

Short Story 2

The Dude Made Good

©1991 by Wayne Winters

Bisbee, Arizona in 1911 was a booming copper camp — a place of contrasts where rough and ready miners labored underground grubbing red metal from rock for a living, then played just as hard at their pleasures off shift. Bisbee was a substantial city with numerous brick buildings, a stock exchange, a fine library, excellent schools and a cosmopolitan atmosphere.

It was into this atmosphere that one afternoon stepped Greenway Albert, a 25-year-old “Eastern Dude” of Baltimore extraction and Virginia Military Institute education. Proceeding from the train station to the office of the Calumet and Arizona Mining Company, the soon-to-become Bisbeeite sought audience with Captain Jim Hoatson, “top dog” at the C&A. The two men introduced themselves and Albert explained that he had come to accept employment with the firm and to look after the interests of his uncle, General Greenway, a major stockholder in Calumet and Arizona.

If Cap’n Jim was surprised by the announcement from his visitor it did not show. That he was amazed at the appearance of the young dandy that stood before him is putting it mildly. Here was a man of medium size, dressed in ruffled shirt, red tie, black pants, French gray shoes, spats and a gray long-tailed coat. A black top hat completed the outfit. Turning to a subordinate, Hoatson ordered, “Put this man in a closet then get him into decent clothes before he gets out on the street and some of the boys have sport with him!”

Greenway Albert took to Bisbee and Bisbee took to Greenway like fleas take to dogs. The young Easterner, with a genuine interest in people of all stations in life, was soon as much at home in the hidden nooks and corners of Brewery Gulch as the drawing rooms of close-by Warren’s elite—an area in which, due to his social graces and background, he was soon in considerable demand.

The people at Calumet and Arizona set about making a mining man of the young civil engineer. Right off the bat he went to work underground at the Irish Mag. While Albert’s underground experience with C&A didn’t include close association with a muck stick, considerable surveying and similar chores fell his way. Orders had preceded him into “The Mag” that he should be tolerated but not hurt. Because of the very real interest he displayed in the working of the mine and an evident desire to learn, Greenway was, with some reservations, accepted as a “regular feller” by his co-workers.

Several years after his arrival in Bisbee disaster struck the young man. A hole had misfired and after the stemming had been cleared a charge consisting of a stick

of powder, cap and fuse had been inserted into the hole. While waiting for his helper who had gone for a tamping stick, Albert became impatient, grabbed a piece of drill steel and rammed home the charge. The resulting explosion drove the steel into his eye. A few weeks later, outfitted with a glass eye, the “Dude” was back at work.

Greenway continued his employment at Calumet and Arizona until the early 1920s when he decided he had learned enough about mines and mining to strike out on his own. He moved to Tombstone, took a lease on some properties and soon became a full-fledged and moderately successful mine operator.

Once he arrived in Tombstone, Albert began cutting the wide swath in that mining camp’s life that continued for nearly half a century. Greenway learned of the results of a diamond drilling project from between the third and fourth levels in the Empire Mine that had penetrated a substantial “roll” of rich silver-gold ore in the adjoining Silver Thread claim. It was on the basis of this information that he obtained a lease on the Silver Thread and soon went to mining what has gone down in Tombstone’s mining history as “The Albert Ore Body.”

In a comparatively short period of time, Albert mined, shipped, and sold ore from the Silver Thread that netted him in excess of \$60,000. From this nest egg the rest of his enterprises hatched. In the years that followed, Greenway leased and mined portions of the Toughnut, Lucky Cuss, South Extension of the Grand Central, Tranquility and Tombstone Extension Mines. Few, if any of his activities proved to be as lucrative as was the first of the Silver Thread, but he kept his financial head above water—what money he may not have obtained from rock put in the box, he more than made up for by promotional activities. And at mine promotion he was nonpareil!

As Lady Luck smiled on him, Greenway’s tastes for the good life increased. He built Casa de Suenos (House of Dreams), a lovely home, complete with landscaped yard, peafowl wandering through the gardens, a huge swimming pool all surrounded by a wall of native rock. Electricity was supplied by a private generating plant and the garage housed several automobiles. Hospitality at Casa del Senos was as gracious as the surroundings were luxurious. Afternoon tea was the order of the day. A table or two of bridge was often enjoyed by a variety of guests including Tombstone socialites and visiting dignitaries. Weekend parties included guests from Bisbee, Tucson and all points in between. Upon several occasions Greenway imported entertainers, lights of stage and screen, who arrived in the old camp via private railway

car, to liven up his social affairs.

During his prosperous early years in Tombstone, Albert was not only the busy mining man and promoter, but he became known for his prowess as an automobile racer, owning several race cars and employing a full-time mechanic to keep them tuned. Entering the cars in many meets in the Southwest, he drove them with considerable success. Next came flying. Greenway learned to fly and bought a biplane, then graded out an airstrip northwest of the town. Evidently aviation was not one of his long-suits for he soon abandoned his interest in that activity.

One of his pet holdings was a sizable block of claims that were in the general vicinity of the Phelps-Dodge pit at Ajo. Over the years Greenway promoted this group, mainly on the basis of surface showings, to a variety of prospective purchasers, leasers or what-have-you. Believing in their merit himself, he invested much money in core drilling his holdings but failed to succeed in interesting the major mining firms in the property.

In the mid-1920s while in Ajo, Greenway learned of a prospect located about 30 miles southwest of the then-busy copper camp. Before heading alone into the remote desert he stopped by the gas station that he regularly patronized and told the owner where he was going and requested that if he failed to check in with him that evening to get a search going. It was the middle of the summer and Albert tooled his open touring car mile after dusty mile over the barely discernible trail. Several times he had to dig the vehicle out after it had bogged down in sand washes, but determined to reach his goal he pushed onward. With the mercury hovering around the 110° mark the trail pinched out halfway up a small hill. The prospect loomed dead ahead so Greenway, toting a pick and some sample bags, took off afoot.

It was mid-afternoon when loaded down with samples, he made it back to the vehicle. After downing the sandwiches he had brought for lunch, followed by a couple of swallows from a canteen of water, Albert climbed aboard his car, cranked it up and backed around onto the trail. In a moment the engine quit and refused to restart. A check of the gas tank revealed it to be bone dry. Back-tracking a bit to the place where he had parked revealed a patch of gasoline soaked sand. The vehicle, parked uphill at a severe angle, was drained of every last drop of fuel.

Making himself as comfortable as possible in the sparse shade of the car in the afternoon sun, Greenway pondered his situation: miles from any habitation and out of food but with a couple of one-gallon canteens of water, he believed himself to be in no serious peril. After all, he had left word with the gas station owner to come after him if he failed to show up that very evening. Finally the stranded man curled up in his Arizona bedroll—sand for a mattress and the stars for his blanket—and made himself comfortable, secure in his belief that help would come and he'd be on his way back to Ajo by mid-morning. The day arrived right on schedule but no tell-tale cloud of dust brought promise of help. When no one showed up by sunset Greenway realized that his situation was becoming desperate, so gathering up the canteens he started back-tracking over the trail. The going was

hard for walking through the sand sapped his strength. What's more, the night was moonless and it was necessary for him to stop often to search out the track. All this, coupled with the fact that he'd missed a bunch of meals, made for an unhappy wanderer. With the coming of daylight Greenway sought out the sparse shade of a palo verde tree and fell asleep.

Awakening late that afternoon the mining man pondered his fate. By now he had given up on help coming from Ajo. He had come to realize that his only chance for survival was in walking yet another night and hopefully gaining the road between Ajo and Sasabe before his strength played out. As things turned out that's exactly what happened. About daybreak Greenway made it to the main road. A couple of hours later a woodcutter from Sasabe, on his way to Ajo for supplies, found the exhausted man sitting beside the highway and muttering something about wanting breakfast. Once he had been fed, rested and cleaned up, Albert hied himself to the gas station. Accosting the man he had trusted should an emergency arise, he was told, "Oh, I thought you probably had gotten back to town after I closed down and I didn't think any more about it." He lost a customer!

Years later Greenway enjoyed regaling listeners at his parties with the tale of his adventure along El Camino de Diablo (the Highway of the Devil). The punchline of the story came when he related how just before being picked up as he sat along the highway he looked up and saw a bunch of buzzards circling. He said to himself, "They think they're going to pick my bones clean but one of those bastards is going to get the surprise of his life when he pecks into my glass eye!"

Things went well with Greenway Albert for the first quarter of a century he was in Tombstone. He lived high on the hog, working hard and playing the same way. Disaster, in the form of the destruction of Casa de Suenos by fire, hit shortly after World War II came to an end. The home was rebuilt on a modest scale but the parties declined both in grandeur and frequency. The price commanded by silver dropped so low that mining in the Tombstone District ceased and Greenway turned his full efforts toward trying, without success, to promote the Ajo copper claims. Albert, in his early sixties, was out of the mining business.

Retired and with limited income, Greenway and his last wife, Josephine, lived comfortably, playing bridge, entertaining now and then, and traveling about the country in their big vintage touring car to participate in classic automobile shows. It was "the good life!"

August of 1968 found Albert driving alone to Ajo to supervise the performance of annual assessment work at his long-held group of claims. After several days in the copper camp he headed home to Tombstone but fell asleep at the wheel of his vehicle and died in the resulting crash.

A week later a little group of friends gathered at Boothill Graveyard to sprinkle the ashes of "The Dude Who Made Good" over the last resting place of so many of Tombstone's characters. One of Greenway's old friends remarked, "I'm going to come down here every morning and watch to see if some vulture comes scrounging around. I, too, want to see what happens when he tries to peck that glass eye!"



HISTORY OF MINING IN ARIZONA
VOLUME II

EDITORS
J. MICHAEL CANTY
MICHAEL N. GREELEY

PUBLISHED BY



MINING CLUB OF THE SOUTHWEST FOUNDATION
TUCSON, ARIZONA