

ALLAKAZAM

John Daniels told me in 1961 that I had an interview with a fellow by the name of Mark Wilson.

Mark had just come to Los Angeles the previous July to produce his *Magic Land of Allakazam* for Kellogg's cereals, and he needed another person as magic creator. He had brought Gaughan and Bev Bergeron from Dallas with him, and now had Torchy Towner and Bobby Fenton on the payroll. He needed someone to come up with the appropriate small magic, and John recommended me. I went to the interview, gave them all the right answers and was roped in to the middle of network television production at CBS studios on Fairfax and Beverly boulevards.

It was not only an interesting job, but I learned a lot about television, audiences, and the presentation during those days. In that first year, the six of us would have meetings to figure out what we would do for the next two to three shows, and we would come up with a complete show because of our backgrounds. Towner was interested primarily in acting and illusions, Fenton had a good background in box magic (he had worked as a Valentine doing a nice manipulative act in night clubs before the war) and illusions and they both worked as assistants on Virgil's world tour, Bev had a background of working shows other than just magic, I was the resident close up magician, and Johnny Gaughan

Excerpt from: *The Magic in Books*
by Leo Behnke



3:00 A.M. Saturday Morning), We'd rehearse. One of the great advantages we had that Fred Shields was assigned to us as studio liaison, and his magic knowledge helped us in more than one situation.

Saturday morning was film day (no videotape in those days), and we let in the audience. The lead-in to the show had already been filmed, so we could concentrate on just the content of the shows. First of all, we'd do the big illusions in order to get them out of the way. Then, while we were setting up for the various tricks that happened during the course of the show, Mark would do the tricks in the audience. These would be a card trick with a big finish, or any other trick with small props that could be handled and be performed surrounded. By this time, the audience

could and would hustle up the props for our specialties. My work in the show was all the small magic: the trick Mark did while seated in the audience, a table trick with models for props and an appropriate story, and any sleight-of-hand tricks. Besides those, I was also to take care of the fan mail, any premiums or promotional tricks for giveaways, and, naturally, the library. After two weeks of putting everything together, We'd take the props to Stage 43 at CBS-TV on a Thursday morning. That afternoon, and as long on Friday as it took (Some times that would be until 2:00 or

had been there for the maximum time allowed, so they'd be dismissed and we could film the tricks where spectators weren't needed. During the following years, we used the summer hiatus to have a weeklong meeting at some resort, usually in Palm Springs, to create outlines for all the shows for the following season. This saved a lot of time and work during the eight or nine months that were used for the filming. The first year had been constant pressure to stay two or three weeks ahead of the broadcast dates but with the new system it was much easier.

"To the
Amazing Wilsons:
Congratulations
on the
50th Anniversary
of *The Magic Land
of Allakazam!*"

Bob & Esme
Gibson

"Mark, it was great fun
to be there with you
at the beginning when
we were both just nine
years old. I'm so pleased
to see the wonders you
and Nani have made
in the magic world
ever since.

Congratulations."
Walter
Zaney Blaney

"For me it is
an honour to
congratulate my
esteemed friends and
great artists on this
50th Anniversary!!!
My warmest regards
to you Nani & Mark."

Silvan

"When we were kids,
TV was new and there
were not many Japanese
TV shows. We watched
many American TV
shows and one of them
was the *ALLAKAZAM*.
We remember it very
well, and now we
are family!

Congratulations on
this 50th anniversary.
We are honored to
be a family."

Miyoji & Hitomi
Kimura
Greg's wife - Ayako
Wilson's parents

"Mark and Nani,
You gave our world
the gift of *MAGIC*
through your pioneer
efforts in creating
and producing
*The Magic Land
of Allakazam*.

You have given
our world the gifts
of *WONDER* and *JOY*
with your magical
presence throughout
the years.

We are ever so
grateful!"

Denise & John
Wreede