

Ninepatch

Stitch - by - Stitch

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

Editor's Note: This month's story is third in a series related to my Ireland Pilgrimage, Sept. '02.

May 2003

Dear Friends,

For several weeks this letter languished, fragmented. I *felt* its dark *Irish* heart, yet it seemed wordlessly lost to me. I tried wearing my *blacks* –the all- black clothes I took on my Ireland Pilgrimage.

I stood looking at my closet, unable to decide what to wear. Finally, I chose my black jeans and a cropped black top. Donning black clothes these days meant I was going dancing. Standing there, though, I was not feeling rock- and- roll confidence.

Blacks didn't help, so I tried burning my novena candle to illuminate a lightless space inside that echoed emptily. I set flame to the wick of a tall, white candle in a clear glass, hoping to shine a beam on my spiritual course. As I watched the fire work, I understood how wax must feel as the flame first liquefied it, then turned it to vapor.

I continued to cast about for an agent to transform my own sad heart. That's when I recalled some lines I wrote during my first week in Ireland.

It was the fifth afternoon when I felt a kind of darkness I called, **DARK HEART**. In place of paragraphs or a voiced narrative, that afternoon I penned the stanzas to capture the mists of my soul for my Reflection Group.

I paged through my spiral notebook of scrawled quotes and thoughts from those ten days abroad. My notes provided clues to the components of the dark mist I was experiencing. The day had been a glorious one of safety while exploring, absorbing spiritual friendship, learning enticing mysteries of the past and play-fully skipping puddles in the rain. Though *dark*, my words that day carry more than dim echoes I felt now.

DARK HEART

Shadow heart,
Sad heart,
Blind heart in darkness.
ALONE.

But,
Warm night--
And comforting,
A deep well
Of closeness.
SAFE.

And,
Silent starless eve,
Quiet earth.
REST.

With
Black velvet
Waiting smoothly
For second sight.
Under God's Raven wing,
EASY.

I typed the lines then realized my present interior matched only the first stanza. I *wanted* the rest of the poem—the sweeter comfort that eluded me.

I turned to the practices of my spiritual program. I prayed, meditated, attended meetings and voiced my feelings with special friends. Nothing changed. I wondered what was missing. Why could I not **feel** the sweet smooth *night* I knew on the pilgrimage? I didn't know. But here's what happened.

Like every other pre-Easter Saturday evening for the last eight years, the night before the high celebration on Sunday, I drove to church. Prayers, song and ritual there would celebrate the Christian holiday. I parked about ten minutes early. I grab-bed my sweater then locked the car. Without haste, a few paces later I stepped into the silent vestibule. Automatically, I reached for a bulletin. Then I looked up and through glass doors into the sanctuary. It was dark and silent but people sat all around. Then I remembered that this night a fire would be blessed and holy light ceremonially re-turned to the altar.

Slowly, I pushed the glass and stepped in. I tip-toed to an empty pew and, after kneeling for initial prayers, sat back. In that dark, silent holy place I suddenly *knew!* I was sitting in *darkness-awaiting- new-light*, a holy state and the essence of the last three **DARK HEART** stanzas.

I found my black *Irish* heart! Why had I lost it? How did I find it again?

It may be a mysterious process—some cycle of assembling, then coming apart followed by reassembling. Scientists say the light wave does that: it is first a strand, then comes apart in particles, only to join again in the wave.

Perhaps even in their separateness those bits *know* they will again join as a wave. It happened to me: beginning this letter, I was fragmented. Now, after immersion in a holy dark-ness I am a wave again.

I am blessed.

Frances/Fritzie, Editor adds, "That night ended Lent, a traditional forty-day season of denying oneself to find a higher existence. For several years in place of "denial" I added meditation. Now, pre-Easter has become a time of heightened prayer and meditation. Through the days, like the rising tide lifts a beached rowboat, this enlarged spiritual practice usually lifts my spirit. Maybe that influenced my experience, too."

*

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

(Letters to the Editor)

Hi Fritzie –

I certainly enjoyed your note. I quote, "The game of life is never over as long as there's breath." The more I thought about your words, the more I agree that life is a game. My idealistic self wishes it weren't a Game, but my realistic self acknowledges that it is a game.

Take for instance the projected sale of my home of over thirty years. You can't imagine the little games I've played with my broker, other brokers, potential buyers, my husband and no doubt with myself.

So much of what I do includes an ulterior motive. I'm cooking for a family from my church that is in need of some help. Reasons for helping: (1) It is a decent thing to do and I like the family. (2) I haven't done

squat lately; it's high time I took my turn. (3) Because I haven't done squat lately, perhaps others will notice that I'm still participating in church life. I wonder if that is just how I operate or if everyone, if honest, has hidden meanings to their behavior as they play the game of life.

I read in the local paper about several New England retreats where women or men go for rest, rejuvenation, and often, silence. Perhaps that would be a place where the game could stop, at least for a short while. But does it ever stop?

Only time and life will tell.

Love,
Elaine

Elaine (Apr. '03) adds, "I just added a new grandson. I survived my grandmother /mother-in-law visit to help out but was really happy to get home. My friend advised me to take along plenty of duct tape (for my mouth) and I believe I used about 2 and a half rolls. Time and time again, I thought about tolerance. It became my silent mantra. I felt I had so much I could have shared with my daughter-in-law in her role as a new mother, but after testing the water I knew she wasn't ready for my brand of wisdom. Thank goodness for duct tape."

Dear Frances,

Where, oh where does the time go? When I received your recent email I realized it has been a long time since I sent you any thing.

I was, however, thinking of you. In 1999 I first wrote to you about *Ninepatch*. A new friend I'd met at pool exercises shared her copy with me. She knew I was a writer and thought I would be interested. Of course I was.

After a long absence, I recently rejoined the pool program and saw my friend again. We got caught up with each other and I told her about my very fulfilling writing endeavors with you and *Ninepatch*.

It turns out that her daughter-in-law is your good friend since college days! This is no coincidence! Some things in life don't have an explanation and just acceptance will do fine.

Joan V.

Joan V. Spies (Oct. '02) says, "My health has improved. I continue to volunteer at an elementary school and I have also been invited to participate in a new Bereavement Program in my Parish. I will be traveling quite a lot this year, all for happy reasons."

Dear Frances,

I just hit my fiftieth birthday! Now friends and family have been teasing me by saying things like:

"Well, now you are mid-life.."

"Embrace your midlife..."

"You hit the half- way mark..."

"Congrats on reaching the first half- century!"

GEESH!!!! Half-way mark? I ask you, *Does EVERYONE honestly pin their hopes on*

living to 100 ?

Laughing out loud!
Whatdaya' think, Frances?
Luv,
Cat

Cat (Apr. '03) adds, "Fifty down, bring on sixty!"

Hi Frances,

My husband and I have been out traveling a good part of the winter. It is good to be home and have a chance to see everyone.

When you tell me you are going out dancing again, I think to when I was doing that, too. I don't miss the dancing/dating scene at all. I do miss the absolute freedom of being single, but it's a trade-off, and for me--well worth it.

I look back now and think I would have been better off while I was single if I had prayed more. I may have been happier then, had I really relied on God fully as *husband*. I was too afraid.

God has taken very good care of me in spite of myself.

Love,
Diana

Diana (Apr. '02) says, "I have to add that I'm enjoying the time I have to explore and study the Bible, now that I'm retired, and my trust in God is steadily growing. My prayers have increased and my joy is more full. I am so grateful to the God of my understanding."

Dear Frances,

In an April e-mail about the website you wrote, "A great number of our readers are non-computer users – old-fashioned, maybe—but sometimes more in tune with their souls for what-ever reason."

I read that and had to laugh. Yes my dear, I do understand this since I am, in my own way, old-fashioned, too. Each of us has our own ways for tapping into the higher music /truths of the cosmos, and that is as it should be.

The irony of this though, is that it is precisely this soulful nature of our *Ninepatch* friends that attracts me to them, and that I think would attract others... if I can just find a way to present us on the site so that others might better understand and become involved in the beauty of *Ninepatch* the way I have.

As always with love,

TROR

TROR (Apr. '03) ,muses, "My coming to Ninepatch was a synchronistic thing, like finding the name 'Tror' at the beginning of a new leg of my spiritual journey... It was a mistyping of the name "Thor" that I decided to use. Later, I learned from a Danish friend that, where he came from, 'tror' meant 'I believe'. Of course, it – and Ninepatch – was perfect for me!

Hi Fritzie!

I just finished rereading Apr.'03 *Ninepatch*. What really got my attention was your ex-perience *seeing* the young girl of long ago during the minutes you contemplatively climbed the grassy passage to Tara Hill. It reminded me of a time shortly after my return from Hawaii when I wrote a poem, "The Gathering Place. The title is the descriptive name of Waikiki Beach.

Allow me to backtrack a bit. I was in Hawaii three times during WWII. I wrote this poem in 1989 when my wife and I went on a tour there. (We were staying at the Royal Hawaiian when I had the experience and wrote the poem.)

Prior to leaving for those islands, I read Michener's book, Hawaii. This book is the archeological background and history of the state. I was greatly impressed by the tales and lore of the Hawaiian Deities. (If I am correct, you had a similar reading experience before your Ireland pilgrimage. As I recall, you read up on the early Celtic Christianity and even folklore.) My assumption is that an unsuspecting, subconscious, tuning takes place in someone about to have a spiritual experience. Like your story about the preteen girl you *saw* ascending Tara Hill, as I stood on our balcony of the hotel I beheld a character at The Gathering Place.

I can still vividly picture him, even today. He was a diminutive citizen who came on the beach just as dawn come. He was at a distance, yet I saw him clearly. On his shoulder, he carried a boom-box which played music I couldn't hear. As he listened to the music, he did a simple dance, raising his free hand to the sky while chanting some kind of prayer to his god.

Following is my poem, "Gathering Place." It tells of my experience as I stood on that lanai overlooking Waikiki Beach.

THE GATHERING PLACE*

Ere the new day
Has been born
I awaken to the sound
Of the gentle surging surf
On its early morning round.
Stars are still
And shining brightly
As I reach my balcony
There to gaze out in the night
At the calm Pacific Sea.
Drawing deep breaths to the beat
Of the slurping surf I sigh
Harmonizing with the ocean,
Monk in contemplation, I.
Overwhelmed in solemn stillness
Now a mystic vision see
Polynesian spirits stirring
As they rise up from the sea.
On the blue waves I perceive them
Under white caps stringing foam.
From the swelling sea one stretches
As the other spirits roam.
Then it curls up to the beach,
Sprays a wet kiss
Then ...Aloha!!
Shimmies deftly out of reach.

Soon I see a fleck of white
And a new wave comes a twirling.
'Neath a star just to the right

**Looms another one unfurling.
 Then the two join in delight
 Swaying hips in gentle breeze:
 Spinning nymphs of whirling light
 Spawning offsprings** in the lees.
 Now the swells are cresting higher
 Arcing waves and frothy spires
 And in palm of surging flume
 Zoom!
 The warriors of yore
 Come to counsel with Kahunas,
 At The Gathering Place
 Once more.
 Cracks the dawn
 The spell is broken
 Stars blink out and in their stead,
 The Hawaiian sun comes shining
 Over famous
 Diamond Head.
 Gone the vision of enchantment
 But the memory retains
 The pleasant sounds
 And gentle breezes
 Playing on the sand and sea
 Where the mortals and immortals
 Haunt the shores
 Of Waikiki.**

Lee (April '03) adds, "It appears also, that unveilings take place in distinct places all over the earth. They seem connected to spots where particular events once occurred and, may even still take place."

Editor's Note: A few details about Waikiki Beach may help the reader. Lee told me the following:

* If my memory is correct, "Honolulu" means, "The Gathering place."

**Waikiki I believe means "sosprings," water springs like spouts. At low tide when the water by the shore is shallow and at the same time mountain reservoirs are also full, water spouts sometimes appear.

----- **F-O-R-U-M** -----

(Readers Write to Other Readers)

Dear Georgene,

What a nice surprise to hear from you! My intentions have also been to reply sooner. I'm glad to hear you love your new location and your new workplace, but sorry you have lost both parents. Those "defining moments," as you called the anniversary of their loss, are difficult.

I'm finding that I speak about my parents more than ever the longer I live. Mom has been gone now nearly eleven years and my father, twenty. I really do believe in the eternal life of the spirit. I recall real-life incidents with my parents often, and use phrases that my mother used frequently. I'm certain of their presence around me, in fact, sometimes it feels as if my spirit is fused with theirs. For example, last week, I

redecorated my sleep area. I took a handsome black suede Playboy Stetson hat that belonged to Dad and placed it on a new green glass head (actual size.) It now stands in one corner of my bedroom.

See you in the newsletter, thanks to Frances, our Florida news sprite!

Love,
Gail

Gail (Apr. '03) says, "The war in Iraq is disconcerting to me. I'm glad that I have a very peaceful environment and the habit of faith.

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

ENLIGHTENMENT

I had an epiphany this week. I was locked into non-prayer because of a couple thoughts that managed to set up camp in my head and heart. Thought number one was, *All families are praying for their loved ones safe return home from the war.*

Thought number two was, *Not all of those prayers will be answered in the manner we desire.*

Thought number three was, *If that's the case, then, what is the point of praying. Is God going to hear my cries over that of another? Maybe it's all pre-ordained and prayer is an exercise in futility.*

Boy, was I stuck. I often refer to the Serenity Prayer when I get mired down:

**God, grant me the serenity
To accept the things I cannot change,
Courage to change the things I can,
And wisdom to know the difference.**

This time, I couldn't make head or tails of insight in those familiar words.

Then, after reading a story about a father who asked Jesus to heal his son, a light came on. I came to a realization that I needed to pray for the same thing as that father: "I believe, but help me with my unbelief."

So, that's what I am doing. I feel as if the world has been lifted off my shoulders. Daily, I am being taught about my unbelief. It is changing, too--evolving into a stronger *believing* and reliance on my Higher Power I choose to call God.

I still have my initial thoughts and they plague me now and then. Now, I have been given the ability to not let them drag me into the depths of despair.

What a gift!

Pam (Apr. '03) adds, "What helped me turn around in part, was a woman friend's total acceptance of where I was and what I was going through. She didn't try to talk me out of my feelings or convince me I was wrong in my thinking. She didn't judge me. She also didn't try to make me better.

I must say, my ability to choose the right people with whom to share my life has improved over the years! (BIG grin)”

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

EDGAR CAYCE:
AN AMERICAN PROPHET

This well- researched biography by Sidney D. Kirkpatrick is reputed to be the best on the famous seer.

Edgar Cayce, Jr. was born in 1877 to a family of tobacco farmers in Kentucky. As a child he began having visions. Al-though he didn't fully understand his psychic gift, he found he could use it to help others.

His readings, which were received while Cayce was in trance, were mostly medically intuitive. As he used his gift, his powers expanded to include almost any subject. There seemed to be no limit to the depth and scope of the information he received. Despite having only an eighth grade education, he came to know and advise many influential and well-known people.

For much of his life, Cayce's gift was exploited by opportunists whose object was financial gain. He became involved in several partnerships; one of which was the fruitless search for oil in Texas.

Another was with the Blumenthal brothers. They were New York stockbrokers who used Edgar's readings to increase their earnings in the stock market. They ignored his advice in 1929 and lost most of their wealth when the market crashed. They blamed Cayce for their losses and were bitter and ven-geful in the aftermath. While the Blumenthals had garnered enormous profits, Cayce and his family lived in near poverty for most of his life. Throughout this time, he continually cautioned his partners in these ventures. He told them they must all work in the spirit of cooperation, and for the good of all.

Another partnership, which was formed to find lost treasure in the Caribbean, also failed for lack of cooperation among its principals. Although treasure was not found, the readings gave an exact geographical location of the lost continent of Atlantis. The information given in the life readings also suggested,

...that the future destiny of the United States and the world, was in the hands of those who had once been entrusted with the welfare of Atlantis. Their failure to abide by God's laws had resulted in the destruction of the then civilized world, and those same souls would now, in America, be karmically tested again. (Page 374)

In the latter part of his life, Cayce gave psychic readings on past lives and reincarnation. He was a devout man all his life and when he began to receive information about reincarnation he was reticent to share it. He thought the concept of living more than one earthly life was, "the work of the devil." Eventually he became convinced however, that many of his family members and close associates had known each other and interacted with him in prior lifetimes.

After Cayce's death in 1945, his descendents have carried on his work through the Association for Research and Enlightenment.

June (Apr. '03) says: "Cayce was certainly ahead of his time. Scientists are beginning to investigate and validate some of the material he was given. I was absorbed in this book and I plan to read more about Cayce's work."

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

FRIENDSHIP

Next month will be our second themed issue for 2003. It is *Friendship*. Webster's New World Dictionary defines this term as "*the state of being friends.*" "Friend" is also defined as, **1** a person one knows well and is fond of **2** an ally, supporter or sympathizer.

When I think, "friend," descriptors come to mind. A few are *life-long friend, high school friend, college friend, work friend* and *spiritual friend*. All these phrases connote slightly different relationships. One might be more of a *pal* or *side-kick*, another might be a *bosom buddy* or *confidant*.

In a lecture I once heard, psychologist Terry Gorsky had a special term for the friend one joins for just special activities like bowling, tennis, quilting or movies. He calls these people, *colleagues*. A *friend*, he defines as a person whose company you prefer-- no matter what the activity.

The June '03 issue clock is ticking. Please send your comments, stories, poems and drawings on friends of ANY sort by May 15 -- without email -- and May 20 -- with e-mail.

Editor, Frances

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

BEING ME

**In one of my reveries,
I found myself with some bees
Alongside of their beehive.
Wondering what it was to be inside.**

**There the Queen Bee reigns supreme,
Living on nectar and cream,
Carried to her by worker bees,
Gathered from flowers and trees.**

**The drones do her housework,
With nary a fuss or quirk.
Their droning fills the hive,
While the Queen Bee is alive.**

Outside, the hive looks like a dome,
Oddly shaped for a home.
What other domes have I seen
With my eyes or in a dream?

The Taj Mahal has a dome,
So has St. Peter's in Rome.
London's dome by Christopher Wrenn
Comes to me oft and again.

Then off I'll go in imagery,
St. Peter's Plaza I will see,
And walk upon the many stairs
That lead one to the upper airs.

Into the vast domain I'll go.
There's lots to see, go very slow.
It's all so huge, golden, strange,
I walk along the central lane.

View the baldachino* there,
And St. Peter's golden chair,
Think of all the popes and kings
Those who kiss the papal ring.
(There is so very much to see,
It tires out poor little me.)
I think I'll go to the Holy Door,
Wait there for what's in store.

John Paul II may just be home.
I'll go inside and with him roam.
Quiet as a little mouse
Shadowing him in his big house.

And then I'll go to works of art,
Raphael's paintings win my heart,
And in the great library,
There are manuscripts to see.

I feel a sense of lassitude,
Along with bits of gratitude,
And find myself beside the hive
Very glad to be alive.

I drift and doze in summer sun,
My traveling is all gone and done.
Mind and heart are satisfied,
Here in my chair I will abide.

The bees won't even bother me,
They know me now and they can see
I'm just a gatherer in thought
Which to my busy mind has brought

Some nectars sweet.

Phyllis (Apr. '03) regularly contributed to Ninepatch from its beginning September 1994 until

she passed on in January of 2002. This poem is from the private collection of Fr. Louis Anderson and is used by his permission.

* Baldachino is a structured canopy over an altar.

LIFE LINES

You have yours
And I have mine.
If they never meet,
We'll not entwine.

They may go in circles
Or straight ahead-
Go up and down
Or stay in bed.

They may cross at the corner
Or on a busy street
They may slowly come together
But never quite meet.

Watch a life line
As it travels into space.
Watch where it goes-
To what place.

For if it travels parallel
But not too far from yours,
You will have a companion forever
As we complete our fateful tours.

James is single. He has six grown children of equal sex. He likes to write. James says he is, "...presently traveling life's learning journey."

Ninepatch

Statement of Purpose

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

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

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

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

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ISSN 1094-3234

E-mail: Ninepatch9@AOL.com

Website: <http://www.ninepatch9.org>

**Annual newsletter suggested donation rate:
\$15-\$35.**

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

501c3. Documentation is available for a small fee on request.