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A few moments with...

Barbara Saltzman

*In 1995, Barbara Saltzman published the children's book **The Jester Has Lost His Jingle**, written and illustrated by her son, David, 22, who died of Hodgkin's disease in 1990 shortly after completing the book. The fable about a court jester's discovery that laughter is hiding within all of us has sold more than 225,000 copies, and more than 25,000 of the books have been donated to children's hospitals. Saltzman, 57, of Palos Verdes Estates, Calif., will be at the Borders bookstore in Ocoee on Saturday at 11 a.m. to read the book and sign copies.*



David's story as well. David's struggle and our struggle also tells them a lot about perseverance and belief in yourself and in those you love and in the fact that when people die they're not out of your life. I've gotten letters from parents whose blind children respond to the language, parents whose deaf children respond to the vividness and joy of the pictures, and even from parents who tell me that their autistic children respond to the book as a whole.

Q: How has publishing and promoting this book helped you and your family deal with your son's death?

A: It's wonderful to see that David's vision — and our belief in it — has been validated, but it's a very bittersweet feeling because we feel David should be the one personally receiving this wonderful feedback.

Q: How did the book's message about the redemptive power of laughter help your son face his own illness and death?

A: David really was the jester, and he faced life and death the way the Jester acts in the story. The Jester never gives up. The Jester always has a sense of humor and always is whimsical and

Q: How important was it to your son to have his book published after his death?

A: David's joyful outlook on life was the heart of *The Jester Has Lost His Jingle*, and he wanted that shared with children all over the world. And we promised him that we would see that it would be published the way he wanted it done and that it would also be given free to children with cancer and other special needs.

Q: How has this book inspired children, especially those with serious and chronic illnesses?

A: The book touches children on a very deep level at all times, but it has a special resonance for children with serious and chronic illnesses and other special needs. We receive letters and calls from these youngsters all the time, and I meet them everywhere I go. One particular letter I got from a youngster who had a very difficult life said, "I like your book. It filled me up with joy." This to me so symbolizes how the book affects children. They respond not only to the actual story but to



Barbara and David Saltzman at his Yale University graduation

filled with fun and good spirits, and that's how David always was. His work on the book made him feel wonderful. And his bright outlook on life is right there on every single page. David enjoyed and relished every single minute of his life. And he insisted that we not sit around and cry and feel sorry for him or ourselves. He taught us an awful lot by how he lived and how he ultimately faced his own death.

— Terry Godbey