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The write way

*Story teller spins
his tales into novel*

By Courtney Tripp
SPECIAL TO THE NEWS SUN

Each night Gregg Rosenquist reads his wife and sons a chapter or two of a story before bed; however, unlike most dads, he is the author of every story. Now one of these stories is published and available to the public.

After becoming addicted to writing as a child growing up in Chicago, Rosenquist's first novel, *The Opening and Closing of the Moon*, was published in February of this year.

“Writing it was really therapeutic The book was like a scrapbook for me,” said Rosenquist, a 34-year-old resident of Round Lake.

He explained that the inspiration for the novel came from the desire to preserve a piece of his life, especially the relationship he has with his son Josh. “My son Josh (was my inspiration) and he's my hero, too. He's a math genius. He's 16 and he has not given us one bit of grief yet,” said Rosenquist.

Josh agreed that they have a very close relationship, and that the novel was a huge compliment to him as a son. “He really complimented me in saying that I am the perfect son. ... This guy is a master story teller,” said Josh, adding that stories and teasing are part of not only his father's books but also their daily lives as well. “He keeps us amused.”

One episode involving the father and son in Rosenquist's novel is based on Josh and his father's actual experience. In the scene the father is teaching his son to ride his bicycle, and despite numerous warnings about the monkey bars being bike magnets, the lesson ends in the son running into the bars.

Recording real life

Rosenquist has also been known to tell outrageous stories to family and friends just to note the reactions. Sometimes these stories and encounters make it into his writing as Rosenquist keeps numerous journals and is always taking notes on life. “I'd say almost half of the book actually happened,” said Rosenquist. “All the characters in the book are based on real life. ... Inspiration is everywhere, you just have to be open to it.”

The main section that is fictional in Rosenquist's novel is the love story between the main character Daniel and Sydney. “When it comes to writing a love story, I prefer to keep the reality to myself. Most of that part is fiction,” said Rosenquist. “I think for me part of the attraction to the writing came in losing myself when writing. It opens up doors for me.”

According to Rosenquist, the main theme of his novel is the preciousness of life as the main character Daniel deals with falling in love, losing that love and bringing up his son with the fear that he could lose him, too. While Rosenquist utilizes metaphors throughout the story, he ex-

plained that he tries to be fairly direct in style, steering away from too heavy or abundant imagery. “It's really an emotional book. It's full of metaphors although it's not overwhelming,” said Rosenquist. “I'll tell you when I finished that last page it surprised me that I was in tears. That's when I knew I really had something here.”

From short story to novel

The novel originated as a short story and developed into a novel after Rosenquist's writing instructor at the College of Lake County, Paulette Roeske-Ried, suggested he develop it further. “They have a really wonderful writing program (at CLC),” said Rosenquist, who has been attending CLC to refine his writing. “I have learned that the real story is in the relationships between people.”

The novel took four years and eight drafts to develop in the product that is now available through iuniverse.com. Rosenquist explained that those four years involved many times when he was locked in his office writing in candle light to the sounds of two U2 CDs. “When he is writing, we don't see him very often,” said his wife Kathryn. “But we are all very, very proud of him.”

Kathryn and Gregg have been married for 17 years and reared their adopted son Josh together. They also adopted another boy, Ryan Miller, a year ago. Both Ryan and Josh are 16. “Writing takes months and they are all very patient about it,” said Gregg. “I try to do most of my writing in the fall and winter, so in the summertime I can be outside with the family.”

Besides the writing, Rosenquist also works from his home doing graphic design for marketing, brochures and business cards. His company is called The Office Ink. “I really enjoy my jobs,” said Rosenquist.

Meeting the challenges

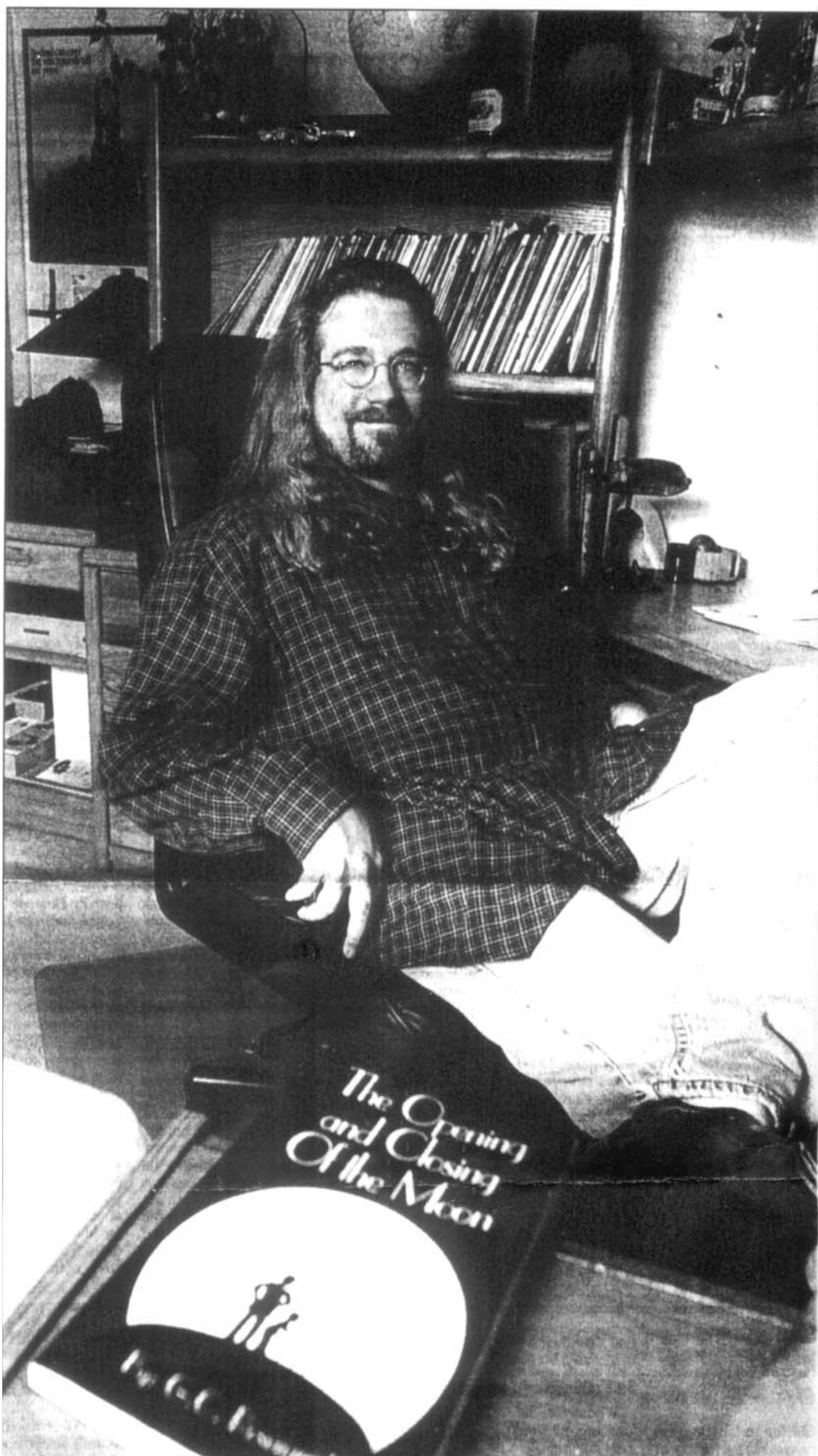
Already, he has several more works in progress, including a science fiction work about a catastrophe that causes a sole survivor at sea to search for any other survivors on earth. “My goal is to write a novel per year,” said Gregg. “I really love the craft. ... I just immerse myself in it.”

While the writing comes fairly easily to Gregg, he explained that the publishing and publicity end of it have been the greatest challenges in writing his first novel. “It's really a grass roots thing. It's been an experience. I am learning a lot of things,” said Gregg.

One of the learning experiences, Gregg added, is how to take criticism. “It makes your skin thick. You really need those people. They are there to help you improve,” said Gregg. He also received support from his family during the publicity of the novel as they assisted in passing out fliers and spreading the word.

“I love all his books,” concluded Josh. “His originality really stands out to me.”

Rosenquist's novel can be found online at iuniverse.com, ordered through any bookstore or borrowed at the Libertyville Library.



MICHAEL SCHMIDT/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
Gregg Rosenquist poses in his office at his home in Round Lake. Sitting on a table in front of him is the book he wrote titled: *The Opening and Closing of the Moon*.