

West Bloomfield resident pens story for children

Pee Wee Mulligan is only six inches tall, but at age 60-plus he's practically ready for retirement.

Don't bet on it, though. After publishing his first book, *The Adventures of Pee Wee Mulligan*, this year Raphael Adler, Pee Wee's creator, is just warming up.

He devised 39 Pee Wee stories when he created the fantasy character in 1936 and thought up dozens more since. Adler, 80, brought Pee Wee Mulligan to life in a few sessions of storytelling, while entertaining rambunctious children in a Catskill Mountains resort. He was 17 and singing for his pay, which he'd send home to his family.

"They'd have me play classical records at lunch, but the kids would be interfering with the folks eating," said the West Bloomfield author. "I kept them busy with Pee Wee stories."

It didn't take long for parents to sit in on the storytelling sessions. "They'd say, 'don't tell the story until we come out of lunch.'"

Little Pee Wee's appeal was beginning to take off. Adler wrote a comic book scenario — pitting Pee Wee against Hitler — and then a cartoon script. He put the project aside



Adler

for 60 years while embarking on his own adventures.

"I came to Windsor and met my wife. Instead of going back to New York, we were married

after 10 days."

The couple settled in Detroit where Adler continued a singing career that started when he was 13 years old and singing Yiddish and English songs on a children's radio show in New York.

"I became a singing bartender at my wife's uncle's bar while I was doing some TV work here. My fantasy was that I'd run my own nightclub here."

He sang and made drinks at night and attended classes at Wayne State University during the day.

"At first I thought I'd go into public relations, but then I got into teaching. It all fell into place in the strangest way."

Adler taught English and speech at Berkley High School, while taking graduate level classes in psychology and speech pathology and eventually earning a doctorate degree in brain trauma and neuropsychology.

He retired from Berkley High in 1968, but continued his education career as an adjunct professor at Oakland Community College, where he taught ethics and philosophy — what he calls "rocking chair" courses because few teachers are interested in teaching them.

While teaching part-time, he took a full-time position as director of the speech and hearing clinic at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Pontiac where he helped stroke patients and brain trauma victims regain their speech.

He stayed until 1984 when his day job began to conflict with his teaching. "They wanted me to give up the teaching post and I wouldn't."

He continued teaching, writing poetry and songs and dusted off his long-languishing Pee Wee Mulligan story five years ago.

"I was talking and joking with one of my neighbors and I said, once upon a time I wrote this story."

He told her a Pee Wee tale and she made him promise to put it on paper.

"It took so many different forms. I had a long form and kept sending it out, but no one was interested in that," said Adler, who prefers writing

with a pen rather than a computer keyboard. "Then I met some young people who run a film institute. I said, 'look I have this long thing, help me figure out a way to shorten it.'"

"They started using it like a movie script. Everything was still too long. That's when I switched to poetry to move it along. I shortened it and came up with new characters."

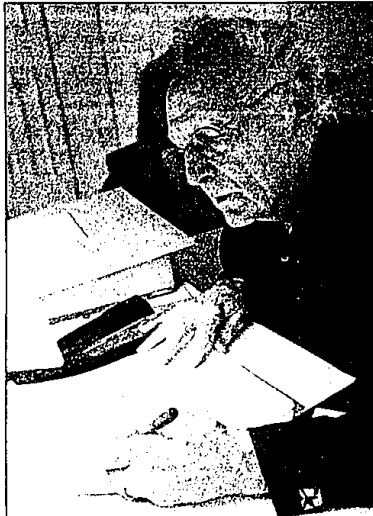
By 2001, *The Magical Adventures of Pee Wee Mulligan* was ready for a publisher. 1stBooks, a print-on-demand, eBook publishing company produced the tale earlier this year as a 97-page paperback.

The book tells the story of Mary, who meets the magical Pee Wee after inadvertently freeing him from a book in her grandmother's attic.

The pair travel through time to colonial America where they meet Benjamin Franklin and other friendly — and a few menacing — characters.

The book is available on line for \$14.95 from www.1stbooks.com on the Internet.

Adler said some Waldenbook stores also carry the book. And he'll be on hand at the Jewish Community Center's annual book fair on Nov. 10.



JERRY ZOLINSKY | OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC

Dr. Raphael Adler edits his work in his study at his West Bloomfield home.

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