

# Behind the Scenes



## Boomer finds strike's silver lining

by Chuck Bins

The Screen Actors Guild strike this fall forced many lesser-known actors and actresses onto depressingly hard times. But for Linwood Boomer (Adam Kendall on NBC-TV's 'Little House on the Prairie') the cloud had a silver lining.

"The strike was a pretty nasty affair all the way around . . . I can't tell you I was sorry it didn't happen—it was quite a burden on me personally. [He and his wife, Shannon, had just brought their first-born son home from the hospital when the strike started.] . . . but," he added, "a lot of good came out of it for me."

One of the good things emerged in a special two-part episode in which Adam Kendall regains his sight and packs off to law school. The second part airs Monday, December 8.

The shooting was originally scheduled for last August. "At first I was worried about it because I didn't think we'd have enough time to do it right," Linwood said, speaking from his home in Pasadena, California where his son was lying next to him, babbling and nibbling his father's finger.



Linwood Boomer

"To save editing time we've been shooting without a lot of cutaways [long, usually wide-angle establishing shots followed by a cut to medium and close-up shots from other cameras]. This time we had a lot of time for the shooting but not much time to get it on the air afterwards. So what we did, we shot it mostly in the masters using one, long continuous shot.

"As a result of that the show has quite a different look to it than it used to—more like a feature film, a glossier look."

The episode, 'To See the Light,' moves the character forward, focusing on how Adam adjusts to his new-found sight and the impact law school has on his marriage. And Linwood pointed out, "It's nice for me because it gives me something to act." It's a real turning point for Adam, he said, not just a gimmick to advance the plot.

### Prime time

The strike also had another advantage for Linwood—it gave him more time with Gideon, his son. And Shannon, of course, didn't mind having her husband around to share in feeding and diapering. "That's part of the fun," Linwood said, adding "I'm really much closer to him now than if I'd been working every day."

At one point in the interview Linwood reported, "He's chewing on me." And then talking to his son, "You're not old enough to talk to the interviewer."

Gideon, he said, is a non-stop babbler. "I think he wants to be an actor."

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# PBS in the spotlight



## 'Sesame Street' adds characters

Counting 'Countess Dahling Von Dahling,' whose addition inevitably adds up to rain, and reporter 'Warren Wolf,' the only TV newsman with braces on his teeth, lead a host of lovable new Muppet characters who have made their debuts on 'Sesame Street,' now in its 12th season on PBS.

The series that continues to top all ratings among preschool audiences returns with two new Emmys to its credit, including an award as outstanding children's informational or instructional series.

Continuing its goal of preparing youngsters for a successful transition from home to school, 'Sesame Street' once again will expand its curriculum goals for the new season.

In addition to its traditional pre-reading, counting and pre-science instruction, the series includes for the first time messages on traffic safety and material to make its young viewers more familiar with some of the print symbols they will encounter in school workbooks and tests. Underlining, circling, folding, crossing out and following arrows are some of the symbols that will be introduced.

Helping children to recognize the abilities and special needs of their handicapped friends is a continuing aim of the show. Violinist Itzhak Perlman, a polio victim, will be a featured guest during the season, and once again mentally and physically handicapped youngsters will be part of the regular activities on the street, as they have been since 1975.

### Teaching through fun

As always, 'Sesame Street's' teaching will be blended with entertainment. Many of its learning messages for the 12th season will come through the antics of new Muppet characters who will add to the fun provided by old favorites like Big Bird (above, with Mr. Snuffle-upagus), Oscar the Grouch, The Count, Bert and Ernie.