

## **‘We’re In to See the Wizard...’**

My family moved to the 2-year-old San Diego suburb of Allied Gardens in 1956, the year that The Wizard of Oz was first shown on TV.

Although we lived in California, the ranch land surrounding our blocks of one-story tract homes reminded me of the Kansas home of Judy Garland’s character, Dorothy Gale, from the 1939 movie. We were amazed to hear from our parents that The Wizard of Oz changed to a color film when Dorothy reached Oz, since we had only black-and-white TV for some time.

When my cousins would visit, my family’s corner lot on Galewood Street became the ideal playground for reenacting stories we saw on TV. We had a sizable cast for our TV-inspired games. I’m the oldest of the generation consisting of my four siblings, five cousins and me.

Playing “Oz” became our favorite pastime. It was so special that the 1960 reenactment with my cousins was the subject of my first diary entry, when I was 7: “We watched 77 Sunset Strip and played The Wizard of Oz. I was Dorothy. Gil: the wizard and old witch. Linda: the good witch. Me: Aunt Anna and Uncle Steven. Pam: mean lady and whatever. Larry: workman, scarecrow. Gil: tin can man, tree.”

I don’t think we realized then that some people in the movie played dual parts. We didn’t pay much attention to the earlier Kansas portion of the movie; we were impatient for Dorothy’s adventures to start.

We played Oz indoors. My family's house had an L-shaped hall, and when we shut the doors, the dark hall was perfect for scary scenes. With the doors open, the hall became the Yellow Brick Road where we sang, "We're off to see the wizard..."

The Wizard of Oz was shown only once a year, so it was a special event. In 1964, we anticipated the broadcast with the eagerness normally reserved for Christmas and birthdays. My parents had bought a color TV!

My cousins and the neighbors came over to see Oz in color, and Mom made an enormous pan of buttered popcorn on the stove. We children sat in rows on the floor, excited enough even to ignore the popcorn.

The colors were so captivating that we didn't sing along with Dorothy and her friends. We simply oohed and aahed as if we were watching fireworks. The ruby slippers sparkled, and the wicked witch was green!

Today, we watch The Wizard of Oz with children and grandchildren and share childhood memories and the joys of watching and playing Oz.

—Liz S. San Diego, California