

# Steel Magnolias

Breast Cancer Support Group, Inc.

## Teresa Went To Mexico

May 19, 2008

### Did You Notice

Several days ago, my sister, my niece, Kathy, and I were walking around my yard, looking at the beautiful spring flowers, when Betty asked, "When you left the doctor's office, after being diagnosed with cancer, did everything look prettier?" I answered Betty, "Every color was brighter, even the tree bark seemed exaggerated. I was amazed at the different patterns and how many shades of brown are on different varieties of trees. It was like, I was for the first time, seeing the world around me."

I hear this testimony, over and over again, from newly diagnosed cancer patients. In this month's Guideposts magazine, I read the Gayla Ross story. Gayla, who lives in Oklahoma City, a dental hygienist, working to become a dental hygiene teacher, gave up vacations, and worked long hours, at 27 years old, she thought she had plenty of time, her whole life lay ahead of her.

After being diagnosed

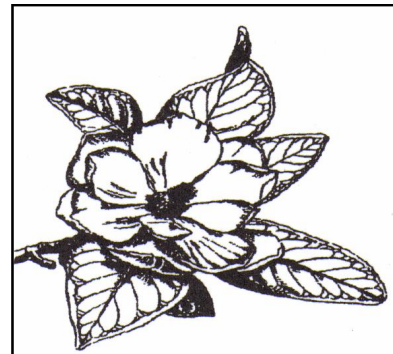
with breast cancer, Gayla suddenly pictured herself old and thought of all the things we're conditioned to dread about old age—suddenly she thought, "I may never grow old." And then a cascade of *nevers* flooded her mind...Never marry. Never have kids. Never been on an airplane. She exclaimed, "What have I been doing all my life?"

Gayla's first trip on an airplane was to attend a breast-cancer convention. After that, she bought a pink, low-slung motorcycle and rode it up the California coast to raise awareness about young women with breast cancer. She rode the rapids in Colorado, scuba dived and visited a rain forest. She said, "Best of all, I met a man named Grant—online!—and married him. We take a cruise with family every year. I am a new person. A better person. A person who survived cancer, yes and who may get it again. But that brush with death has taught me the value of life. It's a gift from God. I don't intend to waste it."

### Teresa's Story

I was first introduced to Teresa, by Gloria Woosley, at the Steel Magnolias New Beginnings Banquet, July 24, 2007, at Top O The River. Teresa, an uninsured woman, in her forties, had been experiencing discomfort in her breast. She said something about it to her friend, Gloria Woosley, who then told her to go to the Calhoun County Public Health Department. Teresa was diagnosed with breast cancer, has had chemotherapy, surgery, radiation and more chemotherapy, and is a valued member of Steel Magnolias.

Teresa, a member of Debra H. Jones Ministries, 1211 Noble Street, Anniston, has for years, helped make up boxes of essential items such as clothing and food for needy people in Mexico. Following the completion of her treatments for breast cancer, Teresa, whose travel experience included a few trips to Georgia and Florida, decided she wanted to meet



Sharing love through support

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the people for whom she raised money and packed boxes with food and clothing.

Teresa participated in fund raisers, made two appearances on the TV 24 television show, "Walking By Faith," and traveled to Piedras Negras, Mexico, ministered at two women's conferences and a newly established church that didn't yet have a roof.

Teresa encourages everyone to make the most of each day. She

said, "Before my battle with breast cancer, I never appreciated how beautifully the birds sing. Now I just listen, everyday." Teresa concluded, "No matter what you have or don't have, there is always someone who could use a helping hand. Keep your faith in God. Don't give up!"

### **Timing**

When does a cancer patient look at the world as a more beautiful place? Does every cancer patient grab life with both hands and an open heart? Does every cancer patient want to make the world a better place? Does every cancer patient work to improve the treatment environment for cancer patients who are yet to be diagnosed? Probably not.

### **How To Support a Loved One Reeling From Cancer Diagnosis**

In an article written for the Wall Street Journal, Ms. Bernstein shares a telephone call she received from a sister, telling her that their mother had been diagnosed with leukemia. After she hung up the phone, she tried to prepare herself to call her mother. She then realized that she had absolutely no idea what she should say to her. Ms. Bernstein said, "I learned a lasting lesson that day: there isn't anything correct to say to someone reeling from a cancer diagnosis. But in helping my mother through her illness, I discovered that some ways of showing support are better than others. While there's no right approach, there may indeed be wrong things to say."

In the article, Ms. Bernstein pointed out that not every cancer patient wants the same type of support. Some want to talk about their illness and accept help willingly. Others struggle to preserve their independence and behave, at least outwardly, as if nothing is wrong.

Fear of doing or saying the wrong thing keeps some friends and family members from doing anything. While this is the worst mistake one can make, there are slip-ups we should avoid. DON'T ask what a person's prognosis is! DON'T talk about your relative who lost his or her battle to the same cancer! DON'T offer theories as to why your loved one got sick! DON'T give unsolicited advice and DON'T insist everything is going to be just fine.

In general, experts say you should take your lead from the person who is sick. If he or she wants to talk about their cancer, be willing to listen and don't be afraid of emotions. If the person feels comfortable crying in front of you, be honored because you filled a really important need. Be careful to always treat your loved one as a person and not as a patient—Be ready to provide whatever help is needed: picking up groceries, providing transportation, returning phone calls. Being there doesn't require much more than enduring their pain and trying to be useful.

Taken from a Health Journal article written by Elizabeth Bernstein for the Wall Street Journal  
(Thank you Greg Flanders for sending this great article!)

### **May For Mothers....May for Remembrance**

For me, April and May are hallowed months. It was in April and May that God saw fit for my three precious sons to be born. To feel the same way about this month, on the calendar, just read the special days of remembrance in May. To honor those who sacrificed for freedom, those ever giving, faithful friends, as well as our devoted mothers, we offer the following tributes:

#### **Everyday**

Everyday you make me smile  
You let me know you care  
You help me see the good in things  
And for me you're always there.

Everyday You ease my pain,  
And help me through my day  
You let me know I'm not alone,  
You teach me love that way.

Everyday I say a prayer  
To keep you safe and free  
And everyday is filled with hope,  
That you'll spend time with me.

Everyday you show me love  
Wanting nothing back from me.  
You let me know you are my friend  
And keep me company.

Everyday I look around  
Even when my life's a mess.  
Knowing in my heart of hearts  
My friends are just the best.

Everyday I thank the Lord  
For having given me  
The very best that I can have,  
That is, all my friends, you see

### **No Peace Without You**

You must have been brave to serve your country-  
To never know where you'd go to fight.  
You were content to let us stay.

With honor and pride you marched away.  
So we were the ones who slept in comfort;  
While you were the ones who stood guard.  
A mighty heart without a name  
A powerful force with little fame

Now you may think we've forgotten,  
But we want to thank you from our hearts,  
Across this nation we know the truth-  
We would have no peace without you!

Did you ever know that you're our heroes  
And everything we'd like to be?  
We can fly higher than an eagle;  
You are the wind beneath our wings.

Now you may think that we've forgotten,  
But we want to thank you from our hearts,  
Across this nation we know the truth;  
We would be nothing without you!

Faye Roberts

### **Before I Was Myself, You Made Me, Me**

Before I was myself, you made me, me  
With love and patience, discipline and tears,  
Then bit by bit stepped back to set me free,

Allowing me to sail upon my sea,  
Though well within the headlands of your fears.  
Before I was myself, you made me, me

With dreams enough of what I was to be  
And hopes that would be sculpted by the years,  
Then bit by bit stepped back to set me free,

Relinquishing your powers gradually  
To let me shape myself among my peers.  
Before I was myself, you made me, me,

And being good and wise, you gracefully  
As dancers when the last sweet cadence nears  
Bit by bit stepped back to set me free.

For love inspires learning naturally:  
The mind assents to what the heart reveres.  
And so it was through love you made me, me  
By slowly stepping back to set me free.

Nicholas Gordon

### **True Value**

As never before, we in America are coming to grips with what is truly valuable, as we are being forced to scale back our spending and do without luxuries we've grown to believe are essentials. I think this next story speaks volumes to our generation.

### **Seven Wonders Of The World**

A group of students were asked to list what they thought were the "Seven Wonders of the World."

Though there were some disagreements, the following received the most votes:

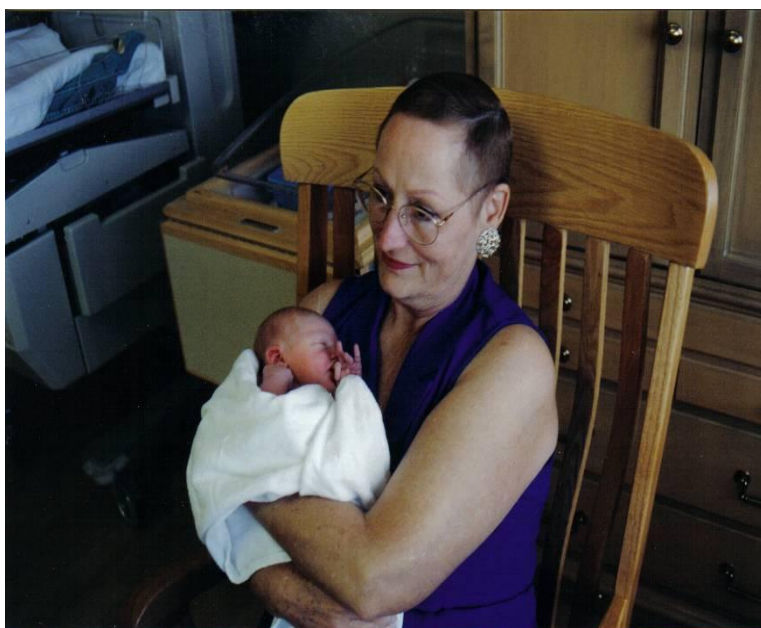
- (1) Egypt's Great Pyramids (2) Taj Mahal (3) Grand Canyon
- (4) Panama Canal (5) Empire State Building
- (6) St. Peter's Basilica (7) China's Great Wall

While gathering the votes, the teacher noted that one student had not finished her paper yet. So she asked the girl if she was having trouble with her list. The girl replied, "Yes, a little. I couldn't make up my mind because there were so many." The teacher said, "Well, tell us what you have, and maybe we can help." The girl hesitated, then read, "I think the 'Seven Wonders of the World' are:

- (1) To See (2) To Hear (3) To Touch (4) To Taste (5) To feel
- (6) To Laugh (7) And to Love"

The room was so quiet you could have heard a pin drop. The things we overlook as simple and ordinary and that we take for granted are truly wondrous.

A gentle reminder—that the most precious things in life cannot be built by hand or bought by man.



Just weeks before being diagnosed with breast cancer, I was told that our eldest son Van and daughter-in-law, Michelle were expecting our first grandchild. From the moment of diagnosis, my only goal in life was to be finished with chemotherapy and declared cancer free by the date of her birth. In May, 2000, as I sat in Olivia's nursery, my hair just beginning to grow back, nothing mattered except this precious baby, feeling her warmth and hearing her steady breathing, my baby's baby. On May 4, 2008, we celebrated Janice Olivia Johnson's 8th birthday.

In the past eight years, I've celebrated the marriages of my two younger sons. Bill to Andrea and Greg to Amy and I've had my life made richer by two more granddaughters, Kaylee 5 and Emily 18 months. Many wonderful people have shared their lives with me, both their sorrows and their joys and I've been blessed to see Steel Magnolias develop into a recognized nonprofit organization that makes a real difference in the lives of cancer patients.

**Happy Mother's Day**

## **Rumblings from the World of Medical News**

### **Special Report in May 2008, AARP Bulletin**

**UPDATE: Breast Cancer: Estimated new cases in 2008: 184,450. Lifetime probability of developing this cancer is 1 in 8.** Five year survival rates have increased to 89%. This cancer is a poster child for the new targeted treatments that attack the gene mechanisms that cause the disease. And new tests can now look at a patient's genes and help predict the risk of recurrence. Still other genetic tests help determine the therapies that will work most effectively.

Today, hit or miss therapies are giving way to carefully targeted drugs that attack these genes at the most basic level, subverting the abnormal mechanisms they use to survive and grow.

"For the past 50 years oncologists tested hundreds of thousands of compounds on cancer cells to see if they would slow the growth or destroy them," says Gabriel N. Hortob`agyi, M.D. Director of multidisciplinary breast cancer research program at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. "It was very inefficient." "Now, we can profile cancer genes, understand what makes them abnormal, then look for very specific ways to disrupt those processes," Dr. Hortob`agyi says. "This is a revolution. Instead of developing 50 drugs over 50 years, we're developing 10 or 20 drugs every year."

### **UPDATE: Susan G. Komen For The Cure Advocacy Alliance: April 18, 2008 Protect breast cancer patients from discrimination.**

Bridget Mooney graduated in 2005 with a degree in International Relations from Boston University. But just one week after her graduation, Bridget was diagnosed with breast cancer. She was only 21 and has no family history of the disease. For nearly six months, Bridget was told by several doctors not to worry about a lump in her left breast and was not sent for a mammogram. Bridget was diagnosed with Stage 4 breast cancer. Her doctors were not optimistic about her chances of survival, but she had a good response to chemotherapy and has now been cancer free for over a year. Bridget is still in treatment-she goes every three weeks for chemotherapy and will have to the rest of her life.

"Breast cancer in someone my age suggests a genetic mutation, but I did not get genetic test. I am afraid of being discriminated against by a future employer or when I try to get health insurance if I test positive for a genetic mutation. There are currently not enough rules or safeguards to protect patient information. I already cannot get life insurance because I am a breast cancer survivor." said Bridgett. "My mom has not had cancer. I want my mom to know about her own breast cancer risk, but I don't want to get a genetic test because I worry that my mom and my cousins may face discrimination. By not getting the test, my family doesn't have important genetic information which would empower them. I hope one day my family members will feel free to take any steps possible to avoid developing breast cancer themselves."

Diane Balma, Komen Advocacy Alliance, Emailed a plea for those receiving the Komen newsletter to send a letter to our representatives in Washington DC, imploring them to pass the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act-which if passed would make it illegal to discriminate based on genetic information.

**Great News! More that 16,000 sent letters to their senators in support of GINA. As a result, the Senate, on April 25, unanimously passed the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act. The bill now needs approval of the House and the signature of the President-both are expected to happen quickly.**

**May 2008: Susan G. Komen For The Cure has just awarded the largest grants funding ever. The awarding of \$100 million in scientific research.** This is the largest grants funding in Komen's 26 years history and represents a 30% increase over last year's investment in scientific research.

**(Note)** This amazing scientific grants increase doesn't effect how money from Race For the Cure is distributed. 75% of money raised in Birmingham, at the October Race For The Cure, goes to provide grants that provide services for women living in the northern half of Alabama. For more information about Komen Alabama, contact Kelly or Ellen at (205) 930-8886 or <administrator@komenalabama.org> [www.komenalabama.org](http://www.komenalabama.org).





**Award presented to  
Dr. Stephanie Fussell  
by Lenora Johnson**

Dr. Stephanie Fussell, visited Steel Magnolias at the April 22 meeting. Lenora Johnson, Executive Director, presented Dr. Fussell with a special Gold Coin award, thanking her for her service, 2005 - 2008, on the executive board of the Steel Magnolias Breast Cancer Support Group, Inc. Dr. Fussell, in early May, returned to her hometown, Biloxi, Mississippi, she will be greatly missed by everyone who knew her, but most especially by her patients.

Dr. Fussell, who was accompanied by Anniston Oncology, Office Manager, Debbie Kaufman, told the ladies of Steel Magnolias that we were making a huge difference to cancer patients. She said "I doubt you have any idea the scope of good you do, just today, a patient told me about how appreciative she was of the support given by Steel Magnolias."

We sincerely thank our historian, Elizabeth McCabe for making a pictorial history of the events of Steel Magnolias. We also thank Jimmy Taylor for making pictures so that Elizabeth can be included in our pictures. Because of absence due to family emergencies and travel, many of our Steel Magnolias are not pictured in these April pictures. **Pictured below are: Back row: Sherry Grinstead, Marti Rogers, Debbie Kaufman. Center row, Elizabeth McCabe, Keither Zeimet, Dr. Stephanie Fussell, Lenora Johnson, Marti Warren, Carol Barker. Front: Connie Baldwin, Marie Harbin.**



#### **Group Meetings**

Following a prayer of thanksgiving, by Sherry Grinstead, for our food, Men of Steel and Steel Magnolias enjoyed a buffet that featured chicken tenderloins, cream pies, cake, and salads. We were honored to have Dr. Fussell and Debbie Kaufman share our fellowship.

Following our food and fellowship, Men of Steel went to their meeting area and Steel Magnolias entered into

our scheduled business meeting. In Nancy Burnell and Margaret Taylor's absence, Lenora Johnson read the minutes and presented the financial report. Both were accepted as read. **Old Business:** Lenora asked group to table the decision about office equipment until we hear from a business who is considering designating proceeds from their annual fund raiser toward the purchase of new equipment for the Steel Magnolias office. Marti Warren encouraged everyone to make themselves available, 12:30, at the RMC West, main lobby on the 3rd Monday of each month to help ready the newsletter for mailing. **Lenora made a plea for everyone to continue contacting our state senators and representatives about closing the loophole in the Breast and Cervical Cancer Medicaid Treatment Act. Letters to the editor are also a great way to draw attention to this unfair loophole. Uninsured Alabama women should receive the same access to funding for care as uninsured women in Georgia and Mississippi!**

### **Correspondence**

**Dear Steel Magnolias,** Thank you so much for the care package that was sent to me in January. I appreciate all of your prayers most. Right now I am getting a blood transfusion to help regain my strength. I was diagnosed with Stage III breast cancer in Nov. 07, and I have chemo once a week. I had a breast and lymph nodes removed on March 3rd, last month. I am healing slowly and trying to regain a normal life. I really appreciate all that you do for our fight. Warm Regards, Kandi....Oxford, Alabama

**Dear Steel Magnolias,** Thank you for the educational and inspirational material and the back issues of the Steel Magnolias Newsletter. What a comfort and joy to know there are those out there to talk to who understand this difficult journey. Thank you for your prayers. God is the Great Physician. Today I start chemo for 18 weeks, then a lumpectomy and 33 radiation treatments. What a blessing treatment is available. I go to Kirklin Clinic at UAB. Am trying to keep a positive attitude as I go forth. With God's tender care, the wonderful support of family and friends and the best medical team and treatment, I am blessed. In God's Love, Doris.....Birmingham, Alabama

**Dear Lenora,** Thank you for the exquisite magnolia wreath. I understand it was hand made. It has a place of honor in the chemo room. Sincerely, Ellen....Anniston Oncology

(Note) Dr. Ellen Spremulli and her staff went the extra mile in caring for someone to whom I'm very close. To show my gratitude, I made a beautiful wreath to be used wherever Dr. Spremulli chose. Thank you Dr. Spremulli, Lenora

**April 30, 2008 Dear Ms. Johnson,** Thank you for your recent letter regarding S. 358, the Genetic Information Non-discrimination Act (GINA) of 2007. I appreciate your taking the time to share your thoughts with me. As you know, GINA was introduced by Senator Olympia Snowe on January 22, 2007, and seeks to prohibit discrimination on the basis of genetic information with respect to health care and employment. H.R. 493, the House version of S. 358, passed the Senate with my support, by a vote of 95-0 on April 24, 2008. The bill currently awaits action by a Conference Committee comprised of members of both the House and Senate who will reconcile the difference between the two chambers' bills. You may rest assured that I will keep your thoughts in mind when the Committee's final report comes back to the full Senate for consideration. Thank you again for writing. Please do not hesitate to contact me or a member of my staff if we may ever be of assistance to you. Very Truly Yours, Jeff Sessions.....U.S. Senate

**ATTENTION !!!!!** For too long, we the voting citizens, of ALABAMA have behaved as if our voice doesn't matter! Why else would we stay silent when our uninsured loved ones are being refused care through a Medicaid program because of a loophole in a treatment act that has been law since 2001. Our elected representatives in the House and the Senate need our votes to keep their jobs. When they get enough correspondence from us, they begin to listen. Votes equal career for those serving in Montgomery! **USE YOUR POWER!** Write that letter! **YOU** can make a difference.

### **Mark Your Calendar**

**Tuesday, May 27:** Steel Magnolias and Men of Steel Meeting  
5:00 p.m., Tyler Center. Men in the Nook...Magnolias in the Galley  
Special Speaker: Glenda Coley of Countryside Hospice  
Please bring sandwiches, heavy hors d'oeuvres, salad, fruit or light dessert

**Tuesday, June 24:** Steel Magnolias and Men of Steel Meeting  
5:00 p.m., Tyler Center. Men in Nook...Magnolias in the Galley  
Meeting for fellowship and discussion of July and August events.

**Tuesday, July 22: New Beginnings Banquet**

## **Here Goes**

### **Coach's Instructions**

At one point during a game, the coach called one of his 9-year-old baseball players aside and asked, "Do you understand what cooperation is? What a team is?" The little boy nodded in the affirmative. "Do you understand that what matters is whether we win or lose together as a team?" The little boy nodded yes. "So," the coach continued, "I'm sure you know, when an out is called, you shouldn't argue, curse, attack the umpire, or call him a pecker-head. Do you understand all that?" The little boy nodded again. He continued, "And when I take you out of the game so another boy gets a chance to play, it's not good sportsmanship to call your coach, 'A Dumb Butt,' is it?" Again, the little boy nodded. "Good," said the coach. "Now go over there and explain all that to your grandmother."

### **Shopping With A Grandchild**

An old man was grocery shopping with his grandson. The toddler was crying, and at times, screaming at the top of his lungs. As the old gentleman walked up and down the aisles, people could hear him speaking in a soft voice.... "We are almost done, Albert... Try not to cry, Albert, Albert... Life will get better, Albert..." As he approached the checkout stand, he carefully brushed the toddler's tears from his eyes and said again, "Try not to cry, Albert... We will be home soon, Albert..." As he was paying the cashier, the toddler continued to cry as a young woman in line behind him said, "Sir, I think it is wonderful how sweet you are being to your little Albert." The old gentleman blinked his eyes a couple of times before saying, "My grandson's name is John..... I'm Albert....."

### **Genealogy**

A little girl asked her mother, "How did the human race appear?" The mother answered, "God made Adam and Eve and they had children and then all mankind was made." Two days later the girl asked her father the same question. The father answered, "Many years ago there were monkeys from which the human race evolved." The confused girl returned to her mother and said, "Mom, how is it possible that you told me the human race was created by God, and Dad said they developed from monkeys?" The mother answered, "Well dear, it is very simple. I told you about my side of the family and your father told you about his."

### **Conversation With My Hairdresser**

A woman was at her hairdresser's getting her hair styled for a trip to Rome with her husband. She mentioned the trip to her hairdresser, who responded, "Rome? Why would anyone want to go there? It's crowded and dirty. You're crazy to go to Rome, So, how are you getting there?" "We're taking Continental," was the reply. "We got a great rate." "Continental?" exclaimed the hairdresser. That's a terrible airline. Their planes are old, their flight attendants are ugly, and they're always late. So, where are you staying in Rome?" "We'll be at this exclusive little place over on Rome's Tiber River called Teste." "Don't go any further. I know that place. Everybody thinks it's going to be something special and exclusive, but it's really a dump, the worst hotel in the city! The rooms are small, the service is surly, and they're overpriced. So, whatcha doing when you get there?" "We're going to see the Vatican and we hope to see the Pope." "That's rich," laughed the hairdresser. "You and a million other people trying to see him. He'll probably look the size of an ant.. Boy, good luck on this lousy trip of yours. You're going to need it." A month later, the woman again came in for a hairdo. The hair dresser asked her about her trip to Rome. "It was wonderful!" exclaimed the woman, "Not only were we on time in one of Continental's brand new planes, but it was overbooked, and they bumped us up to first class. The food and wine were wonderful, and I had a handsome 28 year-old steward who waited on me hand and foot. And the hotel was great! They'd just finished a \$5 million remodeling job, and now it's a jewel, the finest hotel in the city. They, too were overbooked, so they apologized and gave us their owner's suite at no extra charge!" "Well," muttered the hairdresser, that's all well and good, but I know you didn't get to see the Pope." "Actually, we were quite lucky, because as we toured the Vatican, a Swiss Guard tapped me on the shoulder, and exclaimed that the pope likes to meet some of the visitors, and if I'd be so kind as to step into his private room and wait, the Pope would personally greet me. Sure enough, five minutes later, the Pope walked through the door and shook my hand! I knelt down and he spoke a few words to me." "Oh, really! What'd he say?" He said: "Where'd you get the crappy hairdo."

**All jokes, courtesy of..... Gudrun King**

The Pessimist looks for the difficulty in every opportunity. The Optimist looks for the opportunity in every difficulty  
From a Guideposts reader