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SHERRI WINSTON
Commentary



A wish is granted, a dream come true

As the bigger kids busted below on Apple Avenue, my brother Keith and I would play in the empty second-story apartment above our house.

Even though Keith was two years younger than me, he was like a "big brother." He looked out for me.

And he looked up to me.

I was already 5. Already big enough to go to school. He envied that so much.

"I can't wait 'til I'm big enough to go to school, too," he would tell me. Then we'd start sliding across the floor, hiding, laughing, playing.

He talked about going to school a lot. I wish that his wish could have come true.

He died of prostate cancer two days before his fifth birthday — a week before he would have been old enough to start kindergarten.

A dream of laughter

Maybe that's why the story of David Saltzman caught my attention.

David was an honors student at Yale University when he decided what he wanted to do with the rest of his life.

After attending a summer study program taught by illustrators and authors, David called his mom and said, "That's what I want to do."

During that program David got the idea to write *The Jester Has Lost His Jingle*.

In the story, when the people of the kingdom lose their joy, the Jester is banished. But fate leads him to a hospitalized girl. Like everyone else, she seems unhappy.

"... Hello, little girl," the Jester said. "My! How do you do? ... I wonder if you can tell me, how come laughter's not with you? ..."

The little girl looked up and her eyes were opened wide. She turned slowly to the Jester, and she quietly replied ... "Here I lie with a tumor ... And you ask where's my sense of humor?"

Beautifully illustrated, this poetic, inspirational book teaches us the power of laughter: Its infectious nature, its necessary existence.

But David never saw his book in print. During his senior year, three months after he began this project, he was diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease.

He died March 2, 1990.

Making a wish come true

His mother remembers his pain. "When he was going through chemo, he was very disturbed to see other kids going through it and knowing what they had to go through," Barbara Saltzman says.

For David it became more important than ever to teach those children to smile.

And when he died, it became critical to Barbara and Joe Saltzman to finish what their son had started.

They refinanced their home and spent \$350,000 to self-publish the book. They even added a room inside the garage of their Palos Verdes, Calif., home to serve as an office for the book business.

Slowly their investment is paying off. The book has had a 70,000 press run and is into its second printing.

"The book is a really happy book. While David was undergoing the most difficult and challenging experience, he was able to produce a book of such fun and humor and joy," Barbara says.

And while her family has undergone the most painful experience a family can have, the Saltzmans have been able to make their child's wish come true.

I envy that very much.

To order "*The Jester Has Lost His Jingle*" (\$25), call 1-800-9-Jester.

Sherri Winston's column appears on Wednesdays.