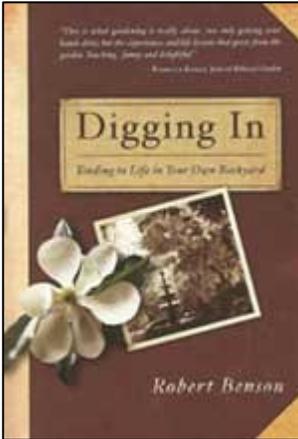


Readin' & Writin' with Lauraine- June 2007



Have I mentioned before that I love small books?

Maybe I should amend that: you might have figured out by now that I have an ongoing love affair with books---of all sizes.

I do love to read, magazines, newspapers, cereal boxes, yes, whatever has words written on it but mostly---books. I love picture books, children's books, tween and teen books, nonfiction, fiction. I am an eclectic reader. I especially love finding books that I can joyfully share with all my friends, including you, the readers of this column.

That said, this month's book is a small one, possibly called a gift book, but while small in size, *Digging In* by Robert Benson, is large in heart and thought. I am proud to call Robert a friend, and while I know him personally, his books have opened other worlds to me. Sometimes his books encourage me to look deeper into my own world, and other times they carry me away to a distant island. I have heard him tell stories about baseball and growing up, about writing and thinking deep, and I have held his books close to my heart.

In *Digging In*, Robert writes about the lessons he learned while, with the help of his children, his wife, and their friends, turning a plot of land behind a small house into a garden. He observes and writes these lessons for life in a quiet and thoughtful way that speaks to me of the riches we often miss in our own backyard: building fences, digging holes for roses, moving a heavy fountain from one place to another, replacing the fence--all part and parcel of ordinary life, told in an extraordinary way. I always want to go visit the places Robert writes about.

Now I know I am beginning to sound like a broken record, but here again is an author who takes the everyday-ness of his life and writes it in such a way that a publishing company publishes his books and thus all of us readers can enjoy bits and pieces of his life. So my question for you is: *why not you?*

Have you looked around at your life, your family, and your friends, and enjoyed and/or learned from the events around you? Learned things that you could share with others? Do you love to tell stories and make people laugh, or make people think? Or both? Now that is the real winner, if you can do both at the same time.

I know Robert keeps a journal, and he pulled some of the things in *Digging In* from that journal. I can tell you that he writes by hand, with a fountain pen, and I can tell you that he sees the eternal in the every day.

I saw a poster years ago with a big golden sunflower on it and the phrase "Bloom where You are Planted." That has stuck with me for years. I want to bloom where I am planted and right now, that is here in Tehachapi.

What about you? Maybe reading *Digging In* will give you more ideas about writing, about blooming, about life in general. I hope so.

I think I'll go savor some of his stories again. And scatter flower seeds, along with my stories. Coming soon are my next novels, *Breaking Free* and *Sophie's Dilemma*.

If you haven't been to your local bookstore lately, make sure you drop by.

Until next time,

Happy Readin' and Writin' from Lauraine