

Los Angeles letter

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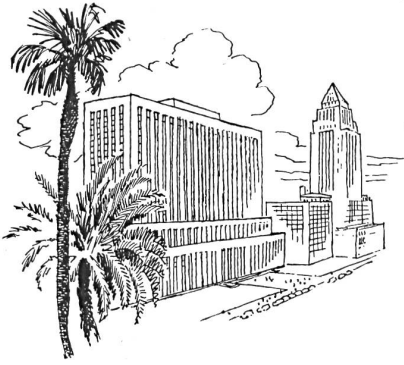
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Los Angeles Letter

No appraisal of the California fashion market is complete without mentioning Howard Greer, one of the country's most prolific designers. His career is not confined merely to fashion but to a whole range of fabulous adventures that began humbly on a farm in Nebraska in the great Middle West.

From the unsophisticated surroundings of genteel poverty, Greer was catapulted before his twentieth year into dream castles, untold elegance and the salons of European haute couture. He gained passage to Europe by means of

HOWARD GREER

Black dress; neck-line trimmed
with Swiss organdy.

Photo John Engstead



a highly dramatic letter to the world-famous dressmaker, Lady Duff Gordon, who sent for him merely for a laugh. But Greer, the spontaneous funny man with the irrepressible sense of humor, had no joke in mind as he gradually rose in power and prestige to become the protégé and constant companion of this famous and temperamental woman.

During this highly tenuous existence he came to accept the world of glitter as his own. A famous battle with Lady Duff Gordon however ended all this and led to his return to America. There followed a series of sketches for several New York dressmakers, and a gradual transition into clothes for revues, for the Ziegfeld Follies, for the personal wardrobes of showgirls and finally, because his popularity was proving too great for the firm in which he worked, he was sent off to answer a call at Famous Players Lasky Studios. His designs for their tempestuous new star, Pola Negri, led him to Hollywood and Paramount Studios. There he spent happy days and nights deep in seas of rhinestones, extravaganzas of furs and feathers and the excitement that filled the air of Hollywood in 1923.

Success followed success, and then Greer decided to open his own custom-made to order shop. There followed a hectic period of financing, a trip to Europe for preparation and finally the opening of the dazzling House of Greer on fabulous Sunset Boulevard. The opening was complete with klieg lights and Hollywood Stars in purple dinner jackets as well as the usual celebrities dripping furs and jewels. "Everything", says Greer, "was exceedingly elegant and uppercrust, and for the first few years I did nothing but lose money."

He soon decided that fun was fun but making money was important too. So a wholesale collection, born of necessity and nurtured in an inconspicuous side street location, began its rise to popularity with finer shops throughout the United States. Today fifty-two shops carry the Greer collection and return each season to increase their orders. The Greer collection now shows little evidence of its Lady Duff Gordon past although he still retains a few famous "names" of the past as private customers, as well as some of today's luminaries such as Lana Turner, Deanna Durbin, Zsa Zsa Gabor and Jane Russell. He frankly states that he designs for women who never get up before noon and that his sole aim is to drape and glorify the feminine figure. Some of his admirers admit that this

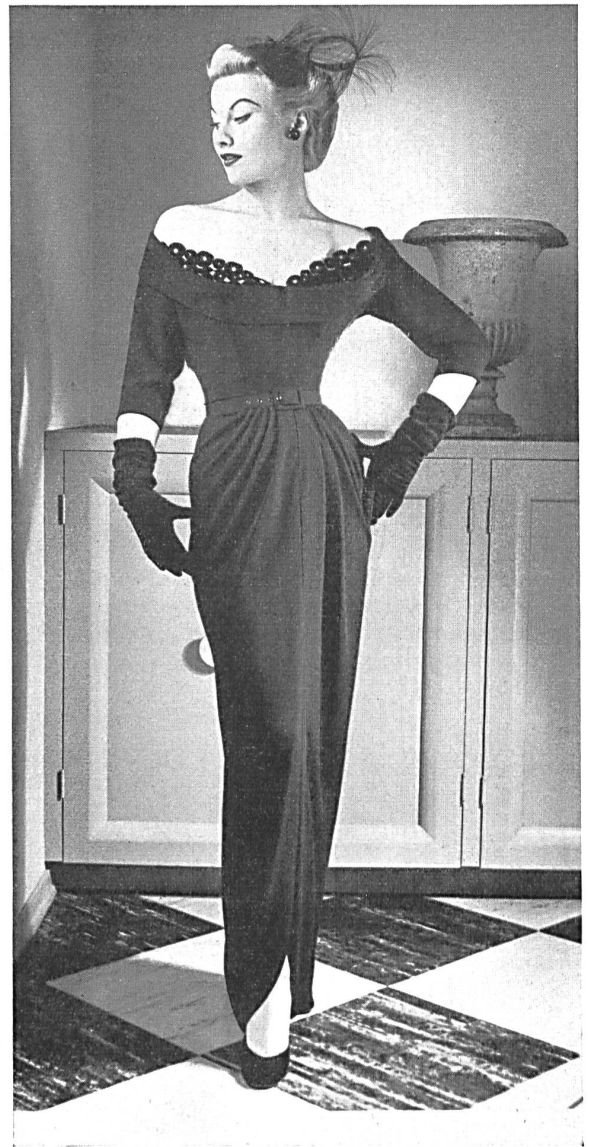
purpose is occasionally carried to an alarming degree of frankness.

In 1945 the name Howard Greer came to represent a dual personality when Bruce McIntosh, a successful New York designer of wedding gowns, became a full partner. These two sharply different personalities met, and decided they could make beautiful fashions together. Greer knew what the woman of elegance wanted. Bruce had catered to the younger crowd. The combination, a beautiful blend of complementary talents, has been a happy one as is evidenced by the increasing success of each new collection. And since both men agree heartily on making a woman look more like a woman than she's ever looked before, in every collection there is a wealth of delicately disciplined

HOWARD GREER

The star Jane Russell in the RKO-picture «The Las Vegas Story» wears a white dress with neckline trimmed with heavy cotton embroidery.

Photo RKO Radio Pictures, Inc.



HOWARD GREER

Black crepe dress with neck-line trimmed with Swiss velvet embroidery.

detail in Swiss braids, discreetly used velvets, a soupçon of gold encrusted flowers, a dash of frivolous ball fringe, a luxuriance of alluring organdy, a diverting display of new, experimental yardages, and a froth of creamy richness in the carefully worked-out tracery of Swiss embroidery... all in all, a breathtaking employment of every trick of the dressmaker's trade.

These things plus an abundance of good humor, an almost terrifying amount of talent, a thoroughgoing delight in living every day to its full and a clear sense of direction have made the House of Greer one of the most outstandingly successful fashion enterprises in the United States.

Helene F. MILLER.