

# Suburban Life

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Down the yellow brick road, a girl from Kansas, uprooted by a tornado, went to the Land of Oz for help from a wizard who could get her back home. Dorothy, Oz, the Munchkins, the tornado itself, and even the wallpaper in Dorothy's bedroom were re-created by an area advertising agency for a 30 second commercial on home insurance. Miraculously, all of this was done, not in Hollywood but in Southfield and Farmington Hills.

What, two Dorothy's? Just as in the original Oz, the movie is black and white, then brilliantly, turns to technicolor as Dorothy clumps down in Oz following the tornado. For the commercial shoot, an all-gray Dorothy and room were used, until the scenes turn to color, a scene being rehearsed at right.

Photographs by Andrew Sacks and staff photographers Randy Borst and Mindy Saunders.



## Land of Oz, take 2

By Shirlee Rose Iden  
staff writer

NOTHING is routine when you are producing a 30-minute commercial based on "The Wizard of Oz."

That's what Hugh Broder, director of broadcast production at W. E. Doner Advertising in Southfield says, and he ought to know.

Doner is winding up a project in the works since last summer produced in Southfield, with special effects done in Farmington Hills.

"It should air in mid-March for a budget of between \$100,000 and \$120,000," said Broder, who added that doing it in Los Angeles probably would have likely doubled the price.

The message of the spot is that when your house is crunched by a tornado, you really needn't seek out a wizard, but call on AAA Homeowners' Insurance to fix things up.

"We're big on taking a story that's familiar to audiences and building on it," said Broder.

Many of the actors, technicians and such are local talents. Even Dorothy, who now lives in California, is a former area resident, according to Sandra Hermannoff of the Doner Agency.

MANY hands and minds go into the making of commercials, and this was no exception.

Jon Weber, model maker, built a replica of Dorothy's house in the old movie. It was suspended from a string and spun around as it was filmed, giving the effect of a house spinning in a tornado.

To film the storm itself, a cloud tank, actually a

huge aquarium, was set up. The aquarium weighs close to a ton when filled. Tom Hitchcock, special effects supervisor, and his crew filled the tank halfway with salt water.

Then, a large cylindrical piece of plastic, open on both ends, is lowered into the tank in which fresh water is added. Salt and fresh water won't mix because of differing densities, so the salt water stays on the bottom.

Water from a garden hose is forced in and starts the water in the cylinder rotating. The special effects crew then injects black and white dyes in the water. Stratified cloud effects are produced where the fresh and salt water meet.

For the sequence, the camera is filming in slow motion. And it was done over and over for the right shot.

JUST as when Judy Garland did it, the house goes through the cyclone, the bed reverberates, Dorothy is catapulted into Oz, walks the yellow brick road, meets charming friends and there's a happy ending.

For Broder and others, the happiest ending may be still on the horizon. That is, if the low-cost 30-second spot wins some prestigious awards for him and his company.

Tinsel town has its charms, but the metro area is justly labeled a top spot to make commercial and industrial films.

If you see Dorothy, the tornado, and the Munchkins on your TV screen soon, don't turn the channel. It's not Judy Garland. This is the road to Oz taken right here in Oakland County.



In the original "Oz" Dorothy is in her bed when the tornado hits (above). Reproducing the storm and gyrations of the bed took at least three production people effects, were produced. In addition to Dorothy to simulate. At right, Ben Adams.

