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BOOK ENDS

Edited by Debbie Arrington from staff and wire reports

The Jester has found more laughter

Barbara Saltzman made two promises to her son David before he died. No. 1, David's children's book would be published. No. 2, his message – that laughter is hiding inside all of us – would not die with him.

"David was always cheering other people up," says his mother. "He was the jester."

Working with her husband Joe and surviving son Michael, Saltzman has gone a long way fulfilling both promises to David, who died of Hodgkin's disease six days before his 23rd birthday.

Rebuffed by publishers who told them "rhyme doesn't sell," the Palos Verdes family started their own publishing company. The Saltzmans had plenty of experience to pull from. Barbara was editor of TV Times and the daily Calender section at the Los Angeles Times. Joe is a longtime journalism professor at USC. Michael was executive producer of TV's "Murphy Brown."

To make David's dream happen, the family went about \$300,000 in debt. But no price tag could be put on the pride they feel in their labor of love. David's beautifully illustrated 64-page book, **"THE JESTER HAS LOST HIS JINGLE,"** has become a nationwide best seller and a staple of children's libraries from coast to coast.

Barbara Saltzman loves sharing the book in person. At 1 p.m. today, she will be reading it aloud at Barnes & Noble's Marina Pacifica store, 6326 E. Pacific Coast Highway, Long Beach. (562) 431-2253.

If a children's book sells 12,000 copies nationwide, it's considered a publishing success, says Saltzman. Now in its fifth printing after its initial 1995 release, "The Jester Has Lost His Jingle" has 175,000 copies in circulation.



Barbara Saltzman introduces the Jester doll to go with her son David's book, "The Jester Has Lost His Jingle."

Photo by Hillary Sloss / Press-Telegram

Of those, more than 25,000 books were donated to children with cancer and other life-threatening diseases. That was part of promise No. 2. To share David's message of healthy laughter with those who need it most, Saltzman has worked closely with the Long Beach-based Parents Against Cancer, a support group for the Jonathan Jaques Children's Cancer Center at Long Beach Memorial Medical Center.

"David was very concerned about children who were going through the same thing he was," says Saltzman. "If he saw them in the hospital, he would hug them. This is one way

of enabling him to keep hugging."

Dr. Jerry Finkelstein, medical director of the children's cancer center, helped make the book donation program happen. "David's life-affirming message is a friendly story that is perfectly designed to build up patients' spirits," he says. "He knew what it was like to be ill and in the months before his death, he worked single-mindedly to finish his extraordinary book."

Now, the Jester is expanding from publishing to toymaking. After hundreds of requests, the Saltzmans commissioned a Jester doll to go with the book. The 20-inch cuddly Jester comes with bells on and a detachable Pharley, his clown-head companion. The doll will sell for \$32. Or you can get the \$20 book and the doll packaged together for \$45.

Monday morning, several of the dolls will be donated to ill children at Jonathan Jaques. This way, sick kids will get a chance to hug back the little laugh-making jester. And David's message lives on.