

Entertainment

Michael Landon feels growing pains

By MARILYN BECK
HOLLYWOOD — Pa Ingalls is feeling growing pains.



Allison Argrim
... Nellie Oleson

Michael Landon sits behind the desk in his MGM office, which is lined with enough "Little House on the Prairie" photographs, drawings and paraphernalia to make it a mini-museum of the long-running show. He wears jeans, a loose, white cotton pullover shirt, darkly-shaded aviator-style glasses and a suppressed grin which demonstrates the not-altogether solemn nature of his remark.

True, he's particularly aware of his video children's aging as he prepares for a seventh season of "Little House" — a season he says will focus much attention on the married lives of Laura Ingalls and her antagonist, Nellie, who were mere sprigs of 10 and 11 when the series debuted.

And true, he shakes his head in amazement at the blossoming maturity of the juvenile members of the cast. He comments, for example, that to him, Allison Argrim (Nellie) "is still the little kid who kept fainting the first day of shooting because it was too hot."

But as the 44-year-old veteran video star continues to recollect and talk of the future, it becomes clear that Landon is hardly in a glum mood — or even a very serious one. Known for his off-beat humor as well as for his genius-level IQ, he has the disconcerting habit of inserting punch lines into sober thoughts.

"Yeah, I remember that first day," he goes on. "She (Allison) kept smiling like this."

He demonstrates a bizarre grin, his lips tight together, pulled up tautly into a "U" shape.

"I kept seeing her go around that way and, I don't know, I thought maybe she was doing it as some kind

actually provided relatively little material for story lines.

"If you haven't read the books, you should take five minutes out some time and read them all. You'll come across things like an entire chapter on cooking a muffin."

"I mean, they're wonderful books for kids. Kids can learn a lot from them. But we couldn't rely on them for stories. We have had a lot of help from Laura Ingalls Wilder biographies. Her life story is really interesting." And a bit different than it has been depicted in the show, notes Landon, citing as an example that the real Laura eloped and that "her father was really a hard nose. I think she was a little ticked off at him when she was married."

Though his first reaction to the question "What are you going to do after the series?" is a muffled remark about heading for a mental hospital, Landon actually has plans to produce several other series for NBC "which I don't want to say much about now."

"They'll be modern — not period pieces. Some of them are off the wall, using a lot of the things that have happened to me. I'll get a lot of ideas in the middle of the night and I'll get up and jot them down on a pad I keep on my nightstand table. And then the next day I'll look at them and have no idea what they mean."

He has an idea he'll be limiting his contributions to the NBC projects he's developing to behind-the-scenes work. In fact, he pictures himself doing less acting, although "if a really good role came up, I'm sure I'd take it."

On the other hand, "the other night I was in a very bad mood, and I was talking to my wife. I said, 'You know, every once in a while I'd like to be able to get away from all this. I'd like to be able to go into a restaurant and just eat.'"

"There's always this thing where somebody sitting maybe four feet away is talking about you, as if you couldn't hear: 'He's gained a little weight, hasn't he?' 'Hey, didn't his hair used to be gray on 'Bonanza'?"

"I said, 'Honey, I don't care how

successful the show is or anything, I just want to get out of this and do something where I won't be looked at all the time."

"You know what I'd like to be? I'd like to be the man who weeds the plants on the freeway dividers. I mean, I'd be facing away from the traffic so nobody'd have the chance to recognize me. And I'd still be my own boss. If I liked the looks of a weed — I'd leave it."

Not that he means it. Landon goes on to poke fun at himself and other celebrities who complain about recognition, making the observation that "the only thing worse than being constantly recognized is not being recognized at all."

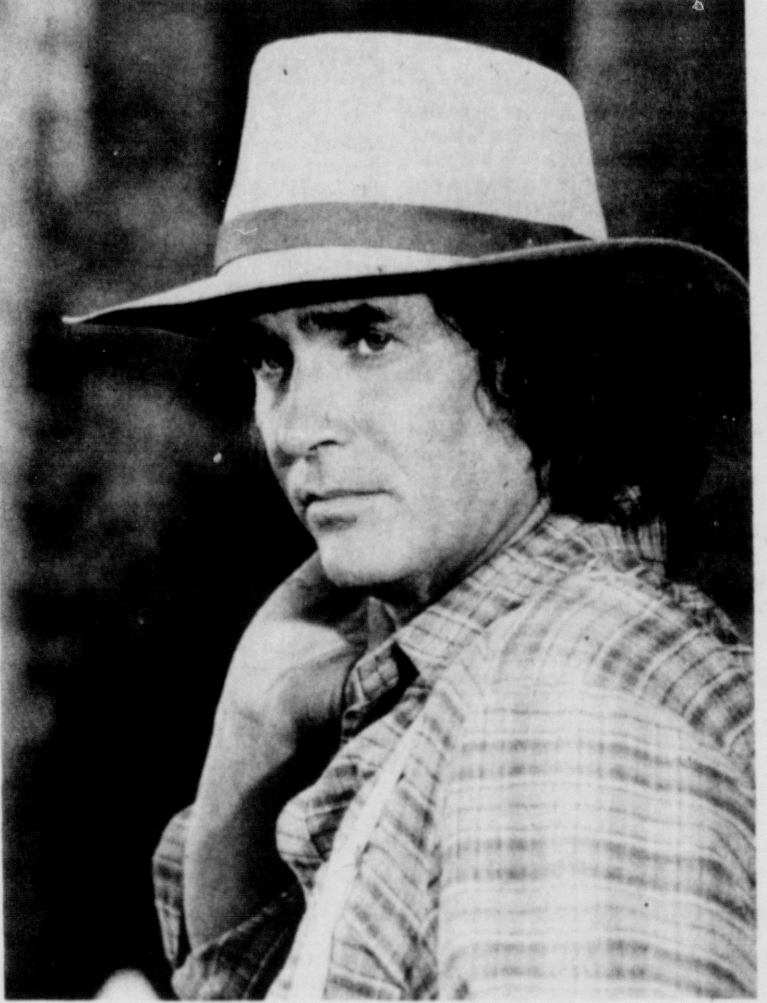
He has a favorite vision of transplanting some well-known personality "who believes he'll be recognized no matter where he is" to the top of L.A.'s Benedict Canyon road while construction is going on, "and having him wear one of those workman's orange vests and a hat and hold the 'Stop' and 'Slow' sign. Nobody'd know who he was. It would drive him crazy."

Landon thinks "Johnny Carson would be perfect" to place in such a setting — and envisions the "Tonight Show" host taking the anonymity for just so long before he attempted to attract attention with his trademark golf swing.

Unlike past hiatus periods, Landon reserved the past few months for preparation of the coming season of the "Little House" show on which he serves as executive producer and frequent director and/or writer. Squeezing in TV movie projects such as his "The Loneliest Runner," he says, "just gets to be too much."

He did take time for three vacations with his family this year, he says. "We got to drown in a rainstorm in Palm Springs, got snowed in on a ski trip in Utah and then we went to Hawaii — which turned out to be very nice."

Landon's also experiencing some of those "growing pains" with his own children (three from his first marriage, four from his current, 18-year union with Lynn Noe). He



Michael Landon thinks he's growing down

proudly displays a photo of 17-year-old daughter Leslie. With three "Little House" appearances behind her, Leslie's continuing her drive toward an acting career as a theater arts major at the University of Southern California. Mike Jr., at 15, is planning a behind-the-camera show business career. "And I also have one kid who's a mechanic and one who's a songwriter. I think it's great — whatever they want."

Landon thinks "It's incredible, the number of relatives we have working together on the show — considering none are mine. We have Melissa and Jonathan Gilbert, Lindsay and Sidney Greenbush, Pat and Matt Laborteaux and Wendi and Brenda Turnbaugh."

"The Dionne quintuplets were born too early — they could've been the whole east side of Walnut Grove."

Going out

Ongoing Kenosha

Paintings by Linda Graffe at the Elks Club through June sponsored by Kenosha Art Association.

"Illustrative Abstraction," work by Marc Travanty, Upstairs/Downstairs Galleries at Kemper, 124 66th St., Sundays only, through July 20.

Milwaukee

Silver in "American Life: Selections from the Mabel Brady Garvan and Other Collections at Yale University, the Milwaukee Art Center, through July 20.

Chicago

"Treasure of the Conception," exhibit at Shedd Aquarium in the national American debut of recovered sunden treasure, through mid-September.

Joseph Winterbotham Collection, exhibits, East Wing, East End, Art Institute of Chicago, Michigan Avenue at Adams Street, through Aug. 3.

Velvets from the Permanent Collection, Agnes Allerton Gallery, Art Institute of Chicago, Michigan Avenue at Adams, through Sept. 28.

"Plan of Chicago: 1909-1973," original renderings, memorabilia and manuscript material from library's own collection, Burnham Gallery of Architecture, Art Institute of Chicago, Michigan Avenue at Adams.

Marsden Hartley Retrospective, exhibition, East Wing, West End, Art Institute of Chicago, through Aug. 3.

School of the Art Institute, fellowship exhibition: part I, annual juried show of work by graduates, School Gallery, Art Institute of Chicago, through July 12.

Rentals and sale of works by Chicago-area artists, Art Rental and Sales Gallery, Art Institute of Chicago, Michigan Avenue at Adams.

Other

Grasskiing, new this year in Wisconsin, at Cascade Mountain, Portage, from 10 a.m. until dusk, weekends until July 4.

Every Thursday tour the Governor's mansion, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., 99 Cambridge Road, Maple Bluff.

29 Today Kenosha

Charlie Chaplin Films, 8 p.m., Kemper Center.

"Illustrative Abstraction," by Marc Travanty, 1-5, with audiovisual presentation at 3, Upstairs/Downstairs Galleries, 124 66th St.

Milwaukee

"Where's Charley?," 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., Melody Top Tent, 7201 W. Good Hope Road.

Summerfest, Summerfest grounds.

Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, with pianist Jeffrey Hollander, 7:30 p.m., Uihlein Hall, Performing Arts Center, 929 N. Water St.

"It Happens Every Spring," 7 p.m., Summer Cinema, Vogel Hall, Performing Arts Center, 929 N. Water St.

Chicago

Cubs vs. St. Louis, 1:20 p.m., Wrigley Field.

"Cabaret," 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., Marriott Lincolnshire, Routes 21 and 22.

"Best Little Whorehouse in Texas," 3 p.m., Shubert Theatre, 22 W. Monroe.

Chicago Symphony Orchestra, 7:30 p.m., Ravinia, Highland Park, Ill.

"Talley's Folly," 3 p.m., Studebaker Theatre, 419 S. Michigan.

"Ain't Misbehavin'," 3 p.m., Blackstone Theatre, 60 E. Balbo.

Other

Eagles, Alpine Valley, East Troy.

Antique, Art and Craft Show, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Stonecroft-Grafton.

Annual Bluegrass Music Festival, KOA campground, Mukwonago.

King Richard's Faire, Bristol.

11th annual Spring Green Arts and Crafts show, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Spring Green, Wis.

30 Monday Milwaukee

Summerfest, Summerfest grounds

Brewers vs. Oakland, 7:30 p.m., County Stadium.

Chicago

White Sox vs. California, 7:30 p.m., Comiskey Park.

1 Tuesday Milwaukee

Brewers vs. Oakland, 7:30 p.m., County Stadium.

Summerfest, Summerfest grounds.

"Chicago America Vaudeville," Melody Top Tent, 8:30 p.m., 7201 W. Good Hope Road.

Chicago

White Sox vs. California, 7:30 p.m., Comiskey Park.

"Best Little Whorehouse in Texas," 8 p.m., Shubert Theatre, 22 W. Monroe.

Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Shubert Program, 8:30 p.m., Ravinia, Highland Park, Ill.

"Ain't Misbehavin'," 8 p.m., Blackstone Theatre, 60 E. Balbo.

2 Wednesday Kenosha

Kenosha Pops Band, 8 p.m., Memorial Fountain.

Milwaukee

Brewers vs. Oakland, 7:30 p.m., County Stadium.

"Chicago America Vaudeville," 8:30 p.m., Melody Top Tent, 7201 W. Good Hope Road.

Summerfest, Summerfest grounds.

"Funny Face," 8 p.m., PAC Summer Cinema, Vogel Hall, Performing Arts Center, 929 N. Water St.

Chicago

White Sox vs. California, 7:30

p.m., Comiskey Park.

"Best Little Whorehouse in Texas," 2 and 8 p.m., Shubert Theatre, 22 W. Monroe.

"Ain't Misbehavin'," 2 and 8 p.m., Blackstone Theatre, 60 E. Balbo.

"Cabaret," 2 and 8:30 p.m., Marriott Lincolnshire, Routes 21 and 22.

Other

"Exit Laughing," Playboy Club, Highway 50, Lake Geneva.

3 Thursday Milwaukee

"Chicago America Vaudeville," 8:30 p.m., Melody Top Tent, 7201 W. Good Hope Road.

Brewers vs. Oakland, 7:30 p.m., County Stadium.

Summerfest, Summerfest grounds.

Chicago

"The Whispers and Shalamar," Mill Run Theatre, Golf Road at Milwaukee Avenue, Niles.

Chicago White Sox vs. California, 7:30 p.m., Comiskey Park.

"Best Little Whorehouse in Texas," 8 p.m., Shubert Theatre, 22 W. Monroe.

Other

"Ain't Misbehavin'," 8 p.m., Blackstone Theatre, 60 E. Balbo.

Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Shubert Program and chorus, 8:30 p.m., Ravinia, Highland Park, Ill.

Waylon Jennings, Poplar Creek, 8 p.m., Hoffman Estates.

"Cabaret," 8:30 p.m., Marriott Lincolnshire, Routes 21 and 22.

Other

Charlie Callas, Playboy Club, Highway 50, Lake Geneva.

4 Friday Kenosha

Kenosha Pops Band, 8 p.m., Simmons Island.

Fireworks, following Pops Band, Simmons Island.

Milwaukee

"Chicago America Vaudeville," 8:30 p.m., Melody Top Tent, 7201 W. Good Hope Road.

Milwaukee Brewers vs. California, 1:30 p.m., County Stadium.

Summerfest, Summerfest grounds.

Chicago

"The Whispers and Shalamar," Mill Run Theatre, Golf Road at Milwaukee Avenue.

Chicago White Sox vs. Oakland, 1:30 p.m., Comiskey Park.

"Best Little Whorehouse in Texas," 8 p.m., Shubert Theatre, 22 W. Monroe.

"Ain't Misbehavin'," Blackstone Theatre, 60 E. Balbo.

Don McLean, Bonnie Koloc, 8 p.m., Ravinia, Highland Park, Ill.

"Cabaret," 9:30 p.m., Marriott Lincolnshire, Routes 21 and 22 Ave.

Other

Fireworks, 9 p.m., Bueyrus-Erie complex, Sturtevant.

Foghat, Alpine Valley, East Troy.

Charlie Callas, Playboy Club, Highway 50, Lake Geneva.

5 Saturday Milwaukee

"Chicago America Vaudeville," 5 p.m. and 9 p.m., Melody Top Tent, 7201 W. Good Hope Road.

Milwaukee Brewers vs. California, 7:30 p.m., County Stadium.

Summerfest, Summerfest grounds.

"The Three Godfathers," 8 p.m., Summer Cinema, Vogel Hall, Performing Arts Center, 929 N. Water St.

Chicago

"The Whispers and Shalamar," Mill Run Theatre, Golf Road at Milwaukee Avenue.

Chicago White Sox vs. Oakland, 1:15, Comiskey Park.

"Best Little Whorehouse in Texas," 2 and 8 p.m., Shubert Theatre, 22 W. Monroe.

Bill Bruford, Park West, 322 W. Armitage.

Jimmy Buffet, 8 p.m., Poplar Creek Music Theatre, Hoffman Estates.

"Ain't Misbehavin'," 2 p.m. and 8 p.m., Blackstone Theatre, 60 E. Balbo.

Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Mahler song cycles, 8:30 p.m., Ravinia, Highland Park, Ill.

"Cabaret," 6 p.m. and 9:30 p.m., Marriott Lincolnshire, Routes 21 and 22.

Other

Charlie Callas, Playboy Club, Highway 50, Lake Geneva.

King Richard's Faire, Bristol.

Doobie Brothers, Alpine Valley.

6 Sunday Kenosha

Four Buster Keaton short films, 8 p.m., Kemper Center.

Milwaukee

"Chicago America Vaudeville," 3 and 7:30 p.m., Melody Top Tent, 7201 W. Good Hope Road.

Milwaukee Brewers vs. California, 1:30 p.m., County Stadium.

Summerfest, Summerfest grounds.

"Canterville Ghost," 8 p.m., Summer Cinema, Vogel Hall, Performing Arts Center, 929 N. Water St.

Chicago

Chicago White Sox vs. Oakland, 12:30 (double-header), Comiskey Park.

"Best Little Whorehouse in Texas," 3 p.m., Shubert Theatre, 22 W. Monroe.

Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Berg and Brahms, 7:30 p.m., Ravinia, Highland Park, Ill.

"Ain't Misbehavin'," 3 p.m., Blackstone Theatre, 60 E. Balbo.

"Cabaret," 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., Marriott Lincolnshire, Routes 21 and 22.

Other

Doobie Brothers, Alpine Valley, East Troy.

"Exit Laughing," Playboy Club, Highway 50, Lake Geneva.

King Richard's Faire, Bristol.