

## Dying author got last laugh on skeptics

Children's book became best seller

By Delbert Ellerton  
STAFF WRITER

As the story goes, the late David Saltzman loved getting a chuckle out of his Yale University classmates.

One day, he told them a joke. But no one laughed, his mother said.

To ease his pain, which was compounded by a losing battle to Hodgkin's disease, David wrote and illustrated the best-selling children's book, "The Jester Has Lost His Jingle."

The book, which sold more than 180,000 copies to reach The New York Times' best-seller list, began as a class project.

Barbara Saltzman, David's mother and the book's publisher, visited Morrow Elementary School last week.

She recited the "The Jester" to students. She also told them David's life story.

Before moving into the story, Barbara Saltzman gave the students some background. She told them that kings had jesters in their courts for entertainment. But jesters also were the deliverers of bad news.

"Jesters could tell kings things

they couldn't accept from anyone else," she said.

In the book, the Jester awakens one morning and finds laughter missing in his kingdom. He and his helpmate Pharley go on a search to find it. During their adventure, they find that laughter can re-energize a sad world.

"David saw himself as the jester," she told the students. "David always loved to dream. He loved to read children's books."

David kept a good attitude as he battled Hodgkin's disease, she said.

"It just took his body before we were ready for his body to be given away," Saltzman said.

Before David's death in March 1990 at the age of 23, the family promised David that "The Jester" would be published just as he wrote it.

"It took five years after his death to get it published," Saltzman said. "David drew the pictures and wrote the story and story-boarded it."

Several publishers wanted to make material changes to the 64-page story and its illustrations. The Saltzmans resisted the

demands. They decided to publish



DELBERT ELLERTON / Staff

**Promise kept:** Barbara Saltzman, mother of the author of "The Jester Has Lost His Jingle," tells Morrow Elementary students about her son and his successful book, which she published.

the book themselves and distribute it from their garage.

Skeptics said it wouldn't sell.

In the first year, more than 40,000 copies were sold. Thousands of copies have been given

to hospitals like Scottish Rite and Egleston for children battling cancer.

"It's a wonderful children's book," Saltzman said. "The Jester" hit the Times' best-seller list

March 13, which is David's birthday, she said.

"I always carry David in my heart," Saltzman said. "I always feel as though he's right there beside me."