

It seemed like a pretty standard week for young "Little House on the Prairie" fan Patrick Bordeaux back in 1977. On Wednesday, he tuned in for a new episode of the show, as was the custom of millions of other fans on Wednesday nights.

The very next day, he received a phone call from the show's producers, asking if he would like to come and read for a part. Several hours and a 50-mile drive later, he was in front of "Little House" executive producer, writer, director, and Charles Ingalls himself, Michael Landon.

Bordeaux recounts: "When Landon released all the other boys, he said, 'You stay. You've got the part.'"

On Friday morning at 7:30 a.m., Bordeaux started work on his first episode, portraying Laura's close friend, Andy Garvey, a role he would play over the next five years of the show.

"So, less than 48 hours after watching an episode as a fan, I'm on the show," Bordeaux says. "It was so fast. There was no time to get nervous. 'Ohh, that's Melissa Gilbert. That's Melissa Anderson. That's Carrie.' I know all these people, but I'd never met them. It was a really crazy week."

Bordeaux recounts his story in the short break he has between being the parade grand marshal for this year's Wilder Day celebration and signing autographs for Little House fans at the Laura Ingalls Wilder Historic Home and Museum. It's a busy weekend, but one he's enjoyed. His previous trip through Mansfield was for a festival in Webster County, and he didn't have time to fully embrace the town, its citizens, and all it had to offer, including the Wilder Home, until now. "It's amazing," he says.

"It's just like Laura and the stories there. Plainly beautiful, very sweet and honest and genuine."

While his character, Andy, was a TV show original and not featured in any of Laura Ingalls Wilder's books, Bordeaux is still happy to be part of her legacy in his own way.

One would think that playing a well-known character on a show as big as "Little House on the Prairie" would bring with it a tremendous amount of pressure. Surprisingly, Bordeaux says it's actually the opposite, due in part to the nature of the show and the temperament of its fans.

"Unlike something that I might have written or created myself, being a part of some thing that's bigger, it's a lot easier and a lot more enjoyable because there's no pressure," he says. "The people who watch 'Little House' are very nice. No one's coming up to challenge me on a political statement or anything. It's just 'Little House.' What was great about it is, there's religion, there's everything, but the base of it all is just good mor also. And morals are standard across all politics, religions and whatever."

He recalls vivid memories of being on the set with Melissa Gilbert (Laura) and all the other actors. Even times that might not seem pleasant to some he looks back on fondly, such as shooting the show's many exterior shots in Simi Valley, Calif., where temperatures occasionally soared to 100 or 115 degrees. Rags dipped in ice water kept them cool during the long days of filming. One memory in particular stands out to him and many of his fellow cast members. The production of the show had moved over from Paramount Studios to MGM. The "Little House" and barn sets had been built on the 100-year-old sound stage, which was being renovated at the time. During filming of that week's episode, the episode's guest star pulled the kid actors aside for a "field trip," leading them to the corner of the sound stage where an old oil heater that had sat for 50 years had just been removed.

Underneath was the iconic yellow brick road used in the filming of the "Wizard of Oz." "Little House on the Prairie" was now being shot on the same sound stage as one of the most influential films of the 20th century. What made this discovery more special to Bordeaux and the other kids was the fact that the guest star who was showing them this was none other than Ray Bolger, who played the scarecrow on "The Wizard of Oz" around 40 years earlier.

"Every kid in the world has seen 'The Wizard of Oz,'" Bordeaux says.

"We knew that Ray Bolger was the scarecrow when we met him, but we had no idea that we were shooting on the original 'Wizard of Oz' sound stage. To see that with him was pretty spectacular." Bordeaux has had no shortage of work since his days as a child actor on "Little House." Perhaps his most notable non-"Little House" role was a decade-long run as Bud Roberts on the hit CBS series, "JAG." He can also be seen in numerous films and other shows, from the comedy film "Summer School" to shows like "vicarly" and "Castle." "I fly under the radar where no one really knows what I'm doing," he says. "And then you look back and you go, 'Oh, you did a lot of stuff.' I've stuck around for a long time. I was born and raised in Los Angeles. I love Los Angeles. I love the business. I've been there since I was a kid. And it's the type of job you can do until the last day you're around. I'm looking forward to that." His most recent project is a horror film for the online streaming service, Tubi, called "Dante's Hotel." In between roles, he runs and teaches an online acting school. "You can train in Hollywood without being in Hollywood," he says.

Of course, "Little House on the Prairie" has something particularly special that few other shows do.

"Michael Landon told me, the one thing about 'Little House' is, we'll always be on TV because it's not dated," Labyrinth says. "It's not like Mork and Mindy or something where it was very 'of the time.' It's timeless."

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