

# Ageless Peace Pilgrim Walks Over 25,000 Miles In Crusade For Peace

by Eric Rodenberg

She claims she's ageless. She claims she has lead three lives. Since January 1, 1953, when she walked out of the city of Los Angeles, dressed in what looked like a blue sweat suit and a tunic embossed with the legend, "Peace Pilgrim," she claims to have walked over 25,000 miles in the name of Peace.

One of the first things you notice about her is her hair, the same pepper-flecked silvery color it was when she first began the pilgrimage 23 years ago. Or it might be her eyes — deep grayish pools that fail to elucidate what lies in the depths. You know there's something down there, but it's impossible to define any impression that dissipates their mystery.

Her voice, another distinguishing feature, is soft — at first; however, when she begins talking of the pilgrimage and peace the volume of her voice increases with her zeal.

Peace Pilgrim, who long ago discarded her given name and worldly possessions, has trekked through all 50 states, 10 Canadian provinces and part of Mexico to "around people and make them think" she says in that unwavering voice.

She's penniless and proud of it. She carries all she needs in the pockets of her tunic — a toothbrush, comb and pencil. Years ago, before the pilgrimage began, she vowed to "remain a wanderer until mankind has learned the way of peace, walking until I am given shelter and fasting until I am given food."

Peace Pilgrim seems to be a learned woman — well versed in the history of mankind and eloquent in communicating her hopes for world peace and how these hopes may be obtained.

She is elusive about her background, only commenting that her "first life" was preoccupied with "making and spending all the money I could."

"I wasn't happy with my life

then," she explained. "All the unnecessary possessions I had became unnecessary burdens. I decided I would not accept more than I need until those that have less than they need are comforted."

Her "second life" was devoted to studying and preparing for the long pilgrimage. She describes this period as one of growth and introspection. "During that life I grew beyond my previous limitations," she said, "physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. I knew that if I was going to make the pilgrimage I would have to be prepared."

The "third life", what she calls the happiest, began when she started out on her pilgrimage from Los Angeles in 1953. The mood of the country in 1953 was not the most indulgent to the idea of a Peace Pilgrim — with the Korean War still in full bloom and the oppressive atmosphere of the McCarthy committee permeating the country.

It was during that year when she was picked up and jailed in California for vagrancy. Although she was only charged with vagrancy, Peace Pilgrim still believes that investigating officers on the case were looking to bring additional charges against her. Before dismissing her as a "religious pilgrim," the investigators thoroughly looked into her background and interrogated her.

Throughout her incarceration though, Peace Pilgrim remained characteristically optimistic, working with the other "girls" in the prison and making plans to improve the inmates' situation.

After getting back out on the road, Peace Pilgrim began accepting interviews with the media and giving lectures in high schools and universities across the nation. It was about 15 years ago when she crossed the 25,000 mile mark.

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