

Oz

Revisited

Baum's great-grandson writes sequel to the yellow brick road

By RAY HUGHEY
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Dorothy and Toto aren't in Kansas anymore. They've returned to Oz. One of America's favorite fictional heroines has been brought back to life by the great-grandson of the man who created her. Westlake Village resident Roger Baum, 51, a great-grandson of L. Frank Baum who created the Wizard of Oz stories, has written a new adventure returning Dorothy Gale and her dog Toto to the magical land of Oz.

Roger Baum's new book, "Dorothy of Oz" will be in area bookstores next month, marking the first new Oz tale in 25 years.

Priced at \$14.95, the 176-page book is being published by the Morrow Junior Books division of William Morrow and Co. Inc. The new Dorothy tale features a full-color frontispiece and 50 black and white illustrations by Laguna artist Elizabeth Miles, who illustrated the "Puss in Boots" and "Velveteen Rabbitt" children's books. The book also features an afterword by Oz enthusiast Peter Glassman, co-owner of Books of Wonder children's bookstores in New York City. Baum says Glassman and other Oz fans encouraged him to write his Oz story.

Baum says his book stays true to the original by his great-grandfather. So don't look for Dorothy's ruby slippers. The famed shoes were silver in the original book. They were changed to a more photogenic shade for the movie.

His great-grandfather wrote 14 Oz novels. The first was "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" in 1900. The final one was "Glinda of Oz" published after his death in 1920. Ruth Plumley Thompson wrote another 20, and Jack Snow wrote the two most recent Oz tales.

Baum's father read the original Oz stories to him when he was a child. He first tried his own hand at writing children's stories in 1965 with

"Long Ears and Tailspin" published in 1965 by Exposition Press.

Baum, a consultant with Great Western Bank, began jotting down his Oz tale in spiral-bound notebooks three years ago. He avoided trying to imitate his famous kin's writing style, but did try to capture the spirit of the original Oz stories.

In her new adventure, Dorothy returns to Oz to help her friends, the Cowardly Lion, the Tin Man and the Scarecrow, and prevent the Mad Jester from turning the citizens of Oz into China dolls. Her adventures include a trip down the Munchkin River and encounters with some very hungry dragons and a treacherous maze.

Baum already has been making the rounds promoting his new book. Jane Pauley interviewed him NBC's "Today" Aug. 15. He also did a half-hour live radio interview in New York City.

The new Oz book would seem especially welcome this year, the 50th anniversary of the release of the classic 1939 film "The Wizard of Oz," starring Judy Garland as Dorothy.

Baum is pleased at the reception his book has received from the book industry so far. "Once they hear about it, everybody gets excited."

He's already finished a second, smaller Oz story, "The Rewolf of Oz." "We're hoping to see it in about 12 months," he says.

He's also four chapters into another standard-length Oz story, as yet untitled. That story will feature a new character, Jonathan, a friend of Dorothy's who runs away from home and is carried to Oz when he falls into Raging River.

"It's kind of taking its own shape," says Baum. It's Jonathan's story, he says, adding Dorothy will probably make a guest appearance. Oz wouldn't be the same without Dorothy.