

1968

~~and Brother Miles~~

1968 interview
Lake City, Tenn.

1.

Rev Roger Powell by
Eleanor Dickenson with
Bob Weems

~~Creekie and Brother Powell -- interview~~

CREEKIE AND BOB WEEMS (NOT MILES) INTERVIEW POWELL ABOUT B. MAYS

~~xxxx~~

Creekie: When you look at those signs -- maybe you could tell from the signs which trip it was that you took?

Brother P. -- Oh you mean those pictures -- Yeah.

Creekie -- Like on thses different signs, which year was it?

Brother Powell -- This was 51.

Creekie -- The one in the middle?

Brother powell -- The one in the middle, un huh. And the one in the left hand corner is Junction City, Kansas in ~~xxxx~~ early 52.

Brother ?? That's the trip he took with his two sons, isn't it?

Brother Mays?? -- Grandsons

Unknown -- Does he actually do any preaching, Brother Powell?

Brother P. No, no he doesnt. He just preaches by signs.

Creekie-- Now his wife's Church of God, but you don't know if he is.

Brother Powell -- I don't know whether he is or not. I don't think so.

Unknown -- Well, what was his life's occupation?

Brother Powell -- Coal miner

Unknown -- Well, how long has he been doing tis work?

Brother Powell -- I guess ever since he was a young man. I guess he's done this for -- I'd say fifty or sixty years I guess.

Unknown -- He soesn't get paid for any of it --

Brother Powell -- No. ^{or} No money involved. He worked it out ⁹ ~~so~~ that he ~~would take~~ his vacation check and his vacation ~~trip~~, too, and put it into those signs. *and make those trips during the vacations*

He would even take his liquor check

Unknown -- While he was working?

Brother Powell -- That's right. In other words, when he got a vacation,

The money he got out of it supported his trip -- he went on his trip.

Bro Miles -- Well, now, who paid for the materials for these signs?

Powell -- ^{He DID.} Sometimes he would get some of it donated to him in timber or metal.

E -- All that he paid for himself?

Powell -- ~~Yess~~ Oh yes, he paid for it himself. Wears overalls and drives a bicycle. (laughter) One of the funniest men you ever met.

~~Powell -- What kind of a man is he?~~

Miles -- What kind of a man is he?

Powell -- He's a little bitty small kind of a -- well, he's just a comical fellow. If you ever meet him, you'll know him the next time you see him. It won't make no difference.

E -- How long was he in the coal mines?

Powell -- I don know -- I guess maybe he put up maybe forty years in the coal mines.

E -- How old is he now?

Powell -- I guess he's getting up around seventy -- something like that.

Miles -- Well, does he still make these long trips to Kansas?

Powell -- These long trips, he's still making them. I was in his home three months ago and sort of looked his work over. And he's got a museum over there if you'll just go over there and look at it.

E -- That'd be wonderful.

Powell -- he's got many things there. It'd be worthwhile for you to go and see him.

E -- I'm planning to I think it would be a good idea if we called him to make sure he'd be home. He might be off on a trip.

Powell -- I'd say he's one of the greatest sign evangelists in all the world.

Miles -- Does he make up a whole load, then takes this load?

Powell -- Yes.

Miles -- Well, now who helps him put these signs up?

Powell -- Well, he just gets somebody to go along with him and drive the truck ^{with a truck} takes somebody along to help him.

Miles -- Does he get any local help to put up these signs?

Powell -- Sometimes he might.

E -- Does he have to get any kind of special permission to or just he just find a good spot and --

Powell -- He just finds a good spot. And if they run him off, he just finds another'n. Sometimes he has to get a permit. And sometimes he has to rent -- you know -- locations. Around the airports he rents ~~xxxx~~ locations.

Miles -- Does he pay this rent himself?

Powell -- That's right. And if he puts up one and lights it, he'll pay the light bill on it. And I'll guarantee you another thing, he ain't never failed either.

Miles -- Well, how many signs does he have up now approximately?

Powell -- Oh, my, well, you couldn't even estimate. I don't know. I guess he knows, but -- Thousands and thousands of them.

E -- But how can he afford to do all this?

Powell -- That's the mystery of it. God supplies -- you have to -- it's a mystery to all of us. It's a mystery to me how -- Sometimes it's a mystery how people does with so much, and it's a mystery to me how I do with so little, see? That's right. That's the way it goes

E -- How many have you helped him with?

Powell -- You mean how much did I help him in putting those up? Well, I just give my time and time ^{wear and tear on the truck} ~~driving the truck~~ and he supported -- I mean paid for the gas.

E -- You were driving a lumber truck, and you'd just take off --

Powell -- ~~XXXXX~~ And I'd just take a week off and go with him, see.

Miles -- How far -- what is the longest trip that you've ever made in one of these

Powell -- Junction City, Kansas, I guess. And Mobile Alabama, and Battle Creek, Michigan. That's about the limit on -- that's about the three main trips that I made. I've made some short trips for him.

Miles -- Now from Lake City, Tennessee, that would be what -- the Kansas trip was what -- three thousand miles?

Powell -- No, I was driving out of -- we was driving out of Middlesboro, Kentucky. No, it only amounted to a couple of thousand, I guess.

Miles -- Round trip.
Yeah, that's right.

E -- These other signs. Some of these are concrete. And some are copper?

Powell -- They're made out of just ordinary brick siding that goes onto homes. They're already framed with wood, and then they put this on there, and there's a steel rail that goes down through this sign. See, it goes into the ground. You put that in there, and it'll hold for fifty years. And some of those signs, well they'll just last for years, you know, they'll just. It's a sight the capacity of reading that you can get out of it, you see.

E -- Are the churches pretty good about keeping them up?

Powell -- I don't know. Some of them are and some of them are not. Sometimes People takes an interest in anything, and sometimes they don't

signs overseas ~~miss~~ ^{MISSION WORK,} the missionaries, more or less take better care, of them I think than they do in the states.

E -- Some of his signs go overseas?

Powell -- Oh yes.

E -- Oh, really?

Powell , oh yeah, he put a different type sign overseas.

E -- In different languages?

~~Powell -- Yes, he put a different type sign overseas.~~ Powell -- Yes.

E -- How does he learn --

Powell -- I remember one time that he had a -- he took -- ah little galf-pint whiskey bottles. Up in Middles boro, ^{W.V.} it wasn't no trouble to get them there. He took those half pint whiskey bottles by the hundreds and the thousands ands. And he had fourteen different languages put in -- I believe it was fourteen different languages put in those bottles, and sent them around the world where they'd drift in to the communist countries and everywhere.

E -- For heavens sakes.

Powell -- Yeah, that's right. I put some in the Ohio River for him myself. And there's other places . . . ~~And he's got~~ And he's got letters, I guess from around the world from those things. Any way in the world to get the gospel out Prepare to meet God in many different languages.

Miles -- Well, now, if you were to meet Mr. Mays tomorrow, would you meet just the average-appearing fellow?

Powell -- I'd meet the same fellow I met twenty-five years ago..

Miles -- Would you know him -- ~~XXXXXX~~ not knowing his background, could you detect him from just the average individual?

Powell -- You would.

Miles -- You would? In what way?

Powell -- I don't't know. He'll always have a word for you that'll attract your attention. And he's just a commical man. Actually, this thing with him is beyond the natural man. It's ^{THE} supernatural, all right. And it's got working, through the man. ~~It's~~ ^{JUST} like it is in me, praying for the sick. I'm just a man. But ^{IF} ~~when~~ I put my on him and a fellow gets well, that's more than a man. That's the way it is. And so he's got the directions on putting those signs up, just the same as I have getting a text to preach from it or a verse of scripture, see? He has the same thing. It's a -- he's got his directions. He can tell you right where it ought to be. He's got it right in his mind, where they're going to be before he leaves home -- about where they're going to set. He can just about pinpoint them, just about where they'll be. And he knows what he's doing. He knows --

E -- What about what he chooses to write on them? Some of these have more things written on them than others. ~~There's~~

Powell -- These were my signs, but he printed some of the. He printed ~~xxx~~ these on the truck. The signs on the truck was printed by Brother Meys.

Miles -- You originated the letters on those signs?

Powell -- And I liked his idea of the sign business. And I got into this sign business myself on the truck there. I never owned a automobile or anything from that time till this but what I had a sign on it.

Miles -- Yeah, I noticed your automobile in the back had signs on it. the front

E -- You know, if I met you driving a lumber truck with a sign on ~~it~~ that said PREPARE TO MEET THEY GOD, I'd be scared.

Powell -- You'd think I was going to preach instead of sell lumber, wouldn't you?

E -- No, I'd feel there was a mighty heavy truck with this sign, PREPARE TO MEET GOD, I'd drive real careful.

Powell -- Well, I carried this one on the rear end of my ~~trunk~~ truck here, in the middle of this picture here. And I was run off of the road one time on account of it.

E -- Really?

Powell -- Oh, yes.

E -- Who did that?

~~Powell -- Man run me out of the road. I've been run out of the road. I knowed he was going to run me out of the road or he was going to wreck me one, see. I knowed it for a while before. You don't know these things by just knowing. You know them by feeling. And I was down pretty close to Cincinnati when he done this. And so I been run out of the road and cussed and scorned at quite a few times, over those signs, but it's still good. It's still good. You can put them on your car today, and ~~fix~~ you can carry them around -- like I got out there on my car today. I can drive a thousand miles. And probably there'll be one person, maybe two or three throw up their hand that they know what I'm talking about. It's remarkable to think of how little people are thinking -- how bad this needs to go before the public. You're doing the right thing.~~

E -- You can see from these pictures how much good this is going to do.

Powell -- That's right.

E -- So I hope he'll feel the same way.

Powell -- He will. This, I consider, will be a great thing.

Miles -- Well, she's certainly put a great deal of work into it.

And it's been sincere, too.

Powell -- You would not have got the vision of it, if it hadn't a been given you. You just a -- if you'd a been going to work for the enemy, why you'd a got a different vision. I'll tell you that right now. That's right.

Bob -- You said while ago this fellow Mays was comical. What did you mean by comical?

Powell -- Well -- you'll have to meet him yourself to know. You see the comicals strip in the paper, you know, in the lettle things -- something like this, you know But he's a man that'll -- he has a motion or something ~~er other~~ about him that will remind you. If he didn't do nothin else, he'd just turn his hat around ^{in his hand.} and stand there and look at you. And you'd know him the next time you see him. I've bean right in their home. I've ^{eat with them.} I've slept in their beds, and I've eat at their table. And I've enjoyed them. We've had prayer, ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxx~~ together and sang together and it's been glorious.

Bob -- Do you think his sons will go on with this? Do they take an interest in this?

Powell -- His children are more or less married and gone. But they've got an interest in it. They're interested in it. They're not against him. I was just noticing leafing through this, the sincerity on the faces of the people. That's pointed out pretty good.

E -- I can tell you about so many of them. She was wearing a ^{PINK} ~~A~~ -- I don't know, it was a shower cap or something. And she went into a kind of a trance. ^{There} She was prophesying. And it doesn't always show. That's why I started doing the tape recordings to go along with the pictures. Because you can't always tell what thry're saying. So I started taking may tape recorder with me so I could get both the sound and the picture.

Powell -- Here they are at the altar??

E -- Well, They had Sister Dorothy Knott preaching, and she gave them
 a hard time. ^{And so} They'd come down to the front. They'd come running,
 down to the front, and I had to draw awful fast. Once they got down I'd
 have a few minutes where ~~fix~~ I could be drawing. but when they were
 running I couldn't. See, here's where they're all down. But ther'd

be a whole row, and I could just get a few. before they'd all move
 Powell -- You're into something that's interesting. But it has to be
 given. That's right, you have to have this in you. Something has to get
 in you to bring this forward. You got to get the vision of it.

E -- It's sometimes hard to explain to people why I'm doing it, so I'm --

Powell -- It's beyond you. If it wasn't beyond you -- if you could
 explain it,-- why it would be, it would be --

Bob -- Artificial.

Powell -- That's right, but it's beyond you. ^{you see} In other words, all you
 can do now is ^{just} use the simplicity of it to bring it out. In other words,
 it's a simple thing. It's simple, and it's so simple you can't afford
~~xxxx~~ to explain it, because if you did, you'd explain it away and
 if you done anything else, you'd get it so complicated that why --

E -- You can see how, with these pictures, that getting some of these
 signs will add an awful lot to the exhibit.

Great long discussion about making an appointment
 with Bro. Mays, getting his phone number, etc.
 She gives Br. Powell receipt for photographs.

Powell (Just as they start to leave.) Hey brother come here a minute.
 We'd better just knldy join hands like this and have a word of prayer
 before you go --

Prayer: Divine God, we thank you, Lord, for our friends Lord, and keep your divine hand of protection upon them, Lord. And oh God go with them, Lord. And oh ~~Lord~~ ^{hkh God,} let everything that they touch their fingers to, Lord prosper, Lord & Master god for the benefit and the saving of souls ^{of men} in the day that we now live. Bless ^{God,} Lord, and Oh, God, and Go with us, and God, we'll give you honor and glory and ~~praise~~ praise in Jesus' name. Amen. Bless your heart. God bless you in your work.

I've been at this thing here for seventeen years, and I've never looked for anything -- only just people. And I've never starved yet

E -- You won't.