

Carrying all she owned in her tunic pockets, the Peace Pilgrim passed through Kansas on her final crossing of the country.

John and Ann Rush of Hemet continue to spread the message of the late Peace Pilgrim, whose tunic is being worn by Ann.

Peace Pilgrim's Journey—'on Foot and in Faith'

Hemet Couple Make It Their Project to Continue Mildred Norman's Work

By ANN JAPENGA, *Times Staff Writer*

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.

—**The Peace Pilgrim**

HEMET—With the humility befitting one whom others called a saint, Mildred Norman—a woman widely known as the Peace Pilgrim—used to refer to her heroic journey as her “retirement project.”

Norman covered the United States on foot from 1953, when she first set out from the Pasadena Tournament of Roses Parade, until 1981 when she was killed in a automobile accident near Knox, Ind., at age 73. Her message was that if world peace ever was to

come, individuals must first attain personal peace.

Now a Hemet couple, who were one of the many people to shelter Norman in their homes over the years, have made it their own retirement project to continue the work of the Peace Pilgrim by distributing her teachings in written form.

Ann and John Rush, both 68, have participated in organized peace rallies and vigils throughout their lives, but today they believe that keeping the spirit of the Peace Pilgrim alive is more important than any other peace-related work they could be doing. Their mission even takes precedence over spending time with their three children and eight grandchildren.

“The beauty of Peace Pilgrim was that she was able to reach people the peace movement could never reach,” said John Rush, a former Whittier postman who moved to Hemet two years ago. “The peace movement might have turned these people off, but here was this woman. . . .”

Norman's style of speaking was much like Lily Tomlin's sagacious bag lady, or Maude of the cult movie “Harold and Maude.” Her message was so simple, her delivery so effusive, that sometimes she was judged to be “completely off the beam,” as she put it.

She accepted no money. Her only possessions were a blue work shirt, blue trousers, cheap tennis shoes and an often-patched cotton

tunic with PEACE PILGRIM lettered on the front, and, 25,000 MILES ON FOOT FOR PEACE on the back. (She passed the 25,000-mile mark in 1964, and stopped counting.) In the pockets of the tunic she carried a toothbrush, a comb and correspondence from admirers around the nation, which had been forwarded to her at a post office box in Cologne, N. J. She also carried copies of her aphorisms, which she insisted were not “impractical religious concepts,” but “laws governing human conduct, which apply as rigidly as the law of gravity.”

John Rush was not impressed the first time he heard Norman speak.

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