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Lions and tigers and bears oh my! Sandi Bonfiglio peruses Oz lore

## Club studies Land of Oz

By CAROL HASKIN

If a story is any good at all, it leaves its audience wondering what happened to the characters after the "The End." Well, despite her assertion that there's no place like home, life in the Kansas dustbowl finally got rather economically depressing for Dorothy. With the help of old friends in the Emerald City, special travel arrangements were made and Dorothy, Auntie Em, Uncle Henry and Toto were packed up and shipped back to Oz.

Anyone who already knows all this is a true Oz fan and staunch follower of the two historians of the Land of Oz: L. Frank Baum, the country's originator, and his literary heir, Ruth Plumly Thompson.

Oz devotees number in the thousands. Since 1957 they have been finding each other through the International Wizard of Oz Club, headquartered at 220 N. 11th St., Escanaba.

The club is currently 1,560 members strong, 85 of whom are in Michigan. Two live in Bloomfield Township.

Jean Krolik has been a member of the club for about 10 years. Sandi Bonfiglio joined only last summer. Each became interested in the organization because she found the Oz habit addictive and could not abandon the imaginary land after only one trip.

"You either are an Oz book person or you aren't," Mrs. Krolik explained. "If you are, it's more than just a children's story. It's a masterpiece, like works by Jonathan Swift, Tolkien and Tolkien. The man has created a country, and there is consistency and sense to everything he did."

Mrs. Krolik has been collecting the Oz books since she was a girl when an annual event was the drive from their summer cottage on Watkins Lake to Pontiac to pick up the yearly Oz adventure.

Having reread her collection as an adult, Mrs. Krolik said she found more in them now than she did as a girl. However, she prefers to read the books for enjoyment rather than making them the focus of a literary study.

as many Oz members are wont to do.

**THE CLUB'S QUARTERLY** publication, the "Baum Bugle," carries scholarly articles on various aspects of Oz. One paper traced Dorothy's life, explaining what happened to her parents, how she got to Kansas and her exact relationship to Auntie Em.

Another issue had a treatise on "The Memorable Horses of Oz." The magazine also carried a series on Baum's career as a Hollywood filmmaker. (Early in his career, "Our Gang" director Hal Roach starred in one of Baum's Oz films, "The Patchwork Girl of Oz.")

The Oz film that everyone remembers is the 1939 MGM version of "The Wizard of Oz" starring Judy Garland. Having grown up with the film's yearly television screening, Miss Bonfiglio became interested in the books and then in the club.

Miss Bonfiglio found that the stories have a modern appeal that Baum could not have foreseen when he wrote them.

"Women's libbers really enjoy these stories," Miss Bonfiglio said, "because all the central characters are girls."

Dorothy, Polychrome the Rainbow Lady of Oz, Ozma, who takes over the reins of power when the Wizard disappears in his balloon, are the heroes of the Oz stories. Most of the male figures are either non-human, such as the Tin Woodman and the Scarecrow, or humbags, like the Wizard.

**THE INTERNATIONAL WIZARD OF OZ CLUB** holds annual conventions for each of its chapters. Miss Bonfiglio plans to attend this year's gathering of Ozopolitans, members living in Michigan and surrounding states.

This year's Ozopolitan convention will be held at Castle Park, from June 20-22. Castle Park, located near Holland, is the site of an impressive castle, bringing to mind, at least to the mind of an Ozopolitan, the castle of Glinda (the Good Witch of the North) or Gayerette (ditto South).

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