



Closer look at the theater

EDITOR'S NOTE — This is the third in a series of articles on the "Theater of All Possibilities." Mr. Brooks will appear today on the Jim Eason Show on KGO Radio.

By Jack Brooks

Syufy Enterprises Inc., owner of the building for The Theater of All Possibilities at 160 Golden Gate Ave., has been notified that its tenant is seeking a sublease for the space for a two-year period. The reason for the search, as reported to The Progress, is because of the pressure from certain areas of the media and press.

It isn't all philosophy and mysticism at The Theatre of All Possibilities. The name of the game is "Money." Alex and Sharon Gans-Horn aren't in it for peanuts. Shrewd, if not unethical, business practices have set the operation apart from other local theatres. The Horns don't tolerate anything that doesn't have a guaranteed return.

RED MOUNTAIN RANCH

In the hills above Agua Caliente in Sonoma County, there is a ranch-vineyard called Red Mountain Ranch. Alex Horn no longer owns it. It was part of the settlement in a messy divorce settlement with his former wife, Anne.

When Greer was overseeing the ranch it contained 457 acres, and 71 of those acres were planted in grapes. "It was a marvelous experience," beams Greer. "I wouldn't trade the good times for anything in the world. And I'm glad I witnessed what happened when things went bad. I wouldn't have believed what people will allow to be done to them unless I'd seen it myself."

In an interview with Mark MacIntyre, I said that I had heard that members of the group gave their bank accounts and mortgaged their homes to supply money to the Horns. MacIntyre's answer was emphatic.

"The Horns are wonderful people. I've never heard of anyone mortgaging their home. Of course, I was never in the group. I was only hired as an actor," he said.

Greer remembers a night at Red Mountain: "Alex assembled the group and informed them that he wanted to buy a trans-Pacific racing boat, the biggest available. It was berthed in Hawaii. I watched as people pledged \$150,000 in savings and home mortgages. He raised the money in a matter of minutes. After he bought the boat, he found that the hull was defective, so he abandoned the project." The ranch was a lucrative enterprise, according to Greer. "One year, I believe it was 1970, Horn's income from the year was \$397,000."

I assumed that this figure included the vineyard income. "Oh, no." corrected Greer. "It takes five years to get a grape harvest. That was just from member contributions."

THE STREET SELLERS

When The Everyman, and later, The Theatre of All Possibilities did a play, very few San Franciscans were not aware of it. Posters appeared in every neighborhood grocery store, book nook and on hundreds of fences and telephone poles from Daly City to Sausalito. Members

of the cast accosted strollers on street corners, tourists in Ghirardelli Square and strap-hangers on Muni buses. "No" was never taken as an answer where tickets were concerned. Many people bought the \$5 ducats (later raised to \$6.50) just to get rid of the persistent vendors.

Rumors persisted that ticket quotas were set for the members and that failure to meet these quotas could result in drastic disciplinary measures. When queried on this point, actor MacIntyre stated, "I never heard of any ticket quotas. I very seriously doubt that there ever was such a system."

Kathleen Salmon-Mandis tells a different story. "There were ticket sales meetings every night after the performances at which time quota fulfillments were checked. One evening, my husband, Mark, failed to meet his obligation in sales. Alex Horn struck him in the face with such force that Mark was thrown to the floor and his face cut by his broken glasses."

MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN

The Horns were very big on people getting married and reproducing. If one member of a married couple left the group, the remaining member was instructed to divorce the defector and marry someone else. Time limits were placed on the process.

A long-time member, single at the time, was directed to marry-up or get out. The process he employed was rabbinical referral. The problem was, that the young lady he met and married didn't know about the package deal, i.e., that she didn't just get a husband, but a weird theatre group, and the Horns, too. When she did get the big picture, she also got out. She got two things for her pains, a beating and an annulment. She was pregnant at the time, by about a month, and, because of her physical and mental condition, she was advised by her doctor and her rabbi to have an abortion. She did.

Kathleen Salmon was also pregnant when she left. When I asked her (given the facts that members spent all of their spare time working at the theatre, often 'til near dawn, when they would go to their daytime jobs) what child-care was provided she answered with anger in her voice.

"None! The babies and toddlers were kept in cribs backstage until all hours. The parents didn't have time to give to the kids and the theater, too. The theater took precedence."

Reproduction was a big factor in the group. At one juncture, Sharon Gans-Horn directed all of the couples to get pregnant within thirty days. All complied, except one couple who just didn't seem to be able to meet the deadline.

When Kathleen Salmon left the group, Mark divorced her. Shortly after the birth of the child, Mark Salmon and Fred Mindel appeared on her doorstep and demanded custody of the child. Using the usual tactics of the Horn philosophy, they told her that "she was an unfit mother who would kill her child." The terrified mother finally placed a call to the police and the pair fled.