

His dream is to write children's books

By Carolyn DelMarco
staff writer

"Welcome to Camp Barry."
Camp Barry is the Keego Harbor abode of Barry Rudner, 35 — printing forms salesman, windsurfer, art collector, falcon lover, flautist, one-time would-be scientist and children's book author. Did we mention bachelor?

And "Welcome to Camp Barry," is the greeting supplied by the enthusiastic, youthful Barry Rudner on the answering machine and at the door of his tiny, uniquely furnished, slightly Bohemian home, a short stone's throw from Cass Lake. "Not much bigger than most people's closet," is how Rudner describes the 450-square-foot home to visitors. He gives the grand tour from a single spot in the middle of the combination living room-dining room-kitchen-

en-office.

THE BOOMS from three windsurfers sit in the corner. In the bathroom are the saunas. On the back deck are the three boards. Why three? "Oh my God, are there three? Yesterday there were two. They must be breeding again," he says.

He shares Camp Barry's space with Woman, his generic cat. "She sort of looks like a speed bump, doesn't she," Rudner says by way of introduction, "sort of like . . . dirt." About the home: "It's a cottage, but without the lake it would just be a shack . . . the house is paid for. I'm living free and I'm allowed to do what I want to do."

What he wants to do most is write children's books. What he wants almost as much is to get them published. "I'd love to be able to write chil-

dren's books for the rest of my life," he said.

The dream is beginning to come true. Last month his illustrated paperback book, "The Littlest Tall Fellow," was released by a new children's publishing firm, Tiny Thought Press.

The book was rejected by 28 publishers before acceptance. In general his works have, in his own words, "been rejected by every major publisher at least four times. I have not been an instantaneous success."

The turning point came last year when Rudner sent his manuscript, with illustrations by Connecticut sculptor Thomas Fatsbender, to a well-known author-illustrator. The reply said, "Throw away the writer. The illustrations are great."

He queried a literary agent who replied, "The writing's great; throw away the illustrator."

"That gave me hope," Rudner said. "Two professionals couldn't agree."

RUDNER HAS been writing for 10 years, since he was in graduate school. Up until then he was normal, he insists. He grew up in Farmington Hills, son of Ellen and Ted, brother of Heidi, and twin brother of Bennett, now painting houses in California.

He graduated in 1972 from North Farmington High School and went on to Albion College, where he earned a bachelor's degree in biology and religious studies with time out for a stint at Hebrew University. ("I'm not a religious person but I am a man of God.")

In 1977 he moved to Lansing "to play in graduate school. I was being trained as a scientist. I thought I wanted to be a doctor when I was hit with the writing bug."

His first writing venture was about Lassie, his toilet-trained cat. He returned to Detroit to work at his "real job," as business forms and printing salesman in the family business, Great Lakes Printing. The job means long hours in his car during the day and working on his home computer at night "until I drop. I brood every day. I'm constantly brooding, percolating while I'm driving. I'm in my car 100-150 miles a day."

Rudner spent three years researching children's literature while writing. "I like Shel Silverstein, Maurice Sendak, Jane Yolen and Dr. Seuss. He's been the most influential."

"If I had to categorize my writing," Rudner says, "I would say that I am a writer of modern day fairy tales. Whether they are written in prose or verse they still follow the basic elements and structure of a fairy tale. Fairy tales address the fears and desires of children, which are not necessarily based on the laws of Newtonian physics, but the laws of imagination, which have no rules. Fairy tales, therefore, address what is true in the mind of a child, but not necessarily what is real; their under-

standing."

All fairy tales, Rudner believes, have the same basic elements — fantasy, recovery from despair, escape from predicament and consolation or revelation.

Rudner's aim is to give dignity to the smallest achievement. "Look at child-raising today. When the kid starts to crawl or say 'da-da' all hell breaks loose. It's the greatest thing since sliced bread."

"The Littlest Tall Fellow" reflects that. It has nothing to do with suc-

cess and crossing the finish line, and everything to do with showing up at the starting line. It's about reaching for dreams, like dreams of being a children's book author.

About his own reaching, Rudner says, "If it hurts more to give it up than to do it, then I think you really have no choice but to go on. I've had a lot of people criticize my writing, but no one ever told me to stop."

"The Littlest Tall Fellow" is available at Little Professor and Borders book stores for \$3.95.

Enrollment for study in Jerusalem opens

Project Discovery, a Detroit high school program in Israel, is enrolling students for spring 1990 semester. The program offers 10th and 11th grade students the opportunity to study in Jerusalem.

The project's coursework corresponds with the Michigan Public Schools requirements.

Nineteen participants took part in the program last year. Benji Wilken, a West Bloomfield junior says, "I have matured a great deal through this experience. I understand much

better what Israel is all about. It was the best experience of my life."

Applicants should have above-average scholastic achievement.

The program is co-sponsored by the Jewish Welfare Federation, the Israel Program Center and the Agency for Jewish Education, and subsidized by the Jewish Welfare Federation.

For further information or an application, call Yefet Ozery at 661-5410 or Ofra Fisher at 354-1050.



DAN DEAN/staff photographer

Barry Rudner grew up in Farmington Hills thinking he wanted to be a doctor until the writing bug hit. His first published book, "The

Littlest Tall Fellow" — for children — is now available from Little Professor and Borders Book stores.

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