

# MARK WILSON AND THE MAGIC CASTLE

It was on a Saturday some 48 years ago, sometime during 1962. We were shooting *The Magic Land of Allakazam* at CBS Television City, when for some reason, I walked out into the hall which separated the giant studios, when Bill Larson walked up to me.

Mark "I'd been wanting to tell you that my brother Milt and I are going to open a magic club in an old house here in Hollywood over on Franklin Street and we'd like you to be a member. It will cost you \$25 to join. The old place was built back in 1902 or 03, and Milt has made a special deal with the owner of the house. It will have a bar and be a great place for magicians to get together. I think we will call it the Magic Castle. Would you like to join?"

I said, "It sounds like a kind of interesting idea. Do you think it will work?"

Yes, we think maybe it will. We have a lot of magicians that are interested too, so we will need to see what happens. Would you like to join us?

"Okay, but I have to discuss it with Nani first."

A number of months went by and I ran into Bill Larson again at CBS and asked him, "How is that magic club thing coming along?"

Bill replied, "Well, it's almost ready to open. It's on Franklin Avenue, just one block West of Highland. It's an old house, on top of a hill, on the north side of the street. You can't miss it.

Why don't you stop by and see it sometime, Milt will probably be there."

A few weeks later we did drive by and drove up

that hill from Franklin to the old house for the first time, and done many thousands of times now. We parked the car and, sure enough, when we went inside, there was Milt working hard removing the old paint from the banister on the steps that go up to the second floor.

"I don't know why they would cover up this beautiful wood with all this old paint," was our greeting from Milt, as he sanded away. When you think about it, Milt has been sanding away, changing and adding to the new and old pieces and parts of the Magic Castle for almost 50 years now.

A few weeks later we had a call from Bill Larson "Mark, we are going to open

the Magic Castle tomorrow and we really need some publicity. If you can think of something that would work, we certainly would like you to come down and do it on opening day. I know this is very short notice, but we really do need some help tomorrow."

So Nani and I put our heads together and came up with a levitation effect, with Nani floating in the air in front of me, as I stood on Erma the magical grand piano. That was the photograph that ran, with an announcement that the Magic Castle was now open, which was printed in Newsweek Magazine, the first ever national publicity for the Magic Castle.

Since then, the Magic Castle has turned into a multimillion dollar operation, serving great food and presenting the best magicians from around the world, seven nights every week. I assure you, the Magic Castle would not be up there on top of that hill, if it were not for Bill and Milt's dream, which has really come true. And... all we magicians are much better for it!



**MARK & NANI  
THANKS FOR  
THE MAGIC.  
LANCE**