

Peace Pilgrim still walking for the world

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The voice that came bouncing down the basement hallway was unmistakable, even after 14 years.

It had to be the Peace Pilgrim.

She would be gray-haired, would be wearing navy blue slacks and shirt and a short blue tunic of many pockets like a carpenter's apron.

There would be large white capital letters on the front, PEACE PILGRIM, and on her back, 25,000 MILES ON FOOT FOR WORLD PEACE.

I had a clipping in my notebook from my interview of her on May 15, 1959, on her first of five visits to Salem. Her picture, then, had the old Salem City Hall clock tower in the background. She survived that historic structure.

At that time, the Peace Pilgrim already had walked 14,000 of her first 25,000 miles, wearing blue canvas, crepe-soled shoes in a child's size.

Somewhere in the misty past she had a name, had an age, a home and family attachments. But for more than two decades she has said, "I shall remain a wanderer until mankind has learned the way of peace."

When I entered the room I saw quickly that she hadn't changed, except, mysteriously, to look younger. Her gray hair now is longer and her pale blue eyes still sparkle when she expresses her ideas.

These are ideas developed in the meditative walks along roadsides and mixed with her close reading of current events.

The lettering on her blue tunic appears factory-made, whereas in 1959 it was from a handmade stencil. She may be a little less slender around the waist, which ought not be mentioned in a peace atmosphere.

The Peace Pilgrim — maybe she should be called Ms. Peace Pilgrim — has a new optimism about peace. She sees young people seeking inner peace and she thinks that could lead to world peace.

She sees the world learning that war won't work and that nobody can win, particularly under threat of nuclear weapons.

"Dueling ceased when it was seen that men legally right were being killed. Today we are on the brink of the time when peace is possible because we can see clearly now. The tide of world affairs still is drifting toward destruction, but optimists see peace activity in every town."

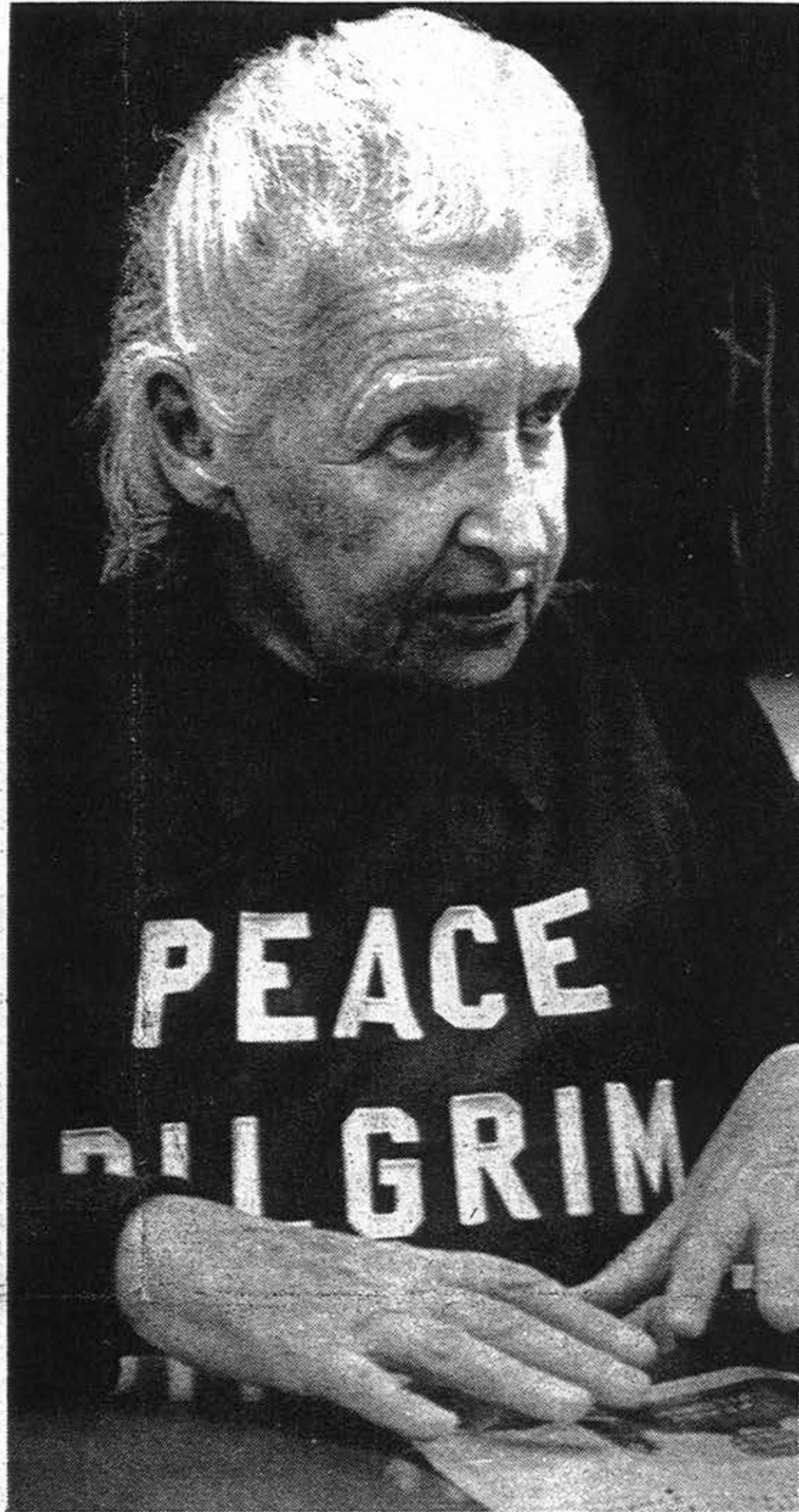
The Peace Pilgrim said that pro-war "hawks" are almost extinct, that major toy manufacturers have quit making toys of destruction, that there are "some good rebellions" against false values of war, prejudice, materialism and hypocrisy.

"I would like to see us establish a Peace Department of government to work for peace and to encourage other nations to do so," she said.

"We are much closer to the time when small nations will give up the right to the UN to make war."

The Peace Pilgrim read my faded clipping from 1959 about her being free of headaches and colds for 21 years.

"Yes, and I can say now that I still haven't had a



(Capital Journal photo)

Peace Pilgrim wanders into Salem

headache or cold in the 35 years since I stopped living to get and started living to give, when I felt willing to give up the self-centeredness and to plug in to find inner peace and the universal energy."

She said she still asks for no food, shelter or money; still mails peace literature free to her growing mailing list; and when someone mistakenly encloses money, she gives it to finance the mailings.

There's the Peace Pilgrim's "magic formula" for resolving conflicts and it remains the same during her wanderings:

"Have as your objective the resolving of the conflict — not the gaining of advantage. For avoiding conflicts, be concerned that you do not offend — not that you are not offended."

She will be in Salem for four more days, then return June 28 to speak at 8 p.m. at a meeting sponsored by Unity of Salem, 1361 Madison St. NE, on "The Steps Toward Inner Peace."

Sunday's meeting was sponsored by Concerned Citizens for Peace, a Salem group.