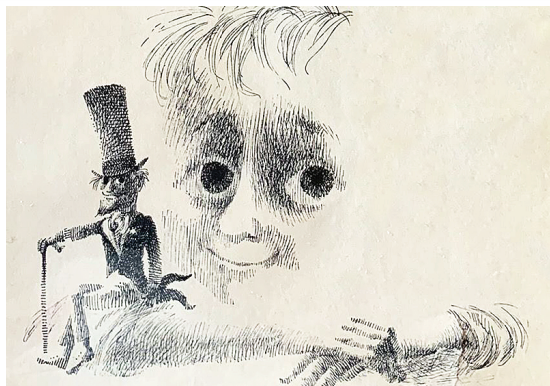
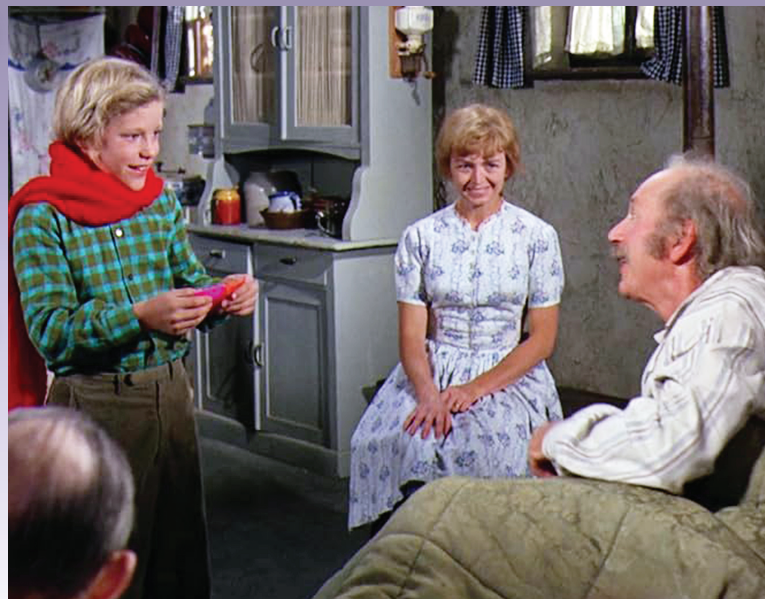


BUCKET LIST

By Charles Apple | THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

The original “Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory” movie — starring Gene Wilder as Willy and a 12-year-old Peter Ostrum as his little pal Charlie Bucket — opened on June 30, 1971: 55 years ago.



ROALD DAHL WROTE SEVERAL POPULAR CHILDREN'S NOVELS.

In addition to 1964's “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory,” Dahl wrote “James and the Giant Peach” (1961) “Fantastic Mr. Fox” (1970), “The BFG” (1982), “The Witches” (1983), “Matilda” (1988) and the screenplay for the 1968 movie adaptation of Ian Fleming's “Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.” Dahl was hired to write the screenplay for this film as well.



THE OOMPA LOOMPAS WERE DIFFERENT IN THE BOOK.

In Dahl's original novel, Wonka shut down his factory after it was infiltrated by industrial spies who were after his confectionery recipes. Wonka then replaced his entire work force with the diminutive Oompa Loompas ... who, in early editions of the book, were drawn as African pygmies. Later editions portrayed them as white-skinned with golden hair.



WAS THIS AN EXAMPLE OF PRODUCT PLACEMENT?

The entire film was built around a new candy bar introduced by Quaker Oats — the Wonka bar. Quaker Oats even underwrote the cost of the film. Producers changed the name of the film from “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory” to “Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory” to help sell candy. The funny part: The cheap chocolate used in the bars melted too easily and had to be recalled.



THE ROLE OF WILLY WONKA WAS HOTLY PURSUED.

The producer of the film, David L. Wolper, wanted Fred Astaire to play Wonka. All six members of Monty Python said they'd love to play Wonka. Famed actor and comedian Peter Sellers called Dahl to lobby for the role. Dahl himself preferred Sellers' old “Goon Show” co-star Spike Milligan. Don Lane, who played the candy shop owner, was also considered for the role.



GENE WILDER MADE ONE DEMAND OF THE PRODUCERS.

Wilder landed the role of Willy Wonka but he had an idea of how he wanted to introduce himself to the audience: He'd come hobbling along with a cane and then suddenly turn an athletic somersault. His logic? “From that time on, no one will know if I'm lying or telling the truth.” Wilder felt so strongly about this that he had it written into his contract.



SAMMY DAVIS JR. WANTED TO PLAY THE CANDY SHOP OWNER.

Davis loved “The Candyman,” the song the candy shop owner sings near the beginning of the film. He tried to talk producers into hiring him to play that role but they felt such a big star might be distracting so early in the film. Davis recorded the song anyway, released it as a single and it spent three weeks at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 singles chart the next summer.



CHARLIE AND GRANDPA WERE AN ODD COUPLE.

Grandpa Joe was played by veteran actor Jack Albertson, who had won an Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor in the 1968 film “The Subject Was Roses.” Charlie, on the other hand, was played by Peter Ostrum — who was 12 years old when production began. This would be Ostrum's first and final screen performance. He'd go on to become a veterinarian.



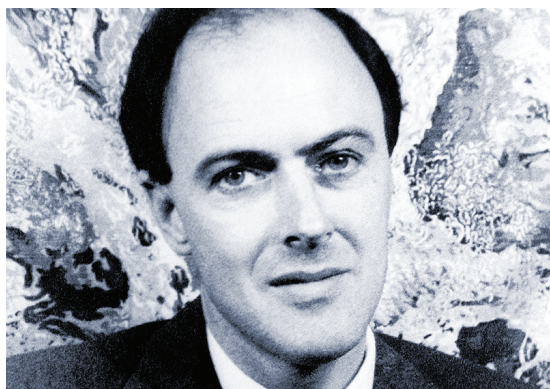
NEVER WORK WITH CHILD ACTORS.

As you might imagine, some of the children were a mess. The girl playing Violet had a crush on Ostrum, so she didn't want to pick her nose as the script instructed her to. She also said all the gum she had to chew resulted in 13 cavities. The kid who played Mike Teevee admitted he was a brat during shooting. The 10 actors hired to play the Oompa Loompas stayed up late every night, drinking and bar hopping.



THE CHOCOLATE RIVER WAS DOWNRIGHT DISGUSTING.

It wasn't all chocolate: It was 150,000 gallons of water, colored with real chocolate and cream. They kept messing with the formula because the river kept turning red. In addition, the cream spoiled quickly under the hot studio lights. The whole thing smelled awful — the kid who played Augustus Gloop especially hated it because his character falls into it at one point.



ROALD DAHL WAS NOT HAPPY WITH THE FILM.

Dahl was displeased with producers changing the title of his work. He was displeased at how a new scriptwriter was brought in — after Dahl himself repeatedly failed to meet his deadlines. He was displeased with how the film placed more emphasis on Willie and less on Charlie. Dahl was so displeased that he refused to sell producers the rights to his sequel book.



WAIT — DID YOU SAY THERE WAS A SEQUEL BOOK?

In Dahl's 1972 novel “Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator,” the elevator at the end of the first story takes Charlie, Willy and Grandpa to an orbiting space station, where Charlie helps fight off shape-shifting aliens known as Vermicious Knids. After saving the day, Charlie is invited to the White House. Before he died in 1990, Dahl wrote the first chapter of a book about that visit, too.



AND THEN THERE WAS A PREQUEL ...

In 2023 “Wonka,” a prequel to the Chocolate Factory movies starred Timothée Chalamet — fresh off award-winning performances in “Lady Bird,” “Call Me By Your Name” and “Beautiful Boy” — as a younger Willy just entering the chocolate business. The film grossed more than \$634 million worldwide, making it the eighth highest-grossing film of the year and earning Chalamet a Golden Globe Award nomination.