

Father, daughter collaborate across an ocean to write ‘RALLY CAPS’



Staff photo/Matt Dean

In a recently released book, Stephen Cutler combined a baseball incident he had when he was 10 with his grandson who wears a cochlear implant.

The Royal Palm Beach resident collaborated with his daughter, Jodi Cutler Del Dottore, on a six-year project that produced *RALLY CAPS*, an 87-page book about a boy overcoming obstacles and believing *nothing is impossible*.

Cutler's daughter lives in the Tuscan town of Grosseto, Italy, with her husband, Luca, and children, Jordan and Sofia. The two shared ideas and wrote via daily e-mail.

The event that Cutler used to set the stage for *RALLY CAPS* was an incident that happened while he was taking part in Little League tryouts. After coming off the field to sit on the bench, Cutler was hit by a bat that had slipped out of the coach's hands.

Cutler received a compound fracture and sixteen stitches in his nose and missed a Little League season.

RALLY CAPS deals with a boy's anxiety about getting back on the baseball field when he goes to summer camp.

Cutler Del Dottore, 35, used Jordan's experience of being diagnosed with hearing loss at age 1. He used hearing aids successfully for eight years and received a cochlear implant in his left ear in 2004. He plays baseball.

"The motivation for writing this book was to mainstream a hearing-impaired character with a cochlear implant in literature," Cutler Del Dottore said from her home in Italy. "It is fundamental that our children are represented in literature and that they are represented as the strong, sensitive individuals they become as a result of living with a

handicap."

Cutler, 61, a lifelong Baltimore Orioles and Cal Ripken Jr. fan, used Ripken as a role model in *RALLY CAPS*. Cutler said the way Ripken played baseball and his belief in celebrating the game played a major role.

Ripken will be inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame on July 29 in Cooperstown, N.Y. Cutler believes that it was fate that *RALLY CAPS* came out the same year that Ripken is to be inducted.

Cutler, a retired human resources director from Maryland, attended Cal's Baseball Fantasy Camp in 2001. Before Cutler pitched in a seven-inning game, he was warmed up by Ripken.

A rally cap is a baseball cap worn inside-out while trying to will your team into a come-from-behind rally late in the game. According to Cutler, the rally cap was first featured during the 1985 baseball season when New York Mets fans occasionally wore their baseball caps inside-out to generate a come-from-behind victory.

The superstition spread to Mets players, and the rally cap became part of the national scene during the 1986 World Series.

"It's really an unbelievable feeling to have something that you have worked on so hard and for so long come to fruition," Cutler said while holding his first copy of *RALLY CAPS*, which had just been delivered. "Jodi's creativity really enhanced the story along with my facts and figures about the game."

Cutler Del Dottore shared the sentiments of working with her father, calling it rewarding.

"It was a very special and unique experience collaborating with my father," Cutler Del Dottore said. "I'm very appreciative to have had the opportunity to create something special. And to think we did it all by e-mail."

For more information, visit www.rallycaps.net.

By MICHAEL DAVIS
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