

# Steel Magnolias

Breast Cancer Support Group, Inc.

## Challenge-Opportunity-Potential

January 16, 2006

### Challenge

“Each of us at some point in our lives will face a doctor or pick up the phone and receive bad news. What do you do when you receive bad news that changes your life by destroying your dreams?

What do you do when bad news comes? You have to do something. You have to act to minimize the damage. You have to go on with life. You have to realign your dreams with new boundaries. You have to live in a world as a different person-and live with a God who has acted differently toward you than you expected.

You might choose to take such bad news and simply slug it out and fight the battle as a wounded soldier hoping that the joy in life ahead will be worth living in spite of bad health and broken dreams. Perhaps you are a person of faith who suddenly is wondering what difference God is going to make in this crisis.

No matter where we stand in our personal faith, when the doctor brings bad news, most of us want *God to help fix things*. Our lives have been hit with an earth quake. The world as we know it is trembling, and we are grasping for solid ground. But if we wish to find that stability, our understanding of this world may need to change radically. As the ground continues to shift beneath our feet, perhaps we need to view life differently than before. Perhaps we must grasp a different concept of time, a different notion of reality, a different understanding of value, a different relationship with the Father.

In the Bible, God tells us that death is not the end of life, that life is more than what we touch, that value doesn't have to vanish with tragedy and that He can provide his presence, peace, purpose, and power in any situation.

I have spent more than twenty years of my life caring for suffering people, first as a missionary

doctor, then as a medical oncologist. I have often been the doctor handing out bad news. I have seen many people, both Christians and non-Christians, fall apart and never live again, and I have seen others who, with hope and victory, face the change that bad news brings. I have watched incredible men and women reach down, pick up their broken dreams, and refashion them along God's design into something more beautiful than they had ever been before.”

Printed with permission of Dr. Al B. Weir

Dr. Al B. Weir, MD, specialist in Hematology and Medical Oncology, was a practicing oncologist at West Clinic in Memphis, TN; is the Director of Campus and Community Ministries, Director of Medical Education International, Christian Medical and Dental Association, and the author of “When Your Doctor has Bad News.” Dr. Weir's book, published by Zondervan, can be bought through your local book



Sharing love through support

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### Opportunity

Not until we, as individuals, are stopped in our tracks, with the reality of a life threatening disease, do most of us realize how great the need. Need, not only for monetary and medical help but the need for emotional and spiritual support. The need for a roadmap, someone who has made the journey and knows the questions to ask.

We as survivors, are uniquely qualified to encourage and guide newly diagnosed breast cancer patients.

When we step to the plate and reach out to a woman who is reeling from the fear that consumes every person who is diagnosed with cancer, we help not only a shattered sister, we strengthen our own sense of survival. I pray we will all see the great challenges of our lives as opportunities to be ambassadors, singers of HOPE to those who have lost the words to the song.

In the early part of 2004, I had a CAT and PET scan that suggested cancer in two lymph nodes. I saw both Dr. Spremulli and Dr. Wesley Smith and was referred to, U.A.B. thoracic specialist Dr. Cerfolio. I received encouragement from several really special people, one was my friend of many years, Gudrun King. This poem was featured in the March 2004 newsletter and is worth reading again.

### **A Bend in the Road**

When we feel we have nothing else to give,  
And we are sure the song has ended,  
When our day seems over and shadows fall,  
And the darkness of night has descended.  
Where can we go to find the strength to valiantly keep trying?  
Where can we find the hand that will dry the tears that the heart is crying?  
There's but one place to go and that is to God  
And dropping all pretense and pride,  
We can pour out our problems without restraint,  
And gain strength with him at our side.  
And together we stand at life's crossroads,  
And view what we think is the end.  
But God has a much bigger vision  
And He tells us it's only a bend.  
For the road goes on and is smoother,  
And the pause in the road is a rest,  
And the part that's unsung and unfinished  
Is the sweetest and richest and best.  
So rest and relax and grow stronger.  
Let go and let God share your load,  
Your work is not finished or ended.  
You've just come to a bend in the road.

Author Unknown

*“We spend January 1 walking through our lives, room by room, drawing up a list of work to be done, cracks to be patched. Maybe this year, to balance the list, we ought to walk through the rooms of our lives, not looking for flaws, but for potential.” Ellen Goodman, Columnist, *The Boston Globe**

Sometimes, it is not until we face a crisis, a life threatening episode in our lives that we are awakened to a hidden gift in our lives. Perhaps we have been too busy with daily responsibilities to be sensitive to our inner person. I trust that we, in the early part of 2006, will allow God to use us in some ministry that will help those who have been placed in our paths. As we develop the potential that is part of each of us, the light that's fueled, will give us the courage to help others. Challenge=Opportunity=Potential=Encouraging those making their journey into Bad News and Broken Dreams.

### **Purpose Revealed**

We all know of people whose life purpose was shaped by some crisis in their youth or some crisis in the life of a friend or close family member. A few years ago, I caught a TV interview with an oncologist, practicing in Birmingham who, in his childhood, lost an arm because of cancer. This tragedy cemented his determination to help cancer patients.

In the June 2002 issue of Guideposts magazine, I read the remarkable story of renowned plastic surgeon, Dr. Mark McDonough. I've kept this issue in a file, waiting for the opportunity to share this story of survival and heroic faith.

### **I'll Be Waiting, Son**

As sixteen year old Mark McDonough and his mother and four brothers said bye to his father a salesman who was leaving on a business trip, Mr. McDonough instructed Mark, "Take care of everyone." That night the house caught fire, taking the life of Mark's mother and six year old brother. Mark was so badly burned that his own life was in jeopardy. During conscious times Mark felt great guilt that, under his watch, family members had died. He even told his Dad, "I'm sorry, Dad. I'm sorry. I'm just so useless. I couldn't save Mom and Toby. I hate being here. I hate being alive. I hate what a burden I am to you." Mr. McDonough replied, "You still don't understand, do you, Mark? I need you. We all need you. God sent you back for a reason. Your place is here-with us. You're not a burden. It's just the opposite. You're what keeps us going."

From that day on Mark started looking at his recovery differently. He thought of how far He'd already come from the first agonizing days. He went to college and earned a degree in physical therapy in 1981. Later, he enrolled in medical school to become a plastic surgeon. Having undergone more than 30 surgeries, his arms and hands are now restored enough to do the delicate work that plastic surgery demands.

Dr. Mark D. McDonough, MD of Orlando, Florida knows exactly what his patients face. Dr. McDonough said, "When I meet a patient who's been burned so badly he can't imagine getting out of the pain, much less ever having a meaningful life again, that's when I'm most grateful God has given me the chance to do this work."

**"Our Father is preparing us to meet the deep inner needs of others by bringing us through the dark places first." 2 Corinthians 1: 3-4**

**Encouragement is most successful when it is passed like a baton from one recovered person to the next hurting person. In 2006, I pray that Steel Magnolias will be increased with the participation of those now making their way through this difficult journey called Breast Cancer.**

I keep this little prayer on my message board: *"Lord, order my steps today. Make me strong, not for the sake of possessing strength, but to make me sufficient for the crisis moments in my life and in the lives of others who reach out to me."*

### **Steel Magnolias' November Meeting**

The Nov. 22 meeting of Steel Magnolias Breast Cancer Support Group, Inc. was called to order by President Jo Ann Taylor. Fifteen members were present. Jo Ann greeted everyone and introduced special visitor, Tanya Adams, a student at JSU. As a class project, Ms. Adams is making a video on how psychological attitude affects our health. She asked for volunteers to be interviewed and tell their experiences when dealing with breast cancer.

Sarah Stinson gave prayer for those dear people on our prayer list. Secretary Kay Hogue read the minutes of the last meeting and they were seconded and approved as read. Financial, Report was given by Treasurer, Sarah Stinson. She reported our current balance is \$2320.80. The members unanimously approved the report.

Lenora Johnson, director, introduced the guest speaker for the evening, Gladys Denizard. Ms. Denizard is a registered nurse who work with the Hispanic community. She stressed the need for organizations, such as Steel Magnolias to assist in bridging the gap between the Hispanic population and others in Calhoun County. She offered to assist by distributing literature and interpreting to the Hispanic population. She stressed the importance of informing

Hispanic women about breast cancer and educating them about all kinds of cancer.

The meeting then moved to old business: Janet Reese gave a report from the nominating committee, comprised of Janet Reese and Eleanor Henderson. Nominations for 2006 officers : President: Pam Bussey; Vice President: Keither Zeimet; Secretary: Debbie Lee; Treasurer: Nancy Burnell; Parliamentarian: Sandy Chapman. Motion was made and seconded. Nominees were elected by unanimous vote.

The new business included the following:

1. Lenora Johnson announced the contribution of Thank You Coins, by American awards, to recognize Gold, Silver and Bronze contributors to Steel Magnolias breast Cancer Support Group, Inc.
2. Lenora Johnson announced that Steel Magnolias had been invited to make proposals for grant through the Community Foundation.
3. Announcement was made that Steel Magnolias had an invitation to hold the January meeting at Monet Salon and Day Spa. Members voted unanimously to accept the invitation.

There being no other business, meeting was adjourned, members and guests enjoyed refreshments in the Deli.

### **Steel Magnolias Christmas Party**

Saturday, December 10, we arrived at Western Sizzlin Steak House in Oxford at about 10:00 a.m. Other Steel Magnolias and their husbands or friends continued to arrive, so that we were assembled and Dr. Dave Roberts said grace at about 10:30 a.m. Everyone enjoyed a time of great food and fellowship.

After our meal, before Dirty Santa, Steel Magnolias and community leaders who served as officers and directors in 2005, our first year as a non-profit organization, were given beautiful awards. American Awards did an outstanding job of engraving and a Gold coin was placed at the top of each award. Faye Self received Volunteer of the Year Award for her faithfulness to help Steel Magnolias, whether at a fund raiser or in the Tyler Center, at meetings and stuffing envelopes as we prepared the newsletter for mailing. Faye Roberts, who will soon be a first time grandmother, was given a beautiful wreath, a thank-you for her generosity in giving of Dump Dump Dolls to the children and grandchildren of Steel Magnolias. Jeff Williams and the Wide Net Family received special recognition for their tremendous contribution in the design of <steelmagnoliasinc.org>.

As always, Steel Magnolias had a great time playing Dirty Santa. As always there were some ornaments that everyone wanted. Nobody put more effort into finding the perfect ornament than Gail Tuck, who drove to Carrolton, Georgia, had an ornament personalized and then waited in line until she almost lost her Christmas spirit.

Larry Baker joined us late and enjoyed a few cups of coffee as we enjoyed his company.. Larry made a \$100 contribution in memory of Del. I presented a \$500 check to Steel Magnolias from Monet Salon and Day Spa.

Before we left our party, I told everyone about a patient of Dr. Birdsong, someone we learned about at Ladies Night Out, a young mother who was having it rough this winter, with the loss of her job and the diagnosis of stage 3 breast cancer. We passed a small gift bag and when it made it's way back to Treasurer, Sarah Stinson, there was \$350, a love offering for this dear sister and her family.

Before we went our separate ways to complete plans for our individual family celebrations, Dr. Dave Roberts led us in the singing of a Christmas Carole.

### **Correspondence**

Dear Lenora, I can not begin to thank you and Steel Magnolias for the wonderful surprise wreath at the party. I never in a million years would have guessed it was for me. I can't wait to share it with Mother. I hope you don't mind if I give it to her, as it is because of her love that our ministry exists. Since she is approaching 83 next year I don't know how many more years I will have to share joy with her. Thank you again and I'll always be grateful for the kindness of the wonderful Steel Magnolias. Love Ya, Faye

Dear Lenora,

Thank you for all the information on breast cancer. I really appreciate the dictionary. Also your support over the phone, just listening to me. I knew God was with me and I was not alone but you were such a help. I know that support is important. You are a blessing. Dr. Keith Smith did a needle biopsy and the test came back, I have a cyst. He said they usually don't turn into cancer. I will see him in 6 months. In SC, when we lived there it was every 3 months. Lenora thank you again and if I can do anything for you or "Steel Magnolias," please let me know.  
Love and Prayers in Christ, Dorothy...Anniston

I would like to still receive Steel Magnolias. We do not have a computer. Keep up the good work! Thank you and may God bless you all. Julia...Alexandria

Dear Mrs. Johnson,

Thank you so much for all the "Care Packages" I have received from the Steel Magnolias and the Tuesday Bear Huggers! I appreciate Ms. Pam Bussey for asking ya'll to do this.. I read all the information and newsletters and thoroughly enjoyed it. I do not have a computer but would love to continue receiving the newsletter. Today was like Christmas when I received the package full of body lotion, hand lotion pretty earrings, bear pin, perfume, little bear, cute little pillows, and the great turbans and "Do rags or bonnets" to cover my hair. . I couldn't have received this at a better time. My long brown hair is just about all gone. That has been really tough on me. I was diagnosed with bilateral cancer in late October. Rather than do the mastectomy now, I had an enlarged lymph node under my arm and the Doctor said he must do chemo first to save my life. I took first chemo Nov. 2 and will have another one Nov. 30. I haven't been nauseated yet, and pray I won't be. Just tired and then I'm losing my hair. I do sing for my God at several churches and witness for him prior to my singing. I have a long road ahead like all of ya'll have walked, but with God's help I know I'll make it. Please continue to pray for me as you all have been. I believe in prayer and know where my help comes from. The Steel Magnolias and Tuesday Bear Huggers are a GREAT "MINISTRY" and each of you should be very proud of the work you are doing. I hope you each know what you have done for me ALREADY has made my journey through cancer a little easier! May God bless each of you in a very SPECIAL way- I will pray for ya'll too... All My Love Always, Cathy, Quitman, Mississippi  
P.S. You do a great job on the newsletters. (NOTE) The jewelry and toiletries were given by Donna Feazell...Avon

Dear Lenora,

I received my first Steel Magnolias for November. I really did enjoy it and thought of all the ones I did not receive. I am a 23 year survivor. Thank you for the newsletter. I would like to receive it each month. Frances, Heflin

Merry Christmas! (Contribution of \$20) I'm a friend of Betty Jacks. Jane, Anniston

Dear Lenora,

I would like to thank all the ladies who volunteered their time to participate in Sacred Heart's Health Fair. This was a great way to educate the public on various services available to breast cancer clients and survivors. Let's not forget the wonderful support provided by the Steel Magnolias Support Group. Thanks for all your hard work and support. I hope you will consider a return visit next year. Thanks Again, Rosa Lawley, RN...Sacred Heart Parish Nurse

#### Contributions

Monet Salon and Day Spa,,,,,\$500      Larry Baker .....\$100      Jane Austin.....\$20  
Jimmy and Ina Rooks.....\$150      Betty Skelton.....\$10      Martin/Wakefield's..... \$268

**MGMA.....\$500 We sincerely thank every person who has partnered to help Steel Magnolias reach even more wonderful women who are walking the difficult journey of breast cancer and our efforts to reach those yet to be diagnosed with the message: Make an appointment with your doctor today, get your mammogram!**

#### MGMA Luncheon

Dr. Dave Roberts, Chairman of the Board of Steel Magnolias Breast Cancer Support Group, Inc., attended the December 14, MGMA, Ladies Night Out Luncheon at The Anniston Country Club, and accepted a \$500 contribution for Steel Magnolias. Dr. Dave said he was the only man there. How fun was that? Thank you Dr. Dave for being such a great representative for Steel Magnolias.

### **Questions.....Questions.....Questions**

The year 2005, is a year when it was not possible to pick up a magazine or listen to the national news without hearing of some study or opinion about advances in the treatment and diagnosis of breast cancer.

Herceptin, once a drug reserved for advanced breast cancer is now recommended for anyone whose pathology report identifies them as Her2/neu positive. The question comes to mind, how about those of us who were diagnosed before this protein was part of a patient's diagnostic study? Should they be retested? Would they benefit from Herceptin? Studies show that Herceptin reduced the recurrence rate by 50%. This is the greatest degree of benefit since Tamoxifen. How great is the possibility of heart damage from Herceptin? Congestive heart failure was the most common side effect found in the studies. 4.1 percent of Herceptin patients developed heart failure compared to 0.8 in the non-Herceptin group.

Digital Mammography, is it always superior to Standard Mammography? Currently Digital Mammography is not widely used. Only 8% of U.S. Mammography machines are Digital and the cost of Digital Mammography is 1.5 to 8 time more expensive than Standard Mammography. Will it one day replace Standard Mammography? Current studies say that women with dense breasts have a detection rate of 70% with Digital compared to 55% with Standard Mammography. In post menopausal women both types of mammograms have similar diagnostic accuracy.

Aromatase Inhibitors, Femara and Arimidex: Is there any evidence that Estrogen Receptor Negative patients benefit from these maintenance drugs? The studies clearly show them to be more effective than Tamoxifen for estrogen receptor positive patients.

Very soon, Steel Magnolias will have Dr. Fussell as our special speaker so that we can ask her the many questions that we all have about the many news reports.

### **On The Lighter Side**

Maya Angelo is one of the most respected women in America. She is esteemed in much the same as the late Erma Bombeck. Like Erma Bombeck, she is a straight shooter and her sage advice is appreciated by every woman. Ms. Angelo made comments, on her 70 + birthday, about her thoughts on growing older. She called it, "exciting." Even if we are nowhere close to seventy, we can still appreciate these comments.

### **Don't Break the Elastic**

"I've learned that no matter what happens, or how bad it seems today, life goes on, and it will be better tomorrow."

"I've learned that you can tell a lot about a person by the way he/she handles these three things: a rainy day, lost luggage, and tangled Christmas tree lights."

"I've learned that regardless of your relationship with your parents, you'll miss them when they are gone from your life."

"I've learned that making a 'living' is not the same thing as 'making a life.'"

"I've learned that life sometimes gives you a second chance."

"I've learned that you shouldn't go through life with a catcher's mitt on both hands; you need to be able to throw some things back."

"I've learned that whenever I decide something with an open heart, I usually make the right decision."

"I've learned that even when I have pains, I don't have to be one."

"I've learned that every day you should reach out and touch someone. People love a warm hug, or just a friendly pat on the back."

"I've learned that I still have a lot to learn."

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

### **New Year's Wishes**

*May you get a clean bill of health from your dentist, your cardiologist, your gastro-enterologist, your urologist, your proctologist, your podiatrist, your psychiatrist, your plumber, and the I.R.S.*

May your hair, your teeth, your face lift, your abs and your stocks not fall; and may your blood pressure, your triglycerides, your cholesterol, your white blood count and your mortgage interest not rise.

May New Year's Eve find you seated around the table, together with your beloved family and cherished friends. May you find the food better, the environment quieter, the cost much cheaper, and the pleasure much more fulfilling than anything else you might ordinarily do that night.

May what you see in the mirror delight you, and what others see in you delight them. May someone love you enough to forgive your faults, be blind to your blemishes, and tell the world about your virtues.

May the telemarketers wait to make their sales calls until you finish dinner, may the commercials in TV not be louder than the program you have been watching, and may your check book and your budget balance-and include generous amounts for charity.

May you remember to say "I love you" at least once a day to your spouse, your child, your parent, your siblings, your friends; but not your secretary, your nurse, your masseuse, your hairdresser or your tennis instructor.

And may we live in a world at peace and with the awareness of God's love in every sunset, every flower's unfolding petals, every baby's smile, every lover's kiss and every astonishing, miraculous beat of our heart.

**We Need Contributions of Old Costume Jewelry  
Please call Marti (256) 237-0206  
Or give to any Steel Magnolia  
Thank You.....Thank You.....Thank You!!!**

**.....January 24: Steel Magnolias Meeting will be held at.....  
Monet Salon and Day Spa, 5:00 p.m**

Read Steel Magnolias Newsletter on your computer <[www.steelmagnoliasinc.org](http://www.steelmagnoliasinc.org)>

**.....Mark your Calendars.....  
Thursday January 19: Board Meeting, 5:30 p.m. Tyler Center Deli  
Organizational Meeting with Attorney Joe Maloney**

**Tuesday January 24: Steel Magnolias Meeting, 5:00 p.m.  
Monet Salon and Day Spa**

## **Jo Ann, Here Goes!**

### **Shingles**

Doesn't it seem that more and more physicians are running their practices like an assembly line? Here's what happened to Buford: Buford walked into a doctor's office and the receptionist asked him what he had. Buford said, Shingles. So she wrote down his name, address, medical insurance number and told him to have a seat. Fifteen minutes later a nurse's aide came out and asked Buford what he had. Buford said, "Shingles." So she wrote down his height, weight, a complete medical history and told Buford to wait in the examining room. A half hour later, a nurse came in and asked Buford what he had. Buford said, "Shingles." So the nurse gave Buford a blood test, a blood pressure test, an electrocardiogram, and told Buford to take off his clothes and wait. An hour later the doctor came in and asked Buford what he had. Buford said, "Shingles." The doctor asked, "Where." Buford said, "Outside on the truck. Where do you want them."

### **The Living Will**

A man and his wife were sitting in the living room and he said to her, "Just so you know, I never want to live in a vegetable state, dependent on some machine and fluids from a bottle. If that ever happens, just pull the plug." His wife got up, unplugged the TV and threw out all the beer.

### **The Lost Chapter of Genesis**

Adam was hanging around the Garden of Eden, feeling very lonely. So, God asked him, "What's wrong with you?" Adam said he didn't have anyone to talk to. God said that He was going to make Adam a companion and that it would be a woman. He said, "This pretty lady will gather food for you, she will cook for you, and when you discover clothing she will wash for you. She will always agree with every decision you make and she will not nag you, and will always be the first to admit she was wrong when you've had a disagreement. She will praise you! She will bear your children and never ask you to get up in the middle of the night to take care of them. She will NEVER have a headache and will freely give you love and passion whenever you need it." Adam asked God, "What will a woman like that cost?" God replied, "An arm and a leg." Then Adam asked, "What can I get for a rib?" Of course the rest is history.....

### **Chicken Surprise**

A couple go for a meal at a Chinese Restaurant and order the "Chicken Surprise." The waiter brings the meal, served in a lidded cast iron pot. Just as the wife is about to serve herself, the lid of the pot rises slightly and she briefly sees two beady little eyes looking around before the lid slams back down. "Good grief, did you see that?" she asks her husband. He hasn't, so she asks him to look in the pot. He reaches for it and again the lid rises, and he sees two little eyes looking around before it slams down. Rather perturbed, he calls the waiter over, explains what is happening, and demands an explanation. "Please sir," says the waiter, "What you order?" The husband replies "chicken Surprise." "Ah.....so sorry," says the waiter, "I bring you Peeking Duck."

### **Hear.... Hear**

A man feared his wife was not hearing as well as she used to, and he thought she might need a hearing aid. Not quite sure how to approach her, he called the family doctor to discuss the problem. The doctor told him there is a simple test the man could perform to give the doctor a better idea about her hearing loss. "Here's what you do," said the doctor. "Stand about 40 feet away from her and in a normal conversational speaking tone see if she hears you. If not, go to 30 feet, then 20 feet, and so on until you get a response." That evening, Connie is in the kitchen cooking dinner, and he was in the den. He says to himself, "I'm about 40 feet away. Let's see what happens." In a normal tone, he ask, "Honey, what's for dinner?" No response. So the husband moves closer to the kitchen, about 30 feet from her and repeats, "Honey what's for dinner?" Still no response. Next time he moves into the dining room where he is about 20 feet from her and asks, "Honey what's for dinner?" Again no response. So, he walks up to the kitchen door, about 10 feet away. "Honey what's for dinner?" Again, no response. So he walks right up behind her, "Honey what's for dinner?" "Lee, for the 5th time, WE'RE HAVING CHICKEN!"

### **The Flea**

A father was reading stories to his youngest son. "The man named Lot was warned to take his wife and flee the city, but his wife turned back and was turned to salt." His son asked, "What happened to the flea?"