

# Mrs. Grace Fiero, A Woman Who Has Never Known Mediocrity

By EVA HAMILTON  
Mail Tribune Staff Writer

Faith, the size of a mustard seed, will move a mountain; and it will give a person courage to accept the swing of life's pendulum, even when it seems drawn by a magnet from one extreme to another — never resting in the middle.

So believes Mrs. Grace Fiero of Medford, a woman who has never known mediocrity.

"It has always been the Ritz-Carlton or a park bench. Crepes Suzette or buckwheat," she summarized the tempo of her life when recently queried as to the success of her inventions.

"Oh, I'm fresh out of royalties," this former actress of the legitimate stage, who has called Medford home for many years, replied. "The patent on the bottle guard was good for 17 years. Seventeen years go by rapidly."

How much did she realize from the invention?

**Baby Sitting Now**

"Probably \$35,000. I'm baby sitting now. I love it. I just adore children."

Then she laughed and it was as if someone had turned on a switch. It was there again. That same fervor recognized by David Belasco when he gave Grace Andrews of Minnesota the lead in "The Rose of the Rancho," when the star of the show developed laryngitis.

She drew 10 curtain calls the first night she played "Juanita." She became known as "David Belasco's find of 1908." It is all reported in clippings, very yellow and a little torn, now treasured in her home on West Tenth street.

Mrs. Fiero's theatrical career began in the famous Garrick theater in Chicago. She was the baby of the famous Andrews Opera company family. Because she was too young and "didn't have a voice," her father, Will Andrews, kept her on the Minnesota farm when the opera company went on tour.

But she didn't stay there. She went to Chicago and won her audience with Belasco after many weeks of living on bananas "10 cents a dozen in those days."

**Can Still Remember**

Her stage success followed an exciting and colorful childhood. Her uncles, Ed and George Andrews, owned a beautiful resort at Waterville, Minn., on Lake Tetonka. They had a special railroad spur built to the park. The hotel was spacious and supported two large verandas which were used as stages for summer opera. The Andrews company presented "H.M.S. Pinafore" and the "Mikado" there with Japanese



**WITH INVENTION**—Mrs. Grace Fiero, one of the Rogue valley's most versatile citizens, former actress, former inventor, music clerk, gardener and baby sitter, poses here with bottle guards, her most profitable invention. She was photographed at 537 West Tenth st., where she and her sister, Edith, widow of the late James Stevens, oper star, now make their home. (Knackstedt photo)

lanterns lighting the lake and the grounds.

"I can still remember the thrilling beauty of it all," Mrs. Fiero exclaimed, describing a little girl's reaction to the trips to the resort, which was always filled with celebrities.

In winter, the opera company went on tour. In summer, the company rehearsed and presented light opera at the resort.

The family, also, had stables and a race track at Lake Tetonka, Minnesota's famous horse, Dan Patch, ran there.

"Surely everyone knows about Dan Patch," Mrs. Fiero added without getting a reply.

How long did the Andrews brothers have this resort?

**Always Had Fun**

"Until they lost it," their adoring niece answered. "The Andrews' never had money, but boy we always had fun."

Eight members of the family of 10 participated in opera. "Aunt Mary Andrews Stone really had the best voice of

Andrews, was a Methodist circuit rider in Minnesota. Singing hymns at his services, her father, uncles and aunts, learned they had operatic voices. This realization gave birth to the Andrews Opera company.

After 40 years behind the

footlights, Ed Andrews, whose name recently appeared in the Mail Tribune's "Flight O' Time" column, abandoned the opera company and came to the Rogue River valley, drawn by the fruit boom. He joined his brother, Will T. Andrews, who had led the migration to southern Oregon. Later, George Andrews came, and so did opera to Jackson county.

Grace came to spend her vacation with her parents. She stayed to marry Conro Fiero, Chicago millionaire. She gave up the opportunity to star in "Beverly of Graustark" to become hostess at "Woodlawn," Fiero's orchard home, now known as Mon Desir Inn.

Glamorous years, filled with entertaining, followed. Conro was a Yale man and the valley had become a mecca for gay young blades from several eastern schools. It suddenly seemed to her: its own Ivy League. There was music. Dining, winning and theatre — then the apple boom collapsed.

**Fieros Lose Orchards**

The Fieros lost their orchard in 1917, first year of World War I. Each went into war work in Washington, D.C. The colorful life resumed. Their home became a salon through which moved socialites from many lands. The war ended, the Fieros went to Paris, he as representative of the Buda machinery company. They lived there several years and today Grace describes them as "The most exciting years of my life."

Next in Fiero's business career came Canada. In Toronto, Grace got footlight fever again and some of the best press notices of her career. Starring in "The Three Weddings of a Hunchback" in Hart House theater with the Players club of the University of Toronto, her character work inspired the critics to

such comments as "appalling effectiveness and Dynamic power," her scrapbook reveals.

**Wonderful Comeback**

"A wonderful comeback after so many years at the bridge table," she admitted. "Those years were all 'Ups' in Mrs. Fiero's terminology, 'no downs.' But the ride on life's elevated was brief. Conro decided to leave the Motor company and returned to the States to invest in a promising invention. (Not his wife's.)

Speaking today as a former inventor, Mrs. Fiero describes the idea as wonderful. It was for a razor blade vending machine but it didn't materialize for the Fieros. However, they were in the money for a little longer.

Then came the stock market crash and the depression. Conro's health broke and they moved into a small New York City apartment with Conro's sister, a sculptress.

**Works in Shop**

Mrs. Fiero went to work in a shop. Evenings she made foundation garments for special friends, selling them at \$40 each. In search of better garters for the exclusive models, she called on Venus corporation and this started her on the inventing trail. She showed the garment to the manager, Herman Schneit-tacher.

"Too expensive," she recalls his conversation. "Try some inexpensive gadget."

"I have it," she answered, and returned with a better guard she had made in Paris to keep Conro's shaving lotion from spilling in his luggage. So began her inventing career. The royalties did not come in soon. They were very small for many years. During those years the Fieros really knew the feel of a park bench at night, the gnawing sensation of hunger in the day.

**Recoups Standing**

Then Conro, who also moved in extremes, recouped his financial standing the same way he had lost it, in the

stock market.

But health was not so easily reclaimed, and death ended the story for Conro, when he was 56, and out of debt.

Mrs. Fiero returned to Medford. The apple trees had been gone for many years. The house, the lawn, the hedges were quite the same. But now they were for the public. "Woodlawn" had become Mon Desir Inn.

She could have lived on memories, alone, but she was an Andrews and no stranger here.

**Works at Store**

For a number of years she worked at the Purucker Music Store. With her sister, Edith, Mrs. James Stevens, she cared for her mother until her death.

She concentrated on her inventing and her gardening, her favorite hobby. Her royalty checks grew from two to three to four figures and she was sure that she was once again on her way. The patent on the bottle guard ran out and she went to San Francisco with models of several inventions on which she had worked far into the night for many nights. The patent attorney told her she had nothing to patent.

"Completely defeated I returned to my hotel room," she described the incident. "Then I said to myself 'Grace this is not the way to get things done. I got out my Bible and asked God what to do. God said, Grace go see the other patent attorney' and Grace did."

**Two Basic Patents**

"The other patent attorney told me I had two basic patents and several possibilities."

The pendulum was swinging to the right again. But not for long. The Korean conflict broke out and Mrs. Fiero's inventions were to be produced in aluminum which became a strategic metal. So ended another well laid plan.

She hasn't quit inventing, but she has given up the idea of having inventions patented.

and her 27 volunteers responded adequately to the need.

Whatever she wins, whatever she loses, her philosophy remains the same.

"It is: If you really want something, pray for it, work for it, and you'll get it. You have to have faith," she declared at luncheon at the Hotel Medford. (The remark triggered that switch again and there was no doubt in the mind of her listener that Mrs. Fiero has the answer.)

**Never Misses Concert**

Mrs. Fiero never misses a concert by the Southern Oregon Philharmonic Society, conducted by Richard Werner, husband of her cousin, Carolyn Andrews Werner, daughter of Ed Andrews, who continued his career in Medford later joining the American Light opera company.

**Challenge to Workers**

For five years she has been canteen chairman of the Jackson County Red Cross chapter. When she has to make a speech she has the same butterflies in her stomach she had on opening night. But her fellow workers say she gets the job done just as she did behind the footlights.

The Dec. 2 flood was a challenge to all Red Cross workers here and Mrs. Fiero

and her 27 volunteers responded adequately to the need.

Whatever she wins, whatever she loses, her philosophy remains the same.

"It is: If you really want something, pray for it, work for it, and you'll get it. You have to have faith," she declared at luncheon at the Hotel Medford. (The remark triggered that switch again and there was no doubt in the mind of her listener that Mrs. Fiero has the answer.)

**Never Misses Concert**

Mrs. Fiero never misses a concert by the Southern Oregon Philharmonic Society, conducted by Richard Werner, husband of her cousin, Carolyn Andrews Werner, daughter of Ed Andrews, who continued his career in Medford later joining the American Light opera company.

**Challenge to Workers**

For five years she has been canteen chairman of the Jackson County Red Cross chapter. When she has to make a speech she has the same butterflies in her stomach she had on opening night. But her fellow workers say she gets the job done just as she did behind the footlights.

The Dec. 2 flood was a challenge to all Red Cross workers here and Mrs. Fiero

**TAX WORK MADE EASY**

Rent or Lease

- Adding Machine
- Typewriter
- Calculator

**VOIGHT'S**

8th & Grape 772-4100  
Easy Parking Green Stamps

**THERMO-RITE**

The ONLY Time-Tested  
**GLASS FIREPLACE SCREEN**

Enjoyed by Thousands in the Rogue River Valley

- RADIATES MAXIMUM HEAT
- ELIMINATES ROOM HEAT LOSS, SAVES FUEL
- PROTECTS AGAINST FLYING SPARKS, ASHES, DIRT AND DRAFTS
- TWIN DOORS OPEN WIDE FOR EASY LOADING OF FUEL
- CONTROL DRAFT WITH TWO SLIDING DOORS FOR FAST OR SLOW FIRE
- SOLID BRASS CONSTRUCTION, BEAUTY UNPARALLELED, THOUSANDS IN USE WINTER AND SUMMER
- BURN WOOD, COAL OR GAS

PHONE 772-7166

**SMITH LUMBER CO.**

Corner 8th and Fir Sts.

## Building for the Future is Your Job, Too!

For 52 years the Boy Scouts of America has been working to prepare our young men for the future . . . to build better citizens. The Boy Scouts of today are the leaders of tomorrow . . . a large part of our country's security rests with them. Boy Scout Week begins next Thursday . . . lasts until February 13th. So, this week we salute them for their outstanding job in fulfilling this goal. We offer them our wholehearted support and we hope that you will do the same. Active adult participation and cooperation are essential to the growth and usefulness of this fine youth movement here in the Rogue River Valley and throughout the nation!



**Jorgensen's Dairy Products**

**FIESTA ICE CREAM**

**TOPS IN TASTE**

After a session with fellow Boy Scouts, there's nothing quite so refreshing as Jorgensen's extra-nutritious, extra-flavorful FIESTA ICE CREAM (It gets the added oomph from an exclusive nutrient—NUTRIMIX!). Scouting is FUN . . . and whenever and wherever there's FUN, you'll usually find FIESTA. It's really GOOD to the last spoonful, comes in convenient size, colorful cartons that just fit the refrigerator. Stock up TODAY!

**Jorgensen's . . .**

**FIESTA ICE CREAM**

After a session with fellow Boy Scouts, there's nothing quite so refreshing as Jorgensen's extra-nutritious, extra-flavorful FIESTA ICE CREAM (It gets the added oomph from an exclusive nutrient—NUTRIMIX!). Scouting is FUN . . . and whenever and wherever there's FUN, you'll usually find FIESTA. It's really GOOD to the last spoonful, comes in convenient size, colorful cartons that just fit the refrigerator. Stock up TODAY!

## Public High School Student Fees Brings State Board Action

Salem — Student fees in Oregon's public high schools, subject of many inquiries and some recent complaints from parents, who feel the fees have become too high, particularly for families with a number of children in school, brought action from the state board of education at the January meeting here.

The board passed a resolution requesting all local district boards to adopt a policy which would limit costs to students to only those charges approved by each local school board in a regular school meeting.

Board members rejected, by failure to approve, an Oregon City school board appeal to continue its post-high school, vocational-technical program for an additional year.

**Resulted from Tie Vote**

The failure to approve the request resulted from a tie vote by the six members of the board present. The action limits the Oregon City program to high school students only. The present enrollment is composed predominantly of high school students.

Last year the state board of education approved for one year the operation of a post-high school, technical-vocational program in the Oregon City school district under the community college law. This approval expires June 30, 1963.

**Two school district reorganization plans were approved by the board. One forms an administrative district of Gresham district 4, Orient district 8-300J, Pleasant Valley 15-302J, Rockwood 27, Lynch 28 (all in Multnomah county) and Damascus Union High school district, and all of the Gresham Union High school district except Clackamas 64.**

The other plan provides for the formation of an administrative school district comprised of School District 21-J,

Gates, 123 J-Mill City and Santiam Union High school.

**Other Board Action**

The state board also approved:

—A policy guide pertaining to the joint use of state educational radio and television network facilities by the state department of education and the state system of higher education. This will be the official guide for the two agencies in planning, developing, and producing ETV and radio programs for public schools. The policy statement was developed by the Governor's Educational Coordinating Council.

—March 25 as the election date on the question of the formation of the Central Douglas County Area Education district.

—Financing migrant education programs during the regular 1962-63 school year in Nyssa (District 26), Malheur county; and for Monitor (District 142CJ), Marion county. Nyssa reported 160 migrant students and Monitor indicated 21.

—Issuance of elementary emergency certificates for the school year 1963-64.

**Nine County Students On OTI Dean's List**

Nine Jackson county students are on the fall term honor roll and dean's list released by Oregon Technical Institute, Klamath Falls.

All received grades of 3.0 (B) or better to be included in the list.

They are Michael T. Dwyer, Lawrence A. Brown, Gerald R. Gould, Charles J. Goodman and David A. Elrod, of Medford; Patricia D. Logan, Talent; Donald D. McPeters, Shady Cove; Dean L. Weltman, Eagle Point and Frank H. Thompson, Central Point.