

Listen to Life

Wisdom in Life's Stories

August 20, 2006

A free newsletter about learning and getting more from life by paying attention to our own stories and the stories of others, based on the presentations, writings, photography and workshops by Dion McInnis (www.dionmcinnis.com).
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You May Have a Claim

The hard-selling lawyer blasted in his typically obnoxious way during the radio ad for his business: "You may have a claim against anyone who hurt you," the tough lawyer growled. That may be great for his business, but it speaks to, and encourages, many of the problems children and adults have in modern society. Neither life nor government assures anyone of a painless existence, and when "life happens," there isn't always someone to take the blame, to sue or to accept the burden of responsibility.

I recently conducted my "Memories to Memoirs" workshop for a seniors group. Part of the process includes creating four different timelines that inspire writing exercises. As I guide the participants, I say "Draw a dot at the top of the page: You were born. Now, draw one near the bottom of the page. Someday, you'll die. Connect the dots." This begins the process. At the conclusion of filling out the four lines, one of the attendees spoke out.

"The two dots—when we were born, and when we die—are not in our hands; they are in the good Lord's hands. But everything in the middle is up to us." He went on to describe that the way we cope with things that happen in our lives—the joys and sorrows, losses and gains—and what we may of those moments, are up to each of us. No one else.

He couldn't have been more right. Yet our society holds onto a mindset that life is supposed to be fair, just at all times, and smooth sailing. When it isn't there must certainly be someone to sue, the thinking goes. The workshop attendee was the first African-American IRS agent assigned to this area's zone in 1962. He certainly did not have an easy time of it. As the group shared, it became clear to everyone that each had a life of troubles. Such is life.

Justice and fairness are important, but certainly not a given. Never will be. We may have the right to make claim against someone else, but we have the responsibility to claim our lives for ourselves.

Listen to Life is an electronic newsletter that presents lessons for living by listening to life, based on the writing, poetry, photography, presentations and workshops of Dion McInnis. Stories such as these inspired the book, "Listen to Life: Wisdom in Life's Stories," published in 2005, available at Barnes and Noble, Amazon and Borders. Dion's next book will share his views of being father and son.

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