

1975 - 2005 Our 30th Anniversary



"The Aldrich Family" JACKIE KELK as <u>Homer</u> Brown and EZRA STONE as <u>Henry Aldrich</u>

#### Membership Information

New member processing: \$5 plus club membership of \$17.50 per year from January 1 to December 31. Members receive a tape library listing, reference library listing and the monthly newsletter. Memberships are as follows: If you join January-March, \$17.50; April-June, \$14; July-September, \$10; October-December, \$7. All renewals should be sent in as soon as possible to avoid missing newsletter issues. Please be sure to notify us if you have a change of address. The Old Time Radio Club meets on the first Monday of the month at 7:30 PM during the months of September through June at St. Aloysius School Hall, Cleveland Drive and Century Road, Cheektowaga, NY. There is no meeting during the month of July, and an informal meeting is held in August at the same address.

Anyone interested in the Golden Age of Radio is welcome. The *Old Time Radio Club* is affiliated with the Old Time Radio Network.

#### Club Mailing Address

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## He Knew What The Shadow Knew

#### Dreaming up scary scripts for this famous '40s radio program meant having a few nightmares, too!

By Eric Arthur, Williamsburg, Virginia

Created in the 1930s by Walter B. Gibson, *The Shadow* magazine stories and novels became immensely popular and were soon developed into a weekly radio series. Airing from 1931 to 1954 (and briefly starring the inimitable Orson Welles), the program became one of the longest-running radio shows on record.

With Gibson still turning out stories for publication (he wrote almost 300), the producers brought in free-lance writers to help with the growing demand for *Shadow* radio scripts.

In the early '40s, I was writing for a number of mystery radio programs including *Gangbusters*, *Molle Mystery Theater* and *Inner Sanctum*. A friend suggested I try working for *The Shadow*, which was becoming the most popular drama in radio. I did . . . and landed a job as a regular staff writer. This photo (right) was taken toward the end of my stint on the staff.

Walter Gibson left us sharply drawn characters and well-developed story patterns to follow. As long as we held to his formula, the plot for each episode was left to our imaginations. With those guidelines, we pitted Lamont Cranston and Margo Lane against a galaxy of vampires, zombies ("walking dead") and other antisocial creatures. Devising such schemes often resulted in my own unsettling dreams. In one recurrent nightmare, I was chased by a grinning zombie brandishing a machete. Fortunately, I always screamed myself awake before he caught me.

Evidently I wasn't the only victim of such nightmares. On one occasion, the main sponsor of the program, the Blue Coal Company, ordered us to lay off the zombie bit for a while. Mothers all across the country had complained that we were scaring their children with too many scripts about "the walking dead"!

#### **They Walked and Talked**

Without zombies to terrorize Lamont and Margo, we had to come up with other creatures. In "Bubbling



Death", for example, my leading lady, heiress to a Creole fortune, was drawn to her demise in a Louisiana swamp by the voice of a vengeful ancestor. (They had barred the "walking dead", but they didn't say anything about the "talking dead".)

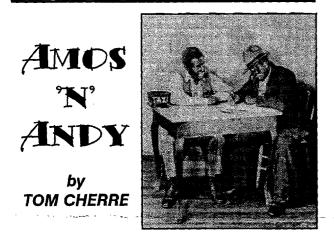
I called another script "Dolls of Death". In it, a little toy maker who hated big people acquired the formula used by a tribe of Indians in the Amazon to shrink heads. The toy maker invited a 6-foot-7 police commissioner to the back of the shop for a cup of coffee. The coffee was laced with knockout drops, and the commissioner soon ended up as a tiny doll on display in the toy maker's shop window.

There was often real excitement on the shows that we writers didn't create. Because broadcasts were live, the actors and technicians had to get everything right the first time. During one broadcast, the sound man's gun jammed. A nervous young director ran into the studio from the control booth and shouted into the microphone, "Bang! Bang!"

Another time, one of Lamont's enemies said, "I'm going to put a bullet through your heart." Again there was gun trouble, but the quick witted actor ad-libbed, "On

second thought, it would give me greater pleasure to choke you with my bare hands." And then the gun went off.

During the 25 years The Shadow was on the air, the writing staff turned out over 1,000 episodes. Today the material would probably be called corny. But I like to think all those programs were a fitting tribute to Walter Gibson's super-sleuth . . . and to those more innocent times when **The Shadow knew**.



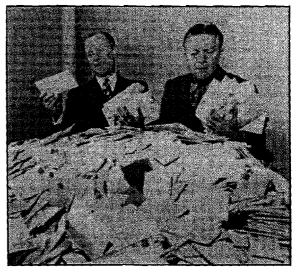
This past Christmas as like most of us, I managed to take in more of my share of Christmas goodies. I'll probably have to walk a few more miles this summer to take the extra pounds off. I also caught my share of the usual Christmas movies. You know the ones I'm talking about "Miracle on 34th Street," "It's A Wonderful Life," and all the Crosby ones.

Anyway, years ago the old radio shows also had shows typically written for Christmas. So while I was walking my trusty dog O'Malley one night I was tuned into an Amos 'n' Andy from December of 1944. I will add the fact that Amos 'n' Andy is one of the favorite twelve shows in my radio collection.

Well, the story starts out when two rich white people are talking about a wager one placed for \$1,000. As he was passing the bill to the winner the wind takes it away from the second floor of the train terminal and carries it down below into the hands of Andrew H. Brown. The two people continue to talk and wonder who would find the money and how it would affect the finder's life. Some of you probably know the story I'm talking about. So when Andy attains this new found wealth the first thing he does is go out and hire a valet for himself. Andy then proceeds to tell Amos this money will make him a new man, while Amos in return tells Andy a hard luck story of his taxi cab woes and his need of money for repairs. Needless to say Andy squanders all the money away in a short period of time. The only two worthy possessions Andy had left was a gold cigarette case and a gold handle cane. He asks the Kingfish if he would pawn them in for cash. The next day he runs into Amos, who is still hard pressed for cash. Andy tells him he has a surprise for him in the alley. Lo and behold it's Amos's cab all fixed up with a new paint job. Amos is choked up for this noble act of charity. He reiterates to Andy you are truly my best friend. Andy merely replies, "What are friends for?" The exhibition of a better friendship could not be captured any better than here.

To sum it all up, this was like the closing scene of "It's A Wonderful Life". Amos 'n' Andy was always a funny show, but it also had another slant to it with stories just like this. Andy on one occasion comes to the aid of a soldier on leave. Another tearjerker was when Andy works hard to get Arbadella, the daughter of Amos, a special doll for Christmas that Amos would never be able to afford. Most of the shows revolved around the sinister schemes of the Kingfish or a girlfriend problem with Andy. However once in awhile the writers wrote a sentimental story like I mentioned with warm-hearted ingredients interjected in the main theme.

For my money Amos 'n' Andy was one of the best. I felt the claims of the NAACP that the show was racially motivated were unfair. I thought the story lines were great and always funny in a sensitive nature. I will continue to enjoy the many Amos 'n' Andy shows I have for many years to come. I really do "apprechalate them".



Pictured are Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll, out of makeup and in the midst of listener mail offering suggestions for naming the baby "born" to Amos and Ruby. The photograph is dated December 8,1936

# HE MAKES LIKE SUPERMAN

Bud Collyer keeps a schedule that would wilt even the comic book hero he plays on the air

#### by TWEED BROWN



It's 10:45 most any week-day morning at the RCA building in Radio City. A Studio door suddenly bursts open and out streaks a human form—faster than a speeding bullet—and disappears into another studio three doors down the hall. It's not a bird—not a plane—it's not even Superman. This human chunk of greased lightening is Clayton (Bud) Collyer, a radio character who makes like Superman—both on the air and off.

The above 100-foot sprint is occasioned by Bud's super schedule which calls for him to appear on NBC's *Road* of Life, from 10:30 to 10:45 five days a week and on ABC's Listening Post from 10:45 to 11 an equal number of days. There's only a 30-second lapse between Bud's last words as announcer/narrator on *Road of Life* and his opening lines on Listening Post.

"It's a good thing both studios are in the same building." Bud comments, "or I'd never make it. If either of those programs even were to move to another floor, I'd have to make like Superman and fly in and out of windows or crash through the ceiling."

Most of Bud's life runs at that tempo. Perhaps that's why he quit law back in 1933 to go into radio. It wasn't a bad move for Bud. Today at 32 he makes better than \$50,000 a year and follows a daily routine that makes Superman look like a transient rusticating on a bench up in Central Park.

For six years Bud has been playing Superman—the amazing newspaper reporter-good fairy who can clear tall buildings in a single bound—and paralleling it with a radio schedule that has him broadcasting on all of the four major networks some time during the day. Five days each week he appears on four shows daily, and an average weekend will find him on from two to five. In his spare time (that's a witticism, chum) he romps with his three youngsters and teaches Sunday School. Which is not bad for a handsome young fellow who started out with full intentions of becoming a lawyer.

Bud grew up in and around New York with his wellknown sister, June Collyer, who was a movie actress before she became Mrs. Stuart Erwin. His brother, Richard, is supervisor of Edward Small Productions on the West Coast. Bud attended Horace Mann School for Boys, Williams College, and was studying law at Fordham when he got a job as a radio singer to help pay his tuition.

Following that Bud got his one and only taste as an inthe-flesh entertainer in a floor show at the Plaza hotel. The audience frightened him so badly that he never tried it again. About that time Bud finished law school and was all set, to hang out his shingle. Then one day Helen Claire, Fox Movietone fashion editor, suggested that he try radio acting and recommended him for a series at NBC. He got the job and found the work and pay so enticing that he forgot about law.

During his thirteen years in radio, Bud has announced some of the top shows emanating from New York. In addition to playing Superman, he has announced Truth or Consequences, Hildegarde Program, Cavalcade of America, handled remote pick-ups for We the People, is, current emcee of Continental Celebrity Club, announces Break the Bank and more soap operas than you can shake a tub of suds at.

Bud's schedule, Monday through Friday, runs something like this: From 9 to 9:50 a.m. he rehearses ABC's *Listening Post*. From 9:55 to 10:30 he rehearses NBC's *Road of Life*. From 10:30 to 10:45 he is on the air as announcer/narrator for *Road of Life*. Then he does his speed sprint down the corridor to appear as announcer on Listening Post from 10:45 to 11 o'clock. Then from 11 to 1 Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, Bud makes one-minute transcriptions and recordings to plug the programs he appears on.

He allows himself a half hour between 1 and 1:30 p. m. for lunch. At 1:30 he's back rehearsing for the afternoon broadcast of *Road of Life* which goes out on CBS. At 1:45 the show is on the air.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays Bud is free from 2 to 4, but on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays he makes more rccordiags. Then from 4:15 to 5:15 he rehearses Superman. And as all live-wired kiddies know, Superman is on the air from 5:15 to 5:30 over Mutual. In between times Bud gives interviews to high school reporters or to Superman fans who want to. feel his nuscles. Bud is a free-lancer, which means that he can do any shows that he can fit into his busy schedule. A couple of nights a week he stays in town to do free-lance programs. On Friday night he announces the new ABC super-give-away quiz show, Break the Bank. On Saturday night Bud moves over to CBS to perform as the glib emcee of Continental Celebrity Club. He tries to keep Sundays clear, but he gets a call now and then to handle a remote pick-up for We the People.

Although Bud is a handsome, well-proportioned specimen, he is quite content that he never has been called on to pose in Superman suits or undergo a publicity campaign linking him with the super hero of the comic pages. The owners of the Superman properties have discovered that they, can't match with a physical facsimile the image of their comic book Galahad that is engraved on the minds of Young America. During the New York World's Fair a brawny, muscle-bound ex-pugilist was crammed into a Superman suit and placed on exhibit with the intent and purpose of aweing comic-page devotees. But the youngsters took one quick look, grabbed their noses, and nasaled: "You're not Superman—why don'tcha go back to Brooklyn—ya bum?"

Bud, too, has found that being identified with the wonder man of the air waves and comic books has its drawbacks. By word of mouth the word got around that Bud is the ether super character and he is often asked to lift cars by skeptical youngsters who wind it up with, "An' let's see yuh fly." Once when Bud was living in Jackson Heights, a young worshipper of eight would wait for him every night at the subway exit. As Bud walked home, the lad would follow, hopping along beside him and looking beseechingly up into Bud's eyes, begging him to "make like Superman." The youngster's mother later told Bud that on nights that he failed to arrive in Jackson Heights at his accustomed time, she had to go to the subway exit and lead her offspring home by the ear, as he otherwise would have kept his vigil all night for his hero.

Bud and his wife, the former Heloise Green, have taken great precautions to make clear in the minds of their three children—Patricia, eight; Cynthia, six, and Michael, four—that daddy is not Superman, but merely an actor, who among other jobs, portrays Superman on the air. The Collyer children are ardent *Superman* fans and wouldn't miss a broadcast for a pocketful of bubble gum. But when they listen in, it's to Superman not Daddy. They entirely disassociate their father from the mental picture. they carry of the comic character who is "more powerful than a locomotive."

People have wondered if Bud's rigorous schedule didn't wear on his nerves—making a barbiturate addict of him. Perhaps the calm, unruffled exterior was merely a guise—that down underneath he was a bundle of nerves as a result of living by a split-second time-table. Bud smiles and assures everyone that his blood pressure is normal and that he sleeps as soundly as a truck driver. He keeps a room in Manhattan and every spare moment he dashes over to it and stretches out for a catnap.

After watching a Superman rehearsal and broadcast, it was easy to understand why Bud's rigorous schedule doesn't get him down. It's pure play with him. Bud and Comedian Jackie Kelk, who plays the part of a cub reporter, clowned and cut up like a couple of high school sophomores and kept Director Roger (Duke) DeCoveny fretting throughout the rehearsal. Since there is no studio audience for *Superman*, they were able to continue their gagging right on through the broadcast—except when they were in front of the microphone and then they gave a performance calculated to keep Junior's ear glued to his receiving set.



JACKIE KELK, JOAN ALEXANDER, JACKSON BECK AND "SUPERMAN"

Bud Collyer is one successful man who is not particularly interested in climbing to further pinnacles of achievement. He'd be quite content to spend the rest of his life doing the type of radio programs that he's now doing.

Bud likes it here in New York. And he has the satisfaction that when he has spoken his last word for the day into a microphone he can head for home with the assurance that when he gets there he can shed his radio roles and step into the part of husband and father—just like any other commuter—although en route a couple of youngsters may call on him to "make like Superman."

(Reprinted from September, 1946)

## When Martians Invaded Goober Hill

On Halloween Eve 1938, most folks in East Texas didn't even know "the war of the worlds" had begun.

#### by Richard Murphy, San Augustine, Texas

What might have been the most famous radio broadcast of all time caused hardly a ripple in East Texas on the night before Halloween 1938.

While much of the country was in panic over the landings of Martian spacecraft in Grovers Mills, New Jersey, folks around my hometown were tuned in to The Old-Fashioned Revival Hour or, like me, The Chase and Sanborn Hour with Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy.

There was one farmer out in Shelby County who hustled his family into the storm cellar. But he was a little hard of hearing and thought the Martians had landed at nearby Goober Hill instead of Grovers Mills. The "invasion" was in fact a broadcast of *The Mercury Theatre on the Air*. The cast, led by the soon-to-becomefamous Orson Welles, did an adaptation of H.G. Wells' "The War of the Worlds."

#### Tuned in to Hysteria

I was only 10 at the time and not yet interested in heavy drama. I opted for Edgar and Charlie, whose program came on at the same time, 8 p.m.

Many other listeners in the country apparently also started out listening to The Chase and Sanborn Hour on NBC. But, as I learned later, when the first commercial break came on, they switched over to CBS and heard what sounded like an authentic weather report, followed by a program of dance music broadcast from the Hotel Park Plaza in downtown New York City.

The program was soon interrupted by a news flash reporting that astronomers had observed a series of explosions on the planet Mars. Soon there were reports of strange objects in the skies over the little town of Grovers Mills.

What a lot of listeners missed was the announcement at the beginning of the broadcast that said the program was fiction, based on the Wells story. What millions of dial-twisters did hear was that a meteor-like object had just crashed in a field near the town. Soon they heard an on-the-scene interview of "Professor Pearson of Princeton University", played by Orson Welles.

A reporter named "Phillips" did the interview. He was played by Kenny Delmar, who was better known as Senator Claghorn on *The Fred Allen Show*.

#### **Creatures Had Landed**

Phillips and Pearson described the smooth metal cylinder that had landed in the field . . . and reported how the end of the cylinder started to rotate and open.

"Ladies and gentlemen," Phillips said, "this is the most terrifying thing I've ever witnessed! Someone's crawling out of the hollow top! Someone . . . or something!" Phillips went on to describe two luminous disks that might be eyes . . . tentacles . . . and then the thing itself" large as a bear" and glistening "like wet leather" with "saliva dripping from its rimless lips".

There followed some hysterical babbling, then silence. Another announcer came on with the horrifying news that the Martians were equipped with heat rays and had incinerated some policemen who tried to approach them.

There were plenty of folks who panicked when they heard that. Soon roads were jammed and telephone lines tied up. Dozens of people were later treated for hysteria and shock.

But most of us in East Texas stuck with Edgar, Charlie and *The Old-Fashioned Revival Hour* and didn't join in the panic.

Even if I had heard the broadcast, it's unlikely I would have fallen for it. You see, I was an avid fan of radio adventure serials, especially *The Shadow*. I was very familiar with the voice of Lamont Cranston, who clouded men's minds as *The Shadow*. It was Orson Welles.





One of the best Comedy shows I remember listening to during the Golden Era was the Fanny Brice Baby Snooks Show. This show was first broadcast on February 29th, 1936 as part of The Ziegfeld Hour Of The Air, and the last broadcast was May 29th, 1951.

The Cast consisted of Fanny Brice as Snooks, Hanley Stafford as Daddy, Lalive Brownell as "Mommy" Higgins (later portrayed by Lois Corbet and Arlene Harris). Leone Ledoux as Snooks' little brother Robespierre. The Announcers over the years were John Conte, Toby Reed, Harlow Wilcox, Dick Joy, Don Wilson and Ken Roberts. The music was provided by Meredith Willson and Carmen Dragon. The Vocalist for the entire series was Bob Graham. The theme was "Rockabye Baby". Baby Snooks became a character for Fanny Brice at some point in the early 30s, nobody seems to know exactly when. What is known for sure is that Fanny was appearing in her Baby Snooks costume as part of the Follies show on Broadway. Then, in 1936, at 45 years of age, she used this baby persona to great effect on the CBS show The Ziegfeld Follies Of The Air.

After various format and slot changes, Snooks eventually got her very own show in 1944. Lalive Brownell took on the role of Mommy Higgins alongside the now well entrenched part of Daddy Higgins played by Hanley Stafford. The half-hour slot was initially aired at 6:30 p.m. on Sundays, but later moved to an 8 p.m. slot on Friday and then in November 1949 to an 8 p.m. slot on Tuesday evenings. The shows revolved around the Snooks character creating vignettes through which the comedic potential of the character could be fully exploited. Snooks specialized in making minor mishaps into major catastrophes and small parental disagreements into all out war.

In 1945 Fanny was forced to miss several episodes due to illness and her absence was covered up through a story line involving a search for the missing Snooks. It featured leading stars of the time such as Robert Benchley, Sydney Greenstreet, Peter Lorre and Kay Kyser. The same year saw the first appearance of Leone Ledoux as Robespierre, who until then was an off-mike character.

On May 24th, 1951 Fanny Brice suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and died five days later at age fifty-nine. The final broadcast was a memorial program aired on May 29th, 1951.

## Wanted . . .

Looking for copies of the following ESCAPE Shows:

1947 - "Run of The Yellow Mail"

- 1949 "The Blue Wall"
- "The Primitive"
- 1950 "The Big Sponge"
- "Your Grandfather's Necktie"
- 1952 "Nightmare in the Sun"
  - "Pagosa"
- "Transport to Terror"
- 1953 "The Blue Hotel"
  - "Dangerous Man"
    - "1/8th Apache"

Phillip E. Harney 8 Fairfield Avenue Danbury, CT 06810

I am looking to complete my collection of *MIDNIGHT CAB* Shows from the Canadian Broadcasting Company (CBC). I am missing two from 1993, four from 1994 and <u>all</u> from 1996. Please contact me at <u>raolday@yahoo.com</u> if you can help.

I would be willing to purchase or trade for the missing shows. Thanks

Dick Olday 171 Parwood Trail Depew, NY 14043



Jackson Beck was heard as Bluto in 300 Popeye cartoons as well as narrating Woody Allen's first film, "Take the Money and Run".

Phil Harris was introduced to a new generation of fans when he was featured in several animated Disney films. He played Baloo in "The Jungle Book" (1967), J. Thomas O'Malley in the "Aristocrats" (1970), and Little John in "Robin Hood" (1973).

Paul Frees filled in for Parley Baer as Doc Adams on the December 12, 1953 episode of the Gunsmoke radio series.

Red Skelton's famous Clem Kadiddlehopper character was created and first introduced on Cincinnati's WLW by Skelton stooge Lon Clark, who later starred in radio's Nick Carter, Master Detective.

When Sam Spade, starring Howard Duff was cancelled, NBC revived the program after receiving more than 250,000 letters protesting the program's cancellation. But the series failed when Duff was replaced by Steven Dunne.

Barry Kroeger portrayed Alexander Dumas, Sr. in the 1949 film "Black Magic" (aka "Cagliostro"), costarring with radio veterans Orson Welles and Raymond Burr.

Bill Johnstone was chosen over 45 other hopefuls to succeed Orson Welles as the Shadow.

Boris Karloff, at age 44 years, wasn't considered a star when "Frankenstein" was released in 1931, and was not even invited to the film's premiere.

The Great Gildersleeve's first name "Throckmorton" came from the street Hal Peary was living on.

Jimmy Stewart's "Best Actor Oscar" for "The Philadelphia Story" was displayed in the window of his father's Pennsylvania hardware store for 25 years.

Fran Striker syndicated his earliest Lone Ranger radio scripts to several radio stations, receiving \$4.00 per script from Detroit's WXYZ and Buffalo's WEBR, and \$5.00 from Omaha's KOIL.

Stacy Harris portrayed Batman on Radio's The Adventures of Superman, and later co-starred with Johnny Rockwell in The Adventures of Superboy. A 1961 television pilot.

Lon Clark studied at the Minneapolis Music School and began his performing career as an opera singer, pit musician and orchestra conducter.

Norman Corwin's We Hold These Truths, simulcast over all four networks eight days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, was heard by half the population of the United States

Fred Allen, the vaudevillian born John Florence Sullivan worked under a variety of stage names including Paul Hunkle, Fred St. James and Freddy James before settling on Fred Allen.

#### LATEST ADDITIONS TO THE CASSETTE LIBRARY

- 3487 Murder At Midnight "The Secret of XR-3" 9/30/46 Murder At Midnight "Till Death Do Us Part" 12/9/46
- 3488 Dark Venture "Pursuit" 7/31/45 Dark Venture "The Only Inhabitant" 11/19/46
- 3489 Gunsmoke "Stage Holdup" 1/2/54 Gunsmoke "The Joke's On Us" 1/9/54
- 3490 Eddie Cantor Show "Eddie Inherits A Plantation" Eddie Cantor Show "Eddie's Farm"
- 3491 Counterspy "The Kleptomaniac Clues" 1/7/51 Counterspy "The Captured Contact" 1/14/51
- 3492 Broadway Is My Beat "Phillip Hunt"4/21/51 Broadway Is My Beat "Georgia Gray" 4/28/51
- 3493 Gunsmoke "The Boughten Bride" 7/12/52 Gunsmoke "The Kentucky Tolmans" 8/9/52
- 3494 Life of Riley "Good Neighbor Week" 10/5/46 Life of Riley "Boy Scout Camp" 11/9/46
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- 3496 Suspense "In Fear and Trembling" 2/16/43 Suspense "The Customers Like Murder" 3/23/43
- 3497 This Is Your FBI "The Highway Highjacker" 12/14/45

This Is Your FBI "The Sorrowful Swindler" 12/21/45

- 3498 This Is Your FBI "The Waterfront Felons" 12/2/49 This Is Your FBI "Frozen Frame Up" 12/9/49
- 3499 Philo Vance "The Idol Murder Case" 1/25/49
- Philo Vance "The Golden Murder Case" 2/1/49 3500 Philo Vance "The Flying Murder Case" 2/8/49 Philo Vance "The Butler Murder Case" 2/15/49

## The Old Time Radio Club

49 Regal Street Depew, NY 14043



# FIRST CLASS MAIL

For more information call Bob Burchett 888-477-9112 (toll free) This years convention will ge held at the RAMADA PLAZA. (Formerly the BEST WESTERN HOTEL) 11911 Sheraton Lane, Cincinnati, Ohio 45246 Rooms \$67 single or double (Mention the convention when making reservations)

# APRIL 15-16, 2005

