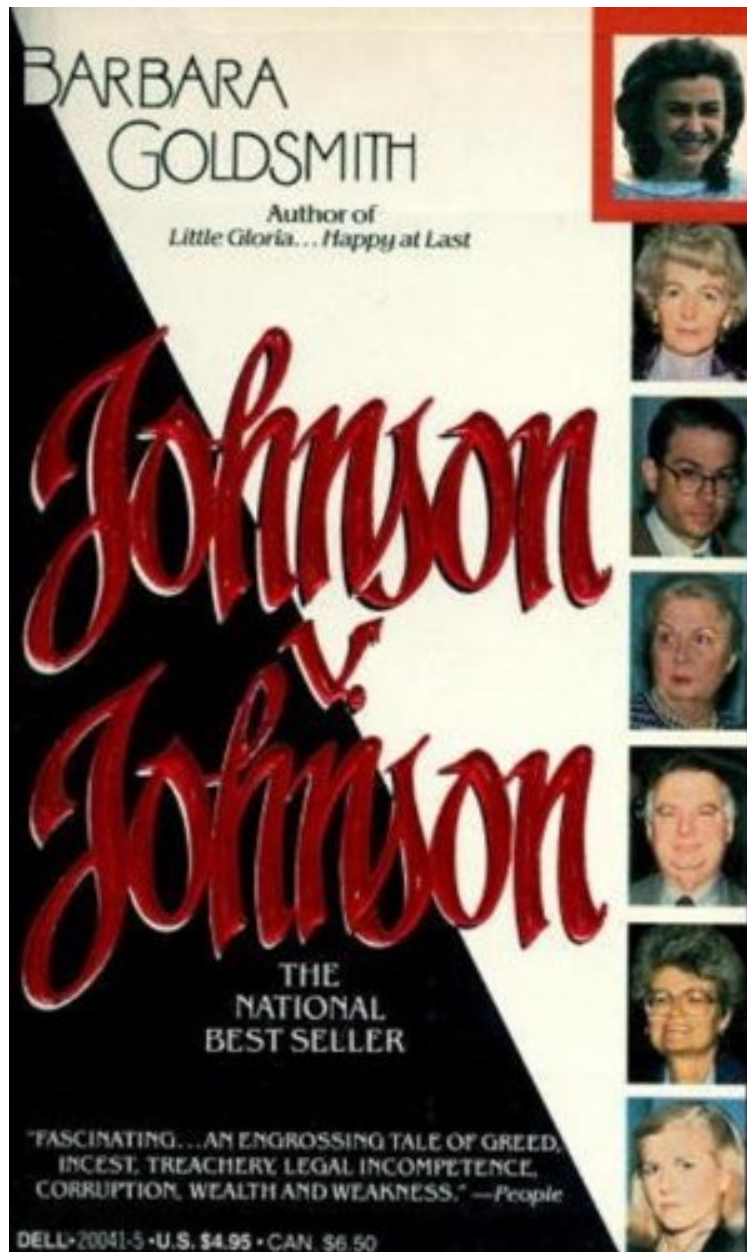


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## JOHNSON V. JOHNSON

*Barbara Goldsmith*

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**Barbara Goldsmith : JOHNSON V. JOHNSON** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised JOHNSON V. JOHNSON:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. InterestingBy misscoconutsThe story of how Johnson Johnson began is interesting although this book is written in interview form without much input from the author through story

telling. It is all based around a court case and the money involved is unbelievable. There is another book coming out at end of July, early August and I would hold out as it seems it is going to go more into their lives than this book does. Good overview of the children and their relationship with their father, one of the founders. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. disjointed conversational writing By JBS424 instead of a flowing narrative, it's page after page of dialogue....not always related. Although the info held within the pages was interesting {hence the second star}, it was delivered in a most uninteresting way. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Difficult Subject Made Clear By Randolph A. Malone I used this book as a help in writing a family history for one of my relatives included in this book.

With the extraordinary investigative acumen and sensitive narrative skills that informed her best-selling *Little Gloria . . . Happy at Last*, Barbara Goldsmith now gives us the most sensational case of a contested will in American history— weaving a hypnotic tale of vast wealth and moral corruption. When J. Seward Johnson, the pharmaceutical heir, died in 1983 at the age of eighty-seven, his six children (each of whom was already in possession of an immense fortune) were outraged to learn that he had willed his entire \$500-million estate to their stepmother Basia— a woman forty-two years Seward's junior, a Polish refugee who had once worked as a chambermaid in his household. They came to believe that Basia had used undue influence to "enchant" their father, prying his fortune away from him and turning him against his own children. They wanted "justice." The legal battle that followed spawned a seventeen-week-long trial, the involvement of 210 lawyers (some of whose behavior was legally and ethically questionable), \$24 million in legal fees, and public disclosures of the often scandalous details of the lives of many of the parties involved, including attempted suicide, drug addiction, and accusations of a murder plot. Going beyond the courtroom itself, Goldsmith delves into the family's past and present, demonstrating that, from the start, the poisonous effects of overwhelming wealth were a tacit but powerfully felt subtext to the proceedings. From her insider's position, she reveals the true Johnson legacy— one of profound emotional damage. In their own voices Seward's children, his first wife, relatives, friends, employees, and Basia herself express their thoughts and feelings with a startling degree of frankness, revealing a past of incest, malignant neglect, and betrayal. Through this deepening of the story, Goldsmith has been able to elucidate the profoundly complex reasons why each of the Johnsons believed that what was most emphatically at stake was not financial remuneration but emotional reparation. Throughout the four-month trial, Goldsmith (who researched the case for over a year and examined thousands of pages of documentation) was in constant attendance, and she tells the dramatic story of what occurred in spellbinding detail. We see the contesting parties, their innumerable lawyers, and the trial's remarkable judge, Marie Lambert ("part Portia, part Tugboat Annie"), playing out their roles in a courtroom packed with press and spectators, and rife with animosity, mistrust, and uncontrolled emotions (which erupted into a near-riot and death threats against the judge). Goldsmith illuminates how and why, as the trial progressed, it was transmuted almost entirely into a battle among lawyers, about lawyers, and for lawyers. She provides a masterful and devastating indictment of American law and lawyers, seen here as an out-of-control juggernaut fueled by a seemingly inexhaustible supply of money. Family drama, courtroom drama, explosive psychological drama, a trenchant and sometimes shocking portrayal of lawyers at work today— *Johnson v. Johnson* is a brilliant synthesis of the legal, the social, and the human aspects of a society in disarray.

From *Library Journal* When J. Seward Johnson, heir to the Johnson Johnson pharmaceutical fortune, died at 87 in 1983, his will left virtually everything to his third wife, Basia, 42 years his junior. Johnson's six children (by his first two wives) angrily instituted what would become the longest and most expensive will contest in U.S. history. Journalist Goldsmith sat through the entire trial and spent countless hours interviewing family members and attorneys. The first parts of the book trace the family's turbulent history; the last concerns the trial itself. What emerges is a larger-than-life saga of greed, corruption, and decadence that becomes almost overwhelming at times. There is sure to be a considerable audience for this book at public libraries. Jack Ray, Loyola/Notre Dame Lib., Baltimore Copyright 1987 Reed Business Information, Inc.