

No One Chose This Journey

Fran Padgett

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You won't find the slogan "Hang in there!" or a prominent use of pink in Fran Padgett's book, *Breast Cancer: No One Chose This Journey*. These absences are among the strengths of this inspirational book aimed at breast cancer patients.

The core of the book is the narratives of women "chosen by breast cancer," and of their families and caregivers. Among them is the author's story of her solo retreat to a resort in Galveston for three days prior to her surgery. Like this story, the others included in this book are not sappy tales of perseverance and suffering; they are simple, straightforward accounts of life's challenges—work, sickness, survival, and death. The format of each story is unique. For example, Eveline's story is told through short letters to a friend, and Bonnie's is a statistical comparison of famous cycling races to her bike ride to her last chemotherapy treatment. The stories are linked by Padgett's information about the narrators and about her acquisition of the pieces. They are also unified by the theme embodied by Esther Valdez, Mamma Care Specialist. The book is dedicated to Valdez and promotes her mantra, "Care. Share. Be Aware."

The stories are interrupted by quotes from Robert Frost's poetry. These excerpts build the metaphor that fighting cancer is like climbing a mountain—a refreshing twist on the journey metaphor. Lyrics from the song "Galveston" and the seventy-four evocative illustrations by the author add dimension to the book. Each work of art was inspired by a specific woman. The final result is an exquisitely presented, glossy volume.

Author and artist Fran Padgett, founder of the Weathervane Foundation, a non-profit dedicated to supporting breast cancer research, received the BMW 2005 Houston Hero Award. Her first book, *Breast Cancer Recovery: No One Wrote a Manual*, focused on her own experience with breast cancer. In 2007 it was awarded a silver medal in the Independent Book Publishers Association's Benjamin Franklin Awards.

Padgett has said, "I'll be a breast cancer survivor when I die of something else. In the meantime, I expect to live every day in every sense of the word." The book ends with Frost's poem, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," which is famous for the lines, "But I have promises to keep, / And miles to go before I sleep." How appropriate.

GERALDINE A. RICHARDS (July 27, 2010)

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