

## Patron Joseph Dreyfus, Part 1

Joseph Dreyfus wasn't a regular visitor to nightspots but not too many medical students are. Neither he nor his wife, Adele, even enjoyed liquor. But, because, on this Saturday evening a friend of a friend was leaving for overseas duty in the Armed Services the couple was part of a group of eight visiting the Coconut Grove for a farewell dinner for the departing serviceman. Mr. and Mrs. Dreyfus had never before been inside the nightclub.

The group arrived sometime after 9:00 P.M. and, after a considerable waiting period were ushered to a table on the Terrace section of the Main Dining room. "We were finally seated around a very tiny table which was ordinarily supposed to hold two to four people, at the most, and we were all crowded around this little table." After fifteen minutes they group still had not been served. At the next table they noted the cowboy movie star Buck Jones with an entourage of film people.

As they chatted amiably Joe Dreyfus heard someone yell 'Fire' ! "I got up to see what was going on because I had been taught not to panic. And I could see a sheet of flame coming across the room. And it was very hot and I put my hands up to my face which saved my eyes and the next thing I knew I was on the floor. I couldn't see anything." From the

time he arose from the table until he was rendered unconscious was between 10 and 15 seconds.

Joe Dreyfus woke at the Boston City hospital, unable to see, badly burned and learned that his beloved wife, Adele, had perished in the flames. His classmate Saul Davis, his wife Henrietta as well as Beatrice Rice were injured and had been taken to the Mass. General Hospital. Of the others he wasn't sure what had been their fate. Months of skin grafting and physical therapy followed before he was released from the hospital. The Dreyfus family expended thousands of dollars for special nursing care.

Part of his hospital stay was in the same room with Clifford Johnson, a hideously burned Coast Guardsman who was credited with pulling many patrons safely from the Broadway lounge. Johnson was on a Stryker frame and Dreyfus states "Clifford and I were roommates for a long time. And I couldn't stand the smell and they finally moved me someplace else."

Clifford Johnson had sustained burns over almost his entire body and his subsequent survival was considered a medical miracle.

( Clifford Johnson was later to die a most ironic death. Trapped beneath an overturned vehicle he was incinerated when the spilled gasoline ignited.)

Upon his discharge from Boston City hospital Joe Dreyfus completed his courses at Middlesex University Medical School. During his internship the skin grafted to his hands

remained a constant problem for a long period : "Every time I scrubbed for an operation my gloves were full of blood ". As a doctor he was considered a burn expert.

About a month after leaving Boston City hospital he "went to a nightclub ".