

Local author's children's book inspired by lumberjack sculpture



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While driving by the lumberjack sculpture in Cedarama Park, David Tank made a simple comment to a friend about everything having a story.

“For instance,” he said, “that statue has a story.”

When he came to realize at that moment what he had just said, he had the inspiration to write a children's book about the wood carving, “The Lumberjack and the Eagle.”

“I started to write it up on the spot,” he said, thinking “that would make a pretty cool kids' story.”

He finished writing the book at home in April in just a short time because the lumberjack's history should be told. And the next day, he shot the photos.

“He [lumberjack] needed a story,” said Tank, who has been teaching writing classes and mass communication for eight years at UW-Stout. He is also the advisor to the Stoutonia. “And I think we're ready for a new tall tale,” he added.

Although the lumberjack's history is made up, a lot of the area history is accurate, according to Tank, who offers humor and a surprise ending in the book.

“It's a new stage in the statue's history,” he said. “It now has a back-story,”

The chainsaw carving by Justin Howland spoke volumes to Tank, who pared that down to a simpler form. Howland was consulted on the phone during the writing of the story, and he probably received his copies of the book in the mail on Saturday.

The sculpture proved fruitful with ideas.

“The book is a new, tall tale that tells what happened when Jake the lumberjack came to the land of tall pines,” said Tank, “and how the trickster eagle prevented him from cutting down the last of the trees.

“It's a fun story for young kids and makes a great discussion starter about caring for our environment and natural resources.”

That theory is being put to the test this weekend when Tank's grandkids visit and he reads the story to them and gives them each a copy.

The book is scheduled for release this month and is printed by Eau Claire Printing, which specialized in short-run books, and is published by Planert Creek Press. And appropriately, it will have its local debut at the facility established by Menomonie's lumber barons, an irony not lost on Tank.

A book signing will be held at the Mabel Tainter on Thursday, July 12, from 3 to 8 p.m. as part of Ladies' Night Out in downtown Menomonie. Books will be sold locally for \$8; they usually sell for \$9.99 on Amazon.com as well as www.planercreekpress.com.

In addition to the Mabel Tainter, The Lumberjack and the Eagle will also be available at Rassbach Heritage Museum and in Eau Claire at The Local Store, Crossroad Books and Chippewa Valley Museum.

Tank also created a video of the book, complete with new pictures, music, sound effects and character voices, on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sBGxZpxNVVU&feature=youtube>.

"It works well in helping youngsters learn to read," he said.

This is Tank's fifth book. He has written The Magic of 3D Photography, Wisconsin Wildflowers in 3D and River of Hope. His first children's book "Half Pint," was sort of like the "Little Engine That Could," but the story was based on a little train that sat in a park in Utah, a Union Pacific Railroad project, and the Union Pacific Railroad published the book.