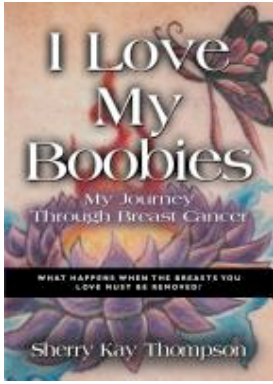
The background of the book cover is a close-up photograph of a person's skin with two tattoos. In the upper right, there is a tattoo of a butterfly with black, red, and purple wings. In the lower half, there is a large, detailed tattoo of a lotus flower with purple and blue petals. The title text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

# I Love My Boobies

My Journey  
Through Breast Cancer

**WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE BREASTS YOU  
LOVE MUST BE REMOVED?**

Sherry Kay Thompson



*Why do people say such crazy things to people who have cancer? What should you say when someone tells you it is your fault? Author Sherry Thompson learned how to move beyond caring what people think and began accepting her cancer and embracing her life!*

# **I LOVE MY BOOBIES**

## **My Journey Through Breast Cancer**

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**I Love My Boobies:**  
**My Journey Through Breast Cancer**

**Sherry Thompson**

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First Edition

## **History With my Female Friends**

I wish I would have made friendships with women a higher priority when I was younger. I did have friends and I loved to go to my friend's homes because it was fun to get out of my house. Most of my girlfriends had much more lenient parents than I had. Well at least the friend's houses I liked to go to did. Some of my friends had very strict parents. Going to their houses was not a lot of fun. The problem with going to my friend's houses was my mom did not like me to go. I had the feeling she did not trust me. She probably was just trying to keep me safe but at the time I felt like I was in a cage. She tried to prevent me from going to my friend's houses at every possible turn. When I did go I had a strict curfew. She usually would not let me stay with my friends at all if they had brothers. She said something bad might happen to me since there were boys in the house. She felt that boys and men could not control themselves around females.

I did manage to have at least one friend at all times throughout my school years and they wanted to be my friend in spite of everything. When I turned 16 I was allowed to go on double dates with my girlfriends and their boyfriends. Double dating worked out well for a

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while however when my boyfriend and I became serious he really did not like to go out with other couples. I dropped my friends and graduated from high school one year early. I moved to a town close by and lived with my grandmother. I got a fast food job. Living with my grandmother was wonderful because she trusted me and was not always keeping track of me or grounding me. I was only seventeen but I felt like I was much older than that. A year later I got married and devoted myself to my marriage and a few years later to my daughters. My husband was always telling me jokes and making me laugh so I thought of him as a good friend. We went to our family's houses for holidays and we occasionally double dated with friends. I never had a close girlfriend during those times. I remember feeling very lonely before I had kids because my husband worked seven days a week so I was alone a lot. I did not try to make friends because he did not like people over and he liked me to be there when he came home from work. Once my daughters were born I just kept myself busy and did not try and make friends. As my daughters grew I loved going places with them and laughing and having fun with them and their friends. I was a girl scout leader, I shuttled other peoples kids to various events and I even sat with other mothers at

various school and sporting events however I did not have a girlfriend to just hang out with for many years.

A woman who I was a friend of mine when I was in elementary school and in high school lived close and had a son the same age as my daughter Jessie. She and I began spending a lot of time together. Sometimes taking our kids with us or just going out in a group with other ladies. We also did couple things with our husbands and other couples. I really liked having a girlfriend again. My husband did not like going places with other couples so I quit trying to set up double dates with my friend and her husband. Instead she and I began taking our kids to movies, skating and to local amusement parks. We had some great times together. She began working with a lady who did not like me and I pulled away from our friendship because she insisted on inviting this lady to everything we did together. Even though we were not as close as we previously had been she did help me find a job. She told her sister that I was looking for work and her sister got a job for me working part-time at the College where she was employed. I worked with the sister for a while. After I worked for the College part-time for one year I got a full-time job with the same College in another department. For a while I only ate lunch with her sister

because I felt we had become good friends while I worked in her department. Slowly I began making girlfriends in my new office and going to lunch with them instead.

When I began working full time I was so exhausted by the end of the work week I really did not care if I was a couch potato the entire weekend. The friends I made at work were just work friends. We went out to lunch however I did not see them any other time outside of work. My friend's sister and I would get together with another lady she knew once a month. We also made sure to celebrate birthdays together. We also took a girlfriend trip to Las Vegas. When I quit my job and my husband and I opened a sandwich shop in the little college town where I previously worked, I was overwhelmed with running a business and very stressed out most of the time. I was working seven days a week and had little time for girlfriends. When I had been running the sandwich shop for six months I started cutting back on my hours. This freed up some of my time. The three of us started getting together again once a month. For some reason I really did not enjoy our ladies nights. Maybe I felt like they were jealous because I owned my own business? They both always talked about how much they would like to have a



business of their own. Sometimes they made “funny” comments which I thought were snide. Saying things like, “Why did you hire a person who everyone knows is a loser,” and other comments like, “I bet you wish you were back at your old job.” They wanted to meet in December to exchange Christmas gifts but I keep telling them I was too busy to see them. I made these excuses because the last few times we had been together I did not enjoy myself. When we finally did see each other in February to celebrate my birthday, I shared a problem with them that I was having with my daughter. In so many words they both basically told me I was a terrible mother. Maybe in their opinion I was being a terrible mother. I felt good friends would have given me the benefit of the doubt or at least spoken some comforting words to encourage me. I had laid my heart out on the line and they had proceeded to kick me when I was down. I did not feel like good friends would treat me in such a manner and I had not felt like they had been good friends for quite a while. I went home and wrote them an email telling them just how I felt and that I needed a break from them. I never heard back from either one of them so I guess I was right we were not good friends. I now realize the level of stress I was under running my own business probably factored into

the end of our friendships. Since I started the restaurant my top two priorities were my business and my family.

I did not get to see my work friends at work anymore and no longer shared lunches with them. So when I did get to see them I really enjoyed spending time with them. I really realized how much I missed them. We began meeting for dinners or weekend lunches when we had time. I owned my own business and employed young college students. I really missed working with women my age. I began cherishing my time with other women and I cherished my female friends more. It was good to get together with other women and talk about the unique issues women go through. It is fun to talk with my girlfriends about our past. Things which use to crush us we can now share with each other and laugh about it. One story I recently shared with my friends was a story about how as junior high student I was constantly being accused of stuffing my bra. I always felt hurt and embarrassed. Life did a 360 and it became necessary to stuff my bra because one side of my chest was flat after my first surgery. So if someone were to yell at me after my first surgery, “She is wearing falsies” like the mean boys did back in Junior High, they would have been half right. I am glad I can laugh about something which happened to me in

sixth grade. Something that back then I thought was the “end of the world.” I now realize it was a life lesson.

Hanging out with girlfriends is such a wonderful thing for women to do. We can relate to each other and share our ups and downs. We do not have to leave it in the past and not talk about it like my friend suggested. We can share our problems. We do not have to feel that we need to hide bad things that happen in our lives. We share our souls and even when we disagree with each other we can still learn something. I continue to find new female friends the more I socialize or do volunteer work. I made a couple of friends by volunteering at a local political office and other friends by joining an on-line Meetup group. I also enjoy doing things with my daughters. My daughter Jessie and I see each other a lot because she lives near me. When my youngest and I get together we always laugh and have fun. We find the same things funny and have a lot in common. My oldest daughter, Shawndra lives 14 hours away so I do not get to see her much. When I do see her we always have a good time. She is busy doing about 10 freelance jobs and she and her husband have tons of friends and a busy social life. I went with her recently to San Francisco to attend a couple of private winery tours. She was sent there by one of her clients to write about

two small wineries. We had fun and explored the city. She is so full of life and loves life, being with her is always a pleasure.

Jean, a good friend of mine found an essay talking about how important our female friends and relatives are to our health. After having breast cancer I am always searching for ways to improve my health. So if being with friends and sharing my experiences is good for my health that is what I will continue to do. The essay said one of the best things a man can do for his health is to be married and one of the best things a woman can do for her health is to nurture her relationships with other women. It went on to say how women feel connected with each other in a different way than the way we connect with men. It also talked about how we provide support systems and how we help each other deal with stress and difficult life experiences. The essay said research also shows how physically this quality “girlfriend time” helps us to create more serotonin which helps us combat depression and create a general feeling of well-being.

In the article, Why Friendships Are So Important, by Sheryl Kraft, she quotes Aristotle who said: “Without friends no one would choose to live, though

he had all other goods." Studies show that women bond by sharing their feelings while men bond by doing activities together. When women share our feelings we also share our souls. For us spending time with a friend is as important as jogging or working out at the gym. When we exercise we are doing great things for our bodies. But sometimes we feel when we are having fun with other women; we are wasting our time and should be doing more productive things. We need to stop feeling guilty about spending fun quality time with other females. We need to realize friendships with our girlfriends, mothers, sisters and daughters are very good for both our mental and physical health.

## People Whom I Love

I read that the average person has two or three people they can call friends. They defined a friend as someone you could count on to be by your side in bad times or good times. I was lucky that I had more than three people that I could call my friends during my cancer journey. They say a person finds their true friends and the people who really love them when they go through hard times and I agree with that. I am thankful for the people who stepped up to the plate and cared enough about me to help me through the pain. I just hope I will be there for them in the good times and especially in the bad times. What I continue to learn is people are surprising. The people that you assume will support you sometimes will not and the ones you do not expect to show any kind of support are there for you. I thank God for the people who helped me through my pain and suffering and for the people who have been kind during moments I least expected it. I had a nurse by the name of Mary at my first silicone implant surgery. She was also my prep nurse at the second mastectomy. She told me about her breast cancer experience. She said my plastic surgeon had done her silicone implant surgery when she had breast cancer and he was so good to her. She said she would

recommend him to anyone she knew. She said he was not just a good doctor he was a good person. I thanked her for sharing her story with me. She may be the reason I want to share my story because she really inspired me. Meeting Mary reminds me of a Wisdom Quote I recently read, “In life, you will realize there is a role for everyone you meet. Some will test you, some will use you, some will love you, and some will teach you. But the ones who are truly important are the ones who bring out the best in you. They are the rare and amazing people who remind you why it’s worth it.”

I also found a wonderful masseuse while getting a massage with my daughter Jessie. When I told her I recently had mastectomy surgery she proceeded to give me the gentlest and most caring massage I have ever had. The massage included a warm towel for my feet and special oil for my nose to help my sinuses. One of the most unexpected places where I found a kind person was at the dermatologist office. She gave me a discount on the broken veins on my breasts and skin tag removal after I told her I had the broken veins because my skin was stretched to put in a breast implant. She and her assistant could not have been nicer and when I went to pay the bill I was charged for only one skin tag removal instead of three. It is good to know there will be always

be many more people who are kind in this world than people who are unkind.

I read about a wonderfully kind woman who I will probably never meet. She is a tattoo artist who puts tattoos on breasts which are scarred after breast cancer surgery, she does nipple tattoos free of charge. I really am glad there are people in the world like this tattoo artist who care enough about women with breast cancer to think of a way to make them feel beautiful. I am not sure if I will ever be brave enough to get such a tattoo. If I do I hope it is someone kind and caring like the tattoo artist I read about. They showed pictures of some of her work and she had tattooed beautiful flowers, pink ribbons and various other designs over her client's breast cancer scars. I am sure the women she has tattooed are very grateful for the wonderful things she has done for their scarred and battered bodies. When I read her story I was reminded of this quote: "Cancer tried to knock me down but my determination to fight to win is non-negotiable. I want to see the sunrise, the sunset and experience all the seasons that life has to offer. I want a lifetime of it. It's doing what I need to do to experience the next sunrise, the next sunset and the next season." ~Ann - LymphomaClub.Com



## **An Update on What I Am Doing Now**

After much consideration I decided to have tattoos put on my breast cancer scars because I wanted to smile when I looked in the mirror instead of frown. I really could not talk myself into going through anymore surgeries. I found a tattoo artist by the name of Constance. She does amazing tattoos and is a digital media specialist. The first time I met her I was impressed with her sense of humor, her amazing studio and clever jewelry made out of bugs. We sent messages back and forth on Facebook her asking me what ideas I had and me responding with pictures. I also texted Constance a picture of a flower design from a purse my sister had recently sent me and I told her I wanted to put this flower design where my nipples should be. She loved the idea and so in our first two hour session I left her studio with flowers for nipples. We recently did another session which lasted four hours and she tattooed flowers on my scars. She designed all my tattoos on her own, with a few suggestions here and there from me. During the tattoo sessions Constance makes me laugh. She tells me about her life and I tell her about mine. Before I started the tattoos I warned Constance I may cry the entire time because I felt it may be very emotional for me to change my scars to

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beautiful works of art. Who knows I may cry from happiness because every session brings me closer to beautiful breasts. Constance has made me feel comfortable topless and scarred. When I look in the mirror I cannot stop smiling. How could I not smile when I see flower nipples? I will always love her for making me smile. It has not only made me smile my friends seem to like the results too. When I went to lunch with my friends Roberta and Jean they insisted I show them my tattoos. They loved them and raved about how well Constance covered up my scars. So thank you again Constance. I love you and your creativity. I found a quote that says it all, "I do not need therapy I just need to talk to my tattoo artist," Funny Quotes via Facebook.

I currently am separated after 38 years of marriage. I live in my little beach house in Florida. When I think of these enormous changes which have occurred in my life I think of this quote, "Everyone has gone through something which has changed them in a way that they could never go back to the person they once were." Unknown

I found a local GYN who is wonderful. His name is Dr. Cortez and he also has a wonderful sense of humor.

When I warned him about my recently acquired nipple tattoos, he stopped a minute before he opened my gown to do a breast exam. Then he proceeded to open the gown and chuckle, “You do have tattoos don’t you?” I am so lucky I found a doctor who has a sense of humor which is very important to me because I love to laugh and I need a doctor that loves to laugh also. After we finished the exam he said I needed to see an oncologist and he recommended one for me to see. Since I was seeing an oncologist every year in Ohio he said I needed to find one in Florida. A couple of weeks later I meet with the oncologist and to my surprise he said, “You had pre-cancer not cancer so I do not need to see you again. Your GYN will be able to take care of any issues you have.” So once again I was being pushed aside and treated like I did not belong in the “breast cancer circle.” When I go back to see my Florida GYN it will be interesting to get his take on why the oncologist does not feel he needs to see me again. I wonder when things will change for women like me. I hope anyone who has had my type of breast disease or as I call it “cancer” will contact me and tell me their story. It will be interesting to see how our situations are similar and if we experienced the same “doctor problems.”

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Helping others makes me forget my problems and it makes me feel like a better person. I currently volunteer for the local Vitas Hospice program. I do TAP phone calls and bereavement calls to check on Hospice patients and their families. I also do home visits. At these visits I sit with a patient for about an hour once a week. It gives their caretakers a chance to have a break and it gives the patient a new face to see every week. I also hope to get a dog soon so that I can be a part of their pet program. This program brings animals to visit Hospice patients. Volunteering makes me feel good about myself and I choose to volunteer at Hospice because I had cancer and because they were so much help to my brother Timmy who died because of his cancer.

Another benefit of living in Florida is I get to see my sister Gail. I live only three hours away from her. I hope we will be close since we did not get a chance to know each other when we were growing up. She invited me to spend my birthday at her house so I drove down to see her and her husband. The first night she had the neighbors and their kids come over after dinner. The neighbor kid and I celebrated our joint birthday together with a cake and ice cream party. After we had the party Gail and I went to check out her little town and we

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walked, talked and drank martinis at a local bar. The next day we went to a Zac Brown Band concert and then on Sunday they took me for a ride on their boat with their two sweet dogs. We ended the visit with lunch by the river at an amazing restaurant. She and her husband were so good to me that weekend and I had so much fun. What a great way to spend birthday number 57!

Gail and I also did a road trip on Mother's Day weekend to visit my adopted mother (Gail's Aunt). We decided our road trip was going to be more than a drive from point A to point B. Instead we stopped at anything along the way which looked like fun. We stopped and took a picture of Gail standing in front of a 30 foot metal rooster. We went on a glass bottom boat ride and we stopped at St. Mark's lighthouse. We had so much fun when we got to our destination we felt like we had been on vacation. The next morning we went to church with my mom. After church we went to a High Tea at a local Tea room, where my mom had made reservations. My mom fell in love with Gail and I feel like she and I are becoming more than sisters we are becoming friends. My mother also loves having Gail in her life she asked me to give her phone number and address to Gail. Gail has a love of life and a joy for life which is

very contagious. Her daughter Amanda has been sweet too, she texts me and sends me messages via Facebook. She has also invited me to spend Christmas with her, her husband and two children. It will be wonderful to share Christmas with my new family, I feel lucky because I have found a new branch of my family.

Family is very important and now that I am living in Florida I have been lucky enough to be with various members of my family. My oldest sister bought my old car from me. I drove it to my mother's house in Florida where my sister was staying. It was a nice trip even though I was alone. It made me realize I should go visit my mom more often. The next day my sister, her boyfriend and my mother and I took off for Ohio. We stopped and visited my brother's widow and spent the night at her house. We visited Timmy's grave and then stopped by my daughter Jessie's house and visited with her, her husband David and my wonderful grandson Caleb. The trip was so much fun and I felt so close to my family. When they dropped me off in Kentucky at Jessie's house and went on to Ohio I really missed them. The decision to join them on their trip was a last minute decision on my part. The trip was a blessing God gave me and now-a-days when he gives me these blessings I snatch them up and run with them. During

my visit to Ohio I got to swim with my grandson Caleb. I was excited to try out the new swimsuits which camouflage my breast issues (one side is bigger than the other). I can proudly say I wore my swimsuit without feeling awkward or self-conscious. The swimsuits make me feel good on the outside and knowing I have tattoos covering my breast scars makes me feel good on the inside. During my visit I also got to give Caleb a bath, read him a bedtime story and put him to bed. I have to confess when he cried (because he does not like to go to bed) and said “Bye.” I had to kiss him and run out of the room because I knew it was the last time I would put him to bed or even see him for a while. I dropped to the floor in the hall and cried my heart out. Sometimes even the joys in life tear at our hearts because we do not want to let them go. We want to hold on to them and keep the joy going on and on. The memories of that wonderful trip will forever make me smile. I also got to visit my Ohio friends: Jean, Roberta and Paula. So I thank God for the last minute trip which turned out to be the trip of a lifetime. When I flew back alone and got home with only my cats to greet me I felt a little lonely. I truly believe Florida is where God wants me to be and I will work to make it a happy place.

Living in Florida has a lot of good things going for it. I now attend church and am a member of several meet-up groups. I have also tried dating via Match.com and went on four dates. I am currently dating a man I met on the Zoosk dating site. I feel like every date teaches me more about myself and is an experience I need to go through. I found this quote on Facebook and it is going to be my mantra: “Three grand essentials to happiness in this life are something to do, something to love and something to hope for,” Joseph Addison.

Volunteering for Hospice brings me happiness and I have met some wonderful people who also volunteer. I love living in Florida but I miss seeing my grandson Caleb and my daughter Jessie. I keep them in my heart. I love my grandson so much some days I struggle with the longing to see him and I cannot stop crying. I joined a writing group so I could write and get these heavy feelings out of my heart and onto paper. At one of the meetings I wrote this story about the deep longing I have to see my grandson Caleb:

### **The Merry-Go-Round**

As Caleb and I whirled around on the Merry-Go-Round his eyes got big and he



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held on tight as the speed accelerated. I had not seen him in two months so it made me happy to watch the expression on his little face and listen to him engage in his toddler babble.

I tried to quiet the nagging voice in my head that kept saying, “You only get to see him for a couple of hours then you will not see him again for months.” I wanted to shush the voice and embrace the few hours I had to spend with him. Because he was my only grandchild it made me feel very vulnerable.

I wanted to see him every week not every few months. But I now live over 800 miles away. The thought of the long distance miles between us left me fuming. I needed to stop worrying about the future and embrace these moments with my one year-old grandson.

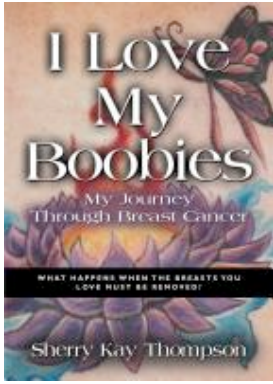
Life was great so I decided to enjoy this moment in time. I grabbed his hand and

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we ran off to the next adventure we would find at the mall.

I loved writing that story about Caleb and how much I miss him. I also miss my friends in Ohio and I miss everything I had in my life for 56 years in Ohio. Life does not always turn out like you think it will. It does not mean life is not going just like God wants it to go. His plans for me were not the plans I had laid out for my life. In my heart I know his plans will be better.

I want to end with this wonderful quote from Mother Teresa: “People are often unreasonable and self-centered. Forgive them anyway. If you are kind, people may accuse you of ulterior motives. Be kind anyway. If you are honest, people may cheat you. Be honest anyway. If you find happiness, people may be jealous. Be happy anyway. The good you do today may be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway. Give the world the best you have and it may never be enough. Give your best anyway. For you see, in the end, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway.”



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