

# Preface



In 1956 (the one hundredth anniversary of L. Frank Baum's birth), when I was fourteen, the classic 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz* began to be shown yearly on television. I was not a great fan of the movie—at first. But, as Oz aficionados know, the movie grows on you. It is rated the number one fantasy film and is tenth among the 100 Greatest Movies of All Time by the American Film Institute. Starring Judy Garland as Dorothy, Ray Bolger as the Scarecrow, Jack Haley as the Tin Woodman, Bert Lahr as the Cowardly Lion, and Frank Morgan as the Wizard, *The Wizard of Oz* is one of the all-time favorite films of Americans of all generations.

I didn't read Baum's 1900 book, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, on which the movie was based, until 1997, when I was interviewing for a job at the University of Kansas. I thought since the classic work was set in Kansas I should be familiar with it and perhaps I could create intriguing links between the development of Baum's book and the position for which I was interviewing. One thing I learned from that interview, however, was that the Kansans I met didn't seem to know much more about Baum's book than people in any other state. I didn't get an offer from KU, but it was on that April 1997 trip that I began thinking about the possible broader implications of the Oz stories. As a bonus, in preparing for the interview I also read Michael Patrick Hearn's original annotated work, *The Annotated Wizard of Oz*. Hearn's wonderfully detailed book had enough in it about the life and times of Frank Baum to pique my interest in the author and the potential of the larger Oz story.

It seemed to me that in our contemporary world, educated people should aspire to integrate the intellectual, moral, and ethical lessons Baum's characters come to represent: learning, loving, and serving others through humility and a

focus on the future. I thought that by extension, Baum’s book could serve as a model for integrated scholar faculty members—individuals who are able to blend teaching, research, and service in extraordinary ways—to the benefit of students and themselves. And it could serve bright high school and college students in similar ways. From these musings evolved the bases for *The Way of Oz*, specifically the linkages among learning (wisdom), loving (heart), and serving (courage), with one caveat. Learning in and of itself does not necessarily lead to wisdom. But in the philosophical construct of *The Way of Oz*, the integration of learning, loving, and serving can indeed lead to wisdom. And, when combined with the Dorothy figure as leader and the Wizard as the champion of humility and related virtues, a powerful complex, or model, evolves for lifelong learning, loving, and serving. Thus, it became my hope that *The Way of Oz* might assist the “youth of all ages.”