

A personal pilgrimage

By PAUL R. JEFFERSON
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To hear the Peace Pilgrim tell it, walking all over the United States for almost 30 years in order to spread her gospel of religious faith and personal fidelity is one of the most natural things a person can do.

Wearing a lettered tunic describing her religious odyssey, the self-proclaimed "woman with a mission" continued on her seventh pilgrimage across the country when she passed through Topeka this week.

"I just go wherever I'm invited," said the Peace Pilgrim — her professional name — about her local visits to speak with congregations at the Unity Church of Christianity and

the Church of the Brethren. During her week's stay in Topeka, the elderly woman also addressed sociology and psychology classes at Washburn University, and handed out copies of her pamphlet with her "magic formula" for resolving conflicts of all kinds: Have as your objective the resolving of the conflict — not the gaining of advantage.

"Every person is born for a purpose," she said, and added that she gave no mind to being thought "crazy" or "eccentric" by some. Although the Peace Pilgrim was deliberately vague on biographical data, her message shone through her vivid blue eyes.

"You must be living to give instead of to get," she said, "and to promote the causes of peace. Real peace is more than the absence of

war; it is an absence of the causes of war."

Beginning her journeys back in 1953, the 70-plus year-old woman has traveled more than 25,000 miles on foot in her east-west, north-south excursions from her home base in Cologne, N.J. Her only accoutrements on her travels, besides the clothes she wears, consist of a comb, toothbrush and a writing pen.

The Peace Pilgrim described her message as one based on God's laws — as outlined in the Bible — and a humanistic mixture of positive thinking and the wealth of human potential.

"All people have potential, but the choice is yours whether you'll finish the physical and mental growth to be able to live up to it," she said. The well-traveled woman added one other aid to reaching one's full potential: spiritual growth.

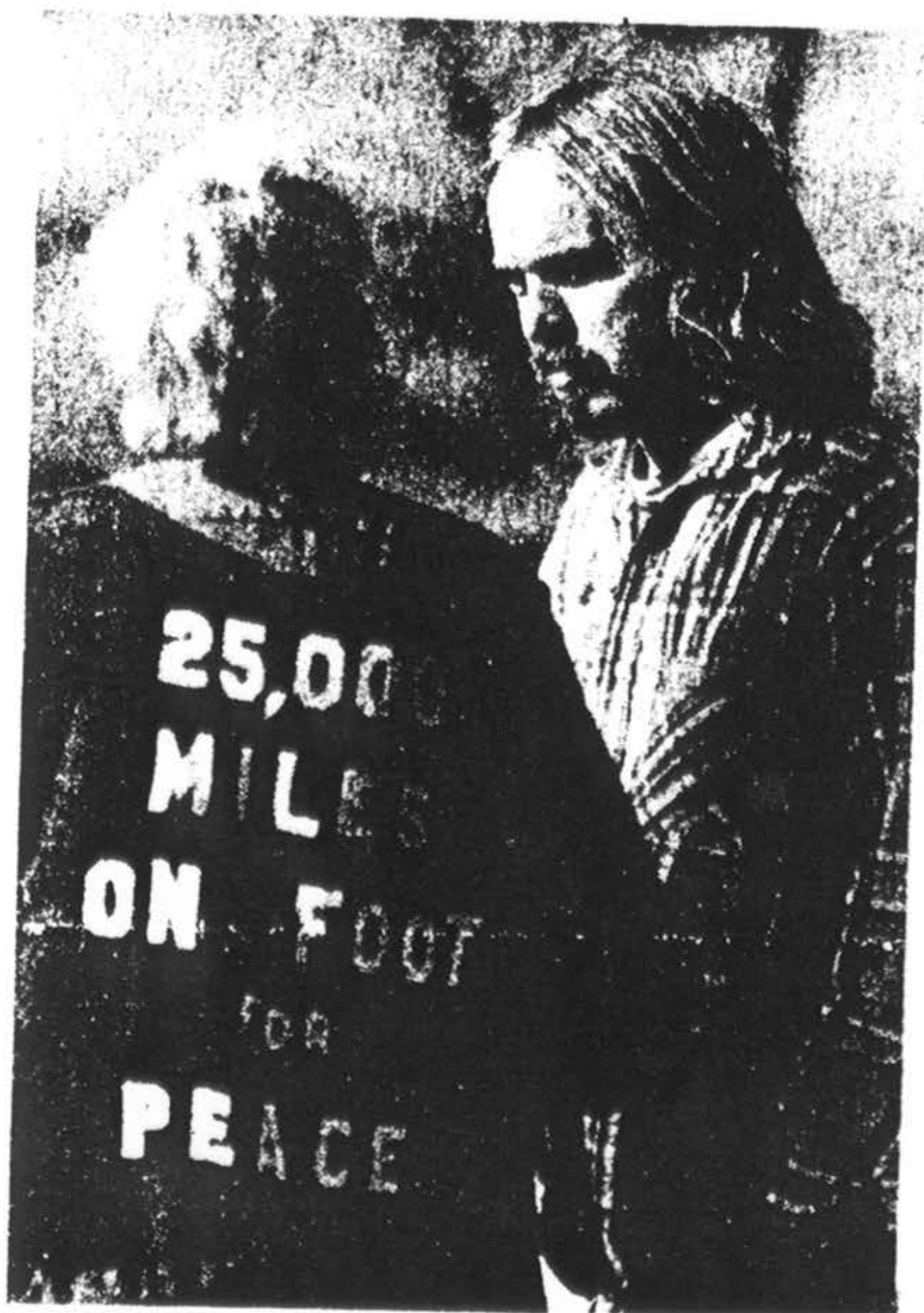
"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he," she said, quoting one of many Bible verses which crop up in her public conversations. The Peace Pilgrim has taken her peace-promoting message to schools such as Harvard, Yale, the University of Pennsylvania and University of California-Berkeley, and is on her way to Dallas to lecture at a Catholic convent.

"My seventh peace pilgrimage route will take me through the 48 states in about six years," she said, adding that all of her stops are planned from invitations she has received.

After first undertaking the cross-country travels on her own, the Peace Pilgrim now receives funding for a newsletter from anonymous donors, but she is not affiliated with any organization or denomination. All of her mail is forwarded from her mailing address in New Jersey.

"I seem like I have lived three lives," she said, in describing how she started her "gentle crusade." After living what she termed "an empty life of money and things" as a young woman, she said she began living a more austere life in the late 1930s, when she began working among the elderly, pared her ifestyle down to a "need level," subsisting on about \$10 weekly.

It was then that she took her own intimate vow: "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 never carries any money. "I fear nothing and expect good, so good things come to me."



Barney Hubert, Topeka, stopped on US-40 east of Topeka to talk to the Peace Pilgrim when he saw her walking.