

December 2015

VOL. 1 / ISSUE 16



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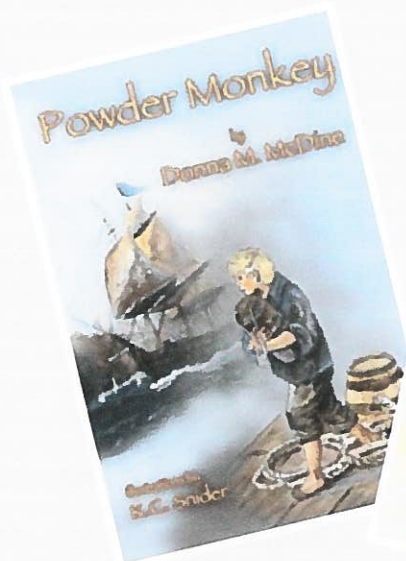
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# Donna McDine

## Finds Inspiration in Everything

by Melissa Fales



**Having penned books about** topics as diverse as animal poaching, 18th century sailors, the sport of hockey, the Underground Railroad and first-day-of-school jitters, children's author Donna McDine is clearly someone with no shortage of muses. "Ideas spark for me from just about anywhere, from newspaper articles to overheard conversations in the grocery store or local coffee shop," she says. "Ideas and inspiration are everywhere, we just need to take the time to absorb and listen to our surroundings."

McDine grew up about 30 minutes outside of New York City, in what she describes as a simpler time. "We didn't lock doors and we explored the neighborhood unattended by adult supervision for hours on end," she says. "I recall fondly the smell of pine tree sap on my hands that would take days to wear off, the wind on my face while sleigh-riding and racing go-carts and the whipping sound our baseball cards would make once we clothes-pinned them to our bicycle spokes." Today, McDine calls upon those vivid memories of her carefree childhood days to help her capture the attention of her young audience.

**As a girl,** McDine watched episodes of *Lou Grant* on TV with her dad. Fascinated with the idea of doing

research and getting to the bottom of a story, she dreamed of becoming a reporter. Although McDine ultimately took a different career path, she's retained that drive to discover "the facts" and has incorporated it into her writing. For example, while researching for her book, *Powder Monkey*, McDine found herself immersed in the gripping, yet disturbing accounts of young men forced to become wartime sailors in the late 1700s and early 1800s. "Historical fiction is a great love of mine and I enjoy the research aspect in creating a realistic and true-to-facts story that children will enjoy without feeling like they are reading a textbook," she says.

**Instead of becoming a reporter,** McDine earned a business degree in office management and had a successful career as an administrative assistant and personal assistant. "When my second child was born, I had already been working as a virtual assistant way before it became mainstream," she explains. "For about ten years, I concentrated on raising my daughters and having the opportunity to work from home for various clients without having to pay for daycare, which was a major plus. However, I longed for something more fulfilling in the professional spectrum."

While casually perusing a magazine one night, McDine found an aptitude test for the Institute of Children's Literature. She eagerly filled it out and sent it in. "After some time, I heard back with an acceptance to the program and I haven't looked back since," says McDine. "It still surprises me that I have a writing career as a published children's author."



“Where there is determination and inspiration, success is imminent.”

**As her children grew**, McDine adjusted her writing schedule accordingly. “The lure of a steady paycheck and a great benefits package has brought me back to a traditional office setting at The Salvation Army,” she explains. “Now that my daughters are much older, my time for writing and authentic author connection is in the evening hours instead of the daytime.”

McDine says she’s grateful for the support of her husband, Tom, and her daughters, Nicole and Hayley, who have been behind her 110 percent as she’s pursued her writing dreams.

**Next, McDine will tackle** a historical fiction work-in-progress that she shelved some time ago, and she has plenty more story ideas in the pipeline. For example, she says the idea of a book on miners consistently

intrigues her. “I’d like to conduct some preliminary research on miners, and see where it takes me,” she says.

**When McDine isn’t working**, being a wife and mom, or working on her next book, she finds

time to keep a blog called, “Write What Inspires You!” She says she chose that title not only because it describes her creative process, but also to encourage others to pursue their goals. “I wanted a title that resonated with my philosophy of writing,” McDine says. “Where there is determination and inspiration, success is imminent.”

For more information about Donna McDine and her award-winning books, visit [www.donnamccline.com](http://www.donnamccline.com).



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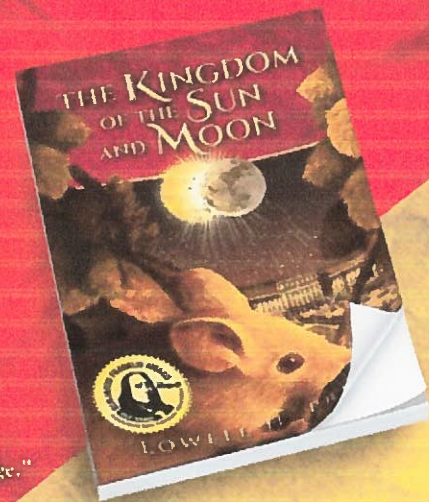
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Parkers Mill  
PUBLISHING

Ages 10 and up.  
ISBN: 978-0-9905130-0-1