

Book tells of childhood, sister's death

**Weldon B. Johnson**

The Arizona Republic

Jun. 11, 2005 12:00 AM

Patricia Brooks has always made her living through sales and marketing. But the experience of losing a sister to cancer helped give life to a long-held dream.

Brooks runs a motivational speaking and training business, Patricia Brooks Seminars, out of her Scottsdale condo. She also teaches a business course at Arizona State University's East campus. But she spends a good deal of her time these days promoting her book *Gifts of Sisterhood*.

The book chronicles Brooks' relationship with her sister as they grew up in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, follows them into adulthood and through her sister's illness and death five years ago.

**QUESTION:** You've always wanted to write a book?

**ANSWER:** This was not the first book I'd planned on writing, but we don't always know what God has in store for us in life. People who know me thought I'd write a book about marketing because I've lived and breathed it for 25 years. But I grew tremendously as a person from this experience (her sister's death). The book is set up in 14 chapters. The last one is about my trip to Ireland, where my grandfather was from. I took my sister's spirit to Ireland. That's the gist of the book.

**Q:** Your sister, Roberta, isn't mentioned by name in the book. Why is that?

**A:** I wanted people to be able to read the book and get closer to the story. One in four people will be affected by cancer. I didn't put any names in it so people could put themselves in it and get closer to the book.

**Q:** Was the book therapeutic for you?

**A:** Oh, very much so. More so than I ever thought it would be. Most people who have read the book said it brings them to tears. It's very emotional. It was that way when I was writing it. It got better the third or fourth time I did it, but it took some time for me to be very honest in the book. I'm gut-wrenchingly honest in the book. That's the feedback I've gotten.

**Q:** What type of illness did your sister have?

**A:** My sister battled lung cancer even though she had quit smoking 12 years before she died. One of the things I want to do is remove some of the stigma associated with lung cancer. A lot of people will dismiss it and say it was because the person smoked. I recently found out that the Eli Lilly (pharmaceutical) Co. has a campaign going to try and remove some of that stigma. I'm trying to get involved in that somehow.

**Q:** You say you're proud of your sister's success. How was she successful?

**A:** I saw her as successful even though by a lot of our society's standards she wasn't successful. By that I mean people are judged by the kind of car they drive or how much money they make or whatever. She was very successful in her community and impressed a lot of people by what she did and how she gave back and how she raised her children. They built a new library in my hometown (Saint Ignace, Mich.) and dedicated a portion of it to my sister. I realize it's a small town, but she was appreciated and is missed by people there. Those were the kind of gifts I got from her. I restored my faith in the process of losing her and going through her battle with cancer. I always thought I had a pretty good grasp on what was important, but I really grew as a person.