



Follow the yellow brick road

It's time for Chesterton's annual Oz Festival, which this year will feature Roger S. Baum and friends. To get ready for Oz, you can check out a special section in this week's Valparaíso News. The section starts on page 5.

A chip off the old Baum

It's been more than 90 years since L. Frank Baum first published "The Wizard of Oz," but his great-grandson, Roger S. Baum, is keeping the family tradition intact by jumping full force into the world of "Oz."

Since completing his first Oz book, "Dorothy of Oz" in 1989 (that book, by the way, bears no relation to his great-grandfather's "Dorothy and the Wizard in Oz," one of the 13 Oz books he completed before his death in 1919), California resident Roger Baum has started his own publishing house: Yellow Brick Road Publishers.

The 54-year-old writer, who spent most of his career as a banker, said the original Oz books provide no income to his family: the first eight Oz books are currently in the public domain, "and Ted Turner owns all rights to the 1939 MGM movie."

"There was a Baum trust once that went to some of great-grandfather's heirs," Baum said, "but I never participated in it. My parents kept a very low profile, but they did read me the Oz books when I was a child."

There are 45 different Oz books (many are out of print) by the two Baums and a handful of other writers, and a very successful national Oz club.

"The books are filled with contradictions about Oz," Baum said, "so I try to stay as close as possible to the original book."

Baum said his visit to Kansas next week will be his first.

"Great-grandad never made it to Kansas either!" Baum said with a laugh. "I hope to get the chance to get to visit Liberty, Kan., at some point. That's Dorothy's home town."