

# the Edmond Evening Sun

IN THE HEART OF EDMOND

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## Mother Shares Son's Fanciful Tale Of Humor And Strength

It's up to us to make a difference. It's up to us to  
re." — From "The Jester Has Lost His Jingle."

By LORAIN LAWSON  
SUN Staff Writer

When Barbara Saltzman's son David showed her a cartoon jester and an outline for a children's story, she knew it could be a classic. She thought the story could outlive her. She didn't anticipate the jester would outlive David.

Her son conceived the story a few months before he was diagnosed with cancer of the lymphatic system. In his hour of despair, the jester rang into his mind.

The college student decided to face the disease with strength and humor, like the bright, jiling character he had created.

Over the next year and a half, as the cancer consumed him, David brought life to his fanciful hero. David died in 1990, just 11 days before



SALTZMAN

his 23rd birthday. But before his short life ended, he gave the world "The Jester Has Lost His Jingle," a tale of how the jester helps an angry world rediscover laughter and the strength within each of us.

The book holds a powerful message for others, according to David's mother. She has left her job as an editor at the *Los Angeles Times* to spread the story all over the world. She arrived in Oklahoma City Wednesday to share the story with the Murrah Building bombing survivors and young cancer patients.

She will read "The Jester Has Lost His Jingle" to Washington Irving Elementary students Friday afternoon.

"The basic message of the book is self-empow-

erment for children," she said. "They can find laughter, and laughter can make them feel better."

Saltzman opted to publish the book herself with help from David's brother, Michael, an executive producer for the television show "Murphy Brown." David's father, Joe, has only recently begun to help because he found the project too painful after David's death.

The family wanted to ensure the integrity of David's message and shunned large publishing companies because they feared it might become just another book to them. It took them almost six years to finish the project.

"We were very committed that this book be done as beautifully as it could be done and we refused to compromise," she said. "We felt that what was important was that it be done right, not quickly."

The book was released in October and made



David Saltzman died at 22 before he could see his children's book published. His mother and brother took up the task.

the *The New York Times* Best Seller list March 2 — David's birthday.

Saltzman travels around the country, reading the book to all ages of children. It is also given to children with cancer through Parents Against Cancer, and 20,000 copies have been donated for that purpose. Some of those books will stay in Oklahoma City with bombing survivors and cancer patients at Integris Baptist Medical Center, where Saltzman spoke at a Women's Health Forum today.

The story affects all ages of children for many reasons, she said. The book does not talk down to them and the jester lives in a real world, with real problems, but does not abandon hope that he can make a difference. The children understand and appreciate that, she said.

"Children are aware of what's going on," she said. "They see things and they live things that are not pleasant."

Her dream is that David's book will become a classic and a whole generation will grow up recalling the values reflected in the jester and his stick friend, Pharley.

The little jester can't provide ultimate answers, but his message of

### Meet Mom

SUN readers can meet Barbara Saltzman at Barnes & Noble, 6100 N. May Ave., at 2 p.m. Saturday. She will also read "The Jester Has Lost His Jingle" at Washington Irving Elementary School on Friday, but the public is not invited to that event.

reaching inside for laughter and strength does ease readers' minds, she said.

"I have found that the jester has helped them cope with their loss and their sorrow and feel closer to the ones they loved," she said. "It comforts them."

She recalled a girl at one of her first readings who asked if she still missed David. She said yes.

The girl told her, "I really feel he's here. I really feel he's an angel on my shoulder now," she said.

"David was the jester," Saltzman said. "David's insight and his sense of humor carried him through it and that is what has carried me through."

"I always do feel his spirit is hovering over this project."