

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 I share another piece of my spiritual journey.

February 2003

Dear Friends,

After I read my morning inspiration, I wrote myself a prayer to help focus my day, *May I put today in God's hands*. I did not *feel* much of a connection. Sometimes I don't *experience* closeness-- but I do it anyway. It always means something.

All morning, I worked my way down my "do" list. I checked,

>Call car insurance

>Send proposal

>Tax letter

Write Ninepatch miracle

The last remained. It had been on my list for many days. I had considered *many* miracles, but was not able to decide on one.

By noon I sat in a spiritual group's meeting. I thought of nothing (*I put myself in God's hands—a small miracle.*) as the chairman read from a daily reflection book. Suddenly, an **e-v-e-r-y-d-a-y** miracle happened. I "heard" one word above all the rest: *providence*. Like a magnet, that word pulled recent events and thoughts together— in an instant I knew I would relay the following story.

In definition two, Webster's New World Dictionary defines *providence* as *the benevolent guidance of God or nature*. This type of holy unveiling occurred on DAY NINE of my Ireland Pilgrimage.

That morning we walked well into a wooded area where Kevin, an early Irish Saint, went to pray for days, weeks and even months at a time. Carson, our Ireland guide faced us as we gathered near a three- foot stone wall across our path. He waved up behind him, and to his left. There, I saw only the tops of some ruins.

"Reefert Church," he said. He told us it is the sacred burial place of kings and saints. As he continued, I scribbled phrases in my notebook, then glanced back at Carson who was then pointing to and naming a few of the trees around us in full leaf of summer. "Hazel, beech ... oak." He paused before he named *oak*, reminding us these trees were holy to the early Celtic Christians. Celts always built their churches in oak groves.

As I recorded his words, other pilgrims began to climb a stile in the old wall where we'd paused. It was a 90-degree climb. (The old stile was put here to keep sheep in one side and allow people to the other.) After quickly sketching it, I hung back, eyeing the climb with mild alarm. Mildly crippled by a "frozen shoulder," my balance was poor. If I tottered, I could not even catch myself. My right shoulder would not hold my weight.

Two men of our group stationed themselves to help others climb. One stood at the bottom of the wall to give a hand up. Another stood at the top of the steps- in- a hill. When it was my turn, I took a breath.

I'm awkward, I breathed an explanation to the lower pilgrim who reassured me with a nod and a smile. He gave me a thrust. The momentum helps me mount the three vertical steps that rose about a foot each. At the top, I sat on the ground a moment and took another breath. Then

the top man helped me stand. I thanked the men then turned toward Reefert Church. There, I saw the others already disappearing around its roofless gray cobblestone side. I ran to catch up.

Once inside the stone walls, we stood quietly on a gravel floor while Cheryl, our contemplative guide from the US, read us a poem. I recorded a few phrases, ...*silver apples of the moon, / golden apples of the sun...*

Then, we prayed. Instead of closing my eyes, this time I gazed heavenward. Breezes blew through the prayer and ruffled leaves of nearby trees that seemed to touch each other and the sky. In one INCREDIBLE moment, *holiness* touched my heart. Tears, my outward sign of the divine contact, slid down my cheeks and dripped off my chin. Intently, I watched and listened for a *message*.

I focused overhead... layers of waving branches ... the leaves turning on their stems... Then, beyond all the leafy presence, I saw a small triangle of white sky. *The sky* I thought, *it's something about the sky...*

About then, group prayer and reflective silence ended. Other pilgrims began to file silently out. Focused, I waited-- I *must* know the message! I called on my senses. I felt the breeze... heard the gravel crunch under pilgrim feet ... saw the sunshine... My gaze followed that light to the southeast where my gaze landed on the church's intact south window. As I breathed in the stone image, the message came, **The way is through the green.**

I don't pretend to know what that means. I have considered several interpretations. I do know this, I must hold that message with honor and reverence. When the time is right, it *will* unfold.

Frances Fritzie

Frances Fritzie, Editor comments, "*Miracles are everywhere, if only I stop to see them. Read on for others' stories about their*

small,

e-v-e-r-y-d-a-y and

INCREDIBLE experiences."

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(Letters to the Editor)

A SIMPLE CROSS

A few weeks before my husband died of cancer, a devoted Episcopal friend visited him. She asked him if he would like to wear her oversized cross which she said had been blessed. He said yes, so she took it from her own neck.

As I watched, she tenderly guided it over his head and left it resting on his chest. It was a plain smooth unadorned gold cross on a long chain. He was still wearing it when he died.

In the days after the funeral period, I approached our friend and held out the cross to her. She was somewhat surprised and asked, "Don't you want to keep it?"

"I think you should have it." I placed it carefully in her hand.

She held the cross and examined it closely. "Did you polish it?" she said, wonder in her voice.

"No, I just washed it with soap and warm water. He perspired quite a lot, at the very last," I answered softly.

"It looks as though it has been polished," she said with awe. "It was a holy death," she pronounced.

June (Jan. '03) adds, "Was it a miracle? I'm still not sure. You decide."

Dear Fritzie,

You also asked for letters on **e-v-e-r-y-d-a-y**- miracles, so I have a thought. It does seem the older I get, the more it is a miracle just to live another day.

I think that is why I love the morning so much. It's a new day-- another beginning.

Patricia

Patricia (July '02) adds, "We have just come south for a few months. My days are filled with errands: running around and picking up things needed for projects and to settle in. The first week we get back is always so busy—but, calm will return. "

Hi Frances:

Right now the only miracle that comes to my mind is one I think many ex-students will understand. You remember I am back to school, now, studying to be a pharmacist. My miracle is what you might term small, but to me it was HUGE.

The fact that I passed my pharmaceuticals class last term -- that was a minor miracle in my academic life. I thought I was truly in danger of having to repeat the class! And this one is *required!* Wish me luck in Pharmaceuticals- 2 this term.

Maeve

Maeve (June '02) adds, "Right now I'm still happy on my new path of becoming a pharmacist- - I've met some new friends and I'm constantly challenged. Let's hope I still feel this way upon graduating in 2006! My kids seemed to be proud of me--and my husband, too."

Dear Frances,

My husband and I had a miracle about a week ago. A bird flew into our window and crashed to the ground. I checked on it for the next forty minutes or so, in case it was just knocked out. (I didn't want a neighborhood cat to get it.) It never moved. Finally, I asked my husband to pick it up and dispose of it. I was upset to see the little body lying there for so long.

He went outside and picked up the feathered body. He didn't just scrape it into a bag with a stick like I would have done. He gently lifted it, stroked it, and talked to it for a full minute.

Then, he said, "It moved."

I went over and peered at it. I didn't see anything. "Are you sure?" I said.

"Yes, it's going to come around. I'm sure of it."

Well, my husband stroked that little bird for a few minutes more before the little eyes opened. The creature wasn't really conscious yet. It took a good five minutes more for it to wake up enough to realize it needed to fly off.

During all that time, the bird never acted distressed. Finally, it just got bright-eyed for a second then flew to the nearest tree.

The miracle isn't that the bird lived. I know it was just knocked out. My husband is my miracle. He takes things so easily. He notices. He feels. So different from what I see around me--and what I see in myself. I felt so good to have been drawn into that moment of kindness and release.

Peace,
Georgene

Georgene (Jan. '03) says, "The other day a friend told me how she looked for 'the thin spots' of life. She said that thin spots are the places where God gives us a little glimpse of heaven from our place, here on earth. I've come to realize that my husband is one of God's thin spots. While he has plenty of faults I could list, if I chose to, I'm always drawn back to his intentional respect for life and ability to fully live in the present moment."

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Dear Frances,

The Saturday before Christmas I had a little excitement. The Sister who was sitting behind me during our special evening prayer accidentally got her lit candle caught in my hair. Flames shot up a foot high before she put out the flames. Fortunately, I did not have any hair spray on. Also, neither she nor I were burned. My burned hair filled the whole chapel with an awful smell, but I was fine.

One of our Sisters is a hair-dresser. She'd been dying to cut off my long locks and offered her services. I quickly accepted and came away from her beauty shop with a nice and attractive hair cut.

So what can I say? God was with me!

Love you all!

Patience

Patience (June '02) says, "Everyday miracles are just as important—or more so—than the big ones. I am so very grateful no one was hurt in the fire."

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Hello Frances,

As you know, I have been lighting a candle every morning and saying the prayers I have on an index card underneath the candle. I also have a Jesus night light in my father's bedroom.

This morning I went into his room to open the blinds and there was something lying on the floor by his bed. At first I thought it was our dog's chew-bone, but when I stepped back in and looked closer, it was his Jesus night light.

My first thought was about my nearly blind ninety-one-year-old father. *Oh no! What is he doing now? He can't just turn the light off, he has to pull it out of the wall?* I proceeded to plug the light back in the socket. When I did, it lit, so I turned it off and started out of the room. I didn't get three steps, when I heard, *click*. I turned around and the light was lit again. I went back and turned it off again, then turned to leave. Again, I heard, *click*. I looked and it was lit. When I turned it off a second time, I stood there and watched.

You can guess. I heard, *click* and the light came back on. I actually saw the knob go right-to-left! I pulled it out of the wall and inspected it. It appeared OK. I plugged it in a third time, and turned it off again. But again the same thing: *click* and the light came on. Finally, I pulled it out of the wall and put it on the floor. (This is probably the reason my dad put it on the floor to begin with!) I didn't really think about it again until I was telling our friends this story at breakfast. They led me to think this might be a *sign* or *message*.

I have to tell you that I've been asking God for some kind of sign that he was hearing me. I have wanted a *spiritual awakening*. Even with all the praying and all the readings I do, I had not felt what others describe. Now I really think this was my sign. My Higher Power *is* hearing me. Maybe I have not been asking the right thing or seeing with *spiritual eyes*. I have chills talking about this experience.

Sorry this is so long... I just had to tell the whole story.

Love Ya!

Rena

Rena is married and mother of two grown daughters. Her father and one daughter also live with her. In her spare time she enjoys walking, reading and baking. She adds, "I always thought a spiritual awakening was supposed to be like a thunderbolt or a clap of thunder--nothing so subtle as a blinking night-light or a skipped heart beat. This, too, was a sign that I needed to make some life changes -- that He was indeed hearing me."

Dear Fritzie,

After a long engagement, my daughter's wedding was a wonderful spur-of-the-moment event.

My husband called me at work to tell me that she and her fiancé were getting married that evening at our home and forty guests were expected. Less than an hour later I was zooming home. I stopped on my way to ask my sister—who was teaching piano—if she would play for the wedding. Once I got home, I found a friend to manage the refreshments and spirited the bride off to find a dress. She was not healed from a traffic accident and couldn't walk far. So I got a wheelchair and pushed her at record pace in

and out stores. We were both excited and we were tearing around like tornadoes. We must have look like crazy women on a caffeine high.

I found a dress then stopped at a flower shop before they closed and picked up pink roses mixed with baby's breath for a bridal bouquet and decorations.

Meanwhile my husband was frantically tidying up the house and rearranging things to make room for guests. He also placed phone calls to invite our family and made other final arrangements. Somehow-- by magic I think—he managed to have the house looking great when my daughter and I returned.

By 11:00 PM my daughter looked radiant and her fiancé sweet, shy and handsome. Guests all crowded in and the wedding went on without a hitch: short and sweet. The reception was fabulous, too. My daughter's friends got a cake decorated with their names at a nearby store and there was a beautiful spread of other refreshments as well.

Six hours from the announcement to event. If *that* isn't a miracle, I'm not sure what is!

Blessings,
Ginny Lee

Ginny Lee (October '02) adds, "I'm telling you this is the way to have a wedding! We all LOVED it. No worrying ahead of time about this or that. Thanks to all family and friend who pitched in, it was wonderful!"

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****End of Miracle- theme letters****

Hi Frances,

On your January '03 post-it you mentioned it's been a while since you heard from me. You asked if I was all right. Yes, it has been a long time since I've written, and yes I'm doing OK.

Mostly I just putter around the house. Right now I'm putting together a jigsaw puzzle that my daughter gave me for Christmas. It's HARD.

I also just finished listening to a book on tape, Into Thin Air by John Krakauer. It's about a tragedy on Mount Everest. My book group has begun reading, Secrets and Mysteries by Denise Linn, but I'm having a hard time becoming engaged in it.

I laminate for one of the schools in my district one day a week. I'm beginning to think about income taxes. A *Ninepatch* friend and I get together for lunch and art gallery hopping about once a month.

So, yes, I'm doing OK. I'm just not moved to say much. I don't know when this cycle will change, but thanks for your kind thoughts.

Love and hugs,
Carol

Carol (Oct. '02) adds, "Maybe I'll do the cup exercise, I don't know..."

Fritzie,

I was excited to see the review of The Red Tent, a book that has become a favorite of my own. As I read the *Ninepatch* reviewer's comments, a fear came over me. The feeling became stronger as I avoided looking at the end of the column to see who the contributor might be. I thought, *Oh, no...please God, no...don't let it be Fritzie who is saying these things about her mother.*

I am so sad for you and sorry that I didn't understand more about what was going on with you when we were teenage friends. But you probably didn't know either ... too involved trying to be what you thought your mother wanted you to be.

I pose a question to you now. How might your life have been different if your mother had let you be ... yes, how might your life have been different if she had just let you be yourself? Is that the essence of your spiritual journey ... finding Frances? Is that the question for this journey?

I felt great respect for the women in the story and felt proud to be a woman. Such strength they possessed. They knew when to keep the rules and knew how to break the rules with such creativity. And they suffered so much, but in their suffering I saw more strength.

I will try not to be sad for you but instead think of the distance you have traveled.

Love,
Elaine

Elaine (Sept. '02) After just completing Prodigal Summer by Barbara Kingsolver, Elaine recommends it as a stunning book about women, nature and much, much more.

-----***I-N-S-T-R-U-C-T-I-O-N-S***-----
(Reading and Listening)

A NINEPATCH WRITER'S BOOK

Stingray Sound is a book to be shared between generations. The back cover says it is "A timeless story about the great old mother stingray whose pups learned to be friendly with human beings." Each generation must ask, regarding the other species: "Is this creature merely weird and scary or is it actually dangerous?"

This is the story of Graywings who gives birth to her pups in warm waters near where fishermen clean their fish and children swim off their boat. The illustrations are reproductions of the author's quilts and fiber art. Printed in royal blue ink on 100% recycled paper, the book also contains facts about stingrays, a glossary, and directions for making a cloth toy stingray. This toy can enhance the bond between its maker and the child who receives it as well as between reader and listener. It could also help a child understand the story.

Author, *Skysinger* (Jan. '02) was unable to attend a Michigan Read Around and donated several books to *Ninepatch* for others who attended. Frances brought remaining copies back to Florida and will share them with interested Ninepatchers. Send a check for mailing (\$1.50) along with your request and address to:

Ninepatch, Inc.

PO Box 1263,
Avon Park, FL. 33825.
Copies will be sent in the order requests are received.

Frances, Editor

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SELF-UNFOLDMENT

A Book Review

I've long been very curious about Hinduism. Just recently I stumbled upon a book that not only taught me something of Hinduism, but also opened my eyes to so much more!

Self-Unfoldment is the book's title. It is by Swami Chinmayananda and is classified as 'philosophy' but it is more of a workbook of personal discovery and self-development. Each chapter of the book introduces us first to a new way of looking at reality, (and ourselves), and then invites us to challenge what we think and believe. The author then follows up with basic and advanced levels. Each chapter ends with suggestions for further reading.

The language of Self-Unfoldment is elegant in its simplicity and renders the material eminently accessible to all. Using a combination of modern anecdotes and wisdom culled from the sacred texts of ancient India, the author explains many 'Eastern' concepts such as 'Karma' and offers insights into Vedanta. Vedanta is one of the six systems of Hindu philosophy evolved from the Upanishads. (The Upanishads are to Hinduism, as the Psalms are to Christianity's holy texts.) His pragmatic approach to personal enlightenment is refreshing and results in many practicable exercises, such as simple meditation, readers can use on their spiritual journeys.

Self-Unfoldment is one of the most radical books I've ever read. It challenges everything from interpersonal relationships to the relationship between man and God/dess - it questions the very essence of reality and then answers itself with daring simplicity. In fact, Swami Chinmayananda admits his book could be considered heretical!

For example, he states that each of us is, in essence, God ... That 'reality' as we know it in day to day life is illusion ... That each of us has the innate ability to be successful and to live in a state of happiness which he calls bliss. All we need do is to peel away or unfold the layers of illusion we've built for ourselves. Then we can realize this *true* self.

This book also helped me to understand a few concepts that I'd been struggling with for a long time. One is the concept of 'one-ness' as opposed to duality. We 'see' ourselves as separate from one another, from objects, and from God. This is called a 'dualistic' view.

The truth, however, is that all of reality is made from the same thing (from God) and therefore there is no difference between you and me, or between myself and God, or even between me and a tree or a star!

Understanding this is perhaps the most liberating, empowering and humbling experience one could ever have. If you ever get the chance to read this book, please do! I'm sure you'd enjoy it as much as I did.

TROR (Jan. '03) adds, "A while ago I tried writing down my thoughts on spirit (or soul) and was surprised by what came out in the process. I found my beliefs were radical even to me! And in truth, this new found awareness made me feel 'different' than others. Reading this book though, I see I'm not alone. And you know, stumbling onto this book the way I did... well, it seemed like it was God's way of telling me, You're on the right track. "

JUNE'S AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

This month June tells us about her books where people write about their own lives.

1. Hometown by Tracy Kidder is a story about the author's own hometown. It is rich in nostalgia as he weaves together a tapestry of a place and its residents. He relates the history of the town and its social patterns. The reader follows the thoughts and routines of a hometown police sergeant as he deals with the grittier side of its petty criminals and the victims of poverty. Kidder's love for his town is evident and it strikes a chord with the reader.

2. A Separate Place is by David Brill. The author chronicles his journey from a hectic, stressed-out life in suburban Knoxville, Tennessee to a cabin in the woods on the Cumberland Plateau on a wild and scenic river. A veteran of the 2100 miles of the Appalachian Trail twenty years earlier, he instinctively seeks out the peace and oneness with nature that he had somehow lost. His marriage of eighteen years is falling apart, and caught in between are his two young daughters who cling to him as they sense the coming break. Brill slowly but gradually comes to terms with his conflicts and his Higher Power in the simple sanctuary in the wilderness.

3. Lazy B is by Sandra Day O'Connor and H. Alan Day. This brother and sister team grew up on a sprawling ranch in the Southwest. Their story is a loving intimate memoir of their family background, of their pioneering parents and grandparents. It is a very human, easy to read account of daily life in isolated high desert country, and the hardships and rewards that formed their characters.

As the authors grew to maturity, their lives took different directions. Day took over the management of the Lazy B from his father and carried on for thirty years until the family decided it was time to sell it. O'Connor went to law school at Stanford University and then took up the practice of law. She served six years as an Arizona State Senator and later was a judge on the Arizona Court of Appeals for twelve years. In 1981 President Reagan appointed her an Associate Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court. She was the first woman to serve in that capacity.

4. Talking to Heaven is by James Van Praagh. Van Praagh is a noted medium who communicates with the spirits of those who have died. This is a moving account of how he first discovered his unusual gift. He shares his experience and wonder with the reader as he comes to understand his psychic powers. Included are many stories of families and loved ones who have had their fears allayed as to the whereabouts and happiness of those they have lost. Van Praagh passes on to his clients any bits of trivia that "come through"

because they are often the means by which their identity is verified to the client's satisfaction. The author also gives insight and guidance to readers who may want to contact the spirits on their own. He offers an inspirational view of the world beyond.

June (Feb. '03) adds, "Although these four books are all autobiographies, that is their only similarity. The experience of each writer is a total change of pace."

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(Ninepatch Business)

A NEW MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR

In the coming months we will be changing Membership Coordinators. **Kelly** (Feb. '02) will hand over records to **Carol** (See AROUND THE FRAME). Carol's first responsibility will be for the June '03 subscriptions.

We thank Kelly for her two years of service and we are grateful to Carol for taking over. On behalf of our other volunteers (our Board, website director, Michigan agent and note-writers) we welcome Carol to service!

Frances, Editor

LOOKING AHEAD AT THEMES

For those of you who like having extra time to put together a special themed story, here are themes and date for 2003.

Friendship is the next theme. Its month will be June. We will be interested in unusual friendships, best- friend stories and what makes a friendship. The third theme for this year is *The Gift of Suffering*. It will be October 2003 in honor of 9-11-03.

This one requires finding a silver lining in one of life's storm clouds. We hope to see your stories!

Frances, Editor

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

(Our Spirituality)

MEMORY IN BLUE

Way out
On the Atlantic Ocean,
My eye beheld
The deepest blue water
I had ever seen.
The Heavenly Artist,
Painting the watery depths
Deep, royal blue.

Phyllis (Jan.'03) was an original and faithful Ninepatch reader and contributor. She died in January 2002. This poem is from Frances' private collection.

Ninepatch, Inc.

ISSN 1094-3234

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