

Steel Magnolias

Breast Cancer Support Group, Inc.

Weathering The Storm

March 17, 2008

The Storm

During his fourth voyage across the Atlantic, in 1502, Columbus and his crew found themselves in a storm unlike anything they had ever experienced. In the ship's log, on Dec. 5, Christopher Columbus made this entry:

"For nine days I was one lost, without hope of life. Eyes never beheld the sea so angry, so high, so covered with foam. The wind not only prevented our progress, but offered no opportunity to run behind any headland for shelter; hence we were forced to keep out in this bloody ocean, seething like a pot on a hot fire. Never did the sky look more terrible; for one whole day and night it blazed like a furnace, and the lightening broke with such violence that each time I wondered if it had carried off my spars and sails; the flashes came with such fury and frightfulness that we all thought that the ship would be blasted. All this time the water never ceased to fall from the sky; I do not say it rained,

for it was like another deluge. The men were so worn out that they longed for death to end their dreadful suffering."

Joaquin Miller, in the mid 1800's, after reading the ship's log kept by Columbus, as he crossed the Atlantic in search of the new world, wrote the poem, "Columbus." The following is a verse from that impressive poem:

They sailed and sailed.

Then spake the mate:

"This mad sea shows his teeth tonight.

He curls his lips, he lies in wait,

With lifted teeth, as if to bite!

Brave Admiral, say but one good word:

What shall we do when all hope is gone?"

The words leapt like a leaping sword:

"Sail on! Sail on! And on!"

In Psalm 30:5, we read these words:

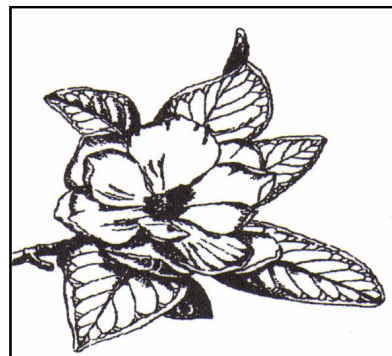
Weeping may endure for a night but joy comes in the morning.

Since my diagnosis of breast cancer in September 1999, and in the years

since founding Steel Magnolias, as I've observed other newly diagnosed cancer patients, I've observed a parallel between the descriptions of nature's storms and the mental and emotional upheaval in the lives of cancer patients. Sometimes we find ourselves cast about, in an instant, by a circumstance beyond our control. Like Columbus and his crew, with no land in sight, we can only sail on!

One Beggar To Another

From *How To Bend Without Breaking*, by Larry Jones, these words: "In 2nd Corinthians 1:4, Paul explains that God comforts us in tribulation, 'That we may be able to comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.' That's also the definition of evangelism: **One beggar sharing with another beggar where to find Bread.** Therein lies one of the keys to conquering despair, namely, getting outside yourself and talking to others of your victories and how you've been helped. If you're alone in your despair, you



Sharing love through support

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have a tendency to look inward. But if you're sharing with others, you're sharing your victories, not your losses. There's an old Swedish saying, '**Blessed is he who sees a dawn in every midnight.**' When we share with others, we are able to envision the sun that's shining in the midst of darkness."

God Walks the Dark Hills

God walks the dark hills the way
the byways
He walks on the billows of life's
troubled sea

He walks in the cold night, The shadows of midnight
God walks the dark hills, Just to guide you and me.

Then God walks in the storm, The rain and the sunshine
He walks on the billows, On through the glimmering light
Helps us walk up the mountain so high, Cross our rivers, Through valleys
God walks the dark hills, Cause He loves you and me.

“God Walks the Dark Hills,” written by Iris DeMent, made popular by the Goodman’s, and
Shared with Steel Magnolias by Dixie Reynolds

And now, as Paul Harvey would say, “The rest of the story.” The last verse of Joaquin Miller’s powerful poem:
“Columbus”

Then pale and worn, he kept his deck,
And peered through darkness, Ah, that night
Of all dark nights! And then a speck...
A light! A light! At last a light!
It grew, a starlit flag unfurled!
It grew to be Time’s burst of dawn.
He gained a world; he gave that world
It’s grandest lesson: “Oh! Sail on!”

At this time of year, when nature seems to be in a state of convulsion, trying desperately to shake off the chill of winter, it seems that the damp cold soaks into our bones, chilling us to the core of our being. It was on such a day, as I marveled at the beautiful daffodils, that I wrote this poem:

The Promise of Daffodils

Beneath my lovely willow tree,
Her graceful limbs, bowing and spinning;
Laid bear, in the cold, north wind,
Her once rich leaves lay quivering.
Her cold and naked branches
Sleep through the winter’s wind and snow,
Till Spring’s warmth once again
Clothes her with a beauty that entrances.

In the grip of winter’s night
My being aches with Mother Nature.
Go away day, cold and gray,
Come warmth, come beauty, come light.
While the earth is still frozen and still,
In a relentless winter’s chill;
My spirit is made to soar
By the promise of daffodils.

Lenora W. Johnson

Success isn’t measured by the position you reach in life.

It’s measured by the obstacles you overcome.

Booker T. Washington

Women On Mission Group 10

Monday, February 18, Lenora Johnson was guest speaker to a WMU group at Parker Memorial Baptist Church. My invitation came as a result of Nancy Burnell's October speech to the Oxford Quest Club. Betty Jacks, a dynamic woman I had met several years ago at the Quintard Mall, asked me to speak to her church group. As arranged, I met Bettie Davenport and she accompanied me to the meeting room. Women On Mission Group 10 is made up of older women. I found these women to be a group of very bright and engaging Christian women who are very involved in their church and community.

Even though Prentiss and I had enjoyed a late lunch, I thoroughly enjoyed the delicious pasta casserole, tossed salad and sinfully good Black Forest sheet cake. As we ate, there was an exchange of interesting and insightful conversation. Following a short meeting and prayer for both foreign and home missionaries, I was asked to tell them about the work of Steel Magnolias.

It is always a privilege to share with any group about the outstanding services Steel Magnolias offers to cancer patients in Calhoun and surrounding counties. I also shared with them the new programs: Men of Steel, Breast Cancer Awareness Program for 7th-12th grade girls, and our campaign to get our legislators in Montgomery to close the unfair and inequitable loophole in the 2001 Breast and Cervical Medicaid program.

As with most groups, they didn't know anything about the 2001 Medicaid program, voted into law by the Alabama legislature and attached to the Public Health Department's CDC Breast and Cervical Screening program, creating a loophole through whom unsuspecting uninsured Alabama women have fallen.

I spoke for about 40 minutes and left, Parker Memorial Baptist Church parking lot with a full heart, very glad I had spent a couple of hours with this group of sisters in Christ.

I am very grateful to Betti Davenport, Betty Jacks and the ladies of group 10 for inviting me and I sincerely thank them for their \$100 contribution to the work of Steel Magnolias.

Steel Magnolias and Men of Steel Meet

Tuesday, February 25, was cold and blustery, however we still had a good group, including two who were attending for the first time. Because our meeting was scheduled to include a tour of RMC Imaging Department, we didn't have a called business meeting. At about 5:20, Steel Magnolias and Men of Steel loaded into cars and went across the street to the outpatient elevator. Nick Kaufman was waiting just inside the outpatient waiting room.

He led us through the major screening areas: PET, CAT and MRI. He explained the reason doctors order one test over another. Everyone was invited to ask questions, and questions were asked and answered. We were very impressed with how knowledgeable Mr. Kaufman is about each machine and stunned at the cost of the machines, as well as the cost of maintaining them.

I think it was news to all of us that, because of the time to restart and the cost of startup, the MRI machine can never be turned off. Mr. Kaufman said that restarting the MRI took five days and close to \$100,000.

He also told us of the importance of being on time for any test that required contrast dye. Because of the short life of the imaging fluid that is injected before the CAT, PET or MRI, we were told it is imperative for patients, scheduled for testing, to be on time for their appointments.

Mr. Kaufman did a great job and told the group that if anyone ever wanted to know more about any of the imaging equipment at RMC, they just needed to call and he would be happy to answer questions.

Because we were all familiar with mammography, ultrasound and x-rays, we loaded into our cars and returned to the Tyler Center. There we enjoyed great snacks, before the Men of Steel went to the Nook for their meeting. Steel Magnolias learned more about our new ladies and we just enjoyed each other. Ina Rooks led us in prayer for those on our prayer list and we said goodnight.

Financial Statement

| | | |
|------------|---------------------------------------|------------|
| February | Balance Brought Forward | \$5,389.54 |
| 01– 100.00 | Lenora Johnson: Monthly Expense | 5,289.54 |
| 01- 175.00 | Shahinian Insurance for Quintard Mall | |
| | March 22, Bake & Jewelry Sale | 5,114.54 |

Snacks for Chemo Patients

At our February meeting, Steel Magnolias voted to place baskets of snacks in the chemo treatment rooms at, Anniston Oncology, Dr. Niaz, and the RMC 4th floor treatment room. Gloria Woosley contributed a beautifully decorated basket for RMC and Margaret Taylor decorated baskets for the two treatment rooms in the RMC Physician's Center. Margaret Taylor delivered all three baskets, with instructions to call the office when the baskets need refilling.

Where the Rubber Meets the Road

There is a great deal said, about cancer diagnosis, about support and providing a patient's needs . Most of it is meant in an abstract way. In other words, "If you look on our website, you will find that there is a number of services we provide for people with cancer, a phone number to call and speak to someone." We have this information on our website and it has it's place, but for most people diagnosed with cancer, caught in the eye of the storm, and absolutely for those patients who don't have a computer, this sounds hollow.

Local cancer patients, to Steel Magnolias, are unique. In all the gospel texts, Jesus is recorded as saying, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." In the book of Luke, it is recorded that Jesus was asked, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus' reply is recorded in Luke 10: 30-37: In reply, Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed, on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' Which of these do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

In 2002, Chaplain Wilson called with the name of an RMC nurse who had been diagnosed with breast cancer. He said, "Lenora, I've encouraged her to call you but she will soon be having a bilateral mastectomy, here is her telephone number, please call her. I called immediately and asked if I could mail her the Steel Magnolias' Care Package. She gave her address and I mailed the packages. A few mornings later, when I checked my email, I opened one from this nurse. It was sent at 2 a.m. The message said, "Thank you Lenora and Chaplain Wilson for reaching out to me. In a few minutes I will be leaving home and reporting for my surgery. Since my diagnosis, I've been too overwhelmed to talk to anyone new. In your package, I read information I needed to know before my surgery and the Tuesday Bear Hugger items will be a big help. I feel like I'm not alone."

Soon after starting Steel Magnolias, Chaplain Wilson told me that support is best done one patient at a time. How true! A patient who lacks transportation to or from treatments, doesn't have enough money to buy a meal, and is on a journey they have no idea about: what started the frightening journey or what to expect, is a person where the rubber is definitely meeting the road.

Mrs. Howell was absolutely correct when, years ago, she said, "Some things are like having a baby, cain't nobody do it but you." And, Steel Magnolias can do nothing that will change a diagnosis or bring about a cure, but we can take some of the discomfort and fear out of the journey. We can give patients who otherwise feel alone, a sense of connection with people who have been diagnosed, had surgery, taken chemotherapy, lost much of what they considered beauty, undergone weeks of radiation treatments, and are now thriving, and beautiful, as well as stronger and smarter because of their journey with cancer. We can give a meal to someone in the patients family so they can eat a meal while their loved one is in surgery. This gesture says, "We know what you are going through and we care."

Dr. West said, "The best part of what you do is the meetings." Some patients who live out of reach of our meetings think the newsletter is the most important part. I think every service offered by Steel Magnolias, makes up a more complete program of support.

Steel Magnolias Breast Cancer Support Group, Inc., is working to find ways of providing for the practical needs of ordinary people who are fighting cancer.

Close the Medicaid Cervical and Breast Cancer Treatment ActLOOPHOLE

We are receiving reports that letters from concerned citizens to their state representatives are making some of our elected representatives take another look at the loophole in the 2001 law that is causing so much hardship on our mothers, daughters, sisters and friends. Please help Steel Magnolias in our efforts to stop the state of Alabama from balancing the budget on the backs of the poor women of our state. The Loophole makes uninsured women responsible to the public health department, and then denies legitimate coverage that they never knew existed. Together we can awaken the conscience of our elected officials to change this tragic policy! **It is just plain wrong to deny coverage to a poor uninsured breast cancer patient based solely on where she is diagnosed!**

Correspondence

We would like to thank the wonderful people who take the time, as they fight their battle with cancer, for sending us a note, letting us know of the difference we have made in their lives. Sometimes it is a note from a caregiver, a family member, sometimes it is a letter from a bereaved relative or friend. From the bottom of the heart of every Steel Magnolia, "THANK YOU!"

Dear Steel Magnolias, Thank you so much for remembering my mom, Sandy Trammell, with your donation in her name. She always spoke so kindly of what you all do and the comradeship of your group.
Thank you again so very much.....Kendall Reaves.....Mt. Holly, North Carolina

Dear Steel Magnolias, Thank you so much for your donation in Mother's name to the Susan G. Komen Foundation. Mother loved this group and what it stands for. As you know she had been a worker with women that had suffered breast cancer for years. You all are such an inspiration to me and I plan to return to the meetings soon with donations from Mother so her work will still continue, even after death.
Thank you all.....Wanda Pettus....Oxford, Alabama

Dear Friends, I support what you do for cancer victims and their families. Five of my siblings have suffered cancer. January 15, I lost a fourth family member due to the "C" word. This is a small contribution from Betts Pope and myself. May God bless you as you bless others.
Sincerely.....Nora Embry....Oxford, Alabama (Betts and Nora enclosed a contribution of \$10)

Lenora Johnson, I want to thank you and the group of Steel Magnolias for the letters and prayers. My wife's cancer is out side of her left kidney and left lung, but not attached. I think they have it under control. Keep Derek Brown in line for me, my grandson. Wife is Pauline Brown. This is not much but it might get you some small items.
Isaac Brown....Bessemer, Alabama (Mr. Brown enclosed a contribution of \$30)

Thank you so much for the "Care Package." It is really good to know that there are people I can talk to when I need support. Thanks again for caring.
Thanks....Gail and Family....Piedmont, Alabama

Enclosed is a \$20 donation in memory of Greta Kemp. Please send an acknowledgement to the family.
Thank You.... Jeanne and Bobby Hollingsworth....Anniston, Alabama
(Note....Steel Magnolias always sends a letter of acknowledgement to the family when a memorial gift is made)

Lenora Johnson, Exec. Director, Thank you for coming to our meeting and sharing with us about the services you provide for those with breast cancer. You are giving so much to those in need. Please use this contribution in the ministry of your group. Enclosed is a check for \$50 from our group.
Thanks again for all you are doing.....
Susan Temple for Women on Mission Group 10, Parker Memorial Baptist Church

Concerned Readers!!!!

For some time, the Susan G. Komen Foundation has been encouraging everyone, in an effort to close the Medicaid Loophole for Cervical and Breast Cancer Patients, to write not only letters to their elected state representatives, but also letters to the editor, of the local newspaper. Steel Magnolias has already issued a plea for citizens to write their governor, state senator and representatives. We now ask our readers to please write letters to the editor on behalf of uninsured breast and cervical cancer patients. We are not talking about new legislation but an official state policy that has been in place since 2001!

Glenda Coley, of Country Side Hospice, passed this information on to Steel Magnolias: The Governor's budget cut critical state funding for the Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program. Steel Magnolias, Susan G. Komen Foundation and the American Cancer Society have asked the Alabama legislature to restore funding, and close the loophole that attaches the Medicaid Treatment Act to the CDC Screening Program that is accessed through the Alabama Public Health Department.

Glenda said that Steve Hurst and Jim Pruett were present at the February "Smoke Free Alabama" meeting in Talladega. She said that Steve Hurst showed the Steel Magnolias' letter and said something had to be done about this! Glenda said she spoke up and said, "That is our Steel Magnolias, they are in Anniston, we've never had a group like this in Alabama." She went on to say that Jim Pruett spoke up and said, "We had to cut the budget somewhere, and we decided to cut it here."

How sad! The people we've voted to represent us, think so little of the poor, uninsured women of this state that they would balance the budget on the back of the weakest among us. Sooner or later, every family will have someone who slips through this loophole. The cost of insurance is such that self employed people in construction and people who work in the service industry, cannot feed, clothe, and shelter their families, and have anything left to pay the high cost of insurance premiums.

Our united voices can change this TRAVESTY! Please love your neighbor as yourself and take the time to contact your representatives or write a letter to the editor. All it takes for injustice to continue, is for good people to say nothing!

.....Mark Your Calendars.....

Saturday, March 22: Bake and Jewelry Sale, 9:00 a.m.--5:00p.m.

Quintard Mall...More information: Jewelry (256) 239-0855

Bake Sale (256) 447-9822

Tuesday, March 25: Steel Magnolias and Men of Steel, 5:00 p.m.

Tyler Center...Men meet in the Nook...Magnolias in the Galley

Everyone come prepared to enjoy a Pizza Party. We will be celebrating Saturday's big day at Quintard Mall. Just bring your appetite.

Tuesday, April 22: Steel Magnolias and Men of Steel, 5:00 p.m.

Tyler Center.....Men meet in Nook....Magnolias in the Galley

Here Goes

Tea Party

One day the mother was out and left her 21/2 year old daughter in her husband's care. Someone had given the baby girl a little "tea set," as a get-well gift and it was one of her favorite toys. The little girl's daddy was in the living room engrossed in the evening news when she brought him a cup of 'tea', which was just water. After several cups of tea and lots of praise for such yummy tea, Mom came home. The daddy made her wait in the living room to watch their daughter bring him a cup of tea, because it was 'just the cutest thing.' Mom waited, and sure enough, her 21/2 year old comes down the hall with a cup of tea for Daddy, and she watches him drink it up. Then she says, "Did it ever occur to you that the only place that baby can reach to get water is the toilet?"—Courtesy of Faye Roberts

Arab?/Jewish Humor

A fleeing Al Qaeda Guerilla, desperate for water, was plodding through the Iraqi desert when he saw something far off in the distance. Hoping to find water, he walked toward the object, only to find a little old Jewish man at a small stand selling neckties. The Arab asked, "Do you have any water?" The Jewish man replied, "I have no water. Would you like to buy a tie? They are only \$5.00. The Arab shouted, "Idiot Jew! Israel should not exist! I do not need an overpriced tie. I need water! I should kill you, but I must find water first." "Okay," said the old Jew, "It does not matter that you do not want to buy a tie and that you hate me. I will show you that I am bigger than that. If you continue over that hill to the east for about two miles, you will find a lovely restaurant. It has all the water you need. Shalom!" Muttering, the Arab staggered away over the hill. Several hours later, he staggered back, near collapse. "Your brother won't let me in without a tie."—Courtesy of Pokey Warren

Senior Travel

A travel agent looked up from his desk to see an old lady and an old gentleman peering in the shop window at the posters showing the glamorous destinations around the world. The agent had had a good week and the dejected couple looking in the window gave him a rare feeling of generosity. He called them into his shop: "I know that on your pension you could never hope to have a holiday, so I am sending you off to a fabulous resort at my expense, and I won't take no for an answer." He took them inside and asked his secretary to write two flight tickets and book a room in a five star hotel. They, as can be expected, gladly accepted, and were off! About a month later the little old lady came into his shop. "And how did you like your holiday?" he asked eagerly. "The flight was exciting and the room was lovely," she said. "I've come to thank you but, one thing puzzled me, Who was that old guy I had to share the room with?"—Courtesy of Deb Saskia

Crazy....

I urgently needed a few days off work, but I knew the Boss would not allow me to take a leave. I thought maybe if I acted "Crazy" then he would tell me to take a few days off. So I hung upside down from the ceiling and made funny noises. My coworker {who's a valley girl} asked me what I was doing? I told her that I was pretending to be a light bulb so that the Boss would give me a few days off. A few minutes later the Boss came into the office and asked, "What are you doing?" I told him I was a light bulb. He said, "You are clearly stressed out. Go home and recuperate for a couple of days." I walked out of the office. When my coworker {the valley girl} followed me, the Boss said to her, "And where do you think you are going?" She said, "I'm going home too, I can't work in the dark!" (Sounds like a smart valley girl to me)—Courtesy of Gudrun King

Ancient Ancestry

The following was overheard at a recent 'high society' party: "My ancestry goes back all the way to Alexander the Great," said Christine. She then turned to Miriam and asked, "How far back does your family go?" "I don't know," replied Miriam, "All the records were lost in the flood."—Courtesy of Pokey Warren

Lying Is A Sin

A minister told his congregation, "Next week I plan to preach on the sin of lying. To help you understand my sermon, I want you to read Mark 17. The following Sunday, as he prepared to deliver his sermon, the minister asked for a show of hands. He wanted to know how many had read Mark 17. Every hand went up. The minister smiled and said, "Mark has only sixteen chapters. I will now proceed with my sermon on the sin of lying."—Courtesy of Pokey

A Little Depressed

I was a little depressed last night, so I called "Lifeline." Ended up with a call center in Pakistan. I told them I was suicidal. They got all excited, and asked if I could drive a truck.—Courtesy of Gudrun King

Steel Magnolias needs volunteers at 9:00 a.m. to help set up the Jewelry Sale, Tables will be in front of Kirklands, in the Quintard Mall. Anyone wishing to volunteer, please call Marti @ 239-0855.....If anyone wishes to volunteer a few hours, anytime between 9:00 am and 5:00 p.m., whether in Bake or Jewelry Sale, please call Lenora @ 447-9822.

*We Cross The Oceans, Climb Mountains Steep
Praying for the Cure, Our Daughters to Keep
We Are Steel Magnolias!*

Steel Magnolias

**Bake and
Jewelry Sale**

*Marti's
Decorative Candles
\$5.00*

*Steel Magnolia's
Polo Shirts
\$15.00*

**QUINTARD MALL
MARCH 22, 2008**