

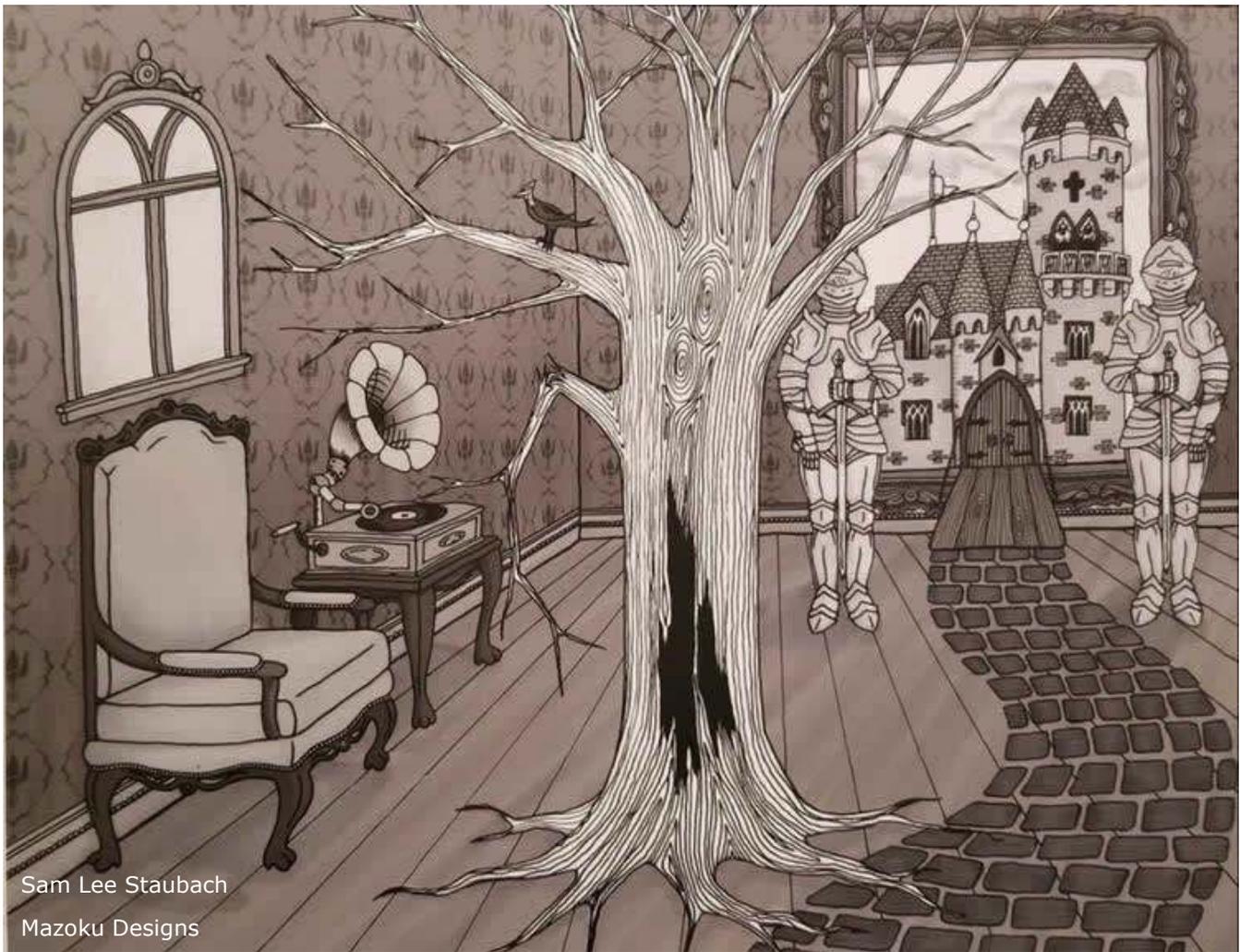


## The Shattered Oak

A reflection by Sherry Genga

My mother's life was not easy. She dealt with and battled domestic violence, child abuse, suicide, and eventually mental illness. She was affected by and surrounded by the nature of mankind's cruelty. And yet, she gave my siblings and I her gift of strength.

In writing *The Shattered Oak*, I came to terms with her thought process and experienced her level of bravery and reliance. I finally comprehended her intense strength, courage, and determination by acknowledging her survivor skills and her deep love of faith that provided her comfort that she was never alone.



Sam Lee Staubach  
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As I wrote her story, I was able to put my mind at ease because I knew the content and the nature of her story, nothing was made up. I knew her circumstances and her reality intimately—I was there. When writing, I chose words that exposed the dignity, integrity, and honesty that captured my mother's essence. In this light, I decided to have my mother, Barbara, narrate her story, letting the content come from a third person rather than a first or second. I felt the impact might reach out and grab readers by the collar and bring them into the story.

And, as readers became enveloped in her story, I hoped they might experience a sense of enlightenment in the realm of empathy and be offered an opportunity to get outside of themselves and see things from a different perspective. Throughout the book, Barbara never tries to teach (and absolutely does not preach) something. Her voice shares her "experience, strength and hope", as opposed to just giving suggestions. She was and is a survivor, and in that way, a role model. But more than just surviving, she has become a student of life—someone who learns as they move through life. For our family it is never about being right (as opposed to wrong); focusing in the present moment as much as is humanly possible, we all try to do the next right thing.

## The Writing Process

I encountered some challenges when writing that I had to learn to overcome. My mind was always engaged and constantly focused on my content. It was hard for me to be physically present in the room because writing consumed, mesmerized, enchanted me. During this time, I listened to every word spoken on the radio, including song lyrics, and even nouns and verbs in conversations. I used my skill as my own secret weapon. I wanted to know what words were more powerful and best described our emotions. It was my own experiment to find the right mixture of words that gave readers the explosion they looked for in a magnificent book making it a true must read.

To help me remember my thoughts I took advantage of my 'notes' app on my I-phone. I used the voice button to record them because I can talk faster than write things down on paper. I spoke out loud without any lost ideas. This became a valuable tool to help me organize my thought process more quickly and efficiently. I printed my phrases from my home computer whenever I had time. What I had to do next was look at my sentences printed on paper. I needed to put all the words together like a puzzle. I thrived on the challenge of piecing my sentences into structured paragraphs and chapters. I honestly enjoy doing things that I am not familiar doing and finding the capability to do so.

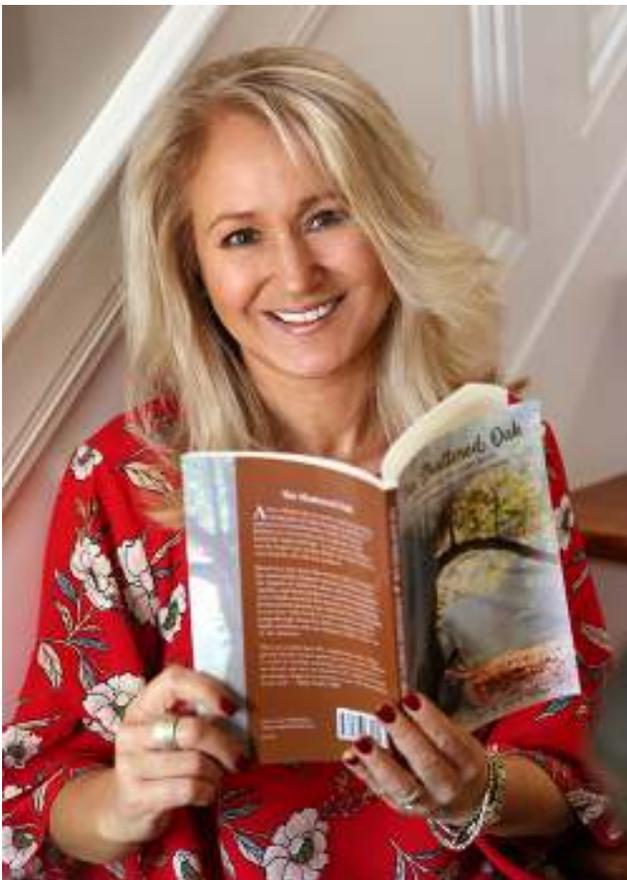
My major frustration in writing the book was finding time. I had to find a way to write every day. I noticed that if I didn't keep my thought process fluent and frequent, I had to reconnect with the current. It was like I had to jump-start my brain's creativity all over again figuring out how to be my main character. So, I adapted, and I took time to write every day. By replicating these actions, I made it possible for every chapter to flow with enormous empathy creating an experience for the reader to hear a voice of integrity, hope, and strength.

I needed to write this book because I wanted silent voices to be heard. I knew as a young child that my mother's story needed to be told or turned into a movie, it was just a matter of when. Barbara was and is a survivor; in the book she reassures readers that asking for help is a strength, not a weakness. She shares her experience that it is possible to recover after trauma, stress, or extreme anxiety. She shows us how she released her fears and replaced them with gratefulness to find her ability to move forward; her passion for gratitude allows her to face her fears. Barbara's experience in journaling and acting like her own therapist helped her to overcome negative self-talk. She discovered a way to face her fears and her depression by filtering and releasing the feelings and then letting them go. She figured out that having a positive attitude was the "secret

ingredient” in managing her survivor skills as she navigated through life. Her lesson learned was that “the power of positivity” was the best way to navigate through her destructive negative self-talk thinking. She had to find her strength and independence. In *The Shattered Oak*, she navigates readers toward an understanding that if they can find self-love and worthiness, in time they, too, can heal.

I also hope that readers learn a sense of healthy skepticism. When consulting with health professionals, please get that second and maybe third opinion. Beware of assumptions that shut down exploration for explanations even with experts. I also want readers to remember to always think outside of the box. The obvious answer is not always the correct diagnosis as evidence in this book.

Currently *The Shattered Oak* is being used by psychologists and counselors at recovery centers. After clients read it, they spend time together processing its contents, speaking about the similarities in their stories and commenting on how it is helping them heal from trauma. [www.theshatteredoak.com](http://www.theshatteredoak.com)



**Sherry Genga** is the owner and founder of Spring-eze Women Shoe Inserts. Her entrepreneurial nature evolved from her current 27-year career as a waitress in the High Roller lounge at Foxwoods Resort and Casino. She shares her experiences in classrooms with young entrepreneurs at local colleges to inspire them and offer the skills and resources to invent and develop new products. Her philosophy led her to the Connecticut Manufacturing Resource Center program, which helps small and midsize businesses in areas such as supplier development and securing a manufacturer for their product. Sherry is married to Jason Genga, and she has two children, Justin and Nicole. She resides in her small town in Connecticut where she grew up.