

Ex-Showman Living in Drew Area

By VIOLA ROGERS
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Drew—Avery Greenman's richly varied life has led him from farm boy to Metropolitan Opera to custodian of the local school.

One may wonder why anyone would leave a highly successful stage career, the bright lights of New York, Boston, Toronto, Chicago, and other large cities, and the highly remunerative salary of the stage for a secluded home in the mountains.

But the Greenmans fell in love, first with Oregon and then with a particular piece of Oregon. For 10 years they had been looking for a place to call home when they reached retirement age. And having traveled from one end of the United States to the other, they knew all of the states.

In the summer of 1954, they came to Grants Pass, got several listings from a real estate agent, and started out to find the place they would finally call home.

Looked At Several Places
After looking at several places in the area and being disappointed in them, they got lost. As the day waned they became more tired and cross. Finally they were on Highway 42 between Canyonville and Trail. They were going to look at a place just over the divide.

But just beyond Drew they spied a small, primitive "For Sale" sign. The place was off the highway, the house was little more than a shed, and no one was home.

They found the owner at a neighbors, talked with her a few minutes, and drove on to Shady Cove where they stayed over night. At five o'clock next morning they got Mrs. Silva out of bed and bought their future home.

Yield to Oregon
They had planned to remain in show business several years, devoting their summers to fixing up their home at Drew. But the place grew on them until finally after three



CHOOSE MOUNTAIN HOME—Avery Greenman (Jack Mann on the stage) and his wife have a mountain home in Drew, for which he gave up a successful stage career. Greenman appeared in such Broadway productions as "High Kickers" with George Jessel, "One Touch of Venus" and Mike Todd's "Peep Show."

summers they yielded to Oregon's beauty. Greenman left the stage, and Drew became their permanent home.

But he wasn't ready to retire. There were still too many things that needed doing, and as with most people, everything had its price. So for a while Green-

parties, on streetcars, or wherever they might be. Avery acted as his straight man.

Read Ad in Paper
Then one day in 1920 Greenman saw an ad in the Cleveland paper which read "wanted—two comedians." This was a rare ad and the only one like it Greenman had ever seen. The boys answered the ad, got the job, and went to work for a man who knew no more about show business than either of them.

They opened in Lodi, Ohio. Shortly before opening time, Avery went to a store next door to the theater to buy a collar button. When the clerk asked if he wasn't new in town, Greenman felt important, replied, "Yes, I'm with the show," only to learn that the clerk didn't even know that there was a show in town. So on opening night, they played to a few relatives of the cast.

Greenman was like a first time loser in Las Vegas. He was money out of pocket but he had acquired a taste for show business. So he rented a hall in Cleveland, got the cast together including a four-piece orchestra, and sold tickets to a show and dance. The venture was a success. And Avery became a producer even though he didn't know what a prop was.

Gets Booking Agent
He talked a friend, who was a cement finisher, into being booking agent for the company. At Ashtabula, Ohio, where the theater manager had to have a stage built before they could perform, they played to a full house. At that time Greenman wasn't paying the cast wages. He just doled out enough for each one's board and room and stuffed the rest of the bills in his pocket.

Until they played Meadville, Pa., the theater manager there had never heard of having the orchestra on stage. And Avery says he wouldn't be surprised that it was a

first. Up until then the place for the orchestra was in the pit. It was also at Meadville that he changed the subject when asked what props he needed because he didn't know a prop from a theater ticket.

The booking agent was doing a noble job and Greenman's pockets were bulging with greenbacks. But he was young and all that money frightened him. He thought he had better get the cast back home to Cleveland while his luck still held.

Chance at Circuit
Later, while working in Cleveland, Greenman got a chance to go to work on the Gus Sun circuit in tableau shows, the forerunner of the vaudeville circuits. Then he met Bert Lewis, a black-face comedian who had retired from show business to open a theatrical agency, and signed on with him.

Lewis had so few clients that whenever he got a call for an actor, he sent Greenman. It was under Lewis' tutelage that he gained his greatest knowledge of the acting profession. He spent four years in Akron, Ohio, with Lewis.

It was in the summer of 1935 when Greenman was playing in a musical show at the Hollywood Playhouse that he met Sydna Black, his future wife.

Later when he went east, Sydna went with him as his wife. They hadn't been back East long when Sydna decided her husband should have a show of his own. So she sent a scout to Denver to see if he could get them a theater.

The first Greenman heard of this was when he picked up a telegram in their hotel lobby that read, "Have theater, when will you arrive?" He went blasting up to their room to see what his wife had been up to.

The outcome was that he put a show together, went to Denver where they were well received, and then on to Seattle, Wash., where they played for a year and a half. Later he was booked in such cities as Vancouver, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, New York, other eastern cities.

A couple years had passed in New York when Nick Holde learned George Jessel was looking for a comedian for his show "High Kickers." Holde told Jessel, "The man you are looking for is in Newark, New Jersey."

Greenman got the part as feature comedian writing his own material. The only thing Jessel didn't like about Avery was his name which he changed to Jack Mann, which was Greenman's stage name from then on.

It was while working in High Kickers Jack auditioned for Paramount Studios, but he later gave that up to stay with Jessel.

Jack went on to do "One Touch of Venus," Mike Todd's "Peep Show," and to be on the Ed Sullivan TV show.

In Metropolitan Opera
While doing Peep Show, Jack was asked if he'd like a part in a Metropolitan Opera, and they were prevailed upon to see it and if he liked the part it was open for him. They sat through the first two acts thinking they were way out of Jack's range. And then the third act—and the drunken sailor. "That's for me," Jack almost shouted. He played the part for six years, giving it up for a bit of Oregon.

Mrs. Greenman, who gave up a stage career to marry Avery, comes from a family of show people. Her mother's sister, stage name Siella Gilmore, was on stage in New York. And her father, Sid Black, was billed as "Champion Bicycle Rider of the World."

It was W. C. Fields, a friend of Sid Black, who got Sydna Black into show business. In 1933 Sydna played with Fanny Brice in a Billy Rose show. She also appeared in "Showboat" and was under contract with Paramount Studios when Jack met her.

Although the Greenmans' home in Drew is thousands of miles from the New York stage they are not entirely away from show business. Two years ago he went to Las Vegas for two months at the Dunes hotel. They do scenes for community affairs at Tiller, they appeared in Komtite Kapers at Myrtle Creek, and occasionally do a bit at night spots.

Shrubs Reported Taken from Hospital
Eight Juniper shrubs have been stolen from Rogue Valley hospital property, Medford city police reported.

The shrubs, valued about \$48, were planted in a line along Murphy rd.

They were taken sometime between 3:30 p.m. Wednesday and 7:30 a.m. Friday, police said.

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