

FOOTNOTES

LITTLE PEOPLE

Two-and-a-half years ago when **Thomas Ott** and **Jan Krawitz** first decided to produce a film about dwarfs, the filmmakers came upon a unique opportunity to tell an important story.

Few documentary films had previously addressed the subject, and the public perception of dwarfs remained firmly entrenched in misconception.

Ott and Krawitz sought out help, including the 3,000-member **Little People of America** organization. But the LPA members were skeptical about the project because of the dwarfs' frequent adverse experiences with the media. The filmmakers' dream seemed crushed.

But they decided to give it one more try. Ott and Krawitz laid out their plans before the group, showing them the central theme of the planned film: The dwarfs' struggle towards self-esteem and equal opportunity in an unkind and prejudiced world.

The resistance dissolved and the little people decided to help. It was June 1981, and Ott and Krawitz embarked on a grueling 12-week shoot which took them 12,000 miles around the country. They filmed the little people with whom they had met at the LPA meeting.

Funds were provided by the University of Texas at Austin's University Research Institute, Southwest Alternate Media Project and the Sinking Creek Film Celebration.

The result is an 88-minute, 16mm film titled *LITTLE PEOPLE*. The film has been screened at the 25th annual LPA national convention in Las Vegas, The New York Film Festival and at the University of Texas at Austin where Krawitz is an associate professor in the Radio-Television-Film Department.



Filmmakers **Thomas Ott** and **Jan Krawitz** flank **Lee Kitchens**, one of the dwarfs featured in the documentary, *LITTLE PEOPLE*, which screened at the University of Texas at Austin last fall. Kitchens, a Lubbock resident, is an electronics engineer for Texas Instruments and is a former president of **Little People of America**.

Ott, a native of Switzerland, is currently in Europe entering the film in various festivals. He and Krawitz share the credits for producer, director and editor, while Ott was cinematographer and Krawitz recorded the sound.

Reaction to the film has been positive. Reviewer Vincent Canby of the *New York Times* said the film "is an able, educational, sometimes moving, and on a couple of occasions, a blithely funny film."

Canby said the most poignant sequence occurred when the filmmakers recorded the last hours of a baby born to dwarf parents in which the dominant dwarf genes had combined for a fatal effect.

He adds, "The nicest thing about *LITTLE PEOPLE* is the indomitability it salutes."

Krawitz and Ott interviewed more than a

dozen dwarfs for the film. One of them is **Len Sawisch**, a physically tiny, extremely gifted consulting psychologist.

Sawisch says, "I feel a kinship with blacks. But when they tell me their people have been slaves for 200 years, I tell them my people have been given away as gifts for 2,000."