



(Photo by Jim Burton)

Peace Pilgrim's Progress

(Written after my 1000 mile pilgrimage through California)

DEAR FRIENDS OF PEACE:

During the winter season of 1959 I walked a 1,000 mile pilgrimage through California. I walked in an oval- from Los Angeles to San Francisco to Sacramento to San Diego to Los Angeles. I also visited many places off my walking route. Below is an article I wrote as I walked out of San Francisco across the Golden Gate Bridge. Musing beside an old fort, I wondered what it would say to the people of the world if it could speak.

AN OLD FORT SPEAKS

When I was built much time and money was spent on me, because it was thought that I would defend the city against, all invaders. Now I stand forlorn, since it does not require great wisdom to recognize that I am obsolete. But I am not the only material defense which is obsolete. Even the most modern of them are obsolete now, although you in your fear and your bewilderment still cling to them. But while in your immaturity you lavish your time and your treasure upon them, you know in your hearts that they cannot defend you against anything. You know that you stand, seemingly defenseless, facing a new age, while the nuclear bomb says to you "Make peace or perish!" But are you really defenseless because all material defenses have crumbled as they were bound to crumble? Have you forgotten the defense which cannot crumble, the defense which lies in obedience to a higher law? Down through the ages your best teachings and your best selves have been telling you that evil can only be overcome by good, and experience has shown that if you want to make friends you must be friendly. When will you have wisdom enough to forsake the path to annihilation and turn to the defense which is timeless and ageless and changeless? People of earth, the decision is before you! You can still choose life, but you must choose quickly!

VARIETY IN CALIFORNIA

It is a joy to walk through California in the winter through the warm sunshine of an irrigated desert, atop a cliff overlooking the blue Pacific or along a beach, through orchards and vineyards and nut groves and cultivated fields, over scenic mountain passes. California's mountains are majestic and lofty and often snow-capped, so if you wish you can ski in the morning and come down to the ocean for a swim in the afternoon. In Southern California trees seem sparse, although palm trees line the city streets, eucalyptus trees line the desert highways, there are live oaks on the hills, cottonwoods in the arroyos and graceful pepper trees near the houses. Northern California, with its massive redwoods, seems to be a land of trees. Just about anything can be grown in California, from citrus fruit and tropical dates to apples and vegetables that are usually grown in the north. California is a land where seasons are not very pronounced - for instance, in San Diego, sometimes called the City of Eternal Spring, it is always warm in the daytime and cold enough for a coat or a blanket at night. In this season less land flowers often disregard the proper blooming time. It is not uncommon to see chrysanthemums, poinsettias and jonquils blooming happily with geraniums, petunias and other summer flowers. In some sections no house is complete without a garden, and there are flowers everywhere. About April the desert comes to life, and blooms with a profusion and a beauty that defies description.

NEW CALIFORNIA

When you realize that California's chain of missions was started nearly two hundred years ago, the state does not seem very new, but actually most of the growth is new and most of the people are new Californians. The pioneer spirit still survives sufficiently to make new things welcome, so many interesting new things have established themselves in the Golden State. Some seem quite worth while - others seem transient. Since it is in the process of rapid new growth, California faces some new problems. Most acute among them is the smog problem, which is centered in the Los Angeles area. At times I encountered smog so thick I could not see across the street and so irritating to my eyes that tears ran down my cheeks. Probably all industry in this area will need to be muzzled with smoke consumers or moved, all home heaters that send smoke into the air will need to be changed, and even cars will need to be equipped with devices to eliminate fumes. California's southern seacoast is worth reclaiming - it could be an earthly paradise. When I arrived in Los Angeles, at the end of the Nevada nuclear tests, radioactivity was also a problem, having risen to more than 200% of what a human being can tolerate for an extended period of time. The Mayor of Los Angeles was phoning the President about this while the testers were trying to get the deadline extended. This is indeed a new age problem, and one which may have devastating effects.

LETTERS TO CONGRESSMEN

In answer to numerous inquiries, I would like to say that I do believe in writing letters to Congressmen, and below is a letter which I recently sent to my Congressmen:

I have never met a modern military man who did not realize that military victory is a concept which became obsolete with the coming of the nuclear age, and most civilians realize this also. We now face the problem of eliminating physical violence in this immature world where psychological violence still exists. If we who conquered the atom by applying scientific principles cannot create a peaceful world situation by applying psychological principles we will all perish together.

Congressmen in this crisis period have a great responsibility, for they cannot avoid making momentous decisions. They can make choices that surviving remnants will condemn them for or choices that flourishing future generations will extol them for. May they prove equal to the new age!

The new age demands higher values. Those who spoke of peace were once called idealists, but in this nuclear age the idealists have become the only realists. We have always thought of ourselves as having high ideals. Let us apply some of them in this crisis situation and lead mankind away from annihilation toward a golden age of peace.

Let us end the draft, inform other nations of our action, and ask them to do likewise.

Let us establish a Peace Department to do extensive research on peaceful ways of resolving conflicts, inform other nations of our action, and ask them to do likewise.

Yes, let us prepare for peace! With the instinct of self-preservation pushing strongly in that direction, it may break out at any time and find us totally unprepared!

SOME MORE SONGS OF PEACE

I am very grateful to hear from some of you that my songs are being used so meaningfully

"WE CAN BE FRIENDS"

(To "Blue Danube")

We can be friends - we can be friends,

And then strife will end - then strife will end,

Then all war shall cease - then war shall cease,
And we shall have peace - most blessed peace.
So give me your hand - give me your hand,
As friends let us stand - together stand,
When we stand together in friendship
The earth is a one-derful land!

"O'ER THE HORIZON"

(To "Juanita")

O'er the horizon
Faintly dawns an age of peace-
Stars sing together
That all war can cease.
Yet the war-clouds linger
Bringing fear into each heart -
For we know not peace ways
And a war could start.
Lord of mercy and wisdom,
Make us wise to know Thy way.
Lord of love and compassion,
Let us Thee obey.

THE CHOICE IS OURS

We are living in a crisis period. We who are living in the world today must make the choice between a nuclear war of annihilation and a golden age of peace. Those who do nothing are choosing war - in which direction the tide of world affairs is strongly drifting. Those who do something meaningful for peace become a part of the stirring and awakening in that direction and help to accelerate it. We cannot stay where we are, and as to which way we go - the choice is ours!

COMMEND THE GOOD

May I suggest a peace project which everyone can undertake. Whenever you learn that someone has done something on the good side commend him and give him moral support. This applies to those around you, of course, but it also applies to those in your government and in the United Nations. All not-good things are transient things - containing within themselves the seeds of their own destruction. They will fade away if the good is strengthened, so let's commend the good and strengthen it!

Best love and best wishes,

PEACE PILGRIM, Cologne, N. J.
