

1962 Brother Harrison Mays. Interview

I got one back from the Philippines about six months ago. I got it and it's been in the ocean for sixteen years.

I've got seven thousand of them, everywhere in the world.

One bottle put in the Pacific in Central America got to the Philippines sixteen years later.

"When they write me they always tell me the number (of bottle) and I check my files.

See this here. This is ^{the} Jerusalem. It's fifteen hundred miles square,

E -- They don't bother you, do they -- if you put it right on the line, right by the interstate?

BM -- Well, yes and no. I'll show you how I work it. ...They've asked everybody to keep 660 feet away from this fence on the Interstate. . . . I can't do that. It's too far, and I've got to make a sign too big. I can't stand it. I'm a part of this United States. And there's freedom of religion ~~and~~ speech and the press, but it don't mean you can get out and put a sign where somebody'll get killed with it. ^{so long as} you've got freedom, you've got to use horse sense with it. If I get out ~~there~~ and put up a sign where somebody'll get hurt, I ought to be put in jail. . . . Here's the way I do this. Right here comes the Interstate. . . . Now here's the fence. In other words, the Interstate fence. There's a little old road coming up through here to Farmer Brown's . . . maybe he

lives up here someplace. Here's his fence. His fence and his land right here. This here is the old road, and it's gone back to the county. I call that no-man's land

E: He's figured out the law in every state and county to try and get it as close as possible ~~xxxxxx~~ to the law.

He mails them to missionaries and they put them up -- in 82 foreign countries. These are paper -- to be pasted on boards -- and are inserted in small mailing tubes to be mailed.

Airport signs -- in Atlanta, Knoxville, , Chicago airport. West Palm Beach.

has recently gone into flourescents.

I've had three torn down right here at Knoxville. The airlines tore them down. They/re afraid of disturbing their passengers, and they come innhere fussing about trash being down there at the end of the runway. They tore down two up here at Cincinnati. I know what I'm doing, disturbing their passengers.

Hix largest sign measure 105 feet. "They've got so many trees set down out there, right close to it, you can't hardly see it." It's electric. situated on top of a mountain just outside Middleboro.

I keep it locked up to keep that wife ~~sixxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ you know, from tearing up my . . . I had a quart of beer out of Al Capone's distillery. And I had a -- the day after whiskey went out of Middlesboro, I wnet up to tune my cross up on the mountain and somebody had hid a quart of whiskey up there. Afraid of it, you know. So I got that. And she -- some along winter time, she's afraid them rats would get in here . . . She pured it

out and put coffee in it. Then it come winter time, it ~~frxxxxxxx~~ frozed up and busted. I said "How in the world did that bust?" Well, she finally told me. Now I've got a lock here. You can't get in here.

Brother Mayes' coat

Well, there's two hundred and fifty-nine ~~crosses~~ ~~on~~ ~~there~~ that thing. And each one of them represents each chartered church in the United States. We have 259 chartered ~~churches~~ with a charter, besides them that don't have a charter. Each one of them represents each one of them. Well now, all of them ~~are~~ doing good. And there's nobody to be culled because one is just about as important as the others.

B -- These crosses represent 259 different denominations in the U.S.A. Feel free to ask why. Humanly speaking this is to be expected but mainly this would

Men -- or angels or whater you want to call it -- that knows better. But we're humans and that's it. Now. Now let me tell you about it. I made up twelve bare-faced lies to get that jacket. Can you imagine that? And let me tell you the reason. That's one stoey in the name of each of the twelve apostles. Each man that sets a church up, he says, "Well, the Lord, the prophets, and Jesus' t3achings all tells me to do it this way. Well, there's no such a thing. It's a fasehood. It's just -- the greater portion of it's just manmade stuff. ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~things~~ ~~we're~~ ~~supposed~~ ~~to~~ ~~be~~. As far as the essential things, we're all together.

But where we're different on the little things that don't amount to nothing. But still yet that's it. So, So the Lord didn't give us ~~the~~ right to do all these things. And I didn't want nothing right about that jacket. And I wear that on Sunday and that's all. Well, sometimes

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in a parade I'll wear it just for suriousity on ~~my bike~~ ^{this} bicycke right there.

~~For a smample, I put one up here just ~~on the~~ ^{this} side of Yellowstone on , on this last trip. Well, I hadn't been back two days till I heard from a state man out ther. He said, "~~well~~", I took your sign down. Due to this here beautification that Mrs. Johnson signed into law, , it's my duty to do it. I hate to do it. Well I wrote him back and I said "Well now I'm going to bless you out just a little bit in the name of the Lord because Now, they ain't no kind of a sign nowhere that's any more appropriate or beautiful, stuck alongside the road, out of the way, than a sign that reads GET RIGHT WITH GOD and then inviting people to come to church in that area. There ain't nothing any more beautiful than that. Now, Now, I'm going to tell you one of five things. Now bless your heart I wouldn't hurt you at all, Now just take it back up there and put it back in that hole you got it out of. You didn't have any business taking it down noway. Your job don't demand that. ~~Just~~ put it on some less important place or give it to some preacher to put it around his church. Or else just set it up in the garage there where you got it. In the jail there where people can read it. That's all I've got it for is for folks to read.~~

Now forgive how I say this. I'm Catholic, Protestant, Jew. What I mean by that is this: Anything that's good about any of them, I in for it. In other words, I'm working through all religious bodies, both Catholic ~~Nxx~~

and jew. Church members and non ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ -- you know, non organized
that

A lot of people don't even have a ~~XXXXXXXX~~ charter to their church and ~~XXXX~~
so on. So I'm just a friend of them. . . I'm just a friend of all of them.
regardless of how mean they are or how good they are. That's the size
of it. The meanest people I can do something good for, just suits me the
best. There's, well, there's a family lives in this section, that, if
they knowed any better -- if they knowed any better, they'd be a disgrace
to mankind. One of the family has got six illegitimate children. And
another one of the family has got five or six. ~~XXXXXXXX~~ Well, they've just
got enough for all of them ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ put together
to get almost about one. In other words -- they're not crazy, but they're
not sharp. . . . Oh just any amount of times I give them money and
just ring them up and and maybe take big old baskets of stuff in there
and say, "all right, live it up." They're human. The fact of it is they
shouldn't be around in society with all that going on. But they're here.
We have to put up with them. Lots of folks are born ~~XXXXXXXX~~ with just
outright no sense, I'd say. And I'll tell you another thing. . . .

We'll say, "Well, I'm not a going to help them people because they're drawing
social security. And they're drawing state aid. The point of it is that
that;s starvation living. They're not having enough for nothing, after
all. So, we should go along there and help them anyway. And folks
don't look at it thataway. They say "I'm not going to help them because
they're getting a check, too. But when you come right down to business
they're not having enough to eat. Me and my wife draws six hundred
dollars, about, tax free. Social security and miners' pension and this
black lung. All right, after we live and keep everything up, there's
not but a little bit left. You must think about a man that's got four or

five kids. If he's drawing a hundred and fifty dollars. What can he have? Just a cornbread living, that's all. And it's up to me to help ~~him~~ ^{somebody like that}. Why, I give more money away ~~than~~ to the kids around here than ever the people that -- well, I don't know I'm more involved than the folks around here or not, but anyway --

E -- Did you work in the mines?

Yes, fifty-three years. I've been -- no, forty three. I've been putting up religious signs fifty-three years. That's where I got mixed up.

See, all I make now (painting signs for the Coca-cola company, etc.) ~~xxxxxxx~~ ^{all} since I got pensioned off here, I can put it in the work of the Lotd. Well, I've got to make a right smart of money. because -- thirty -- it cost me about thirty-five hundred dollars this year. Or more. And about that much last year.

Down in the mines, he used to write signs on anything -- pieces of ~~xxxx~~ slate,

Slightly ahead of his time, he began making signs for the planets around fifteen years ago so he'd have them rfeady to go.

We're going to have to get more speed than we've got, though, if we get anywhere towards getting to the planets. because twenty-six million miles is as close as you can get to Mars. from the earth. That's the closest you can get. . . . They'll do it. By the year eighty they figure they can get loads of passengers up to the moon. Going to the moon is a small thing. When you undertake to go to Mars, now, that's different. And, well, at the speed of light. You know how fast that is?

186,000 miles a second. At the speed of light, you can get to the planet Pluto, in six hours. That's two billion and a half miles away. And be there an hour and then come back, ~~that's~~ thirteen hours. Five billion miles. That's a lot of mileage. That's the speed of light now. When you going to run it?

E -- What did you do in the mines. What job did you -- Everything. that pretains to mining. Laying track, breaking ~~up~~ after motors, running motors. ~~Everything~~ Everything besides bossing and I wouldn't have that.

E -- How old were you when you started? I was about fifteen. Spent all my life in the mines, the coal mines. about seven miles from here.

E -- They're closed down now, aren't they? Yeah. There's hardly any of these deep mines a-running. Just a few now and then, but there is a lot of stripping. Oh, there used to be twenty-one mines up this branch right here and up this one. Now I believe there is one small one -- or two -- deep mines. That's all. They're not doing any good. The one that I worked at worked about three hundred men. 350, something like that. Now there's one or two -- well, I'd say there's five houses up there. I remember when there was ^{up there before} hundreds of them, where we lived.

E -- Isn't it better that they're closed? They were pretty unsafe and -- Well, Well, I don't know, It's awful dangerous. ^{nearly} ~~and~~ everywhere you look in a ~~coal mine~~ coal mine, it's dangerous. But all this here stripping coal it's -- well, I'd say it's not as good. as it is to go under there, because it's been exposed to the weather and ^{out} ~~and~~ outcroppings and everything.

E -- And it tears up the land.