

PRESS RELEASE

A “new classic” of Wisconsin boyhood, *The Life and Times of the Last Kid Picked*, released as e-book

NEW YORK — When it was originally released, critics hailed David Benjamin’s *The Life and Times of the Last Kid Picked* as a vivid evocation of Wisconsin childhood in an almost forgotten era, “those dear, dead days” of the late 1950’s.

Benjamin’s book was praised for its “unjaded wit and genuine charm” by the *Chicago Tribune* and “full of wonderfully written set pieces” by the *Hartford Courant*. Benjamin’s prose drew positive comparisons to several forebears in the grand tradition of Midwestern storytelling — among them Mark Twain and Booth Tarkington, Mike Royko and Jean Shepherd.

And now it’s back!

The Life and Times of the Last Kid Picked, chosen as a Notable Book by the Wisconsin Library Ass’n and nominated for “Best Book of the Year” by the Great Lakes Booksellers Ass’n, is being re-released by Random House, in an e-book version, on 25 May, 2011.

The Life and Times of the Last Kid Picked is a rare portrait of the last period in American life when kids were simply set loose willy-nilly — without coaching, supervision or GPS surveillance — into the streets, fields and playgrounds of their community, where they were entirely free to organize and officiate their own games. Or they could do nothing at all.

Benjamin’s book follows his autobiographical hero from grade school through junior high in the hamlet of Tomah, Wisconsin and — later — in Madison, the big city. It ranges through every place of adventure possible to an unsupervised boy in a time before the advent of “play dates,” “tiger moms” and “helicopter parents.” Instead, in Benjamin’s richly textured reminiscence, there are lakes, swamps, creeks, swimming holes, forests, sandlots, junkyards, schoolyards, backyards, back porches, dime stores, barrooms, basketball courts and Saturday matinees.

Among its highlights are the Great Monowau Street Tadpole Catastrophe, the pursuit of the Epic Lone Wolf Trout of Council Creek and the historic baseball battle of the Catholics of St. Mary’s School vs. the Miller School Publics on the (metaphorical) Sands of Iwo Jima.

During a 2003 book tour accompanying the paperback release of *The Last Kid Picked*, Benjamin told audiences of readers, students and radio listeners that he wrote the book partly out of fear that a brief moment in American life would go unchronicled and be forgotten. “These were a few precious decades when kids lived recklessly, when they didn’t just run with scissors. They ran with homemade spears and broken bottles, live snakes and baseball bats,” said Benjamin. “We never got driven anywhere. We couldn’t live without our bikes, and none of us would’ve been caught dead wearing a bicycle helmet.”

Among a series of positive reviews that included the *Washington Post* and *Chicago Tribune*, *Fort Myers Magazine* wrote that Benjamin “is the real deal — a grown-up kid with a razor-sharp memory, a wicked wit, and a ribald way with poignant, hysterical anecdotes.”

Reviewer Chuck Twardy, in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, issued a warning: “Benjamin’s tales of pickup ball or fetid-pond fishing are, for the most part, richly hilarious. He retains a little boy’s flair for spinning epics from anecdotes, and he applies to it an adult’s taste for irony. Don’t read this at bedtime — your laughter might wake up the kids, and they have a big day tomorrow.”

And author James Dodson, who called *The Life and Times of the Last Kid Picked* a “small treasure,” wrote: “It’s full of the heartbreak of tiny lives, the salty give-and-take of being a kid on the threshold, making the team but losing the faith of sweet innocence. Do yourself a favor: pull up an armchair and take a trip back there. You won’t regret the journey.”

The Life and Times of the Last Kid Picked, in e-book, is compatible with all e-reader technologies. It is available through Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Books-A-Million, BooksOnBoard, Christian Books, eBooks.com, the Google eBookstore, iBookstore, IndieBound, Kobo, Powells, the Reader Store for Sony. Random House’s Facebook page for the book is accessible at

<http://www.randomhouse.com/book/11350/the-life-and-times-of-the-last-kid-picked-by-david-benjamin>

The Life and Times of the Last Kid Picked can even be obtained through iTunes at

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/book/the-life-times-last-kid-picked/id434132863?mt=11>