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Got Bieber Fever' - 2 fans' testimony

Diana Kapp, Special to The Chronicle

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Russell Yip / The Chronicle

Ellie Wessinger (left) and Lizzie Halper hang out in Halper's room, decorated in a Justin Bieber motif, and the scene of much intense writing for their book.

Lizzie Halper and Ellie Wessinger are living the teen girl dream. At age 14, the two San Francisco high school students are on a first-name basis with Justin Bieber. He's complimented them profusely. They've even hung out with his mom, Pattie, and grandma Diane.

All this took was writing and self-publishing their 148-page ode to Bieber, which they've titled "Got Bieber Fever? A Fan's Guide." Oh, and finagling the rights to a pile of never-before-seen Bieber shots from photographer Robert Caplin and launching a fan blog so fellow "beliebers" could share the love. They received hundreds of entries, from as far away as Ireland.

Now they get their own moment in the spotlight. They will be signing books at Books Inc. on Chestnut Street in San Francisco at 3 p.m. Saturday.

Their book project was born out of obsession. The two friends, who met in a girl band when they were 10, were touring University High School last fall, soon after seeing Bieber live in concert for the first time. Giddy and bursting with their newfound love, they hit on an idea to let their feelings out.

"We were like, 'We need to marry him. What else can we do?' " Halper said. "That's when we decided we should write a book."

They got started that afternoon. This was the first of dozens of "hours-and-hours"-long writing sessions in one or other of the girls' bedrooms, which became plastered with Bieber posters and paraphernalia over time.

"We wrote on weekends, early in the morning, late at night, lots of times when we should have been studying," said Halper. (It doesn't seem to have hurt much. Halper is a freshman at University and Wessinger at Marin Academy.) The two girls wrote alternating chapters and passed them back and forth for editing.

But rather than this creative outlet mellowing their crush, it only grew. They started eating his favorite cereal, Cap'n Crunch, on the chance that maybe his box touched theirs on the factory shelf. Halper got a musical Bieber toothbrush, and Wessinger changed her Facebook name to Ellie Bieber. They could spout his blood type (AB), exact birth time (12:56), and complete backstory, which was a huge part of his appeal.

"His fans found him on YouTube. He's not some Hollywood type. He's really accessible," cooed Wessinger. "You feel like you know him even if you don't." Halper piped up, "He makes you feel that way. It's like he says in the first line of his book - 'Every one of you is "My Favorite Girl" because each of you is special in your own way.' "

Since they were experiencing progressively more intense phases of Bieber love, they organized the book around this truth. Their fan guide chronicles the six phases of the fever, from "Heartache" and "Secret Obsession" on through "Kiss and Tell" and "Overboard."

Reading through the book is basically like being a fly on the wall in Halper's pink-carpeted bedroom in Jordan Park, or in Wessinger's "shrine to Bieber," as her dad calls it, in the Marina. It's a charming window into the psyche of a teen girl.

"The voice makes you melt. The lyrics make you melt. HE makes you melt," they write in the "Secret Obsession" section. "Secret obsession usually lasts eight weeks. For the Believers who are still in the Secret Obsession stage, we recommend going public. It becomes too painful to stay in this stage of the Fever."

How the book got from their bedrooms to selling at local bookstores and soon on Amazon had a lot to do with supportive, connected parents. Halper's parents are active in the San Francisco arts, music and [education](#) scene. Wessinger's mom is an animator, and her dad, owner of Black Star beer, came through with backstage passes for the girls as a bat mitzvah present for Halper, which got them their first in-person glimpse of the Beebz. Once they were deep into the writing, he introduced them to Bieber's manager, Scooter Braun, who connected them to Caplin.

Braun also paved the path to his brother, Adam Braun, and his charity Pencils of Promise. Even at 13, the girls were savvy enough to understand that their best chance of getting Bieber behind their book - and tweeting about it - would be to give all the book proceeds to charity. What better

choice than one connected to Bieber's manager's brother? "Plus, the organization builds schools for kids in Guatemala and Laos," Wessinger said. The girls hope to build one themselves someday.

It was at the November Pencils of Promise fundraiser in New York City that the two teens got to give the book to their idol personally.

His reaction exceeded their expectations. He was genuinely impressed, and took time to page through it.

"We never dreamed it would go this far. We got to go to New York. He knows who we are. He knows our names," squealed Halper.

"He has two copies of our book in his house. His grandmother wants us to send her more," Wessinger chimed in excitedly.

Got Bieber Fever? A Fan's Guide: Lizzie Halper and Ellie Wessinger. 3 p.m. Saturday. Books Inc., 2251 Chestnut St., S.F. www.booksinc.net.

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