

# Hamming it up on Bailey Avenue – 1944

**S**andra Amigone Sease sent along this photo with her family collection of images from the Chez Ami. Although the photograph was not taken at “The Chez,” she felt it was “too great not to use it for something.” We couldn’t agree more! So we decided to share it with our readers on a page of its own.

According to Sandra, the photo was taken in 1944 at a party held at her parents’ (Frank & Gladys Amigone) apartment on Bailey Avenue. It shows comedian Foster Brooks (right) singing and playing a miniature ukulele, accompanied by Steven Pankow on the accordion. Perhaps it was taken after dining at the Chez Ami earlier that evening, as the two seem to be wearing the same suits as in the photograph on page 33.

For the uninitiated, Foster Brooks (1912-2001) was an actor and comedian, best known for his portrayal of “the loveable lush” on *The Dean Martin Show* and celebrity roasts in the 1970s. Brooks got his start as a radio announcer and singer in his native Louisville, however – noted for his rich, baritone voice, which is undoubtedly being put to work in this photo. Later, he spent time in broadcasting and TV in both Buffalo



SANDRA AMIGONE SEASE COLLECTION

and Rochester, performing with a musical group called the “Hi-Hatters” while in Buffalo before heading to Los Angeles in 1960. He was also a frequent performer – and diner – at the Chez Ami.

Steven “Diamond Jim” Pankow (1908-1993) was the proprietor of Pankow Motors, a Dodge-Plymouth dealership, at the time of this photo. In 1949 he was named Erie County Clerk, in which position he remained until being elected mayor of Buffalo, a position he held from 1954-1957. His administration oversaw numerous “improvements” to Buffalo’s transportation

network, including the Niagara Thruway extension, the construction of the Kensington and Scajaquada Expressways and an extension to the Buffalo Skyway. He was succeeded by Frank Sedita in 1958, and subsequently stood trial the following year for various financial irregularities during his term as mayor. In the end, he beat the rap when his tax and accounting records were conveniently destroyed in a fire at Pankow Motors.

Our heartfelt thanks to Sandra for sharing this piece of her family’s history – and this whimsical look at two of Buffalo’s famous, or infamous, citizens of years past. 🍷