

A day in the life of a domestic worker: Without a 'green card' it's a lonely ordeal

By TRICIA CRANE

She stands at the bus stop, waiting. You've seen her before but she makes neither eye contact nor conversation. She wears casual clothes, slacks and a blouse, carrying a large purse or overnight bag. Your polite "hello" brings a shy smile, then a timid response. "I don't speak English."

The "95 — Los Angeles" pulls up to the curb. The door whooshes open and she sighs with relief, stepping safely inside.

Friday comes late in the week and Monday arrives all too soon for a live-in maid taking the bus back to suburbia.

Leaving the weekend apartment she shares with two friends who work in a factory, Lupe catches the first of a couple of bus rides that will take her to a corner not far from a house in the Valley and to her \$65 a week job.

One of an estimated 10% of California's workers who are undocumented, and one of the million who enter the state each year to find employment, Lupe, who earned \$80 a month at an office job in Costa Rica, is at the crux of the issue that currently concerns both state and federal legislators.

Comment from federal Immigration and Naturalization Service district director Joseph Surreck is that "Representatives from the State and Labor Departments are now in Mexico City," and that "It is anticipated that within the next week they will make their report to President Carter who will, in turn, make his recommendation to Congress concerning the matter."

There are those who feel that illegal workers rob the state of revenue, increasing the costs of health care, education and police. Others argue that immigration policies should conform to the economic facts that they report prove illegals bring more to the state than they receive, and that without them there would be economic chaos. They claim that monies sent south of the border actually amount to insignificant figures.

"Carter is considering giving amnesty to individuals who have built up roots like jobs, homes, families," according to David Bo-

joquez of Los Angeles' One Stop Immigration Service.

"Carter feels it is a question of human rights," says Bojoquez. "But at the crux of the matter is the Dixon-Arnett Bill which sought to regulate illegal aliens from competing with citizens for jobs but which," says Bojoquez, "has been rendered invalid pending federal action."

According to Surreck, "The President's proposal will concern four areas: the question of sanctions against employers who hire illegal workers, clearly defined requirements for the establishment of eligibility, monetary aid to Mexico, and beefed up border patrols."

But despite the standstill in deportations, for Lupe, a worker without a work permit, the issue is as real as the potentially dangerous distance from where the bus drops her off to a parking lot pick-up point across the street. Lupe's phone call to her employer brings a lumbering shuttle, ending painful moments when she is visible, most vulnerable.

"I'm thinking mostly about the danger when I take the bus," confides the 40 year old Lupe. "My friends say, 'Come work in the factory. It's fun. We work eight hours, then go home and rest. You'll be with friends.' But I am afraid to travel back and forth every day."

There are several homes in her life, but the one she calls her own is thousands of miles away. It's not as nice as the Encino one where she has her own room and radio, or as pretty as the panoramic view from the Sherman Oaks house where she cleans on Thursdays to earn extra money, or as private as the place she spends weekends with friends. But it's where her children live and where she hopes to return one day.

Lupe's first bus trip, in 1969, brought her to Los Angeles through the back door for reasons she finds difficult to recount.

"My daughters were growing up and the money I made at the factory wasn't enough," she says with a voice that cracks, stops, then goes on. "My husband had died and I had to go. . . It was terrible. They cried. I cried. The little one got sick. But I wanted a different life

for my family. That's why I'm here and not with them."

She worked for six years, sending money home, saving some, hoping to return, build a small store and retire. But in a moment her dream was deferred.

"I was at the bus stop when they arrested me," said the tiny woman with a voice that seemed to draw from a well of fear. "The immigration men, they go everywhere. They go to the markets, to the movies, to the bakeries, but mostly to the bus stops."

"I was home a month and I came back," she says, recalling the financial setback and her second trip through Central America where there was the "constant fear of banditos" who are known for robbing "coyote" smugglers of their illicit immigrants and contraband cargo.

"It is more and more dangerous all the time," she says of being "smuggled" into the U.S. "And some people even die, but I don't want to die."

Three hundred dollars is the minimum fee to be transported across the border. Trips from Central America cost additional hundreds of dollars. Forged Social Security cards or green cards cost more. Then there are those few who cross with 72 hour passports and overstay their visits.

With her most recent illegal border crossing two years behind her, today Lupe is back working for the same family, taking on additional cleaning jobs to earn more money.

According to Bojoquez of One Stop Immigration, "the chances of this woman and others like her returning to the her country are very slim. Seldom do these individuals return to their homes unless they are forced to by deportation," he says.

"You see, the quality of life for these people here is not that great, but it's a lot better than what they face at home. The worker may be held with the threat of being turned into the authorities and there are many cases of abuse. We run into cases of rape and imprisonment."

But the most we can do is try to see to it that the individual isn't thrown out of the country during

the prosecution."

"I have friends and sometimes I feel happy," Lupe says. "But I don't feel that this is my home. When I'm with my friends on the weekends we go out to dinner, sometimes to Disneyland or Busch Gardens. And sometimes," she says, laughing, "I go out on a date. But," seriously, "I don't think of getting married again. My oldest daughter, she says 'mother, if you meet a good man get married.' But you never know when a man is good and I'm here only to make a better life for my family."

One domestic referral service agent who prefers to remain anonymous refers to the issue and the women who are his livelihood with the jargon of a high school economics textbook.

"The trend is away from live-ins. My files are thinning," he says in a telephone interview, "and the demand for live-in workers increases while the supply diminishes. But the demand for live-outs is less than the supply."

Unemployment caused by job displacement by illegal workers is a point being taken into consideration by legislators concerned with new regulations. However, in the case of the live-in domestic, for the most part, if illegals weren't doing the job no one else would.

Says the man who locates workers, no questions asked, no green cards required, for a percentage of the first month's salary, "The average Caucasian doesn't want to work as a live-in and if she did, she would cost a lot more. There's a large demand for black domestics but most would rather live at home. And the cost of an illegal fresh across the border is a minimum of \$50 a week where it was once \$35."

But for most live-ins life amounts to a "Catch-22" living in to hide out.

And if Lupe could earn a living at any job she'd like, what would she do?

"I don't know," she says. "I don't think about that. I really like the family I work for. But if I could, I guess I'd like to work in a record shop. I could talk to people and listen to music. Yes, I think I'd like that a lot."



Reality of everyday life for an illegal domestic worker includes an early morning parking lot pickup where many gather to wait for employers. The car stops; the door swings open, and another working day has begun.

Valley News photos by Tricia Crane

Charity series to debut

The good work done by charities receives considerable and well-deserved publicity by the media. The public is daily made aware of the remarkable contributions charitable organizations are making to humanity.

But there is another side of the charity "coin."

Fund-raising for charities is a \$28 billion business in America, and this huge flow of tax-free cash is partly veiled and unsupervised. Thus, it's open to abuse.

In a six-part series debuting in this section Sunday, award-winning investigative reporter James A. Haught will examine the little-publicized "other side of charity."

Michael Landon has a lot to say about parental role

By FRAN ERWIN

Michael Landon climbs down the ladder of a hayloft inside a gray, weather-beaten barn and walks through the door across prairie dirt to a blue-canvassed director's chair bearing his name.

It's the backyard set of "Little House on the Prairie," Soundstage 31, Paramount Studios in Hollywood's Gower Gulch.

The "little house" itself is 40-plus miles away on a ranch location site in Simi Valley.

Only in Hollywood could a house and its barn be so far apart. But that's the magic of motion picture making.

Landon, who stars in "Little House on the Prairie," now in its fourth year on NBC television, also is executive producer of the show and directs many of the episodes.

He's just been up in the hayloft directing the "Ingalls children" in a no-dialogue sequence in which he hyped up the young actors with audible direction, talking them through the scene: "The dog gets the sack, moves it away. Look at Patrick. Hide your face! Hide your eyes!"

Landon eases his 5 foot 11, muscle-thin body into the chair, saying he's "never tired after a day of directing if it's been a good day."

The actor's brown hair is worn in short curls, period enough for his role as Charles Ingalls, the pioneer father on "Prairie," and mod enough for his real-life role as dad to seven children: Mark, 26; Cheryl, 22; Josh, 16; Leslie Ann 13; Michael Jr., 16; Shawna, 4, and Christopher, 2.

His green eyes are framed by brown tortoise-shell glasses and when he smiles, even teeth flash white against his suntanned face.

Despite the fact that his four-in-one career requires more than a heaping tablespoon of energy, Landon says he sleeps only five hours a night and eats only one full meal a day, "usually a leisurely four-hour dinner."

Casually dressed in navy blue cotton slacks and a matching shirt, the actor crosses his legs and lights up a cigarette. "We loved our house in Encino. We lived there for 10 years. But my wife and I always wanted a brick house and when we found one in Beverly Hills we went crazy for it and bought it."

In writing for television, Landon says he likes to create stories that families can relate to. Normal families, who love and care about one another. "There are a lot of them out there," he says.

"I like to focus on the joys and problems that occur in the average family unit. For instance, parents becoming aware of the fact they are not communicating with their children or children who are not conversant with their parents."

Landon says he and his children have a good relationship. That they can talk to him. "We love each other. Of course that doesn't mean that there aren't going to be problems."

"I tell my children that I want to live in a clean house and that if they want to live in a pig sty, they can do that when they have their own homes. But as long as they are in my house, living under my roof, they are going to have to live by my rules. It's not 'our' house, it's 'my' house."

"It's up to me to see that my home is the way I want it to be. It's up to me to set the best example I can. Then if something goes wrong with one of my children, I'm not going to blame myself. If they get into trouble, they're going to have to get out of it. But don't look to me and say 'you did it to me.'"

"When my children come home from school and complain about a teacher and tell me they can't get along with her, I say 'Baloney. Adjust. Make it work.'"

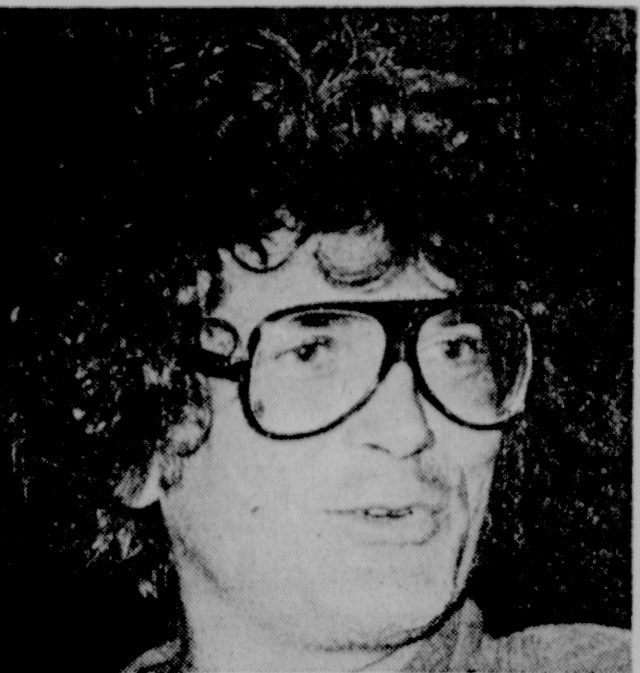
"People would do themselves a heck of a lot of good if they would take the blame for what goes wrong and say to themselves, 'Now I've got to do something about it.' But you can't do anything about it if you think it's someone else's fault all the time. If you want it to get better, you have to say it's my fault and I'm going to fix it. Then it gets better."

Landon says when actor Freddie Prinze committed suicide people "went through that whole blaming number. They said show business killed him."

"But show business didn't kill Freddie Prinze," he



Wearing track suit for part he plays in opening sequence of "The Loneliest Runner," Michael Landon, who produced, directed and wrote story about bed wetting, lines up shot in camera.



says. "Freddie Prinze killed Freddie Prinze. Nobody shoved that junk down his throat, he wanted to take pills and drugs. Show business didn't do that to him. He did it."

"Parents should do the best job they can do raising their children," Landon continues. "But if something goes wrong, don't spend the rest of your life burdened with guilt because that doesn't help anybody."

On June 14 at 8:30 p. m., NBC will rerun "The Loneliest Runner," the story of a preteen boy who suffers the trauma of being a chronic bed wetter. Not only was the 90-minute drama produced, directed and written by Michael Landon, but "it was my life."

"My mother thought I'd stop wetting my bed if she hung my soiled sheet out of my bedroom window for

all my friends to see. I was humiliated — but I still wet my bed."

It took Landon three days to write the script and four years to get it on television. "Nobody would touch it with a 10-foot pole," he recalls. "I couldn't understand what the powers-that-be thought was so controversial and distasteful about the subject. There are 10 million bed-wetters in this country," he says.

But Landon persisted and finally NBC agreed to do it. When the show was aired last December, it was critically acclaimed.

Landon says he knew his script was good. "I knew it was saying exactly what I wanted it to say: That bed-wetting is caused by deep sleep patterns. Change the patterns and you have a cure."



MICHAEL LANDON

Valley News photos by John Rosenfield