

# 'Get Right With God'

## Middlesboro man has spent life making, distributing such signs

BY MARIA BRADEN

MIDDLESBORO, Ky. (AP) — Along the highways and back roads are thousands of crosses and signs proclaiming "Get Right With God" and "Jesus Saves."

It's the lifetime work of one man — a retired coalminer from eastern Kentucky, whose signs stand in all 50 states and 82 foreign nations and provinces.

"People tell me they think it's a company that does it, or somebody hired to put up them signs," said H. Harrison Mayes, an elfin man who's been spreading the Lord's word for more than 50 years.

As a young man Mayes was severely injured in a rock fall in the mine. Doctors said he would die but Mayes believes the Lord saved him, so "I figured I would devote the rest of my life to warning others to follow His word," Mayes said.

The idea to paint signs and distribute them came "because the Lord just put it in me," Mayes said.

He now supports his endeavor by doing free-lance sign painting in Middlesboro.

Mayes has traveled up and down the East Coast, across the midwestern Bible Belt and into the southwest, erecting signs wherever he can.

"I don't ask — I just get as far away as I can," he said. "After the hole is dug I can put the sign in in five minutes."

Mayes erects most of his signs alongside interstate highways because "it's where the masses travel."

He knows the laws limiting advertising on highways, but doesn't always abide by the rules and regulations.

"It's all trespassing," he acknowledged,

"but you can't get anywhere if you ask — it doesn't do any good."

Mayes tries to put the signs on right-of-ways, but has occasionally strayed onto private property. He has had a few run-ins with angry property owners, but said he has managed to talk his way out of the scrapes.

People are leery of religious signs because "religion has a different feel to it," he said. "People don't like the idea for a dozen reasons."

A major stumbling block for most people is the fact that he doesn't belong to a church or religious denomination.

A larger obstacle is that Mayes doesn't pay to erect his signs.

"One guy told me to take my sign down — that he could get \$300 for a sign like that on his property," Mayes said.

The design and size of the signs has changed over the years.

In 1917 Mayes began painting messages on the rocks in the mountains near his home. Later he began making small wooden signs, then started producing crosses made of concrete poured into wooden molds that he built himself.

Each cross weighs about 1,400 pounds.

One of his most elaborate productions was a 36-foot-by-36-foot message designed to be seen from the air. It was made of rocks cemented together to proclaim "Victory in God," and weighed 300 tons.

Mayes has since turned to the construction of aluminum signs on wooden frames, which are durable but much lighter. He said a truck can carry 75 of the new lightweight signs, compared to only about four to six of the concrete crosses.

Mayes manufactures about 100 signs a year in a workshop at the rear of his house, which is built in the shape of a cross.



THESE WORDS ARE on hundreds of signs across the country. Most of them are the work of 78-year-old H. Harrison Mayes, a retired coalminer from eastern Kentucky. The Mayes are shown in the backyard of their Middlesboro

home, where he works on the signs. Mrs. Mayes is holding a half-pint whisky bottle that contains a card saying "Prepare to meet God." Thousands of the bottles have been put into the ocean by the couple. (AP photo)

## State GOP ke of impeachm

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — News that the U.S. House Judiciary Committee had approved one article of impeachment Saturday against President Nixon drew generally negative responses from three top Kentucky Republicans.

Sen. Marlow Cook, reached at a "birthday celebration" at Stouffer's Inn here, refused at first to comment on the action, in which the committee voted 27 to 11 on a nine-part impeachment article accusing the President of having "prevented, obstructed, and impeded the administration of justice" in the Watergate cover-up.

All 21 Democratic members of the committee and six of 17 Republicans approved the article.

Cook said he would not comment because of the possibility that he might sit in judgment on Nixon in the event of a Senate trial. He added, however, that he was "amazed at the consistency of the Democratic vote."

"I would think that in a thing of this magnitude and constitutional seriousness, that those 21 members wouldn't be so constantly consistent."

He said the split vote among Republicans showed "more individuality and independence of mind, indicating the independence of Republicans in Congress as opposed to their Democratic counterparts."

Charles Coy, Kentucky Republican party chairman, did not feel that adoption of the impeachment article indicated guilt on the part of the President.

"I think everybody recognizes that a charge is not evidence of guilt, and that what the Judiciary Committee is doing in approving the article is the same thing a commonwealth's attorney does when he prepares an indictment for a grand jury," he said.

"I attach no special significance to the fact (that the article was adopted). With the presumption of innocence, a great many people are acquitted" after being charged with offenses.

U.S. Congressman Tim Lee Carter of the 5th District felt the article of impeachment should have been more specific in its charges.