

Ninepatch

Stitch-by Stitch

- *W - e - C - r - e - a - t - e - O - u - r - L - i - v - e - s*
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February 2002

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

Dear Friends.

A football game blared from a big-screen TV at one end of the room. At the other end, three of us had pulled chairs to a large oval dining room table. It was stacked with magazines, and also held scissors, glue sticks and as-sorted construction paper. We were ready to cut and paste. Nancy had pasted before, but her daughter was new to the activity.

It was a perfect setting, since most important in our first stage--picture choosing-- is distraction. One must pay NO attention to choosing words and pictures. Usually, talk around the table carries this duty. Tonight, however, the football game and occasional outbursts from Nancy's husband and my visiting son helped. Another useful diversion was the four-year-old granddaughter's busy play and her 10-month sister's clamors to hold or fed bits of our snacks.

Picture choosing, trimming and pasting slid easily along. We finished ahead of the game's fourth quarter. I began the show- and- tell part by looking at each woman's pictures. I pointed out what I saw in terms of dream images. Then I explained what the picture often meant. After that, each of us told why we *thought* we chose our words and pictures.

When my turn came, I also pointed out two images common to my other pastings: a zebra and a curly-haired woman. I put my finger on the woman and frowned, thinking out loud, "I know she is some aspect of me... there's SOME reason I have permed my hair for over 25 years!" I paused, then continued, "I don't know what this means." I pointed to a gray block area surrounding the curly- haired woman and a lover. "Maybe it's a dungeon or a cell..."

At that, Nancy's daughter laughed, "Maybe it's a basement UNDER the basement!"

I smiled. She referred to a story I told about early psychiatrist Jung. He said basements were our *subconscious* and the basement under that was our deepest being.

I nodded at her joke, and said, "Sometimes a meaning is found best when one tells a story about the pictures."

Later, I took my own suggestion, and wrote this tale.

GIVE THEM SHELTER FROM THE STORM

Dressed in black, her wild- yet- controlled hair curled down the middle of her back. She glanced around the windowless stone shelter. In her long-fingered hands. she clutched two keys. "Yes," she nodded to herself, "This will do."

She lifted her long skirt and easily climbed the few stone steps to the grassy plain above. His back was to her as he surveyed the grassy plain. There, wildebeests and a lone zebra grazed, oblivious to

threatening black clouds rolling above. Thunder echoed from the distant foothills beyond. He turned to her and said, in mock-serious tone, "What if we are found?"

She shook her head.

He countered, "If we are?"

She shrugged.

"I know the secret," he reminded her.

She smiled and tilted her head slightly as she looked up at him, "You won't tell."

He led the way and they began to descend the few steps into the stone shelter. Over his shoulder he teased, "What if I do?"

A step behind him, she smiled to herself, then wrapped her arms around him, her ringed fingers loosely covering his mouth. She breathed into his ear a sort of dare, "I won't let you tell."

Just then I stepped from my hiding place in the shadows of the cellar. I pulled up my camera and snapped a photo. Neither of them seemed to mind I was there or cared that I took their photo.

It was then I noticed her *keys* were actually dark-colored roses. I wondered how those would work in the heavy old door. Maybe that was their secret.

*

Frances says, "It took a few days, but I did make a connection between this story and my personal story, "She- Waited." (June and Aug. '97) She adds, "I see I remain in a cave-like place of safety. I wait for the rest of my people."

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

(Letters to the Editor)

Dear Frances,

I think it is impossible to move oneself from one place to another without experiencing a major drain to mind and spirit. I don't know how the nomads do it. A move involves EVERYTHING, physical and temporal, being touched. Even when it is going well, there is much physical and intellectual strain. I hope you feel more yourself soon. I have not been sick, but I've had a recurring tightness in the stomach that requires centering and prayer to alleviate.

Cars, like new houses need attention, too. My car needs an oil change. I had hoped my husband would have sold our old house in the Midwest and be here by now to take care of it. No big deal, just something that needs to be done. It is another one of those "indicators" of how long this move is taking. It's representative of the move not going as well as I hoped. Funny how I make those kinds of lists -- always have.

That's all for now.

Peace,

Georgene

Georgene (Jan. '02) adds, "After a 90- day separation my husband and I have been in our new home for three weeks. There is now a new list of indicators that measure the settlement process. The lists never end."

Dear Frances,

I have moved again! My roommate had not been well. She needed to move to a situation where she had to do less maintenance and that would not have the mold we encountered in our little house. That left me by myself and I didn't like that. So I asked to move back to the main sisters' house.

Now I am living in a kind of apartment situation with the others, again. I think it will work out fine. Today, I am living out of boxes and in cramped quarters as I am waiting for one of the others to move out, so I can take her room. She, in turn, is waiting for two others to move. It is the "domino effect".

This moving makes me think again about what I really need. With each move I tend to get lighter and lighter in my own personal stuff.

Much love to you!

Patience

Patience (Jan. 02) is back in the United States. She adds, "I am now settled into a wonderful space and really like it. It does not take me long to feel comfy."

Fritzie...

Thank you for writing. You say you have bought a new house. Moving is no simple task and at our age, I find it very daunting.

I am thrilled to see your success with *Ninepatch*. I wish you all blessings in this special season of life's journey. I know in whom we believe.

Much love

CJ

CJ knew Frances in high school. She is married and mother of four children and grandmother to five. She works fulltime, but in her free time she enjoys reading, cooking/baking, and two- mile brisk walking (daily if possible). She adds, "I am watching my cat Maggie as she is lying on top of my monitor while I type this. She loves to be my companion when I am emailing. I so appreciate her unconditional love -- yeah, right -- I am the one with the tuna can! Ha! Can't wait to get to know everyone better and share!"

*

Dear Frances,

I have begun a business doing custom tie-dye kids' clothing and hand-dyed silk scarves. The scarves are what I am really wanting to concentrate on as I love the instant results and creative play that goes with making them.

I have been relatively successful in my short time doing this and am making some money, too! It is surely a risk to put one's creative self out there. I have never done anything like this before so it has certainly been a learning experience.

I am finding out things about people that I never knew before. I am amazed how many women out there are also creative/artists who don't do what they love because of family responsibility.

I am struggling from time to time with that very thing. I want to devote all my time to this new endeavor as the laundry piles up!! I will continue to figure it out one day at a time, I suppose!

I am grateful for the opportunity that has arisen. I was not looking for this, and I did not have a burning desire to do it. It just happened. It's the first time in my life I have ever done anything creative and it has been a ball for the most part.

Must close-- kids and life are calling!

Love,
Kelly

Kelly (Oct. 01) says, "Many exciting things are happening with my business. There is a wonderful sense of personal satisfaction in creating beautiful things for others to enjoy! WOW, God is good!"

*

Dear Fritzie:

This is the closest thing you will receive from me in the form of a holiday greeting. I cried as I forced my boys to remove the memory boxes, yearbooks, boxes of trophies, favorite books, academic awards, report cards and various other memorabilia from my house. I am preparing to put the house up for sale this year. They protested that they didn't have space in their homes to keep the trash, including favored stuffed animals, the treasures I was forcing on them.

I told them they didn't have to keep the menageries, but they would have to be the ones to throw anything out. I just couldn't summon the will to do the deed.

Once the grumbling stopped and they did as I had requested, I felt the chill of liberation pass through me. Maybe I could get rid of other clutter in my life. Maybe I don't really need to save the dried corsages given to me at each boy's wedding. Perhaps those really tired child-made ornaments that I've always hung on the back of the tree (because I've always hung them on the back of the tree) can be discarded. Maybe those house-plants that incessantly need watering all winter long can go to someone with endless patience. It might just be all right to give away that beautiful but ten-times-too-heavy cardigan my sister knit for me back in the 60s. This move could be therapeutic rather than traumatic.

Just as I had thought all of that, I came across the following quote from Edith Wharton, which is my real message of hope.

...The other producer of old age is habit: the deathly process of doing the same thing in the same way ... day after day, first from carelessness...and last from cowardice or inertia.... Habit is necessary, it is the habit of having habits, often turning a trail into a rut that must be incessantly fought again if one is to remain alive.... If one is unafraid of change, insatiable in intellectual curiosity, interested in big things, and happy in small ways....

Love to you, Fritzie, and to all of those you love.
Elaine

Elaine (Jan. 2002) was struck by her own negativity when reading about her previous 'do-nothingness' comments. She thanks Ninepatch for holding up a mirror for her." Thank you, Ninepatch."

Dear Fritzie,

I won't look for an answer to this letter until you are more settled but I did want to wish you all the best now that you are moved.

At the end of each year I usually have one of two groups of feelings. Most of the time it is the feelings I have been having lately. I am really optimistic about the coming year and have an excitement for things to come.

The other feelings I have sometimes are dread and sadness. I can't explain it but these feelings usually dictate my year.

Luckily, at the end of 2001 I felt optimistic!

Good luck...

Patricia

Patricia (Jan.'02) adds, "I have finally arrived in Florida for the winter, have completed all the thousand little, time-consuming, tasks around the house. I am preparing to enjoy myself now."

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Dear Frances,

You asked about my grandmother who discovered she had cancer (NonHodgkins Lymphoma) and wasn't sure she wanted to fight it. (Sept.'01) Well, she did fight and now I've learned she may no longer have to endure the full-out chemo treatments. Her lumps are all but gone and her hair's coming back!

She's also been writing about her battle with cancer for local newspapers, hoping that what she writes will help others. That's my grandma, thinking of others in her own time of greatest need. :)

Glad I could share the good news and thanks for asking after her.

TROR

TROR (Oct. '01) adds, "I believe the chemo treatments were necessary, but that it was the power of prayer that saved Grandma's life!"

Dear Frances,

Thank you for the Labyrinth you included in the Nov.-Dec. 01 issue! It's a nice meditation tool. I haven't read up on it, but discovered one at Oakland Community College in Farmington Hills, Michigan. It was near where I used to live.

I walked it once and found it peaceful. An article in "Phenomenews", that great 'new age' paper published in Royal Oak, Michigan, carried an article about three labyrinths in Michigan. I was glad to experience one near me.

I hope your holidays were special!

Love,

Gail

Gail (Oct. '01) adds, "The holidays were fun and filled with family visits, mostly by my visiting them. Besides shopping, I knitted three sweaters for three 2-year old granddaughters. Then our new baby arrived 5 1/2 weeks early. Thank God, he is ok.

There has been little time for reflection, but lots of time living in the moment! Everything is just the way it is supposed to be. I was so happy to receive the latest Ninepatch-to reconnect. I wish you all an unforgettably serene new year."

*

Dear Fritzie,

I hope you are beginning to feel settled in your new house—and making it uniquely yours. These days I seem to be gone more than I am home.

I spent most of November in NYC volunteering for the Red Cross. I worked in Records and Reports at the headquarters for the NYC disaster operation -- doing paperwork and training local volunteers to help with data input.

The hours were long and two days off in twenty, but I got to see my daughters, who live in the area, a few times a week. Both are doing well despite one working just blocks from *ground zero* and the other having bomb scares at her work twice a day for at least a month.

I wish you a happy and healthy 2002!

CLS!

CLS (Mar. '01) adds," We will all be together in our family getaway for the holidays. It will be a welcome vacation for all."

*

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

Conclusion

Editor's Note: A young couple is faced with the fact a lump (THE FRITZ) in his neck is actually cancer. He is in the midst of chemo-therapy as the story continues. His girlfriend is watching a chemo, occasionally remembering how it was before.

Each person who found out he had cancer reacted differently. Some were shocked, and attempted to console me. A few offered prayers, not just thoughts, but actual appeals to their God. Most just nodded and retreated into themselves to contemplate their own fragile mortalities.

Cancer is an odd disease. Its mutant cells invade the very stuff that prevents disease. Once I realized this ironic fact, I did my best to ignore it. Dwelling on it wouldn't help.

Today we wait for his preliminary blood test results. He is already anticipating sensations that haven't started yet. I wish I could hug him, but I imagine that he needs to stay sterile. More realistically, I know that jostling his IV will hurt him, and he already hurts enough.

I look out the window, but the only view I have is of the parking garage. I pick up my notebook from the floor and sketch the IV stand to remember it. As I sketch, the nurse comes back. She tells him that his white blood cell counts are too low. He can't receive a treatment that day. Instead, he will have to come back later after receiving a shot for several days. She gives him the first injection then tells him that she will be removing the IV needle.

He tells me that if I thought putting it in sounded painful, I won't like the sounds he makes while it comes out. I look out the window while he sucks in his breath. My eyes are moist and I think back.

I stopped thinking about him being sick after he had gone through two months of treatment. On the days he wasn't feeling sick everything was normal and nice, and we'd laugh or fight like we had before. We never talked about cancer. But sometimes when I would joke about being sick, we'd both look a-way. Then I'd regret having brought it up. I felt like I was somehow the opposite of his hospital life. Then he asked me to come to treatment with him.

Now, we walk out of the hospital together. I have my arm around his waist. We are going to the diner, and I am both happy and sad that he didn't have to go through treatment. I am happy because I am honored that he asked me to go with him to something so personal. But I am sad, too, because I know that he has to keep going until he's well.

We get in the car, and drive away from the hospital. Then I'm free to imagine again that life is semi-perfect and nothing is wrong.

Christa (Nov.-Dec. '01) recently graduated from Hofstra University with a BA in creative writing. She is currently finalizing plans to move to Los Angeles to pursue a career in script writing.

*

SACRED PLACES

Several years ago, I took a short course on sacred spaces at Virginia Wesleyan, a small Methodist college in Virginia Beach. In the course, we discussed what constitutes a

sacred space, and what were common characteristics of sacred spaces. Part of the study was for each of us to take field trips to *sacred spaces*.

Once there, we were to sit quietly, observe the space and describe the physical characteristics and our feelings in the space. I enjoy photography, so I also took photographs to illustrate my observations.

First, several of the class met to visit a mosque. But, everyone was on his own for the other field trips. Our initial field trips were to traditional sacred spaces. After that, we were assigned to identify and visit non-traditional sacred spaces, such as shopping malls, football stadiums and for me, a bike path.

My favorite bike-riding venue is a short loop of one of Yorktown's tour roads. It is a narrow, serpentine lane through the forest adjacent to Surrender Field where the British surrendered to Washington's troops October 19, 1781.

Its very nature seems to quiet me. The trees have over- grown the road so the rider feels enclosed and protected as he travels through the space. Because the road curves left then right then back on itself, you can't see what's ahead. Still, I was drawn ahead with anticipation of what's around the next curve.

I think of it as a metaphor for my life.

Bill is married (40 years) and father of a daughter who is an archeologist and a son who recently left the US Army and plans to return to college. In his spare time he works with Boy Scouts in high ad-venture activities like rock climbing, caving, white water canoeing, and long distance bicycling. He rides and his wife volunteers in two 150 mile Bike Tours per year. He adds, "Since turn about is fair play, I tag along with my wife on her pipe organ adventures."

Ninepatch
Statement of Purpose

Ninepatch is the monthly publication of a non-profit organization
by the same name.

In the pages of this newsletter, women
and the men who support them,
share their spiritual journeys,
their life experiences, their stories, their thoughts, their pondering,
their pain, their joy and their observations.

This newsletter offers a forum where its readers can be heard
and remain anonymous if they choose.

Such sharing is vital in helping
other women and men find their place in an eternal spiritual circle where all
both know and are known.

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and cannot be used for gain .

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

(Reading and Listening)

SUZANNE’S DIARY FOR NICHOLAS

Reviewers said this was an unusual story for author, James Patterson. I picked up this best-seller in my weekly visit to the library.

In the early pages, Suzanne wrote about life in her diary for Nicholas. Her words captured my interest. Imagine life is a game in which you are juggling five balls. The balls are called work, family, friends and integrity. You are juggling them, trying to keep all of them in the air. Then one day you finally come to understand the balls are not all the same.

Work is a rubber ball. If you drop it, it will bounce back. The other four balls are made of *glass*. If you drop one of those, it is irrevocably, scuffed, nicked, even *shattered*.

Suzanne said that once you truly understand the lesson of the five balls—you would have the beginning of balance in your life. This book gave me good food for thought.

Helen B. (June '00) adds, “As I live my life, I’m very aware of all the ‘balls’ Suzanne wrote about.”

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

(Ninepatch Business)

NINEPATCH VOLUNTEERS

Our *Ninepatch* personal involvement continues to grow. Following is a list of volunteers who routinely give us time and talent. First, we have five note-writers who make a *personal* contact with a stick-on note attached to each mailed copy every month. These creative and dedicated souls are: Kathryn, Georgene, MM, Gail and Barbie. (Phyllis was a note-writer from our beginning. I will miss her sometimes-cryptic notes.) And, I enjoy reading the quips and quotes every month and I'm sure you do, too!

Next, three saints help with the business of *Ninepatch*. June, Kathryn and Georgene are on our board of directors. We meet by telephone twice a year. That way, we create and steer projects and plan our budget.

June also keeps accounts for *Ninepatch*. Her efforts help me retain my sanity. She also proofreads for me and often is a first reader of my letter. I value the comments she makes and use them to be more clear and concise.

Two areas developed in 2000-2001. First, Kelly tracks subscriptions and renewals. Sending reminder notes is part of her job. (See her letter regarding changes in renewal.) She was also a great help in organize this area. We compared our subscription lists regularly. This helped me to be more accurate.

Also new this year is Lynn who has been hard at work on our website. (I invite you to set aside some time and visit us at: www.ninepatch.org) The FORUM continues to have new entries on various subjects. It is also the area where *prayer requests* are posted

- - - - - **T-H-R-E-A-D** - - - - -
-

(Our Knowing and Our Spirituality)

NO EASY WAY

**There is no easy way
To look at this.**

**John's terrible leg pain
Has been diagnosed:
His cancer has metastasized--
Not just found in another location
But five or six!
Metastasized is not good.
It means the cancer has spread Throughout his body,
And the pain in his left leg
Is caused by tumors
That have invaded his spine.**

**John has a total acceptance
And says he doesn't even
need pain pills!
(The doctor gave us very strong
pain pills.)**

**Like a turtle, I have
Pulled back into my shell .
I am numb--**

Totally numb.

Cat (Jan. '02) says, "If I only knew how bad he was from the beginning I would not have nagged him so much-- to eat all the time and to be more active and to ... well... just to get better all ready."

LISTENING TO MOZART

**Upward,
Energies,
Pyrotechnics,
Clamoring,
Climbing,
Shooting stars.**

**Falling sound,
Mellowing,
Softening,
Slowing,
Down.**

The carousel turns.

Phyllis (Jan '02) passed away on Jan. 7, '02. (She OKed this poem in May of 2001 but I never used it as she always had another piece she wanted instead.)

Phyllis was the first of my spiritual and creative mentors. She coached me the summer I conceived Ninepatch. She was our solid supporter these nearly eight years. More than all that, Phyllis was my friend. I will miss her dearly.

Editor, Frances

IN MEMORIAM

*Phyllis
Dear friend,
Mentor,
Member of Ninepatch
Circle 1994-2002,
Completed her journey in this world
Jan. 7, 2002.*

*

*Eternal joy grant unto her, Oh Lord.
And let perpetual light shine on her soul.*

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We hope you enjoyed this issue and wish you well. We welcome readers' responses and hope you will join our writers' circle, too.

Frances Fritzie