

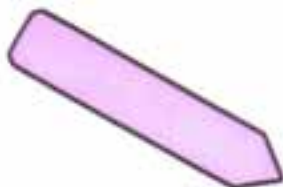
Finally, a developer who got a tip from a Mattel source who said Ryan was desperate to sell at a fire-sale price, showed up and made an offer for everything—what now looked like an amusement park fun-house, all of its contents, and the very valuable Bel-Air land that The Castle sat on. Ryan let it all go for “just nothing”—under \$2 million, according to Constantinesco. “It was a terrible deal for Jack. It should not have been made. It destroyed him to lose his house. He was in such a funk, such a depression during that whole time. It was just awful. He saw the sale of his home as a big failure on his part.”

(The property was later purchased by the royal family of Saudi Arabia, who erected a controversial monstrosity of a palace, removed all of the imported trees and plantings, and covered most of the vast expanses of lawn with marble and concrete. The Saudis left the country after 9/11, and the dated and ugly house, considered a teardown by agents, was on the market for \$40 million in early 2008.)

The stress and anxiety was mounting for Ryan, especially with the lawsuit against Mattel taking over his life. He went through several lawyers in the legal battle—a complex accounting case and high-stakes saga that played out largely behind closed doors, and one that would drag on for close to a decade. Ryan’s contract with Mattel was, according to a Mattel attorney involved in the case, “arguably ambiguous, but there was a contractual entitlement for him to get a certain percentage royalty on products, no question.” Mattel contended that Ryan had to be personally involved with a product in order to be compensated. The litigation involved virtually every Mattel toy from before Barbie to Hot Wheels, and, overall, some two decades of Mattel’s product history.

“Mattel fought him every step of the way,” says Roger Coyro. “There were a few times when Jack was slow in answering some depositions and interrogatories and Mattel would move to either have the lawsuit dismissed, or sanction Jack because of his slowness in responding. It was just a matter of pure paper, and they would just flood Jack with paper. It was the typical corporate philosophy of keeping the ball in the air as long as they can.”

One of Mattel’s attorneys defending the lawsuit, who requested anonymity, on the eve of Barbie’s 50th anniversary still proudly displayed a framed check from Jack Ryan in the amount of \$25,000—a



sanction award ordered by a judge because Ryan “failed and refused” to respond to discovery in the case.

“There were perhaps 200 products that were at issue that Ryan was claiming he was entitled to royalties on,” says the attorney.

I prepared a set of written questions asking a half a dozen or so questions as to each product, which were designed to go into the role he played in it and the basis for his royalty claim. For almost two years, we never got a response from him, or we got responses that weren't sufficient, and we kept after him. Ultimately, we took the matter to court and got an order requiring him to provide answers, and sanctioning him for \$25,000 for not properly responding. The check was paid on April 11, 1979. It would be worth three or four times that today. Ultimately, we got the responses from him.

It was during the period of constant depositions—more than 200 days of sworn questioning over a two-to-three-year period—that Ryan suffered an almost-fatal heart attack, which caused a six-month delay in the case. The lawyer, who says he personally liked Ryan, believes the physical and emotional strain of fighting Mattel was too debilitating for the Father of Barbie. “As I understand it, literally all his vital signs had stopped, but they were able to revive him. He in one sense died.” Coyro says Mattel “deposed Jack to death,” but the Mattel attorney looked at it differently. “I kind of viewed it as Ryan's stalling to death.”

Ryan had to undergo life-saving quintuple heart-bypass surgery at Cedars Sinai Hospital. “The lawsuit was hard on him,” says his daughter, Diana Ryan. When he recuperated, the depositions in the lawsuit continued. “It was like Lazarus coming back to battle Mattel,” observes the former Mattel lawyer. Roger Coyro says Ryan never considered giving up. “Jack was as determined as they were, though not as strong. He didn't have the corporate wherewithal that Mattel did.” After dropping his first two lawyers, he retained the legendary California trial attorney Joseph A. Ball, who had been a senior counsel to the Warren Commission, which investigated the assassination of President Kennedy. “He was very tenacious and effective reviewing the Mattel accounting, and analyzing the underpayments and understatements to Jack,” says Coyro.

Just prior to the trial date, both sides dropped the attitude and got serious about discussing a settlement. Over the course of about a month, a so-called courthouse-steps confidential agreement was reached in early 1980 that called for payments to Jack over a 10-year period. "He got a fraction [less than half] of what they really owed him, and that's the game Mattel played," says Coyro. "It was a decent sum in those days, between \$10 million and \$15 million—before legal expenses."

Ryan later told a gathering of inventors, "Ruth and Elliot Handler owed me \$24 million in royalties and unfortunately our relationship ended when I sued them for \$24 million, and I had to settle for \$10.1 million. Mattel earned millions of dollars of interest on the money they didn't pay me, so they invested \$1 million a year in harassing me for eight years where I had to prove that I was a real inventor even though I had over a thousand patents at that time."

The former Mattel lawyer says he viewed the settlement

... more as splitting the baby. But, looking at the case objectively, Mattel certainly had delayed for a lengthy period of time paying him. And, as is true in any settlement, they paid him less than the demand. From a financial viewpoint, Mattel certainly paid a lot of attorney fees. But ultimately they certainly paid less. The net to them was both a substantial delay in payment, a lesser sum, and, as I recall, capping the amount owed to Ryan because he might have been entitled under his contract to being paid infinitum. I liked Jack. He had his idiosyncrasies. But I would never dispute that Jack was important in building the Mattel institution and the creativity in toys that that company had. He was an adversary, but I certainly had respect for him.

After the case was settled, an embittered Ryan came to despise lawyers, declaring, "Unfortunately, the lawyers are taking over the country, and taking over the world, and like any disease I hope it kills itself."

At times, throughout the ordeal, he was emotionally and physically spent from his efforts of trying to get what was due him.

"He was pouring so much energy into negative work—the lawsuit and dealing with Mattel—that should have been going into productive, creative work that he thrived on," notes Coyro.

Jack was a strong character, but he also was someone who always liked approval and appreciation from people for what he was doing for them. He really felt betrayed by the Handlers.

Mattel was his home for some 20 years, developing one of the great toy companies of the world, and yet they were just fucking with him every chance they could get, and thinking up new ways to do it. In the meantime, Ruth and the others were fucking Mattel by misstating financial statements just to keep Wall Street happy. These were the types of people he was dealing with.



After the settlement, and in the wake of his heart surgery, Ryan hit the brakes somewhat on his manic sybaritic lifestyle—he didn't have the financial wherewithal, or the energy, sexual or otherwise, to pursue the high life anymore. He began obsessing about his emotional and mental health, and in his research he discovered the work of Dr. Kay Redfield Jamison, who was director of the UCLA Affective Disorders Clinic. He contacted her and was knocked out by both her brains and her beauty. As with so many other women in his life, he instantly fell in love.

Before long, Ryan and the pretty psychiatrist had developed a close relationship. She was enamored by his charm and intelligence, but rejected his many proposals. One of the reasons was because the two shared a commonality that would make marriage difficult, and had "the potential for catastrophe," she observes years later. "We had the same illness. My field of research and clinical study is bipolar illness. He knew that, and somewhere along the line I told him about my illness. He was aware that he had manic-depressive illness and was interested in talking about it. He was particularly interested in the illness's relationship with creativity. He thought a lot of inventors had it, and he thought that the illness had been involved in his success. He had many of the characteristics that make highly creative people creative. He asked me about mania and depression and suicide from time to time and we talked about those things very openly."

In 1999, seven years after Ryan's death, Jamison's book *Night Falls Fast*, about understanding suicide, was published to critical acclaim. By then a professor of psychiatry at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, she wrote in the prologue about her relationship with Ryan, and a curious pact that they had made one evening at their favorite restaurant, the chic Bistro Gardens, in Beverly Hills.

We were talking about suicide and making a blood oath: if either of us again became deeply suicidal, we agreed, we would meet at Jack's [first wife's] home on Cape Cod. Once there, the nonsuicidal one of us would have a week to persuade the other not to commit suicide . . . a week to cajole the other into a hospital . . . to impress upon the other the pain and damage to our families that suicide would inevitably bring.

With Jamison, Ryan "repeatedly" talked about the most important and meaningful part of his life—his relationship with the Handlers and Mattel, and how it all ended so depressingly for him. "He was devastated," she says. "He felt betrayed. He felt like he didn't get the recognition, the intellectual credit, the inventing credit, the financial credit. All ways around he felt he had been treated badly."

Eventually, Ryan and Jamison moved on with their lives—she to further her career, and he to promote his latest inventions. One of these was a "top secret" doll that he told associates would far surpass the success of "my Barbie"; the other was called "The Magic Cup," which instantly cooled hot coffee or tea to a drinkable temperature and kept it there for almost a half hour.



Always needy and desperate for companionship, Jack Ryan married his fifth and final wife, Magda, a Polish émigré, in August 1984. He literally swept her off her feet, seemingly without her knowing what was happening, she says.

When he met her, she was working as a companion for a wealthy but elderly and sickly Polish woman who lived in Beverly Hills. Magda spoke little if any English. She had been in the United States only six