

## The Becwar family truly believes in magic



The Magical Becwars, kneeling, from left, Mark and Janene Harris, standing, from left, Gale, Janis, Irene and LeRoy as they end their show.

By Deb Reeves

Independent Correspondent

CENTRAL CITY — What if your father was a magician?

Or what if each of your four children was a magician?

Or what if your husband and your four children were all magicians?

In the case of the LeRoy Becwar family of Davenport, all of the above are true.

And having a magical family keeps life from being dull.

LeRoy started the show. He was doing magic before he and his wife, Irene, were married. She will tell you with a chuckle — that she married him to find out how he did the tricks.

They eventually added Joyce, Gale, Janene, and Janis to the troupe.

By day, LeRoy operates a television repair shop in Davenport, and even there, the magic show goes on.

"I like to do a trick now and again for the customers who come in," he said. "Sometimes, when I go to a home to repair a TV, I might take a few cards along."

His customers in the Davenport area will attest to the fact that a little magic makes the TV repairs go down a little easier. And being a repairman who's also a magician makes you pretty popular with the kids.

"I've had parents tell me that their kids say they hope the TV breaks so LeRoy can come over," Irene said. "He would do magic all day if he could."

LeRoy almost always has a pocket full of surprises and he's more than willing to use them. In fact, the trick he finds most difficult is ending the show. Those who wander behind the stage find that the magic goes on even after the curtain is down.

Janene said her dad was a big hit during her dating days. "He used to keep my dates past their curfew showing them magic tricks," she said.

As their family grew, it seemed natural for LeRoy and Irene to include the children in the act.

The first time the kids performed, they stole the show, he said.

LeRoy used to pay them a dollar for being in the shows, but eventually they did them just because they developed a love of entertaining people, said the young Becwars.

Janene's husband, Mark Harris, and Joyce's husband, Jeff Chleboun, are even getting into the act. Both women perform magic shows in and around their communities, and their husbands are willing assistants. And the Becwar children are getting their own children involved in the act.

When magic is a family passion, magic conventions become a regular ritual. At the conventions (held several times a year throughout the United States) magicians and aspiring magicians can learn new tricks as well as share some of their own — all for a price.

Janene said that the family fre-

quently buys new tricks at the shows, and that she remembers spending her baby-sitting money to buy tricks of her own.

As a result of the tricks purchased and others that the family has created, LeRoy has started listing each trick, and he set aside one room of his business to store the paraphernalia essential to magic.

"We have duplicates of some of our favorites, but we share others," said Janene. "Since dad started the list, we can call if we need kids' tricks, for example, and he can tell us who has them."

Each member of the family eventually moved toward a particular area of magic.

Janene and Janis love doing shows for children. Janene teaches at Southward Elementary School in Central City, and Janis is a student at UNL majoring in elementary education, so their vocations fit well with their hobby.

Gale loves making people laugh, and is perhaps the most serious about magic. He does shows several times a week, and travels over a wide area.

"Dad motivated us originally, but now we all just love it," said Gale.

"There's just an incredible high you get from performing. Everybody likes magic, from age 6 to 60. There is a misconception that magic is just for kids. I do a lot of adult shows — banquets, conventions — they enjoy magic as much as the kids."

The Becwars are a close-knit family, and are quick to cite the positive attributes of their siblings and parents.

"Janice is by far the most creative, she never stops thinking or refining a show," says Gale. "She is the one we call when we need help with dialogue."

"Gale has always been the shy one," countered Janice. "He uses magic to meet girls. Instead of asking them to dance, he asks them to pick a card."

"Mom is the glue that holds us all together," added Gale. "She gets the show ready. Most people don't realize that for each hour long show, there is an hour of preparation time."

Irene also handles much of the scheduling for the family, particularly when more than one Becwar is to be in the show.

While most families get together for a week-end visit, the Becwars get together to practice magic or to do a show together. They call on each other when they need an assistant for a performance, and they brainstorm for new ideas whenever they meet.

"We practice actions as well as going through the words," explained Janene. "Coming up with the idea or the dialogue and routine to go with an idea are sometimes the hardest part of a trick. The actual practicing is just fun."

The amount of time spent in practice depends on the result desired.

"To be good at it takes less time than to be great at it," she said.

Irene doesn't exactly mind family getting together to do magic, but...

"It would be nice to talk about something besides magic once awhile when we get together," said with a laugh.

Doing a show as a family only compounds the problem. "We talk about the show on the way and then about how it can be improved all way home."

She can't say too much, though says her family. After all, she is the one who got the kids involved in magic in the first place.

Figuring out how a trick is done is the goal of some people who do magic, and that's fine, said LeRoy.

"There is an explanation to magic, but that takes away the fun," said LeRoy. "The worst insult I could get would be if someone came to me and said I made a fool out of the Magic is fun. Our attitude is that you don't set out to fool people, you try to entertain them."

Magic can help people get away from some of the problems in their everyday life, to escape for awhile, added Janene.

"Magic has played a big part in keeping our family close," said Janene. "No matter how old we get, how much our lives change, we still have that common interest. It keeps us close together."