

1986. Four young songwriters join forces to write and record songs for the then-burgeoning children's market. If Raffi can do it, why not us? We have access to a recording studio, lots of talent, a marketing plan and chutzpah.

1987. Our plans having led nowhere, we break up our consortium and head our separate ways. Then, the phone rings. It's New York. It's an editor at Orchard Books, looking for the guy who wrote the song "Old Mr. Mackle Hackle" on that demo tape by the songwriting consortium...

- **Gunnar** (into phone): "Um... That's me. Well, Richard and Ruth helped on some of the lyrics, but it's mostly my song."

Editor: "Would you like a contract to write a book?"

Gunnar: "Uh, sure. Oh, wait. I don't know how to write a book."

Editor: "Don't worry. I'll help you."

1988. The editor helps me tremendously. I've got a great story, we're looking for the perfect illustrator, I'm working on more stories, when the phone rings. It's New York again. The editor who has mentored me and paid me says she's leaving to pursue a different career.

1989. The phone is NOT ringing. My new editor doesn't call. I get the distinct feeling she doesn't like my work. My feelings are confirmed when I get a letter from her canceling my contract and suggesting I pursue a different career.

1990. I go and get myself a literary agent, she sends my stories around to all the publishers, but nobody's biting.

1991. My stories remain unsold. I leave my singing group and sole source of income (The Bobs) to pursue some different careers. I forget all about the so-called children's market. I'm too busy looking for the career I might be right for.

1994. Atari Games seems to think that my talents as an acapella arranger are well suited to writing music for video games. Who am I to argue? I go on to write music for multiple video games, gaining recognition and money. I have a new career.

1999. Another new career turns out to be running my own record company. I put out 2 CDs for adults (by yours truly) and one of them, Spinning World, is a big success. But I'm seized by a sudden urge to put out a recording of children's songs. The resulting collection, entitled "Old Mr. Mackle Hackle", is a big hit, wins all kinds of awards, gets lots of attention.

2000. The phone rings. It's New York. It's Orchard Books again. They've got a copy of my CD and absolutely adore the song "Old Mr. Mackle Hackle". Have I ever thought about writing a book based on that song?

- **Gunnar** (into phone): “Um...I had a contract with you folks 12 years ago to do a book like that.”

Orchard: “Really? Well, water under the bridge. All the old people are gone now. We’re new. We

really want to do this.”

Gunnar: “Great.”

2001. Orchard books suddenly undergoes a major corporate restructuring, and all the people I’d been talking with are suddenly gone. My dreams of authorship are once more dashed. I put out another CD for children, “Ants in My Pants!”, and it’s another hit. I like doing songs for kids and families, it’s an itch I love to scratch!

2002. I attend a local meeting of children’s booksellers to ask advice on the best way to display and market my CDs in their stores. I sing for them, acapella. I’m a hit. After the meeting, a woman comes up to me and says...

- **Woman:** “Have you ever thought about writing a children’s book based on that song?”

Gunnar: “Let me tell you a little story...”

2003. The woman turns out to be a highly reputable agent, and she helps me adapt “Old Mr. Mackle Hackle” (again) into a viable format for a book. We search together until we find the perfect illustrator. We land a contract with Little, Brown and Co. My new editor at Little, Brown is MOST excellent and helps me bring the story and the words into sharp focus.

2005. “Old Mr. Mackle Hackle”, the Book, is finally released to the world. It’s well-received, but is not a best-seller. I get busy writing a new off-broadway musical.

2008. Inspired by our young son who I am stay-at-home Dad to, I put out another CD for children, “I’m Growing”. It’s another success.

2009. I fulfill a lifelong dream of recording and putting out an album of solo piano compositions. It’s moderately successful.

2010. I take the phone off the hook and dedicate myself to taking care of our son. It’s bliss.

2018. Our son is 16, no longer needs taking care of. I’m itching to do more music. I’m also incredibly hungry. I write songs about food, release “I Am Your Food”.

And on it goes...