

FAMILY BUSINESS

# Like Mother, Like Son

Newport Beach author Cynthia Muchnick has forged a career penning how-to books based on real-life experiences. Her first, “Will You Marry Me?” was inspired by her husband’s marriage proposal. Now 16-year-old son Justin is following in her footsteps.—VALERIE TAKAHAMA



» **SPRING 1991**

Adam Muchnick meets Cynthia Clumeck, a fellow Stanford University student. Their first kiss is in the campus’s Rodin Sculpture Garden, fitting since Cynthia is an art history major.

» **SPRING 1993**

Adam pops the question by spelling out WILL YOU MARRY ME in Scrabble tiles. They get hitched the next year.

» **SPRING 1994**

Cynthia works as an admissions counselor at the University of Chicago. She gets a contract for “**THE BEST COLLEGE ADMISSION ESSAYS**” (Macmillan, 1997).

» **WINTER 1996**

“**WILL YOU MARRY ME?**” (Macmillan, 1996) makes her a sought-after guest on talk shows. She writes “**101 WAYS TO POP THE QUESTION**” (Arco, 1997).

» **WINTER 1997**

The Muchnicks move to New York City, where Cynthia writes travel stories. She rides the cultural zeitgeist with “**THE ULTIMATE WEDDING IDEA BOOK**” (Three Rivers Press, 2001), and catches another trend with “**THE FRUGAL BRIDE**” (Three Rivers Press,

2002). “My mom always joked, ‘Do they have any idea how much your wedding cost?’”

» **WINTER 1998**

The couple move to Orange County, where Justin is born in May, followed by Jacob (2000), Ross ('04), and Alexa ('06).

» **SUMMER 2000**

Cynthia starts a business tutoring teens and writes “**THE EVERYTHING GUIDE TO STUDY SKILLS**” (Adams Media, 2011). “I wanted to write a book that would teach the bulk of kids what the brightest kids do to make themselves successful.”

» **SUMMER 2012**

Justin and Cynthia co-write “**STRAIGHT-A STUDY SKILLS**” (Adams Media, 2013). He finishes a book proposal and heads off to boarding school.

» **SUMMER 2014**

Justin publishes “**THE BOARDING SCHOOL SURVIVAL GUIDE**” (Peterson’s, 2014), an essay collection of advice from students.

» **FALL 2014**

Cynthia publishes “**WRITING SUCCESSFUL COLLEGE APPLICATIONS**” (Peterson’s, 2014) and Justin heads back to school in Massachusetts.

JUST ASKING

## Touch-Up

Artist Mike Tauber talks about sprucing up the statue of Eiler Larsen, Laguna Beach’s “Greeter.”



**What does The Greeter say about the community?**

This sculpture is a combination of history and art. It’s not very refined, it’s a little bit whimsical, it’s cement, but it speaks to public art, and to preserving history.

**Did longtime residents talk to you about Larsen?**

People just ran across the street to tell me their stories. People would hire him to take care of their front yards. They said, “We were scared of him as a child,” but they remember him with affection now that they’re adults.

**Talk about the 2006 restoration work you did.**

The face in its original form is a little bit menacing. I was careful to add just a tiny bit of friendliness to his face. Softening the eyes. The eyebrows were a little bit uplifted. I did very subtle [work].

MUCHNICK PHOTOGRAPH BY PRISCILLA IEZZI