

## **2009-K644**

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION celebrating the life of Munchkin Clarence Swensen upon the occasion of the tribute honoring his memory on June 7, 2009, in Chittenango, New York, during Oz-Stravaganza! 2009

WHEREAS, It is the custom of this Legislative Body to mourn publicly the death of cherished citizens of the State of New York; though not from New York, Clarence Swensen, through his role as one of the Munchkin soldiers in the 1939 "Wizard of Oz" movie has enhanced the lives of New Yorkers for 70 years and will continue to do so for time immemorial; and WHEREAS, Chittenango, New York, known as the birthplace of "Oz," is the home of author L. Frank Baum, whose most famous book, WONDERFUL WIZARD OF OZ, was made into the timeless MGM classic "Wizard of Oz," which continues to be enjoyed by young and old around the world; and WHEREAS, Not only has Chittenango made a home for the L. Frank Baum Museum and all things "Oz," it annually hosts a weekend-long festival, originally known as Oz Fest, and for the past many years as Oz-Stravaganza!; and

WHEREAS, Oz-Stravaganza! 2009, to be held June 5-7, 2009, will celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the "Wizard of Oz" and the 100th Anniversary of L. Frank Baum's book, ROAD TO OZ, and, on Sunday, June 7, 2009, will feature a fitting tribute to Clarence Swensen, a frequent and welcome visitor to Chittenango and participant in several Oz-Stravaganzas!, honoring him and celebrating the Village of Chittenango's designation of Tuesday, December 29, 2009, the anniversary of his birth, as August "Clarence" Swensen Day; and

WHEREAS, Clarence Swensen was born on December 29, 1917 and grew up in Austin, Texas; and

WHEREAS, At 4'6" tall, he was made for the role of a Munchkin soldier; he got his start in show business in 1936 with the Stanley Graham All-Midget Circus and then appeared, playing seven different characters, in the 1938 all-midget western, "Terror of Tiny Town"; and

WHEREAS, In 1939, his next, and best known, role was as one of the Munchkin soldiers in "Wizard of Oz," after which he went on to have a

role in "Tarzan Finds a Son", and to appear on "Entertainment Tonight," the TV special "Memories of Oz," "I Married a Munchkin," "We're Off to See the Munchkins", and many other programs, and traveled to many Oz Festivals, in addition to Chittenango's Oz-Stravaganza!, throughout the United States, sharing his story about the making of the famed movie and his part in it; and

WHEREAS, In time, he left the entertainment business and, during World War II, served as a civil service radio technician at Kelly Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas; later in his career, Clarence Swensen worked and eventually retired as an electronics technician at the University of Texas Balcones Research Center; and

WHEREAS, In June 1945, Clarence Swensen married Myrna Clifton, who will attend Oz-Stravaganza! 2009 just as she did so many others; they shared 63 years together until his death on February 25, 2009, at the age of 91, and raised three daughters and had several grandchildren and great-grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, To the people of Chittenango, Clarence Swensen became a dear friend and family member over the many years he attended Oz celebrations; he never failed to thank his fans and always maintained it was their love of the movie that made it the timeless classic it has become; his ever present smile, energetic step, and loving hugs will be remembered forever; and

WHEREAS, Clarence Swensen believed in the celebration of life and this Legislative Body, on behalf of all the citizens of Chittenango and the

State of New York is proud, in memory and friendship, to celebrate his; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to celebrate the life of Munchkin Clarence Swensen upon the occasion of the Village of Chittenango tribute honoring his memory on June 7, 2009, during Oz-Stravaganza! 2009, and to commend the people of Chittenango for helping to keep the "Wonderful Wizard of Oz" alive through Oz-Stravaganza! and many other ways; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Clarence Swensen's beloved wife, Myrna Swensen, the Village of Chittenango, and to Oz-Stravaganza! 2009.