

and bring him to our small apartment, where he would help us assemble the magic kits we were selling.

After Nani and I moved to Los Angeles to produce *Allakazam*, a few months later Johnny arrived in LA to attend a fine arts college and went to work for us as a runner. Those runs were often to Owen Magic, where he met an old gentleman named Carl Owen ... and the rest is history. We soon realized we could not afford to buy those wonderful Owen props every week, so we bought a Shop-Smith (a do everything wood-working device for \$100 from Sears) and opened our own shop with Johnny in charge. As he learned more and proved his ability constructing many effects for us, John became the supervisor of our shop, where often he

had three, four or five men working for him to help construct the illusions. Many of these gentlemen such as, Bill Smith, David Mendoza, and Bill Schmeelk now have their own shops throughout the country. They all got their magical start working for Johnny Gaughan.

And then there was Bob Fenton and Bob Towner, who were really essential to our success.

Their lives had both been de-



voted almost entirely to magic. Both had been with Virgil on his tour of South East Asia, Europe, Australia, New Zealand and, of course, the United States. They actually had more on-stage magical experience than the rest of us put together, but they fit perfectly into our group of struggling artists.

We would usually start the creative sessions for next week's show on Sunday night. (Sunday during the day was always reserved for our young son Michael.)

So the two Bobs, Fenton and Towner, would start their week with the Sunday night creative meeting, and then usually work every day, until we shot the show on Saturday. Not only did they help getting the pieces and parts together for every show, they also played important on camera parts as well.

Bob Towner was Evil,

the World's Most Evil Magician; he was King of the Lost Balloons; or The Evil Puppeteer, depending on the theme that week. Bob Fenton's most memorable parts were as the Old Grandma or Hazel the Witch, complete with the large wart (which is a necessary part of every evil witch's nose). They both put on their costumes (supplied by Nani), did their own makeup, rehearsed every show and helped load in and strike the show, that they had helped to put together during the week.

And then there were our two beautiful girl assistants, Jackie Joseph and Lynn Barton. At this time, I am not sure what happened to Lynn, but Jackie went on to become, first a movie star and then an excellent character actor. While we were shooting *Allakazam* one week, Jackie came to us and said, "I'm so sorry, but I have to take two weeks off, because they are shooting a movie in which I will be the co-star, along with some new actor that's just getting started named Jack Nicholson." The name of the movie was *The Little Shop of Horrors*, which was the first of several movies that have born that name this was the first and it has now has become the cult classic we know today.

Another major asset was Leo Behnke, who I relied on as our "close-up" specialist. Leo could always be counted on to come up with a new, usually sleight-of-hand effect, which I had to learn every week.

During the second year of *Allakazam*, we were indeed fortunate to have the services of the multi-talented Francis Martineau on our team. He added greatly to our shows, not only because of his extensive magic ability but we particularly utilized his creative artistic talents.

As I mentioned before, John Daniel of Owen Magic supplied many of our illusions. John was the only California person that I knew and when the Wilson family first arrived in Los Angeles, he was kind enough to direct us to the very first hotel in which we stayed.

Dick Zimmerman was never a full-time Allakazamer because he was a Naval officer based in the California Bay area at the time. But Dick was kind enough to submit many creative ideas which we utilized on many shows during the five-year run.

All the *Allakazam* shows were directed by Andy Sidaris. The impro-

vised music was supplied by Jack Anderson who had done the same for us back in Dallas.

There were many others whose names I should include on this list and to whom I sincerely apologize. My only excuse is that It has been some 50 years since all this happened.

I hope I have covered our magical family sufficiently, because it was through the efforts of the entire group that we achieved our goal. Except for those that came with us from Dallas, all of these people were strangers to us when we arrived in Los Angeles, a few weeks before that first show aired.

Today the Wilson's, Nani, Michael, Greg, and I, have a better understanding of why *Allakazam* achieved the success that it did. It was truly the result of a group effort, by people dedicated to spreading the art of magic to the world. This realization brought to mind a poem written by my grandfather, who was not a poet but a dynamic entrepreneur. We now know, better than ever before, although it was written a century ago, it is certainly still true today.

*Happy Magic!*  
Mark Wilson

**Congratulations**  
On 50 Years of  
**Allakazam Magic**  
Mitt & Arlene Larsen

**Thank you to our Allaka-Zammers and Fans!**  
Your love and support helped make this whole project possible.

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