

= Clarence Chesterfield Howerton =

Clarence Chesterfield Howerton (February 9 , 1913 ? November 18 , 1975) , also known as Major Mite , was an American circus performer who starred in the sideshow for over 25 years , 20 of which were with the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus . He was 2 ft 4 in (0 @. @ 71 m) tall and performed with several groups from the early 1920s through the late 1940s , billed as the smallest man in the world . His small physique was often contrasted alongside larger circus sideshow acts , such as the juvenile obese and the excessively tall .

Regarded as a " highly successful sideshow [novelty] " and celebrity , Howerton visited the White House and represented recruitment efforts of the United States Marine Corps . He was featured in multiple films , including a role as a Munchkin in 1939 's The Wizard of Oz . He retired in 1949 .

= = Early life = =

Clarence Chesterfield Howerton was born on February 9 , 1913 , in Salem , Oregon , to Frank and Helen Howerton . He had five brothers , all of whom grew to 6 ft (1 @. @ 83 m) tall . However , Howerton grew to a height of only 2 ft 4 in (0 @. @ 71 m) . An expert said that he might have a " deranged ductless gland " . Howerton 's mother was just over 4 ft 0 in (1 @. @ 22 m) tall , which led some to wonder if his small stature was inherited .

At age six , Howerton was living in McCleary , Washington , with his parents and five brothers , Albert , Ernest , Forrest , LeRoy , and Charles . His father was employed at the time as a factory mechanic . Howerton never attended school , likely due to his physical size and associated emotional consequences .

In January 1926 , Frank Howerton shot himself , having been in poor health previously . His mother subsequently remarried to Robert Crawford . At the time of the 1930 United States Census , Howerton was living with Crawford and his mother in Manhattan . According to the Census listing , Crawford was a " showman " while Howerton and his mother were identified as performers .

= = Career = =

Howerton 's career began at a young age , when his father entered him into a local vaudeville show . In 1923 , at the age of ten , Howerton joined the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus , where he starred as a major attraction . The circus was the largest of the kind , with 800 performers and over 1000 animals . Although he was only ten years old , the circus sought to exaggerate his diminutive size by claiming that he was 18 years old . He was billed as the smallest man in the world , exhibited and known to the public under the name , " Major Mite " . The " Major Mite " moniker had previously been used by an American comedian who died in 1900 , and a 19th @- @ century circus performer , William E. Jackson , who died in 1901 , at 24 , 2 ft 9 in (0 @. @ 84 m) tall and weighing 26 pounds (12 kg) . Accompanied by his mother , Howerton spent 20 years with Ringling Bothers and also worked with the Cole Brothers Circus , the Coney Island Dreamland Side Show , and the World Circus Sideshow .

In December 1922 , Howerton received national press coverage when he visited U.S. President Warren G. Harding at the White House and billed as " the world 's smallest man . " One newspaper noted at the time : " The smallest midget and the smallest Shriner in the world , known as Major Mite , caused more excitement when he called at the White House recently than many a notable has done . "

In 1927 , Howerton drew the attention of The New York Times when he led a " strange cavalcade " through the streets of Manhattan to the Hospital for Crippled and Ruptured Children . Howerton led the parade in the original coach that had previously been used by General Tom Thumb . The coach was drawn by two Shetland ponies , and Howerton was accompanied by " Tiny Doll " , described as " the Major 's sweetheart " and other circus performers . He also drew the attention of the Chicago Tribune when he visited Chicago in 1928 .

In 1928 , Howerton was paired with an extraordinarily large circus sideshow performer known as "

Tom Ton " and billed as the " Human Atom " and " Big Baby Elephant . " Howerton is said to have performed with numerous human oddities , also working with Ruth Pontico , a woman weighing 700 pounds (320 kg) , in his career .

In advertising and film , Howerton found success beyond the sideshow . During the 1930s , he was used as a mascot for the recruitment side of the United States Marine Corps . His biggest role in acting was with 1939 's The Wizard of Oz , in which he played the part of a trumpet @-@ playing Munchkin , Herald # 3 , who announced the arrival of the mayor . He was one of the smallest Munchkins in Oz . Howerton also appeared in several shorts of the comedy program Our Gang , including the 1932 short , " Free Eats " .

By 1940 , he was living with his mother in Manhattan . His occupation was described as an " exhibitionist " in a circus , but a 1941 document states that he registered with " Clackamas County Local Board No. 2 " , located in Estacada , Oregon ; his registration prompted the Board to state " We believe we have the smallest registrant in the United States " . In the announcement of his registration , his weight and height are given , vastly contrasting to other sources : a height of 3 ft 6 in (1 @. @ 07 m) , and a weight of 52 pounds (24 kg) . His last performance was for Cole Bros. , in 1948 .

= = Reputation = =

Howerton was often seen with other human oddities , for example , in 1924 , he was photographed with Martin Feig , a four @-@ year @-@ old boy who weighed 104 pounds . Feig reportedly said to Howerton , " Aw , you 're nothing but a germ @-@ weight midget . " One newspaper referred to Howerton , who was in reality only 13 years old at the time , as " the Beau Brummel of the side shows " , noting that the Doll sisters (two female small persons working with Ringling Brothers) declared him " a regular sheik " .

In contrast to his public persona , Howerton reportedly enjoyed cigars and beer , " often yelled obscenities , " and was known to " run the length of a bar , kicking anything in his way " , sometimes whilst dressed in children 's clothes . While working with Ringling Brothers , Howerton befriended Jack Earle who was 7 ft 7 1 ? 2 in (2 @. @ 32 m) tall , but at the time was advertised as being 8 ft 7 in (2 @. @ 62 m) . The two were often photographed together in promotional materials for Ringling Brothers , with it being said that " it is penny @-@ ante poker which has made pals of Jack and the major " .

= = = Size = = =

Reports of Howerton 's size range vastly , the upper boundary for both height and weight is given by the United States Selective Service System , who report a height of 3 ft 6 in (1 @. @ 07 m) , and a weight of 52 pounds (24 kg) . A height of 2 ft 4 in (0 @. @ 71 m) is given in several more modern sources , including Ripley 's Believe It or Not ! : Howerton himself claimed that was his height at 22 , and that his weight was 20 pounds (9 @. @ 1 kg) The Chicago Tribune gave his height as 2 ft 0 in (0 @. @ 61 m) , and his weight as 20 pounds (9 @. @ 1 kg) . At 18 , it was reported that he weighed 13 pounds (5 @. @ 9 kg) .

= = Post entertainment industry and death = =

Howerton retired from the entertainment industry in 1949 , at the age of 35 . By 1970 he had moved back to Oregon and was living with a niece in the small town of Dayton . His diminutive size meant that he didn 't pay welfare to the state as it was " never collected from " children " less than 0 ft 30 in (0 @. @ 76 m) tall " . His size , however , meant that he was forced to have tailor made clothing , which he additionally " demands it 's good standard " .

On November 18 , 1975 , at the age of 62 , Howerton died of pneumonia in a hospital in McMinnville , Oregon . He was buried in Mountainview Cemetery in nearby Oregon City . Aside from one brother , he outlived all of his immediate family .

