

Oz writer's great-grandson to appear at annual fest

By Dee Dunheim

L. Frank Baum's filing cabinet was divided into two sections: One went from A to N, the other from O through Z. He took the O and the Z and made it OZ - Roger S. Baum is the eldest living great-grandson of the author of the most widely read and beloved children's book of all times "The Wizard of Oz," penned

in Chicago's Humboldt Park, was home to the elder Baum for many years. Despite a heart problem, he continually worked to support his four sons. He was a traveling salesman, published a small newspaper and ran a dry goods shop.

The magic, however, in his life was story-
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telling. Each story he envisioned, fired and sharpened his imagination for future stories. Baum became so well known and well loved by the neighborhood kids that they waited on his doorstep for him to come home to or come out of, his apartment.

"The tales were tested not only on his four sons, but all the kids in the neighborhood," says Roger. "My great granddad told these stories for the love of the young at heart."

The writer's wife Maud prodded her husband to write down what he so far had only been reciting. Reluctant at first, he finally consented, sat pen in hand, and of course

we know the results. All in all Baum wrote 61 more books, several under pen names.

Children of the world lost a dear friend when he passed on at the age of 62, but one hundred years later, he still lives in our hearts. His wife Maud survived him by 30 years and lived to be 92. Roger was blessed with the opportunity to hear stories directly from his great grandma as she sat in her big winged-back chair.

"She did get to see the movie in 1939, and even visited the set with Judy Garland," says Roger. "I think she was pretty pleased with the outcome."

Just as L. Frank Baum's wife prompted her husband

100 years ago, Roger Baum's wife Charlene has also gently motivated her husband to follow the famous author's footsteps to continue down the Yellow Brick Road to write his own series of seven Oz books. Baum will be on hand at the Wizard of Oz Festival to sell and autograph copies of his newest book, "The Lion of Oz and The Badge of Courage."

First released in 1995, the book has since been made into an animated two-hour musical motion picture to debut on the Disney Channel in late August. It will appear on Toon Disney, be released on DVD and VHS in September, and then shown on television stations internation-

ally.

Whether you're young or old, the festival hits responsive and emotional cords in

all who love the life's lessons learned from Oz.

For schedules, information, activities and maps, call

the Duneland Chamber of Commerce at (219) 926-5513 or log onto <http://wpl.lib.in.us/chamber/Oz/oz.htm>.

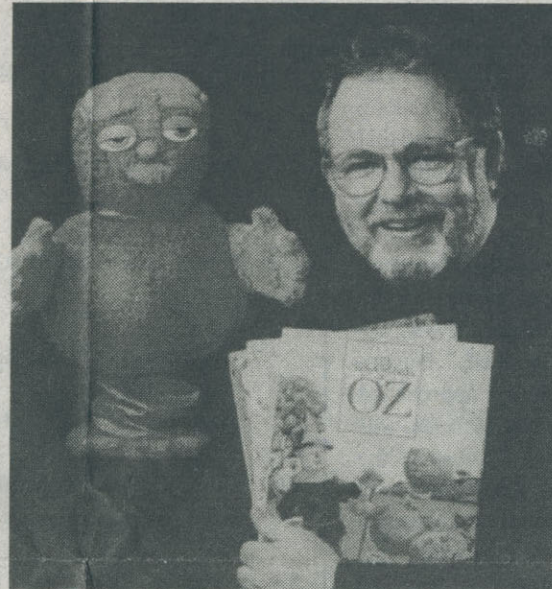


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Duneland Chamber of Commerce
Roger S. Baum is the oldest living great-grandson of L. Frank Baum, author of the most widely read and beloved children's book of all times "The Wizard of Oz," penned 100 years ago. Baum will make an appearance and chat about his famous great-grandfather, and sign copies of his own latest Oz book. Baum is pictured with one of his characters the SillyOZbul.