

ACCELERATED REVIEW PROCESS - E

Office of the City Engineer

Los Angeles, California

To the Honorable Council

Of the City of Los Angeles

Honorable Members:

NOV 07 2007

C. D. No. 13

SUBJECT:

Hollywood Boulevard and Vine Street - Walk of Fame Additional Name in Terrazzo Sidewalk –
THE MUNCHKINS

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- A. That the City Council designate the unnumbered location situated one sidewalk square northerly of and between numbered locations 53K and 53k as shown on Sheet 19 of Plan D-13788 for the Hollywood Walk of Fame for the installation of the name of The Munchkins at 6915 Hollywood Boulevard.
- B. Inform the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce of the Council's action on this matter.
- C. That this report be adopted prior to the date of the ceremony on November 20, 2007.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT:

No General Fund Impact. All cost paid by permittee.

TRANSMITTALS:

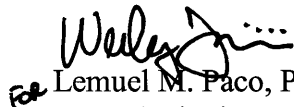
- 1. Unnumbered communication dated October 16, 2007, from the Hollywood Historic Trust of the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce, biographical information and excerpts from the minutes of the Chamber's meeting with recommendations.

DISCUSSION:

The Walk of Fame Committee of the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce has submitted a request for insertion into the Hollywood Walk of Fame the name of The Munchkins. The ceremony is scheduled for Tuesday, November 20, 2007 at 11:30 a.m.

The communicant's request is in accordance with City Council action of October 18, 1978, under Council File No. 78-3949. Following the Council's action of approval, and upon proper application and payment of the required fee, an installation permit can be secured at 201 N. Figueroa Street, 3rd Floor, Counter 23.

Respectfully submitted,


for Lemuel M. Paco, P.E.
Central District Engineer
Bureau of Engineering

sm: Munchkins.02
(213)482-7055

cc: Construction Services Center, Counter 23
Bureau of Street Services
Administration



October 16, 2007

Mr. Gary L. Moore
Public Works Engineering
Att: Lemuel Paco
201 N. Figueroa St., 3rd Floor, M.S. 503
Los Angeles, CA 90012

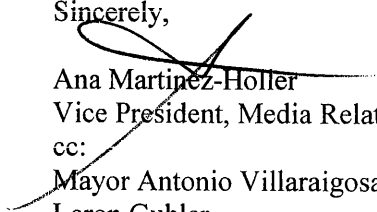
Dear Mr. Moore:

The Walk of Fame Committee of the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce has approved the below listed name for insertion into the Hollywood Walk of Fame:

THE MUNCHKINS -Category –(MOTION PICTURES) Requested star location to be 6915 Hollywood Boulevard, north side of the street in front of Grauman's Chinese Theatre. The star for THE MUNCHKINS will be placed in the second row next to the usual row closest to the building in the second row next to the star of ROBERT ZEMECKIS (2ND ROW) and a blank square, neither have a number. The star will also be located next to those located in the original row and previously dedicated to JOHNNY GRANT which is numbered 53k to the east and ZSA ZSA GABOR which is numbered 53K and faces the west. According to sheet #19 plan 13788, THE MUNCHKINS's star has no designated number. The dedication ceremony is scheduled for **Tuesday, November 20, 2007 at 11:30 a.m.** Thank you for your cooperation in this request. I look forward to a response from your office soon.

The following materials are enclosed: THE MUNCHKINS' bio and the Board of Director's Minutes.

Sincerely,


Ana Martinez-Holler
Vice President, Media Relations

cc:

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa

Leron Gubler
Carmine Goglia
Insp. R. Gladden
Sally Castro

Johnny Grant
Ralph Pipes
Topher Best
Top End Const.

Sgt. Mike Arminio
Michael Kantor
Dan Chismire

#4

Hollywood Chamber of Commerce Meeting of the Board of Directors

Wednesday, June 20, 2007

Board Members Present: G. Abou-Daoud, C. Armstrong, J. Briggs, H. Cochran, M. Cooper, M. Costa, K. Diehl, S. Durante, B. Farrar, B. Folb, D. Gajda, L. Goldman, J. Grant, B. Folb, R. Inouye, M. Larson, E. Lestz, C. Massie, S. O'Rourke, M. Panatier, R. Pipes, P. Robertson, F. Rosenthal, M. Schultz, D. Scott, M. Shelton, T. Smith, S. Tronson

Board Members Absent: D. Gallagher, S. Kay, J. Kreshek, E. Peterson, S. Smith

Honorary Board Members Present: O. Arslanian, C. Baumgart

Staff Present: L. Gubler, V. Kish, T. Lindgren, A. Martinez-Holler, E. McDonald, R. Silsbee

Guests Present: Gilbert Smith, Nosotros Theatre

Call to Order

Briggs called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m.

Walk of Fame Report

Grant read the list of recipients approved by the WOF Selection Committee for 2008. They are:

MOTION PICTURES: Angela Bassett, Cate Blanchett, Stan Lee, The Munchkins, Tim Robbins and The Westmores of Hollywood

TELEVISION: Bill Geist, Kate Linder, Howie Mandel, Sherwood Schwartz, Vince McMahon, Susan St. James, and Brian Keith (Posthumous)

RECORDING: Christina Aguilera, Brooks and Dunn, Ricky Martin, Red Hot Chili Peppers and George Harrison (Posthumous)

LIVE THEATRE/LIVE PERFORMANCE- Stephen Schwartz

(MSP: Grant, Diehl) to approve the list of 2008 recipients.

Adjourn

There being no further business, Briggs adjourned the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by:
Todd Lindgren

MUNCHKIN NOMINATION

Nomination for "The Munchkins", as represented by Jerry Maren, Mickey Carroll, Margaret Pellegrini, Karl Slover, Meinhardt Raabe and Clarence Swensen to be honored with a Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

"The Wizard of Oz" has been declared as the most watched movies of all time and "The Munchkins" are among that classic film's most iconic characters. The American Film Institute named "The Wizard of Oz" as one of the best films ever made and the third best musical ever. The line "Toto, I've got a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore" is the American Film Institute's number 4 quote, and "There's no place like home" is ranked as number 23. "Somewhere Over the Rainbow" is ranked as their number 1 song of all time. Recognized the world over, there are few people anywhere on the planet that don't know the Scarecrow, the Tin Man, the Cowardly Lion, the Wicked Witch and of course, the famous Munchkins! The surviving Munchkins have each had fascinating lives in and of themselves. Among those still around are the original Lollipop Kid who handed the large all-day sucker to Dorothy and still sings, "We Represent the Lollipop Guild". His new book "Short & Sweet" just came out. Another played four different characters, including the first trumpeter, a soldier, a sleepy headed child in the nest, and the citizen who started the anthem "We're Off to See the Wizard" and still sings a great rendition complete with tra-la-las. Another still tap dances up a tornado along with the Coroner who still pronounces the Wicked Witch "not only merely dead, but really most sincerely dead". His recent book is already in its third printing and he has recently been on Jimmy Kimmel and CNN. Inducting the Munchkins with a star would be a wonderful, nostalgic, family oriented, heart-warming event for all ages and we believe they embody all that is great about Hollywood; you just can't get more classic Hollywood the "The Wizard of Oz".

JERRY MAREN was just eighteen when he got a telegram from Loew's Incorporated requesting his talents for "The Wizard of Oz". It guaranteed six weeks' employment, transportation, food--"the works," he says. Born on January 24, 1920, in Boston, Massachusetts, Maren was originally named Gerard Marengi, the youngest of eleven children. He took dancing lessons when he was young and aspired to be an entertainer, appearing locally in an act called "Three Steps and One Half." In November 1938, standing just three foot four, he met up with the Oz-bound group of little people in New York City and traveled by bus to California. "I don't remember much about the bus trip, except that it was long. There was a bus full of us and we all became friends. It was an experience because I'd never been around other little people before, so I learned a lot. We'd stay in different cities and they'd stuff several of us little ones in a room together and we'd leave again early the next morning and the driver would travel as much as possible," he says. There, at MGM, because of his dancing abilities, he was chosen to be the middle "tough guy" of the Lollipop Guild who hands Dorothy the oversized sucker. "I remember they had a monstrous crew on the set," Jerry says. "A man who wore tall boots would go into the pond and fix the lilies and then walk out, and the other crew members would mop up the water. When we had time, we used to sneak off and try to watch the other movies being made. We ran into everybody. I snuck over to watch 'Lady of the Tropics' with Hedy Lamarr."

"The Wizard of Oz" was the first of many movies Jerry made. After Oz he went directly in a few "Our Gang" comedies and a featured role in "At the Circus" (1939), starring the Marx Brothers. (It's the one where Groucho sings "Lydia the Tattooed Lady"!) Jerry was permanently transplanted to southern California from that moment on. Maren has worked steadily in films ever since, on camera and behind the scenes as a stunt double or as a costumed character. In the late 1950's Jerry was persuaded to undergo hormonal treatments to increase his height. He worked with endocrinologists at California's Scripps Clinic who tested out some new growth hormone injections. "I started dreaming how great sports and things would be for me if I were taller," he says, but he grew only a few inches. The treatment thrust Maren directly into puberty, which was a life-altering metamorphosis at his age, but his height was not drastically modified. So Jerry remained a little person (four foot three), is satisfied with his stature, and proud to be a little person. Although he's rarely given credit for it, in the 1950s, with his pal actor Billy Barty, he helped co-found and organize the "Little People of America" organization.

Commercials on television proved quite lucrative for Maren when he played Buster Brown on radio and television in the 1950s and 1960s and performed in McDonald's television commercials under the hefty costume of "Mayor McCheese" and the "Hamburglar" for a decade. He is constantly recognized as the little guy in the black tuxedo who scattered confetti at the end of each episode of TV's "The Gong Show". His list of film and television appearances is as long as that of any major Hollywood star. Jerry became one of the most prolific—as well as one of the wealthiest—of all of the midgets who remained in show business after working in The Wizard of Oz. Among Jerry's film work: Maisie Was a Lady (1941), Beyond the Blue Horizon (1942), Fingers at the Window (1942), Here We Go Again (1942), Flesh and Fantasy (1943), Johnny Doesn't Live Here Anymore (1944), Show Business (1944), The Great John L. (1945), Duffy's Tavern (1945), When My Baby Smiles at Me (1948), Three Wise Fools (1946), Samson and Delilah (1949), Superman and the Mole Men (1951), The Planet of the Apes (1968), Little Cigars (1973), The Battle for the Planet of the Apes (1973), The Bad News Bears Go to Japan (1978), Where the Buffalo Roam (1980), Under the Rainbow (1981), Tron (1982), Something Wicked This Way Comes (1983), The Being (1983), It Came upon a Midnight Clear (TV movie, 1984), Hot Moves (1985), House (1986), Spaceballs (1987), The Great Outdoors (1988), and Dreamer of Oz (1990). Additional television credits include: Smilin' Ed's Gang (aka Andy's Gang), The Andy Williams Show, The Beverly Hillbillies, Bewitched, Star Trek, The Lucy Show, Laugh-In, The Wild Wild West, The Flip Wilson Show, Get Smart, The Sonny and Cher Comedy Hour, Daniel Boone, The Odd Couple, Switch, No Soap, Radio, Julia, The Tonight Show, Truth or Consequences, Lidsville, Mary Hartman, Logan's Run, The Twilight Zone, Wizards and Warriors, Geraldo, Maury Povich, To Tell the Truth, Night Court, The Daily Show, The Man Show, and Seinfeld.

Jerry and his wife, Elizabeth, an actress and also a little person, live in the Hollywood Hills; their home was completely built to scale with lowered counters and smaller chairs, tables, etc. As he lights an ever-present stogie, which is almost bigger than he is, and leans back glancing outside at his pool, Jerry seems to enjoy his retirement and talking about his most famous role - as the only surviving member of the Lollipop Guild. His golf game is good, he says, and he plays softball during summers on a team known as The Hollywood Shorties. Even in his eighties, he still enjoys running the bases—just not as fast.

During the past ten years Jerry has been on of the most sought-after Munchkins for television interviews, commercials, and Oz festival appearances. "I'm a little heavier nowadays," admits Maren. In a memorable Converse sports shoe commercial that aired nationally during the 1993 Super Bowl, Jerry was made up as a troll-like Munchkin dressed in a striped referee's uniform. He welcomed basketball superstar Larry Johnson "to three-point land" in an Oz lampoon that did well for the company. "I can mention a long list of credits, movies, TV shows," Jerry says,

"and nobody cares about any of it except Oz, and that was my first." After all, everyone remembers the Lollipop Kid, don't they? For Jerry, Oz is perpetuated by the frequent personal appearances he makes, with a large lollipop in tow. As one of the most requested of the Munchkins, Jerry has been interviewed more times than he can count, with usually the same questions about Oz. He tries to keep his responses fresh, he says, and inevitably he's plied to sing the song that has become his theme. "I was on "To Tell the Truth" and stumped the panelists. I can't tell you how many airplanes I've been on or how many cities I've been to in the last ten years. One of my favorite moments was attending the movie with my wife at Grauman's Chinese Theater when they released it again recently. When I walked out into the courtyard where all the footprints are in the cement there were news cameras waiting for me to come out of the show. The place was mobbed and they all clapped. It was amazing, all these years later."

In the opening of the Munchkin scene, when the Munchkins come out, you'll notice a little fellow climb out of a manhole. Don't blink. Just after that, **MICKEY CARROLL** saunters right across the screen holding a bell as the town crier. He's in a deep purple cloak with a yellow flower sticking out from his striped vest. He also plays one of the fiddlers who escorts Dorothy out of the Land of Oz (second from left, as you look at the screen). "I did voice-overs for several of the Munchkins," Mickey says. Now in his eighties, Mickey reflects with much pride on his entertainment career. His pictures of Judy Garland and other celebrities he's worked with or met hang on the wall of his office and in his living room. Mickey started tap-dancing and performing when he was in grade school in St. Louis. He had a one-man act and traveled around to nightclubs and theaters, closely managed by his older brother, Bud. His fondest memories of being on the road include dancing with a young Donald O'Connor and his sisters and having Ronald Reagan room with him briefly in Hollywood. But his trip to MGM studio is not one of Mickey's fondest memories. "Bud and I were on our way out to make "The Wizard of Oz" when we had a big car accident in Albuquerque. A truck hits us head-on. We had to stay there for weeks, and we ended up suing the truck driver's company and won." Mickey arrived late on the set and missed almost all the rehearsals. Luckily, he was a quick study, and dancing was no trick for him to pick up. Director Victor Fleming took a liking to Mickey and put him in several roles: town crier, soldier, and that of one of the fiddlers near the end of the scene.

In more recent years, Mickey has given much of his time to promote "The Wizard of Oz" and his role as a Munchkin, while affiliating the appearances with charities. His pet projects are raising money for the Special Olympics and other needy causes. The plaques on his office wall commend him for many hours of fundraising for such causes as the USO, the Muscular Dystrophy Association, the Variety Club, and the Ronald McDonald House.

When asked what he remembers most about Oz, Mickey says, "Probably how beautiful Judy was. And her voice! She was fantastic. And how she used to get tired on the set. "When we sang the songs on the set, some of us Munchkins used to joke and say, 'Ding dong, the witch is dead, which ole witch, the son of a bitch!' I also remember how the pond leaked and we'd slip on the Yellow Brick Road sometimes. They'd have some guy come out and mop it up." In the past ten years, Mickey has been sought out to make appearances on national television shows and travel the country. With a quick wit and always an eye-popping line for the reporters and radio show hosts, Mickey continues to talk about Oz and his show business experiences. At an age when retirement usually means just that, Mickey wants no part of sitting at home and watching television all day. "I love meeting the people," he says. "The kids are great, and the parents, they are my biggest fans. I could talk myself silly telling stories and singing, and the autographs. My God, I don't know how many thousands of autographs I've signed over the

years." On his eightieth birthday, Mickey threw out the first baseball at the Cardinals game at Busch Stadium in his hometown of St. Louis. "Now how many people get to do that?" he asks.

MARGARET PELLEGRINI was also known as "Popcorn" or sometimes "Li'l Alabam" to her friends and colleagues. She was a tiny southern gal who got whisked away from her hometown of Sheffield, Alabama, to a movie set to be a Munchkin. It's the kind of dream come true that movies are made of.

Margaret was born on September 23, 1923, around the corner from where Helen Keller lived. Margaret's venture down the Yellow Brick Road actually began at a potato chip booth in the Tennessee State Fair. "My sister's husband worked for a potato chip company in Memphis, and they had a booth at the state fair. I was helping them out, and some little people came walking by and spotted me. They introduced themselves as part of Henry Kramer's Midgets and asked me if I wanted to join their show. "At that time I didn't think I was a midget," says Pellegrini, who then stood about three feet four. She gave the people her address and eventually was contacted by a booking agent who worked with Leo Singer. "I got a letter from Thelma Weiss in Hollywood to come out to make the movie. "You can spot Margaret in several corners of Munchkinland—even as one of the Sleepy Heads who wipe their eyes and "get out of bed." The director used her in more than one place, no doubt, because she was so small, perfect for the setting. And she still knows the entire scene by heart. It was a fantasy to make the movie, and she has never regretted it, remembering almost every detail as though it were yesterday. "For us girls, our dresses were so big, and we had such big petticoats, that we had some ladies who were there to help us go to the bathroom," Margaret remembers shyly. With a bit of a raspy voice Margaret looks back on Oz as a "fantastic experience." Afterward, she traveled with some midget troupes and later married an average-sized man, ex-fighter Willie Pellegrini. They had two children, Margaret Jo and William Joseph Jr. (who refers to himself as "a son-of-a-Munchkin"). Margaret is even a great-grand-Munchkin, she says. After her marriage in 1943, she devoted her life to raising her children and steered clear of show business, except for a brief appearance in the unusual Dalton Trumbo film "Johnny Got His Gun" (1971).

"There were many years where I didn't even tell people I was in the Wizard of Oz," Margaret says. "Unless the topic came up. I thought people would think I was lookin' for attention. And then it started showing on television, and as time went by, people started asking me questions. It's all very exciting, even now." Of all the midgets from the film, perhaps Margaret was the one who stored the memories with the most accuracy over time. In vivid detail she has been able to recall nearly every aspect of her Oz experience. She happily remembers the first time she saw herself in the film at a theater in 1939. "I was at Treasure Island World's Fair working with Singer's Midgets," she says. "The movie came out on August 15th and Mr. Singer picked out a couple of us little ones. His chauffeur took us over to San Francisco to a large theater, like one of the vaudeville houses, maybe the Fox Theater, and it was premiering there that afternoon. A lot of people came to the movie. I believe Singer had Nita Krebs, me, and Karl Slover, and we were at a card table in the lobby and we autographed some programs or photos as they went in and when they came out. "When the show started, they let us stand in the back by the railing that blocks off the seats from the aisle and we stood there and watched the movie," she remembers. "I saw myself and I started jumping up and down and I was saying 'That's me! That's me!' I got all excited and everybody turned around and looked. They thought something had happened. I just put my hand to my face and said, 'oh, I'm sorry.'" What Margaret can't recount is how many times she's watched the movie since that day in 1939. "Too many to count," she laughs.

Today Margaret is widowed and makes Glendale, Arizona, her home. She has become one of the most visible of all the little people who appeared in the movie, usually donning a replica

costume at personal appearances. During the anniversary year she turned up on countless television shows, including Good Morning America, Larry King Live on CNN, Geraldo, The Marsha Warfield Show, Maury Povich, and The JMJ and Tammy Faye Show. She has greeted crowds at Oz festivals and waved in parades (including the Indianapolis 500 parade) all over the country and maintains a hectic schedule. Luckily, her memory for names, places, dates, and times is fantastic. She saved much from her show business and traveling days and is planning to remodel and devote one room in her house to her treasured Oz collectibles. "Right now," she says, "it's crammed so full I can barely walk into it. I get so much stuff every time I go to these festivals. I love it!"

KARL SLOVER says he was the tiniest of the Singer Midgets who portrayed Munchkins. He's grown now, from three feet tall when he played a trumpeter in "The Wizard of Oz" to four foot four. His father was six foot six. "Mr. Singer told me I would grow," Karl says. "He seemed to know who would and who wouldn't grow later in life." Originally, Karl's last name was Kosiczky. Born in Hungary, he changed his name to Slover when he became a U.S. citizen in 1943. His odd nickname, "Karchy," originated when he was working with Singer's Midgets and there were too many midgets named Karl to keep them straight. Karchy, which is Hungarian for Karl, was pinned on him for years, although he seldom answers to it now.

Karl played the first of three trumpeters who lead the mayor's procession. Besides Oz, he appeared in the film 'Block-Heads' (1938) with Laurel and Hardy, and 'They Gave Him a Gun' (1937) with Spencer Tracy. He was the town barber and a saloon bass player in The Terror of Tiny Town (1938), and you can also spot him in the baby carriage in 'The Lost Weekend', a 1945 blockbuster starring Ray Milland. Karl, who still speaks with a slight accent, said, "We knew English when we did The Wizard of Oz. I've read in places that all the Munchkins were German, and they didn't know how to speak English. We learned way before that." Karl remembers the first day on the set of Oz: "They took us through the studio. Here they had these apple trees," he says. "Well, at this time, I didn't know they were rubber. They looked very real. I saw the trees move, and I said, 'What the heck?' My roommate thought I was nuts, and we kept walking around, and then he saw it, too. About that time, the prop man said, 'Oh, there's a man in those trees.' That tickled me."

Karl is now the last of Singer's midget troupe, and has earned a sort of "royalty" status in the Munchkin world, commonly meeting celebrities who seek him out and wish to meet him. In 1995 when David Copperfield toured the country and stopped in Tampa with his extravagant show, the magician requested a meeting with Karl, who happily obliged. Today Karl, who is now in his eighties, remains retired from full-time work except for traveling with "The Wizard of Oz". His time is spent corresponding with friends and relatives and gearing up for the frequent Oz festivals he attends each year. In 2001 Karl was honored at a banquet given by the Sons of the Desert organization (the longtime Laurel and Hardy fan base) in Los Angeles, where he was even congratulated by Ray Bradbury.

MEINHARDT RAABE (pronounced "mineheart robby") was probably the most formally educated of the small actors. This may have been why he was given the role of the Munchkin coroner who pronounced the Wicked Witch dead, unraveling an oversized certificate of death in honor of the occasion.

Born on September 2, 1915, in Watertown, Wisconsin (his parents were German), he stand four foot eight now. He's grown six inches since he was twenty years old. To fund his own college education Meinhardt worked at world's fairs, performing in expositions such as the Chicago World's Fair in 1934, the San Diego Exposition in 1935, the Texas Centennial, and Cleveland Great Lakes World's Fair in 1936. Meinhardt earned his bachelor of arts degree in accounting

from the University of Wisconsin and his master of arts in business administration from Northwestern University, all the while juggling a career—of sorts—in show business. “Years ago, the public conception was small body, small mind,” he says. “The door was slammed shut in my face as far as an accounting career”. Meinhardt was also the shortest licensed pilot in the nation and volunteered for active front line duty in World War II. Although turned down due to his diminutive stature, he became a coast watcher looking for enemy submarines along the Eastern seaboard and trained other full sized pilots.

“There was a well-established midget grapevine around the country.” Meinhardt says. “So I went to California when I heard MGM needed little people for the movie. The casting director picked me as a result of my public-speaking experience. I probably had a little bit better diction and enunciation than maybe some who were foreign-born.” “I went around and got autographs of all the people associated with the picture,” he says. Judy Garland inscribed a beaut to him: “She wrote, ‘To Meinhardt, a perfect coroner and a perfect person too. Love from Judy’ on a picture I still have in my scrapbook. I also have Jack Dawn, the makeup man, and Mr. Brown, the chief electrician, along with Margaret Hamilton and Billie Burke, Ray Bolger, Jack Haley, and Bert Lahr. It was fun.” Before and after Oz, Meinhardt worked for the Oscar Mayer company as their mascot and goodwill ambassador. Known as “Little Oscar, World’s Smallest Chef,” he toured in promotions for the company’s meat line. He was right there traveling in the first Weinermobile produced in 1936. After the market widened, he took on three protégées as Oscar Jrs. The employment with the Oscar Mayer company was something Raabe relished for thirty years. It was during this time that he met his wife, the former Marie Hartline, also a little person. Marie had performed with Rose’s Royal Midgets in the early 1930s, but declined a job as a Munchkin in the movie.

Meinhardt has continued to frequent many Oz functions around the country each year. Dressed in a long robe, reminiscent of his costume and hat from the film custom made for him and presented from the cast of the hit Broadway play “Wicked”, Meinhardt says he never tires of spouting his famous coroner’s spiel...only having to write it out for autograph collectors, which he rarely does. He has been most proud to sign the array of Munchkin character merchandise which has hit the market in years past: Coroner Munchkin statues, dolls, trinkets, and Christmas ornaments by Hallmark, to name just a few. In 1997, the Raabes were involved in a tragic automobile accident and Marie Raabe died from injuries on October 22, 1997. Meinhardt’s life changed suddenly and he gradually recovered from a broken ankle and other injuries. Now he lives in an assisted-living residence and still answers fan mail and travels as much as his health will allow. “I don’t move around as swiftly as I used to,” Meinhardt said recently, “but I still try to meet the fans at various functions when I’m able. What’s the word on the grapevine? Any Oz conventions coming up your way?”

CLARENCE SWENSEN was born on December 29, 1917, in Austin, Texas. He was the smallest of five brothers and one sister. Four-foot-six-inch Clarence (nicknamed “Shorty”) began a career in show business when he appeared at the Dallas Texas Centennial of 1936. “In 1937 I was supposed to be in Stanley R. Graham’s All-Midget Circus in San Antonio working with Christy Ball’s elephants, as well as playing the saxophone and drums with a band,” he says of the indefinite engagement. “After nearly eight weeks of rehearsals, we opened for a day and a half, when we were shut down because of monsoon rains.” Not long after, he hopped a train and headed to Hollywood to appear in “The Terror of Tiny Town”; a few months later he landed the role of a Munchkin soldier in “The Wizard of Oz”. Directly following, he worked in an ape costume in the film “Tarzan Finds a Son!” (1939) with Johnny Weissmuller, whom he describes as a “very nice gentleman—not the star type at all.” During this period Clarence says his height was around four foot one. When World War II broke out he enlisted and went to Kelly Field Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, where he worked for four years as a radio technician.

Clarence married his sweetheart, Myrna Myrle Clifton, in 1945. Myrna is a most extraordinary little person in that she is the off-spring of midget parents—quite a rarity in the annals of recorded medical science. “Doctors and researchers keep saying that midgetism is not inherited,” Myrna explained. Considering this type of dwarfism is a medical condition caused by a malfunctioning pituitary gland, somehow the condition was not only transmitted from Myrna’s family, but also passed on to her and Clarence’s children and grandchildren. Clarence and Myrna had three daughters, two of whom are small in stature. They admit that when they became grandparents, they were curious as to what the future would hold for their grandkids. “One of our grandchildren—we think—would have been small,” says Myrna. “He showed all the signs, but his parents took him in for hormone treatments, and he grew.” Medical science should be grateful that Clarence and Myrna are the patient, thoughtful type, genuinely concerned about the human race and those presented with this type of challenge in life. Several years ago the couple submitted themselves to an extensive battery of tests administered at the respected Johns Hopkins Hospital. “We were like guinea pigs,” says Myrna, laughing, “and they still don’t know why it is passed through our family.”

The Swenson’s reside today in Texas just outside of Austin, disproving the old adage about dimensions and Texas, you might say. They attest, however, to the tune that Texans are deep in heart. It wasn’t until 1989, Oz’s golden anniversary, that Clarence—the authentic Munchkin of the family—was reunited, after all those years, with some of the other little folks with whom he worked in the movie. It was the start of a whole new chapter in his life, something out of left field, he admits. In the ensuing years Clarence and his wife have traveled the country and attended many Oz festivals, and he has appeared on television programs such as The Maury Povich Show as well as in a variety of television documentaries about the making of Oz. You can spot him in his tailored Munchkin soldier costume, which perfectly replicates the original wardrobe he wore in the film, right down to the striped fez-like hat with a fuzzy plume atop. “It’s the fans who have made us stars,” Clarence points out, “and we Munchkins are grateful for that.”

We believe that due to the preeminence of the film “The Wizard of Oz” in American Cinematic History, and the importance and worldwide iconic status of the characters “The Munchkins” these people should be honored with a Munchkin Star in the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

We hope you agree. **THANK YOU!**

Submitted with approval by the remaining Munchkins, with information excerpted from the book “The Munchkins of Oz” by Stephen Cox, as edited by the staff of Hollywood Blvd Cinema.