

# I JUST WANT TO GO HOME!

**By Mac King**

Springfield, Missouri — Here I am sitting alone in my hotel room waiting for room service to deliver my club sandwich and iced tea with extra lemon. This is not a rarity. What is unusual is my overwhelming desire to leave my hotel room, say “to hell with my show tonight,” and just go home.

Three nights ago I was awakened in my bed by a huge earthquake rumbling through Los Angeles. When the rumbling started my wife, Jennifer, and I woke up and sort of said to each other, “Cool, a little earthquake.” The shaking intensified. At first I did the manly thing. I covered my wife’s body with mine. I suppose I thought this would protect her in case the roof caved in on us. It quickly became apparent that this was a really wicked tremor, and so we made our way to the frame of our bedroom door. They say that’s where you’re supposed to go. The roaring sound of the earth was horrifying. We stood in the hallway screaming with fear as we clutched each other tight. The power had gone out, but there was enough light to see into our office and watch as the two front legs of my desk snapped off and it pitched forward on to the floor, its drawers sliding out almost in slow motion and spilling their contents. Jennifer’s desk turned over and her computer crashed to the floor. Windows shattered as the rest of our furniture jumped around and then fell over. Books and pictures mixed together with pieces of the walls and ceiling forming big piles in the middle of the living room. An entire set of dishes flew from the kitchen cabinets, their fragments mingling with food and trash.

I thought that if the earthquake didn’t kill me, I would certainly suffocate. I was simply too scared to breath. And if I wasn’t crushed or asphyxiated, I might drown in a pool of my own sweat. I am sweating right now as I relive those 45 horrifying seconds.

It’s three days later and I am, coincidentally, in Springfield. There is a mess of snow on the ground. I’m working in a club that couldn’t afford my normal comedy club fee, but I had a show here yesterday for a real estate investment group that couldn’t quite afford my regular corporate fee. By combining the two, it turned out to be a good deal

for everyone. I say that my being here in Springfield is a coincidence because the last big natural disaster I was in took place right here a few years ago.

Jennifer and I were moving from our home in Louisville, Kentucky, to Los Angeles in order to pursue my show business dream. We had sold or given away everything we owned that wouldn’t fit into our little Ford Escort. I had booked a series of clubs that led us on a six-month trek across the country finishing up at our new apart-

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ment in California. We hired a phone-answering service and had our mail forwarded to us at different points along our way.

One of our stops was here in Springfield. I had just finished taking a shower and was setting up for my show when Jennifer saw the warning on television. A tornado was headed through Missouri right toward us. The club I was working for put us up in a rented house. In a tornado they tell you to go to the basement. We opened every closet door in that house and eventually concluded that there was no basement. So, upon hearing the news of our approaching doom we huddled into the bathroom with a mattress and a radio, monitoring the progress of the tempest. I think we had the bizarre thought that the mattress would protect us in case the roof caved in. We could hear the wind whipping around outside as we lis-

tened to the description of the storm’s destructive tour through the city. After it had passed over us we went outside to look around. There were trees in the road and parts of houses knocked down. Someone’s laundry was in our front yard.

I called the club. “Come on in,” they said, “the power is out here, but we’ve got about 40 people who arrived before the tornado struck.” We dodged the litter that occupied the streets and made it to the club. It was eerie driving in the dark with no buildings lit up and no streetlights on. And they wanted us to do a show!

We placed candles around the edge of the stage. Jennifer sat in the back of the room and held one of those big flashlights focused on the stage. It cast a feeble circle of light on me. Michael Flannery, a comic from Cincinnati, sat on the floor at the foot of the stage and held a smaller flashlight on my hands or face — or whatever he thought best. At the end of my “Vanishing Earthworm” trick I said, “The tube is empty and the worm is gone! Of course, it’s so dark I could have just dropped it on the floor and you folks would never know!”

I guess it was sort of silly to do a magic show practically in the dark, but it was relatively well received. I think it was due mostly to the giddy atmosphere pervading the place. We had all lived through a dreadful brush with death and come out basically O.K. I think we all had that same light-headed, awestruck reaction the first day after the earthquake; but now it’s three days later and that feeling is gone. I really just want to go home. ●