

Ninepatch

Stitch - by - Stitch

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

EDITOR'S NOTE: Here's a recent page from my spiritual notebook.

July-August 2004

Dear Friends,

I sat in a quiet darkened room with at least fifteen people, most seated around tables arranged in an open square. After a prayer and readings, each person spoke while others listened without comment. It had been over a month since I was part of this gathering. As I heard others tell of living their spiritual principles, my gut relaxed. I felt a longing to sit with this fellowship more often. As I began to consider how to schedule regular visits, several dark *posts* standing in a lawn flashed in my mind. I last saw those same uprights in 2002, on the second day of my pilgrimage in Ireland.

I recall that morning on the Emerald Isle. After prayer and breakfast, we filed onto our coach and rolled along narrow tree-lined roads toward Newgrange, a Stone Age monument the Irish government had restored and preserved. Dated 3,200 BC, this structure is a grass-covered mound more than two football fields in diameter and about four-stories high. Like strange white dominos, huge stones carved with swirls, and dots lay on their sides around its base. Built by a pre-writing tribal people, it was apparently used for some sort of special ceremony one or two days of the year. ([Http://www.arthistory.sbc.edu/sacredplaces/newgrange.html](http://www.arthistory.sbc.edu/sacredplaces/newgrange.html))

We entered through a small doorway about one story up from the ground. Single file, we squeezed along a dark, narrow and winding passage that opened into a small electrified high-ceiling room. Lining this stone vault were more impressive and mysterious carvings. Apparently, the room was created for special ceremonies related to light.

Using a special beam, our guide showed how sunlight shines through a two by three foot rectangular window over the door and straight into the cave-like space. This occurs for about ten minutes on the shortest day of the year. Direct rays also briefly enter the day before and after this solstice. The rest of the year, the angle of the sun misses the opening.

After our thoughtful venture inside the mound, we gathered on the grounds outside near a few tall guardian-like boulders. As I glanced around, I noticed ten or more aged wood posts arranged in an indecipherable pattern on one side. Those dark aged poles fascinated me.

Several weeks later, I saw the posts a third time. Their image was in a story I told to another group:

It was a sunny afternoon. I was swimming in rather shallow blue-green waters. Paddling along, I did not notice the time. Suddenly—as happens in the tropics-- the sun began to set. Near steep banks, trees cast shadows and made the water dark. I began to feel a current. I stretched my toe down to touch bottom-- only to discover I could not.

Now tired and treading, I glanced around for a way to get out of the water. I saw nothing but several dark wood posts protruding from the water, like channel markers. I swam to the nearest upright and clung to it.

In the morning, I'd see where I was and decide what to do next.

In this story, the *posts* have become places of rest along a deep unknown waterway. Those pillars seem to represent my life's grounding places. The deep water with its current are my life's changes.

These meanings work. My life had been swimming along, without a care, but now I've come to a stop. I am over my head with lessons. I am learning how to live in two places, how finances will work and most of all, how to "be married." I often feel tired by it all. Worse, I feel the current's drag when lessons test me and I don't get 100%. For instance, when I recently traveled to join JK, I forgot two important things — *dancing shoes* and a medication.

But, why did I first *see* the Irish posts? And, what made the image change? I don't know. Yet, from my latest story, I can imagine things will look better with rest and clarity. In the meanwhile, I'm clinging to a pillar of **faith**. Though aged, it is strong.

I am blessed!

Frances Fritzie

Frances Fritzie, Editor adds, " Looking back, I seem to continually reconnect with images I first beheld in Ireland in 2002. That pilgrimage was an experience that touched me deeply. I would tell more about that experience—clearly, The Best Money I Ever Spent --our special topic for the rest of 2004 -- but the story is not **directly available** to tell. I must be content with bits and pieces as they do become tell-able." **EDITOR'S**

NOTE: Many photos of our pilgrimage visit to Newgrange are also available on the website: www.Ninepatch9.org. They were taken by a fellow pilgrim who sent them to us for this use.

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

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(Letters to the Editor)

Dear St. Frances,

Miss Alf (my little daughter) and I just returned from a thank-you picnic for volunteers at our food pantry. She had fallen asleep so I peeked through the mail where I spied *Ninepatch*. I opened and read it. (*Ninepatch* keeps piling up here -- no surprise! My son and daughter keep me *b-u-s-y!*)

Anyway, I missed the last two, so congratulations on your wedding and I am sorry to hear about Kathryn's passing! You know, every time you see a white mushroom or a circle of mushrooms—"white mushrooms in the darkness"—you will be reminded of your friend.

Blessings***

Malaina

Malaina (Feb. '04) says more about the June '04 issue, "And thank you for the attached quote (by Mother Theresa), We can do no great things, only small things with great love. I only hope I am doing small things with great love."

Dear Frances,

When I got home after vacationing in Florida, then visiting my children out west, I had a month's worth of mail stacked up. In paying bills and catching up, I set the March *Ninepatch* aside and forgot about it. When I remembered it, I couldn't find it. Then, after the April issue arrived, I got real curious and went digging in the garage among my recycle papers—and *found* it!

It seems you are dealing with death lately. Kathryn's passing was so soon after your cousin Mark's suicide. I enjoyed your sharing of how your son, and then you, shared pleasant memories as a farewell.

I've also enjoyed the pet stories. They brought to mind my pet adventures but I was not inspired to relate any. Perhaps the *Kitchen Table* topic (beginning January 2005) will inspire me.

All for now.

Love,
Palma

Palma (Jan. '04) says, "My trip out west and visit with my families all went well. When I arrived home, there were four-foot snow banks in the middle of March!"

*

Dear Frances,

Thank you for your letter. You said you were all excited and upset because a couple across the street asked if you would consider selling them your house. You thought you should and were in a spin for about a week. You said after they actually toured the house, they decided it was too small for their needs.

I am glad you came to a decision about the house. It seems to me The Lord stepped in on that one. He made a decision through those people. You are right when you say it wasn't time to sell after all. You were worried about nothing.

Relax and have fun! Enjoy your new life with JK.

Love and prayers,
Linda Sue

LindaSue (June '04) adds, "Maybe you can use a few slogans and quotes I do:

Let Go and Let God!

Don't worry—Be Happy!

Relax! "

Hi Frances,

Indeed it has been a long time since I wrote and much has happened. I have gone through a *Judas Experience*. A Judas Experience is when you are betray-ed by someone you consider a trusted friend -- an almost- like- a-member- of- your- family kind of friend.

I have no desire to give full details on the events. In the end, it almost cost me my job and took me to an over night stay in a city jail in New York City. Worse, it was all based on a terrible lie. I was lied on and judged by my peers. It was one of the worst times of humiliation that I have experienced since being molested by five boys at the tender age of thirteen.

Still, I must say with all my heart, *to God be the Glory*. Just when I thought all the doors were closing, God was busy opening up others. You see God does have a funny sense of humor. I never quite know exactly what God is directing me to do, either. For me, this terrible experience was an opportunity to explore other avenues in which I could be used by My Creator. It was a way to do a service for others who (like myself) had suffered in silence, those who had overcome bad relationships, cheating husbands and cheating wives' disrespectful children. (Maybe this letter is one!)

I just try to remember that God is in Charge no matter what.

Until next time

Egeria

Egeria (Oct. '02) continues, "Through all this, I have learned that if I pray for my enemies, God will turn them around. Also, it is better to Love than to be loved; better to understand than to be understood."

Fritzie:

We've had a death in my husband's family this past week. His widowed sister-in-law died in her sleep. My husband cared little for the woman and only after my prodding did he commit to calling the widow's adult children.

This has made me think deeply about the survivors. I wondered, "How would I feel if friends and family ignored me after losing someone close?" I also tried to picture the days, months and years following the death -- what if people forgot about me?

I'm hoping this experience changes how I deal with death in the future.

Much love,

Elaine

Elaine (May '04) adds, "I am thrilled to have a new grandchild! Little Lily was born in April. My greatest disappointment was I had to keep away (at first) because of a bad cold."

Hi, Frances!

Thanks for sending me to the June issue.

Wish I could do your book gathering coming up.* It got me thinking about the book I've been reading, The Left Hand of God by William E. Barrett. I would classify it as adventure with religious overtones. I first read it when it came out in the early '50s. After that, it was made into a movie with Humphrey Bogart.

Just this week re-read it! It is still a real page-turner, set in rural China during post WW II. I recommend this good read.

Don (June '04) comments on summer in the South,, " I'm spending about two hours daily in my yard/garden. As I write at 8:20PM, it is still 92 degrees. Ugh." * **Editor's Note:** Book comments from that group will start in the September '04 issue.

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

RISK REWARDS

As I geared up for summer, whittling away at winter weight, plotting out my garden, and planning weekend get-aways, I also kept in mind what I recently heard a 'life coach' share on TV.

She said that when we allow ourselves to get caught in the endless 'sleep-work-sleep' cycle of day-to-day life, we forget how to really live. To combat this, she suggested, each of us should challenge ourselves to do something that scares us, at least once a week.

Of course, she didn't mean that we should risk our lives, but she did mean that we should take some *rational* risks, that we should do something that will wake us up and remind us of what it feels like to live!

Since hearing this, I've tried to do one thing each week. One week I set aside serious fears of traffic and drove to a huge city, took the first bike ride I've had in years. Another week, I spoke to a superior at work about a stressful situation. These may be small matters to others, but to me they were **risks**.

As that life coach suggested, each risk faced, brought a benefit. The bike ride took me to see a loved one and I also learned I could still keep up with the kids. The other risk cleared the air at work. Each one made a difference in my day-to-day life!

It worked for me!

*Lynn/TROR (June '04) continues, " I hope that you'll challenge yourself too. Risk something so you will **live** this summer!"* **EDITOR'S NOTE:** For those of you who do not regularly visit the website, this is part of Lynn/TROR's introductory letter for our June '04 issue.

THE GARDEN OF INNOCENCE -- *A Graveside Service*

We went to our first *Garden of Innocence* graveside service today. It was lovely. A young couple contributed guitar and flute music, the Knights of Columbus provided a color guard and pall bearer services.

Isaac was born and died Feb. 7, 2004 and not claimed by his family at the hospital within thirty days of his death. Thus, he became an abandoned child waiting to be buried.

The service was impressive. When the little casket first arrived, all the guests stood in a circle around the gravesite. Isaac, in the casket, was passed from person to person so each could "touch" him and love him. Music was played, a eulogy given by a priest, a poem was read, and balloons were released to celebrate his life. Then each of us dropped a handful of rose petals in his grave.

After the service my husband and I stayed to talk to a couple of the other volunteers. They shared a lot about their journey with the *Garden*. I was amazed at how much there was to learn! For example, in California, a baby of twenty-plus weeks who draws one breath is considered a live birth and requires a birth certificate.

A baby who breaths for one minute or more before death requires a death certificate. Each situation is processed differently in order to release the child to *GOI* for a proper burial. Unfortunately, institutional wheels turn slowly as these requests are not a high priority for the agencies who must process them.

The original plan was to bury abandoned children, assuming the abandoning was on the "streets," so to speak. Then the *Garden* realized there were cremains (cremated ash remains) sitting at the County and unclaimed cremains at funeral homes waiting to be dumped in the ocean.

The society has worked (and is still working) to get those released. Forty-three children have been buried since 2000. Twenty-one child cremains are pending release from funeral homes. While all this was in process, they discovered there are still whole-body children waiting in hospital morgues. (There are at least eleven of these.) So they started working to get those released, too. Every situation is different. It's a long process.

GOI got some unplanned press when the A & E program, "Family Plots" interviewed a funeral home in San Diego. They happened to have just received Isaac for preparation. That television program has generated email requests for help to start similar programs from four different states, and also Quebec, Canada.

How wonderful if every child could be loved and sent "home" with dignity and tears.

Georgene (June '04) gives us her life update, "My husband and I are spending two nights at the beach using the going away gift my ex-employer gave me. Interestingly, last week six more people were laid off -- four of them good friends. Now it's time for me to give an ear like they did for me. Hard stuff."

HEALING A PAINFUL PAST

In the middle of May, I spent one amazing week on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. What an eye-opening experience to see the devastating effects of my white European culture and how it has so seriously hurt these beautiful people.

I was volunteering for RE-MEMBER, an outreach project to the Oglala Lakota people. Their mission is seeking to improve the quality of reservation life through relationships, shared resources and volunteer services. During the week, I helped with various projects and work that needed to be done, but I learned much more than what I gave.

One day, a group of us visited the historical marker at Wounded Knee. The sign originally read, "The Battle of Wounded Knee". However, a new small sign has been placed over the word "Battle" and the more accurate sign now reads, "The *Massacre* of Wounded Knee".

Our history with the indigenous people of this land is filled with other killings, hundreds of broken treaties, and rape. There were also dirty schemes. For example the man who runs the mission at the reservation told me a gruesome tale. The incidences took place before the Revolutionary War and were done at the instigation of a British general. Soldiers gave several tribes blankets that had been intentionally infected with smallpox! The same man also heard some Lakota talk of similar incidents during the 19th century. Bad as these and other episodes were, in the long term it may have been even more damaging that my culture took away *their* names and gave them *ours*.

One Lakota man pointed out that the indigenous people of this land were the first victims of terrorism ON THIS SOIL. I also shook my head when I heard of a Lakota woman who was challenged about the trash on the reservation. In return she asked, "Why don't we all look more critically at how we are polluting water and air and the very serious effects this mass polluting has had on our lives?"

You and I may have had a day or a week, sometimes longer, when we are *really* depressed. But for a people who have suffered the way the Lakota have, there is "generational depression" which they are fighting. There are signs that the next generation of Lakota will do better, but to do so, they are having to conform to a white way of life, even as they preserve their ways of life.

A lesson I feel our culture is still learning is that we are all wonderful human beings (or can be). The mindset that any group of people are not "human" or are "savages" is inaccurate. There are barriers, such as prejudice and ignorance. These we need to work through. People need to listen and understand one another; understand *every*-other.

I felt overwhelming sadness at the loss of people who lived on this land for thousands of years with their meaningful way of life and their deep spirituality. I grieve for the innocence of the indigenous people who had a very difficult time understanding our concept of "owning" land and property. For them, the land is not for any one, it is for everyone.

Peter is happily partnered for five years now, and living the busy times of life. In his little free time he enjoys the outdoors, reading, and writing. He adds, "In our time, it is my prayer that we do better than history has shown, and listen to each other and learn, and evolve as better spiritual beings."

Knowledge breaks the world into
pieces—
Wisdom makes it whole.

James (June '04) expands, "Modern man -- with his knowledge -- tries to change the earth. Ancient Man-- with his wisdom -- tries to save the earth."

***-T-H-E—B-E-S-T—M-O-N-E-Y-
I—E-V-E-R—S-P-E-N-T***

(Our Special Feature)

SAVED MONEY

Three-thousand dollars seems like a lot of money when you think of it sitting on your dresser. It could be a semester at your local state college or even one thousand cups of fancy coffee from Starbucks.

The best money I ever spent equaled about that much, but I didn't use it for anything in particular. It was all the money I'd managed to save up while working for more than a year at a job I absolutely hated.

Every day, saving that money meant facing three bosses who loved to yell at, insult and demean everyone around them -- including customers who were spending thousands of dollars at a time. The yelling, of course, included shrieks at each other, as well as screams at customers and also employees. Every day, saving that money also meant spending ten or so stress-filled hours punching end-less names and numbers into a computer. When the orders came in, I processed and billed them before they were shipped out. Once shipped, the invoices from those orders came back to me and I filed them without having to even think about it. Sometimes I had to call customers to track down payments or to verify their credit cards, but mostly my schedule revolved around an **in** box and an **out** box.

Saving that money meant feeling like life was passing me by and knowing that I could do better. It also meant applying for other better jobs every night and being disappointed over and over again.

In the end, all that saving let me buy the best gift I've ever given myself: *unemployment*. I spent three-thousand dollars to quit that job and enjoy a few months of very quiet time in which I wrote and read and, most importantly, relaxed.

Christa Weber (June '04) adds, "It took me a while to think about The Best Money I Ever Spent-- since I hardly spend any nowadays -- but then it just kind of hit me."

LESSON MONEY

My wife and I were dancing at an American Legion club in Florida. Dancing? Well, sort of. You see I really didn't know how to dance, but that didn't seem to matter, as we moved slowly to the music.

We stayed close to the far edge of the dance floor and held each other tightly. We always stayed within a few inches of her oxygen tank on the floor. She died three months later.

The following winter, I returned to Florida and visited the Legion. There, I watched people at the bar telling jokes and having drinks. There, it seemed, *he who laughed the loudest, was having the most "fun"*. In contrast, the people at the tables around the dance floor were *really* enjoying themselves. They were dancing and also had companionship, and exercise. Then and there, I decided to take dance lessons!

I inquired at the local library for books on the subject. I found one of the volunteer ladies there was (and had been for a number of years) taking dance lessons at a studio in a nearby town. At her urging, I enrolled in a pay-as-you-go plan. This was excellent advice.

Beginning lessons were frustrating. I couldn't hear the beat, and also had two left feet. But, with time and encouragement, I began to get the feel of the music. I learned a waltz, the swing and the rumba, to name a few. Eventually, I switched to lessons at a closer studio where I also began attending the studio's dances. Before long, I had confidence enough for public dances.

Now, I find Florida a dancer's heaven. I step to the music several times a week, either at singles' affairs or at private clubs like the Moose and Elks. I often seek out ladies who seem to be bypassed by the men at the dances. Many of these ladies are older, but excellent dancers and enjoy dancing. I find pleasure in moving to the music and feeling and sharing the rhythm with my partner. I also still enjoy learning new dance steps and have a library of fifty or more dance tapes. I like sharing all the dance knowledge I've accumulated.

I wish I had discovered dancing earlier in life. Now, I encourage people to take dance lessons and enjoy the fruits of their efforts. Money I spent on dancing lessons was surely, THE BEST MONEY I HAVE EVER SPENT!

Le (Feb. '04) says, "I'm fascinated by stage productions like: "Dancin," "Sweet Charity," and "Damn Yankees."

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

THE SECRET LIFE OF BEES

This book was written by Sue Monk Kidd. It is a wonderful spiritually feminist read and a good story, It takes place in South Carolina in the early '60's when civil rights is in full bloom.

It is told by a 14-year-old white girl named Lily who is trying to make sense of her mother's death when she was four. Lily hates her mean father and loves her nanny, a black woman named Rosaleen. One summer, Lily and Rosaleen run away and wind up in the home of three black bee- keeping sisters to whom they become emotionally attached.

Lily learns about bees, the Black Madonna of Chains, develops a relationship with a black boy and finds the mother within herself.

Humor, drama, robust characters and a happy ending all recommend this book.

Carol (June '04) says she enjoyed the book so much, she read it 3-1/2 times before re-turning it to the library.

*

AGAINST ALL ENEMIES

This book is by Richard A. Clarke who served thirty years in the Senior Executive Service of the White House. Under the administration of seven presidents, he became a dedicated authority on combating terrorism.

The book opens with the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center. Clarke was the nation's crisis manager, running the Situation Room in the White House. In the days that followed the attack, the author was dismayed at the response of George W. Bush and his key officials. Clarke recalls that when President Bush took office, he showed no interest in al Qaeda. Nine months passed before Clarke was able to get a meeting with Bush. Instead, the administration's focus was on Iraq.

What I found interesting is the contrast in the style, perception and intelligence of Clinton and Bush. After attacks in East Africa in 1998, FBI and CIA provided evidence that the operation had been al Qaeda. Then-President Clinton asked for an overall plan to deal with al Qaeda. "Listen, retaliating for these attacks is all well and good, but we gotta get rid of these guys once and for all," Clinton said, looking seriously over his half glasses.... You understand what I'm telling you?"(page 185) As a result, the Clinton administration had plans in place to attack al Qaeda.

The clearest indication of Bush's understanding and his motivation came in an interview with Diane Sawyer on ABC. Sawyer asked in several ways about the hard fact of Saddam Hussein's possession of weapons of mass destruction as opposed to the

possibility that he might try to ACQUIRE those weapons. “Finally in exasperation, the president said,

I’m telling you I made the right decision for America because Saddam Hussein used weapons of mass destruction (in the 1980s) and invaded Kuwait (in 1990)” (page 266)

So he invaded Iraq which he concluded “...means America’s a more secure country.”(page 267)

Much of the book is taken up with Clarke’s recounting the history of terrorism by the Arab nations. He recites the details of endless meetings, agendas, and opinions of the principals attending.

There is no doubt about Clarke’s knowledge. His story is consistent and complete.

June Poucher (June ‘04) adds: “I have no doubt the threat to our country is real. I am troubled by a security system that seems woefully inadequate.”

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

MONEY THOUGHTS

My computer’s thesaurus tells me that in addition to *legal tender*, **money** is also *wealth* and *riches*. When I reached for Roget’s Thesaurus to get further inspiration, the term “money” listed synonyms for a page and a half. Here are a few more terms I hope will inspire a story from you:

Money (*legal tender*)- hard cash, red cent, dime, silver, *quarter*, George Washington, **fiver**, ten spot, C-note, **gold**...

OUR WEBSITE OFFERS A NEW FEATURE

The *Ninepatch* website, found at **www.ninepatch9.org** now features a calendar. So far our weekly prayer gathering and special cut- and- paste event are listed for July. The calendar includes phases of the moon and lists formal *Ninepatch* e-vents. To reinforce our sense of community we would also like to include reader's birthdays or significant events like graduation, starting a new job, a birth, death, marriage and even divorce. However, readers must enter this information themselves as we do not keep personal files.

Visit the calendar and see for yourself how easy it is to add your special information. The actual update to the calendar is done once a month. It will be reviewed by TROR before it appears to keep any odd data from appearing.

If you have an interesting or important event coming up, please take a cyber trip to the site and share it with us!

Frances Fritzie, Editor

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