

Harrison Mayes, 88, miner who erected crosses, dies

Associated Press

MIDDLESBORO, Ky. — Harrison Mayes, a retired coal miner who erected wooden, metal and concrete crosses on roadsides across America, died Friday at Community Hospital. He was 88.

Mayes had vowed to continue the project until "people in all lands and planets have been told the word of God."

He placed crosses in all 50 states, sent smaller versions to missionaries in 82 foreign countries and sought to have one placed on the moon, according to his daughter, Ruth Beeler. Mayes also placed a 105-foot cross

on a mountainside near Middlesboro that is lighted at night.

He had received practically no financial or physical support from anyone and once said he belonged to no particular church.

"I'm a good Catholic-Jew-Protestant; I follow the best parts of each," he said during a 1973 interview.

At one time, Mayes shipped hundreds of whiskey bottles, each with a religious message, to postmasters in 12 seacoast cities for dumping in the ocean. The University of Tennessee's language department translated the phrases into foreign languages for him.

Mayes said he had heard from people around the world who found the bottles.

Mayes started his religious projects in 1918 while working in a coal mine near Fork Ridge, Tenn.

"I was saved from an accident by the Lord and I figured I would devote the rest of my life to warning others to follow His word," he said.

Mayes had supported himself and his wife on his miner's retirement check and in 1973 estimated that he had spent more than \$100,000 "of my own money on our work — mine and God's — but it has been worth it."

Mayes used the name of a conti-

nent — Asia — for the middle name of one of his two sons and nicknamed his grandchildren and great-grandchildren after planets, Mrs. Beeler said.

"The way we figure it," Mayes said, "is that each of the children is responsible for putting up signs on the planets they are named after. I think interplanetary space travel will be pretty common by the year 2020, so I'm just planning ahead."

Mayes is survived by his wife, Lillie, two sons and two daughters.

The funeral will be at 2 p.m. tomorrow at Creech Funeral Home.

Harrison Mayes, who erected crosses, dies

Associated Press

MIDDLESBORO, Ky. — Harrison Mayes, a retired coal miner who erected wooden, metal and concrete crosses on roadsides across America, died Friday at Community Hospital. He was 88.

He had vowed to continue the project until "people in all lands and planets have been told the word of God."

He placed crosses in all 50 states, sent smaller versions to missionaries in 82 foreign countries and sought to have one placed on the moon, according to his daughter, Ruth Beeler. Mayes also placed a 105-foot cross on a mountainside near Middlesboro that is lighted at night.

He had received practically no financial or physical support from any-

one and once said he belonged to no particular church.

"I'm a good Catholic-Jew-Protestant; I follow the best parts of each," he said during a 1973 interview.

Mayes started his religious projects in 1918 while working in a coal mine near Fork Ridge, Tenn.

"I was saved from an accident by the Lord and I figured I would devote the rest of my life to warning others to follow His word," he said.

Mayes had supported himself and his wife on his miner's retirement check and in 1973 estimated that he had spent more than \$100,000 "of my own money on our work — mine and God's — but it has been worth it."