

Ninepatch

Stitch - by - Stitch

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

Note: This letter is one of the editor's recent spiritual experiences.

March 2004

Dear Friends,

It was Tuesday morning. I had flown North, rented a small car and was now headed to my hometown in Indiana. As I drove, I noticed numbers out-lined in amber dots. They flashed the temperature: 28 degrees F. As I waited to turn onto the expressway, cars streamed by, tailpipes puffing small clouds. When the light changed, I merged into one of three south-bound lanes.

This journey had begun the previous Saturday evening. When I returned from grocery shopping, I found a message blinking on my answering machine. I pressed "play" and heard my cousin Judy, "...*Sniff*... Oh Fritzie... *Sniff*..." Her voice was strangely flat, "This is Cousin Julie... *Sniff*... Uh..." She paused. "I have bad news."

Immediately my eighty-year-old aunt flashed in my mind. Fighting *the flu* she'd coughed and wheezed when I'd last called her.

In a choked voice, Julie went on, "Uh... Mark shot himself today...Um... The police are still over at his house, but as far as we know he is dead ... *sniff* ...Uh... We are trying to keep the line open. We'll talk to you later."

Mark? I stood woodenly by the answering machine a moment. Then, I leaned over and pressed "play" again. Mechanically, the message confirmed Julie's words. The news made no sense.

Mark, my fifty-six-year-old cousin, was a family success story. Not at first, though. School was hard -- he could barely read. When I was a kid, during every visit my aunt urged me, "Read with Mark."

Even though I repeatedly told him the words, Mark still confused, why, when, where, what and which. He also said, "w-a-s," for "s-a-w." After years of teaching and training as a reading teacher, I eventually knew volumes about children like my cousin. Back then, though, I was helpless in his struggle.

Still, Mark plugged away and graduated from high school. After that, he put himself through a tool and die institute maintaining more than a 90% average. He went on to form his own business, too. I often told his story of rewarded determination to my discouraged dyslexic students.

I called my mind back to the present, turned from the phone and trailed around the house. The message still had no feel of reality. I wanted to call back, but knew enough to wait. Before long my wandering took me to my closet where I started pulling out clothes to pack for Indiana.

Time compressed. Now it was Tuesday morning. A light snow drifted like wind-carried sand across the right lane and collected in small dunes at the far side of the left.

Dime-sized flakes melted against my wind-shield. Others blew past the way stars zoomed by as the Star Wars' *Millennium Falcon* jumped into hyper- space.

The car's heater sighed warmth. Its tires *shurrrrrred* wetly against the salted pavement. Mile by mile I neared my childhood home.

I was nearly halfway there and on a city bypass when skies darkened, flurries thickened, and lanes grew slippery with slush. I sat up straight. My eyes traveled from the road to my speedometer and back to traffic before I glanced at all three mirrors and repeated the cycle. Visibility dropped. Traffic slowed. Minutes ticked by.

Half an hour of diligence delivered me out of the blowing powder and onto dry pavement. I took a deep breath. My rotating gaze again included the snowy roadside and fleecy fields at rest.

There, an occasional cornstalk pierced the fluffy blanket. New green would show in that place before long. And, like the field's frozen time, my present suspension from ugly reality was somehow part of my healing.

May the Powers That Be bless my cousin's anguished soul and comfort those of us left to sort out the debris of his act.

Frances Fritzie

*Frances Fritzie, Editor adds, "Looking back, I thank God for my health, energy and the funds to make that trip. In, perhaps, any family's worst time, I was blessed to be able to be with my kin. There we shared our anguish, our great grief and endured the endless question, **Why?** Gathered family and funeral customs helped me begin to process the unthinkable."*

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

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(Letters to the Editor)

Hello Frances,

Thank you for your letter. You sound busy. I hope you aren't pushing yourself too hard. You know you shouldn't look at bad times in your past as *failures*. We all make mistakes. We all go through bad times—I call them *learning experiences*.

It is normal to avoid hurt whenever we can. We all do. But, we learn from those experiences. I also learned a lot from the Twelve Step Meetings. I am so glad. My husband talked me into going. He thinks they made me, what I am today.

Enjoy yourself. God Bless.

Love and Prayers,

LindaSue

LindaSue (Jan. '04) adds, "My husband and I took yet another mini- vacation this fall. This time we did things we were both interested in. We visited car museums, an Amish area and hunted more lighthouses—this time in Indiana."

*

Hi Frances,

You mentioned the grief I feel over my job --I need to clarify. I never took a job change. When my new boss told me I had to take a ridiculous position-- "or else"-- I gave my notice. He did not accept my resignation. So, I kept my job -- basically "as is," but lost my support staff, as well as any "security" I felt in my position.

My grief comes from having this new, arrogant boss who tries to reconstruct what I do -- to a lesser position -- before he even knows me or what I do. It comes from knowing that I kept my job because I'm needed for a time -- they hadn't picked the knowledge they need from me--yet.

The man with my career in his hands avoids me. I work with his hand-picked female assistant who came in with him and is joined at his hip. She is his extra set of ears and eyes. I grieve because I am afraid to walk out the door to nothing. It's an enabler relationship that sucks.

That grief, combined with the anguish over the death of the owner and leader of our ministry in late October is deep. He repeatedly supported me. Here is an excerpt from an email he wrote to me when my parents died in 2002:

My wife and I are still remembering you in prayer and in our thoughts. I remember when we first met you, how excited we were about you and your giftedness, how we discussed stealing you, never thinking it could really happen. I have been very pleased with your work, your thoroughness, your integrity, your passion for YS, your many long hours. You are so good and sometimes I think we were more vocal about it before we hired you. We are lucky to have you and already you are making your own mark on our company. Thanks for believing in us enough to come to this strange land.

The tone of that email has the tone of every interaction between us. He had the gift of deep-calling-to-deep in a spirit of joy. I felt he was on "my side." Not because of a performance standard, but because he was present to people and could see into them. He wrote in the first chapter of his book, Messy Spirituality:

...For as long as I can remember, I have wanted to be a godly person. Yet when I look at the yesterdays of my life, what I see, mostly, is a broken, irregular path littered with mistakes and failure. I have had temporary successes and isolated moments of closeness to God, but I long for the continuing presence of Jesus...

He was so real in recognizing how universal pain is and so good at treating people well. I hope I have learned some of what appeared to come so easily to him.

Love,
Georgene

Georgene (Jan.'04) adds, "So much has happened since I wrote this. My grieving continues. In early January I learned my job was to be eliminated. I'm now looking for a new job. The new guy moved on to bully someone else. The sadness of losing my boss and mentor continues. I am devastated over the loss of our leader, our pastor, our visionary, and our caring heartbeat. I am crumpled and broken because I've learned, again, that nothing lasts forever... no one is protected from hardship and

heartbreak. I can only try to move through it with grace. I'm only recently starting to feel optimistic again".

*

Frances,

When I wrote "the Cat who Came Back"(Feb.'04) about Maizie, I revisited that time of loss and grief. *It takes time for healing*, was one of the things I constantly heard after the loss of my husband!

Well, it took two years ... and, finally, two Thursdays before my daughter died, I had come to terms with it. Two years, it took!!!

I had just sorted the last of John's stuff for a flea market sale. I'd set his tools aside for my daughter. But, *she* died in the accident that next Friday night!

Now time doesn't seem like a friend-- at all.

CaT

CaT (Feb. '04) adds, "I can only make myself do so much these days. I am seeking out grief counseling and hopefully, will start next week. I have accepted I can't do this one on my own."

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

SWEETHEARTS ALWAYS

My husband and I were high school sweethearts in the '50s and lived twenty-one miles apart. His mode of transportation was hitching a ride, and he was usually able to attain the round trips. *But, one night, he did not get a ride home. He walked twenty-one miles and arrived home at 8:00 AM.*

My husband's mom told him to go to work. He said he held a cigar under his nose all day to stay awake! His mom probably thought that would be the end of our romance, but we didn't part until he was drafted into the Army in 1953. I graduated the next year and went on to college.

Our lives went different directions, but we met again in 1974. He had three sons, ages three, ten and eleven. I had a daughter, 15. We rekindled our romance briefly before

I went to visit relatives. That week I was away I called him collect every day. (Our bill was \$413.00!)

We decided to get married as soon as we could. But, first, I had to finish my divorce. (I was separated without final papers.)

Next, I had to get a job. I found my teaching job quickly by changing from elementary to middle school. Then, we had to pay that phone bill! We made arrangements to pay a little each month. We also needed a babysitter for his sons and some money. My mom earned pearls in her crown by taking the children. Last, his mother earned jewels for her coronet when she gave us \$150.00.

So, the day my divorce was final, we got married. We had the weekend to enjoy a short honeymoon before picking up a very busy family life already in progress.

MM

MM(Nov.-Dec. '03) adds, "My husband sends me flowers every Valentine's Day. On July 20, we will be married thirty years! Looking back on easier times helps me now that my husband's health is failing. I am learning to cope."

A CHANCE MEETING

For weeks my dancing side-kick, Dottie, and I had been stepping to the beat in a small city over an hour's drive from home. We took turns making the long drive.

There, we had joined singles' groups that held dances every weekend. We planned to make this a weekend of Friday and Saturday dances, staying overnight there in between. Then, we noticed the date. It was the weekend before Easter. Neither of us wanted to be travel-tired on Palm Sunday. Thus, it was a spur-of-the-moment plan that found us driving north Saturday evening to swing and waltz for several hours.

As Dottie drove, smooth grassy plains of south central Florida slid by the car windows. Maybe I was talking out loud to myself, when I said, "We can't get our hopes up - - the snowbirds are gone - - this dance can't be as much fun as it was our first time."

That night, we arrived a few minutes early and claimed a place to sit with our singles' club. When the music began, I found a partner right away. After that, I danced with this man and that one -- mostly strangers. Dottie went her own way. Now and then we returned to our place at our club's table where we chatted and sipped water.

It was at one of those times when I spied a man dressed in black, and wearing shoulder-length platinum hair. He was walking our way. "I'll see you later," I said and turned from Dottie. I strode toward the man and before he said anything, I asked him to dance.

"Wow," I thought. I touched his platinum mane and said out loud, "I like your hair!"

We danced a set, and ex-changed get-acquainted comments mouth-to-ear over the music. Here's what I recall from those dances:

He was originally from Chicago and now lived, "out in the country," in a house he'd built. He'd taught high school chemistry for ten years then been a painting contractor. He had been married but, he had also been single for nearly twenty years. And, when I said I was a writer, he mentioned he was a writer, too.

Following a second set of dances, we parted. When I looked around to see where JK was sitting, I noticed an interesting fact. He was sitting at the table with *David*, the teenage son of one of the band members. I didn't know many people at the dance, *but* the month before—the last time I had been at this dance—I had met David.

An only child, my parents usually took me with them to social outings. Often, I was stuck in a group of my parents' friends, bored and rather lost. So, when I'd noticed the teenager sitting alone at the table, I'd asked him to dance. He wasn't eager, but I had talked him into a slow number. As we danced, I told him I had been a high school teacher. I went on to ask him about school, and his interests.

Another unusual realization I noticed was, I didn't want to leave seeing JK again to *chance*. It was just a coincidence that we were both at this dance. He lived nearly a hundred miles distant and had come just to listen to his friends, the band.

To eliminate luck from this accidental friendship, I walked back across the floor to where JK sat with David near the stage. I leaned over and asked him to dance again. During a slow number, I said in his ear, "Don't leave without giving me your phone number."

During that bunch of songs I found out JK had a computer and Internet access, too. When we ended that set, I returned to Dottie and borrowed her pen. I tore off part of a napkin and wrote the *Ninepatch* website address. I gave that to JK when I danced a last time with him. Why I had that urge, I do not know. However, he also gave his phone number to me.

Thus, my acquaintance with JK began. Unexplainable twists of fate had brought us together. First, Dottie and I changed our minds and drove up to dance that night. Second, though I did not know the band, they were playing again. Third, I had met David who told JK about me. Last, I did not usually give out personal information to guys I met yet felt compelled. Coincidences *Life* presents continue to amaze me.

Frances Fritzie Editor, adds, "Earlier the night I met JK, I danced with David again. At that time, he reminded me he had previously mentioned his friend who was also a teacher. JK mentioned that David had said, That teacher I told you about is here. Then David had gone on to point me out. JK says he was on his way over to ask me to dance when I spied him and asked him, instead!"

-----P-E-T-S-----

(Our Special Theme)

WILLIE

When I first got my Cairn Terrier "Willie," everything went wrong. For starters, the guy at the pet store told me that he would always have that short soft coat. I hadn't researched the breed in any way --just picked out the cutest puppy in the window. You

can imagine how shocked I was when, in only a few weeks, he grew a long thick wiry coat similar to Toto's in the "Wizard of Oz!"

An extra fluffy coat and dog hair everywhere turned out to be only a small inconvenience compared to what happened next. Within a few hours of coming home, Willie began to cough. At first we thought it might be the stress, but by the next day I took him to the vet and found out he had kennel cough – a relatively common condition among dogs that are grouped with others. Or so we thought. But one round of antibiotics and two weeks later my precious little puppy that I'd fallen madly in love with wasn't any better. In fact – he was much worse. He'd taken to coughing almost constantly by then and never wanted to do anything but lay in his kennel and sleep. I was beside myself when we returned to the vet.

They asked that I leave Willie for the day to accommodate ex-rays, so I dropped him off in the morning and went off to work. When I returned, I expected to find my puppy happy with a new bottle of pills that would fix him. I wasn't prepared for what followed.

When I told the receptionist that I was there to pick up Willie she escorted me into an exam room and said, "Dr. will be in to speak with you shortly." I said, "Well, where is Willie?" She replied, "Dr. will bring him after he speaks with you." By the time the doctor arrived (five minutes --?-- later) I was a wreck.

When he explained that Willie had a tumor in his lung, and that there was no cure – euthanasia was our only option – my eyes filled with tears. I told the doctor that I had grown to love Willie already – and that he was so young – how could this be possible? When the doctor saw how distraught I was, he offered to send Willie's ex-rays to Texas A&M University to get a second opinion. He cautioned however that I should not get my hopes up. We agreed that I would take Willie home for the weekend, and that we would wait until we heard back before following through.

That weekend, I spoiled him and held him close in every imaginable way. Thank God - Monday brought the most marvelous news – the tumor wasn't solid!! The vet drained it and put Willie on a very strong round of antibiotics. I took my spoilt little hairy dog home, thrilled to death that he was alive – and he was mine!

Sherryl (Jan. '04) adds, "Willie was the most emotionally sensitive creature that I have ever known. When I was sad, he would always jump in my lap and nuzzle my arm in a very specific manner. Often, I'd be shocked when he nuzzled in that familiar way. I'd stop and ask myself – "What am I sad about?" And of course, every single time – there would be something lurking just under the surface that I was trying to ignore. How did he know? I've read that our pets become master detectives when it comes to our subtle non-verbal cues. But Willie is still the most amazing empath that I've ever known!"

OUR MAINE COON CAT

How my husband and I got our Maine Coon cat, Andrew is a complicated story. It was about five years ago. I had gone to pick up my grandson at his mother's house. There I was greeted by this lovely Maine Coon cat. My grandson called the cat, "Sassy." He said Sassy appeared on the back porch one morning, crying at the back door.

He and his mother both like animals. However, her new husband did not like cats. So, Sassy stayed, but outside. They fixed up a warm, dry place for the cat in their shed and fed the cat on the back porch.

After about a year, I got a phone call from my ex- daughter-in law. She was brokenhearted. She and her husband were moving and he was not going to take Sassy along. She asked me if I would consider taking the cat. I already had two cats and did not think I wanted another. Still, I talked it over with my husband, who said, "Go get the cat. We will find a home for it."

When approached by a person, this cat jumped up softly on you and wanted to be picked up and babied. Sassy also came when you called. It reminded me of a dog in cat's fur. I had made an appointment with the vet to have the animal examined and groomed. I had also changed the cat's name to "Anna." When I called in to see if "Anna" AKA "Sassy" was ready to be picked up, the groomer said I might want to consider changing "Anna" to "Andrew" since the cat was a neutered, declawed male. So, *Andrew*, it was.

I took Andrew home and let him in the house. Immediately, he jumped up beside my husband who was sitting on the couch and crawled into his lap.

Remember my husband said we would find a home for this cat? That was five years ago and Andrew is still with us.

Patricia (Jan. '04) adds, "Andrew is a great cat. He's not an outdoor cat with us. He lives in the house. But, Andrew loves to go out with my husband. He follows Bob out to the garden and hangs out there while Bob works with the plants. "

*

MAKE EACH DAY YOUR PET

*Approach each day
as you approach a pet.
As a pet gives
Unconditional love,
So each day provides
Unconditional love.*

James (Feb. '04) adds, "Make each day your pet is the phrase I wrote on ten sticky notes for the February '04 issue. Writing that message encouraged this further comment."

-I-N-S-T-R-U-C-T-I-O-N-S-

(Reading and Listening)

HANDS OF LIGHT

After author Barbara Ann Brennan received her degree in Atmospheric Physics, she worked as a research scientist for NASA. For the past fifteen years she has been working with the Human Energy Field. Brennan is a practicing healer and is currently teaching and conducting workshops on the HEF, Healing and Channelling.

Brennan explains how to see and “read” the energy of the human aura. This includes the chakras, energy blocks and the defense systems in the aura. She explores the range beyond the five senses into what she calls High Sense Perception which she believes is the next evolutionary step for the human race.

She says that the HEF is the key to learning how we help create our reality and how we can change it. On page 11, she writes “It becomes the bridge to our soul, to our inner private life, to that spark of the divine within each of us.”

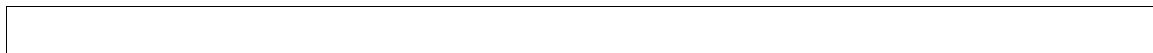
What I found particularly interesting was the chapter on her spirit guide’s Metaphor of Reality. In a much more scientific way, it explores the premise of the book I reviewed here in Oct. of ’03, Excuse Me Your LIFE is Waiting by Linda Grabhorn.

Brennan discusses the many different levels of vibration present in the same space. In addition, she explains the levels of perception. She says that each of us is able to perceive only within a certain frequency range. What is outside that range is not real to us; if we can’t perceive it, it’s not real.

Her spirit guide says that each of us has a “Cone of Perception” which Brennan illustrates with a drawing of a bell curve. Inside the bell is our perception of reality (who we think we are). Outside the bell, is *Who We Really Are*. The top of the bell represents spiritual reality, or clarity of perception. The more we function on the higher frequencies, the more we expand and broaden the base of the bell; and hence, our perception. As we move further into *Who We Really Are*, we have a self-definition without limits, which is ultimately God. The outside line of the bell curve becomes the veil between who we think we are and *Who We Really Are*. The same line is also the veil between the spiritual and the material worlds---and also between life and death.

As we increase our perceptual range to higher frequencies, more of the spiritual world becomes real to us. Healing is ultimately dissolving the veil between the spiritual and material worlds.

June Poucher (Feb. ’04) says: “*I am intrigued by this concept--it is so logical--and that works for me.*”



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

(Our Knowing and Our Spirituality)

ANOTHER DAY

**I had to come to terms with life,
it had to be that way.
I do not know what the future holds,
so I take life day by day.
I found a peace within myself,
I never knew was there.
I cherish the warmth of sunshine,
the touch of those who care.
I savor the gentle kiss of rain,
the splendor of sunset at the end
of a lovely day--
I welcome dawn with a fervent prayer:
Thank You, dear Lord
for another day.**

*Joan V. Spies (July-Aug. '03) responds to our Gift of Suffering theme, Oct. '03,
"I don't think of "suffering" in relation to my own life as much as how it affects those I
have met in my journey . I wrote this in 1984 when I was in the hospital for surgery.
There I spent just one day with this courageous woman who was under medical care for
cancer. Her attitude about her illness and life in general was awe-inspiring."*

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

MY VIEW OF SPIRITUALITY

Here's my contribution to the discussion of *spirituality* and appropriate language to describe *Ninepatch*.

I was glad to see that this topic has come up, since it opens the chance for everyone to have input. Of course, as manager of the *Ninepatch* website, www.ninepatch9.org , I'm open to new ways to present what *Ninepatch* is about to our cyber visitors.

It was interesting to hear June's comments that linked *spirituality* and *mysticism*. I had not thought of "mysticism" in relation to the magazine. Thanks for that thought, June!

I had, of course, chosen "spirituality" as a term to use in connection with *Ninepatch*. I felt that it conveyed a hard to define idea to new and not-so new online readers. That thought is that *Ninepatch* contains more than book reports, life experiences and talks of cut and paste parties. It is also about something different, something less tangible, but none the less there... the **spirit** of *Ninepatch*. The word *spirit* seems to carry both the sense of sharing in an open atmosphere AND the idea that we often discuss higher matters of life. Truth is, however, that I'll welcome new words and phrases to describe *Ninepatch*. I'd like some words that can be used to describe us for several purposes. First, I'd like phrases for newcomers to our site, second, for listing us in other people's sites and third, for creating the lists of "key words" for Internet search engines. Presently, the following are being used:

journal of spirituality and faith, journals, letters, essay, book reviews, art work, and poetry contributors, spiritual search

These terms and phrases can be vital to getting *Ninepatch Online* known to others.

I'll be watching this discussion with great interest!

Lynn/TROR

Lynn/TROR (Feb. '04) adds, "You know, on the one hand I see Ninepatch as simply a group of friends keeping in touch, and sharing personal spiritual journeys (Frances' Editor's Letters almost always touch on this in one way or another) ... and yet, it's more, too. You know, maybe that would be an interest-ing topic for a poll or maybe get a discussion going in a forum? I am always anxious to hear what others think of Ninepatch Online so let us know!"

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