



## Author's descendant returns in sequel

By Lisa McKinnon  
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Lions and tigers and sequels, oh my! When L. Frank Baum wrote "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" and "The Marvelous Land of Oz" near the turn of the century, he saw the books as brief chapters in his multiple career-filled life as newspaper publisher, actor, store owner, gossip columnist and playwright. He had no intention of returning to Oz, but young readers — bitten by the Jitterbug — wouldn't let Baum turn his back on the Emerald City.

Today, filmmakers count box office receipts before deciding to make sequels of "Alien" and "Police Academy." In the early 1990s, Baum used his own popularity poll to find out if he should continue writing about Oz, telling readers that he would bring back Dorothy, the Cowardly Lion and Toto, too, if 1,000 children would write letters asking him to do so.

More than 1,000 requests — many of them signed by little girls named Dorothy — flooded into Baum's mailbox, sealing his fate as the self-described "Royal Historian of Oz." He adapted some of his stories for the stage and screen, producing homemade special effects on the lot of the Oz Film Manufacturing Co. in downtown Los Angeles. Still, more people are familiar with the 1939 version starring Judy Garland as Dorothy than any other film before or since.

Baum died in 1919, but it was business as usual for the Oz series, which continued to produce one new book each year through 1942. Ruth Plumly Thompson wrote 19 books for the series, including one that bears Baum's name, before she retired in 1939. Other writers stepped in, but not before interest in new Oz books had begun to wane. The mythical land gradually fell silent, save for the occasional title published by the International Wizard of Oz Club, which persuaded Thompson to write "Yankee in Oz" in 1972 and "The Enchanted Island of Oz" in 1976.



**L. Frank Baum**  
Great-granddad circa 1905

Roger Stanton Baum, great-grandson of "Oz" author L. Frank Baum, will talk about growing up in the Baum family and writing his own collection of "Oz" books tonight at the Ray D. Prueter Library in Port Hueneme.

Now Roger Stanton Baum, one of Baum's flesh-and-blood "sequels," is helping new converts and old fans alike make the trip to Oz. Baum, who lives in Westlake Village, will talk about his famous great-grandfather and his own series of books from 7 to 9 tonight at the Ray D. Prueter Library, 510 Park Ave. in Port Hueneme.

"What generally happens is that we have fun," Baum said of the once-a-month appearances he makes at area schools and libraries. "Depending on the age group, we talk about great-granddad's books, the movie and maybe some anecdotes. When I open it up for questions and answers, some of them ask about creative writing. Others ask, 'Who's your favorite character in Oz?'"

"I have a hard time with that," Baum added with a laugh. "In the interest of staying on neutral ground, I usually say Toto. You can't go wrong with Toto."

Baum, 54, is the grandson of Lyman Frank Baum's eldest son, Frank Joslyn, whose "The Laughing Dragon of Oz" was published as a Big Little Book in 1935. His own father, Joslyn Baum, preferred to keep a lower profile when it came to the family's literary history. Baum's *moments fully come between*

everybody's got *somebody* in their family who was a giant of the industrial world or an author or playwright or something. It was our nature not to talk about that very much," he said.

### Couldn't resist the Wizard

That reluctance to capitalize on the Baum name nearly kept him from writing his own stories about Oz. A former stockbroker, Baum was working as sales manager for the business checking division of a bank when a member of the Wizard of Oz Club encouraged him to take up where his great-grandfather had left off.

"It sounded a little presumptuous, but I figured no one had to see it but me," said Baum, who had already written short stories, poems for friends' weddings and a children's book titled "Long Ears and Tailspin." He said he wrote "Dorothy of Oz" as a hobby, filling spiral notebooks with hand-written chapters that Charlene Baum, his wife of six years, deciphered and typed into the home computer. In 1989, William Morrow & Co. published the resulting book with illustrations by Elizabeth Miles, who sketched the "Velveteen Rabbit."

Baum's story about how the pigtailed farm girl from Liberty, Kan., keeps the crafty Jester from turning the people of Oz into China dolls earned favorable reviews from incoming Wizard of Oz Club vice president Warren Hollister, who teaches history at the University of

Escanaba, Mich. Both men had a hard time getting their hands on Baum's more recent works, picture books that are sold primarily during book-signing appearances at such department stores as Nordstrom and Dillard's.

"The (other books) are trying to do something entirely different," Meyer said of Baum's "Rewolf of Oz" and a trilogy that introduces readers to the Silly OZbuls, a race of lovable, spring-footed creatures. "They're more directed toward the younger child. But they're interesting and they're sure to be collectors items some day," he added.

### Passport to anywhere

Baum said he plans to follow the trilogy with a more sophisticated adventure titled "Lion of Oz," slated for publication in a year and a half by his own company, Yellow Brick Road Publishers Inc. He prefers writing stories aimed at children because "it lets my imagination go anywhere it wants," he said. "I can go into never, never land."

In honor of Baum's first Christmas in December 1933, his great-grandmother Maud Gage Baum inscribed a first edition copy of "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" with the words "This book was written by your great-grandfather L. Frank Baum." He keeps the book in a safe place, bringing it out on special occasions.

He has vague memories of meeting his