



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 107th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 148

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, MAY 15, 2002

No. 62

Senate

LEONARD KNIGHT AND SALVATION MOUNTAIN

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, there are areas of the California desert near the Salton Sea that can best be described as dry, desolate and forlorn. Indeed, there are those who describe the area around Niland off Highway I 11 as godforsaken. But rising out of this sere, superheated desert is the multi-colored and textured Salvation Mountain, a unique and visionary sculpture encompassing five acres. Salvation Mountain is Leonard Knight's personal statement on the love and the glory of God.

Leonard Knight, a one-time snow shoveler from Vermont, came to Salvation Mountain from the sky. His hot-air balloon crashed into the site and he decided to stay, believing the experience to be a sign from God. Here he produces his unique creation, using adobe, straw, and thousands of gallons of paint to color and reshape the desert landscape. Seen from afar, Salvation Mountain is an unlikely mass of technicolor shapes and textures. Up close, it is an iridescent fusion of doves, clouds, flags, flowers, hearts, streams, biblical messages and countless other images.

In the last 16 years, Knight's creation has been visited by thousands of people from all over the world, artists and art lovers, journal-

ists, students on field trips, retirees, newlyweds and just plain curious people come by the mountain each day. The Folk Art Society of America has declared Salvation Mountain a national folk art shrine. The American Visionary Art Museum has embraced Leonard Knight and his mountain monument.

Salvation Mountain is the product of the vision and non-stop labor of one dedicated man. Leonard lives alone at the base of the mountain, sleeping in a converted school bus that is as colorful as his desert creation. He uses paint constantly supplied by visitors, local residents and others willing to be a part of this stunning work-in-progress. He figures that he has used close to 60,000 gallons of donated paint over the years.

American folk art is found in all corners of our nation. Perhaps one of the least likely locations would be the desert where Salvation Mountain is found. Leonard Knight's artwork is a national treasure, a singular sculpture wrought from the desert by a modest, single-minded man. It is a sculpture for the ages—profoundly strange and beautifully accessible, and worthy of the international acclaim it receives.