

# *Ninepatch*

## Stitch-by Stitch

- *W - e - C - r - e - a - t - e - O - u - r - L - i - v - e - s*  
-

*Editor's note: Each month I share a recent experience on my spiritual journey.*

*In this month's issue, **Frances** reports on the year's projects and sprinkles the issue with *Ninepatch Facts*. Then in *AROUND THE FRAME*, read letters from **Diana**, who tells why she's been silent for over a year and from a new voice, **Brad**. Also, **LindaSue** reports on the ups- and- downs of her life and **June** shares a family story.*

*In *FABRICS*, read more of **Christa**'s story, *THE FRITZ*, a report about a second Cut-and-Paste in Michigan as well as **TROR**'s angst over her grandmother's illness. There's also another new voice, **Jim**, who shares a revelation he found in looking at a photo of his granddaughter and Tigger.*

*In *THREAD* you'll read an update on **Cat**'s journey with John and his illness, as well as **Carol** and **Phyllis** who capture autumn images. Finally, in *MANAGING THE HOUSE*, read Treasurer, **June**'s to- date financial report followed by the 2000 annual report.*

*Hope you'll find something in this issue that touches your heart!*

September 2001

Dear Friends,

While driving that morning I watched clouds pile up like *Reddi Wip* on pumpkin pie. As I thought of nothing, it occurred to me to use this year's minutes to write the annual *Ninepatch* report. That afternoon, I carried my *Minutes* folder and drove to the local mall. I hoped for writing inspiration from a different setting.

It was a weekday and few people strolled through the food court where I pulled out one of two chairs at small table. I sat down, took the lid off a fresh cup of flavored coffee and opened the manila folder I carried. I sipped my dark steaming liquid and read over the October 2000 Director's Meeting. It was then the members suggested I write an article about cut-and- paste activities. Writing led to what became a *major project*: gathering

members for pasting. I recorded a pasting group in Florida and two I organized during my May '01 visit to Michigan...

I lifted my pencil and glanced into the paper coffee cup-- about an inch gone. I sipped and thought, *Major projects...hmm*. I turned pages, then scanned the other meeting, April 8, 2001. That day our first topic was the budget and major expenses. (See the 2001 annual report, last page.) In addition to the usual expenses, this year we paid \$150.00 for a Federal non-profit evaluation. If we qualify, we will be a nonprofit in all states—not just Michigan.

I sighed as I recalled filling out that 23-page report. I glanced around. While I sat writing, near-by tables filled with mothers and pizza-eating off-spring of all ages. I watched families and tasted more coffee, now down two inches. I looked back at my writing and again thought, *Major projects...*

A second project was our website (<http://www.ninepatch.org>) . Our creator, Lynn, is a volunteer who also maintains and updates the site each month. However, in order to be able to even *have* a site, I purchased (but not yet billed *Ninepatch* for) the space where our site is “parked.” Its two-year cost was, \$277.00. We undertook this effort in hopes of reaching the techno-oriented reader, and others who prefer the allure of on-screen sharing.

I paused again then returned to reading the April minutes. I saw we also discussed a third project: the electronic newsletter. Begun in January 2001, this trial will not be evaluated until April of 2002. This project requires just time and energy. Each month after mailing, I create a print-only form of our paper issue. I e-mail it to Lynn who prepares it for the web site. After that, I e-mail it to some twenty folk who have requested this form of *Ninepatch*.

I dropped my pencil and peered into my coffee cup. Just an inch of coffee remained. I sipped the tepid java and reflect-ed, *We do the best we can with outreach*. Then I considered our Eleventh Tradition:

*Our growth relies on attraction rather than promotion.*

Planning revolves around the above “attraction” and it is seldom clear how to proceed. Our readership appears to grow due to readers personally bringing others into our circle. Even then, some stay and become directly involved, yet others stay yet remain aloof. Some even fall away. Outreach is our lifeblood. Readers supply our stories, letters and financing.

The directors and I strive for a common good. We use a process familiar to many families. First, we discuss ideas. Next, we decide what action we want. Then we consider our resources and last, we then make adjustments.

( See next page)

In our *Ninepatch* family,  
Our aim is to share our experiences  
with one another and to listen without  
judgment to the gleanings of others.

Let us support *Ninepatch* and one another.

Blessings\*\*\*

Frances Fritzie

**--- A-R-O-U-N-D --- T-H-E --- F-R-A-M-E ---**

( Letters to the Editor)

Dear Frances,

I was moved by Barbie's letter (June '01) In it she told of inappropriate touching she experienced early in her life. I want to respond to her.

Barbie,

In your letter of June '01, you said, *Why is it easier to take care of someone else than to take care of yourself?*

One answer might be that one doesn't think anyone would believe, understand or realize the effect incidents have on one's life. Let me say, *I hear you.*

Several of my children have had harassing, and harrowing experiences, which were never made public. For two girls, life could have been different but events left their marks.

Both girls were in their teens when they were molested. The first was lured away where she was assaulted. In that case, while the trauma was severe, the physical damage was minimal since there was no penetration. The culprit was apprehended and arrested. Although the case was never published, there *was* a conviction. That seemed to bring closure to that chapter in her life.

The other situation with a second daughter might not be considered as serious, but it seemed worse because the of-fender was a close family member. It was a difficult

situation. There was never a confrontation with the aggressor. That could have been a mistake. ( See next page.)

It seemed keeping her from further contact with that person was no problem. Only later I learned of further improper caresses she received from him -- but refrained from mentioning. In failing to take that offender to task, we may have caused her to have to make a later life-altering decision involving avoiding relationships with men.

Although she now appears happy, I recall the past and wonder, "*What If?*"

*Brad is married. He has five children and many grand-children. He adds an encouragement for Barbie, " You are who you are. Stay your course. No one can touch you now without your consent." He adds, " Hopefully, your story will afford me the courage to tell my own experience that is not like yours in many respects yet holds some echo."*

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### Ninepatch Fact

Our Ninepatch family is both male and female and our ages range from 22 to 88.

Hi Frances,

Everything has changed. In January of 2000 I wrote about my sister, Marie's, illness. (I was dating a man named Doug then.) In September of 1999 my sister let the family know that she had been diagnosed with cancer and had three weeks to live. It was a shock to us all. She lived more than three months so the doctors decided on treatment. As things progressed she would need a Blood Stem Cell donor of perfect match. All the family had blood work done to find out who it could be. We were all anxious to help. It proved to be me.

For a three month period my sister, Marie, stayed in CA. under doctor's care. I flew out for three weeks for the initial treatment. And back again for ten days for another treatment. I had to leave my job both times, worrying if I'd have a job when I came back. ( I work for a small company that does not come under Family Leave Law. My boss was not happy when I had to go back a second time.)

Anyway I would not have had it any other way, I wanted to do all I could regardless of what the cost may be. Fortunately, I did not lose my job. There are many more details and feelings, but to make a long story short Marie passed on October 27th of 2000.

The abrupt death of my sister, four years my junior, totally moved me off center. It left me with an anxiousness to get on with life before it passed me by. Then Doug, who had been a great support and nurturer all this time decided it was time for him to move on, as he was not ready to make any commitments. I had met him through a matchmaking group and continued my membership. Before long, I met a man named Duane. We had a lot in common including the fact he lost his wife to the same cancer my sister had. Also

we both loved to travel. He had traveled by motor-home with his wife and he was anxious to travel again. (See next page.)

We got married May 27th of this year, and our lives have changed dramatically. We have a 38- foot motor-home which has been our home most the time. I retired from work, but still have a condo near where you once did. We may sell and travel full time.

I'm a little reluctant to give it up right now since my parents just moved back to MI. They need our help more and more. Between my two brothers and my youngest sister we trade off giving care, love and support to them.

Thank you for answering my e-mail. I'm happy to hear from you. Thank you, too, for *Ninepatch*. Even though I didn't write during these changing times, it helped to keep me in touch with others, my feelings, and you.

My love to you,  
Diana

*Diana (Jan. '00) says, "I have not worked through all this as methodically as you (Frances) seem(s) to, but just keep doing what comes up, with the help of God."*

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Dear Frances,

Thanks for your letter and the tea you sent. It is a nice day to sit and sip a cup of tea-- cool, dark, and rainy. It's been raining a lot lately. We had some flooding last week.

I know my daughter Anita needs to develop a life for herself. She calls and leaves messages when we don't take her. If her sister and family or we have plans and she finds out, she just shows up, all ready to go.

My life is still going up and down. Some good days. Some very bad days, I had a couple of "anxiety attacks." Thank the Lord, I have pills for those. I needed them around Mother's Day. I miss my mom (who passed away two years ago) and my grandmas and aunts we used to visit that day. My kids didn't remember the day and the night before, Anita had an allergic reaction or an anxiety attack. Her sister sat with her in the hospital until 1:00 AM.

The next day I had anxiety attack at work. It was one of those days when everything was going wrong. My new supervisor was very understanding. On the good side, the family all went out for dinner together last night and they gave me roses and a little lighthouse pin. Then today we went to church and some friend there took us out to lunch. (That seems more like Mothers' Day to me!)

So there are the up days and down days. Take care of yourself. Thanks again for the tea.

Love and prayers,  
Linda Sue

*Linda Sue (July-Aug.'01) adds, "Sorry I missed your(cut and paste) meeting ... we got out of work late. Late supper. By the time I remembered, it was way too late."*

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Ninepatch Fact

About fifty readers receive a paper *Ninepatch*, while another twenty read the electronic issue.

Dear Frances,

It has occurred to me the following family story might bring a touch of humor to the pages of *Ninepatch*. Several weeks ago I had dinner with my nephew, Marcus, and his family. During the meal he told of a recent conversation with his neighbor's child.

When Marcus arrived home from work one afternoon, the little boy was playing in the yard. He called out to the boy, "Well, hi there, Carter. I heard you had a birthday. How old are you?"

Carter smiled and said proudly, "I'm six!"

Marcus' eyes widened in mock surprise. "Hmm. Carter, I've known you all your life and I don't believe you're six years old."

The little boy stretched himself to his full height, stuck out his chest and loudly declared, "Well, I AM! I'm SIX YEARS OLD!"

Marcus paused and his lips twitched, suppressing a smile then he asked, "Well, how long have you been six years old?"

Carter's eyes narrowed in concentration for a moment. Then he tilted his head and said casually, "Oh, about two years now."

*June (June '01) adds, "Marcus is a talented storyteller and the sage of the family. He treasures our Cracker heritage. He shares these personal anecdotes and insights into the human condition with grace and wit."*

\*

----- **F-A-B-R-I-C-S** -----  
(Our Experiences)

THE FRITZ  
Part 2 of 4

In part I, Christa told how she and her friend joked about the lump he had in his neck. "Fritz", they called it.

Later, another doctor decided that Fritz had to come out, so everyone could have a good look at it and decide what it was. The night before he went into the hospital, I sat

(See next page.)

with him, hugged him and did my best to love him so he'd know that I was loving him while he fell asleep on a very strange bed.

Afterward, he had bandages and then a fresh shiny scar as long as my little finger. It looked like a wide, thin-lipped mouth, ready to open. We waited for the lab results. When I was alone I wondered what the chances were that he might... no, I wouldn't admit that possibility to myself. He was permanent, more so than I. Our friends tried in vain to talk seriously about death.

Now he lies here waiting for his chemo treatment. Apparently in a botched attempt to take blood, the new nurse has hit an artery. I can only listen, I can't look at the hole that she has made in him, and the blood that is now dripping down his arm, and onto the table that each patient has next to his or her crazy bending chemo chair.

The nurse is giggling about it, and makes the excuse that she is using a new kind of needle. I glance at his face and can see that he is angry. I find the tears coming again.

Then she is taking his blood away for testing, blood that a minute before was racing through his body, up and down his legs, through his organs, over his brain, doing its best to keep him alive. His eyes are closed again, and I am staring at his face, which is now calm.

I sniffle and his eyes snap open; he asks me what's wrong. I hastily wipe my face on my sleeve, and smile at him. I say nothing is wrong. But something is very wrong. I can watch my mother being stitched up in the emergency room with interest, but I can't hear him wince without crying.

(To Be Continued)

*Christa Weber (July-August '01) says that she is currently enjoying working diligently on her first novel.*

\*

### Ninepatch Fact

During the past twelve months, Ninepatch readers witnessed twenty-six personal stories in poem, letter or article.

## A SECOND MICHIGAN CUT-and PASTE

Phyllis and I wore light coats against the May evening's chill as we stepped through the side door of a large Michigan Bookstore. We had come to enjoy a cut-and-paste, this one for folks who were not able to attend the one at Carol's. I wanted to entertain, but don't have a house in Michigan any more. I wondered what to do when I saw an ad about "community outreach" at one of my favorite Michigan bookstores.

I called the business and asked if we (*Ninepatch*) could assemble there. I grinned when they agreed and began to make plans. That evening my spirits rose when the aroma of fresh coffee from the store's café greeted us.

Phyllis and I arrived early so I could check all the arrangements. That task was quickly done, so we meandered through the various book displays before collecting our drinks from the cafe and settling at a table in an area designed for gatherings—probably book signings and author readings.

Gail arrived carrying a poster she had made several years earlier at a different type of pasting activity. I introduced her to Phyllis. Gail set the poster on a chair and went to get her beverage. Once she settled in I asked her to tell about the poster. It was a different process from ours because she collected her pictures with intent – things she *wanted* to come true. Gail said, “I called it my dream-board, and placed it where I would observe it daily. Just as I was told would happen, each picture cut out of magazines and pasted on the poster, came to pass: I saw eagles, experienced a united family, wrote for local papers, got a sporty convertible, and took a trip to Ireland.”

Her poster watched over us from its chair as the three of us started work on our evening’s creation. First, we chatted while we cut or tore pictures and/or words from a variety of material each of us carried in.

Our talk ranged from Gail’s Ireland trip several years before to Phyllis telling how she’d been enjoying listening to her John Denver collection. I added my own weekend adventures with my younger son’s graduation from the local community college. We followed the only rules: Don’t think about what you are choosing. Take anything that “strikes” you.

Before an hour ticked away, we had a sufficient collection and had moved on to trimming and sorting before pasting it all together. Phyllis was quick and sure. (Maybe because she is an artist who is used to selecting images, I don’t know. I do know she finished first and chatted along as Gail and I completed our paste-ups.)

As always, our last step was a sort of show and tell where each of us told what occurred to us as we considered our work. Following are comments from each paster about one of her paste-ups. To see these photos, go to the website: <http://ninepatch.org> and look in “Resources,” then “Scrapbook.”

*Phyllis ( see also last page)says, “ This cut-out picture has come true since last spring. It shows a sub-teen girl looking out from behind a gauzy drapery. Below is a very large hand holding a butterfly. The words are ‘Break the Chains’ I think of the hand as the hand of God and the butterfly is the soul set free.”*

*Gail ( July-Aug. ’01) says of her pasting, “ I had been deathly ill the night before and brought my shell of a body to the group. The photo of bright colorful daisies placed in a pair of red shoes captured my adventurous spirit that would take me to nothing but the land of joy.”*

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## IT’S NEVER TOO LATE

My grandmother is eighty-three years old and has just discovered that she has cancer of the lymph nodes. When I heard I was plunged into deep grief, but, ...I didn’t really know why!

I hardly know Ruth. For the first twenty years of my life she was a distant, seldom seen, pretty stranger. All I knew of her came through my mother, her daughter, and that lead me to think she (Grandma) was an over- religious fusspot: "Grandma’s here to see me, not you kids!" I recall hearing, and "What would your grandmother think if she knew you’d done this?!"

" OUCH!" I’d think, "Good thing the old bat’s not around to see it, eh?"



Then, Grandma surprised me by showing up for my wedding and bringing gifts and well wishes. I wrote her willingly after that, probably for the first time, and this began sixteen years of letters that taught me about Grandma.

I found out that she's an incredible woman with great convictions and deep spirituality. She's also a philanthropist and an artist. She's really cool! ... And now she's dying.

Yes, I cried for all the years that could have been spent closer to her, I cried for all the others: Dad, my other Grandma, all the loved ones I'd lost. And I cried because I felt guilty for not having gone to see her since coming back to Ontario. (I saw her just before I left in 1989, but almost two years after moving home I've not gotten there. ("Too busy," I say, "Next month..." I tell myself.)

I cried, too, because I know Grandma and Grandpa have a very special kind of love and death might end that. I cried for all kinds of other sad thoughts: for her pain and in wonder at her calm acceptance of her end.

Now, about a week ago, I talked to Mom and found out that (Wish she'd told me sooner!) Grandma has decided to fight the cancer and has received her first chemo treatment. The doctors are hopeful she'll pull through...

When I heard, I called and talked to her. Then I was re-leased from the grief into a new clarity. I found out some things that will take a while to adjust to. One, is that I was not only grieving for Grandma and Grandpa, but for myself, too. I was grieving because I know what a relationship can be, and I don't have it.

I suppose I look at her love of Grandpa as an example of what I want, and I know I don't have it. That made me sad all over again. I thought of all the years my hubby and I have lost because of job separations and petty quarrels...

I always believed that if I found out I had cancer (or whatever) I would not want treatment. Death doesn't scare me, living does. (Sad, I know.) I always told Hubby, if I get in an accident and the situation pops up, pull the plug. But, Grandma and recognizing the value of her life to me has made me consider what it's like for the people left behind!

I suppose I also realized that no matter how much I would want to leave the suffering of this world, I'd have to stay. I must endure for my kids, my hubby, friends, and even reasons I don't understand. I'll have to adjust to that.

Anyway, I asked Grandma if I could visit her, but she said, "No." (Not now) She made me promise to visit her later, in the summer when she's better. I will go, when the time comes, and reintroduce her to the great-grand-children she hasn't seen in twelve years.

And then, I think, if she's willing, I'd like to tell her a little of what I've been feeling, and of how much I've come to love her.

*TROR (May '01) adds, "It took a while to get over the crying. Mom's called once or twice to let me know Grandma's still fighting bravely, which makes me happy. But, I still haven't written her... what do you say to someone in her situation?! 'So... you're dying...? What else is new?' Well, I've got tomorrow off. I'll try again then."*

\*

Ninepatch Fact  
Readers live in forty states and Canada.

## THE PHOTO

Five hundred and forty days. Almost every morning I've sat at my kitchen counter, sipping my morning coffee, and looking at a photo. What is it that I see which brings me back to it so often?

Mornings pass when I don't bother to look. But, inevitably, I look again. I want what I see there. But, my attempts to imitate or replicate it ring so false, so shallow, I stop. The photo shows me how I should look at my God.

I remember when I got the picture. My daughter and her husband were showing me their vacation Kodak-moments. It was my granddaughter's second birthday gift: a trip to Disney World. (Remember those days when your neighbors or friends surprised you with an ambush of 35mm slides and you would wonder, "How many did they take?") I smiled my best dotting Dad- and- Grandpa smile.

And then, as I was flipping and commenting, listening --and yes, smiling-- everything abruptly stopped. The photo. No comment. The flipping ceased. The dotting stopped. I simply looked.

Often I compare that moment to our past days in the Carolinas when the kids and I panned for jewels at the emerald mines. Then I found gold in my sieve. In the photo that day, I found gold while dotting, in my flipping. I wanted it. The gold. In that photo lay a treasure for me. Never realizing its value, my daughter proudly gave me that picture of my granddaughter. I framed it in oak wood, stained and polyurethaned it, and placed it on my kitchen counter.

Brianna and Tigger -- a little girl looking up at a man in a disguise. Yet for me, it was God saying, "*Jim, that's how you should look at me.*" I had never seen such trust and awe before. I had a treasure.

So for five hundred forty days I've had the treasure. I've looked at it so many times and wondered what that photo was saying to me. I could not see. I could not hear. The answer would not come.

Pabulum-fed phrases like, "a child's trust" and "children's innocence," just wouldn't hack it. There was something express-ed in her eyes that answered those words of long ago, "...*Unless you become as little children...*" And, I couldn't grasp it. Until last week.

I believe I have spent 98% of my life "searching." I am restless and know few "quiet moments." I search for some-thing. I am compelled by some inner need to look and to find something --and I don't have the faintest idea what I'm looking for!

But, the answer lay in that picture I possessed. I knew it was there. I reasoned and probed every corner with my intellect. I did everything I could think to do—except PRAY.

I'm not sure if I did pray, but I got my answer, and feel pretty certain that it was given to me. I was asked ( or so it seems) to come up with a caption for the picture. And, without any thought, I wrote down the words, "*What Does She See?*"

The answer was in her eyes—NOT—in her eyes. It's in what she saw that my answer lay. She looked at Tigger and she saw wonderful things. Her eyes spoke and shouted, "**Wonder**" ( See next page.)

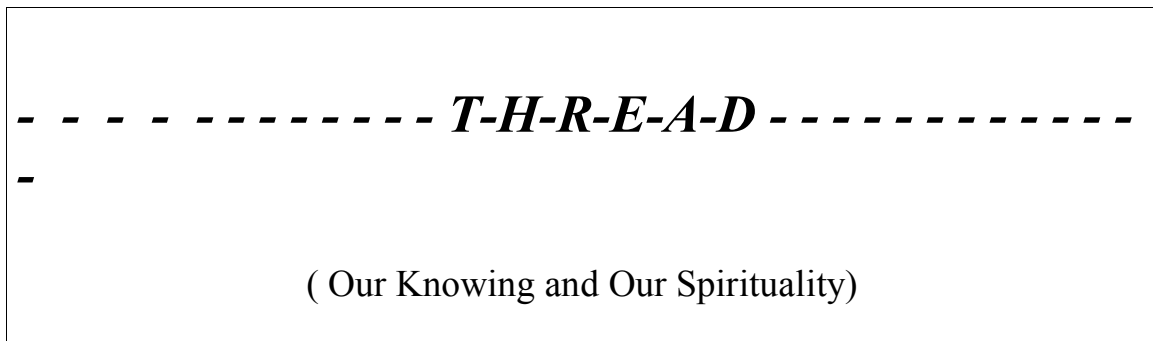
I searched with my reason and intellect, and my eyes revealed a person who was lost—me. She simply opened her heart and never thought. She saw power, strength, but most of all, a goodness she could TRUST—and she TRUSTED.

"...*Unless you become as little children...*" Unless, NOT until—unless I allow my heart to see, I will never really trust, and really share in the kingdom of GOD.

GOD is what I search for, and I will never find Him with my mind.

*Jim is a widower who was married for twenty-eight years. He has a daughter and six stepchildren. Woodworking and golf are two activities he enjoys. He adds, "God reaches out to me—I need only do the same—"reach out" as a child."*

\*



**HALLELUIA!**

**John is done  
with radiation AND  
chemotherapy!  
The doctor released him today.**

**Thank you  
for all your marvelous support,  
your prayers  
and encouragement,  
and for putting up  
with my whining and crying during  
the bad times...  
so happy to be able to share the  
good times with you now!**

*Cat ( July-Aug. '01) adds, "Time had an odd way of stand-ing still during the treatments but now that it is over, it seems like it went quickly "*

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## LABOR DAY 2000

The goldfinches and house  
sparrows eat greedily at  
our feeder.

The parent turns its back on  
the fluttering, demanding  
adolescent who is fully grown  
but unwilling to feed itself.  
I identify and smile.

Much later in the morning,  
birds (starlings?) wheel in  
the cool, overcast sky,  
Gathering themselves into  
ever bigger flocks as they prepare to migrate.

The green leaves are just  
beginning to blush with color  
And have not yet begun to  
tumble in earnest from  
their branches.

My ambrosia cantaloupe languish  
dark green and grapefruit-size on their vines.  
Will they ripen before frost?

*Carol ( June '01 ) says , "Seasonal changes and elemental fluctuations in nature  
between serenity and power, life and death, answer many of my spiritual questions when  
I tune in and pay attention."*

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## AUTUMN LEAVES

The wind SWEEPS scattered leaves  
From still-green grass and solid earth  
A flock of birds RUSHES upward  
One fell SWOOP,

**One big broom.**

(See author note, next page.)

*Phyllis( July-Aug. 01) adds, "This poem came in a rush of wind in my soul. In that moment I knew the wind, ("Knew" means "was intimate with"). What a deal!*

\*

***MANAGING THE HOUSE***

(Ninepatch Business)

A comparison of our finances with last year at this time:

	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>
Carryover	312.99	364.61
Subscrip.	<u>605.00</u>	<u>395.00</u>
Total	917.99	759.11
Expenses	<u>639.03</u>	<u>626.09</u>
Bank Bal	278.96	133.52

Receipts from subscriptions and donations are down by one third from this period last year. *Ninepatch* is currently unable to reimburse Editor Frances for expenses she has incurred without creating an overdraft.

For those of you who have not renewed your subscriptions, please do so; and consider a *Ninepatch* subscription as a gift for a contemplative friend.

*June, Treasurer*

***Ninepatch Annual Report 2000***

Year ending December 31, 2000

Cash in bank		364.61	
Cash carryover 12/31/99			312.99
Cash subscriptions			1050.00
Donations in Kind			123.16
Printing and copying	442.38		
Postage	301.95		
Office Supplies	47.96		
<u>General Ledger:</u>			
P.O. Box Rent	44.00		
Corporate fees	71.25		
Art Work	67.00	182.25	

Totals

1486.15

1486.15

We hope you enjoyed our issue! All are welcome in our circle. Financial contributions are appreciated, but not required. We can be reached at the following addresses:

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Blessings\*\*\*

Frances Fritzie, Editor

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