

Peace Pilgrim's Last Interview: WKVI in Knox, IN
July 6, 1981
Transcript

Conducted by Ted Hayes, manager of radio station WKVI in Knox, Indiana, the day before she was killed in an automobile accident. This interview can be found at the end of the Campbell House audio tape and in Appendix V of the Peace Pilgrim Book.

Ted Hayes: Peace, let's talk a little bit about this wandering that you have done for peace. How did it all come about?

Peace Pilgrim: Well, it started January 1, 1953 from Los Angeles, California. That year I set out to walk across the country, which I did: zig-zag across 5,000 continuous miles. And then I just continued. I'm on my seventh pilgrimage route now which is my seventh crossing of the country. I have covered the fifty states, the ten Canadian provinces, parts of Mexico. It's an effort to do everything one little person can do for peace.

I walk prayerfully, and as an opportunity to talk with many people and perhaps inspire them to do something for peace also, in their own way.

TH: Peace, what brings you to Knox, specifically?

PP: I was invited to come to Knox by an old friend of mine, Gertrude Ward. I met her elsewhere, so this is my first visit to Knox. And, of course, I do this all the time. It's part of my regular pilgrimage for peace. I have no money. I don't accept any money. I belong to no organization, so there is no organizational backing behind me. And I own only what I wear and carry. I just walk until given shelter, fast until given food. I don't even ask, it's given without asking. I tell you, people are good. There's a spark of good in everybody, no matter how deeply buried.

Now it used to be that my invitations were just on the spur of the moment. From total strangers I was offered a bed about three-quarters of the time. And I seldom skipped more than three or four meals in a row, but now my invitations often come in advance. And of course that was the case with my invitation to Knox.

TH: Peace, let me ask you this: Was it always Peace Pilgrim, or did you have a name as a little girl?

PP: Oh, it isn't my old name, but if you should address a letter to my old name, I would not even receive the letter. I'm very much Peace Pilgrim now. I am told that it's a professional name, consistently used, you see. It has been my legal name now for some ten or twelve years because, of course, it was taken way back in 1953 when I first started on my pilgrimage.

Things have changed a good deal since then, but I will say one thing has not changed and that is my peace message. It still remains: This is the way of peace--overcome evil with good, and falsehood with truth, and hatred with love. That's still the message that I'm carrying after all

these years. Well, you see, we haven't learned to live it yet. The key word for our times is really practice. It isn't more light we need, it's putting into practice what light we already have. When we do that, wonderful things will happen within our lives and within our world.

TH: Peace Pilgrim, you know there are a certain number of people who would not even think of doing this, that would probably think of somebody like yourself as a kook or a nut. Do you have a problem overcoming this barrier with some people?

PP: Well, I'm quite sure that some of those who have just heard of me must think I'm completely off the beam. After all, I am doing something different. And pioneers have always been looked upon as being a bit strange. But you see, I love people, and I see the good in them. And you're apt to reach what you see. The world is like a mirror: if you smile at it, it smiles at you. I love to smile, and so in general, I definitely receive smiles in return. I have been supplied with everything I needed on my pilgrimage without even asking for it.

TH: You walk this country of ours without so much as a penny in your pocket. You just walk on faith alone, faith that somebody will take care of you, and it always seems to happen. You must have some intuition as to whom to approach, whom to smile to, and who is going to be good to you though, don't you?

PP: I smile to everyone. I never approach anyone. I'm wearing my short tunic with Peace Pilgrim on the front and 25,000 Miles On Foot For Peace on the back so folks will stop and talk, and lots of them do. It makes all my contacts for me, in the kindest way. And those who come are very special. They're either genuinely interested in peace or have a good, lively curiosity. You see, there's a good deal of interest in peace now. When I started out people accepted war as a necessary part of life. And now, of course, we're looking for alternatives to war. It's a gain actually--it's better than it was. When I first started out there was very little interest in the inner search. Now there's almost a universal interest in the inner search, which to me is the greatest gain of all. And, of course, since I mostly talk about peace within ourselves as a step toward peace in our world, there is an increasing interest in my subject.

TH: Peace, the bible tells us that wars will always be with us. What do you say to people who say that? Do you think that this one little effort can make a difference?

PP: It actually says that there will be 'wars and rumors of wars.' But that prophecy has been fulfilled amply through the centuries. I don't see why we should want any more fulfillment of that prophecy. It also says, 'they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.' Perhaps the time has come for the fulfillment of that prophecy. I believe it has.

I think this, of course, is what all of us really desire. And yet, there is so much pessimism. I was talking to a lady who said, "I'm praying with you for peace but of course I don't believe it's possible." I said, "Don't you think peace is in accordance with God's will?" "Oh yes," she said, "I know it is." I said, "Well how can you tell me that which is in accordance with God's will is not possible?" It's not only possible, it's inevitable. Only how soon is up to us.

Now, I know that all good effort bears good fruit, and so I keep on making what good effort I can. I leave results in God's hands. They may not be manifested in my lifetime but eventually they will be manifested.

TH: Peace, it's not good to, in a regular sense, walk up to a woman you've just met and say "how old are you?" But, I'm going to chance it today. I'm going to ask you how old you are.

PP: I can only tell you that I do not know, and this is deliberate on my part. We create constantly through thought, including we create our age. I had created sufficient age when I started out January 1, 1953, and I said, "that's enough." From that time on I thought of myself as being ageless and in radiant health, and I am. I haven't gotten younger, but I see no point in getting younger. I can get along just fine as I am, and if you have learned the lessons of the seasons of life before, you really have no wish to return to a prior season of life.

TH: Peace Pilgrim has been my guest today. In her literature she says: 'Peace Pilgrim is on my back, 25,000 miles on foot for peace.' And she has finished walking those miles but she continues to walk for her vow is: 'I shall remain a wanderer until mankind has learned the way of peace, walking until I am given shelter and fasting until I am given food.' She appears to be a most happy woman.

PP: I certainly am a happy person. Who could know God and not be joyous? I want to wish you all peace.