

MIKE'S MEMORIES

by Mike Wilson

Hmmm.... what do I remember about the *Allakazam* days? Well, I was only 6 years old when it all started and the family moved from Dallas to Los Angeles in 1960. So memories are a jumble of home life and TV life, peppered with school as an elementary student. We first lived in a home above the intersection of Sunset and Doheny, I heard that it once had been Boris Karloff's house, I remember vividly how disappointed I was that I could not find an entrance to the dungeon below the home where I was most anxious to find the mad scientists laboratory.

Trips to CBS Television City for the videotaping of the show was always something of a mixed emotion for the little guy. I was delighted with the opportunity to go exploring at Farmer's Market next door, but I hated wearing the hand-made pint size Sy Devore tuxedo. And the train. All the kids at school thought I got to ride the train every Saturday morning. Little did they appreciate that the train opening was only shot once, the track laid in the studio was not even a full circle. All it drove was about 20-feet.

I was fascinated by the train, it was a real steam engine. Had a real fire inside and boiling water. It was so neat!

The fun really came in later years when Marx Toys became a sponsor for the show. Wow, that made a change in my Christmas and Birthday celebrations! There was the Vac-U-Form plastic molding machine and the the Shop King lathe that carved styrofoam. Marx had all these neat toys that you made and built things with. Mom and Dad kept a cabinet in the garage full of the sponsor's toys and I dreamed of getting every one of them.

Allakazam was shot in Studio 31 at CBS Television City, one of the two studios that had permanent audience seating in it. If memory serves me right, and years may be a bit mixed, but next door to where *Allakazam* was recorded were two other shows that have truly withstood the test of time. Adjacent to us was Studio 34 where Art Linkletter's *Kid's say the Darndest Things* was broadcast... and on the other side of the hall in Studio 41 was the interior sets for *Dennis the Menis*. I remember once in a while someone would point out to me an equally young Jay North as he walked down the hall. When we took a break from shooting *Allakazam* I enjoyed being allowed to go down the hall from the studio to a vending machine that dispensed big cold green apples. That's when I would sometimes see Jay, he was a few years older than me so I was not one he was going to talk to... and frankly, I was way to shy to talk to him.

Favorite thing that happened to me those years at CBS? It was a very special birthday that Dad set up. I had never seen the movie *Wizard of Oz*. As a matter of fact, I had not yet seen any movie in a movie theater, much less something in color! The film was not in theaters, and not

released for TV yet. But I had heard about the movie from my friends as something really fun. So dad secretly set up a private showing of the movie in the CBS screening room. I was truly excited and happy that myself and about 5 of my friends go to go and see the movie in our own movie theater. I think it had about 20 seats, wow and it was in color! Remember, back then, everything on TV was in black and white.

As I look back on those years, I

appreciate now how nice everyone was to me as a little kid. Bob Fenton always has a special place in my heart, as well as "Torchy" Bob Towner. Bev Bergeron "Rebo" is a man I have always loved. I think it is largely because we had a mutual appreciation of flying kites. Oh, I don't remember every flying a kite with him, but this was a topic I remember us talking about back stage when Mom and Dad would do state

fair performances in the summer with Rebo, Bob Fenton and others in tow.

Oh, and the many dinners at Frascati's on Sunset Boulevard just half a block west of Doheny in Beverly Hills. This very high class restaurant catered to the Hollywood rich and famous and it was definitely a treat to eat there. Matri'd Andre Lion always bubbled when the Wilson family would enter and we would be shown to a nice booth. This is where I learned about chilled vischouis, escargo, and my favorite, shrimp cocktail. Andre went on years later to open his own exclusive and very successful epicurian restaurant Mon Grenier in Encino where it continued to be an absolute delight for me to eat.

