

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.

Dear Friends,

It was after midnight when Cee and I arrived at the hotel in my old hometown. We'd agreed set aside time to talk after our class reunion's dinner and program. Restaurants were dark as we drove to my room at one edge of town. Even the hotel's facilities were closed. We sat in the car and tried to think what to do. "Want to come up to my room for a cup of tea?" I offered, "I have decaf ..."

"OK," Cee said and pushed open her car door.

I buzzed us in with my plastic key card and together we climbed stairs to my room. There I set a pot of water to drip in the coffeemaker. As it snorted softly, I walked to the windows and pulled the drapes against the bright bluish safety light nearby. Cee crossed the room to sit in a chair at one end of the windows. I returned to get cups for tea. Over my shoulder said, "I don't know why I come back to class reunions... I have missed only one in 40 years. I come back every five years..."

I learned one process to answer such questions in preparing for my recent pilgrimage to Ireland. A major factor is preparation. First, I identified my question for the trip and concentrated on it as my mind turned more and more to the visit ahead. Then I recalled the question as I traveled. Further, I spoke of it to others during my journey. Last, I was open for the "answer."

I recited the "think-of-a- question" part to Cee as I poured hot water over our tea bags. Cee only crossed her legs to one side and raised her eyebrows a little.

My question for this trip was, *Why do I come back to class reunions?"*

"So, did you find an answer?" she asked.

I frowned as I handed her a styrofoam cup of steaming brew. I shook my head, "Not yet..."

Now a week later I wonder, if perhaps my question for the reunion *has* been answered. The question I took to Ireland *was*. That reply was symbolic, carried through an Irish saint's story. Still, it was still a clear explanation for the *calling* I wrote about in February '02. I am still pondering the story's images for words to explain my answer—and for its implications.

It seems questions I ask The Universe are seldom "answered" in a way I clearly understand. Most *answers* do not relate to direct action. *Getting* "answers" is satisfying; yet understanding them can be *frustrating*.

Past experience said somewhere there waited a response to my reunion question. Some image, emotion, or word held the answer. I knew I must listen.

Seated at my computer, I stopped typing. I sat still and paid attention. I heard the electronic hum of my computer. Through my open door, I heard cars swish by on the rain-wet street. I took a deep breath and exhaled. Through that listening / breath /time-space answer appeared.

Author, psychiatrist and seeker Scott Peck writes in, *Journey to the Stones*, that reasons for situations, and life events are "over- determined." This means there is no *one* reason anything happens, rather *many* influences come to play in *all events*: mental, physical and emotional.

Now I knew a few explanations for attending the 2002 reunion. For one thing, I travel-ed there to prove I am well enough to make the trip. Another reason is self-affirmation. Attending said, *I have made it this far*. I've survived what life dealt me.

Last is a more worldly component. Months before the event, I chose my dress for the dinner and the program. Later, tried it on to see if it still fit. When I stood before the long mirror and gazed on my image, I saw a stranger. The style and look was aspect of myself I had not seen. I smiled. The look said, "Don't count me out yet!"

I am a mental, physical and spiritual survivor of the class of 1962. I am blessed.

Frances Fritzie

Frances, Editor adds, " For other notes on my reunion, see the website after Nov. 20. ...This is the last issue of Ninepatch for this year. Attached to the end is our annual "Readers' Gift: a game. We hope you enjoy it!"

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

(Letters to the Editor)

Dear Frances,

I have a couple of comments from the 9-11 Tragedy Reflection newsletter, Oct.'02.

First Georgene said, *Time does have a way of beating back mourning so hope can lessen the pain.* I think this is true as I struggle though my husband's increasing illnesses. I look forward to time smoothing the way for my husband and me so hope can *smile* on us!

I am *thankful*. He had a mild stroke. He is also insulin dependent and has a heart block-age, but he can still walk, talk and he isn't paralyzed. I can count our blessings!

Second, I was struck by something Gail said in the same issue. She said, *I am blessed to be aware that I need to practice loving understanding with those at the end of my nose.*

I need to work on that. I was upset with the neurologist I took my husband to see. He was trying to put a guilt trip on me, because I did not take my husband to the emergency room or call 911. It didn't matter to the doctor I had no idea what was *wrong*. I decided I did not ever want to take my husband back to that neurologist after the follow-up was done. I had a note to that effect put in my husband's file at his regular doctor's office.

When I discussed this whole matter with a nurse friend down the street. She said, "Mary, you did the best you could with the information that you had." Now, when I think of the blame thing, I just repeat her words to myself.

Much love,
MM

MM (Sept. '02) adds, "If you have an extra prayer, please use it on us!"

November-December 2002

Dear Frances,

I enjoyed reading your newsletter, *Ninepatch*. I feel compelled to respond to one passage in particular. In the piece, "From This Vantage Point" Christa said,

Pain won't heal without a degree of normalcy, and normal, for us New Yorkers, is the reality of a jostle on the subway or a casually waved middle finger. After the shock wore off, and the fear gradually changed from constant vigilance to a persistent nebulous caution, I watched my city slowly get back into its original groove.

I just went home to NYC this past weekend and was shocked with how its groove is no longer it's "Original."

Growing up in the city, the rhythm was natural for me. It's how I've learned to live my life. However, every time I have been back since Sept 11 '01, I've looked for that normalcy and – I agree--it seems to have disappeared.

While New Yorkers are resilient and appear to have returned to their "normal" life with their "original" sense of urgency, I have noticed change. People now take the time to look at each other. Whether this is to size their neighbor up to measure their potential of threat or if it's just to take in their surroundings, New Yorkers have popped the bubble that they are used to traveling in.

Yes, they are still traveling at top speeds, but small things make them stop dead in their tracks. When I was on the subway this past weekend, a woman dropped her stroller which was folded up next to her seat. It hit the floor with a small sharp sound of impact. The entire car jumped to attention.

A little more than a year ago, those who were dozing wouldn't have flinched. Those who were in mid-conversation wouldn't have missed a beat. I'm not sure how I feel about this change. I am realizing that New Yorkers are starting to live in a community where they are more aware of their surroundings. I guess, in a way, we are finally stopping to smell the flowers.

Athena

Athena is single and recently graduated from college. One thing she does in her free time is take additional classes. Presently, she is taking an accounting class and volunteering at a children's hospital.

Dear Frances,

I have been thinking about you a lot over the last week. I hope your trip to Ireland was (See top, next.) fantastic and a spiritual joy!

The days are getting shorter and already I am whining. I remember when we moved here from Michigan I laughed at folks' complaints about short days. They have at least an hour more daylight here than in I had in Michigan. Now I am here over a year I find, however, it doesn't take long to want more and more.

I loved Sherryl's article in September's *Ninepatch*. There she wrote about turning her energy from years of inner work psychotherapy. She channeled it into a burst of outer movement in her life. As I wrote in October '02, in my 9-11 reflection, my emotions have *morphed into a renewed determination to get over it and move on.*

I think that was much the point of Sherryl's article. I heard her say, *Go ahead and give in to all you have to in order to work something through, but when your resolve rises, take advantage and shift from immersing yourself in the problem, or resting beside it, to making a change that makes a difference for next time.*

I have to learn to seize those moments of strength because it's easy to choose to only rest when I am not fighting the mire. But if all I do is rest -- not much changes. I've generally found that I can make a number of little changes and still have time to rest between mourning, or dealing with any problem.

It's clear that I need rest, too.

Peace.

Georgene

Georgene (Oct. '02) says, "Our Bible study group will not start again until October. It feels like I've got a lot of free time since there is no study to prepare for. Of course, I could study anyway but, like exercising, I do better on the buddy system. "

Hi Fritzie –

Sorry for the "time out". I couldn't sit down to write be-cause I felt like I didn't have any words worth saying! You are on the money – I am not ill, but running on low and messed up in the head with depression from lots of garbage and who knows what else. It is getting better at the moment.

I am grateful for your note. I do get lost in time warps and try to figure out what I have been doing and why do I shut myself off from the good stuff that can help me live more happily. My mantra is *The Joy of the Lord is my strength*. I must say it all day every day!

I think I am coming out of this one, gradually. Please think of me!

Love

CJ

CJ (April '02) adds, "Mostly, I am just so sick of pondering about what to do, I just keep d-ing nothing, and we both know that will get me nowhere! I am telling myself to remember that God has always had a plan for me and I need to tap into prayer and listen for those next steps."

Dear Frances,

I am trying to remember all I wanted to tell you. I do have the best forgetter, so I what I remember I will put down.

First of all, I almost brought my northern cat home. You will remember that's the kitty I found at the camping area three summers ago. Back then my husband said I could not take it home. He reminded me I already had a cat --Bandit-- back home. So when it was time to return to Florida, we left the kitty with a nice young couple I met through the church. I visited the kitty last year when we were up north. She still remembered me. It was hard to leave it again. I cried.

This year, we went to see the kitty again, and she remembered me. I know because she turned herself inside out on my lap, purring. While visiting, we learned the young couple is moving away. He going to study for the ministry.

Now that my cat Bandit died last year after being terribly injured (I wrote you about that, too.) I asked my husband if I could take the kitty home. My husband said, *No problem. We'll bring it home*. Then he changed his mind because of the heat in Florida and, of course, what happened to the other cat— we still don't know how those terrible injuries happened.

Finally, my mind was put at rest. A younger brother of the pastor-to-be will take care of the kitty. This will be an even better living arrangement since she will have the run of the house and also be able to go outside.

Even though I don't know if we will be able to travel north another summer since we are getting so old (but then I say that every year.) Possibly, I will possibly never see the camp-ground kitty again, but I am at peace with her life. I know she will be happy.

Margy

Margy (Mar. '02) adds, "...I really enjoyed the recipe Ninepatch. In fact, I filled out the yellow sheet about recipes but never got it sent while we were away..." (Watch for this in Jan. 2003!) Editor's note: Are there any more recipe responses out there? Better late than never! Send them in!

Dear Frances,

In an e-mail you said you tended to get a little sad as day-light hours dwindle. To that I say, *Don't we all!* That is the process of moving into the coming winter, isn't it? Even in those states where there is not a hard winter, I think it is good to observe *Grandmother Earth's* feeling of winter--death in the ground and rest for a time. In cycles of watching *Grandmother* we know we have Her granddaughter, *Spring*, to look forward to. Life will burst in its fullest again.

Cat

Cat (Oct. '02) says, "I've been busy repainting the house I live in now and the last of my road trips are ahead of me."

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

THANKSGIVING WITH
MY AUNT SUSIE

When I was a child, our family would gather for big holiday dinners at my grandmother's house. The cooking was shared almost equally between my mother and her older sister, Susie. Their "baby sister" Minnie contributed little. My grandmother didn't cook much anymore except for plain food for herself and my granddaddy.

Plans for holidays became a fierce competition between my mother and Aunt Susie. Each believed herself to be the better cook, and also thought she did most of the work. Both scorned the efforts of the other.

Although Mother cooked some dishes at home we always went early to Grandmother's where Mother took charge of the kitchen for the final preparations. Daddy helped carry the pots and boxes of fixings to the kitchen. Then he stretched out the dining table and put in the extra leaves.

My sister and I set the table, then hung around for other chores.

When the tempting smells wafting from the kitchen became almost overpowering, I was sent to the front porch to watch for Aunt Susie and Uncle Cecil who lived only about a hundred yards away. When I saw them loading the car, I ran back down the long hall to the kitchen with this bulletin. That was the signal to put ice into the glasses and pour the tea. My mother and my aunts carried the last steaming, savory dishes to the table.

By this time, my aunt's loud and angry complaining announced their arrival. She wanted everyone to know how hard she had worked to produce the delicious- smelling turkey and cornbread dressing. (My

mother always held that the dressing had too much sage.) There was dead silence, during this commotion as we waited for Aunt Susie’s tantrum to pass.

My granddaddy was a gentle, humble man who had lost control of the four women in his household many years earlier. When everyone finally settled at the table, Granddaddy looked all around. Perhaps he was grateful for a moment of peace. Then he bowed his head and prayed.

After the rituals of passing food and serving plates, about half way through the meal, a little tentative conversation began. By the time we were ready for dessert, Aunt Susie was laughing and talking as if her earlier tirade never happened.

Confused, I watched the family drama every year--trying to understand. It just seemed an inevitable part of having Thanksgiving with my Aunt Susie.

June (Apr.02) says: “Now I am the baker of turkey and dressing for my family. I ask myself, ‘Years from now, will my children and grandchildren recall my grumbling as one of the things they hated about holidays?’ Yes,-- possibly; but I can CHANGE that. Now I understand that I have a choice.”

SONG OF GRATITUDE

I am reminded in the beauty of each day the importance of beginning with three attitudes: gratitude, humility and trust. It is so easy to get bogged down in the fear of injustice and environ-mental destruction ... or attitude of not enoughness of whatever. I must stay connected to gratitude for the beauty and goodness each day holds and for what has been provided in the miracle of life.

Humility is remembering that I do not carry the world on my shoulders; I only carry what is given me and am given who and what I need to do my part. This requires trust that a larger wisdom is working things out in Her own way and time toward the greatest possible goodness for all. No matter how tough it gets, I will have what I need to make it through.

Yes, today, and every day Love is present in each cell of my body, in each molecule I breathe! Just to exist is to experience Love’s presence whether I realize it or not. Only my mind can separate me from it by fear or unawareness.

May we, this day and every day, give our minds, hearts and bodies this message so that we will naturally respond to the Spirit’s healing work in us and through us, knowing we will be given every-thing we need in every circumstance we face.

Yes, it is a matter of attitude and discipline to stay open to the gifts. May it be so!

Julie D. Keefer (Mar. '02) of Morningstar Adventures, a retreat center in central Michigan wrote this for their recent newsletter. She adds, “Friend Mary Weber sent me an inspired message received as she awoke one morning, You are lovable and loved by your existence alone. Nothing else is required.

To that, I say, Amen.”

A DETROIT WOMEN’S CONFERENCE
STARRING OPRAH

A Women's Conference on October 5, 2002 was hosted and emceed by Marianne Williamson. She is the spiritual leader of Renaissance Unity in Detroit, Michigan. The gathering was a powerful experience. Five thousand tickets were sold. (Never saw so many women in one place!)

Marianne prayed with us and added facts about women's right to vote. She pointed out that there were forty-two years between the time Susan B. Anthony first introduced the Women's Suffrage "right to vote" movement and the date the 19th Amendment was ratified.

Anne Lamott was also onstage. She was winsome in working her sobriety. She was very funny and spoke from the heart. She capitalized on her undisciplined habits of living: being indecisive, uncomprehending of financial concepts and out-of-luck with long-term relationships. (I can identify!) I want to buy her nonfiction books: Bird by Bird, and Traveling Mercies.

An intellectual, writer devoted to critical consciousness and awareness of oneself and society, bell hooks says the love ethic changes the world. (No mistake about the uncapitalized name. bell said it is her commitment to her ideas that led her to decapitalize her name. That, and the fact that "bell hooks" was her grandmother's name and there-fore, her pseudonym. This explanation puzzles me because, if anything, it draws attention to her *name* instead of her books.)

She said, "Tell your daughters they can have it all, not necessarily all at the same time or in the order they want it." She added, "Ask your sons what is in your heart." She said that there is a collective hunger for male love. "...we (women) must name the intensity of our loss."

Julia "Butterfly" Hill who sat in a Sequoia tree for a year to protest logging was next to speak. Among other things, she advised, "Step out of your disposability consciousness."

Taking the microphone after Marianne was Senator Debbie Stabenow who was there, to read the Sawyer poem, "One," written following 9/11. (It appears at the very end of this issue.)

Riane Eisler stepped up next and talked about Partner-ship/Dominance paradigms. She pointed out six efforts we can make to accelerate the shift to partnership living:

1. *Stop the intimate violence. (Violence is often a matter of degree in the home or the family. Stop the in-fighting.)*
2. *Educate for partnership parenting.*
3. *Educate to broaden minds. (It is important, period.)*
4. *Work to raise the status of women worldwide. (She said the status of women is a better indicator of a country's health than its GNP.)*
5. *Give visibility to (recognize) care-giving, whether with children or the elderly. (Work to change the system economically, to promote paid parental leave.)*
6. *Change basic belief structure. (One way is to promote giving- life images as opposed to taking- life images.)*

Riane has researched, written and taught extensively. She is a survivor of the Nazi invasion of Austria because of her mother's strength and courage in Vienna. She wrote The Chalice and the Blade, a book believed by some to be the best since Darwin's The Origin of the Species.

Rachel Bagby chanted for us twice. She used the strength of her voice to invoke the stirring of our hearts, moving us to know our own importance in teaching our daughters. We called their names. We used the sound of "Ah." Rachel said, "Ah opens the heart."

Oprah, who by the way looked fabulous, appeared last. She said that we need to be full of ourselves. She said she was always afraid to be full of herself, but now her flower is opening. She added, "It's the shadow beliefs (those we don't *see*) that press us down and hold us back. We need to look at them." For example, she told her story. As a young woman, she believed a comment her father made to her while she was weighing herself in the bath-room. When he saw her he said, "You might as well forget that; you're going to be big -- look at your mother, she's big; look at your sisters, your aunts; they're all big."

Oprah said she believed that all her 48 years. Then she exhorted us to examine several questions: why we came to the conference: why we were here, and why we were on the planet.

The conference left me with much to think about, and a lot to do. I'm starting by contributing to the local paper today, responding to, "Who inspires in my life", a question to the readers. I'm telling them about the conference.

Gail (Oct. '02) adds, "This experience has led me to activism. In addition to what I said above, I wrote about unsung heroes in "Program" meetings around the world. This is kinship therapy through common suffering. A third action I took was to e-mail another editor in support of Bradsher's book a-bout dangerous SUVs. A fourth letter was to Michigan Senator Stabenow about war."

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(Ninepatch Business)

WEBSITE COMMENTS

The other day, I was looking over our Bravenet counter information. (They also handle our forum.) Their statistics showed we are getting-- on Average-- two website visitors a day. I know, not very impressive, but it's something.

Our webhost, DrakNet, also sends me a regular report on traffic to the page. Their statistics are much more optimistic. However, those reports record every time someone tries to access our online files. (See next.) This includes hackers, search engines and just about everyone else. The result is their numbers are *much* larger. It's sometimes hard to imagine real visitor counts. I tend to be conservative in relation to numbers.

Concerning the site as a whole, I think creating *Ninepatch Online* has been a slow, yet rewarding process. Over the past two years (and some) we've gone through a number of changes. First, and most noticeably, we've changed our look a few times. We've tried new things. For example, there's a spiritual interest poll where one can vote (then see the totals) and added features. An example of this is a scrapbook where members can share photos.

Now are we settled on a layout and style. This combination has won rave reviews from Internet development and design email lists.

Less visibly, we've hosted the site with a two different host companies. The current host, DrakNet, is the more economical and offers the best features. It looks like the one we'll stay with.

While the site still gets only a couple of visitors a day, the work to get the site known is on-going. A few of the ways we have reached out are: joining web rings, listing ourselves with search engines, and adding branded content.

My own personal highpoint for the site had been the addition of the prayer circle to the forum. I felt this was a great move! I like to allow folks like me who live far and wide, to feel involved with other *Ninepatchers*.

My own hope for the future is that all *Ninepatchers* will take advantage of the site's features. I can see readers sending photos to our on-line-album. I also envision a few articles and essays over and above what appears in the newsletter. For example, Frances, has gone on retreats. I wish she would write something about that type of experience for folks like me who've not had it.

Adding other experiences like conferences one attends or workshops would also help build the site. People all over the net would be interested in reading those kinds of things.

If readers have any other or related ideas they would like to see included, I am open to suggestion! Send them to Frances: Ninepatch9@AOL.com

TROR (Oct. '02)says, “Working on *Ninepatch* has been such a privilege! With life being so hectic, I don't have much time for writing letters or volunteering anymore. Bet, helping with *Ninepatch Online* gives me the hope that I'm helping someone in some small way. Thanks all!

MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR

Dear *Ninepatch* Readers,

It has been a blessing to serve *Ninepatch* as Membership Coordinator the last couple of years, but now it is time for me to move on to other things. My wish is that one of you in our circle will come forward to fill this area of service.

With the change of renewals to just twice each year, I hope I have made the job easier for the next volunteer. Here's how it will work as I exit the position. If you renew your subscription in January you will receive one more note from me, then it will be time for me to turn over my records.

I want to thank Frances and the Board for the opportunity to serve. I wish them and all of you continued renewal of spirit that I have found being part of *Ninepatch*.

Gratefully,
Kelly

Note: Kelly has been our first Membership Coodinator. She has served *Ninepatch* for two years.

As the previous membership person, I am very thankful to Kelly for creating a more streamlined system. I am also grateful to her for freeing more of my time. Kelly's records will go to the new volunteer. That person will also work with me on a regular basis to be sure my mailing labels—which contain membership data-- are correct.

If you might be interested and want to know more about the job please contact me.

Frances, Editor

COMING IN 2003

Tentatively set for February 2003, *Ninepatch* will include the theme, Miracles and Answered Prayer. My Webster's defines miracle: 1.an event that apparently contradicts known scientific laws 2.a remarkable thing.

For further consideration, my Roget's Thesaurus lists, under *miracle* 920.2, “wonder.” These nouns appear there: astonishment, amazement and marvel.

Also, I want to suggest starts like, It'd be a miracle if..., I thought only a miracle would..., and We prayed for a miracle...

We'll be watching for your letters, stories and poems!
Editor, Frances

SOUNDS

Waterfalls of voices

Tumbling downstream,
Angel songs on high
Raining down from out
the sky,
Bringing joy for you
and I,
Miracles of sound.

Phyllis (Sept. '02) Phyllis died in January of 2002. This poem is from Frances' private collection.

**HOLIDAY GIFT-
GIVING**

Is there someone on your holiday list you would like to send *Ninepatch*? If so, just send us the person's name, address and the usual \$15-35 suggested donation.

Ninepatch will send our SAMPLE issue (Jan. 1999), a note welcoming them and also include a gift card.

Editor's Note:

The following poem is by Dr. Cheryl Sawyer, University of Houston, Clear Lake. It was read at the Detroit Women's Conference.

ONE

As the soot and dirt and ash rained
down
we became one color.
As we carried each other down the
stairs of the
burning building
we became one class.
As we lit candles of waiting and hope
we became one generation.
As the firefighters and police officers fought their
way into the inferno
we became one gender.
As we fell to our knees in prayer for
strength
we became one faith.
As we whispered or shouted words of
encouragement
we spoke one language.

As we gave our blood in lines a mile
long
we became one body.
As we mourned together the great
loss
we became one family.
As we cried tears of grief and loss
we became one soul.
As we retell with pride of the
sacrifice of heroes
we became one people.
We are

one color
one class
one generation
one gender
one faith
one language
one body
one family
one soul
one people

We are the Power of One.
We are United.
We are America.

The IRS recognizes Ninepatch, Inc. as a nonprofit corporation, category 501c3.

(Documentation is available for a small fee on request. Addresses are below.)

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