

CHAT ROOM



Tim Smith

Book writing process takes on a life of its own

Do you ever wonder, when you walk into a book store or library, how all of those bound volumes actually became a reality? Or do you not even think about it?

I must confess, I probably fell into the latter category until only recently. What changed my thinking was the fact I wrote a book myself, "Miracle Birth Stories of Very Premature Babies - Little Thumbs Up!"

Now, as a published author, I'll never again look at a book shelf the same way. Every single title, from tiny paperback to coffee-table-ready picture book, has its own life story from conception to creation.

Every book's author dealt with many of the same issues and concerns that I have had to:

1. Do I have an audience for this?
2. If so, how do I go about convincing a publisher to run with my idea to the printing press?

Tedious process begins

Throw in plenty of agonizing days, weeks and even months second guessing the whole ordeal when "No Thank You" letters hit the mailbox. That kind of rejection makes getting dumped by a college girlfriend seem like a joyous event.

If for some miraculous reason a publisher signs you up, which I was fortunate enough to have happen to me, next comes everything else.

Actually writing a book very well might be the easiest part of the whole thing.

Nobody clued me in about the corporate necessities of reading and understanding the contract, or discussing with publishing house marketing executives why the heartfelt, surely perfect book title needed to be changed. There were the horrors of getting legal release forms signed by book interview subjects. Agonizing over an index topped the list.

Al, that index!

For a mere 10 or 15 pages worth, it sure was an excruciating experience. Having reconstructive jaw surgery didn't hurt as much.

Maybe I went about it all wrong. And I know there are computer software programs today that allow the indexing process to become as easy as A,B,C. But there was no way I was going to go that route for my book. It was my baby, so to speak, and I wanted to make each and every decision on what those lines of type contained.

Details, details

So I have nobody to blame but myself for the four or five weeks it took to detail entries from every single page of the manuscript.

Again, each book on the shelf has an index. Now, when I glance at the back of a non-fiction title, I ask myself the big question: How much did those authors suffer? That question is something I never gave any thought to during my "pre-publication" existence.

It's become part of my lexicon. There's also front matter, back matter... Another term is royalties, but I'm not sure whether I'll enjoy those too much.

But I have to emphasize that, as hard as it might seem, the potential for big money - or even little money - wasn't what drove me harder than anything else in my life to achieve.

When I decided I had a collection of real-life stories worth telling, about the ups and downs extreme prematurity puts on families, I was determined to do it. I knew it would be inspirational and needed to be crafted with care.

If it meant putting it out myself, that's what it would take. Paramount in my mind, when I sought a publisher, was my desire to find someone, someone who also believed in it, and in helping it find a rightful place on those library and book store shelves.

Amazingly, a top editor from Greenwood Publishing Group telephoned only about three months after I began my search, asking to see the entire

A homemaker with a dream of producing a fun game for kids is ready to throw in the towel.

BY MARY RODRIQUE
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When Ellie Keils writes a book about her harrowing experience with the corporate world, it could be called, "Diary of a Mad Housewife, Part Two." Or



perhaps "How Goliath Slew David With One Arm Tied Behind His Back." Keils is the Farmington Hills mom who created a board game called "The Beanie Chase" last year. The theme

centered on shoppers of the popular little stuffed animals. The idea was to be the first shopper to collect a full set of Beanie Babies - overcoming little hurdles along the way - and win the game.

But Keils hurdles with the toy company giant are far from over. An avid Beanie Baby collector, Keils literally dreamed up the idea for her game one night and decided to run with it. Her husband, Ken, and a Farmington Hills illustrator the couple hired worked side by side for months to bring the game to fruition.

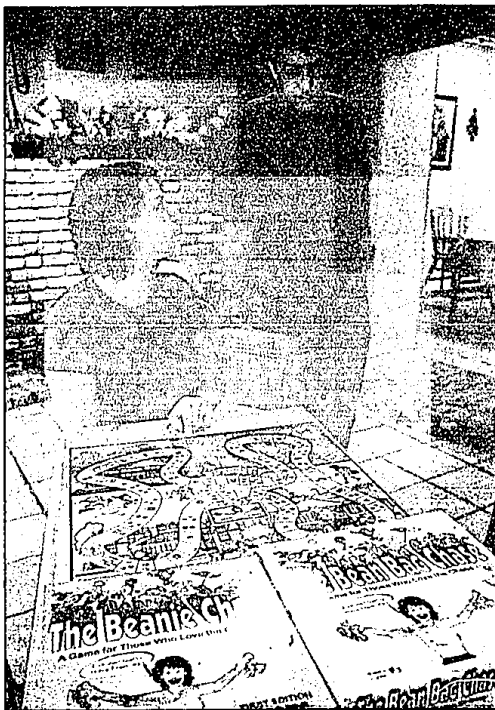
With rave reviews from a trial group of players and distributors lined up to buy large quantities of the smartly packaged game, Keils was stopped dead in her tracks last August by a "cease and desist" order issued by Ty, Inc., the Chicago based manufacturer of Beanie Babies. She was sued for copyright infringement.

With her family's life savings of approximately \$100,000 wrapped up in the game, Keils, the mother of two preschool aged sons, hired an attorney to represent her in the federal court action in Illinois.

She had her game idea patented at the start of the process and wrote letters to toy company president Ty Warner every step of the way, she said. In fact Warner was the first person to receive a copy of her game. Keils initially thought she was in no danger because of a proliferation of Beanie Baby spinoff products available on the market, many not officially sanctioned

Beanie boondoggle

Farmington Hills game maker still in hot water



Beanie modification: Ellie Keils shows husband, Ken, some changes made from the original game to the new version that is also being scrapped now that Ty, Inc. is suing the couple again.

by the toy manufacturer, she said. She has since learned that Ty, Inc. has "bullied many other" entrepreneurs.

She received no return correspondence from Ty, Inc. prior to the lawsuit.

A flurry of media coverage followed her ordeal, "98 percent sympathetic to us," she added.

A compromise was reached last October and Keils was allowed to recoup

her losses by selling her remaining inventory. Future production and profits were barred. And so the Keils liquidated their inventory - no hard feelings, they hoped.

If at first you don't succeed...

Removing all references to the trademark Beanie Baby, Ellie Keils redesigned her game, created a new prototype called "The Bean Bag Chase" featuring generic little toys, and now finds herself in hot water with Ty, Inc. again.

"As soon as I announced the new game on the Internet, Ty came after us claiming we owe them \$26,000. They're coming after us - this \$7 billion toy company," she said.

The Keils company, Johnny Goodsport Enterprises, is being sued for what Ty, Inc. claims it earned above the initial investment they were allowed to recoup.

"We never made a profit," Keils asserted. "There is definitely a loss."

She shakes her head in frustration, clutching a fistful of correspondence with the corporate giant. Keils says she and her husband, Ken, have still not recouped their initial investment and their company is on the brink of bankruptcy. Some store owners who initially agreed to take large quantities of the game reneged on their promise.

"The only thing (Ty) can do now is intimidate us," she said. "We don't know why this stuff keeps happening. They don't want to give us a break. The stress has been unbearable."

A court hearing was slated Wednesday in U.S. District Court in Chicago. Judge Harry D. Leinenweb was scheduled to read briefs, but there were no oral arguments. It was unclear when a decision would be made. John Artz, attorney for the Keils, was not available for comment this week.

Unbearable stress

Since her troubles with Ty, Inc. began, Keils says she has been forced to quit her full-time office job at Ford Motor Credit Co. due to stress. Stress has also sent her to the hospital emergency room on three occasions. She now suffers from panic attacks. The latest round of intimidation has squashed the Keils desire to go ahead with their second game. A couple of potential major distributors balked

Please See BEANIE, B2

Chamber will honor Athena winner tonight

Sharon Hain-Gaber, co-owner of Hearts & Roses Florist in Farmington Hills, will be honored tonight as the 1999 Athena Award recipient.

The award is offered by the Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce. This is the seventh year that the chamber, in partnership with Bob Saks Oldsmobile, has presented this award to a community leader.

Hain-Gaber was selected from six candidates nominated. They are Paula Boegner, Boegner Design & Build; Margo Gorchow, Botsford Health Care Continuum; Krista Kindi-Newhouse, Unique Film and Video; Mandi Skeegan, Farmington Family YMCA; and Jody Soronen, Marketing Communications Council.

Hain-Gaber has co-owned her florist shop for more than a decade. She gives her time to many organizations including the YMCA, chamber of commerce and the Optimist Club. Through her work with her church, and the National Association of Women Business Owners and Professional Women's Roundtable, she has placed a personal priority in assisting with the develop-

ment of women in business and leadership positions.

Anita Mergen, president of Quality Systems Group Inc., a company established to implement quality systems and processes for businesses nationwide, will be guest speaker. The dinner will begin at 5:30 p.m. at the Botsford Inn in Farmington Hills. Tickets are \$50 per person.

In 1993, the chamber presented its first Athena Award to Lynda Mlynarek, president of Botsford Continuing Care Corporation. Mlynarek died in November 1998 following a short illness. She is remembered for her passionate commitment to quality, ethical care for older adults. In her honor, the chamber will donate \$10 from each ticket sold for this event to the Lynda Mlynarek Memorial Fund which was established by Botsford Health Care Continuum to provide continued quality training to elder care specialists.

For more information about the Athena Award program or the dinner, call the Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce at 474-3440.



At work: Sharon Hain-Gaber at her floral shop, Hearts & Roses, makes a garland for a wedding canopy. She will be honored tonight by the Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce with the Athena Award for community service. A dinner program is planned at the Botsford Inn of Farmington Hills.



Erin Cogswell

Miss Farmington gets ready for state

PAGEANT NEWS

Muskegon where 26 other young women from across Michigan will go for the state crown.

Cogswell graduated from Michigan State University May 7.

"Representing Farmington and Farmington Hills was a dream come true," she said.

Tickets for the Miss Farmington pageant, which is scheduled July 7 at Vindimire, are available at the Chamber of Commerce office during regular

business hours. This year's pageant is dedicated to the multi-cultural community with the theme "It's a Small World."

A parade of nations will be part of this year's opening number featuring members of the community dressed in ethnic attire. This year each contestant will have a pageant buddy and for the first time there will be the Miss Farmington Dancers.

For the sixth year in a row, Ginny Morris is the executive director for the Farmington pageant.

Please See CHAT ROOM, B2