

October 2002: Reflections on our 9-11 National Tragedy

Ninepatch
Stitch - by - Stitch
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Editor's Note: Each month in this space I share a recent experience on my spiritual journey.

October 2002

Dear Friends,

A rusty-hinged, long-closed door in my mind was jolted by the Twin Tower explosions and creaked open. Before terrorists struck and maimed the United States, that door was closed and forgotten. I felt *safe* in here. But only here.

I denied foreign travel. It was *not safe*. For example, several years ago, I shook my head in dismay when a friend and her father excitedly planned travel to the Holy Land. *Why would they go there?* I frowned, *People were shooting each other*

Then, in the aftermath of our attack, I realized I was not even safe here. If I had any notion to travel, it was time do it. Once my closed door – *Safety in the US* -- stood ajar, I obtained my first passport. Later, I joined a pilgrimage to Ireland and was even there over September 11 of this year.

My initial anxiety/ disillusionment/ sadness/ dismay at the attack on America transformed my personal safety fears. They became instead, hopes for inner adventure.

And, I was not disappointed.

I am blessed.***

Frances Fritzie

Frances, Editor adds, "This special issue of Ninepatch is dedicated to the Tragedy of 9-11-01. In it readers report changes in their lives over the past year."

- - - - A-R-O-U-N-D - - T-H-E - - F-R-A-M-E- -
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(Letters to the Editor)

Dear Frances,

My reflections on 9/11? It hardly seems possible that a year ago we felt our world teetering on the edge of war. No one knew what tomorrow might bring, if tomorrow ever came. Now, a year later, I look back at 9/11 and ask myself what the year has brought.

For me, it's meant a number of changes. I never saw myself as a fighter, and was never overly concerned with civil or religious rights. Now, after the terrible acts of retaliation we saw perpetrated against Muslims --and others foreign to the Canadian and American culture -- I feel a strengthening of my desire to know and understand others. I want to stand up for their rights as well as my own-- even if that means facing opposition.

9/11 too, brought an awareness of the fact that tomorrow is never guaranteed. I need to live for today... This has made me more apt to reach for the stars, to try for the things I want in life while I have the chance. And, it's reminded me to say things like, *Thank you* and, *I love you*. As the psychic medium John Edward often counsels, people need to, "communicate, appreciate and validate our loved ones today...!" (That way, we won't need the services of a medium like him to do it later!)

On the negative side, that day of disaster and the months that followed deepened my cynicism toward politicians and governments. I feel a similar way toward organized religion, as well as certain charitable organizations. Just the other day I read that the vast majority of the blood collected by the Red Cross for New York was destroyed, while money donated for affected families of the tragedy was channeled elsewhere.

I shake my head and wonder, *Has it really been a year?*

<Sigh>

TROR

TROR (July-Aug. '02) says, "Well, I can tell you one thing for sure about 9-11: I did not watch TV on the anniversary. I just couldn't face those images again. Last year they were burned into all my brain by networks showing them ad nauseum."

Dear Frances,

I know you were in Ireland the first part of September so you missed the 9/11 remembrance day. Lots to absorb and lots to remember. It was a roller coaster ride of fear and pride.

It was a hard day ... but for me, in a good way. Like any sad defining moment in life, the year anniversary offered a day of melting into familiar mourning. Yet, since time had passed, the softness of mourning did not last as long.

Love,

Georgene

Georgene (Sept. '02) comments, "Time has a way of beating back mourning so hope can surface to lessen the pain."

Hi Fritzie!

Today I gave this response to someone who requested a prayer for a person who died on 9/11/01.

May his remembrance reassure you of the good that can be found on this planet.

After I wrote that, I thought that all humanity endures suffering and that all humanity inflicts that suffering upon itself. Everyone suffers when an individual entity seeks it's own good at the expense of another entity. The result is pain for everyone.

I also considered that people of all faith communities have something in common, that is *their faith*. Therefore, I also added this prayer:

Let us pray that world leaders come to realization that all nations have common ground.

Let us pray that people become more sensitive to those of other faiths.

Let us pray that political leaders refrain from dividing believers and corralling individual groups to support their own agenda.

Lee (June '02) adds, "I have done much reflecting on the spirituality of other peoples. I don't have much more to add about 9/11/01 except to say I am somewhat disappointed with the way things are going right now. I believe that I can understand how The Lord must have felt when he walked the earth. "

*

Dear Frances:

A time of the tragedy that affected people not only in New York City and the United States of America but the world at large was created by what transpired that morning of 9-11- 2001.

In my job working on the subway platform of the Trade Center (Fulton St. Station on Uptown Platform, Trains 4-5) I am still seeing many people, some from as far as China, who are coming to view what is now known as *Ground Zero*. They can't really see it very well now because the viewing platform has been removed to begin the process of rebuilding. The plan to rebuild goes on even though many people I talk to-- who since have reluctantly returned to work in the area-- have strong objections to rebuilding *anything* on the former site of the World Trade Center.

Our mayor, Mr. Bloomberg, has asked churches, synagogues and mosques to open their doors for part of the memorial services that will be planed in Lower Manhattan on September 11, 2002. A lot of my customers tell me they plan to take the day off. They just cannot bear to be in the area on that day.

Many are remembering what the disaster felt like to them--the end of the world. Those who made it out of the World Trade Center remember hearing and seeing bodies falling to the ground, and friends separated from one another never to see each other again. I see tears of gratitude mixed with sadness for the co-workers who never made it out at all. They weep for families of the victims and their children who will never hear the voices or the footsteps of their loved ones again.

Yes, Frances 9-11 is a day the world will never forget-- a day that we will recall to our grandchildren and great grand children. It is the day two domestic planes flew into the twin towers. That day changed the way we as Americans live and experience our freedom.

God Bless all of you and God Bless America!

Egeria

*Egeria (June '02) adds, "On Labor Day I thought, '...what a difference one year makes! People are so apprehensive about what is happening and how it will affect them. Many are dislocated as a result of the events of 9-11. There is much depression and I have to admit I feel a bit down myself every now and then. On 9-12, I want to look with hope on the new plans to develop what was once known as the World Trade Center. I hope the area will begin anew and thus give people of NY and the world something to look forward to." ******

Dear Frances,

I have reprioritized my life since 09/11/01. I almost never watch the news. I know that if anything truly important occurs, I'll find out about it when and if necessary. I feel sorry for the news executives: they still continue to try to manufacture a sense of urgency to justify wasting my time.

Both 9/11 and my recent hospitalization, underscored how important my time with family and friends is to my life. I pray for God's guidance in my own life, and for the world's leaders, but I find my focus is inward toward my own spiritual development. After all, that is also the focus of *The Prayer of St. Frances* (below) to change my own behavior in order to have the most positive effect on the people I may impact.

To me, the most important help I can offer is a gentle, caring heart.
Blessings to everyone,
Joy

Joy (April '02) adds, "My health is improving and I am able to do more. I look forward to having my old level of energy and strength back! It is so hard to deal with new limitations."

The Prayer of St. Francis

*Lord make me an instrument of
Thy Peace--*

*Where there is hatred, I may
bring Love*

*Where there is wrong, I may
bring the Spirit of
forgiveness;*

*That where there is discord, I
may bring harmony;*

*Where there is error, I may bring
truth;*

Where there is doubt, I may bring faith;

*Where there is despair, I may bring
hope;*

*Where there are shadows, I may bring
light;*

*Where there is sadness, I may bring
joy;*

*Lord, grant that I may seek rather to
comfort than to be comforted;*

*To understand, than to be understood
To Love, than to be Loved:*

*For it is by self-forgetting that one
finds;
It is by forgiving that one is forgiven;
It is by dying that one awakens to
Eternal Life."*

Hi Frances,

Last year in October my husband and I were trying to decide whether to risk driving to the east coast as we had originally planned. I'm glad now that we went East and wish we had at least tried to also see NY.

We are planning to do NY in the near future and we are pleased that New Yorkers are *going on*. Time does not stand still and we all need to move on.

Vicki

Vicki (May '02) adds, " Around my part of Indiana, we live in a small community of about 500 people. We have a reservoir not far away. Nowadays, we see signs around that say, Call 911 if you see anyone messing with the water. So things have changed here, also.

Dear Frances,

I look at what I wrote in the October '01 issue and I am amazed. It has been almost a year already.

Since that time, my youngest son graduated from college and went to NY to live with his grandmother (my mother-in-law.) There, he works for an uncle.

Trips from CA, where I live, to NY are more serious these days. The waits are longer, the airports less "fun." I had my knitting challenged on the last flight and I had a *circular plastic* needle. I was also pulled aside for those "random" checks-- *twice*. (I have learned not to wear high boots because they are difficult to get back on.)

On one trip there, my husband went to see the Trade Center while we were in NY City. I didn't want to go. I hate the term "war" even *war on terrorism*. I keep thinking there has to be a better way to deal with the problem, something more civilized, some way of dealing with the real problems of poverty and ignorance. There must be something other than a bomb. Maybe I feel this way because at work I try to teach parents who spank their children (for hitting) that there are more effective ways to deal with misbehavior.

So, to sum it up, today, I am more likely to speak my mind and less likely to sit back and expect someone else to say it for me. That's a little piece of personal growth.

Corinne

Corinne (Jan. '02) says, "I don't look forward to all the "remember the terrible day" stories that will be everywhere in September.

Dear Frances,

9-11 showed me we are not “super strong.” America can be hurt: as a nation and as a people. Not everyone loves America: the land of freedom, the land of hopes and dreams.

Something like this can happen to us and it *did* happen to us. At first I thought, “It is a stunt—an ad for a movie. Things like this *don’t* happen to *us*. Everyone loves America.” (Continued below.)

When I realized it was real, I thought it was the end of the world. The Lord was coming to claim his own. These days I pray more. I thank the Lord for every day. I try to learn more about life and more about the Bible. What *is* to come?

LindaSue

Linda Sue (Sept. '02) adds, “ I had a gall bladder attack. I missed three days of work and had tests. I may have to have it out. I have had surgery so many times, for so many different reasons. ‘What next?’ I wonder. Well, I know the Lord watches over me. Mom always used to say, ‘ Everything happens for a reason.’ We shall see...”

*

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

(Our Experiences)

GRIEF AFTER ONE YEAR

I just read my John’s obituary. It seems that it says so little about the man I knew and loved. How can you encapsulate a person’s life history into an obituary notice in a fitting manner. It’s not something I have done often since I lost my husband, August 3, 2001.

But our anniversary is coming up next week and that awful day I lost him will be edging its way to the first year soon. I have tried not to give myself too much time to reflect on his loss. Then other times tried to embrace it. There are so many ways grief changes a person and their attitude towards life and others.

Last year I wrote for the Oct. ’01 issue, but used the name, “Amy” since the unfolding story of my husband ’s death was not yet finished in *Ninepatch*. This year, Frances asked me to think of something I might like to reflect on concerning that 9/11 disaster. All I could think about was grief. I knew their grief.

While I watched those tapes that fateful day over and over and over. My stomach became sick, my heart hurt, my head ached, my ears filled with the imagined sobs and moans of those who lost someone. That day, that minute, within such few precious seconds on a timepiece, the depth and quantity of loss that was experienced drove so many to grieve. The year that has passed has no doubt changed the lives of every individual who was touched by that grief.

Perhaps it was a parent, a child, a distant relative, a rescue worker, or a sensitive person who would be affected by this terrible disaster through empathy. Like those of us who grieve a loss of someone close, the ones touched by 9/11 have been grappling with the same emotions of loss, despair, hope, and continuation all wrapped up in one. Last night I saw the wives of some of the bravest men history will record, on a stage in front of thousands of people., smiling, bravely reading tributes, waving--continuing on. It was a touching moment but what I saw in it was reality. Some leave us...die...and some must stay ...alive. Those of us who continue on do so bravely; marking time and making our own history.

Cat (July-Aug. '02) adds, " While I continue to move on with MY life: church, friends, family, hobbies and activities, I have the thoughts of loss and grief of 9/11 still present in my daily life and I can tell it has touched others deeply and is reflected in THEIR approach to life and others also.

FROM THIS VANTAGE POINT

On September 11, 2001 there was a clear, blue sky coupled with the unified grief of much of the world: an ironic patch of weather that seemed to emphasize the importance of *living* life. Suddenly, New York City's own crass and hard-boiled citizenry (to which I belong) was reigning in its temper and showing a lot of heart.

My experiences progressed in much the same way, on a smaller scale. I'd drifted apart from my friends months before, looking for "something else," but with the falling of the towers I rediscovered them.

Walking down the Brooklyn Promenade on September 12th, staring at the plume of smoke rising from the wreckage, I felt I'd never cared for anyone more than at that moment. Not only did I care for my friends, but for all of New York. We were all just people, united by our pride, fear and anger. I felt like I was holding onto my old friends, and they were safe and warm.

Some people predicted the beginning of a whole new social climate in New York. But that was shortsighted. 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.

Examining the bonds I had forged with old friends, I realized that comfort had been of paramount importance, but convalescence was not meant to be permanent. I had been reminded of the need for togetherness, but I wanted togetherness built on a foundation stronger than sadness. So I also slipped back into day- to- day living and went back to looking for whatever the *something else* is.

I've asked myself if the courtesies, caring and bonds formed post-September 11th were any less genuine because they were inspired by catastrophe. The answer is of course, *No*. Everything we did in those months after the bombings was important to our sanity. New Yorkers needed to hold onto each other and to be useful. It was very beautiful.

But today, the sounds of children's heckling compared to the dusty silence, or the sight of lovers walking hand-in-hand along the riverside, unafraid of terror-attacks: this is more beautiful still.

Christa (Sept. '02) continues to seek employment in magazines or the publishing industry while trying her hand at submit-ting article queries. When not being responsible, she is enjoying traveling around the country.

NINE ELEVEN PLUS ONE

It's been almost a year since that tragic day. As I follow the news I am not reassured by the security measures taken by our government. We live in a volatile world, and there is almost nothing I, as an ordinary citizen, can do to protect myself and my loved ones, other than take sensible precautions.

It seems easy for me to say that we must go on with our lives in spite of constant threats, because it is not for MY life that I fear. I live in a rural area--an unlikely target for terrorists. When a loved one is flying somewhere, I am anxious and prayerful.

THIS is the lesson from nine-eleven: NOW is the time to apologize, to make amends, to help and to heal. THESE are the moments of our lives--THESE are the times to draw near, to share, to comfort, to trust and to express our love and gratitude to those who are close to us.

June (July-Aug. '02) says, "Reinhold Niebuhr says it well in less well known lines of the 'Serenity Prayer,'

...Living one day at a time,
Enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardships as the pathway to Peace.
Taking, as He did, this sinful world\
As it is, not as we would have it. "

DURING THE YEAR AFTER 9-11

As I began to regain my mental, physical and spiritual health in the 12-step program 31 years ago, I wanted desperately to share my newfound knowledge and inspiration with the world.

I felt a similar heart pull following our international tragedy on September 11 last year. I wanted to count, to do something noteworthy -- significant-- to join the American front to improve world understanding and peace.

I have prayed to be in the right place at the right time doing the right thing -- just as I did in my early sobriety. I do believe I am there, just as I was years ago. Then, it was keeping my nose to the grindstone, taking care of my family, working in a good job responsibly. I was always trying to improve our situation and to maintain my spiritual life. It was the basis of my second chance.

Today I am working in an assisted- living facility, both in the office and on the Life Enrichment Staff. In the latter capacity, I am newsletter editor with free reign to provide a

sense of family for both residents and staff. I provide a positive uplifting message, sharing the life stories of those who live there and those who serve there. It is soul enrichment for all of us. It is where I belong.

I know very well that I, as a microcosm of world citizenry, had to suffer the pain of surrendering my wants and desires to a power greater than myself. This is true for me and necessary--at some level-- for most of us.

Gail (June '02) adds, " I am blessed to be aware that I need to practice loving understanding with those at the end of my nose."

PEACE IS WITHIN

Today it is seven weeks away from the anniversary of the Terrorist Attack on America, our dear country, September 11, 2001. I have felt many life-changing events in the past year. A few were: selling a home in one state, buying a home in Florida, respiratory illness over three months, then life-threatening emergency surgery just this past May. I am not scared of dying from terrorists. I have made an early peace with my God. I pray for peace for all hearts and souls who find it hard to accept the inevitable: we are born to die.

My only peace comes from within, knowing that He loves us unconditionally. All the possessions and "stuff" I feel I must have just doesn't matter. The world will never live in peace. It is only within me that I can look forward to beautiful sunrise and sunset.

God Bless America.

Joyce

Joyce (Oct. '02) adds, "I can only say what I feel. "

SINCE 9-11-01

My life does, indeed, feel changed. It feels similar to how I felt as a kid during the cold war in the late '50's and early '60's. "Mad Magazine" was popular back then. It featured the "Spy VS Spy" comic, which fascinated and repulsed me. These days, my husband and I have been watching old James Bond movies on TV. Now, I notice I question everybody's motives more, and I worry about computers and the abuse of artificial intelligence. For a time U.S. flags were waving on many cars. It looked like a rally for some college game and made me feel ashamed. Terrorism is not a game, and we don't need to enflame extremists.

We may have been attacked on our own soil, but for me the war is not about our nation. It's about the more fundamental issues of those who feel persecuted and those whose human needs are not being met. In terms of our own human needs, I've not yet fulfilled my pledge to give more to those in New York, Pennsylvania and Washington DC. I think they need more than money at this point. However, I have become more sensitive to the needs of others closer to home and those in my own community and am taking what action I can close to home.

My faith in God and the human race has deepened. I cling to principles embodied in the *Desiderata* and humbly do the best that I can, one day at a time.

Carol (Nov.-Dec. '01) says, " I'd like to share the Desiderata for those who are not familiar with it.

Desiderata
by Max Ehrmann, 1927

"Go placidly amid the noise and the haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible without surrender be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even to the dull and the ignorant; they too have their story.

Avoid loud and aggressive persons, they are vexatious to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain or bitter; for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself. Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans.

Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time. Exercise caution in your business affairs; for the world is full of trickery. But let not this blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals; and everywhere life is full of heroism.

Be yourself. Especially, do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment it is as perennial as the grass.

Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth.

Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness. Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself.

You are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.

Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be. And whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life keep peace in your soul.

With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy."

- - - - - **T-H-R-E-A-D** - - - - -
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(Our Knowing and our Spirituality)

ANOTHER DAY OF INFAMY, SEPT. 11, 2001

**Early Tuesday morning,
Death rained from the sky.**

EDITOR'S NOTE

Kindly note a change in the address of our website (listed in the box on page 3). Due to a grave misunderstanding with our web host, we lost our original address (name). In the confusion, our site was down for almost two months. All the while we tried to figure out what to do next.

Many thanks go to Lynn who doggedly e-mailed and asked questions until our problem was solved. Our new address is

<http://www.ninepatch9.org> (The "9" is new.) Take a look! It is even better than before!

Editor, Frances

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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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