

Pat Gussin

*Successful Author
& Publisher*



As if a career as an MD, then a globe-hopping VP at Johnson & Johnson, plus frequent university and business board member and vineyard owner were not enough, Pat is also an award-winning author.

She's busy promoting her latest mystery/thriller, *Come Home* which is her seventh book. It's published by Oceanview Publishing that she and her husband Robert started over a decade ago. When not writing, touring, publishing or tending to their vineyards in New Zealand, the couple has been generous supporters of the Friendship Centers in Sarasota and the Boys & Girls Club of Sarasota County.

Usually when people “retire” to our area they’ve had busy careers and then want to switch gears and pursue a life of enjoying a slower pace. A little tennis, maybe some golf. Some will volunteer, too, as that makes them feel connected to their new home while doing productive work.

As if a career as an MD, then a globe-hopping VP at Johnson & Johnson, plus frequent university and business board member and vineyard owner were not enough, Pat is also an award-winning author. However, for a talented wordsmith, I honestly don’t think Pat Gussin has ever heard of the word “retire.”

Her husband, Robert (also an MD and Johnson & Johnson VP), is in the kitchen of their beautiful Longboat Key condo reading a manuscript while Pat is home, but between stops on the road for a book tour promoting her latest mystery/thriller, *Come Home*. The promotional tour has taken her all over the state from Key West to Anna Maria. In 2018 she’ll be in parts of Pennsylvania then New York City before back in Florida again. *Come Home* is her seventh novel.

Two questions emerge...how did she discover writing and where did she find the time to write? “I came to writing in a bizarre way,” she explains, mysteriously. Pat’s work as Vice President for Consumer Pharmaceuticals with Johnson & Johnson had her on long flights to China and Japan and other places around the world. Finding time on her hands, she started to write. She had written medical reports of course, but writing just seemed to come to her naturally as she tapped into her own career as a reference point.

Pat’s first novel, *Shadow Of Death*, is the story of Laura Nelson, a medical student in Detroit in 1967. So meticulously researched, the book has been used in a sociology course at one university, and in a contemporary urban history course at another. Pat, a Grand Rapids, Michigan native, was herself in medical school in Detroit and “in the middle of it” as she recalls of that time in Detroit’s history.

Pat’s was a “demanding life” with not only the rigors of medical school and raising a family, but 1967 was also a time of intense protesting against the Vietnam War. But that wasn’t all. In 1967 the Detroit riots were among the most violent and destructive riots in U.S. history. By the time the bloodshed, burning and looting ended after five days, 43 people were dead and 342 injured.

Not one to write a memoir, Pat instead started by “taking out a yellow tablet and made her [Laura] like myself” but with a lot of “turmoil.” She adds, however, her own life “went well, but this character [Laura] has problems; she makes bad decisions.”

Pat admits, she “didn’t know how to write fiction, but I learned the tricks of the trade.” She gave the manuscript to a friend to read. That friend in turn gave it to an agent who worked for the Spitzer Literary Agency who called and said, “You have something.” Indeed. Pat’s rookie novel would go on to be nominated as “Best First Novel” by International Thriller Writers.

Like all good mystery writers, there would be a series of books with Laura Nelson as the protagonist. In 2007 *Twisted Justice* was published followed by *Weapon of Choice* and for the finale, *After the Fall*, in which Laura’s career as a surgeon and the focus of Pat’s books, comes to an end.

Other books would follow: *The Test* (about a man who creates an unusual will aka “The Test”), *And Then There Was One* (a New York Times bestseller about an abduction) and a book she collaborated with her husband called *What’s Next For You?* which offers advice and inspiration on having a meaningful post-career life, but sounds more like a rhetorical question for this dynamic duo.

Her most recent book is *Come Home* which was a finalist in the 2017 Best Book Awards for Fiction: Thriller/Adventure. It’s about Nicole Nelson and Ahmed Masud, a highly successful Philadelphia couple who are partners in a plastic surgery practice and have a young son. But cracks are beginning to appear in their perfect world. It’s set in the post 9/11 world when there was backlash against all things Arab, plus cultural difference, politics, money and more (I don’t want to give too much away).

At the start of Pat’s writing career the couple went looking for a publisher when her husband said basically, “I think we could do this.” And they did, creating Oceanview Publishing. Oceanview has been in business over 10 years and their niche is a good one: mystery, thriller and suspense fiction – categories that always do well and when there’s a series, they do even better.

In addition to her own work, they publish works by H. Terrell Griffin, Patti Sheehy, John F. Dobbyn and more. Typically, they release 12-14 titles a year. Some authors live nearby; others are all over the country. No matter, due to the digital age, publishing can be done mostly online. Their titles have won a slew of awards and at this point, they can pick and choose which works they will take on. What makes the cut? Pat says they choose, “what we like to read.”

Oceanview Publishing is also on LBK (but moving to downtown Sarasota as of publication date) and specializes in independent publishing. Their web site says that “Oceanview focuses on works that exhibit a strong sense of place and setting; compelling protagonists and supporting characters; tension that builds throughout a book’s narrative; seamless, gripping, and suspenseful story lines; and authenticity, making the books not just great reads but uniquely positioned to make the transition into such media as film and television.” More succinctly, Pat tells me what matters is the writer’s “voice.”

In addition to her many books, Pat has also been a dedicated volunteer at The Friendship Centers, seeing patients in their clinic. According to Friendship Centers CEO Erin McLeod, who also knows of Pat’s busy schedule, along with her writing, travel and book publishing company, sums it up quite nicely: “Pat is so multi-talented. There are so many facets to her.”

Pat was at the Friendship Centers back in 2007 about the same time Erin came on board there. Pat would volunteer on a regular basis for 15 years, seeing the Center’s clients. Women in particular would see Pat and she did a lot more than routine physicals. “She was the voice of reason to get them to get their testings updated. Some people hadn’t been to a doctor in over 10 years.” She’d guide people to see specialists where necessary. “She probably saved a few lives,” according to Erin.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Sarasota County honored the Gussins at the organization’s annual Champions for Children gala back in November, 2017. “Drs. Gussin have touched the lives of thousands of our Club members over the years, and continue to give greater opportunities to help more Club members chart their path toward a great future,” said Bill Sadlo, President/CEO at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Sarasota County. “We are honored to recognize their outstanding legacy at our organization as the 2017 Champions for Children.”

The program highlighted local Club alumni whose lives have been impacted by the couple’s generosity including five local Boys & Girls Club alumni who currently attend Duquesne University thanks to the Gussin Endowed Scholarship. This endowment provides a full-ride scholarship to Duquesne University with educational support to at least one member of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Sarasota County each year.

Pat and Robert also own two vineyards in Marlborough on the south island of New Zealand. According to their web site, “The Oceanview Aratere Vineyard overlooks the Pacific Ocean in the Awatere Valley, near Seddon. The Oceanview Rapura Vineyard in the Wairua Valley is situated on the ‘golden mile’ in Blenheim, the heart of Marlborough wine country. The Gussins grow Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir, and Chardonnay grapes. All of their grapes go into Villa Maria Estates Winery, the most awarded winery in New Zealand.”

For someone who publishes a lot of mystery books, I want to know how she and her husband, with their busy careers also raised six children (and thus have 16 grandchildren). She had two of her children while in medical school (another mystery). But the plot of her life has a consistent thread: focus. She’s also a very calm person who says that when there’s a spare few hours in the day, she’ll go off and write. No cottage in the backyard that no one can enter; no set routine of x many words or x pages per day like many authors have. No writing quirks unless you call a flip chart and an Excel spreadsheet quirky. She also doesn’t work from an outline. Her stories, she says, “Are all about the decisions we make in life.” Pat wants her readers to go “No!” when something happens to the characters in her books. In other words, she skillfully makes her readers “care” for the book’s characters.

She makes it all seem so effortless. It’s still a mystery to me, however, how she does it all. 🍷

STORY: Louise Bruderle
IMAGES: Evelyn England



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