

Paternity Suite

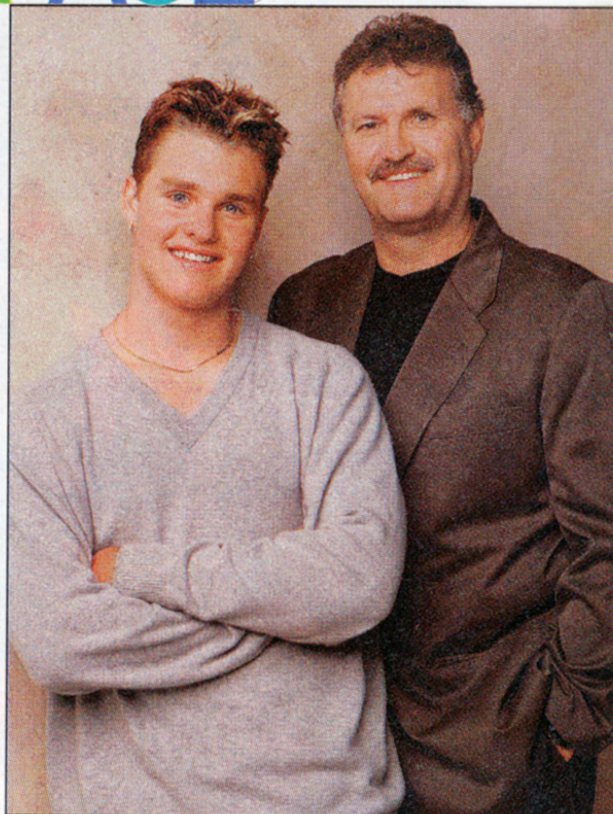
A remarkable documentary, ABC's *The Story of Fathers & Sons* (Thursday, June 17, 8 P.M./ET), packs more of an emotional wallop than a month of *Oprah*. The film is a worthy successor to 1997's *The Story of Mothers & Daughters* and follows the same simple, highly effective format.

More than 40 contemporary American guys, both men and boys, speak candidly to the camera about their relationships with their fathers. Even their most succinct comments speak volumes because the experiences they contemplate are

so visceral.

Like *Mothers & Daughters*, the film follows the adventure of parenting chronologically through all its stages. We see first-time fathers tenderly holding their infant sons, talking about their doubts and fears, their hopes and expectations. We watch different sets of fathers and sons go through the traditional rites of passage: Little League baseball, learning to drive, high-school graduation. Near the end of the hour, adult sons are shown caring for their elderly dads.

A trio of celebrities—actors Zachery Ty Bryan, Edward James Olmos and basketball star Shaquille O'Neal—are included in the mix. But notoriety doesn't make their paternal musings any more poignant or valid than those of their anonymous brethren in the program. In fact, the most memorable participant in this film may be a middle-class father in California,



Like father: Bryan with dad Dwight

struggling heroically (that is, daily) to raise his developmentally disabled son.

This special airs three days before Father's Day, but this is no Hallmark-card homily. We hear from sons who have been wounded or abandoned by their fathers. The diversity of feelings is precisely what makes *Fathers & Sons* so affecting. It radiates deep love and deep pain.

The show is followed by an encore presentation of *The Story of Mothers & Daughters* (9 P.M./ET). Guys, if you're too wrung out to sit through it, leave the tissues behind. The ladies are going to need them as much as you did.



TV GUIDE,
JUNE 12, 1999