

Kids' Stuff

KIDS' STUFF is a special pull-out section of the Weekender for younger readers. The editor is Sandra Hendricks.



One happy family

Michael Landon heads a happy cast and crew on "Little House on the Prairie," as reflected in this photo which he is shown with his TV "family" — Lindsay Green Bush (who plays daughter Baby Carrie), Karen Grassle (wife Caroline), Melissa Sue Anderson (Mary), left to right — and, in front, Melissa Gilbert (Laura).

It's All One Big Happy Family In 'Little House'

High morale among the cast and crew is no big deal for a TV series that has become a hit.

The "Little House on the Prairie" team turned that trick, however, even before the show's debut.

The series premiered on the NBC Television Network in September, 1974, and has consistently been ranked among the top 20 network television programs, according to data based on the Nielsen Television Index.

By September, though, the series' cast and crew had been working together three months (production began the previous June). From the start, it was a one-happy-family time.

When a magazine zapped the series early in the season as a hotbed of disagreement, the "Little House" cast and crew fumed. They wanted to cry out "Wrong." But they didn't know how.

Finally someone came up with the idea of buying a full-page ad in a Hollywood publication for the entertainment world. The project was labeled "Top Secret" so it would come as a complete surprise to Michael Landon, series star and executive producer.

Said Marian Anderson, mother of Melissa Sue, who plays Mary Ingalls: "I was nominated treasurer. Cast contributions, all of which were totally voluntary, were to come to me. Within an hour after the word got out, I had a mountain of cash and checks on my table."

Soon thereafter the ad ran. It said:

"To Michael Landon and associates, John Hawkins and Kent McCray (the series' producer and associate producer, respectively):

"It is a rare pleasure being part of your team and to share in your many talents making 'Little House on the Prairie' the hit it is. Your devoted

crew, staff and cast."

Below these words there were three columns of 89 names, alphabetically arranged. They included the Ingalls family and all the others seen as townsfolk of Walnut Grove, Minn.

They also included the entire behind-the-scenes contingent — David Rose, director of music; Ted Vogtlander and Haskell Boggs, directors of photography; directors William F. Claxton, Leo Penn and Lewis Allen . . . in short, everyone from Ed Abbott, the generator man, to Mary Yerkes, script supervisor.

This morale level is no accident. It starts at the top. Time and again, Landon has told interviewers that he loves to work but only on one condition — that the work is a happy experience.

Landon is spoiled. His 14 years as Little Joe Cartwright on NBC-TV's "Bonanza" series was just that — happy experience.

"We used to have some terrific times," he said as he recalled instance after instance of between-scenes horseplay, especially with the late Dan Blocker. Said Landon: "He was a super guy."

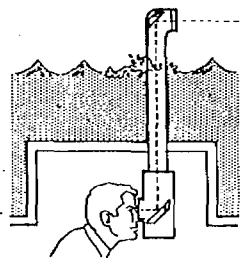
There were other super guys — male and female — behind the scenes, Landon felt. When he received the go-ahead to make "Little House on the Prairie" into a series, Landon contacted men and women. Some left long-running TV shows, other cancelled plans to work on major motion pictures.

"They joined me in taking a chance," said Landon. "Nobody knew whether we would be a hit or be cancelled in our weeks. That we were a hit is frosting on the cake. That we had a happy time getting there is what keeps me coming back."

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ANGLE OPTICS



The periscope is an optical instrument with which a person can make observations around corners. Periscopes are important in submarines or tanks. The largest periscope in the world, measuring 90 feet long, is used at the National Reactor Testing Station in Arco, Idaho, to observe nuclear reactions.

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Kingsport Times News, March 20, 1976, Pg. 19, Kingsport, Tennessee, US

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