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## Man's memory lives in book, dolls that help children cope

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Barbara Saltzman may have lost her son, but his memory lives on through the dolls and books she donated recently to Children's Hospital.

Birmingham's youngest patients were among the first in the country to get their own Jester & Pharley dolls — toys meant to help children cope with the sadness, pain and loneliness of life-threatening illnesses.

It's something Jester creator David Saltzman knew too well.

He wrote and illustrated the storybook *The Jester Has Lost His Jingle* as his senior project at Yale University. He died of Hodgkin's disease a few days before his 23rd birthday.

His legacy, Mrs. Saltzman said, is the book that teaches children laughter and joy come from within. While the story is comforting, the Saltzman family

wanted a toy to go with it so children would have some cuddly company during their medical journeys.

"I'm amazed at the response of children who are ill to the doll," said Mrs. Saltzman, who lives in California. She was in Birmingham recently to give away dozens of dolls and books at Children's Hospital. "It reminds them that the laughter is inside them."

The story opens with a court Jester and his puppet Pharley being banished from the kingdom because they couldn't make the king laugh. Determined to find out where the world's sense of humor had flown to, Jester and Pharley set out on a humor quest that eventually takes them to a dank city.

Thinking they might find some answers in a hospital, the pair approaches a girl lying in bed and asks her where her laughter has gone.

She replies:

"Here I lie, I have a tumor . . . And you ask me where's my sense of humor? I've been very sick. I'm so tired of trying. I don't feel like laughing. I just feel like crying."

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### JESTER: Helps in time of need

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Those thoughts are echoed by children battling cancer or other illnesses, Mrs. Saltzman said.

But the jester's antics eventually get the little girl to guffaw,

and the infectious laughter spills out to the city. Mrs. Saltzman hopes her son's story will teach children how to laugh and spread any joy they find.

David Saltzman got the idea for the book one summer day when he walked into a class and cracked a joke that fell of deaf ears. Suddenly, his good mood vanished. The experience made him realize how quickly depression and disappointment can invade the mind.

He doodled a sad, wilted little

jester that had clearly lost its jingle.

Saltzman tells this story in a letter to readers on the back pages of his book. It was written in March 1989, a year before he died of Hodgkin's disease, a cancer of the lymphatic system.

The jester, he said, gave him something to focus on besides the disease.

"He came to help me in my time of need, and my hope is that, if you let him, he will come alive within these pages and help you too."