

Allison Balson has come a long way from her days in the early 1980s as bratty Nancy Oleson on "Little House on the Prairie."

Balson joined the cast in the show's eighth season as the spoiled adopted daughter of Nels and Harriet Oleson who took over the curly locks and devilish behavior of Nellie, their older daughter, after Alison Arngrim left the series. As the fan site Little-HouseWikia.com puts it, Nancy "causes much trouble through the series."

"When it comes to the fan base, between Nellie and Nancy there's always that 'Who was nastier who was meaner, who was brattier?' debate," Balson said with a laugh. "I think I win the medal, but that's coming from me."

She joined the cast when she was 12. She appeared in the final two seasons and a series of TV movies. She then graduated from Princeton University and received an MBA from Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland. She has continued to act occasionally but also had a music career as a singer/songwriter. For the past four years she has been one of the hosts of a syndicated radio show, "Music Scene Live," which is carried on stations in Florida, Texas, Tennessee, Colorado, Arizona and Australia.

Balson will be in Winston-Salem later this week on behalf of both her acting and radio careers.

Thursday through Sunday, she will be appearing at the Western Film Fair, a nostalgia convention being held in Winston-Salem.

She also will be recording an episode of "Music Scene Live," featuring a performance by the Bo-Stevens, a honky-tonk/ country band from Winston-Salem. The recording of the radio show will be free and open to the public at 8 p.m. Thursday at The Garage, 110 West Seventh St. in Winston-Salem. In a week or so, the episode will be available online at the show's website, www.musicscenelive.com, on the "Listen Online" link.

At the Western Film Fair, Balson will meet fans, sign autographs and answer questions at guest panels. She will also perform "My Friend," an original song that she wrote in honor of Michael Landon, at Saturday night's all-star appreciation banquet.

"Michael Landon was wonderful," Balson said. "He was like a teacher and a father figure to us kids, and to the other adults he was like a best friend."

In addition to Balson, the Western Film Fair will include such familiar faces as Lana Wood (the James Bond film "Diamonds are Forever"), Ron Harper (Uncle Jack from "Land of the Lost"), Kathy Garver (Cissy from "Family Affair"), Nancy Stafford (Michelle from "Matlock") and others.

The festival will be held at the Hawthorne Inn & Conference Center, 420 High St., with early bird screenings of movies Wednesday afternoon and evening. The stars come in Thursday and will be on hand through Saturday with panels, autograph sessions and more. For more information, including ticket prices and a full guest list, visit www.westernfilmfair.com.

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Gov. Pat McCrory will be the guest on a new episode of "Triad Today," a local public affairs program with host Jim Longworth that was taped last week. He will be the sole guest for that episode, which will air at 7:30 a.m. Saturday on WXLV (ABC, Channel 45) and be repeated a week from today at 11 a.m. July 12 on WMYV (MY 48).

"Even though he and I disagree on some policy matters, I always enjoy our discussions," Longworth said. "Some elected officials dodge questions, but the governor embraces them."

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