

# DailyNews

## WEEKEND

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Saturday, 03/13/2010

## Irreverent appeal

### Palo Alto woman's saucy greeting card business takes off

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*Palo Alto Daily News Writer*

Palo Alto resident Lynn Felter, a bubbly 43-year-old mother of three and Army wife, seems like the last person who would create a line of saucy greeting cards spiced with sexual innuendo and crass jokes.

But talk with Felter for a few minutes, and the snarky sense of humor behind her new company Across the Line Cards begins to emerge.

"People don't expect it from me because I look like a chubby sort of Cindy McCain," Felter said in an interview at her Moreno Avenue home office Friday (for the record, Felter isn't even slightly chubby).

"I'll think of the most inappropriate thing I shouldn't say and then I'll say it," she added with a laugh. "It's nice to make money off it."

Less than a year ago, Felter started sending out handmade cards with funny inscriptions to friends. The cards got rave reviews, so she mailed samples to retail stores and set up a Web site where they now sell for \$2.95 each.

Felter said she and her husband, U.S. Army Col. Joe Felter, would often stay up with a glass of wine writing new slogans for the cards after their three young sons went to bed.

In January, Joe Felter set out for a 12- to 15-month deployment in Afghanistan, and Felter threw herself into the business. At the same time, Lynn Felter landed a sales rep who brought her samples to the Seattle Gift Show, resulting in orders for about 1,700 cards.

Felter, who was still printing and cutting out images by herself at home with a pair of scissors, hired four friends and two baby sitters to help with production. The group scrambled and got the order out in a few days. Felter said she has since hired GoodSource, Goodwill of Silicon Valley's business-to-business division, to handle production, and Omega Printing in Palo Alto to print the cards.

Felter currently has 66 cards in her line, and about 30 stores around the country sell her products. Captions range from "Congratulations

on your divorce! Nobody liked that bastard anyway..." to "Happy Valentine's Day ... I love you more today than yesterday. Yesterday you bugged the crap out of me."

One card features an image of two bride figurines on a wedding cake and reads, "Congratulations on your wedding! You deserve the right to be miserable just like the rest of us." It's also available with a photograph of two grooms.

"It's a kind of irreverence that is lighthearted and fun," said Joan Bigwood King, a friend, writer and fellow Palo Alto mother who met Felter through Parents Nursery School. "She appeals to my humor and my friends' humor very well. It's interesting how you could take your greatest asset and turn it into a cottage industry and have success so quickly."

Bigwood King and another friend, Jane Smith, have been providing impromptu consulting and advice to Felter as her business gets off the ground.

"When she told me she was going to start a traditional paper greeting-card business I was like, 'Who's going to buy these?' " said Smith, who formerly worked in high-tech marketing but now runs her own consulting business. Smith said she was stunned to learn that U.S. greeting cards sales come to almost \$7.5 billion each year, according to national trade group Greeting Card Association's Web site.

"It's a huge market, and I think that people are

looking for something that's not just your standard Hallmark greeting card," Smith said, calling Felter's cards "very, very funny, with a definite edge to them."

Felter was shy when she first started making the cards and called herself the company's vice president of marketing and humor. If anyone commented on the racy captions, Felter would joke, "The CEO is this guy named Randy, and he is over the top."

Robert Walker, GoodSource's general manager, said Felter's initial description of the cards made him think he might have to sit down with his employees and ask if they were OK with working on a risqué product. But after seeing the cards, he felt differently.

"I grew up in the city," he said with a laugh. "It's not risqué for me."

While Felter isn't making a regular salary off the business yet, she said she has begun turning a profit. And she's planning on attending the National Stationery Show in New York City in May — a trip that could land her many more orders.

"It's very exciting to see her business take off," Smith said. "Once she goes to New York, she's going to get a ton more distribution opportunities. To me, New York is going to be a big launching pad for her company."

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