

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO...

CHARLIE FROM WILLY WONKA & THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY



Peter Ostrum shot to fame aged 13 playing Charlie Bucket in the 1971 Gene Wilder movie *Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory*.

Peter, now 56, practises as a vet in Lowville, New York, where he lives with Loretta, his wife of 27 years, daughter Helenka, 22, and son Leif, 17.

"I began acting with the Cleveland Playhouse in Ohio which had a very successful children's theatre. They were asked to suggest children for a new movie and the next thing I know, I'm cast as Charlie Bucket.

"The filming was a life-changing event because it was shot in Munich. My father travelled with me – he had served in Germany during the war, so it was a very emotional time for him – but we discovered Munich was a fun place to be.

"There wasn't any glitz and glamour on set. We were young teenagers and we were expected to work as young adults and be professional, so that meant showing up on time, knowing your lines and there wasn't any messing about. I soon came to the realisation that acting was a lot of work.

"The most impressive set was the chocolate room. Our director Mel Stuart didn't want us to see the set until we began

filming so we would have that surprised expression on our faces. I had a genuine grandfather-grandson type relationship with Jack Albertson, who played Grandpa Joe. I also had a good relationship with Gene Wilder, who played Willy Wonka. I think that came through on the camera.

"I haven't seen Gene in years but I've remained close with the other kids and we have enjoyed so many reunions over the years. We all share a special bond and today it's as if they are family.

"I was offered a three-picture deal with the studio, but I decided not to pursue acting. Looking back, my pay cheque was paltry, but it was during filming that I really became interested in medicine. So I bought my first horse with my earnings and that started my current career path as a vet.

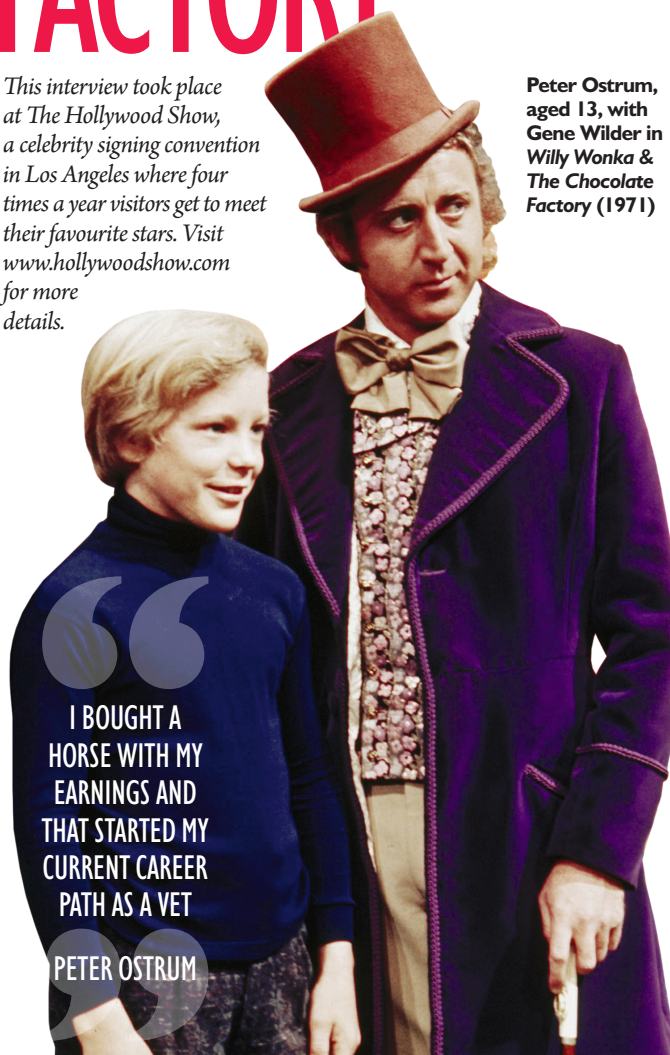
"Whenever I meet fans of the movie, they want to know if the set was really made of candy. Everything we ate was edible except the wallpaper – which really did taste like wallpaper. It was pretty gross.

"People tell me they watched *Willy Wonka* so many times growing up that they wore out their VHS copy. We had no idea we were making a classic, which even coined a new phrase: 'I've found the golden ticket.' I will always cherish my memories of making the movie, but I feel I won the golden ticket by becoming a vet."

Tiffany Rose

This interview took place at The Hollywood Show, a celebrity signing convention in Los Angeles where four times a year visitors get to meet their favourite stars. Visit www.hollywoodshow.com for more details.

Peter Ostrum, aged 13, with Gene Wilder in *Willy Wonka & The Chocolate Factory* (1971)



“ I BOUGHT A HORSE WITH MY EARNINGS AND THAT STARTED MY CURRENT CAREER PATH AS A VET ”
PETER OSTRUM

TWENTY YEARS AGO FROM THE DAILY EXPRESS

NOW MAKE IT A LASTING PEACE

Historic ceasefire must be permanent, John Major tells IRA. September 1, 1994

A quarter of a century of murder and bombings was due to end at midnight last night as the IRA laid down their arms.

But within minutes of the ceasefire

A new beginning: Catholic boy embraces a British soldier in Belfast yesterday

coming into effect there were two shooting incidents and reports of widespread demonstrations.

Ten minutes before the deadline shots were fired in the mainly Catholic Markets area of central Belfast. Earlier, gunmen

fired at a police station in County Fermanagh. A police patrol also came under fire in West Belfast.

John Major stepped up his peace drive by urging Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams to disown the carnage forever.

