



## All Souls: A Family Story from Southie

By Michael Patrick MacDonald

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### All Souls: A Family Story from Southie By Michael Patrick MacDonald

A breakaway bestseller since its first printing, *All Souls* takes us deep into Michael Patrick MacDonald's Southie, the proudly insular neighborhood with the highest concentration of white poverty in America. The anti-busing riots of 1974 forever changed Southie, Boston's working class Irish community, branding it as a violent, racist enclave. Michael Patrick MacDonald grew up in Southie's Old Colony housing project. He describes the way this world within a world felt to the troubled yet keenly gifted observer he was even as a child: "[as if] we were protected, as if the whole neighborhood was watching our backs for threats, watching for all the enemies we could never really define."

But the threats-poverty, drugs, a shadowy gangster world-were real. MacDonald lost four of his siblings to violence and poverty. *All Souls* is heart-breaking testimony to lives lost too early, and the story of how a place so filled with pain could still be "the best place in the world."

We meet Ma, Michael's mini-skirted, accordion-playing, usually single mother who cares for her children there are eventually eleven through a combination of high spirits and inspired "getting over." And there are Michael's older siblings Davey, sweet artist-dreamer; Kevin, child genius of scam; and Frankie, Golden Gloves boxer and neighborhood hero whose lives are high-wire acts played out in a world of poverty and pride.

But too soon Southie becomes a place controlled by resident gangster Whitey Bulger, later revealed to be an FBI informant even as he ran the drug culture that Southie supposedly never had. It was a world primed for the escalation of class violence-and then, with deadly and sickening inevitability, of racial violence that swirled around forced busing. MacDonald, eight years old when the riots hit, gives an explosive account of the asphalt warfare. He tells of feeling "part of it all, part of something bigger than I'd ever imagined, part of something that was on the national news every night."

Within a few years-a sequence laid out in *All Souls* with mesmerizing urgency-the neighborhood's collapse is echoed by the MacDonald family's tragedies. All but destroyed by grief and by the Southie code that

doesn't allow him to feel it, MacDonald gets out. His work as a peace activist,

first in the all-Black neighborhoods of nearby Roxbury, then back to the Southie he can't help but love, is the powerfully redemptive close to a story that will leave readers utterly shaken and changed.

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## All Souls: A Family Story from Southie By Michael Patrick MacDonald Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #27113 in Books
- Brand: Beacon Press
- Published on: 2007-11-01
- Released on: 2007-11-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1

- Dimensions: 8.50" h x .71" w x 5.50" l, .80 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 296 pages

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this plainly written, powerful memoir, MacDonald, now 32, details not only his own story of growing up in Southie, Boston's Irish Catholic enclave, but examines the myriad ways in which the media and law enforcement agencies exploit marginalized working-class communities. MacDonald was one of nine children born (of several fathers) to his mother, Helen MacDonald, a colorful woman who played the accordion in local Irish pubs to supplement her welfare checks. Having grown up in the Old Colony housing project, he describes his neighbors' indigence and pride of place, as well as their blatant racism (in 1975 the anti-busing riots in Southie made national headlines) and their deep denial of the organized crime and entrenched drug culture that was destroying the youth and social fabric. MacDonald's account is filled with vivid episodes: of his brother Davey's horrific incarceration in Mass Mental and ultimate suicide; of the time Helen took her older kids to the hospital, where her current lover was a patient, to beat him up after he denied he was the father of the child she was carrying; of the murder of his brother Frankie by his compatriots after the police shot him in an armored-car robbery. But perhaps most shocking is the accusation that the FBI was paying Southie's leading gangster, Whitey Bulger, as an informant although they knew he was the neighborhood kingpin. MacDonald, who now works on multiracial social projects in Boston, does not excuse Southie's racism, but he paints a frightening portrait of a community under intense economic and social stress, issuing a forceful plea for understanding and justice. Agent, Palmer and Dodge.

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From [Booklist](#)

"The best place in the world." That's what South Boston people

From Kirkus Reviews

An incendiary, moving book that startles on nearly every page. The notorious anti-busing riots of 1974 forever altered the insular working-class Irish community of South Boston, branding it indelibly as a dangerous, racist enclave. Anti-violence activist MacDonald grew up there and lost four out of eight siblings to violence in those dark times; his debut assesses both his family history, and related secret tales of class strife, bigotry, corruption, and vanished lives. MacDonald utilizes the classically Irish viewpoint of the stoic child to re-create a harsh arena of a 1970s ghetto and urban poverty. His single Ma felt blessed when a local politician secured her entrance to the majority-Irish Old Colony project, the best place in the world"; once there, the MacDonalds had to prove their mettle against delinquents with shotguns, thus acquiring the patina of craziness necessary for survival. At first, the nuances of color seemed minor against a vividly rendered backdrop of economic difficulty and the depraved mainstreaming of hard drugs and street crime. Then came the riots; MacDonalds surefooted (neither hardened nor sentimental) narrative takes us through the years of malaise and violence that followed, as politically connected gangsters, such as the notorious Whitey Bulger, expanded the areas drug trade while violently enforcing a macho myth of silent Southie unity, itself built on the long-burnished notion that the white community was somehow different from such similarly working-class, embattled black areas as Roxbury. This explication of how such phenomena of white class-consciousness encouraged the wholesale deterioration of his neighborhood and contributed to the demise of some 250 young people is a devastating cultural indictment. MacDonalds nimble prose and detailed recall of grim times long past make for luminous reading; his hard-won conception of how ghettoized poverty spawns localized violence, and the dignity he brings to lives snuffed out in chaos, gives *All Souls* a moral urgency usually lacking in current memoir or crime prose. A remarkable work. (Author tour) -- *Copyright ©1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Ruben Martin:**

Book is actually written, printed, or highlighted for everything. You can realize everything you want by a book. Book has a different type. As it is known to us that book is important matter to bring us around the world. Close to that you can your reading skill was fluently. A reserve All Souls: A Family Story from Southie will make you to become smarter. You can feel much more confidence if you can know about everything. But some of you think that will open or reading any book make you bored. It's not make you fun. Why they might be thought like that? Have you looking for best book or ideal book with you?

#### **Brian Davis:**

All Souls: A Family Story from Southie can be one of your nice books that are good idea. All of us recommend that straight away because this book has good vocabulary that will increase your knowledge in vocab, easy to understand, bit entertaining but delivering the information. The article writer giving his/her effort to put every word into joy arrangement in writing All Souls: A Family Story from Southie however doesn't forget the main place, giving the reader the hottest and based confirm resource facts that maybe you can be certainly one of it. This great information can drawn you into brand new stage of crucial contemplating.

#### **Rose Buck:**

Are you kind of occupied person, only have 10 or 15 minute in your morning to upgrading your mind skill or thinking skill possibly analytical thinking? Then you have problem with the book than can satisfy your short period of time to read it because pretty much everything time you only find guide that need more time to be go through. All Souls: A Family Story from Southie can be your answer mainly because it can be read by you who have those short time problems.

#### **Benjamin Munk:**

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