

Show Business Pros At Fair Pick Douglas County

By MRS. MILTON HAMMERSLY
"Stumbling" perhaps best describes Jack Mann's initial step into the world of the theater, for certainly the naive farm youth from rural New York was an unlikely prospect to become a featured Broadway comedian.

Now residing quietly on an acreage southeast of Drew with his petite and attractive wife Sydna, who was once a Ziegfeld showgirl, and her mother, widow of an internationally famous vaudeville performer of the Victorian era, Jack Mann, stage funnyman, becomes Avery Greenman, private citizen and adopted Oregonian, and chuckles at his life story. Jack drops his act of stage and is natural and at ease, but his mobile and expressive face often emphasizes his mood as he talks.

Ad Starts Career

Even the newspaper advertisement in the Cleveland Plaindealer which started him in show business was so unlikely as to seem a brainchild of some publicity agent seeking good copy for a client. So far as he knows, it is the only ad in a general circulation newspaper offering work in show business; such ads usually appeared only in stage publications.

He'd never have seen it anywhere else. He did read the newspaper. And so began the story of the farm boy who could entertain his family and friends with humorous storytelling but who had to bluff his way when confronted with actor's lingo, for in the ways of the theater, he was as green as grass.

Avery Greenman was born in Delphi, N. Y., and reared on a farm near Cananota, N. Y. At the age of 21 he was in Cleveland, Ohio, dejectedly looking for work after his factory job had folded, when he had an equally naive friend decided to answer the newspaper ad for two comedians. They got the job and found themselves playing blackface comedy in a show whose 15 cast members doubled in production duties and whose producer-owner was a rank amateur right along with his hired help.

Opera House Rented

The company arrived in the small town of Lodi, Ohio, for its first performance, obtained accommodations at a boarding house and rented the opera house, all on the cuff. On the day of the scheduled opening, Jack entered the haberdashery next door to the theater to purchase a necktie. In conversation he mentioned the show's opening and was flabbergasted when the proprietor admitted he was unaware a show was scheduled in the neighboring building. The explanation came when Jack learned that the owner-producer, in his vast ignorance of show business, had failed to do one iota of advertising. As a result, the entire audience consisted of relatives of the participants.

For the trip back to Cleveland, they hitched a ride on a bread wagon, an air of dejection hanging heavily. Without funds, the owner was ready to disband the show. An idea hatched in Jack's fertile brain and he decided to invest the few dollars remaining in his pocket to take over the group. Carefully doing out a dollar here and a quarter there to provide for his cast, Jack explored possibilities in Cleveland, for there was no money to travel. Finally, on the outskirts of town, he found a hall, arranged for rent on credit, and, wiser after the Lodi experience, ran an ad in the newspaper "Show and Dance, One Dollar."

Instruments Played

Five men in his group played instruments—not good, Jack recalls—but they became his band. They took in enough money for meals and for fare to nearby Ash-tabula Harbor, a resort area.

Describing opening night, Jack says it rained "cats and dogs" and the amateurs expected even worse financial results than before. Jack, not knowing anything about money matters, played the show on a 60-40 split and even lacked foresight to have a representative checking attendance to assure accurate division of receipts. After the show, the theater owner came backstage and handed Jack an "eye-popping wad" of bills. He was so surprised and pleased he accepted the money without questioning such a miracle. Despite dreary weather, the house had been packed and it was his good fortune to have dealt with an honest theater owner.

Money Made

With lifted spirits, the cast played several other towns and made good money, Jack recalls. Then he began to get scared when he look time to think of the responsibility he had undertaken as stage show, and of the cash bank-roll he carried. Such luck just couldn't last! He decided to play safe and get his people back home to Cleveland. Thus ended his first theatrical venture.

He obtained work as a comedian on the Gus Sun Circuit which presented tabloid musical shows in small towns of the Midwest and South not visited by large touring companies. Nightclub engagements took him all over the country.

Eventually his talent came to the attention of George Jessel, who recognized his comedy potential and took him under his wing. In 1941-42, Jack appeared in a feature comedy role in "High Kickers" which starred Jessel and Sophie Tucker. Jack wrote his own part and was not directed in the show—orders of Jessel himself—and when Jack's performance wowed the audience, Jessel expanded the part at the expense of his own time on stage, an unheard-of thing for a star of his own show to do.

The show ran eight months on Broadway and drew praise from critics, but as often happens in show business, it was not a money-maker.

Jessel Praised

Jack has unlimited praise and goodwill for Jessel and is proud that he was responsible for Jack's stage name. The famous man of the theater, democratic and untemperamental to ward fellow-workers, simply could not remember Avery Greenman. Tiring of calling him by incorrect names, he finally dubbed him "Jack Mann" and the name stuck both professionally and in private life thereafter until his retirement to Drew, when he and his wife became plain citizens again except for occasional returns to the footlights, such as their upcoming appearance at the Douglas County Fair.

He chuckles over such unusual credits as having worked in rodeos and cannot ride a horse and having appeared in grand opera and cannot sing. And he says he must be one of few actors to have had the experience of playing to an audience gathered in a corn field near Akron, Ohio, using a truck van for a stage, car headlights for illumination and a tent for a dressing room.

During the run of "High Kickers" George Jean Nathan, veteran drama critic whose reviews were more frequently penned in acid than the heady wine of praise, listed Jack's performance as the outstanding comedian of the year. That review, together with many clippings, photographs, programs and other mementos is displayed on the walls of the Greenmans' bedroom.

In another Broadway musical, "One Touch of Venus" which starred Mary Martin, Jack had a feature comedy role. In 1950 he played in Mike Todd's "Peep Show" which had a year's run at the Winter Garden in New York and drew favorable reviews. When it closed, he appeared in various theaters and nightclubs throughout the country in comedy routines and ventured into television, where he was on "Omnibus," "Ed Sullivan Show," "Comedy Hour," and "Ken Murray Show." He was the summer replacement for Sid Caesar. In 1959 he signed a contract for a four-week run at the Dunes Hotel in Las Vegas. Success of his act led to renewal for a like period.

Father Famous

Jack's wife says her career is of little interest really and that Jack is the important one. Sydna was born in the small town of Wyoming, Ohio, daughter of Sid J. Black whose performance as a trick bicycle rider won him fame and a title as world champion. He appeared in command performances in England, Germany and Japan and performed before packed houses at the Palladium in London and the Winter Garden in Berlin during the 1890's. From her paternal ancestors, she inherited an inclination toward the theater. Her aunt was a successful Broadway actress and was famed for her Victorian beauty. Sydna attended dramatic and dancing schools and then played small parts with stock companies.

W. C. Fields, a close friend and fellow vaudeville performer of her father's was a frequent visitor at

the Black home. He sent her to his own agent in New York and through him she obtained parts in Schubert shows as a dancer and bit player.

Career Blossoms

Her career blossomed modestly and she was in shows produced by George White, Earl Carroll and others of Broadway fame and had a speaking part in "Show Boat," produced by the great Flo Ziegfeld in New York. Among noted performers with whom she appeared were Leo Carrillo, Fannie Brice, Ted Healy, Charles Winninger, Helen Morgan, Phil Baker and Rudy Vallee.

The noted comedian Raymond Hitchcock headlined the show in Chicago in which Sydna appeared just before the two-day vaudeville shows gave way to the three-day shows, which marked the beginning of vaudeville's trail to virtual oblivion as a medium of entertainment.

After her various Broadway and road show appearances, she went to Hollywood under contract to Paramount Studios and in the tradition of many young hopefuls, collected her salary without much opportunity to perform. Later at Fox and MGM she had small speaking parts and played a role in "College Rhythm" which starred Betty Grable, Joe Penner and Jack Oakie.

About that time, she met Jack who was appearing at the Hollywood Playhouse. When their acquaintance led to plans for marriage, the question of her continuing her career was discussed. Mulling over the numbers of show people whose marriages had collapsed under strain of two careers, Sydna decided to forego the footlights for the role of housewife. Nearly 30 years of marriage attest to the wisdom of that decision.

Sydna Stands In

She did not appear on stage again until after they moved to Drew. The first time Jack was slated to do a show in Southern Oregon, the performer who was to appear with him in a comedy sketch got such a case of stage fright at the last moment she could not appear. Sydna as the replacement was the only answer to save the occasion, and despite her own stage fright she managed to substitute commendably. Ever since, she has been Jack's costar. Jack still receives offers from his agent to do shows, but he chooses to confine his appearances

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AND NOW The Manns are shown here in a typical act performed recently in Roseburg. They are scheduled to play nightly at the Douglas County Fair.

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THEN Jack and Sydna Mann are shown in two poses when they were active in national performing circuits. At top Sydna is shown in a publicity shot taken when she appeared in a vaudeville show in Chicago with famed comedian, Raymond Hitchcock. Below, Jack is shown in the role of a drunken jester, a part he played six seasons in the Metropolitan Opera House presentation of "Fledermaus" (even though he can't sing).



How to Find Trump Queen
(Written For NEA)
By OSWALD JACOBY

Thirty years ago when there were only a few real experts each one had his own specialty. Waldemar von Zedwitz's specialty was locating the queen of trumps and his skill in that field has not diminished with the passing years.

queen. So Waldy played West for it and made the rest of the tricks.

NORTH (D) 13	
▲ K 106	▲ 532
▼ K 1053	▼ A 97
▲ 64	▼ K J R 2
▲ A K 943	▼ Q 102
WEST	
▲ Q 9	▲ 532
▼ K J 42	▼ A 97
▲ A 1073	▼ K J R 2
▲ J 87	▼ Q 102
EAST	
▲ A J 874	▲ 532
▼ Q 86	▼ A 97
▲ Q 95	▼ K J R 2
▲ 63	▼ Q 102
Both vulnerable	
North East South West	Pass Pass Pass 1 ♦
Pass Pass Pass 1 ♦	Double Redbl. 1 ♦ Pass
Pass Pass 2 ♦	Pass
Pass Pass	Pass
Opening lead—♦ A	

Improve your bridge game! order your copy of "Win at Bridge With Oswald Jacoby." Just send your name, address, and 50 cents to: Jacoby Bridge, News-Review, P. O. Box 1248, Roseburg, Oregon and a copy will be mailed to you. Or if you prefer, copies may be purchased at the News-Review office.

Q—The bidding has been:
East South West North
1 ♦ 1 ♥ Pass 2 ♦
Pass ?
You, South, hold:
▲ 2 ♥ A Q J 7 6 5 ♦ 4 ♠ A K S 8 7
What do you do?
A—Bid three clubs only. There is time for fireworks later.

TODAY'S QUESTION
Your partner continues with three spades. What do you do now?
Answer Tomorrow

West had one of those light opening bids that many duplicate players feel they must make. They are really apt to boomerang when you are short in spades and sure enough West found himself on lead against Waldy's two spade contract.

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He opened the ace of diamonds and continued with a second diamond to his partner's king. East led back the seven of hearts. West won with the jack and returned a low heart. East's ace of hearts won that trick and West's king of hearts was the fifth defensive trick.

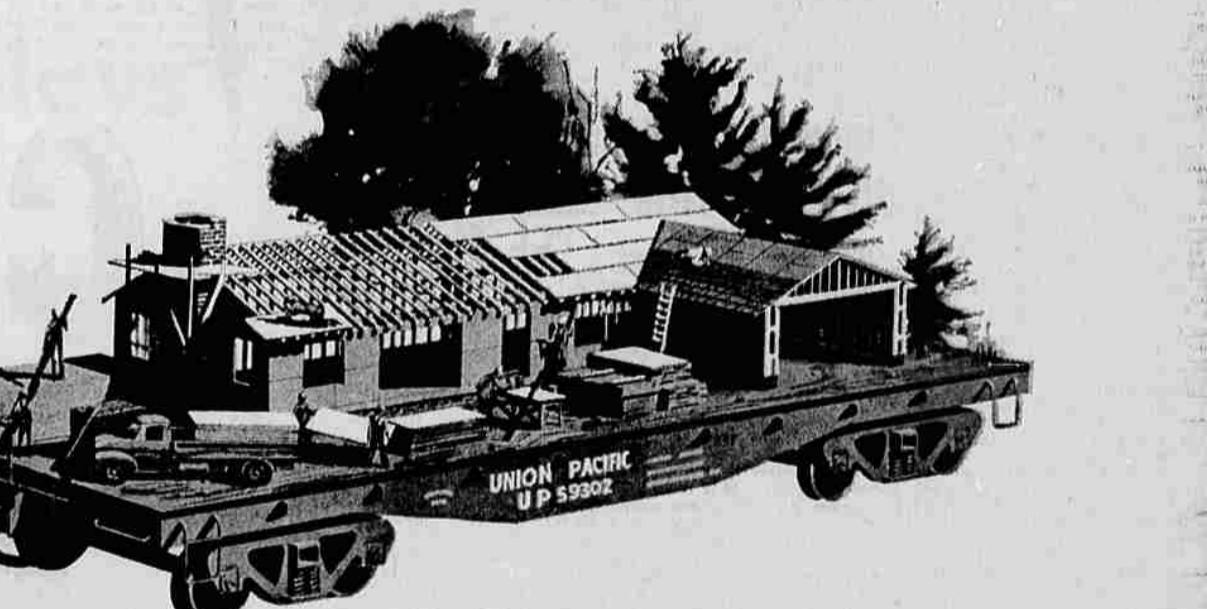
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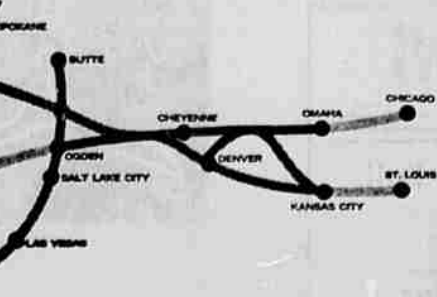
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FAR FROM PEACEFUL
AALBORG, Denmark (UPI) — A tourist, who thought the zoo's tigress looked "tame and peaceful," suffered a badly mauled hand when he offered the animal a cigarette Sunday.
"Our tigress is absolutely not peaceful. And furthermore she dislikes tobacco," a zoo keeper said later.

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