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Metro's Marc Littman Publishes Novel Inspired by His Son's Life

- Book's title character is an autistic boy named Eddie

BY JIMMY STROUP

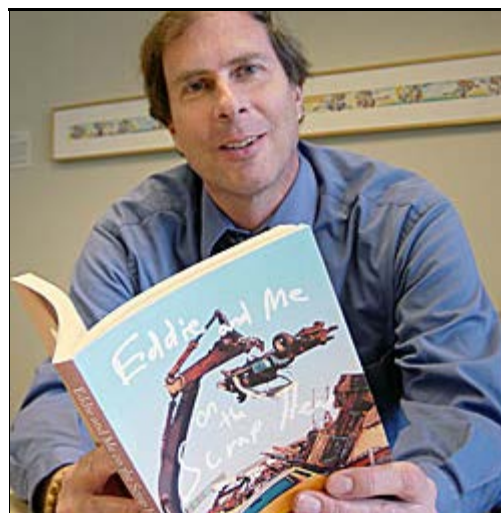
(March 1, 2006) Marc Littman, deputy executive officer of Public Relations, has recently published a novel titled *Eddie and Me on the Scrap Heap*, a coming-of-age tale detailing the life of a 9-year-old autistic boy named Eddie—a character he patterned after his 12-year-old son, William.

Littman's son has Asperger's Syndrome, which is a sort of high-functioning form of autism. He says the process of writing a book about a child much like his own drew him closer to his son.

"While writing the book, I tended to appreciate what he was going through. And then I started—rather than focus on the things he couldn't do—realizing he was a pretty neat kid," he says, adding that loving and understanding your child are not always the same.

Set in a junkyard, *Eddie and Me* focuses on a guitar-playing phenomenon of a boy who likes old movies and facts about Walt Disney, but is also autistic and requires a great deal of attention and care.

"I wanted to have a metaphor for the kid's life, because he's worried he's going to end up on the scrap heap. That's his biggest fear: is that he's junk," Littman says. "Turns out, though, that he's not broken, the people around him – a junkyard pirate, a modern-day witch and a Jewish would-be reggae singer – are broken and he fixes them."

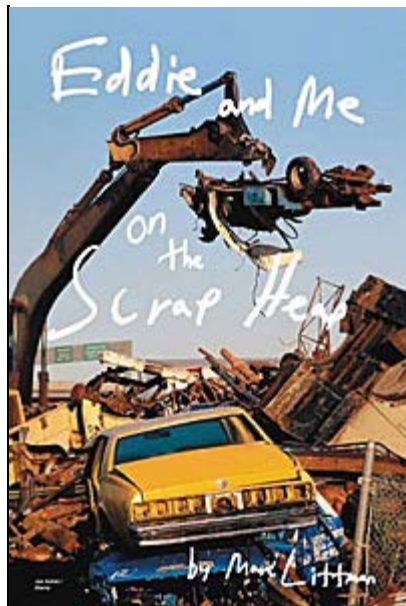


Marc Littman has just published his first novel, *Eddie and Me on the Scrap Heap*, a story of a boy struggling with autism and his relationship with the unusual characters around him.

Compelled to write the story

Littman's novel represents six years of work on an idea he felt compelled to write about, and one that started out much differently than it ended up.

"I tried to write it from the vantage point of the boy, but that was very difficult. So then I tried from the



Marc Littman's novel is available on websites of large web-based booksellers

vantage point of the uncle. I took different paths," he says.

Conscious of the stereotypes that accompany autism, Littman was careful to quietly fight them by crafting a character that was very much autistic, but also was not a caricature of autistic symptoms.

"One of the reasons I made the kid very vocal was because I wanted to get away from the 'Rainman' mentality. You say autism, people think, 'Oh, Dustin Hoffman. Does he count cards?'" he says. "I know kids like that... William's not like that. He's very empathetic and very vocal, very curious. He just doesn't understand a lot of nuances."

Another challenge for Littman was the marketing of a novel that publishers weren't interested in because of the subject matter. He says American publishers in particular are very risk-averse when it comes to novels that don't follow proven themes.

Specialized marketing

To combat that, Littman published *Eddie and Me* on his own, making it available on large Web-based booksellers, and marketing it with audiences that would be interested in the subject—web sites like WrongPlanet.net and foundations that deal expressly with Asperger's and autism.

"It's a mainstream novel, and it's available on Amazon.com and Borders.com," he says. "But because the central character is autistic, I've approached a lot of different organizations that deal with autism."

Littman's desire to write *Eddie and Me* stemmed from his need to relate his experience and to work out some of his own difficulties with his son's condition, but also to educate people who don't fully understand conditions like Asperger's and autism.

"There is no magic cure for autism. But through intensive therapy, through a lot of love, a lot of patience, and a lot of time—particularly from the parents—(children) can temper their disabilities," he says.