

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 in this space I share a recent experience on my spiritual journey.

April 2002

Dear Friends,

Cloudless blue skies allowed sunshine to bathe the cement tables topped with red and white umbrellas outside the Burger King. The area was empty of people as I walked through it to order inside.

Minutes later I returned, carrying a small tray topped with coffee, water and a paper-wrapped Whopper Junior. Sun warmed my back as I sat down, unwrapped my burger then pulled the coffee lid's plastic tab. As I bowed my head for a moment of thanks, a seagull cried overhead. In a moment that call carried me to another place —the beach.

My favorite place to sit out-side and eat is Manatee County Beach's café. There, a gentle murmur of people talking and eating while basking in sunshine mixes with gull cries from the nearby shore. That day, however, my thoughts did not linger in recent beach memories. Behind the patio area at BK, a line at the take-out window began to form. There, an F-150 Ford pickup throatily idled. The low *bum-pba' - bum- pba'* carried me farther into the past.

The truck's exhaust was suddenly transformed to the deep exhaust rhythm of a Century inboard speedboat. I was transported in time to the Indiana lake where I spent summer days as a teenager. In that memory, the inboard is at a neighbor's dock, awaiting its passengers who are straggling out on the wood planks and in various stages of donning bright orange life preservers.

At our house, relatives and guests dot the lawn, the pier and the shallow waters. Lakeside of our house, several large trees cast shadows on the grass. As I gaze from the front stoop, two maples, stand to my right. Once a hammock hung between their sturdy trunks. That day, a mint- green round metal table stands ready to hold more than catsup and mustard bottles now perched on it's flowered, oil-clothed top. Around it are gathered four metal companions and a fleet of webbed aluminum visitors. A few already hold beach towels or terrycloth bathing suit covers.

Aunt Jean, Cousin Maggie and I take turns carrying filled trays from the house as Mother supervises from the kitchen window overlooking the scene. The tabletop disappears as we set down paper plates, silverware, covered dishes as well as olives, pickles and carrot sticks.

To the left of the steps grows an oak so grand that no man can reach the lowest branch unaided. Under it and near the house stand two barbeque grills. There, Daddy and Uncle Jim guard the fires, laughing and talking with guests and neighbors who stroll over. Dense gray smoke curls away on a light breeze as if to summon others.

On the grass in front of the trees, lies a blanket anchored by suntan lotion and towels. Beyond, a cement seawall protects the yard from falling away into the lake. Waves from passing motorboats lap on the wall sounding a staccato, adding an-other line of sound to the far-away hum of other speedboats and the bass note of the nearby inboard's song.

Near the seawall, knee-deep in the lake, Cousin Nina holds baby Ted who is splashing in a small plastic inner tube. Toward the end of the dock our boat-- with its 40 horsepower Johnson outboard motor-- bobs at

April 2002

its berth, ready for use. Its canvas cover lies bundled in a heap nearby in a heap on the dock. At the dock's T-end, friends in shorts sit and dangle their bare feet in the water.

As suddenly as it came, the memory faded. I was again sitting in the sunshine at a Burger King in central Florida. I consider the memory trip and think maybe a philosopher I can't name is right, *The past and the present are one!* I know for sure, this experience was a gift!

Frances Fritzie

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

(Letters to the Editor)

Hi Frances,

I don't know what I previously wrote, but my dad passed on 2/23/02. That's been hard. He was in a great deal of pain and just wanted to go without more pain. That was accomplished, I think. He made the decision to take no more dialysis and no more medication for his infection. He just took pain meds. He was under Hospice care the last 24 hrs and had all the meds he needed, I hope. Although his doctor said he was aware we were there, he didn't communicate with us once he was so drugged up. I feel very sad.

My mom's reactions are hard to read because of her dementia. I think she is aware he is gone but she shows no feeling except a sort of lost-ness. That also is sad.

My husband and I and my siblings decided we could take Mom to live with us in our new condo—in a way that's kind of scary. I'm having a lot of anxiety with the move of our household and Mom's relocation as well. In the middle of all this, my husband and I have our first anniversary coming up.

Sometimes I wish things were back to what they were when I was single and my folks were healthy, but I must go forward, *forward*, forward. I keep saying to myself, THIS TOO WILL ALL PASS.

Then I'll look back and be glad for all I've done-- but I'm not there yet. Thanks for asking what was going on with me. It helps to talk.

Love,
Diana

Diana (Sept. '01) adds, "I have been reading the current newsletters as they come in. It is always a good way to ground myself - by sitting down to read Ninepatch. "

Dear St. Frances:::

It must run in the family...

Our baby daughter, Miss Alf (Amanda Leona Florance) has seen several spirits. Hubs tells this story from a time we were visiting my folks in Alabama. One evening as he rocked Miss Alf to sleep, four spirits appeared. They were-- at least from whom he recognized and described -- my maternal-grandmother, two aunts and an uncle, relatives who had passed on years ago. Needless to say, Hubs got a shock. Miss Alf just looked up at them, cooed and smiled.

April 2002

And she saw a spirit here at our house, but I was too -- well, *terrified* isn't the word I want to use—but *excited*, for sure. I experienced chills and wasn't about to turn and see who (or what) the spirit was, but Miss Alf cooed and chattered to it. *Someone or something was visiting!*

Connections are strong between generations regardless of disagreements and so forth.
Catch you later...

Malaina

Malaina (Jan. '02 adds, “
And here's something else interesting, St. Frances: I show her pictures of relatives and she just looks at them. She doesn't display any interest until I show her a pic of my maternal grandmother. She gets so excited that she grabs the pic and pulls it toward her. She shrieks and carries on. Something, huh?”

Dear Frances,

I hope you got my last letter I sent it to your old address. When did you move?

My life is going on the same. Work every day and every third weekend. My husband is still spoiling me. We had a nice Valentine's Day: flowers, candy stuffed toys and a candlelight supper.

Our daughter Anita is still giving us a hard time. I think it will always be that way. Our married daughter is busy with her family and remodeling their house. We don't see much of them.

I don't see much of my birth family, either, since Mom passed away. The last time we were all together was to have dinner in November last year. That's it.

Life goes on. I hope things are going well for you!

Love and Prayers,

Linda Sue

LindaSue (Jan. '02) adds, “*I have been reading books about angels and also have a Bible study from my church that I have been working on. Otherwise, in my spare time I do my cross-stitch.*”

Dear Frances,

It was a pleasure reading the paragraphs you wrote on the 2001 *Ninepatch* tax letter. My ears perked up when you mentioned *Chi*,

We share a common energy. In the East it is called CHI. It cannot be seen, but it can be felt. It is a personal energy and one that can radiate as well as be passed by hand...

I have been a REIKI* practitioner for four years. I am a level three practitioner. Here are some ideas I'd like to share.

Traditional sages describe human beings as having three sheaths. The outer is *physical body*. It incorporates primitive drives and instincts. The second layer is the *mind*. This includes discrimination, reasoning and a sense of individuality. At the core of every person is the third layer. It is the *soul*, the pure virgin self, untouched by the cares of the world. Any person with training can reach this core. It is beyond reality.

One condition that blocks us reaching this is that human beings are so attached to things we *cannot* take with us on our cosmic journeys. We must drop *things* and become one with God.

I look forward to exchanging ideas with you in the future

April 2002

Peace My Sister,
Love and light
In the spirit,
Egeria

Egeria is divorced and has six grown children: five sons and a daughter. She works full time. She says, "I read this a while back in one of my Tao books, In order to become like Buddha (the Holy One) we must become void. She adds, "Egeria is my great-grandmother's name which means, Life- Giver."

*REIKI is a practice of moving energy for healing.

Hi Fritzie –

Great to hear from you again. Yes, I go to open discussion Twelve-Step meetings and have been on and off for three years.

Going to meetings I get so much more tolerant of the "issues" that come at me in my day-to-day life. I feel I am not "crazy" when I am with the others.

I know I can grow even stronger and have more of the peace in my spirit and soul that I yearn for. And, my poor husband won't have to listen to so much of my raving on the "bad" days. I know what more I really need to do--gee, do procrastination and denial fit me? Ha! *One day at a time!*

I am excited about our class reunion, too -- I really want to get re-acquainted with old friends again (on a more one-to-one basis). As you mentioned, I also don't feel comfortable in the large crowd setting. I tried the social gatherings/events for too long, trying to be someone who fit in! Isn't it amazing how our generation has this "stuff" to straighten out? It didn't occur to my parents that anything was out of balance. They were just happy to do whatever they wanted, without question. Emotional problems or dysfunction (or, God-forbid, something called codependency) were not part of their thinking. They had so much fun together -- I guess!

I am babbling now so will move on. Will talk to you later - can't wait to visit *Ninepatch* again.

Love and Prayers,
CJ

CJ (Mar. '02) adds, "Will be getting over yet another flu in a few days (I hope). I am so thankful when I feel good! This has been quite a season for the upper East Coast since Thanksgiving. But, every day I book surgeries for people who are younger than me and facing such horrible diseases --so, a long bout of the flu (several times) is absolutely nothing to complain about. I am grateful for each day I can be of some good to someone. Wishing everyone a wonderful Springtime!

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Dear Frances,

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Well.

Serendipity?

When I opened your e-mail yesterday I almost answered right away. In part, you wrote, "I was thinking about your car situation the other day. I'd like to see you get a better car before you are divorced. For the sake of the children since you are their caretaker -- you need a reliable car."

I didn't answer then, I decided to wait until I got back from taking my daughter to the movies. I would have said something like this,

Frances,

It is funny you should talk about my car because I have been having similar thoughts myself...

Well. I am no longer having similar thoughts. God took the entire matter out of my hands last night at 7:15PM. I was in an accident with an SUV and my car is totaled. My daughter is totally recovered this morning. I still have a headache from hitting my head on the doorframe. (I suspect my shoulder harness didn't work as well as it should have but I can't really tell for sure.) The EMT said I didn't have a concussion and the headache would go away.

At any rate, I am now in the market for a vehicle, a *reliable* one, too!

Love and prayers,

JW

JW/ Joy (Oct. '01) adds, " I was guided to a car so beautiful that it took me a while to feel worthy of it. I think my Higher Power wants me to accept myself with more self-confidence. It is time for me to climb out of the comfortable Pit-of-Low-Self-Esteem. My car has been an amazing daily gift in this battle. In honor of this gift: my name is Joy. "

-----F-A-B-R-I-C-S-----

(Our Experiences)

SACRED SPACE.

Container for the Holy

A Third Field Trip Journal

Josiah Chowning's Grape Arbor

Sitting under the grape arbor when it's green and the weather is warm is a delightful feeling. It's like "playing house" under the card table or the dining room table.

Grackles fly overhead And finches flit near the street. Small brown and gray sparrows hop about scavenging among the tables. They have become so used to tourists, they have no fear.

April 2002

When the tavern is busy you may share the table with other visitors. Congeniality sounds in murmurs of patrons. It promotes a level of comfort and safety. This breaks down barriers between strangers who sit together – protected -- under the arbor.

Graying, rough wood columns and arbor lattice have an aged' patina. Leaves help create the illusion of being enclosed. The arbor "roof" is suited to humans. The lowness of it focuses your attention and view outside the structure. The informal nature of this enclosure blurs the separation of the arbor from the outside making the two as one.

When the grapevines are in leaf, very little light filters in from overhead. Leaves create a dark canopy and one gazes to the sides where light enters.

Table conversation level is low due to the "intimate" nature of the environment. The spar-rows, however, have no sense of this closeness so they chirp and chatter away, staking out their personal crumb-gathering area. Still, this is a peaceful space.

After sitting under the arbor for thirty minutes and celebrating a "communion" made of some bread, some cheese and some ale, I felt peaceful, indeed.

Bill (Mar. '02) adds, "The cracks and fissures of the arbor's weathered wood give it character," Sort of like me," I think. It is an interesting phenomenon that when dining under the grape arbor, one feels a part of the colonial community of old.

TURNING OVER A NEW LEAF

My wife is going through a long recovery program after a major surgery. I have since taken on the necessary chores maintaining the household. Being the chief cook and bottle washer has been taxing on my time but I have been learning a valuable lesson, too.

I resolved that if I can get a bit of my life's work done while doing the chores there is no reason why I cannot accomplish something positive. I got to thinking about my *life's work* as I watched and listened to author Wayne Dyer on TV last night. A couple of things he said stuck in my mind. One was, *Don't die with your song still in you*. I know that he used "song" as a metaphor and meant we all have a purpose on this planet. He might have said, *Don't let things get in your way of doing what is in your heart*.

One of the songs in my heart is a program I used at one time, to help prison inmates take stock of themselves. I believe that I can make a few adjustments to this program and it can be a tool for all people.

I have listened to other speakers like Wayne Dyer and found, that what they have comes from the same source that is available to you and me. What we have is something always new but is part of something old. For the most part mankind (womankind) has forgotten the old basics: Love, forgive, love and forgive again. Love is always new when one forgives.

Another topic he spoke on was problem- solving. He said situations are only a problem when you entertain that thought in your mind. I realized some of the conditions that I thought were problems were actually created by my thinking process.

I want to change and remember the old truths. I want to watch my thinking processes, too. Then, I can still sing my song.

Lee (Oct. '01) adds, " I had to learn that you can't give what you didn't get. It was only after an ordeal, (which is a story in its self), where I recognized my shortfall; was forgiven from above and given love that I could forgive and love others."

April 2002

THE FUNNEL

After I had been in and out of my Twelve Step Program several hundred times I felt like I was a grain of sand at the bottom of a funnel. I was falling, but I was trying to get up and out. I was not only at the bottom, I was on the outside holding on by just a thread.

That thread was hope that I could get well. The Program kept telling me, *Keep coming back*. That is just what I did. One week I would go and stay “good” one day or maybe two. I’d fail and stop going. Then a month later (even three or four months later) I would try again. I just kept going back and wondering if would I ever *get* it.

One time, after trying and trying, I thought, *I can't do this again*. But I surprised myself and gave it another chance. I had nowhere else to go. I had given up all other methods. This HAD to work. And it did.

Now I have worked my way from the outside edge into the funnel and I am slowly climbing my way up. One day with the help of my Program and my Higher Power, my actions will get me up and out. The Program will work!

Vicki (Oct. '01) adds, “I ask my HP for help and then I have to make the effort. The Program doesn't work by itself. Today my Higher Power does want me and I want Him, too.

-----I-N-S-T-R-U-C-T-I-O-N-S-----

(Reading and Listening)

JUNE’S READING LIST

Editor’s note: Several readers are keeping a list of all books we read in this year. (We hope you will do the same!) This month, June leads off.

Following are six books I have read so far in 2002. The first five are non-fiction.

1. Original Self by Thomas Moore is a collection of meditations on knowing oneself.
2. The Greatest Generation by Tom Brokaw contains stories about the well-known and the unknown heroes of World War II. He also covers the people on the home front, including the discrimination against Japanese-Americans. Courage was a common commodity in those times.
3. Joseph McCarthy by Arthur Herman. The infamous Senator Joe McCarthy and *McCarthyism* was a prominent subject in the post World War II era. He was sometimes careless and indiscriminate in his accusations of people he suspected of being Communists or “Reds” as they were called. Many careers were ruined by innuendo alone. McCarthy was chairman of the House Un-American Activities Committee in the Senate and held hearings for several years. Though he was flamboyant and reckless, he was often right in his assessments. However his own destructive behavior was his downfall. He died of alcoholism.
4. Survivor by Mark Burnett. This is a behind-the-scenes running commentary on

the first "Survivor" TV series. It is interesting but it doesn't add a lot to what we know from viewing the show. I liked it because it was a character study of human nature-- a microcosm of life.

5. All Too Human by George Stephanopoulos. The author worked on the first presidential campaign of Bill Clinton. After Clinton was elected, Stephenopoulos served on the White House staff in several different roles. The book offers a look at some of the inner workings of politics and is somewhat self-serving. It begins with the author having a sort of hero-worship of Clinton but that appraisal evolves into one of

self-protection. Much of his work was in spin control and presidential image protection from the media. It brings to mind the words of Marshall McLuhan: ...*the media is the message.*

5. Self Matters by Dr. Philip McGraw. I like the author's "tell- it- like- it- is" style of writing. I had enjoyed his earlier book, Life Strategies and when I heard of this book and his concept of "10 defining moments" of one's life, I wanted to identify my own. I am working on that now. It involves going into old memories and recalling my feelings and emotions. McGraw also says there are 7 critical choices that put one on one's current path --and 5 pivotal people who have shaped one. I am eager to turn the pages.

6. True North by Kimberly Kafka. This is the story of a woman who lives alone in Alaska. She is a bush pilot and an environmentalist. A white woman, she has a tentative peace with the Eskimo tribe eighty miles downriver. Then a young couple, Easterners, arrives and upset the delicate racial balance. This is the young author's first fiction, and it's a good one, even though it has some technical flaws. There are vague hints of a dark tragedy in the main character's past but the author's writing style and lack of expertise in transitions make it hard to follow in places. While it places an unnecessary burden on the reader, it is well worth the time-spent reading.

June (Feb. 02) adds this comment, "Books! Books! What would we do without them? I figure books I own that are still unread represent hope. I intend to read all of them. There is no such thing as too many books. The ones I don't want to keep, I donate to the (public) library, so it is not a waste."

ANAM CARA

John O'Donohue's book, Anam Cara, A Book of Celtic Wisdom, has affected me like no other. As one attempts to read it, it is necessary to rest and absorb the thoughts —not read it straight through. It is heavy because every word he writes has a purpose and IS weighty.

Anam Cara in Gaelic means "soul friend." O'Donohue is a poet, philosopher and scholar. The beauty of his wisdom touches my heart and causes me to weep with the knowledge that truth is beauty. He says things like:... *beauty likes neglected places...*, and ... *the body is the angel of the soul.* He writes, ...*light is generous...*, and ...*solitude is luminous.* A final phrase I'll share is, ... *true listening is worship.*

He has answered my question about the longing of my heart for the landscape of my birthplace: He says that stone contains memory. The clay from which we came is the clay to which we long to return.

The book is full of poems and blessings. It is a treasure.

Gail (Mar. '02) adds, "Frances wrote about Ninepatch's spiritual (prayer) group(Jan. '02). When I read that, I recalled that forming sacred circles of meditation and study is powerful. The circle is powerful. O'Donohue reminds us that it is symbolic of the circle of life. There are many powerful examples: the circle of our earth, the seasons, the day circled by the moon, the ancient stone circles as a way of surviving, telling time, and the seasons. There is also the Celtic cross that uses a circle to soften the linear and painful lines intersecting the cross and the AA symbol of the triangle is also inside the circle."

THE CUP OF OUR LIFE,
A Guide for Spiritual Growth

Joyce Rupp’s book, offers daily prayer and meditation around a theme. She says, “The spiritual journey is like (the cup) - a constant process of emptying and filling, of giving and receiving, of accepting and letting go.” Each day for six weeks, this book offers a thoughtful piece of Joyce’s personal writing, a breath prayer, reflection, scripture and journaling suggestions. It also offers information for using this book with a group. She uses inclusive language for all people of faith and reiterates what we already know in our hearts about what we need to strengthen our conscious connection to the Divine.

“Solitude is the empty space that we deliberately choose in order to be with the Beloved. In solitude we can savor this goodness and give ourselves space to really listen. When we are occupied with life’s many details and are rushing about in the marketplace, only the surface things of life get our attention. Solitude can help us to disengage and detach. It is when we are alone, uninterrupted, single-minded and single-hearted, that some of the wonderful fruits come to the surface. If we want to learn to grow spiritually, we will need the discipline of solitude.”

This book has drawn me to new awareness of myself and my relationship to the Divine. It has given me some needed structure for my daily practice of prayer and meditation. For me this book has been a cup of blessing, “...a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing...”

Mary Weber’s article first appeared in the MorningStar Adventure newsletter, Winter 2002. She adds, “I am glad for others to know about Joyce Rupp’s books (There are quite a few and I have gained a lot from each.) This particular one has been quite a blessing; meeting me right at my edges of growth. Ahhh, synchronicity!

T-H-R-E-A-D

(Our Knowing and Our Spirituality)

SUMMING UP

**I’m not sure what God
called me to be,
But I chose marriage
and motherhood.
The kids grew up and went away,
And years later my spouse died.**

**Over the years I saw things to build
And He showed me a hammer
and a saw.
I admired oil paintings**

And He put a brush in my hand.
 I had a book to write
 And He sent a friend with a
 computer.
 When I lacked the words
 and inspiration,
 My friend and/or my daughter
 both encouraged me.
 When I had to face
 the *Long Goodbye*
 with my best friend,
 Another asked if I had read
Conversations With God
 by Neale Donald Walsch.
 When I read it, a radical new vista
 opened before me:
 There was an instant recognition
 of its truths.
 So here I am in my seventh decade,
 On a journey of wondering
 and searching.
 And only She knows where
 it will lead me!

June (Feb. '02) says, "Since September 11, I've had the urge to take stock of my life and to think about which direction I will choose."

SPACE

That girl over there,
 "I've heard she's spacey."
 Such gifts are rare,
 For space is spare
 And empty.
 There's nothing there.
 Except a glare
 From light eternal.

Phyllis (Mar. '02) from Frances' private collection.

AT HOME FOR THE FIRST TIME

I am trying to be brave.
 It has been a really tuff
 situation here--
 I tried my best thru it all.

John passed away at 9:30 AM.
 August 3, 2001.
 This is where our story ends, I guess.

It seems it started so long long ago,
 Yet it seems like just yesterday,
 A first encounter with love with
 that man...

That man who looked way too old
To love me
(Or for me to love, for that matter.)
That man who grabbed me up
like a young kid
There, on my own back porch,
And planted a kiss right on my lips.

A bold move for a casual guest
At my New Year's Eve party.

Cat (Feb. 2002) says, "... only pray the daily crys will stop soon ... I miss him so!"

- - - -M-A-N-A-G-I-N-G—T-H-E—H-O-U-S-E- - - -

(Ninepatch Business)

A "STARTER" FOR YOUR FOOD AND RECIPE STORIES

When I did this survey, I thought of several stories and even a recipe or two I could look up and share. If your mind is a *blank*, please fill it out and send it back to us anyway. We love your e-mails and letters, it's the FOOD of *Ninepatch!* *Editor, Frances*

RECIPE LEGACIES

My favorite comfort food is _____

I always felt loved when Grandma made her special _____

Our Thanksgiving meal wouldn't have been complete without _____

On my birthday I always asked Mom to make _____

When I come home after a hard day at work, the supper I most hope to smell cooking is _____

To get rid of my anger I always pull out ingredients to make _____

My first recollections of helping in the kitchen are with my _____ making _____

My favorite family recipe is _____

I am most well known for my recipe of _____

Ginny Lee (Jan. '02)

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