Melissa sue carves a neu career



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the chance to show that I could do some acting, and then my part in the series was increased.

"I was very lucky, too, to be in a TV show with Michael Landon (the producer and star of Little House). I was only 11 then. When I was that young and needed protection, he was there.

"He understood me when nobody else did, because I was very quiet and reserved. It takes time for people to get to know me. Michael understood me because he had been very much like me when he was younger."

Things were a little more difficult for Melissa Sue Anderson than for Melissa Gilbert because Melissa Sue wasn't outgoing and Melissa Gilbert was.

However, unlike many actresses who have acted since they were children and weep about their lost childhoods, Melissa Sue has no complaints.

"People sometimes ask me if I'd like to do what Jodie Foster has done — go away to college, like she went to Yale. I don't want to do that. Why should I go away to school and try to learn those things out of books when I'm really learning them by the work I'm doing, the work I love?

"The way I found out acting is my niche was kind of funny." Born in northern California, Melissa and her parents moved to southern California because she had asthma as a child and they thought the climate was better for her in southern California.

"I continued taking dancing lessons. I had been going dancing and swimming

— anything doctors suggested in the hope these things would develop my lungs. My dancing teacher in Hollywood had once been hired by Paramount in the hope that he'd become their big dancing star. Although he was a fine dancer, he couldn't act — he didn't take to it.

"He thought I had potential as a dancer and maybe as an actress, so he wanted me to get some acting experience. My parents said, 'Absolutely not. That's ridiculous.'"

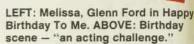
Then about a year after, a next-door neighbour was having his house painted by an unemployed actor, who also thought that Melissa had some acting potential and suggested an agent she could see. Her parents reluctantly agreed.

"My parents figured I'd do one commercial and realize that it was not as glamorous a career as everybody thinks it is, and that it is hard work. They thought I wouldn't like it and that I'd quit. But I did like it, so I didn't quit."

Gradually, under the fatherly guidance of Michael Landon, Melissa grew less reserved. "People used to think I was standoffish, because sometimes I'd walk by them and, if I was thinking about something, I wouldn't be smiling. Even to this day I don't understand why people think you should be smiling all the time.

"On Little House I got to know a lot of people who accepted me for what I was and didn't want to change me. That was a relief; I was comfortable. When the camera was going, I could do whatever I was told and what I felt was right, and I wasn't nervous."

She laughs today about the many



traumas she has gone through on Litt House. She's had more traumas the most of the great soap opera heroines-illnesses, appendicitis, an early ma riage, two miscarriages and lasting blin ness. The more she suffered, the mo audiences loved her and the higher thratings of the show went.

She prepared for playing a blind at lescent very carefully, going to the Fou dation for the Junior Blind and study there and also spending time with sor young blind girls, to learn how the handled things. She even learned to respect to the Braille.

She's a girl who knows exactly wh she wants to do, and has no regrets abo anything she's done or not done. She w offered the role Brooke Shields played the smash hit, The Blue Lagoon, b turned it down.

"It wasn't just the nudity that ma me turn it down. I did not feel that T Blue Lagoon called for enough acting me to do it. I felt that the part was o dimensional, that it wasn't enough of challenge."

Asked if she plans to concentrate marriage or a career, she replied, "Wel think I can do both, depending on the person I'm involved with. If my future husband didn't want me to work, knowing myself, I probably would give it to But I don't think the person I have mind would ask me to do that."

And asked what she considered thappiest and saddest moments of her limelissa said, "I haven't hit a saddest ment yet. It's got to get worse. It's the good right now.

"As for happiness, I'm always ve happy when I feel I've done some go work. Naturally I'm elated when my tire life is going right personally and work."

With that Melissa, the girl not kno for her smiles, broke into a grin which up her face.

- DORA ALBE