

# TV actress far from a wimp

HOLLYWOOD (UPI) — The contrast between 18-year-old actress Melissa Sue Anderson and Mary Ingalls Kendall, the blind girl she plays in *Little House On The Prairie*, is perhaps the most dramatic in Hollywood.

In the syrupy weekly series Mary is a wimp. She is victimized by man and God. She is dowdy. Her clothes are drab. She wears no makeup. Her life is burdensome.

Off-screen, Melissa is a glamor girl. She has dated Frank Sinatra Jr., 37, for two years. She lives in her own San Fernando Valley home and drives a fancy car. Her beautiful, pouty face is impeccably made up.

Her pale blue eyes — not unlike a Siamese cat's in color and shape — are lively, flirty and knowing beyond her years. She is anything but a wimp.

Melissa's clothes are chic and fashionable. One day recently she wore an orchid jumpsuit made of parachute silk with zippers at ankles, wrists, neck and elsewhere. Her figure is as faultless as her young and pretty face.

## Story hurt her

Her cheeks were pink with indignation at a recent story in a national newspaper which reported she was leaving *Little House On The Prairie* because of a long-simmering beef with her co-star, 17-year-old Melissa Gilbert.

It's true, Melissa Sue will be appearing in only three episodes of *Little House* this season. It is also true that another regular actress in the series, Alison Arngram, will not appear in any.

"The story is absolutely false that there has been any big blow-up between me and Melissa and Alison," Melissa Sue said heatedly.

"Alison is leaving because of a contract disagreement with the producers. I'm leaving because there just isn't much more that can be done with the



**Melissa Sue Anderson** She plays dowdy Mary on *Little House* but off-screen she one chic lady.

"The writers have exhausted all the possibilities for Mary Ingalls Kendall. First of all, she became blind. Then she had a miscarriage. She lost her mind. Another baby died in a fire. She's had all kinds of diseases.

"It is just a matter of moving on for me. I've done about everything I could do with the character.

"There have been rumors for years that Melissa Gilbert and I didn't like one another. They said I was jealous of her, that she was jealous of me. Then this story came out saying Alison and I were leaving because we resented Melissa.

And she certainly hasn't been jealous of me.

"When I read the story I telephoned Melissa and we got together to talk about it. We laughed, but it really isn't funny. It hurt us both."

Melissa Sue is grateful to *Little House On The Prairie* and aware that the show, now going into its eighth year, is responsible for making her a star of sorts.

Melissa starred in *Happy Birthday To Me*, a horror movie released earlier this year. Her performance portends a happy future in feature movies.

As Melissa says, she has no real competition for her teenage movie roles, noting that Brooke Shields and Kristy McNichol are both very different types.

She is leaving *Little House* with few regrets. She was 11 years old when the show began. Melissa virtually grew up in the role of the frontier child.

Since turning 18, Melissa has not had to be accompanied on the set by a social worker. Her life with Sinatra Jr. is sophisticated. She sees the singer four or five times a week.

## Will miss friends

She is delighted with her independence, free of supervision. Melissa has enormous self-confidence and a quiet detachment from her associations on *Little House*.

"I'll miss the people," she said. "They're all very nice. Not family, but friends. I'm sure I'll be seeing them on other projects in the future.

"Actually, I haven't been in as many episodes of the series in the past few years as I was at the beginning. I started doing fewer shows when Mary went blind. The series has been a good experience for me personally and professionally.

"It has made me financially independent and will keep me that way in the future."