



DADDIN' FOR EVERY DAD

Local author Dion McInnis pays tribute to fatherhood

By Katherine Adams

Dion McInnis has kept a journal for years to chronicle the events of his life, but the most important characters of his journals have always been his three sons. “In 1998, I wrote in my journal that dads need a verb,” McInnis says. “Think about the word ‘mothering.’ It evokes the image of a woman who’s nurturing her child. What if you said you saw a man out ‘fathering’ children in the park? It just doesn’t work!”

Yes, there was clearly a need to come up with a better verb to convey that same sense of caring and nurturing a child—but with Dad, not Mom. “The word ‘Daddin’ is the word,” he says. “Someone with an expectant fiancé once asked me when he’d start to feel like a dad. My answer was, I knew when I was a dad when I had a baby drooling in my hair, when I felt those chubby arms around my neck, and when I put my child up on my shoulders. Those are the things that make me feel like a dad.”

McInnis, who’s a retired University of Houston-Clear Lake administrator, professional photographer, poet, author, and public speaker, describes his book *Daddin’,—The Verb of Being a Dad* as a compilation of stories, memories, and poetry about “daddin’.” Although McInnis is an accomplished photographer, he chose to illustrate his book with his sons’ artwork, carefully saved over the years.

“People are so hung up on the ‘role’ of Dad—but ‘role’ is a noun,” he explains. “This is about what we do as fathers. I noticed that other books on fatherhood seemed to be divided into two categories—one is sort of an owner’s manual and how-to for things like changing diapers. The other is about how you can still turn out all right even if you had a terrible father. This is about me as a son to my father, and a father to my sons. This book is about crossing generations.”

These verbs: havin’, learnin’, listenin’, lovin’, playin’, fishin’, growin’, leavin’, and livin’ head the chapters that move the reader through the journey the McInnis men have taken together from the day they were born. The three McInnis boys—Dion, Cameron, and Justin—are now adults and the elder two are fathers themselves.

The book’s intensely personal style and deep message will give any father a moment to reflect upon his own experiences and evaluate his own commitment to his children. “My love of my boys is obvious to everyone who knows me, and it’s the defining thing about me. It drives everything I do and how I do it,” says McInnis. ■

Daddin’—the Verb of Being a Dad is available at www.amazon.com.

The McInnis men: Cameron, Justin, Dad, and Dion together for Justin’s graduation from Texas State University.

