

Imag

NEIGHBORS, FAMILY HEALTH

Praying for a purchase

By JEN BLAND
STAFF WRITER

Some Realtors are going underground to sell homes. And Cary resident Jerry Micklewright is doing everything humanly, and saintly, possible to help them.

Micklewright designed a home sale kit that includes a St. Joseph statue, a petition to St. Joseph and a prayer to St. Joseph.

The story behind the statue says hopeful home sellers can ask St. Joseph for help. Micklewright was sick of hearing intricate rules about how to bury St. Joseph — in the back yard, in the front yard, upside



Tim J. Tuffly/Pioneer Press

Jerry Micklewright buries a replica of St. Joseph, the patron saint of home and family.

down, facing the house you want to sell, so many inches deep — so he decided to set the story straight.

In his kit, Micklewright explains: "the truth of the matter is, such specifications mean little, if anything. What does mean everything is that the seller asks St. Joseph for his help, believes that he will intercede and thanks him."

“They tend to be very popular with both people selling a home and Realtors.”

Marge Quinn, Winslow's Hallmark store

to help sell houses, but always a different story.

"No wonder the world thinks we're nuts," Micklewright jokes.

Marge Quinn sells the kits at her Winslow's Hallmark store in Spring Hill Mall. She said they are popular with people from all religions. One woman, Quinn said, bought a kit and told Quinn, "Don't tell anyone, but I'm Jewish."

"They tend to be very popular with both people selling a home and Realtors," said Quinn, who sees 30 of the kits fly out of her store each month.

"I don't know if I'd ever do it," Quinn said. "The people who believe in it, the people who do it, they come back time and time again when they're selling a house."

She said before Micklewright approached her about selling the kits, she received numerous telephone calls from people who wanted to buy their own St. Joseph.

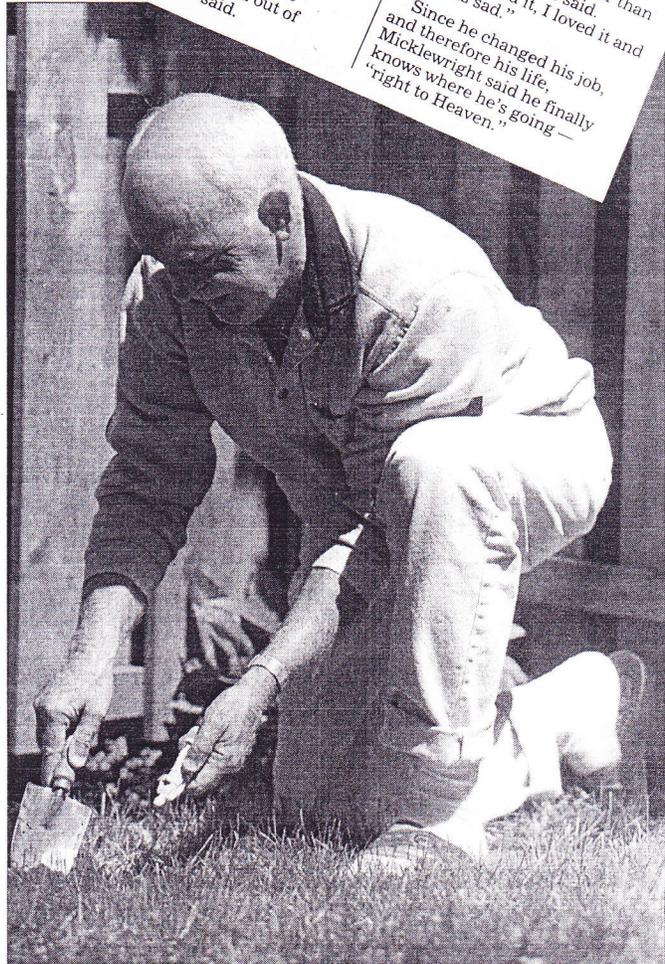
"I very seldom hear a negative on it," Quinn said.

Joseph is the patron saint of home and family.

"I feel anything you ask St. Joseph he's going to help you with it," Micklewright said.

However, the kit warns for home sellers not to get greedy — "Sellers must, of course, first do such practical, yet all important chores, as completing all necessary fix-up, properly staging the home and,

Micklewright, who found himself unemployed nine years ago, began buying rundown homes, fixing them up and reselling them. He kept hearing stories about burying the saint



Tim J. Tuffly/Pioneer Press

Jerry Micklewright of Cary sells St. Joseph statues in a kit which explains how burying the statue in a yard could help a homeowner sell a home.

finally, adjusting the price so as to reflect market value."

Micklewright began selling the kits in 1993. That same year he found himself in divorce court.

All Micklewright's prayers didn't save his marriage, but he said the divorce allowed him to devote himself to his calling — making the statues, writing a book and now designing angel statues and frames.

"Once we really started losing each other, I replaced her with God," he said.

Religious beliefs

Micklewright's deep religious beliefs started in his Davenport, Iowa, where he was the third oldest of 10

children.

When he was a child, Micklewright developed a paralysis. Whenever he smiled or laughed, his mouth would climb next to his right ear. Doctors couldn't help. They wanted to operate, but Micklewright's father refused.

Instead, he took Micklewright to a priest. The priest blessed Micklewright, put his hands on Micklewright's head and told Micklewright's father to take him out in the sun every day for two weeks. Two weeks later, there was no paralysis.

"My dad gave me the greatest faith I could ever experience," Micklewright said. "I don't think I

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could ever be wavered."
His mother also brought him closer to God.
Micklewright said she taught him how to connect with God through nature.
Micklewright admits he wasn't a "good" Catholic for 30 years. Even though he's only missed three masses, Micklewright said his life outside of church wasn't exactly heavenly.
"It almost ended the moment I walked out of church," he said.

Micklewright worked as an executive officer and part owner of a company where he was in charge of designing policies to cut the work force from 350 to 95.

"We were firing faster than we could hire," he said. "When I lived it, I loved it and that was sad."

Since he changed his job, and therefore his life, Micklewright said he finally knows where he's going — "right to Heaven."