

Dr. Robin, anointed by Oprah

By Karen Heller

INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

Robin L. Smith has been touched by an Oprah. And when Oprah touches you professionally, it's all good.

The Center City psychologist's *Lies at the Altar: The Truth About Great Marriages* is cresting the best-seller list with 317,000 cop-

For the Center City psychologist, good things have followed.

ies in print. Dr. Robin — what she asks to be called — flies to Chicago twice monthly to tape sessions with the divine Ms. O. In the fall, Dr. Robin will host an hour-long weekday XM Satellite Radio show as part

of *Oprah & Friends*, along with Bob Greene, Marianne Williamson, Nate Berkus, and Oprah's BFF Gayle King.

That's what Dr. Robin has become: an Oprah friend with benefits, the business kind.

"This is humbling, but I view it as a piece of my journey," says Dr. Robin, 43, raised in West Oak Lane, a graduate of La Salle, East-

See **DR. ROBIN** on M6



DAVID SWANSON / Inquirer Staff Photographer

Robin L. Smith: "On the money," says Oprah.

Dr. Robin

continued from M1

ern Baptist Theological Seminary and Temple, where she received her doctorate. "I really stay present to receive the gift that is happening, the gift of death and loss, as well as the gift of wonderful sweetness that comes as well. That's my framework for how I live."

Oprah Winfrey says of Dr. Robin, "I think she's right on the money when it comes to personal issues, marriage, infidelity, and raising your children. She is able to cover it all."

Dr. Robin travels frequently, delivering keynote addresses and motivational speeches to groups and corporations. Her television career began on KYW-TV, expanded to national programs and then, in February 2005, to *The Oprah*

Smith, a psychiatrist, died in 1990. "It's my way of bringing him with me," she says.

Dr. Robin appears genetically hardwired for television, looking natural in pancake makeup, inviting in sunglasses-inducing colors, and comfortable in three-inch heels while speaking in effortless sound bites. Like most television types, she's thinner, taller, quicker, better-looking and warmer without being more open than most people. She has a full-time personal assistant.

Lies is Dr. Robin's second book. Her first, *Inspirational Vitamins*, was self-published in 2004 in her pre-O days. ("A woman is like a tea bag. You never know how strong she is until she gets into hot water.") *Lies* is dedicated to Oprah and "Fearless Won!," which she says is "another name for the divine."

Dr. Robin credits Oprah with "being the bridge that brought me back to my truest self," while stressing that the relationship is all about the work. They're not kicking back at Promised Land, Oprah's Santa Barbara, Calif., estate.

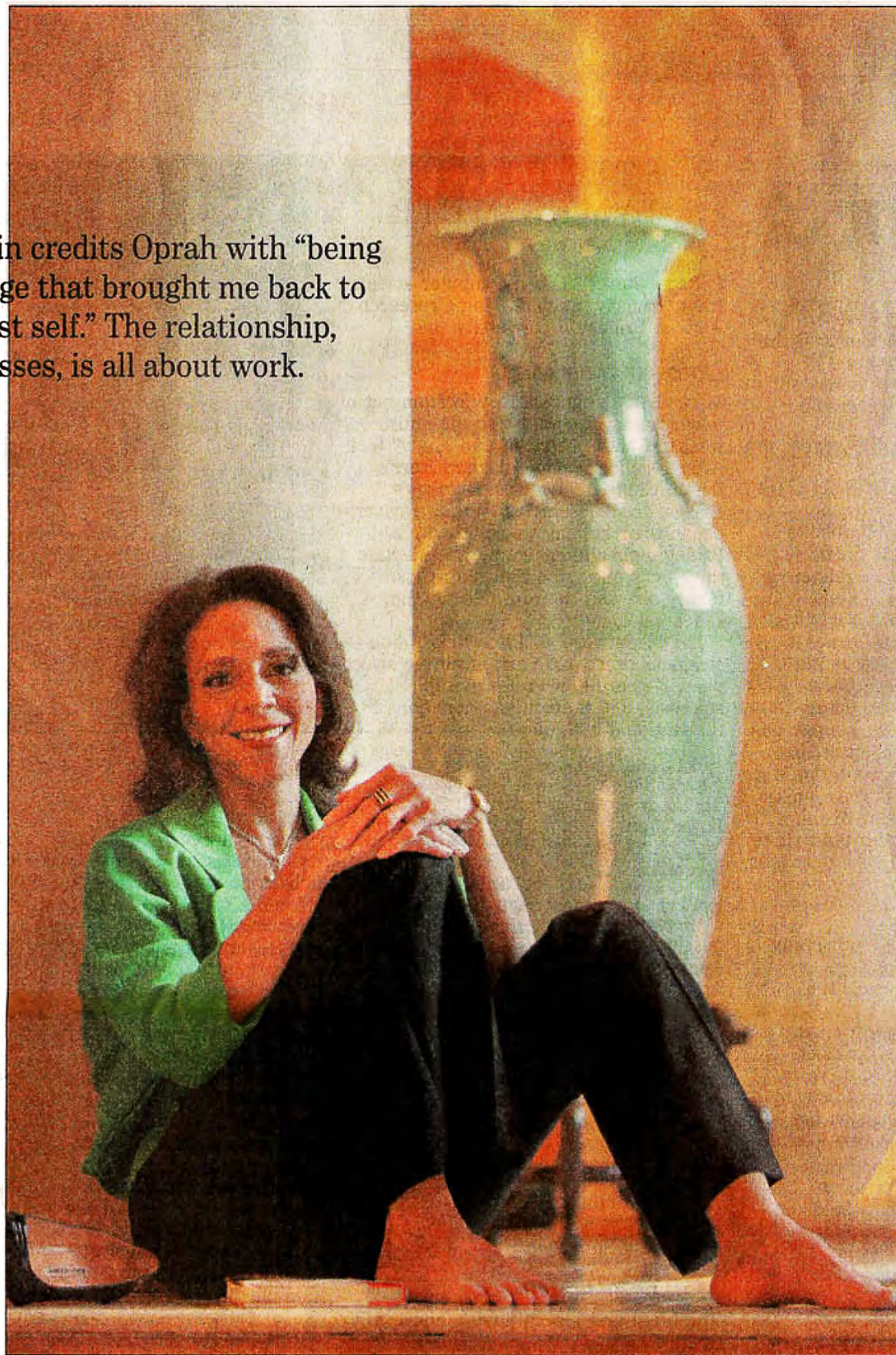
Bob Miller, president of Hyperion, offered Dr. Robin a contract the day he attended an *Oprah Winfrey Show* taping with his author, Brooke Shields. Dr. Robin mentioned she was writing a book about relationships.

"She has such a very clear and unique approach, and is a very good communicator," says Miller, elated that

Lies blew through seven printings in three weeks. "Being on *Oprah* gives Robin a terrific platform, but you also need to say something that strikes a nerve. You need both to succeed."

Lies is rooted in Dr. Robin's personal approach to psychotherapy, which she describes as "existential Imago therapy," relationship counseling crafted by Harville Hendrix and Helen LaKelly Hunt. Her book stresses the importance

Dr. Robin credits Oprah with "being the bridge that brought me back to my truest self." The relationship, she stresses, is all about work.



DAVID SWANSON / Inquirer Staff Photographer

The busy psychologist relaxes in the lobby of the Rittenhouse. She has a spartan office in the building.

"to show up as a grown-up" in relationships, to experience "mature love," and offers 276 (!) questions couples should ask before marriage, from "Do you have dental insurance?" to "Have you ever

been in jail?"

Dr. Robin was married once, when she was 23, and it lasted five years, but "we weren't grown-ups." In *Lies*' introduction, she admits to a subsequent relationship with a man

"whose addiction ruled our lives." She met another man, "the love of my life," who collapsed on a beach in July 1994, never recovered, and eventually died. She prefers not to name him.

"We love when the universe gives, but aren't prepared for what's on the other side of the coin," she says. "But that's how I live. I was not surprised when my partner collapsed in front of me, when trauma and death knocked on my door, but I'm not surprised when all this good happens, too. I've had the big things on both ends of the spectrum."

Dr. Robin is candid on television. "Very few people can say something on TV that makes you sit up and listen, and she's got that gift," *Oprah Winfrey Show* producer Ellen Rakieta said of Dr. Robin in the April issue of *O* magazine. "And I love the fact that she's willing to open up about her own experiences."

Though only up to a point. Dr. Robin is becoming increasingly famous dispensing relationship advice, while declining to say if she's in one.

"I'm not going to answer that," she says, in the most personable way imaginable. "My private life is something that's mine, and I've worked hard to maintain that boundary. I like to keep things very clear, and full of integrity." As she writes in *Lies*, "I've chosen to make my most important life partner the truth."

Her other companion is Kalle, a Portuguese water dog. Rosa Lee Smith, one of the first African American women to earn a master's degree in social work at Bryn Mawr, watches the dog when her daughter is traveling.

Dr. Robin has a group of long-standing friends whom she loves to cook for in her Center City home. "I'm much more of a homebody than people think," says Dr. Robin, a devoted athlete. "My personal life is the exact opposite of my professional life."

Extolling the virtues of being a grown-up, she feels "very much 43 and fabulous. I've worked so hard and always believed my message. I just trusted that the moment would come." And here it is, Dr. Robin's moment, in the sun, on the best-seller list and with Oprah.

Contact staff writer Karen Heller at 215-854-2586 or kheller@phillynews.com.

THE #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

DR. ROBIN L. SMITH

Lies at the ALTAR

The Truth About Great Marriages



Winfrey Show. That relationship grew "very deliberately," with the psychologist signing an exclusive contract in February.

"I love how we grew ourselves into the relationship," Dr. Robin says, sitting in her Rittenhouse Square office, so tidy as to be antiseptic, a hotel room for problems. She sees older patients when she can, but accepts no new ones.

Her father's name is on the door, though Dr. Warren