

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.

September 2002

Dear Friends,

Sun shone and an easy moist breeze wafted palm fronds as I stepped outside and started up the street. To keep my mind off neighborhood houses and people's lives, I usually look down at the pavement as I step off my life. Walking on the very edge where sand often accumulates gives grit to many steps and helps me *feel* my process.

As I walk, I see bottle caps, wrappers, and cigarette butts, but also sometimes spot treasures. That morning I found *two* gifts from The Universe. First I spied, bent and picked up a clear glass marble, the color of my skin. Several steps later, I caught the glint of a penny and I stooped to nab it.

I check the date of pennies I find, and try to recall something from that year. That day the penny was dated 2002! I pondered, *Now...Today...Hmm.*

I looked at the clear marble. The sun glowed on it as I watched it in the palm of my hand. I walked farther. Then I turned back and the sun shone *through* the orb. Light intensified to create a bright star. That star was inside the marble's much larger shadow. The star and shadow shifted as I rolled the glass globe in my palm.

Hmm... That star reminded me of the ever-changing gift of *Ninepatch*. Our newsletter still features many varied writers who share their experiences, perspectives and interests. Our *star* also shifts as new people add their reading attention and a few also write in. This year we had eleven *new* voices:

Jim, Joyce, Mike, Patricia, CJ, Bill, Egeria, Mary Weber, Don, Lynan and Dottie.

These writers appeared with thirty -six "regulars" who shared letters, book reviews, stories and poems. (An up-dated index is available on-line and mailed on request.)

The larger shadow of the marble reminded me of *Ninepatch's* worldly *stuff*. One item is membership. Others include copying, mailing, email-issues, website, finances and planning. I am ever grateful to many volunteers.

First, our hugs go to *Gail, Kathryn, Georgene, MM, and Barbie* who give a personal touch to paper issues with their sticky notes. *June* keeps our finances orderly. (See report, last page.) *Kelly* sends membership reminders and keeps our subscription list. *Lynn/ TROR* single-handedly creates and maintains our website: www.ninepatch.org. OXOXOX to these charitable ladies!

Our Board, *June, Georgene, Kathryn,* and I biannually plot a future for *Ninepatch*. As we move into our *ninth* year, we consider many facts. Here are a few. Our readers live in seventeen states (See last page.) and Canada. Our collective experience ranges from young- and- single through various stages of married and divorced to widowed. Many readers are in various stages of child rearing and a few have no offspring. Sixty-one women and five men (paper *and* e-issue) read our pages. We appreciate readers' energy-- it keeps us going!

For the most part, this information is just “interesting.” Our *spiritual* concern – our *star*- transcends gender and age!

Thanks to *you* for being a ray of our light this year!

May The Universe continue to light our star!

Blessings***

Frances Fritzie

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

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(Letters to the Editor)

Dear Fritzie,

I just finished reading July-Aug. '02 *Ninepatch*. I thought it was a wonderful issue. How different everyone's response was—such individuality. You were naughty, stealing sugar cookies.

Shalom,

Kathryn

Kathryn (July-Aug. '02) adds, “Yesterday I attempted chocolate chip cookies. My mother made them so good I never competed. Since she had been dead ten years, I risked a try. Because I don't eat chocolate, I ate only two which I thought tasted like more.”

Frances,

Speaking of retreats, my employers sponsored one for all its employees recently. Interestingly, while the time with God was awesome, I'm struggling more with my fellow employees falling off the pedestal. I keep forgetting that people involved in ministry are human. I had expected this group to be really "mature" in their retreat habits. I planned to learn something from them as well as from God.

But you know, most of them were so tired that they slept. Another group was drawn off to talk, even though the retreat was designed to be silent. I know God can work anywhere and in any way, but those issues have created a little battle in me. And it brings up my old nemesis: being judgmental. That seems to be more of my lesson of the retreat than of gaining enlightenment from my personal time with God. I need to mull it around more and see what is revealed.

Georgene

Georgene (July-Aug. '02) reflects, "While I had a wonderful time with God, I'm still disappointed in myself for selfishly expecting to gain something from the way others chose to spend their time with God. This wasn't designed to be a community experience--so why did I even notice?"

PS. When I got my Ninepatch, the first thing I did was look for the recipes. Oh, those strawberry pancakes were out of this world! I didn't do everything low fat as suggested, though. The second thing I made was the apple cream pie. Lordy, what a sugar high. Way too sweet --but I'm ready to amend the recipe to my taste because it's a great one. I'll keep whittling on sugar in a few :-) Yum!"

Dear Frances,

Thank you very much for e-mailing me the June 2002 *Ninepatch* issue. If you don't mind me asking, what is the no-talking* retreat all about? I'm intrigued. Why does one go to one? What are they for?

Just curious!
All the best,
Christa

Christa Weber (Feb. '02) gives us a little up-date on her life," "I am currently traveling as much as I can to visit with friends while looking for a position as an assistant editor. I haven't had any job responses yet, but I'm not going to give up hope!"

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***Editor's note:** I am not positive about the purposes of silence. I experienced partial silence years ago during several previous retreats. Each held a different way of beholding life. I live alone, so I can have a lot of silence. However, my mind is active—thinking and talking to me. Outer quiet is not the same as the silence I experience in the presence of others who are also choosing it. Nor is it the same as short periods of intentional mind-silence I know in various forms of meditation.

The first time I had a "silent breakfast" was a little awkward, I now enjoy such periods of vocal absence. I experience most of it an encounter with an unnamed deep, holiness.

Frances,

Many thanks for a copy of your journal, *Ninepatch*, which I enjoyed very much. Your "dark room" experience at the recent retreat rang true to me as I have been cut off into the dark there, too! (Unfortunately, I didn't convert mine into any spiritual insight.)

Your readers seem like a real community, which testifies to the significance of your work on this project. I also love your logo—it's the perfect symbol for a spiritual journey.

Peace,
Franklin

Franklin is married to his childhood sweetheart for almost thirty years now, the proud father of two grown children and also grandfather of two. In his spare time he enjoys reading and beach walking, traveling and racquetball. He works and in his free time he prefers weekend retreats in quiet places.

Frances,

The retreat experience was more than enjoyment ... it was a deep sense of peace and satisfaction from a sustained connection with Spirit.

Don

Don (May '02) adds, "It was a re-learning that wisdom and direction come not from books, gurus or cassette programs, helpful tho they may be. The scriptural, "Be still and know..." was reaffirmed; God speaks through the still, small voice from within when we quiet the other noise in our lives."

Dear Frances,

You said you bought candles and burned one to help keep in touch with the spirit of the retreat. I have also been burning a candle all day long in my kitchen. I began burning it on my kitchen island in March. It does provide a refreshing reminder throughout the day of that still quiet place inside, even when I'm racing around with all my busyness.

I am also still thinking every day, several times a day, of the example set for me by Elsie Hillisum, the Holocaust victim whose diaries ([An Interrupted Life](#)) were discussed at the retreat.

Susan

Susan is married and has two children in elementary school. She has long been a part of a non-denominational spiritual group called The Shalem Institute.

Dear St. Frances:::

You ask if I have time for myself? What a question! It got me to laughing.

To escape from the kids (Miss Alf is a year and Toad is in Kindergarten), I try to spend as much time in the shower as I possibly can without using up all the hot water. Or, better yet, I keep a puzzle book in the bathroom and just sit on the edge of the tub and work puzzles -- just something to get me away.

Yesterday, a woman asked me if the baby is my granddaughter or my own. I said my own and she said, "Oh, wow!" *Oh, wow*, is something all right!

Frances, Miss Alf is so small that people ask how old is she, then answer their own question by saying, "Oh, she can't be more than six months." You should see their faces when Hubs or I reply, "One year."

She isn't even eighteen pounds at this writing. She is tiny and delicate but intensely stubborn. She ain't gonna' be a pushover when she's older!

You take care...

Malaina

Malaina (Apr.02) adds, "Oh, gosh, the magazines I have to catch up on reading! I'm sorry to say that sometimes I even get behind with Ninepatch."

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Dear Frances,

Recently I looked again at the May 2002 issue. I tell you, there are a bunch of authors that I like to read. Also, the books in that issue --WOW—it makes me want to get up to the library first (It's free.) or go to the bookstore. I want to try the one I might like to read. Many thanks to the reviews by Helen and Lynan.

Love ya',
MM

MM (July-Aug. '01) adds, "And to tell the truth, it has been seven years (time for new things beginning—one's skin changes and we should, too!) Hopefully, I will get back to (although I never really started) working on the family tree. I have the soft-ware; it's just the starting!"

Dear Fritzie,

Thank you for sending me *Ninepatch* and your note. I hope this finds you happy and enjoying your Florida sunshine.

Now I am divorced-- after all those years-- and settled in my own life. I enjoyed your descriptions of some of your relationships. Mine with "Mr. Wonderful" has ended. How shall I sum up this one? Could have been great--but won't happen.

I'm looking forward to fall here in the Northwest. Hope you enjoy the seasons, too.

Love,
Bix

Bix (Feb '00) adds, "I am enjoying my freedom immensely. My sons are with me often. I have lots of friends both male and female to keep me busy and happy. My home is cozy and comfortable—and I enjoy projects here."

Hi Frances,

Thanks for your note.

Sorry I have not written much. I've been in a difficult place for a while and have needed to spend time alone. Not that I could really be alone and maybe that was the problem. I felt pulls and demands from work and family to the point that any free time I found was spent in my art room, away from phones and computers. I've put time and effort into drawing, making paste paper and collages, and other assorted hands-on diversions. I have not even had the energy to journal. Maybe I am coming out the other end of whatever this is.

Well, I am off to shower and go to church and then to a bead show. This will be a right-brain sort of day!

Corinne

Corinne (Jan. '02) adds, "I found pearls, jade, amber and coral at the show and I'm thinking about what to do with them. Having a place of my own for my "projects" has

helped my creativity and feeling creative is the best way I know to improve my outlook in general."

Dear Frances,

In an email you said, "Most of the time I don't understand my own life." Really? That may be the most important work to do Frances. Maybe looking so deeply within (and certainly staying so busy) is distracting you from focusing on making your life better day by day. I mean, isn't the benefit of "understanding" your own life being able to use your personal power to improve it? It is for me.

After having been in therapy off and on for six years, attending I don't how many hundreds of 12-Step meetings, writing thousands upon thousands of journal entries, poems and short stories, and spending countless hours doing art therapy and other self exploration activities -- I've decided that the inner work is a means to an end. When I've done enough inner work on a certain issue to arrive at a new level with that issue-- then I take the energy that I've freed up and USE it to CHANGE something in my outer world.

My most classic example of doing that occurred when I finished my first two years in therapy -- then left my therapist, my husband, and my church -- all in the same month. WHEW! That therapy freed up a powerhouse!

That was almost nine years ago. I'm dying to share my most recent example. I'm losing weight. While pregnant, I put on forty pounds. And I've kept the entire lot, and added a few more, over the last fourteen years.

Three months ago I decided I'd try something different. I've been counting calories and exercising and I've already lost twenty-five pounds. I ask myself why I waited fourteen years, and why it's coming off so fast now. Then I realize that the work I've been doing in therapy these last three years has allowed me to let go of that *itchy* intense restlessness that always seemed to be about *needing* a man in my life. And as surprising as this may be -- as long as I *needed* a man -- I was angry about the fact that men tend to reject women who are fat. And my rebellious response to that anger was simply, "*&^% you - I'll stay as fat as I want!" Of course, that intensified and increased my experiences of rejection--which intensified my anger. Which made me want to stay fat. Ugh - it was a vicious cycle that I couldn't see!! I was blinded by anger.

So, I am following my own advice: once you worked hard and free up energy - APPLY IT EXTERNALLY. It can be in small or large ways - but when you *see* your life *getting better* then you *know* you are getting somewhere!!

Hugs,
Sherryl

Sherryl (June '02) adds "Being lighter feels more concise and accurate -- more frugal and economical -- like I've packed more power and energy into a smaller more agile space.

Dear Frances,

For Father's Day, we went back to the same motel where we celebrated after Mother's Day. We spent time alone there (for a change) before we went to our married daughters' for supper and time with the grandchildren. It was another nice day.

Then it was back to work, again. Life goes on. We go to our jobs, see the grandchildren and all the usual things that keep one busy.

Take care of yourself,
Love and Prayers,
LindaSue

LindaSue (July-Aug. '02) says, "In September we are taking another vacation. It is something to look forward to."

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Fritz,

Do you recall Bob from our college Spanish classes? If not, you may recall an incident from when we were dating. I was home on family business with plans to return to take out you and a visiting girlfriend from Indiana. However, I was delayed at home so you called my frat friend Bob. He took both of you out.

When I got to campus, I went straight to your dorm. At the same time the three of you walked up. It was real comical. Bob joked that I caught you and him two- timing me. Bob and I remained friends over the years and often joked about the incident.

Well, today Bob died of a brain tumor. He was a great friend and colleague. By coincidence I walked by his office today not knowing he died. I thought to myself, "I wonder how Bob is doing... I haven't seen him in a while." I didn't see him so, I just did my business and left. This afternoon I learned Bob died today.

This is a sad day.
John

John (Mar. '01) tells us more, "Two days ago, I took my car to be lubricated. There I saw a school friend, Chuck, who was also in my profession. We talked about high school days, family and retirement. It was good to see him. I had not seen him in a while. Chuck also died today of a heart attack.

This afternoon I learned of both deaths from my partner. I was hit hard. I decided to go home and think about all of this. (I think) Why I was rewarded to see Chuck one last time before he died? Why did I have those thoughts of Bob the same day he died? I am hurting."

Dear Fritzie,

You asked about my new job. I just went through a bad week. I've been physically out of kilter and I've had some depression creeping through my facade. Two people, including my boss, brought me to the point of admit-ting that I was depressed. I so hate letting anyone know that I'm not OK. Usually I can pull it off, using my antidepressant persona, because I know how to groom myself, dress nicely, and keep smiling. This makes me think no one can see beyond the smile and the window dressing.

Why am I so unwilling to let people know I'm vulnerable? I think I'm supposed to be perfect. Will I ever grow up? What would happen if the whole fat world knew that I

suffer from depression and that just putting one foot in front of the other is often a challenge and sometimes not even possible? Yes, what would happen?

I compare depression to cancer. Cancer is a touchy subject, but somehow people manage to talk about it. The people around the cancer patient respect him/her for courage and empathize with the pain. The cancer victim gets cards, letters, rides to chemo, meals carried in and visits from friends. Insurance companies foot the bill.

What would the depressed person get if the message were broadcast? Pep talks? Recommendations? Wait. I know the drill: exercise, eat right, get plenty of sleep, take your meds, talk to a friend, meditate, pray, treat yourself to a manicure... *of course*, remember you aren't alone.

Next question. What is it that I want? At this particular moment I'd like someone to tell me that I've been a fabulous mother, that even when I'm depressed I'm better than a lot of people who don't suffer from depression. I'd like to be told that I'm smart and that I'm funny. I'd like to be told that it is OK to stink part of the time, especially because you can also smell like a rose. I'd like the work place to be less demanding when I'm in a funk. When my brain is too slow because of my funk, can't the demands be altered to accommodate my drained brain?

I can see it now, we'll send out an email that says "Elaine is only at 50 percent capacity this week, so give her a break." Maybe there needs to be a movement for card-carrying depressives similar to the Civil Rights movement, the women's movement, or the gay and lesbian movement. But what if we're too depressed to take action?

Here ends my tirade. By the way, I think I learned that "keep smiling" bit from you, Fritzie. I know you did that in high school. Somehow, I just know it to be true.

Elaine

Elaine (July-Aug. '02) says, she told her son that "things just got too complicated" when it became time to finalize arrangements for a trip to the Carolinas to see her new grandson. She wishes she could be honest with her family about her bouts of depression, but fear gets in her way. Recently, though, she is helping a recently divorced friend organize a garage sale prior to her friend's move. She adds, "Feeling useful to another person is just about the best feeling I know."

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(Reading and Listening)

PART OF BILL'S 2002 BOOK LIST

Editor's note: Several readers are keeping a list of books read this year. This month, we hear from Bill.

QUILT MYSTERIES

Earlene Fowler is the author I have been reading. The series is called the "Benni Harper Mysteries." You'll want to read them in order because they're sequential:

1. Fool's Puzzle,
2. Irish Chain,
3. Kansas Troubles,
4. Goose in the Pond,
5. Dove in the Window,
6. Mariner's Compass,
7. Arkansas Traveler,
8. Seven Sisters.

They deal with a thirty- something widow who runs an arts and crafts center that concentrates on quilts. She just "happens" to get involved in all kinds of mischief. My reading the Benni Harper series I have learned a lot about traditional quilt patterns. Each book is named for a pattern that is also a clue to what the mystery is about. At the beginning of each book, she has a description and history of the pattern and various other names for it. They're pretty well written.

Bill (June '02) says, "I'm finished with the 8th book. There are one or two additional books but I don't know the titles yet. Two reasons I was intrigued by the series are, I love mysteries and my wife loves quilting. She retires from nursing in June and when we return from a convention she will begin taking quilting courses. Actually, I am anxious for her to begin because I love to design quilt patterns and colors. I gave my wife a quilt pattern design kit for Christmas, but like a dad and the Christmas model railroad, I'll probably play with it more than she."

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MORE OF LYNAN'S 2002 READING LIST

Several readers continue to keep lists of the books they read during 2002. Lynan also took time to comment on several of her chosen *reads*.

1. The Joy Luck Club. Author Amy Tan tells a story about four Chinese women who immigrated to San Francisco, California. These four women became acquainted and they started to have meetings to play mah jong, a Chinese game played with tiles. During those afternoon gatherings they also told stories. They invested their *mah jong* winnings in stocks. Thus, the Joy Luck Club was formed.

It's a book of collected stories of past memories. Some of the old culture and traditions of the Chinese-American families were lost from one generation to another. This is a wonderful story about the intriguing relationships found between the Chinese mothers and their daughters. You must put this book on your list of books to read. You won't be disappointed.

2. P is for Peril is by Sue Grafton. I love to read this mystery series. I have read every book from *A* to *P*. Grafton has created an amusing detective, Kinsey Millhone, to solve the crimes. The detective is such a likeable character that I find her adventurous escapades highly entertaining. If you love to read mystery novels, I urge you to read this book.

3. Kokology and Kokology 2, are by Tadahiko Nagao and Isamu Saito. These two little books are composed of games about self-discovery and relationships. Tadahiko Nagao states that these psychological games are kind of like an inkblot-reading test (popular in the 60's) that uses words instead of inkblots. These books are full of psychological games that are fun to play and to make the games more interesting you can play with friends. I highly recommend that these two books be added to your library. A sample follows.

When Is a Door Not a Door?

Picture yourself on a stroll through town. The day is beautiful and you are half-lost in a daydream. You turn onto a street that you've never been down before, and as you walk you pass a beautiful house set somewhat back from the street. Pausing a moment to admire this lovely home, you notice the door is half open. Why is the door ajar?

CHOOSE quickly, do not think. If what you envision is not here, choose something similar

1. The house is being burglarized.
2. The owner forgot to close it.
3. The owner is inside, sweeping out the entranceway.

Done? Don't read on until you are! First, the authors tell us that *doors* have twofold significance: passageways and barriers. The front door of a house represents its first line of defense, all that stands between its inhabitants and the uncertainties of the world. By imagining a normally closed door as "open" you envision a scenario of vulnerability as when you expose your weaknesses to others.

Keeping that in mind, here are what the choices show.

1. You instantly assume the worst in any situation. You don't get flustered in a crisis only because you are too busy panicking.
2. You aren't the type to get carried away in crisis situations. On the other hand, you are so relaxed you may not notice a crisis. Mistakes you make are by oversight rather than bad intentions.
3. You may appear laid back, but you never let your guard down. Achieving that constant state of alertness is what has made you the mature individual you are.

Lynan (May '02) comments, "I recalled the time when my husband and I went flying together in his ultralight (a low-flying, open airplane.) It was a beautiful morning. I looked down to the ground and below us the treetops poked through the scattered ground fog. The view looked mystical. As the wind blew into our faces, I encountered a sense of exhilarated freedom. I felt the presence of God. But, then we landed and the magic disappeared."

- - - **M-A-N-A-G-I-N-G—T-H-E—H-O-U-S-E** - - -
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(Ninepatch Business)



(See next)

FINANCIAL REPORT

Ninepatch's year-to-date financial report compares favorably with last year at this time. You will notice the expenses are higher than last year--which is due mostly to the cost of our website. We anticipate our readers' timely renewal of subscriptions, including gifts, and hope you will watch your mailing labels for those dates.

June (July-Aug. '02) Ninepatch Treasurer.

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2001

Carryover from '00...	364.61
Subscriptions.....	395.00
Donation in Kind	<u>0</u>
Total.....	759.11

Expenses.....	-626.09
Bank balance.....	133.52

2002

Carryover from '01....	73.55
Subscriptions.....	710.00
Donations in Kind....	<u>125.25</u>
Total.....	908.80

Expenses.....	-778.20
Bank balance.....	130.60

WHERE DO OUR READERS LIVE?

The following report includes our paper and e- readers.

- Canada-1
- Michigan-25
- Florida-18
- California-3
- Oregon-1
- Nevada-1
- New Mexico-1
- Texas-1
- Iowa-1
- Missouri-2
- Indiana 2
- Ohio-1
- Pennsylvania-2
- NewYork-3

Virginia-1
Maryland-1
Connecticut-1
Massachusetts-2

SPIRIT OR FLESH?

Almost encircled by yellow
daylilies
Like golden arches laid out
flat,
Enriched by the lilies' gentle
energies
More than a warm Big Mac.
I wonder which I would
choose
Were I in the deepest blues,
Yellow lilies or Big Mac?

Phyllis (June '02) died Jan. '02. This poem is from Frances' personal collection.

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Website: a new address will be forthcoming. We temporarily lost our domain name and have to re-register.

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We hope you enjoyed this issue and welcome your response at any of the above addresses!

Frances Fritzie, Editor