

(presentation for Etna Lions Club April 25, 1996)

DON AND ELMA AVERY HAD OWNED THE OLD ETNA THEATER THAT WAS SITUATED IN THE BUILDING THAT IS NOW THE ETNA CITY HALL. THEY BOUGHT IT IN 1943. IN 1957 THEY PURCHASED THE EMPTY LOT BETWEEN THE CITY HALL AND THE SCOTT VALLEY BANK AND CONTRACTED SAM POTTER TO BUILD THE EXISTING THEATER BUILDING. DON AND ELMA ALSO OWNED THE WESTERN SENTINEL, THE VALLEY NEWSPAPER THAT WAS PRINTED HERE IN ETNA AND DON WAS COUNTY SUPERVISOR FOR THE 5th DISTRICT FOR 12 YEARS. THEY HAD NO CHILDREN, BUT THEY HAD A NEPHEW NAMED DON ALSO WHO THEY TREATED AS THEIR SON. WHEN DON AND ELMA DECIDED TO RETIRE THEY TURNED THE THEATRE OVER TO NEPHEW DON AND HIS WIFE KAREN. BY THIS TIME THEY HAD ALSO ACQUIRED THE THEATRE IN HAPPY CAMP WHICH WAS ALSO TAKEN OVER BY DON AND KAREN. DON AND KAREN HAD 3 CHILDREN, SHYLA, DARCI AND RICHARD. AFTER SOME YEARS DON BECAME ILL WITH CANCER AND PASSED AWAY AND JUST WITHIN A FEW YEARS KAREN BECAME STRICKEN WITH THE SAME CANCER AND SHE PASSED AWAY. THEN ELMA'S DON PASSED AWAY LEAVING ELMA, SHYLA, DARCI AND RICHARD WITH THE AVERY NAME.

KAREN HAD PUT THE BUILDING UP FOR SALE DURING HER ILLNESS BUT THERE WERE NO TAKERS SO THE CITY OF ETNA DECIDED TO BUY IT AND HAVE THE BUILDING FOR A COMMUNITY THEATRE TO BE USED BY GROUPS, ORGANIZATIONS, SCHOOLS ETC. TO USE FOR THEIR CONCERTS, PLAYS AND OTHER STAGE ACTS. THE BUILDING WAS IN TERRIBLE CONDITION, RATS AND MICE HAD TAKEN OVER AND THE SEATS WERE IN A ROTTING CONDITION AND THE WALLS WERE BADLY IN NEED OF PAINT. THE SELLING PRICE WAS \$28,500 IF I REMEMBER RIGHT. THERE HAD BEEN A GROUP OF PEOPLE PUTTING ON MELODRAMAS, PLAYS AND OTHER LIVE STAGE PERFORMANCES IN THE OLD DANCE HALL UPSTAIRS OVER CITY HALL AND IN THE FORT JONES COMMUNITY CENTER AND THEY WERE PERFORMING AS THE SCOTT VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY. THEY BECAME INTERESTED IN USING THE THEATRE BUILDING TO PRODUCE THEIR PLAYS AND APPROACHED THE CITY ON THIS IDEA WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THEY WOULD CLEAN IT UP AND GET IT IN SHAPE FOR THE PUBLIC. THE CITY DECIDED TO HELP OUT BY GOING PUBLIC AND START A DRIVE FOR DONATIONS TO HELP THE CAUSE AND THEY ASKED JEANNE AND I IF WE WOULD CHAIR THE FUND RAISING DRIVE WHICH WE AGREED TO BECAUSE WE WANTED TO GET THE THEATER COMPANY IN MOTION AND BEGIN TO USE THE BUILDING. THE THEATRE COMPANY HAD BY THIS TIME ELECTED OFFICERS, A BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND WERE IN THE PROCESS OF BECOMING INCORPORATED BUT NEVER REACHED THAT GOAL. THE FUND RAISING WENT INTO

ACTION WITH NO PROVISION FOR MAKING A DONATION TAX DEDUCTABLE. THE RESPONSE WAS OVERWHELMING.

THIS IS ABOUT THE TIME THE ETNA LIONS CLUB TOOK THE PROJECT ON AND MADE IT AN ONGOING LIONS WORK PROJECT BUILDING UP 100s OF MAN HOURS IN LABOR AND ALSO A HEALTHY SUM OF MONEY IN MATERIAL, PAINT, HARDWARE AND ELECTRICAL WIRING.

WE BEGAN A PROGRAM THAT WE CALLED ADOPT A SEAT ... A PERSON OR GROUP OF PERSON OR ORGANIZATIONS COULD PAY \$18 PER SEAT TO COVER THE COST OF REUPHOLSTERING THE SEATS AND REPAINTING THE SEAT STANCHION. AGAIN THE RESPONSE WAS TREMENDOUS. EACH SEAT WAS ENHANCED WITH THE NAME OF THE ADOPTER ENGRAVED ON A METAL PLATE AND PLACED ON THE SEAT BACK. THE FIRST 5 ROWS OF SEATS NEAREST THE MOVIE SCREEN WERE REMOVED IN ORDER TO BUILD THE STAGE. STANLEY AND JANE FRIDEN HIRED A CONTRACTOR AND BOUGHT THE MATERIAL TO BUILD THE STAGE. THE FRIDENS ALSO BOUGHT THE AISLE CARPET RUNNERS WHICH RUN THE LENGTH OF THE SEATING AREA. THE THEATRE NOW HAD A SEATING CAPACITY OF 305 SEATS... ONE MORE THAN THE YREKA COMMUNITY CENTER THEATER. THE ACOUSTICS FOR LIVE VOICES TURNED OUT TO BE SUPER AND WAS ALSO ACCIDENTAL IN THE CONSTRUCTION BECAUSE ACOUSTICS WAS NOT EVEN THOUGHT OF SINCE MOVIES WERE AMPLIFIED THE NEED FOR GOOD ACOUSTICS WAS NOT A MATTER TO BE CONSIDERED.

THIS WHOLE RENOVATION PROJECT TOOK ON THE NAME OF THE AVERY MEMORIAL THEATRE IN FOND MEMORY OF THE TWO DONS AND THE FAMILY.

THE PROJECT MOVED ALONG QUITE SWIFTLY AND BEFORE LONG IT CAME DOWN TO PAINTING THE INTERIOR WHICH MADE IT A BEAUTIFUL BUILDING INSIDE.

A GRAND OPENING WAS SCHEDULED WITH THE SCOTT VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY PRODUCING A SHOW WHICH INVOLVED SHORT ACTS, MUSICAL AND SINGING GROUPS COMPOSED ENTIRELY OF VOLUNTEERS FROM THE VALLEY. THE THEATRE WAS FULL WITH PEOPLE STANDING IN THE LOBBY. MANY MORE DONATIONS WERE MADE ON THAT AFTERNOON BY THE AUDIENCE WITHOUT SOLICITATION. IT WAS TRULY A COMMUNITY AND VALLEY WIDE EFFORT TO COMPLETE THIS PROJECT.

THE SCOTT VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY SENSED THAT EPOLE WANTED THIS TYPE OF ENTERTAINMENT AND BEGAN PUTTING ON REGULAR PLAYS, MELODRAMAS AND HAVING THE COLLEGE OF THE SISKIYOU COME AND PUT ON THEIR BAND PERFORMANCES AND SOME OF THEIR PLAYS. LOCAL SCHOOLS WERE INVITED TO PARTAKE OF THIS GREAT FACILITY TO PUT ON THEIR MUSICALS AND BAND PERFORMANCES. THE

ETNA LIONS CLUB BEGAN THEIR ANNUAL PRODUCTION OF THE SWEET ADELINE BARBER SHOP HARMONY SHOWS WITH PERFORMING HEADLINERS FROM AS FAR AWAY PORTLAND OREGON AND SAN JOSE CALIFORNIA WITH THE MT. SHASTA ADELINES AS THE ANCHOR ENTERTAINMENT.

FOR A FEW YEARS THE THEATRE COMPANY WAS ENJOYING COMFORTABLE AND GLORIOUS SUCCESS WITH THEIR PRODUCTIONS AND PUTTING PROFITS BACK INTO THE BUILDING EVENTUALLY WANTING TO ADD DRESSING ROOMS AND A SOUND SYSTEM, IMPROVING THE STAGE LIGHTING ETC. ETC.

THE SCOTT VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY HAD NO LEASE AGREEMENT WITH THE CITY OF ETNA OR EVEN A MONTH TO MONTH RENT PERMIT. WE WERE JUST ROLLING ALONG AND HAD NOT EVEN PURSUED THE INCORPORATION PROCESS. EVERYBODY BEING HAPPY WHY ROCK THE BOAT?

THEN AN OUT OF TOWN MOVIE THEATER OWNER APPROACHED THE CITY WITH THE IDEA OF RENTING THE FACILITY TO SHOW MOVIES AND PAY THE CITY A STEADY MONTHLY AGREED RENT FOR THE BUILDING. ABOUT THE SAME TIME THE CITY ADOPTED A REVISED RENT AND USE POLICY WHICH MADE IT COMPLETELY OUT OF REACH FOR THE SCOTT VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY WHO DIDN'T WANT TO SET THEIR ADMISSION CHARGE ANY HIGHER. THE TICKET CHARGE WOULD HAVE TO HAVE BEEN ALMOST DOUBLE WHICH WAS UNACCEPTABLE TO THE COMPANY, THEY JUST COULDN'T AFFORD THE COST OF REHEARSAL RENTAL ON TOP OF PRODUCTION COSTS AND PERFORMANCE NIGHTS CHARGE FOR THE BUILDING.

THE NEW RENTERS MOVIE SHOWINGS TOOK A A STEADY NOSE DIVE AFTER THE INITIAL FAD WORE OFF. SOME NIGHTS THE HOUSE WOULD BE ONLY 4 to 10 ATTENDERS IN THE AUDIENCE. HE FOLDED AND MOVED OUT LEAVING THE THEATRE EMPTY ONCE AGAIN.

THE SCOTT VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY SAW THIS AS A CHANCE TO REORGANIZE AND PERHAPS GET THE USE OF THE THEATRE BACK AGAIN. THIS TIME THEY SOUGHT OUT LEGAL ASSISTANCE AND PRESENTED THEIR REQUEST TO THE CITY COUNCIL IN SEPTEMBER OF 1995 AND MADE AN OFFER FOR THE COUNCIL TO CONSIDER AS TO A LEASE ARRANGEMENT. THE THEATRE COMPANY ALSO AT THIS TIME BEGAN THE INCORPORATION PROCESS TO BECOME A NON PROFIT CORPORATION KNOWN AS THE SCOTT VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY. THEY ELECTED OFFICERS AND A BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND WENT OVER THE OLD LISTS OF PEOPLE WHO HAD BEEN ACTIVE IN THE COMPANY OVER THE PAST YEARS AND CAME UP WITH ABOUT 36 NAMES OF THOSE WHO DEFINITELY WANTED TO BECOME A PART OF THE NEW ENDEAVOR

ON APRIL 2nd THIS YEAR THE COMPANY RECEIVED THIER INCORPORATION PAPERS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA AND THEIR TAX IDENT NUMBER AS A NON PROFIT CORPORATION OPERATING FOR THE ADVANCEMENT AND PROMOTION OF THE LIVELY ARTS, STAGE ENTERTAINMENT, MUSIC, SINGING, PLAYS AND A PLACE THE SCHOOLS WOULD BE ABLE TO USE FOR THEIR PRODUCTIONS, AND WITH HOPES OF ATTRACTING C.O.S. AND ANY ROAD GROUPS TOURING THE AREA. AT THIS POINT IN TIME IT LOOKS AS IF THE LEASE WILL BE SIGNED IN THE MONTH OF MAY, POSSIBLY THE FIRST WEEK IN MAY.(1996)

THERE WILL BE EXPENSES TO MEET SUCH AS INSURANCE (LIABILITY, FIRE) UTILITIES (HEAT, ELECTRIC) WEAR AND TEAR REPAIR AND UPKEEP.

THE COMPANY PLANS TO LEAVE THE NAME OF THE THEATRE AS IT IS... THE AVERY MEMORIAL THEATRE IN MEMORY OF THE FAMILY WHO OWNED IT.

ELMA, DON'S WIDOW LIVED TO ATTEND AND ENJOY NOT ONLY THE FIRST STAGE PRODUCTION AT THE GRAND OPENING OF THE RENOVATED THEATRE BUT SHE NEVER MISSED A PERFORMANCE IF SHE WAS IN TOWN.

WITH ELMA GONE IT ONLY LEAVES THE TWO DAUGHTERS OF DON AND KAREN WHO ARE SHYLA AND DARCI. UNFORTUNATELY RICHARD, THEIR BROTHER DIED VERY YOUNG, NOT EVEN 30 YEARS OLD. THEY ARE PLEASED TO HAVE THE NAME RETAINED.

THE AIM OF THE SCOTT VALLEY THEATRE COMPANY IS TO PROVIDE A PLACE FOR LIVE ENTERTAINMENT, A PLACE FOR GROUPS TO DISPLAY THEIR EFFORTS AND KEEP THE ADMISSION CHARGES AS LOW AS CAN BE AFFORDED. MAKING IT A COMMUNITY FACILITY AND WELCOME THE HELP OF ANYONE WHO MAY BE INTERESTED IN HELPING, WHETHER IT BE TAKING A ROLE, WORKING WITH PROPS, DECORATING FLATS, OPERATING LIGHTS, DIRECTING, USHERING, SELLING TICKETS OR ANY OF THE OTHER MANY CHORES THAT MUST BE DONE.

WE WANT TO MAKE IT WORK AND IT WILL WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE COMMUNITY.

(presented by Buzz Helm for the Scott Valley Theatre Company)