

Branson News

January 28, 1998

Magical Mansion names new magician

by Jimmy Laucaster
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There will be no name change for the Magical Mansion for 1998 but there will be a new magician - Melinda, the First Lady of Magic will headline the 3,000 seat theater.

For the last several years she has been performing her shows in Las Vegas, as well as recently doing a television special for Walt Disney television that was aired on CBS. Now, Melinda Saxe is moving to Branson.

A press conference and tour operator reception was held at the Magical Mansion Tuesday.

Theater president, Mike Bick-

nell said, "We will continue being the Magical Mansion with a magical show."

"Melinda will still be traveling on the road in the off season promoting the show," Bicknell said. "Not only will it be good for us, but it will be good for Branson. We have every intention, in our planning, in having Melinda here for a long time."

"We have the option to stay here longer in Branson if things go well," Melinda said.

Shows will start on April 15 with two shows a day and there will be Christmas shows, too.

(Continued on 2A)



Melinda Saxe

• Melinda Saxe is new magician at Mansion

(Continued from 1A)

"We are excited about working with the Bicknells - Gene (who is the owner of the theater) has been really wonderful because he is an entrepreneur and has great ideas," Melinda said. "Gene is into our ideas and what we are doing. I think it will be a nice marriage here."

She spoke about her start in magic.

"I have been doing magic since I was a little girl," Melinda said. "I grew up in Las Vegas and saw a lot of the performers and magicians. I had a dream at age 13 that I was on stage performing magic. I then went out and started learning magic and working on my performing."

The entertainer has done well, performing at the various resorts and hotels in Vegas for 10 years.

She even has been voted by USA Today as one of the world's top three magicians.

"After leaving Las Vegas, I took my show on the road and did the Disney Special last May 30 for CBS," Melinda said. "Things have kept going on a roll and now I am here in Branson."

There could be more Disney TV shows that could be filmed from the Magical Mansion.

"We have five, one-year contracts to produce four more Melinda specials," said Stephen Zadrick, who is the magician's manager. "She also plans to

work on some more specials with Disney. She is the first female magician to have her own TV special as well as the first female magician to be inducted in the Movie and Magic Hall of Fame. She is also slated to appear as one of the anchors on World's Most Dangerous Magic, where she will levitate herself out of a snake filled pit. This will be shot in February."

Melinda has also appeared on Jay Leno, Oprah Winfrey, Dick Clark Live, Montel Williams and Good Morning America.

Melinda said her show at the Magical Mansion will be a very large magic show with elaborate sets and costumes. The show is musical, as well, from upbeat, original and even John Michael Montgomery music.

"The stage at the Magical Mansion is very large because we have such a large stage show," Melinda said. "Coming to Branson is one of my dreams because it is such a family-oriented atmosphere. That is the type of show that I do. My show has a lot of uplifting storytelling and good positive messages in it that work in a place like

Branson. I have worked hard in creating new illusions to the show."

Melinda said her most well-known illusion is called The Drill.

"The Drill is a death-defying act which a huge drill spears through my body, and picks me up 15 feet in the air and spins me around," Melinda said. "It is very intense and people are on the edge of their chairs on this one."

"I also have an illusion called 'Fireflies' which is a heart-warming story about my grandmother."

Melinda said she would have male dancers and that she also dances. Her show will also have female assistants as well as some specialty acts.

Bicknell said there are also plans to have a morning show with another act which will be announced at a later date.

Bicknell said he hopes that the area around Hwy. 248 will boom again.

"I hope it will," Bicknell said. "It is a good growth area and well laid out with a five lane road. I am glad to see everyone up in this area for this year."