

Ninepatch

Stitch - by - Stitch

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

Note: Each month I write a letter where I share a story from my ongoing personal journey. This one again touches my Ireland Pilgrimage-- but very indirectly.

September 2003

Dear Friends,

I have been in Chicago with JK. Yesterday, he directed me as I drove him to work through unfamiliar city streets. Returning home, in the confusion of local construction, I overdrove my turn. I motored several miles before I realized I was lost. Then at a light, I turned back the direction I thought I should be going.

Luckily, I was in the heart of Chicago suburbia and had stumbled on to a town-like “neighborhood.” There, on one of its main streets, I spied a familiar sign in bright pink and orange letters: **DUNKIN’ DONUTS**.

Ah! I breathed relief. Coffee, donuts and people! Surely I could get directions there. If not, I could ponder city maps I always carried. So, I turned in and parked. I smiled as I swung out of the car. Donuts and coffee are both high on my list of treats.

After ordering and paying, I asked my server how to get to a main street I knew. I was met by a blank look. Just then, a slender blonde lady in black exercise shorts stepped up from behind me in line and said, “I know where that is.” She pointed out the window the direction I was to drive, named streets, saying “right” and “left” after each name. After eating and sipping, I followed her directions easily.

Today, I drove JK back to the same worksite. This time on my return, I purposely drove on to my previous “lost” turning. Again, I wheeled into the busy **DUNKIN’ DONUTS**, where I purchased a dark brew and a sweet. Absently, I wondered why I had driven back.

This day, I chose the same corner table-for-two where I sat before. It stood near a front plate glass window nearly blanked with the backs of posters. From that spot I could observe everyone who came in. I could also see the backs of the man and girl who worked the counter and filled orange and pink-lettered Styrofoam cups and waxed bags.

As I sat and sipped fragrant dark liquid, I nibbled a vanilla frosted donut with red, white and blue sprinkles. I also watched a varied parade as customers pushed through two glass doors. Most slowed as they crossed dark tiles toward the counter. Surprisingly, not all bought donuts or bagels. A few purchased only coffee before hurrying off.

At one time, the double lines included three young men wearing shirts and ties. Two suited men with shined shoes also stood near. This pair later sat at a nearby table and pulled papers from cases, while talking in low tones. Also waiting that same general time were many slender women. Several wore white shirts, long black pants, and chunky- heeled black slides. They appeared to be *going somewhere*. Other ladies donned casual jeans or shorts. Two had children with them. Exuberant and playful, these youngsters appeared to be less-than Second Graders.

One pony-tailed, freckled-nosed girl of about Third Grade age entered alone. She stood hesitating-- away from where the lines formed. With her back to the entry, she looked toward the counter, eyes darting right and left. All the while, she held a dollar bill and stroked it, folded it, and then unfurled it again. At last she closed the space and actually joined the line.

I wondered about her. She appeared a little anxious. What was she studying so intently? Was she wondering which line was better? Maybe she was deciding what to buy.

After watching this assemblage for some time, I reached into my black canvas *daypack*. * I pulled out THE SUN magazine and began reading an article. It was penned by a man who moved to the US from Croatia. His tale was about a subway ride-- the New York *A Train*). Immersed in that tale of observation and reflection, I suddenly realized, "I'm like that!" Like that author, (and *Ninpatch* writer, Christa in *FABRICS*) watching people interests me.

Driving to the shop I wondered about my motive. Now, I know. I like to watch people— to just observe their comings and goings. Sometimes I also tell what I've seen. Here's another piece of myself.

I am blessed.

Frances Fritzie

Frances Fritzie, Editor adds, "My Ireland Pilgrimage in 9-02 appears to be a sort of turning point. In retrospect, I see in choosing that adventure, I opened other paths to follow. Traveling to Ireland and the experiences there increased my desire for gentle adventure. Journeys provide outer experiences that continually open windows onto my soul. In my recent travels I continually connect to my pilgrimage even if it's only a way as small as the daypack I used there."

*DAYPACK

I bought this black canvas *daypack*/bag last year in response to a list of suggested items to take on the Ireland Pilgrimage. *Daypack*, the list read. "Daypack?" I'd never heard of such. Did they mean a *back pack*? Maybe they envisioned a *fanny pack*? No one I called knew. Then, I noticed an item in **Lands'End** and called to inquire about it. After chatting with the friendly female order- taker, I decided to buy it.

The black canvas shoulder bag turned out to be more the size of a small briefcase, but similar to a messenger-style bag. Day pack or not, I carried it everywhere in Ireland. Now, I carry it over my shoulder wherever I travel.

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Ninepatch Celebrates NINE Years!

September 1994- September 2003

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

-

(Letters to the Editor)

Hi Fritzie,

Just finished reading July-Aug.'03 *9patch*. Boy, have you got it bad! That's good. Keep looking into those eyes and don't stop dancing. (I don't think your Ireland experience has anything to do with it.)

Seems that you have made a good turn- around so don't look back. You have arrived at the smiling station. We *Ninepatchers* are all smiling with you.

About the October theme, *The Gift of Suffering*, I don't know. Maybe I am getting numb but 9/11 seems far removed-- and I am tired of suffering.

Lee

Lee (July-Aug. '03) says, "Healing is taking place. Having done the forgiving, placed past hurts behind, you are now moving forward with joy. Happiness follows."

Hi Frances,

I am sorry not to have been in touch. The past year has been a series of deadlines, one after another and sometimes overlapping. When I get a break it's usually brief and I try not to do much at all, except for reading or doing something with my hands.

I still enjoy playing with beads and making a necklace or two for myself. I also make cards for all the birthdays and events in the family and I draw a bit. As I write this, I remember that I intended to take art classes and get back to the life drawing I enjoyed so much. It's sometimes hard to keep those old priorities in mind.

What I have to do at work is important to many people, those my agency serves and those we employ. Financial times are hard. Keeping our funding going when the governor hasn't signed the budget is a challenge. It consumes my energy and time but I'm glad to be able to do it.

So, I do the small projects that unwind me at the end of the day and put off the art classes for a bit. I take off an extra hour or half day from work when I can.

Good to see the newsletter!

Corinne

Corinne (Oct. '02) adds, "I do enjoy the newsletters. They are a reminder about the rest of life that happens whether I am aware of it or not. Lately, I've had to work at the awareness and need the reminders."

Dear Fritzie,

I am having my older kitchen updated with new appliances and cabinet re-facement. I hope it will be a positive \$\$ decision of mine when I get ready to sell and downsize.

Otherwise, I continue on my own spiritual journey. I'm reading an interesting book. It is by author Jack Kornfield and is called, Path with Heart. It has so many appealing thoughts yet I find I must read a few sentences and then lay the book in my lap and ponder what I've just read. Needless to say, I am moving slowly through this large tome.

I still enjoy your writings and those of your contributors. Your publication has such positive energy. My cynical mind finds the peacefulness at the heart of *Ninepatch* people to be envied, yet the words somehow assure me that maybe I will someday be able to achieve the same serenity.

Sincerely,
Bix

Bix (Sept. '02) adds, "I've been single a while now. I have been hurt enough times in enough ways that I am beginning to keep my emotional distance. One of my friends introduced me to a man yesterday. I just couldn't get up my emotional - self to care. I don't know anything about him that should make me not interested, I just feel fatigued at the thought of getting to know someone new with all the work that is entailed with being in a relationship."

*

Hi Fritzie,

Once again, you're a true friend to keep me in mind, especially in view of my long silence.

The silence means nothing out of the ordinary. I'm just preoccupied, and once I start not responding to letters and such, I have a way of making the situation even worse by procrastinating even more.

I look forward to reading the July-August issue of *Ninepatch*.
Hugs,
Fred

Fred (May '02) adds, "My daughter's finally launched in the world. My wife and I just got back from a ten-day sojourn in southern Mexico. We rented a car and drove all over the Sierra Madre down to the Pacific coast. I'm finally beginning to see the beginning of my faint ability to communicate in Espanol. Life is good."

Hello again!

Oh boy!

My husband and I have been doing prayer and Bible study. When I read and worked the chapter, "Overcoming Unbelief" in the book, Praying God's Word, it hit a lot of my "buttons!"

I thought I was OK in the belief department, but it seems I still have a lot of childhood issue- related to unanswered prayers. This afternoon, I've been journaling for a

couple hours. I spent the first one weeping. At one point I had to stop and sob for a bit before I could continue.

Yesterday I attended the weekly *Ninepatch* prayer group. There with the ladies, I realized I was stuck in the area of unanswered childhood prayers. The week before, during the silent meditation part of our gathering, I went into my special place in my mind. There, my inner child was waiting for me on a knoll in the middle of my sanctuary. She wrapped her arms around my neck and wouldn't let go. When our meditation ended, it broke my heart to leave her. I literally gave her to God to hold until I could get back and deal with whatever I had to deal with.

Then on Sunday, my husband and I were reading the selected scriptures and praying about them. I felt the power of what we were reading and praying about, but I also felt this nagging sense of grief building. I didn't say anything to my husband because I was trying to figure out what was going on with me.

I wonder about my response and I suppose it might have helped if I had shared it with him and talked about it then. I do have this pattern of trying to figure things out on my own first. It's not necessarily a good or bad trait, it's just what I do. Figuring things out alone may come from spending a lot of time alone with my own thoughts, even as a child.

Love,
Pam

Pam (May '03) adds, " Since I wrote that message to you, I have really worked on healing the disappointment, pain and the building unbelief that occurred. I am feeling more centered and am believing as an adult. It has been a powerful experience to realize that a four- year- old has been running my spiritual life all this time. I still have to explain things to that younger part of me sometimes, but the blessing is that I can. "

*

Frances,

Today, I am in the middle of getting rid of some clutter. The more I look around my house, the more I see that I need to release. I probably ought to make a list so I can laugh at myself when I finish this effort of letting go. Today, for instance, I threw away two one-pound bags of brewers' yeast --both five years out of date and NEVER opened. Oh, well. At least they are no longer taking up pantry space.

I hope your day was peaceful and fulfilling. Have fun; be safe!
Joy

Joy/JW (July-August '03) adds, " Four days later, this was my clutter- dumped list:

- 5lb box of baking powder
- 5 lb box of sugar cookie mix
- various metal pieces (for my ex-husband's unbuilt forge)
- 9 never reread "O" magazines
- 10 *National Geographic*
- broken lamp
- Wok set
- candle making leftovers
- candle stubs

- cardboard boxes
- hair dye kits x 2
- not quite empty shampoo bottles x 4
- out-of-date canned food
- out-of-date frozen *mysteries*

This list is partial—I can't recall everything. I've got a long way to go. Some of it is going to Goodwill. Some is going to friends and neighbors who can use it, but a lot is just trash.

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

(Our Experiences)

GOD IS WHERE YOU FIND HER

I celebrate this Sunday in solitude... a long walk, the awakening songs of cardinals and mockingbirds. I greet the waning moon and welcome the first glimmer of light on the eastern horizon. The southwestern breeze is heavy with the salt of the gulf. I breathe deeply as the trees and other vegetation happily exchange their O2 for my CO2. I thank them. I acknowledge the perfect order of the universe, giving thanks for the peaceful rest of the night and the promise of this new day.

Now I partake of the "sacrament" of bagel and coffee (no disrespect to those who kneel before clergy to receive theirs).
I love the way Emily Dickinson expresses it:

SOME KEEP THE SABBATH

**Some keep the Sabbath going to church,
I keep it staying at home,
With a bobolink for a chorister
And an orchard for a dome.**

**Some keep the Sabbath in surplice;
I just wear my wings
And instead of tolling the bell for church
Our little sexton sings.**

**God preaches, a noted clergyman,
And the sermon is never long;
So instead of getting to heaven at last,
I'm going all along.**

Don (July-Aug. '03) adds, "Dickinson, Emerson, Thoreau, the English romantic poets, yes the Psalmist, all heard the voice of God through the beauties of creation. The Bible mentions God in nature, too.

When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy hands, what is man that thou art mindful of him?
(Psalm 8:3)

The heavens declare the glory of God. (Psalm 19:1)

*

*In order to be a true smile,
It has to be a happy smile.*

James (July-Aug. '03) says, "The radiant light of a happy smile can never be mistaken..."

THE PEOPLE ON THE TRAIN

In June I wrote about a project that I was doing to entertain myself. At that point, I was commuting two hours per day on the New York City subway. The only things to do were reading or watching the throngs of people crowding the train or bus, and since I was watching them anyway, I decided to write about all those other commuters. While this had the benefit of keeping me writing, it didn't feel complete. I started writing the peoples' actions and looks and idiosyncrasies on postcards and sending them to people I've met in real life and on the internet.

The thing about really observing people around myself (rather than just taking a quick glance and making an assumption) is that I find that I am more tolerant than I was before of loud talkers or people who wander back and forth in the train car. It has also helped me in being able to whittle away the inconsequential in my character details to get to the important stuff.

Each tiny profile gets me asking questions about the details I can't see. Why did she wear a heavy sweater on a hot day? Why are his clothes full of holes? Above all, where are they all going? Jobs? To see their loved ones?

The card for *Ninepatch* read:

The People On The Train (a series) # 32

I am in a subway car that reeks with the fizzy scent of PEZ. No kidding. I have to assume that it's the only other woman in the car. Her perfume or hairspray. When I look over, she is staring at me through dark glasses, pursing her lips in and out of an 'o' shape. They are very pink. Still, the woman stares at me, in what looks like silent disapproval, or perhaps morning mood. I will her to look away. No dice. I bear the weight of her look until she leaves, getting off at Woodside.

-Christa Weber

I think that, like myself, they are all trying to survive and still do the things that will make them happy. And, in the end, isn't that one of the most important revelations?

Christa Weber (June '03) adds, "The project has slowed down quite a bit now that I've gotten a car. I still take the train some mornings, but not nearly as much. The recently mailed batch was fairly large but don't know how quick I'll produce them from here on in."

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

A SPRING AND SUMMER OF READING

Several months ago I began an article for *Ninepatch* about what I was in the process of reading. I took a long time to finish Virginia Woolf's classic, Mrs. Dalloway. Then I read Michael Cunningham's, The Hours, based on Mrs. Dalloway. During that time, I also saw the movie, "The Hours." (It was one nominated for best movie and Nicole Kidman also won best actress in it for her portrayal of Virginia Woolf.)

Mrs. Dalloway -- the book -- was unique in that it takes place in the course of one day. It features ruminations and reminiscings that cascade down the pages in waterfall fashion, sometimes never breaking for a paragraph.

The author, Woolf, suffered severe depression and also took drugs for her death-defying headaches. Some of the writing may have been written while she was near hallucination. Nevertheless, it is poetic and insightful.

In a radio review a few years ago, I remember hearing, at least one person's opinion, that Woolf was considered the most influential female writer of the 20th century. I can see where that might be so. She discussed homosexuality freely, when that subject was taboo in the 20's and 30's. One of the great attributes of intelligent people is that they are great observers. That, she was. In addition, her work is most detailed.

Cunningham's book is also intriguing. The manner in which he entwines the lives of the three main female characters is brilliant. In his book, Mrs. Dalloway, the fictitious character in Woolf's book, is given equal footing to Woolf herself and to Mrs. Brown, the third female character. Interestingly, fictitious characters are given a life-like status on a par with Woolf. This makes the story quite different—and *interesting*.

Gail (July-Aug. '03) adds, "I have two more related books to share. One is Drinking: A Love Story by Caroline Knapp. Knapp's latest is, Attitudes: Why Women Want. Unfortunately, there won't be further books as she died of cancer last year. She was an excellent writer.

Since Knapp was inspired by Pete Hamill's book, A Drinking Life, I picked up that, too. I'm a third of the way through. Hamill's parents were Irish immigrants and his early childhood in the book reminds me of Irish Frank McCourt's, Angela's Ashes."

THE LOVELY BONES

This novel, written by Alice Sebold, is told from the view-point of Susie Salmon who has just been attacked and murdered at the age of fourteen. The chronicle of events that follow include the ongoing investigation of her disappearance and the fruitless search for her body.

Perhaps more importantly is the manner in which her parents, younger sister and brother deal with their loss. Each one focuses on the strengths and weaknesses of their relationship with Susie. All the while, Susie is watching from her idea of heaven and experiencing their feelings as well as her own.

Eight years later, Susie watches some closure for the people she loves. She expresses that her heaven has become wider; her loved ones have now been able to relegate her to memory, where she feels she is meant to be. Susie saw how the lives of her family trailed backward and forward from her death. The "lovely bones" were the connections with each other that grew around her absence.

Although Susie's body was not found there are hints near the end of the book that an old sinkhole may soon be dug up in ongoing new construction.

The author's choice to tell the story from Susie's point of view is a decided advantage. Susie is the only one who has all the facts and shares the thoughts and feelings of everyone involved. Hence, the reader knows the killer and the whereabouts of Susie's body parts.

***June Poucher** (July-Aug.03) adds, "Sebold is a skillful writer who follows the trail of subtle nuances in the relationships of her characters. At times I felt like an eavesdropper."*

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

FIRE

**A flash of rebellion
Is not from some hellion,
But from a spirit in bondage to fear.**

**To be rebellious
Can be glorious
And leave in its wake
Good cheer.**

***Phyllis** (July-Aug. '03) from the personal collection of Fr. Lou Anderson.*

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

INTERIM FINANCIAL REPORT

Traditionally our interim report appears in this September *birthday* issue. As you will see, this year’s report (April 11, ’03) compares favorably with last year.

2002

Cash carryover 12/31/01	-----\$ 73.55
Subscriptions	----- 500.00
Donations in Kind	----- 0
Total	----- 573.55
Expenses	-----218.25
Bank balance	----- \$ 355.30

2003

Cash carryover 12/31/02	----- \$302.43
Subscriptions	----- 345.00
Donations in Kind	----- 0
Total	-----647.43
Expenses	----- 350.29
Bank balance	------\$297.14

We remind readers that our new biannual subscription- renewal reminder system continues to affect our numbers. The bulk of our renewals occur at the end of the year.

A special thanks to June who keeps our books and provides this special report.

Editor, Frances

A FEW THOUGHTS ABOUT GIFTS OF SUFFERING—

October’s Theme

People suffer in different ways. Some "suffer in silence." Others cry in pain. A key that transforms all suffering—emotional, physical, mental or spiritual—appears to be *enduring*.

Looking back, my symptoms of alternate anger and depression marked my “suffering.” I lived *falsity*. Although I did not recognize it at the time, pretending the American dream drained me, left me sad and angry.

Once I finally began to bring my life back to my long-forgotten truth, I received *many* gifts. One was a true smile.

I hope there is something in my reflection you recognize—and you will find a story to share.

Editor, Frances adds, "The deadline for October '03's Gift of Suffering stories is September 15--and at this point-- for e-mail, only. Please use: Ninepatch9@aol.com"

Numbers tell the *Ninepatch* 2003 readership in various states.

For those of you who cannot see the map in this e- issue, here's a report. *Ninepatch* is reach from coast to coast. On the East Coast, we have two readers in Massachusetts, and one in Maryland. Two live in New York State and two more in Pennsylvania.

In the South, one lives in Texas and twenty-two (including the editor, Frances) live in Florida. In the Midwest, one lives I Ohio and seventeen in Michigan. Moving toward the west and across the Mississippi, one reader lives in Iowa and one lives in Missouri. Then there is a BIG leap to the West Coast. There, one reader lives I Oregon and four live in California. One reader lives outside the US. Our webmaster lives in Canada. *Interesting* statistics!

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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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