

It's a magical life

Glenda and Mike Mann travel the country together

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Arguments don't last long in Glenda and Mike Mann's marriage.

That's because with a quick wrist motion, she can saw her husband in half, and he can speak the truth without moving his lips.

Glenda Mann is the magician of the team, pulling rabbits and white doves out of a tall black hat. Mike is the ventriloquist who spends his time talking to dolls that sit on his lap. Together, they both are bringing home the bacon as the Glenda and Mike Magic Show.

For more than 15 years, the couple have made Hutchinson their home base. They travel around the country for up to 10 months out of the year performing for audiences at everything from conventions to school groups.

The couple met in Wichita through a mutual friend and realized they enjoyed singing together. They performed in several musical groups.

"It was love at first sight, wouldn't you say?" he asked her.

"He wrote me poems; he still does," she said.

"I was shy. She brought me out of my shell," he said.

Maybe it was just a special blend of magic, something she was exposed to at a young age.



She recalled watching her grandmother, the wife of a Baptist preacher, illustrate Bible stories for Sunday school with magic tricks. It left her curious to learn more. He began working with Muppet-like puppets, and they both checked out tons of books in the library to learn more about magic and ventriloquism.

The Manns studied, working together to develop a magical comedy act that includes making him disappear. She has studied under Harry Blackstone Jr. and has become a member of the International Brotherhood of Magicians.

Kukla, Fran and Ollie, Edgar Bergen, Paul Winchell and Shari Lewis influenced Mike Mann.

Now, they perform at schools and churches, at county fairs and during library story hours. They just finished a weeklong performance at the Kansas State Fair. They have written a program for soil conservation districts, and their next gig will be teaching children about protecting

water sources through some magic tricks.

The Manns say their marriage is based on practicality, not magic.

"Be good communicators," she said.

"Give each other space," he said.

Living in a 32-foot travel trailer for a good portion of the year makes the last bit of advice difficult to follow, but the couple said the situation appeals to them.

"We can be in the northern states when it's hot in Kansas and in Florida in the winter," Mike Mann said. He keeps a laptop computer in their trailer, and they can manage their events via the Internet.

Personal space also is at a premium because they share their travel trailer with three rabbits - Haredini, Blackstone and Gypsy - and two white doves, Molly and Polly, that appear and disappear throughout the act.

"We love our life," Glenda Mann said. "If you enjoy what you are doing, it's not really work."

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