

Wizard of Oz Actor, Franklin O’Baugh

The “Wizard of Oz” is an all-time favorite movie for many and an icon of American popular culture. Starring Judy Garland, the film first opened in theaters in 1939. Although nominated for six Academy awards, it lost in the “Best Picture” category to “Gone With the Wind.” According to newspapers of the time, the movie’s viewers would see a “marvelous Technicolor movie that surpasses anything of its kind ever performed, ever caught by the cameras of Hollywood.” And, a little-known fact of special significance to people in the Clark County area is that an Arkadelphia teenager appeared in the film.

One newspaper described the film’s first showing in Clark County in 1939: *“Arkadelphia is particularly interested in the Wizard of Oz picture because one of its boys appears in two of the most fascinating scenes. He is Franklin O’Baugh, one of the soldiers in the fairyland of the Lilliputians. Franklin is a member of the midget troop—the greatest number of midgets ever assembled. Now, if you follow directions you may easily spot Franklin in each of the appearances. When the little green-clad militiamen march in, the first time, in column, he is on the right end of the third rank. Later, when the soldiers are formed in front and rear ranks, Franklin is right hand man in the front row. He is nearest the audience. He is recognizable, too.”*

O’Baugh was actually back in Arkadelphia when the film first opened there. He stated that the group trained for about five months for their parts in the movie. About 110 came from all over the world to be a part of the company at Hollywood. Interestingly, O’Baugh told that the voices of other people replaced those of the some of the actors seen in the film.

At the time of the release of the Wizard of Oz, O’Baugh was described as age eighteen, about four feet five inches tall, and weighing sixty pounds. Prior to his appearance in the Wizard of Oz, he toured the U.S. and Canada with a troupe, making appearances and performing in many different venues. O’Baugh attended Arkadelphia High School, and the O’Baugh family lived in Clark County as early as the mid-nineteenth century.

