

Letter earns young writer national recognition

By Teresa M. Pelham
Associate Editor

Sometimes we read books that really touch us — books that mean something special to us and stay with us long after the last page is read.

For nine-year-old Maureen Daly, that book is "The Jester Has Lost His Jingle," by David Saltzman. By the time the children's book was published, the 22-year-old author and artist had died of Hodgkin's disease. An English and Art major at Yale University, he had just about completed the story when he passed away on March 2, 1990.

David's parents, Barbara and Joe, from Palos Verdes, CA, promised him that the book would not only be published, but would also be given to children that could use the book's strong message about the importance of laughter. After a number of publishers turned the project down, the Saltzmans decided to take a second mortgage on their home and publish the book themselves.

The story of the Saltzmans and their book was detailed in the October edition of "Good Housekeeping," which is where Maureen's mother, Kathleen, first heard about the book. She



Maureen Daly of LeMay Street has a special fondness for this book, "The Jester Has Lost His Jingle."

Staff photo by Teresa M. Pelham

eventually bought the book and read it together with her three children. A fourth grader at Duffy Elementary School, Maureen was especially touched by the book and decided to write Mrs. Saltzman a letter.

"I just wanted to thank her for writing the book," Maureen said. "I wanted to make her happy."

Maureen's letter stated that she enjoyed the book and that she realized how hard David must have worked to complete the book.

"His book was touching," the letter reads. "It taught me a lesson. The lesson was that never hide your laughter, because you might forget where you put that wonderful gift. I feel better when I laugh than cry. Thanks for making sure a lot of people heard David's message."

A few weeks after the letter was sent, the Dalys received a phone call from Mrs. Saltzman, who informed them that because Maureen's letter captured the true message of the book, it was being used as part of a publicity package for the book.

But her real reason for calling was much bigger. Maureen was invited to join Mrs. Saltzman for an interview on "Good Morning America."

The interview took place on Nov. 13 at the Atticus Book Store at Yale in New Haven and will air on Tuesday, Dec. 12. Maureen said she has no idea why so much fuss has been made over her letter.

"When we went to Atticus Book Store, they had my letter blown up really big," she said. "It was kind of crazy."

"It was really just an innocent letter to tell someone 'thanks,'" said Mrs. Daly. "You're probably more apt to thank the chamber maid at the Holiday Inn than to thank someone for publishing a book."

Once the 30,000 books arrived at the Saltzman's home and were put into the newly built temperature-controlled garage, 10,000 of the books were sold to Parents Against Cancer, which then donated the books to hospitals. Since then, Ingram Publishers took the project on and recently published 40,000 more books. Locally, the Bookworm in West Hartford Center is presently selling the book.

"It's been very well received," said Sarah Bedell, owner of the store. "We're very happy to have it. Everything about it is good."

To help Maureen remember this part of her life, Mrs. Daly picked out two jester charm necklaces at Lux Bond and Green in West Hartford Center—one for Maureen and one for Mrs. Saltzman. The owners of the jewelry store then decided to donate the necklaces because they thought it was such a nice story. Maureen presented the gift to Mrs. Saltzman at the taping of the show.

"I just wanted to make someone happy," said Maureen. "It turns out I made a lot of people happy."

A Special Letter

Nine-year old Maureen Daly's special letter to the parents of a late author have earned her an appearance on 'Good Morning America.'

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