

# THE TOPEKA CAPITAL-JOURNAL

MAY 4, 2004

www.cjonline.com | 50 CENTS

## BUCK WILDER

*Author's fish stories find an audience in kids who love the outdoors*



# Reeling in readers

BY JANIS CAMPBELL/KNIGHT RIDDER NEWSPAPERS

Tim Smith is hooked on fishing and writing. Smith is the author of the "Buck Wilder" book series that teaches kids about fishing and outdoor fun.

If you had told Smith he would be a popular author when he was a kid, he would have thought you were telling him a fish story. But this story is absolutely true.

Smith said when he wasn't a great student when he was growing up. He earned mostly C's. He loved fishing and doodling, two things that are now a big part of his style and success.

After serving in the Army and working for a pharmaceutical company, Smith started his own stained glass and furni-

ture business. He then decided to follow his other dream: writing a fishing book. He wanted to share his thoughts on fishing with young people.

"I wanted to put fun into fishing. Fishing really has nothing to do with catching fish," Smith said. "It's going outside. It's catching frogs, jumping off the dock

into the mud, it's catching turtles."

How did Smith become known as Buck Wilder?

"I did a lot of dumb things, but the smartest thing I did was not putting my face on the cover and calling the book 'Tim Smith's Fishing Guide.' The smartest thing I did was to use a fictitious character named Buck Wilder to tell kids about fishing."

If you haven't seen the Buck books, they are a lot of fun with crowded designs, doodling around the borders and a little character, Fuzzy the caterpillar, hidden on the pages. Smith started working on ideas for his first book in 1995. Mark Herrick, who worked at Smith's stained glass shop, is a talented artist and came up with Buck's name. Herrick helped Smith create the character and design ideas for the book.

Smith sent the finished book to 12 publishers and guess what?

"They were all very nice, and very polite, but they all rejected the book," Smith said. They gave Smith a long list of reasons why the book wouldn't be successful. So Smith decided to publish the book on his own. He became a book publisher and distributor.

"I'll never forget the day the truck pulled up. It scared us all to death," Smith said. There were boxes and boxes they had ordered 10,000 copies of "Buck Wilder's Small Fry Guide to Fishing."

"I thought, 'What are we going to do with all these,'" Smith said.

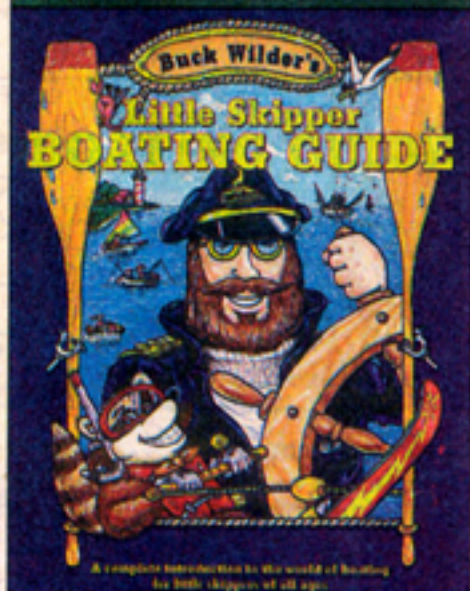
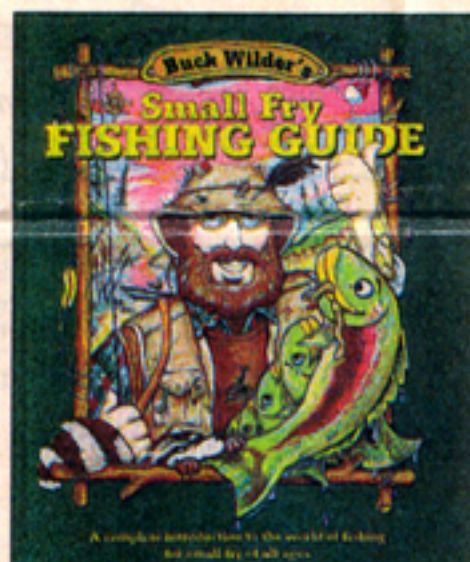
By the end of the first year, Smith had sold 100,000 books. By 1997, Smith decided to try his hand at a second book. He created "Buck Wilder's Small Twig Hiking & Camping Guide." In 2001, Smith published "Buck Wilder's Little Skipper Boating Guide."

Smith has been busy visiting schools during the school year, but this summer he hopes to find time to work on two more Buck books. He's already started a sports guide for kids, and he's also excited about a book on life skills.

Will the book be out next year? Smith laughs, adding, "That depends on how much fishing I do."

### GO FISHING

"Buck Wilder" books can be ordered through Tim Smith's company at [www.buckwilder.com](http://www.buckwilder.com). If an adult buys two books, Smith will put in a third book for free.



PHOTOGRAPHS VIA DETROIT FREE PRESS

Author Tim Smith works at his desk.