

REKINDLING THE CASTLE SPIRIT

- by Harry Evry

Almost 50 years ago, the Larsen family invited the magic community and the world to travel back in time. They invited us to leave modern Hollywood behind and step through a secret door behind a swinging bookcase into a roaring party at the beautiful Lane Mansion in 1910.

What they created wasn't a restaurant. It wasn't a bar, a night club or a dinner theater. It was a true, real-world epic journey, a very real magical adventure.

There is no question the Castle wouldn't exist without the Larsens but, as Milt will proudly tell anyone who asks him, they didn't do it alone. To build and sustain the Larsen's dream took a team, a dedicated community and the support of the most creative and imaginative industry in the world.

What began as a simple spark of a passionate idea, shared between a father and his two sons, spread like a magic flame, igniting the enthusiasm and imagination of an amazing and unlikely team of artists, craftsmen, businessmen, magicians, actors, talk show hosts, land owners, writers, celebrities and even musicians. The Castle was born and built not from a business plan but through a vision. It grew and evolved through the tireless dedication of its members, staff and many members and volunteers who, over the years, have offered freely of their time and talents to make what is truly the most magical and unlikely place in the world.

In the decades that followed, The Magic Castle has grown and been graciously and sometimes not so graciously shepherded into a successful business, a world class restaurant, a thriving nightclub and what may be the most successful dinner theater in the history of the world. In the heart of most guests and most members, however, that's not why they come here.

Fifty years later, guests are still here for one reason: They are here to experience a magical adventure. Not just a magic show, not just a fine meal, not just a night of laughs, surprise and entertainment. These things are all great, but they can all be found in many different establishments all around the world.

Three years ago, Milt Larsen, Paul Draper and I were discussing the nature of The Magic Castle as an epic journey, how it was imagined and why people so love to visit places like The Magic Castle, Disneyland, Caesar's magical empire or any of the themed resorts of Las Vegas. Paul brilliantly pointed out that these are all real-world movie sets where guests are free to live out the fantasy of their own lives.



Harry Evry is a producer, technical director, designer, author, editor, fx supervisor, composer, magician and imagineer. He currently serves as a member of the Innovation Committee, the Media Committee and 50th Anniversary Committee.

He has had the privilege of contributing to many very well-known brands, shows, parks and attractions but is proudest of his contributions here at our world-famous Magic Castle.

The Magic Castle especially takes people out of the cold, hard world of the mundane and transports them for a night — or, for some of us members, for a large part of our lives — into a magical place where magic is supreme and anything is possible. Everything that happens inside the Castle walls that supports or adds to that illusion makes the journey and the magic all the stronger. And whenever those pesky realities of time and reality intrude, that spirit of wonder, empowerment and adventure is reduced.

Sadly, even as the Castle grew and flourished as a club, a restaurant and a theater business for so many years, operational realities and the pressures of time and money have also left their imprints, fading away a bit of the brilliance and grandeur, diminishing some but never all of the elements of wonder and surprise, and often imposing some all too real limits and restrictions on the epic experience that was Milt Larsen's primary vision for the Castle itself.

Most members remember very well how we first heard the news that the Castle had been ravaged by a fire on Halloween 2011. On the morning of Nov. 1, none of us really knew if or when the Castle would reopen.

However, within minutes of re-entering the Castle, rushing past the desolation of the Dante Room and discovering that the prized Houdini Seance Room had somehow been miraculously spared, Milt Larsen, who built so much of the Castle with his very own hands, smiled a sly knowing smile and said, "Remember all those things they said we couldn't do. Now, we will actually do them."

In that moment and then more and more with every month that has followed, the spirit of purpose, dedication, vision

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