

# *Ninepatch*

## *Stitch - by - Stitch*

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

*Editor's note: Following is a recent page from my spiritual journal.*

June 2004

Dear Friends,

Last month I attended the memorial for my friend Kathryn and later, a gathering at her home. I'd traveled to Michigan for this, hoping the church rite and later fellowship of friends and family would somehow help me grieve her death.

At the church, I experienced my friend's deep Christian belief. Her pastor told us about how she practiced it in her life. The hymns she chose to be sung reminded me of Kathryn's deep faith. Yet, my sadness remained.

Later, I arrived at her home, already filled with family and friends eating and chatting. It was strange to see a huge bouquet standing at the door instead of her smiling face and hand raised in greeting. Inside, I hugged her daughter and granddaughter, then ate a little and exchanged stories with past colleagues. Before I left, I walked alone through a back hall and peered into her bedroom. I poked my head into empty guest rooms then stood in the guest bath and read again a framed *Serenity Prayer* on the wall. I finished my tour in her den, where I glanced at photo displays and stood among her musical effects one last time.

Afterward, JK and I drove toward Chicago. While intermittent showers splashed against the windshield, I cried. I longed to transform my grief as easily as I saw raindrops become mist under semi tires, then rise and vanish into the air.

Days later in Chicago, I sat in a grocery's deli area and sipped a tall Starbucks before collecting JK from work. At a tiny corner table, I reread my dreams of several weeks. I gave each a title and recorded it in my spiral bound table of contents. While delving into my dreams, that afternoon, I saw dream "advice" which led to this story.

My dreams tap a *knowing* beyond brain power. I followed clues. The first hint came from the last night of April:

| am a little lost as to how to put things, trying to honor ... KP ... Then | see words like white mushrooms in the darkness, they will be my next step...

In my later dream the same night, I recorded:

...| figured out how to manage the problem. |'ll write two pieces... | even have a start on them both. That's a good feeling.

Alone and silent, I felt the depth of the white mushroom image and words I'd scratched that night. As late afternoon shoppers bustled in the nearby doors and others, finished shopping, ordered coffee to go, I studied the dream. First, I considered the image, "...white mushrooms in the darkness." The fungi in my

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image were the button- type for cooking, *useful matter that grew on/from death of another life form*. I asked myself, "What have I gained from a death?"

Next, I considered, "*two pieces*" and, "*I even have a good start on them.*" Since I had written nothing before that night, I decided the "two" referred to two parts of a dream I remembered from the previous night. I paged back in my journal. Sure enough, there -- two weeks after Kathryn's passing -- I read the *mushrooms* -- useful matter relating to a death. In my first dream of the night, I recorded,

...I see Kathryn. She doesn't see me, though. She is walking through a busy parking lot with a lady friend. KP is smiling, chatting away. She looks great. I am happy for that...

In a second dream that night, I scrawled,

I see Kathryn and sit and talk to her under a tree ... I hug her and cry. I don't want her to go! She hugs me, too, and says, "[t]ll be alright."

A nugget of wordless understanding opened. This dream was a huge step in coming to terms with my friend's death. The morning after those dreams I awoke at peace and lingered in that dream's fog before it slowly drifted away. In some unexplainable way, I had made a connection with Kathryn's spirit!

***May spring's new growth bring you bright blessings!***

*Francs Fritzie*

***Frances Fritzie, Editor*** says, "*While in Chicago, I witnessed trees bravely sending out their small yellow-green flags of rebirth-- even against a forty- degree chill. Like seeing Kathryn in my dream, those tiny leaves gave me hope.*"

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**- - - - A-R-O-U-N-D - - T-H-E - - F-R-A-M-E - - -**  
(Letters to the Editor)

Hi Fritzie,

Thank you for your sympathy card. It was so thoughtful of you to think of me. Yes, I am grieving deeply and have been having a rough time. I just can't believe KP (Kathryn, *Ninepatch* Apr.'04) is gone and when I do I can't imagine how I will function without her. I thought that your *Ninepatch* tribute was so nice -- I cried again.

I was so hopeful that I would see Katie again when she came home to Michigan in April. Still, I am so thankful for all the great phone conversations that we had every ten days or so this fall and winter.

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The last time I talked to her one would never have known she was so close to death. I take great comfort that she didn't suffer. I think of her in Heaven, and having a wonderful reunion with her husband and other loved ones, and keeping time to the beautiful music.

I learned so much from her. She was one of the most influential people in my life. I feel your sadness and know you will miss KP greatly.

Love and God Bless,  
Ilene

*Ilene is single and retired. She enjoys a number of activities, but the highlight of her week is holding and rocking babies in the neo-natal unit in one of the local hospitals."*

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Dear Frances,

Thank you for your letter. (It arrived the day after *Ninepatch!*)

I am sorry to hear about your friend, Kathryn. I also lost a friend to cancer. She had fought it twice and won. The third time took her from me. I think of the slogan, *Let Go and Let God*. It does work. It just takes time.

You sound upset about moving. You say a couple is interesting in buying your house. Have you talked with JK over your concern? It's a big decision to make alone.

There are lots of **b-u-t** s in life. Some things we just can't figure out. I pray the Lord will lead you in the right direction.

Take care of yourself.  
Relax and have fun. God bless you and JK.  
Love and prayers,  
LindaSue

*LindaSue (Apr. '04) adds, "I am glad your wedding day went well. A wedding holds many memories—happy and sad, emotional and humorous. It's a day you will remember forever."*

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Dear Frances,

YAY FOR YOUR MARRIAGE! ... also, condolences on the loss of your friend, Kathryn. May's issue was quite nice! I particularly liked reading about personal retreats (I could sure use one, but unfortunately am not granted that much time off.)

I also liked the synopsis of the book *Georgene* (May '04) was talking about. I've been searching for more freelance telecommuting work but no leads have come as yet.

As for freelancing in general, I've still got my regular staff job and also my regular stories for a . (dot) com. I get paid well, but don't receive enough assignments for it to be really "good."

I hope you're enjoying some beautiful weather!  
Sincerely,  
Christa

*Christa Weber (Feb. '04) says, "I've got my thinking cap on ... no, scratch that, I just figured out what the best money I ever spent was :-)* I like spontaneous inspiration! "

**Note:** Christa's story appears July '04.

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Dear Frances,

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You mentioned you were touched when Kathryn's daughter gave you a few of her mother's personal articles. Endings are sad, anytime, but clearing out the detritus of a person's life is always painful.

I think of what James Hillman says in, The Force of Character, "What is left when I have left?" He felt that a person's essence is left with some of the people who were close to them. Perhaps you feel that essence when you look at or use Kathryn's things.

Bless'd Be.

June

*June Poucher (May '04) also has a story in our special topic section, THE BEST MONEY I EVER SPENT. She says, "A person's essence can be negative or positive; Kathryn's was the latter. I am privileged to have known her."*

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Hi Fritzie!

As I always do, I read in your May '04 *Ninepatch* letter about some of the things said to you before your wedding. Those comments were especially interesting.

I thought the question from your spiritual advisor, "Do you love him?" was curious. I can remember how I felt about my ex-husband. I didn't think he could ever be replaced. But, when I started thinking about the whole situation and about all my feeling for my present husband, I like my feeling now much better.

I am at peace in my present marriage.

I knew Bob in high school and remember him as a very handsome, NICE individual. (He didn't lose that -- it only matured.) I was divorced for over twenty years when I met him again after his wife died.

I didn't plan or want to get married, but I was so comfortable with Bob I reconsidered. I had a job, a car and a life I was very contented with.

Now with Bob, my life is even richer. Of course we have our disagreements, but neither of us carries a grudge. These small matters are over very quick. Most of the time when we disagree, it's a simple misunderstanding.

After reading your letter, I asked myself the same question your advisor asked you, *Do you love him?* The answer is, I do love him. It is hard to describe. I can just say he is my best friend and I really am enjoying our retirement together. I like my older married life.

Now, it seems, there is nothing to prove.

Take care!

Patricia

*Patricia (May '04) continues, "I have always been a free bird and I still am. Nothing has changed (since I married) except I have someone to share things with. It is really nice."*

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Frances,

I am sorry to hear that you have suffered so much from deaths of people important in your life. It is hard.

I have to think of my mom. I went to see her in California for five days. She has Alzheimer's and other physical problems. It was so very good to be with her.

That is where earning money has made a difference for me. I can see her once in a while.

Love,

Patience

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*Patience (Feb. '04) brings us up-to-date with her summer plans, " I will be traveling this June to Europe! I got a scholarship to go to France, Italy and Spain on a special study tour. Then I go to see my mom again in July. Then it's back to Michigan for meetings and reconnect with my congregation. A busy summer lies ahead."*

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Hi Fritzie!

In April '04 *Ninepatch*, **Elaine** mentioned lecturer Wayne Dyer in her letter about depression. Perhaps she will find it comforting to know that Dyer had obstacles in his life that created depression. Years ago, I heard him tell about what he went through to be reconciled with his own father -- who was already deceased at the time.

John Bradshaw has written a book dealing with reconciliation called, Homecoming, Reclaiming and Championing your inner child". In the pages, the author says that while hurting people have to go back in time in order to do their search, a guide is also needed. In addition, on the book's jacket back, editors say, "This is your true homecoming... a discovery of your essence, your deepest, unique self."

I believe John Bradshaw's book is an excellent source of comfort, discovery and guidance. Elaine, I wish you well.

Lee

*Lee (May '04) adds, "Some time ago I read a book called, The History of Psychology by Duane P and Sydney Elle Schultz. I decided that the people who pioneered and helped to develop modern psychology were those who had personal difficulties, themselves. In a like manner, my own philosophy of life came about by processing and even changing my views of what living is all about."*



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

RAY and Ray

Ray and I were not only business associates but close personal friends when, in the spring of 1975 he was killed on his way to work when a train struck his car at a crossing with neither flashing lights or gates. Along with five other close friends, I was honored to serve as a casket bearer at Ray's funeral.

Ray had been an avid gardener. The pride of his garden was a huge staghorn fern suspended from a live oak tree in his back yard. Shortly after his funeral Ray's wife had the beautiful fern divided into six parts, each of which she repotted and presented to the bearers.

I gave my fern a place of honor in my garden where I carefully tended it. I soon began calling the plant "Ray" as the sight of it always reminded me of our great friendship.

Staghorns are propagated by removing small fronds called "pups." Once repotted, they start another plant. Ray thrived, putting forth many pups that I used as gifts for family, friends and clients.

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Now, nearly thirty years later, *Ray* has moved with us several times. He now hangs from a neighbor's camphor tree that overhangs my garden. *Ray* has fathered dozens of pups and who knows how many grand-pups!

Ray lives!

*Don (May 04) adds, " Welcome Spring! Again my days begin with a pre-dawn plunge in the pool followed by a walk to welcome the sun and count my blessings. " Note:* To see a staghorn image, go to [www.Ninepatch9.org](http://www.Ninepatch9.org)

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### THE GARDEN OF INNOCENCE

My husband and I are considering a new volunteer ministry we heard about through our church. It seems perfect for us since my husband is an avid wood-worker, for one thing. For the most part our contributions will involve making small wooden coffins for unclaimed bodies of dead babies and children and attending their graveside services. John will build the caskets and I will line them with batting, fabric, and lace.

The mission of the *Garden of Innocence* ministry is to insure that every abandoned child is given a proper burial. It is not a "Christian" ministry in the context of a denomination, but the volunteer presiders at the gravesites recognize a Higher Power.

Because I am childless, I'm sure this work will stir much in me. The *GOI* ensures that every child is given a first name, and is buried with a blanket, toy, and a poem written just for them.

Following is a poem that I wrote:

**FOR QUENBY**

Little girl with rosebud lips,  
You smile in heaven's sun.  
Around your head a halo wisps,  
You are our special one.

Though our arms never held you  
We send love beyond the sea.  
Our questions never answered  
Life on earth was not to be.

Comfort comes on angel's wings,  
We know that you don't cry.  
For in the arms of Jesus --  
You hear heaven's lullaby.

I always thought that if I had a little girl I would name her "Quenby Kathleen." Writing the poem gave me the opportunity to "adopt" the child I never had --and lose her to death -- leaving me in my childless state. I think I will feel this way with each child we bury.

*Georgene ( May '04) adds, "My husband and I also talked about the child he and his ex-wife lost to miscarriage. It was the first time he really opened up to me about that. We grieved together for a short while. Maybe all this sounds weird, but it makes sense to me."*

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TWO DOGS --

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PIPER AND CHARITY

I have been doing a lot of thinking lately about the trip I dread most in the world -- the final trip to the vet. Our present dog, Charity, is eleven years old. Charity is a Golden Retriever, a present from our children. They gave Charity to us after the untimely passing of Piper, another Golden Retriever. Piper had to be put to sleep at the young age of just five years. I loved Piper, and I also love Charity. (Piper saved my life. Oh, not in the physical action sense, like dragging me out of a burning building, but indeed dragging me out of fire just the same.)

When the end came for Piper I was not there. The reasons were many and – at the time -- seemed important. Piper died one hundred and fifty miles away from home at the University Animal Hospital. The last time I saw Piper was when my wife stopped at my place of work on her way to that hospital. As I held Piper close I knew that it would be the last time. Piper also knew. A day later, at 6pm, we received a call from the vet specialist. She said Piper could not be helped. She suggested that Piper be put to sleep.

I asked, "When?"

She responded, "Now."

I paused. Then I asked her to call back when it was finished. My wife and I embraced. We cried. I prayed.

I have never gotten over my guilt and sadness. I feel I let Piper down when she needed me the most. I was unable to rescue her. I carry a picture of Piper in my billfold. I have her ashes, too. I hope these will be buried with me wherever I may rest.

Now, as I look at Charity I see her slipping a little every day. I pray -- always-- that God will let me be there for Charity. It will be most difficult. I will place that dreaded day into God's hands. I trust that he will give my wife and me strength, and peace. I want to hold Charity like I would have Piper. I want to smell her smell like I would have Piper. I want to look into her eyes with reassurance like I would have Piper.

Will Rogers once said something like, "When I die and go to heaven, and if there are no dogs there, I want to go where they went."

Me too.

*George is married and father of three grown children. In his free time he enjoys flying his 1946 Piper Cub with his wife. He also enjoys taking trips and working out at the fitness center.* **Note:** To see both sketches for this story by *Lynan* (May '03), go to [www.Ninepatch9.org](http://www.Ninepatch9.org)

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***-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)

THE BEST MONEY I EVER SPENT

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Traffic was brisk that Saturday as my daughter and I set out to do our Christmas shopping in a town about an hour away. She was on Christmas break from college and we rolled along happily in my new yellow Mustang. Our heads were filled with ideas for our gift list.

Every store was clogged with tired shoppers, grim determination written on their faces. Some dragged weary complaining children behind them. Checkout lines were long but we determined to make the most of this day. When we had found the last perfect, and affordable gift, we made our way through the darkness and sank into the car exhausted and ravenous.

Pleased with our accomplishments, we looked forward to relaxing over a leisurely dinner. We stopped at one of our favorite restaurants about thirty-five miles from home. I was careful to lock the car to safe-guard our purchases. Then I realized that I had locked the keys inside!

When I voiced this hapless act to my daughter, I added, "...but you have YOUR keys." (She regularly drove the car to the nearby community college.)

Her face registered apprehension. "Well, actually I left my keys at home. I didn't think I'd need them."

A tired sigh of frustration escaped me; first we needed some rest and a good meal. All during dinner, my mind went over my options.

Since it was Saturday night just before Christmas, I doubted I could get a locksmith to come to our rescue. My teen-age son who had a little Jeep could easily bring the key to me. But I immediately ruled that out because he was underage and, although he was a good driver, he was not allowed to drive except on back roads near the family farm.

I could call my husband; but he was drinking and partying with our friends, and would be irritated to be called away. The thought of dealing with his scornful criticism forestalled that option!

After we finished dinner, I called a locksmith. I hit the jackpot; the first one I called agreed to come. My daughter and I waited beside the car for about twenty minutes before we saw his truck enter the parking lot. I waved and pointed to my car. In just a couple of minutes he had the car open.

When he wrote up his bill and presented it to me, I looked at the total of \$18 and thought, "This is the best money I ever spent!"

*June Poucher (May '04) adds: "I never told my husband about that incident!"*

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Life is a balancing act  
Between one's soul  
And one's worldly needs.

*James (May '04) says, "Everyone has a comfort range. I try to stay within my limits."*

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#### BEST MONEY THOUGHTS

When I think of the best money I ever spent, I think of "money" I won in a contest. I used initiative and creative deception to be picked as the winner of chocolates, balloons, a fur jacket and a \$1,000 gift certificate to the best women's clothing store in town.

Here's what happened: The local radio station announced that the grand prize would be presented to the secretary whose boss sent in the best letter of recommendation. Assuming that my bosses would never take the time, I wrote several short letters and had my bosses and coworkers sign them.

I also think of hard-earned money I garnered as a clerk that I spent on a used bureau at a flea market. I still have that piece of furniture almost thirty years later.

Maybe the best money I ever spent, though, was for a little tree. It is now almost full grown, even though it lives in another state, and I can't see it -- I know it is there. A couple of years ago, someone sent me a photograph of it in full bloom.

If time is money, then I take pride in the volunteer work I have done for my church, school district and public library. Even though these are "good" activities, recently I have become burned out and have felt exploited. So, I have cut back drastically on those activities.

Some charity gifts have *not* been the "best money." For in-stance, I don't think of the stingy sums I give away to charitable causes. This kind of giving makes me ponder my values. I humbly admit that I am a thrifty, frugal person sitting on an inheritance but still afraid she will die in poverty.

*Carol (Mar. '04) reflects, "My first impulse was to pass up this 'assignment.' Upon reflection, I decided to make it into a kind of spiritual confession."*

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

RUMINATIONS

I've been pondering *The Body of Christ*. I thought of this topic when I saw a book while on a recent visit to see family. It elaborated on *The Vine*, the concept I am using to organize my own writing is somewhat different but could be organized in a similar way.

While on the same family visit I bought a book called, The Essential KORAN. It is translated by Thomas Cleary. Cleary also translated Tao, Confucius, The Golden Flower and The Art of War. The jacket says of this work,

*"The notes make this a valuable text to have. Cleary brings in Sufi commentary and Buddhist parallels, and he is especially brilliant explaining Arabic roots of key words and their collateral meanings."*

-COLEMAN BARKS, translator, with Robert Bly

Thus, I feel Cleary's work is unbiased.  
Love, Joy and Peace,  
Lee

*Lee has a letter in AROUND THE FRAME. He adds, "I have not done a whole lot on my writing project as yet but I am beginning to get with the program."*

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

(Our Knowing and Our Spirituality)

**SAVOR THE ESSENCE**

Sadness weighs down my spirit.  
 A death of someone dear,  
     envelops me.  
 I will be still to allow my feelings,  
     free reign to develop.  
 I recall fondly  
     memories of a friendship.  
 Much of that person's "ESSENCE"  
     will remain with me always.  
 I need to savor slowly  
     what the person meant to me.  
 I am different because we met,  
     and became friends.  
 What remains  
     will eventually sustain me.

*Joan V. Spies ( Apr. '04) adds, a note to Frances, " I wrote this recently after hearing about the death of your friend, Kathryn. Sometimes I don't always take the time to appreciate how "BLESSED" I am and how much I have grown and been changed by the "Special People" in my life! Their essence and spirit will always be with me."*

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**MOTHER OF SPRING**

Out of the hard dark earth of  
     Winter,  
 out of the Mother of Spring,  
 crowning crocuses push through  
     the last snow.

Comes the sweet curly-headed  
     hyacinth,  
 the boisterous trumpets of daffodils,  
 the red-lipped smile of tulips,  
 and the unruly forsythia  
 like shattered sun, flails its rays.

Violets poke through blankets  
     of shade  
 and dandelions -- the peasants  
     of the fields --

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multiply upon the green.

Now, white surprise of dogwood,  
elegant flash of redbud,  
lilting lilies, showy magnolias,  
and lilacs -- pillows of mother's  
ample breast --  
press to complete  
the birth of Spring.

*Gail (Apr. '04) adds, "This poem emerged as a metaphor for the blossoming of my own body in its 68th year."*

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