

'Everybody's Got Something' will make your heart smile

By JENNIFER LENAIN
Special to the Sun Herald

Robin Roberts has always considered herself a private person. Yes, she spends her mornings with millions of Americans, but her personal matters stayed personal.

That is, until she decided to "make her mess her message."

REVIEW The death of her mother, the late Lucimarian Tolliver Roberts, and her recent diagnosis with myelodysplastic syndrome inspired Roberts' new memoir, "Everybody's Got Something."

From sharing details of her childhood to the details on the love of her life, Roberts is not shy in this inspirational, heartwarming tell all.

Her battle with MDS simply made her stronger.

The day Roberts was diagnosed, she explains, she had no idea what the disease was.

"Then I went and did the very thing we always tell people not to do — and that's go on the Internet," she writes.

Roberts admits feeling terrified when terms like "leukemia, bone marrow transplant, poor survival and dead" continued to pop up.

Throughout the process of searching for physicians and being told she would need a bone marrow transplant to survive, Roberts continued to be focused on surviving.

Family, close friends and colleagues played a major role in her fight, especially her girlfriend, Amber Laign.

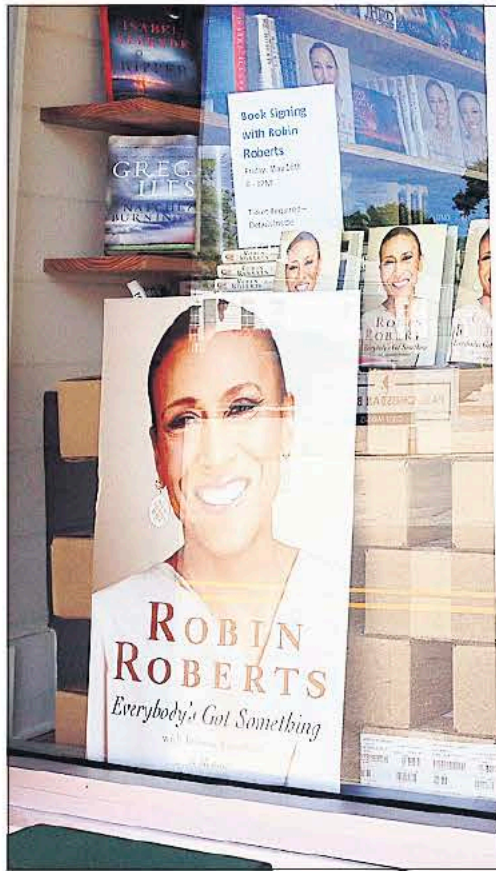
When Roberts scheduled her first appointment with an oncologist, Laign told her, "We're stronger than this. Whatever this is."

Typically the go-to person for her loved ones, Roberts said, "I pride myself on being strong for other people. It's a gift to have someone in my life that has, again and again, showed that she is more than capable of sharing any load that I have had to bear."

At first she bore her diagnosis in silence, with only a few people knowing how ill she felt, but she continued to work.

Roberts' gratefulness for life is evident on each page. She fully encompasses a passion for life, learning from all of the obstacles trying to stop her.

Many of us take our bless-



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Pass Christian Books is stocked and ready for 'GMA' anchor Robin Roberts' May 16 signing of 'Everybody's Got Something.'

Book signing

What: Robin Roberts will sign copies of 'Everybody's Got Something'
Where: Pass Christian Books, 300 East Scenic Drive, Pass Christian
When: 6-8 p.m. Friday
Tickets: The signing is a ticketed event and advance purchase is necessary. Each ticket is \$27 and can be purchased by calling 222-4827 or visiting Pass Christian Books. Tickets are exchanged at the event for a copy of the book.

ings for granted, not realizing that everybody really does have something.

Roberts' message is clear and touching.

She credits her family and upbringing for her optimism and her athletic nature for her competitiveness and will to fight.

As Roberts invites us into her life and shares her fight, losses and breakthroughs, we finish "Everybody's Got Something" feeling as if we know her personally.

This memoir will make your heart truly smile; giving you the power and confidence to fight any battle.

Taking in Roberts' words, it resonates within you that we are all equal, and we all have a choice to be strong and, like Roberts, make whatever mess we have our message.

Roberts on life, love and being Southern

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Between leaving the set of "Good Morning America" and heading off to prepare for an interview with Hillary Clinton, "GMA" anchor Robin Roberts took time in a telephone interview recently to share five interesting facts about herself with the Sun Herald.

1. Southern roots: Roberts takes pride in her Southern roots, and it is evident in her mannerisms.

Growing up in a military family, she said she lived many different places, but after her father retired, her family "chose Mississippi, and Mississippi, in a way, chose us, too. The environment, the people, the family aspect, all of that is very much a part of my foundation, and really helped me understand that we have challenging times and tough times, but we're tough people, too."

Not only is she a Mississippian, but she also is a Coastian, which perhaps was most evident in the following exchange when she learned I am from Bay St. Louis, which neighbors her hometown of Pass Christian: "OK, Bay Rat, I won't hold that against you. That was a big rival of ours."

2. Optimism: Surviving an aggressive form of breast can-



Roberts

cer and myelodysplastic syndrome, Roberts remained courageously optimistic.

"Being optimistic is like a muscle that gets stronger with use," she said.

The title of her book "Everybody's Got Something," she writes, comes from a saying her mother, the late Lucimarian Roberts, used to use.

"Everybody's got something, but what are you gonna do?" Robin Roberts said. "You're not going to allow yourself to be dictated by these dire circumstances. Those three simple words can be looked at in so many different ways. Everyone's got something. Yes, as far as a health issue, marital issue, employment, but it also means everyone's got something to give."

3. Faith: Raised in a strong faith-based family, Roberts considers herself more of a spiritual person, taking "a moment every day to sit, be at peace and be still; just being still and hearing his words."

4. Love: Roberts met her girlfriend of almost 10 years, Amber Laign, when mutual friends set them up on a blind date. Laign doesn't crave the spotlight but gave Roberts her blessing when

she mentioned she wanted to thank her publicly in a Facebook post for being there for her.

Since then, Roberts said, "in general, we have been overwhelmed how positive people have been and how grateful they are that I've had somebody."

Some fans were often "worried that I didn't and (are now) elated that I have this special person in my life who has been there to help me through some difficult challenges."

Roberts said her parents set the bar very high for relationships, making a lasting impact by how equal they were.

5. The Future: Not knowing what her future may hold, Roberts reflects on her past: "I didn't know that I would be doing what I am now, and all I can say is even going through the devastating loss of my mother, my health, my hometown at one point, that I'm still here. I'm so grateful that I want to be here."

Roberts said those things that could have been a burden, instead, "have been wings. I'm gonna soar to new heights. I don't know what those heights are, but I'm just thankful. Have you ever felt that way, just so full of gratitude? I'm not really trying to figure out what the next chapter is, I'm just grateful to be alive."