

# Dewey Michaels' Is Dead at 83; Show-Business Figure 50 Years

Dewey Michaels, 83, operator of the Palace Theater and a leading show business figure and burlesque promoter here for a half-century, died Sunday (Feb. 21, 1982) in Millard Fillmore Hospital.

Mr. Michaels, who suffered a stroke in 1980, was hospitalized with a broken hip after a fall Feb. 12 in his Florida vacation home.

The funeral will be at noon tomorrow in the Sisterhood Chapel of Temple Beth Zion.

A native of Buffalo, Mr. Michaels grew up in the William Street area and attended School 56 and Lafayette High School.

His father, Levin Michaels, owned the Allendale Theater, where Dewey went to work in 1917 as an usher and projectionist.

He began operating the Palace Theater in 1924 in partnership with Nathan Boasberg.

They also operated the Gayety Theater, which had a vaudeville-movie policy in the mid-1930s and where Mr. Michaels once booked a show called the Fred Allan Amateur Show. Mr. Michaels bought out Mr. Boasberg in 1936 to become sole proprietor of the Palace.

Mr. Michaels operated the nationally known theater until 1967, when it was closed to make way for the conversion of old Shelton Square for the One M&T and Main Place Mall projects.

He continued operating a Palace Theater at Main and Tupper streets for another decade, but on closing day Sept. 28, 1977, admitted sadly that X-rated movies had killed burlesque. During the heyday of Burlesque, Mr. Michaels had been a friend of the comedians who later would become stars of the television era.

He also operated the Mercury Theater on the east side of Main Street, near Genesee Street, as an art theater in the late 1930s and early 1940s. He owned and operated other downtown Buffalo theaters,



**DEWEY MICHAELS**

including the Keith and Plaza and theaters in Rochester.

For many years, he was a boxing promoter through the Fairview AC Corp.

Mr. Michaels also promoted stock car racing in Civic Stadium, now War Memorial Stadium, in the early 1950s.

He was regarded as a leader of the city's show business community. In the 1930s, he was a charter member of Tent 7, one of the earliest units of the Variety Club, and served twice as its chief barker.

He was a longtime member of Temple Beth Zion.

He and his wife, Phyllis Dorothy Boasberg Michaels, lived in Egbertsville. Since her death in 1969, Mr. Michaels had lived in a Delaware Avenue apartment.

In one of his last public appearances, Mr. Michaels displayed the nearly 50 scenic backdrops that had been used in the Palace, some of them 60 to 100 years old. They were sold to the National Museum of

American History and other historic institutions.

Surviving are his daughter, Harriet, wife of Michael F. Ellis Jr.; two sons, James W., formerly on the staff of The Buffalo Evening News and now editor of Forbes magazine, and Albert L., a professor of history at the State University of Buffalo; and nine grandchildren.

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#### **MICHAELS—Dewey**

Feb. 21, 1982, husband of the late Phyllis (Boasberg); father of James of N.Y.C., Mrs. Michael (Harriet) Ellis and Albert L. Michaels; also survived by nine grandchildren. Funeral services at the Sisterhood Chapel, Temple Beth Zion, 805 Delaware Ave., Tues. 12 noon. The family will be at the DELAWARE PARK MEMORIAL CHAPEL INC., 2141 Delaware Ave., Mon. 7-9 PM. Flowers gratefully declined. Memorials may be made to the Variety Club.