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From Standing Naked to Going Crazy

BY BRANDON BALLENGER



Todd Rubinstein's day job is tennis coach. He's director of competitive tennis at the Tennis Club of Fort Lauderdale. But the 43-year-old Hollywood resident is known to many fans by another name: Todd Edwards.

Under that pseudonym, he's written poetry – yes, poetry – for the likes of Oprah and Ellen, Elton John and Justin Timberlake, Martha Stewart and NFL commissioner Roger Goodell.

"It started with Oprah and kind of snowballed," Rubinstein says.

"It was given to her as a humanitarian gift, and from there word got out. I've done pieces for 60 different celebrities."

He does them for regular folk, too – his best guess is about 1,000 poems since he started in 2004. Edwards, or Rubinstein, writes his poems in a format he calls Reality Rhyming.

"If your life was a poem, what would it say? It's a takeoff of acrostic poetry, with the first, middle, or last name, whatever the client wants," Rubinstein says.

He has a bachelor's in communication, a master's in student education, and a specialist degree in educational leadership, all from Barry University in Miami Shores. While he had been writing poems for a long time, he got started doing them for others after making one as a gift.

"I was invited to a baby shower and I wanted to give them something a little different," Rubinstein says. So he invented a story about baby Isabella, leading each line of the poem with the next letter of her name. "I handmade it on rice paper and framed it."

People liked it and suggested he should keep doing them. So he did. Now they can be had through his website for as little as \$25 (for a first name up to seven letters) or as much as \$1,400 (with a wide variety of premium frames and craft paper designs). The subject doesn't have to be a life story – it can be topical, like for Mother's Day.

After he did one for Oprah, he started getting poem requests through other celebrities' friends and publicists, and interview requests from TV shows. Then people started asking how he did it.

"How'd you get on this show or magazine? How do you get publicity? – I got tired of explaining it to them," Rubinstein says. So he wrote and self-published a book about it. It spent four months in the No. 2 best-selling slot of the advertising section on Amazon.

The title is *Standing Naked At 10 Below*. "It's how to be your own PR pro, step by step how to get exposed in the media without spending a dime, saving you thousands of dollars a month."

He's just released another book, this time (mostly) fiction, called *The Color Crazy: You Wear It So Well*.

"This is a chronicle of a professional tennis player, and every chapter is a different relationship scenario. It's erotic and provocative, it's lies and betrayal, it's a rollercoaster of words," says Rubinstein, who says he wrote it to expand his writing skills.

How much is made up? Rubinstein is a tennis pro (playing since age 7) who has been ranked No. 1 in Florida at the U.S. Professional Tennis Association's Florida men's 30s division, and in the Top 10 nationally for singles and doubles. And he admits, "I seem to attract the crazy people."

"It's about 50/50, I'll leave it at that," he says. "I look at it like relationship therapy."

He's single and jokes, "I probably will be for a while after this one."

Since Rubinstein's literally written the book on how to pitch your products for media exposure, he has plenty of advice on entrepreneurship, PR, and juggling very different jobs. Here's some...

Try everything you want to do. "There's no such thing as an overachiever, and if somebody says to do just one thing, I think they should expand their horizon and try to be as good as you can. There are so many doors out there."

Accept rejection. "You're going to hear 'no' over and over, but all you need is one opportunity."

Connect quickly. "It comes down to how to sell yourself within 30 seconds – or you're done. You have to find a way to connect with whoever you're talking to in whatever capacity they operate. You can take any product, anything, and connect it to that particular face."