

The Advisor

Newspaper Story

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Author puts personal experience into first book

■ Book named finalist in children's fiction category.

By JIM RENAUD
Contributing Writer

Debbie Walter's job required she have daily communication to a large group via e-mail. After a year of standard greetings and salutations, she had an idea.

"Why not give them one sentence of a story each day, something they could look

forward to, besides getting their needed information?" she said. "Since copyright laws would prohibit using any published stories, I thought 'I'll write my own.'"

It was a simple beginning:

"Once upon a time there was a dog, a cat and a mouse who



Walter

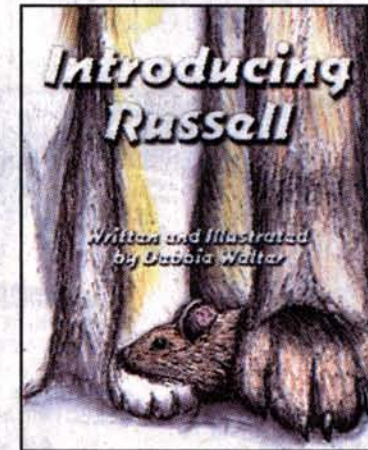
were friends."

Walter, a lifelong resident of Clinton Township, added another line each morning.

"The story seemed to write itself," she said. "Of course it took more than two years to tell the whole story."

Her coworkers enjoyed the story so much they encouraged her to pursue getting published.

The end result was "Introducing



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Russell," a children's novella geared toward readers ages 9-11.

Now, the first-time author is an award-winning finalist in the children's fiction category of the National Indie Excellence 2007 Book Awards.

"I was thrilled!" she said. "People like my story!"

The 68-page story follows Jake

the dog, Belle the cat and Russell the mouse as they set out on a camping trip to Bay City State Park with their human. She was inspired by her own life experiences.

"I've always heard it said 'write what you know' and I've been camping since I was 6," she said. "My father would plan our camping trips each year so we would see all the best Michigan

had to offer. Bay City State Park was always one of our family favorites when I was growing up, and after I married and had my own family, we continued to stop there.

"When you grow up with pets as part of your family most people find that animals are a lot smarter than scientists think they are," she continued. "Putting the camping and the

pets together in a story gave me the opportunity to share some of my experiences."

Not only did Walter write the story, but she illustrated the book as well.

"Even though I hadn't sketched in years, I found I was enjoying it as much as writing the story. Others could see the characters as I see them."

Walter volunteered for more than 13 years at the library at her children's school. She feels that reading to kids and helping them find books to take home helped her understand what they like to read about.

"Kids are smarter than adults think," she said. "Books that challenge, in which they can identify with a character or two,

are ones that were checked out time and again."

"Introducing Russell" was published by Moose Run Productions in Mount Clemens. Moose Run focuses on Michigan authors and Michigan stories.

"It seemed like a perfect match," Walter said. "It's impor-

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tant to work with someone who cares about your book's success as much as you do."

She said she is looking forward to working more with them again, too.

"Jake, Belle, and Russell are having new adventures, and meeting new friends faster than I can write it all down," she said. "There will be another book - maybe more!"

For more information, visit moose-run.com