

Belly laughs abound at comedy museum

'Sillie Sallie' Elkordy displays props at her monument biz and performs

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Chronicle Contributor

In the movie "Patch Adams," Robin Williams' character is a medical student and then doctor who uses laughter to cheer up sick patients and others who are less fortunate. Sallie Elkordy does the same thing, except people call her "sillie" instead of doctor.

When she is not performing for the sick, Elkordy runs the Museum of Comedy in Ozone Park. Located at 80-60 Pitkin Ave., across the street from Mokom Sholom Cemetery, the museum is housed in the Ottavinich which Elkordy's father owned.

Inside the museum, there are a wide variety of items — everything from a picture signed by William Hanna and Joseph Barbera, creators of the "Flintstones," to a vintage George Burns doll complete with tuxedo and cigar and a Henny Youngman pocket jester, which looks like a tape measure but has jokes where the numbers would appear. No matter what the item, Elkordy hopes they fall in line with the museum's motto, "Veni, Vidi, Risi" — I came, I saw, I laughed.

The collection's proximity to a

cemetery is ironic considering that Elkordy, 51, is very much alive.

The laughmeister started out by performing at hospitals and homeless shelters with some fellow comics, but after doing hundreds of unpaid shows, the others stopped returning her calls. Part of the reason she opened the comedy museum was to help pay the comedians who performed with her.

"I went nonprofit as a museum because I had a huge collection of funny stuff, and this would provide me a way to raise money to pay the comics," she said. "I'm a very, very bad fundraiser but a very good fun raiser."

Elkordy said she had ended up paying out of her own pocket for over 550 shows and was writing 15 letters a day to get money for the comedians.

At the museum, which is only open on Mondays from 1 to 5 p.m., Elkordy displays a part of her large collection.

"We do not have the funding to encase the many artifacts, nor do I have the funding to frame the many pictures we have," she said. "We do what we are able to do without funding."

Sillie Sallie's said her real purpose, though, is to "get out and cheer people up."

"We are very good at what we do, and we transform people," she said. "When I see 400 toothless men laughing, it really makes my day. There are 400 men and two teeth among them, it's just funny. These are my peeps."

Elkordy's son, Abbas Octavius Elkordy, aka Joyboy, started performing during his senior year of high school when he was 17. His specialties are impressions and body language humor, and, now 20, he is in college and still performs every chance he gets.

"Go on YouTube and watch his graduation speech — it's off the freakin' chart," Sillie Sallie said. "There is also a clip of him performing at the Comic Strip, and it was good."

The comedian said that though she'd always wanted to be part of a comedy team, she never envisioned it being with her son.

"We were working on a routine together that we mess around with all the time," she said. "We may be performing together here soon."

In addition to her comedy



Comedians Brian Kiley and Sallie Elkordy with a patient at a recent performance.

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performances, Elkordy just completed an unsuccessful run for Congress. She ran as a write-in candidate in the Ninth District in Brooklyn and Queens on a platform called "Cease for Peace." She said if elected she would have addressed a host of problems, including her beliefs that vaccines are causing mental disabilities in children and that the water supply is tainted.

Her father, A. George Ottavino, started the business that houses the comedy museum. He was in the Navy and served during World War II on the USS Hilarity, a fitting name considering his daughter's passion for comedy.

For more information about the Museum of Comedy, becoming a member or booking a performance, call Elkordy at (718) 268-2914.