



PART 3 SECTION 2

MARK WILSON AND NANI DARNELL OF THE MAGIC LAND OF ALLAKAZAM

The Real Story of The Real McCoy—Two Years of Impasse. (Page 3)

THE MAGIC LAND OF ALLAKAZAM

50th Anniversary Celebration

by Mark Nelson

Fifty years ago a new program made its debut on the CBS Television Network. It was special because it was the first regular weekly magic series ever seen on a national broadcast network:

The Magic Land of Allakazam.

Mark Wilson and Nani Darnell Wilson were the stars of the show – a young couple from Texas, their young son Mike Wilson was also featured on the show, as was an invaluable on-camera and off-camera contributor, fellow Texan, Bev Bergeron, as Rebo the Clown. Together they influenced an entire generation of children, illustrating for them the delights and wonders of magic, from sleight of hand to grand illusion.

With the tremendous creative demands of a weekly show, Mark gathered a group of some of the west coast's most prominent and creative magical thinkers together. Each contributed their experience and knowledge, with their own unique talents and skills. Bev Bergeron, Leo Behnke, John Daniel, Bob Towner, Bob Fenton, John Gaughan, Francis Martineau, Lin Searle and dozens more formed the team that not only brought the show to children across America week after week, but spent many months annually touring from city to city, bringing live magic once again to families everywhere.

It received numerous awards and honors from broadcasters and family television organizations. Most



of all, it inspired many young people to pursue magic as a hobby and, eventually, a career – magicians like Doug Henning, David Copperfield, Lance Burton, and hundreds of others.

Thanks to the many innovations that came from the *Allakazam* shows, magic was breaking out all over. Combining the fame of *Allakazam* and Mark's considerable marketing skills, as the series ended, Mark and his team created the very successful Hall of Magic Pavilion at the 1964/65 New York World's Fair, which leads us into a career that flourished for decades to come.

An astounding number of magicians, past and future, worked at one time or another on a Wilson show or production. Alan Wakeling, Earl Nelson, Dick Zimmerman, Chuck Burnes, U.F. Grant, Walter Gibson, Larry Anderson, Ray Pierce, Stan Allan, are only a few of the names contributing to the tremendous success of *Allakazam* and the productions that followed.

There have been many other magical achievements by the Wilson clan, but they all had their roots in the original television show which celebrates its golden anniversary on October 1, 2010, marking 50 years since its premiere broadcast.

TV Guide at one point called Mark Wilson "America's most televised magician."