

# Capital's Gentlest Protest 10 Months Old

By NAN ROBERTSON

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 14— Their address is 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, but they do not live in the White House.

They have been there 24 hours a day for 10 months. No postman delivers mail to them, there is no telephone, and President Nixon sees them only from afar.

The "vigil for peace," which the Quakers began at 11 A.M. on June 2, 1971, on the sidewalk in front of the White House, is the longest, and in some ways the strangest and gentlest, protest ever to materialize on that busy, always-changing stage.

The cast of what one member of the group called "a hobgoblin of people" in their exotic costumes is continually changing, too. The sidewalk and crash pad attracts drifters, Vietnam veterans, runaways, dogs, dedicated pacifists, the lost, the poor, the lonely and sometimes the crazed.

The only constants are three persons who have made the sidewalk their home, with brief interruptions, since the beginning.

There are few Quakers there now. But the Society of Friends and other antiwar groups still provide food, leaflets, and, for those who have endured punishing weather and primitive living too long, warm places to

sleep, shower and do laundry.

The New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends began the vigil last June 2 in support of some of its members who were going on trial that day following their arrest demonstration in April. Brian Yaffe, the director of Quaker House here, said that it was first thought the vigil "might go as long as a week."

But it went on and on, more non-Quakers joined, and by Labor Day it became, in Mr. Yaffe's words, "a free-form happening and a street ministry the likes of which I don't think anybody has seen."

The enduring presence of the vigil is beginning to get under Washington's skin. This city has witnessed in-

numerable demonstrations in recent years, some of them uplifting, some upsetting and bizarre, but none of them this long.

Passersby have seen the protesters in the scorching sun and in the middle of drenching, freezing nights, tumbled together under protective plastic sheeting like

Continued on Page 50, Column 7

## Continued From First Page of Second Part

sleeping puppies in a pet shop window.

"What are they doing there?" people ask. "What do they think they are accomplishing?"

Bob Thompson, a 25-year-old former marine and Vietnam veteran in camouflaged bush hat and denims, doesn't think the politicians are being influenced. "But we're talking to 50 or 60 people a day who pass by," he said. "If just one person we talk to a day is convinced he must do something against the war, it's worth it."

The three constants in the vigil are Ann Woytow, the 41-year-old den mother and straw boss; Eugene Williams, a 28-year-old black who is a Vietnam veteran and the group's jester, and David Flynn, 35, who served aboard merchant marine ships supplying Vietnam. None is a Quaker.

Mr. Flynn, curly beard flying, strides the sidewalk barefooted even in freezing weather. People who knew him and the two others say that the vigil has become a goal, a home and an end in itself for all three. But Mr. Flynn recently told Mr. Yaffe that "nobody is going to stand out in front of the White House 24 hours a day unless he's half nuts."

A cold night with the protesters provided some extraordinary vignettes.

### 'Gay Wedding' Held

Among them: a "gay wedding" at a nearby hippie pad in which a former G.I. and protester named Larry married another former G.I. named Larry; three shaven-headed followers of Krishna bringing food to the sidewalk sleepouts, and serious talks about love, war and Mr. Nixon with strangers wandering past the White House.

Throughout the night, the police patrolled the sidewalk in pairs, walkie-talkies

squawking. They chatted with anybody who was awake. Miss Woytow and the other protesters said that they had been "exceptionally kind" since the beginning.

Both the protesters and the police know that the law is being broken—those on vigil are not supposed to sleep or eat on the site. This had led to the recurrent joke that these street people are "meditating while in a prone position."

At 3 A.M. the dozen persons on the spot were all slumbering soundly, huddled in a jumble of blankets, newspapers and ditty bags under their plastic sheets. Near them were the remains of a free meal that a vegetarian restaurant in Georgetown has donated nightly since last August.

Only the scavenging pigeons and the police were there to keep them company when the first light broke in the morning.

One of the passers-by was a pretty mother from Wilkes-Barre, Pa., who appeared at 2:30 A.M. with her three impeccably dressed sons, aged 5, 7 and 8, and a nine-month-old sleepy baby slung from a rig on her back.

They had been sightseeing, she said, at the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument. Now they had come to view the White House. While her children greedily spooned grape jelly from a jar that the protesters had opened, she spoke of how Mr. Nixon put "power and money" before "love and peace."

She rejected the offer of a ride to the Greyhound bus terminal. "We'll walk," she said. "It teaches the children self-reliance."



Associated Press/Henry Burroughs

Participants in the Vigil for Peace on the sidewalk in front of the White House. The vigil was begun last June.