

News Anchor Tells 'What We Did Today'

Like most parents, KARE-11 reporter and weekend anchor Rick Kupchella values the bedtime reading ritual he and his daughters, Caroline, 7, and Elizabeth, 4, enjoy together each night. Like most kids, the girls often ask for 'just one more story.' That nighttime ritual inspired Kupchella to come up with a creative addition to story time. "After we'd finish reading, Caroline would ask me to tell her another story, and we'd just end up talking about what we did during the day," he said. So although neither father nor daughter knew it when they started, *Tell Me What We Did Today* became more than a nightly family ritual - it became the title and story idea behind Kupchella's first children's book published in September by TRISTAN Publishing, Inc.

Tell Me What We Did Today offers a whimsical look at a day in the life of a parent and child. Humor threads the story together - the father makes silly suggestions to the little girl about what they did and saw together - and is a reflection of the routine in the Kupchella household. "Making life as much of a game as we can is how we do things around here," Kupchella said, adding that story and word games have been part of the girls' lives since they could talk. He enjoyed the process of writing the book, often taking advantage of a

quiet household after returning from a 10 o'clock newscast coming off what he calls "a huge adrenaline rush" from being on the air- and he'd sit at his computer and work on story drafts well into the night.

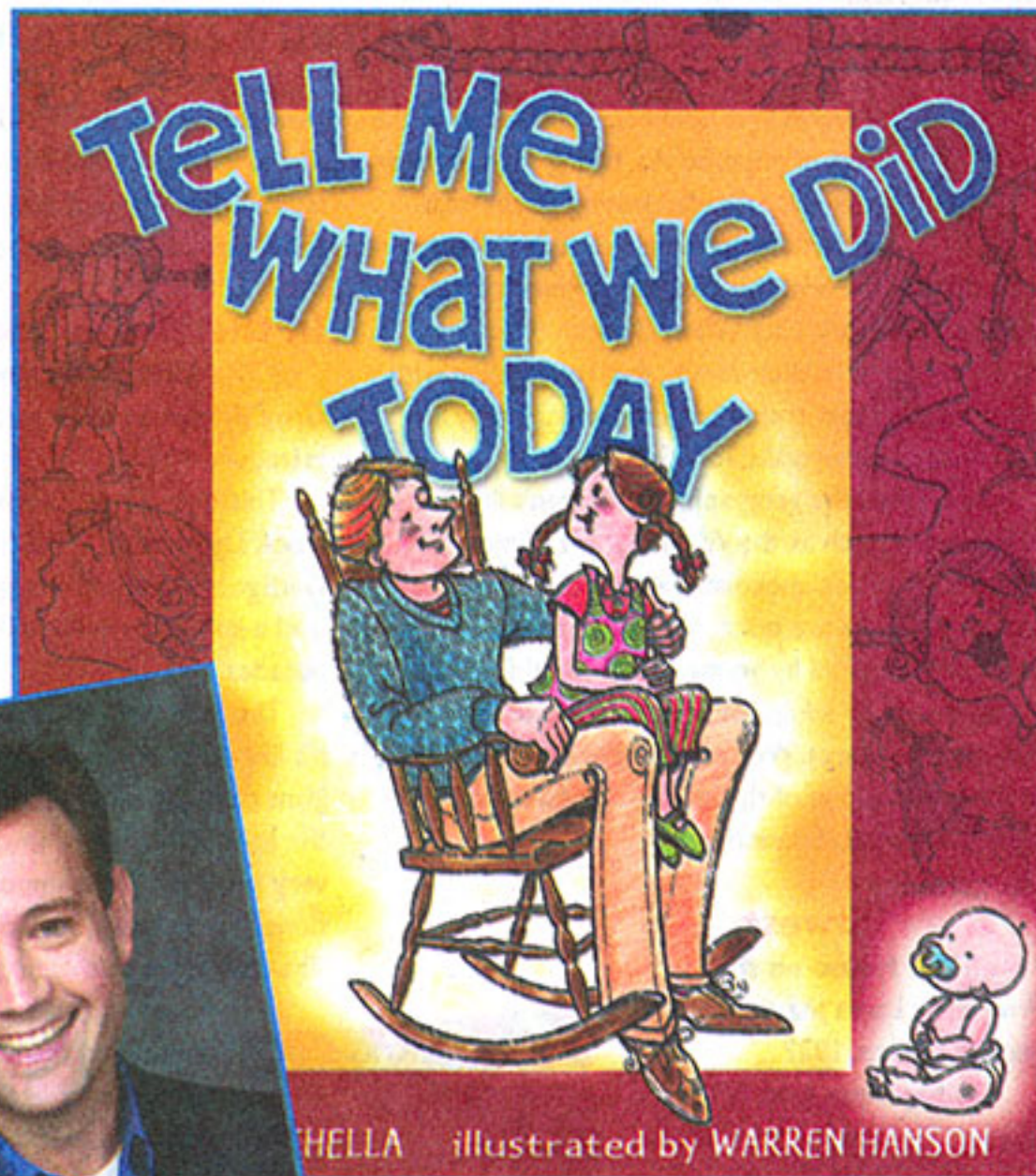
Kupchella believes the book "literally drips with color" courtesy of illustrations by Warren Hanson, the St. Paul artist behind *A Cup of Christmas Tea* and *Peef*. Kupchella refers to the opportunity to have Hanson illustrate "Tell Me" as "big blessing number one."

The two actually met before the project began when Kupchella

started turning story ideas around in his head and became interested in learning more about the world of children's books. Hanson said the book's concept appealed to him. "I liked what it implied about a parent and a child spending time together at the end of the day," he said. Shortly thereafter, the two began working on the project and as

Kupchella's manuscript took shape, Hanson decided to capitalize on "the big, silly aspect" of the story and actually did initial sketches on a tablecloth roll. "When I was young, I would draw on those at church potluck suppers," Hanson said. "The ink would kind of blob up in parts, and I decided that was the kind of quality I wanted to give the illustrations for this story."

Since the book's release, Kupchella has made several store appearances and appreciates the response to this new phase of his career. "Most people tend to know me as a television guy first, but they all seem genuinely interested in the book," he said. According to Kupchella, his girls have occasionally



KUPCHELLA illustrated by WARREN HANSON

KARE-11 reporter, weekend anchor, parent and author Rick Kupchella.

joined him at book signings and "really feel like it's their book, too."

In a roundabout way, Kupchella's daughters once again served as inspiration for his newest book project. During a father-daughter discussion on "what do you want to be when you grow up?" Kupchella was surprised by Elizabeth's reaction to his suggestion she could be a senator or a governor. "She said 'you're being silly, Daddy, only boys can do that,'" he said. "I realized as one of probably about three 4-year-olds who know both a governor and a senator - and they are both men - she thinks that's how it is." (Kupchella's wife, Leslie, served as campaign manager for Senator Norm Coleman in 2002 and is currently Governor Tim Pawlenty's press secretary).

From there, the idea for *Girls Rock*

was born, a non-fiction picture book profiling U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, astronaut Sally Ride and Olympic athlete Jackie Joyner Kersee. The book is scheduled to be released by TRISTAN Publishing, Inc. in the fall. Kupchella chose these women because he believes they provide a powerful example to girls on how they can accomplish anything they set their minds to. "In my lifetime, I think these women have hit the nail on the head in a big way," he said.

In his role as a children's author - which he plans to continue - and as a parent, Kupchella said he thinks a lot about the kinds of messages he wants to send his daughters. "I want them to know there are things to appreciate every day and that you are whatever you decide to be."

Where to Find It

Tell Me What We Did Today

By Rick Kupchella

Illustrated by Warren Hanson

32 pages, \$15.95

TRISTAN Publishing, Inc.

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Available at local bookstores including Barnes & Noble, Red Balloon and Borders