

Ninepatch

Stitch - by - Stitch

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

Note: Here's a recent page from my spiritual journal.

May 2004

Dear Friends,

When I told many of my women friends I was getting married, I got many responses. "Congratulations!" was most common. Others were more diverse.

One single girlfriend asked me how I *knew* JK was, "the one." I grinned and answered, "I just *knew*." She returned my smile and commented, "I knew that!" We laughed.

Another single girlfriend e-mailed me saying she was not surprised I was getting married. She wrote that as long as she had known me (about twelve years) I was interested in remarrying.

At first I recoiled. Her remark seemed hard. Then, I thought back over the many lunches and coffees we'd shared. As I did, I began to see what she was talking about. For example, I always evaluated boyfriends as potential husbands. I don't know why, but I clearly remember my mother instructing me, "*Never date a man you would not marry.*"

A congratulatory e-mail came from a thirty-year friend who had been single for seven-teen years before she met the man she recently married. She added that, no matter how perfect a new husband is, there are bound to be "adjustments." She went on to mention one of theirs – kitchen habits. She said she'd not change a thing about either her man or the marriage. She just wanted to warn me of "sharp stones" in the marital path ahead.

I did not want to hear what another close friend *tried* to tell me. She never came straight out and said what was on her mind. But, from her behavior when we were together socially, I knew she did not approve of my rather sudden romance. In an e-mail, she broached her concern.

It happened last summer when I was traveling with JK. In a message she mentioned, "...the abrupt changes (I was making) in my life." I had an idea what she was getting into so when I responded, I avoided the topic. I did not want to discuss her concerns. I wanted to avoid stirring up my own uncertainties. I wanted to follow my gut, not analyze. Thinking stirs up doubt which has often been a kind of personal jail.

In the same month, I visited my rather new spiritual advisor. In a small room, I sat on her loveseat and she faced me in a softly upholstered chair. After hellos and small settling- in talk, I told her I was getting married. She nodded then asked, "Do you love him?"

I took a sharp breath. I felt attacked. I frowned and thought, "Why ELSE would anyone get married?" Then I realized I had seen women marry for what seemed to be other *primary* reasons. One I considered was financial or social "security." Another might be to escape loneliness.

As I reflected, my advisor waited for an answer. It felt evasive to not say, “Yes!” straight out. However, “love” is a touchy subject with me. I wanted to be completely honest. Instead I said, “I have loved other men, but with JK it was *time* to marry.”

Truth-telling is seldom black- and- white. For one thing, I can say only what I *know* at the time. Second, I have to use my experience which perhaps others cannot understand. Last, I don’t always have words to share what I *know*.

What happened between JK and me from April to December of ‘03, remains a mystery. Unlike *Law and Order*, or *CSI* it is not one that can be explained in an hour. It is NOT a perplexity to be unraveled or secret to be discovered. Rather, it is a sort of suspension. It has an opaque quality and needs to be accepted by *faith*. I like to think I am accepting a miracle my Higher Power offered, *and* —(*Glory Be!*)-- I accepted!

May a miracle make itself known to each of you!

Frances Fritzie

Frances Fritzie, Editor reflects, “Even with faith, I am not totally trusting. I pay attention to clues that I am following divine guidance. I call one such sign, synchronicity. This is the coming together of events or thoughts by unseen plan. In my case, in April of ‘03 I was not dating and living a rather quiet and conventional suburban life. Thus, meeting a sort of hermit who lived in a woods over a hundred and fifty miles away must have been an event coordinated by fate/ my Higher Power/God.”

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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)

Dear Frances,

I'm sorry to hear about Kathryn - I hope that she was not in pain.

You said you felt numb. Don't feel too badly if you don't seem to get upset - we all mourn in our own time and way. You've had a time to get used to the idea. Having time to get used to the idea of a friend's passing can affect things, too.

Well, I'm off to enjoy the last few hours of my day off –

Be well!

Lynn TROR

Lynn TROR (Apr. '04) adds, "I've been tired and rushed a lot lately because of the shift change at work.

Dear Frances,

I just read your e-mail telling me Kathryn died. I have been praying for her every day since you told me about her new battle.

I can't help but recall my husband's battle with pancreatic cancer which we both knew he could not win. In that sense, it's a relief to know that she is gone and that she made her transition peacefully.

June

June Poucher (see also "Sand Trap" in FABRICS) adds, "God rest her soul. I'm glad she was not afraid to die."

Dear Fritzie,

I just got through reading April '04 9Patch. I am sorry about the loss of your friend, Kathryn. Your letter was a very moving experience you shared with us.

Love, Joy Peace,

Lee

Lee (Apr. '04) adds, "We do interrelate loved ones in our grief. I think it is an affirmation of our belief in the after life, where we will all meet someday."

Dear Frances,

Thank you for your letter. I hope things are going well for you.

I am sorry to hear about your cousin's suicide. That happens too often in our world today. The world seems so mixed up. There is so much serious depression and anxiety around.

We finally got over some of our beginning of the year funerals and sadness. We enjoyed Valentine's Day in a BIG way. (My husband likes to shower me with flowers, candy and special events. We had fun!)It was a step out of our "gray time" – a step out of that valley.

God bless you.

Be happy!

Linda Sue

LindaSue (Apr. '04) says, "Sometimes I think one has to work one's way out of those gray times. My husband and I are on our way out now. We are back to our jobs, kids and grandkids. Real Life goes on."

Hi Frances,

So you got married! When I got married (or started dating after a divorce) I immediately felt "out of the loop" with my women-friends. On the other hand, I had felt sort of that way for a long time. I was not really happy working, and not really happy

single. It's no surprise that I'm not really happy married again, either. This marriage is very superficial. By that I mean we talk about the weather-- is it good for traveling or not? Then, of course, we also discuss where to go (or not), and always the big question is *when to go*. (Maybe you can tell we travel quite a bit.)

I'm quite sure it's me because I've never communicated well with my husbands. I'm not sure what causes this, but I think maybe I don't want to be truthful — afraid I'll hurt their feelings. (I don't take criticism well at all, myself.) Maybe I'm not secure enough.

I guess. I can simplify my house, my dress and my schedule but changing my brain with my fears and shame—that doesn't seem to simplify. Old patterns will not go away.

Well, that was a big unload on my experiences with marriage. Take it with a grain of salt, but thanks for the ear.

Love, Diana

Diana (Jan. '04) inquires, "By the way are you indeed married? When was the date? And if you're not yet, don't let me scare you, just be sure to pray, listen, and let God guide you."

Hi Fritzie,

Guess what! I found my car keys. (I could *not* believe it!)

I was looking for something else and was on my knees, looking under the front passenger seat of our van. Lo and behold, THERE WERE MY KEYS.

I thought sure I had looked there before, but apparently not—I'm sure I would have seen them.

Anyway, now I will have to get the old remote reprogram-med because when I gave up and bought a new one, they did it differently.

Maybe my "losing" days are past now the move is over. I thought I was *so* organized and careful, but alas, I was not. Anyway, we have made our last move until we either go to the great beyond or to a retirement village—whichever comes first.

Talk to you later,

Patricia

Patricia (April '04) adds, "You said you were sorting through JK's socks and such. It reminded me of when I first married. My husband saved everything for prosperity. I had quite a time convincing him to part with worn underwear. When I finally convinced him, I had lots of nice rags."

I am so sorry to hear of all the sorrow with family and friends' deaths coming your way, Frances!

Frankly, I'm not doing much "processing" with everything on my plate right now. I went to a therapist for help because I couldn't do it on my own. (See next page.)

There's a new man in my life and it feels weird to me that at this time of my life I am allowed to enjoy such a thing! I don't burden our relationship with all the problems, just

the joy. He is a kind and gentle person -- which I need -- and keeps me smiling and laughing-- which I need even more. It may be an unrealistic escape hatch (I hope not) but it's working for me!

The criminal trial for my daughter's drunk driver is next week. It's keeping my mind in a state of panic! I'm trying to heal, but I think I need a lotta' clutter removed before I can even begin to apply the healing ointment ...tee hee...metaphorically speaking.

Luv' ya'! Hang in there! You are in my prayers -- hope I am in yours!

CaT

CaT (Apr. '04) adds, "This weekend I'm off to Philadelphia where my daughter was killed. I am going to be at the DUI trial to stare down those rats with MADD(Mothers Against Drunk Drivers) by my side."

Dear Fritzie,

In the last part of your letter to me, something you said prompted me to think about how we label people a lot. (I sure do, anyway!) I learned it early, I think. For instance, as a kid, I was labeled a "go-getter" and "house-a-fire." Even now, my parents refer to me as a "regular little Grandma Sandler." This last family name never pleased me. It refers to my being rambunctious, impulsive, hot-tempered and doing things very fast.

It seems to be said with affection and meant in a loving, positive way. However, the comment also reminds me of other traits Grandma and I share like saying things (sometimes unkind) without thinking first and doing or buying things quickly without counting the physical or emotional cost.

Like my family, I think we women in general label people all the time. (Not that men don't!) This restricts them in our minds, and doesn't allow us to see them in the full spectrum of their personality.

It is even worse when we women joke about our weak traits — like not making up our minds, always changing our minds, being "emotional"(and in my case being "dingy or hot-tempered.") These cuts are un-kind and deeper than when the men we love joke about these labels because we women should understand the hurt such talk causes and avoid it.

Besides, those traits are not *weak traits* anyway. Just because men joke about it, doesn't lend any truth to the assumption that these are weak traits in us. (Don't we know better? We should.) There is value in not making up one's mind too quickly. It is *good* in changing our minds when we are wrong. And, being emotional is actually a plus, too. Men just place little value on traits they lack or don't understand. The disappointing thing is that we women do the same thing.

Blessings,

GinnyLee

(See next page.)

GinnyLee (Feb. '03) continues, "As a kid I generally lacked self-esteem except when it came to playing the flute or school work. As adult another part of me is shy. I like very much to be alone. (I hate social parties.) I lack knowing a lot about resolving conflict. I suppose that's why I am often quick-tempered when conflict arises."

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Dear Frances,

You were CORRECT in the note you sent on my last issue. Events in my life got in the way of attending your wedding!!! (Thank you, God, for under-standing! My true friends *under-stand my situation and did not choose to have their feelings hurt!*)

HOPEFULLY, I can catch up with you again when you are at your house. I know that it is challenging for you now that you have other commitments!!!

Speaking of that, now you have the opportunity to live the Twelve Step Traditions in your married relationship!!! For ex-ample, UNITY: your commitment to your MARRIAGE supercedes the wants and desires of each of your personal selves! I know when partners have character defects that arise at the same time, this is called a FIGHT!

After being divorced from others, my partner and I have managed to stay together without being too disagreeable even when we are disagreeing!

Love and Hugs,
Caroline

Caroline (Oct. '99) adds, "My partner and I have been married, 'one day at a time' for twenty-two years next Valentine's Day! "

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Dear Frances,

Of course I always have at least one book going. My current reading is, Dog is my Co-Pilot. It's an anthology of personal dog stories from "Bark" magazine and a **must read** for dog owners / lovers.

Soon, I am officiating at a christening. It will be at the parent's beach house -- actually in the surf from whence the water will be dipped with a sea shell! Music will be done by a bag-piper. I *love* this creative stuff.

Hey, girl, bedtime here. Hope this finds you well and happy.
Pray for peace!
Don

Don (Feb. '04) comments on a busy spring around his house, "I have been up to my elbows in gardening, pruning, weeding, and replanting annuals with summer flowers."

Dear Frances,

Sherryl (Mar. '04) recommended a book that is really helping me. (Which reminds me, I need to share with her how I'm applying it.) It's called, How to Land on the Right Side of Your Ass by Michael B. Laskoff. It's a survival guide for the recently unemployed and I've found the humor and plain talk to be good medicine.

(See next page.)

The author includes some mild profanity i.e. *"Let's be clear: Some miserable bastard has done something unspeakable to you. He, she, or it screwed, robbed, mistreated, crapped*

upon, abused, gave the short end of the stick to, and laid unfair blame on you. You're the fall guy, the scapegoat, the patsy, the innocent at the low end of the totem pole who couldn't protect himself from the evil miscreant who used to employ you. You got screwed, and screwed, and will be screwed until you find another job. You are, in a word, dumped."

While this may sound a bit raw for the pages of *Ninepatch*, it fits perfectly into the angry and hurt world of the recently unemployed. I like the way the author validates the reader's present state of mind. He identifies two kinds of *dumpings* -- the corporate one where your boss hates to lose you but must due to business circumstances, and the personal dumping that occurs because your boss is evil or incompetent and needs a sacrifice to protect himself or a core of favorites.

I've followed the recommendations in the book and have found a faster track to healing, plus an energy and optimism for my job search. I was happy to see that much of my own common sense action steps dovetailed with the author's suggestions, but there are also plenty of new thoughts that moved me through the bitching and grieving into a better state of mind. I know my husband and friends benefited from this book because without it, I think I would still be belly-aching about how my employer "done me wrong." I'd be staring at my computer, unable to start my resume, and choosing to mop the floors rather than search [www. monster.com](http://www.monster.com).

I know this grieving and finding anew is a process and I'll have good days and bad ones, but this book, with its edge of comedy helps me keep my perspective.

Love,
Georgene

Georgene (Mar. '04) says, "I took four days off from the job hunt. I slept in and got out of the house to the beach, my favorite dessert place, park and such. Part of the late sleeping is a bit of depression, but most of it was trying to be good to myself. I feel stronger than I have in a long time and I have two strong job leads that I believe came from job hunting tips I learned from the book."

Fritzie:

I think of you often. I have been wondering what you call yourself now. Mrs. K? (I don't know J's last name.) I feel silly-- I wanted to send you something but felt peculiar about not even knowing your name.

Maybe part of it is also that I'm having enormous difficulties with depression. I've been in and out of it since November. When I'm above it, I carry on as if nothing ever happened. Then when I fall back, I get into the suicidal ideation mode. I feel such disgust with myself.

I have a doctor appointment today because I think I might have an ear infection. I'll discuss the other garbage with him but I don't particularly care for my new doctor and expect to hear what I always hear: take your drugs, exercise and the usual.

Actually, I particularly like the "Exercise!" part of the lecture because just getting out of bed is one of my daily challenges. I want to believe in the *help-yourself* philosophy, but I also think it is contradictory to the problem.

Ever watch Wayne Dyer on public television? He has such a beautiful message-- but when I'm depressed, he makes me want to throw up. The eyes of depression are very sharp. I wonder if he has been depressed a single day in his life.

Elaine

Elaine (Apr. '04) continues, " Sometimes I feel if I accomplish just one thing on my list each day, I've had a successful day. For example, yesterday I cleaned one area. There are tons of things I haven't done that I'm procrastinating on, but I did accomplish that ONE thing. I try to look at that as a positive."

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<p>-----F-A-B-R-I-C-S-----</p> <p>-</p> <p>(Our Experiences.)</p>

THE WHY AND WHAT OF A PERSONAL RETREAT

A friend recently wrote and expressed not having time for herself because so many important and necessary concerns occupy her days. This was my response to her:

It is easy to get caught up in busyness, but it is not impossible to bring awareness of Spirit's presence with us in daily life. We can more easily be present if we use deep breathing with letting go of tension and become more aware of how we are feeling. The practice of gratitude is also helpful.

This is ultimately the challenge of spirituality: living it in every moment! Yet, the times of solitude and silence are still needed for deep listening and guidance. We need time to uncover the emotions and needs that make it so hard to hang on to our centeredness in the midst of the day's challenges.

Staying in tune with ourselves is healthier and more conducive to good relationships than getting so far away from our feelings, needs and spiritual guidance. Distance from ourselves leads us to making increasingly poorer decisions for ourselves and for others. At least this is how it works for me. Perspective is easy to lose if I don't stay mindful. And, of course, I do lose it, but each instance teaches me how much I need Spirit's guidance for a life of greater balance.

Balance requires periods of disengagement from the usual demand of my days. I try to begin my day with some kind of centering: breath meditation, body prayer, journaling, reflective reading or a walk in nature. I live with a lot of external silence which enables me to be listening throughout the day for inspirations, feelings, intuitions and calls to action. These are all ways to more deeply listen to what is going on in my life.

But, over time I need to remove myself from my surroundings in order to refresh my perspectives about the particulars of my life. Without that, it is easy to forget the larger frame of purpose in which I am living my life.

Retreat time is essentially "being time." I usually invite people to spend a good portion of their retreat time opening their senses and paying attention to their immediate surroundings. Nature tends to have a calming, insightful and restorative effect with those

who can open to it. Retreat time is also a time to rest, to journal experiences, dreams and longings and the feelings associated with them. It is time to seek a deeper clarity about the needs under your feelings and the direction those needs are calling you toward. A particular book, a poem, Psalm, scriptural passage or song can also be a catalyst bringing comfort, inspiration and insight for your journey.

In solitude, we are invited to deepen our relationship with the Spirit at the Heart of All Life. This enables us to return to community and to work with a greater clarity of purpose, renewed energy and more trust in the mystery and love that sustains us.

Julie Keefer (Nov.-Dec. '02) tells of her work with retreatants at MorningStar, "My work as a spiritual midwife entails being an active listener, helping the seeker activate her own inner capacity to discern the truth and meaning of what she is sensing, feeling, intuiting, knowing and longing for in her inner and outer life. I might use a variety of ways to approach this. I have mentioned several of them. Others are visualization, creative expression and body awareness. Once the seeker knows how to be in silence with greater awareness and skill, inner resources can be more effectively lead the way.

There is nothing more exciting for me than to see how the Holy Midwife works with the soul that is open and desiring to be guided into greater wholeness and love. This, truly, is the Great Work, the Grand Adventure meant for this life. Imagine our world where this Adventure takes priority!"

**There would be no
disappointment
without expectation.**

James (Apr. '04) says, "It's important for me to stay within my limits."

THE SAND TRAP

Many years ago, when I was a teenager, I borrowed the family car one Sunday afternoon and drove over to visit my friend, Sarah, who lived outside of town in a big old white house set back from the highway among tall native pines. A sandy road led up to the white board fence that surrounded the yard. As I pulled up to the fence, I had a too late moment of "Oh, no!" when I realized I had parked in white "ball-bearing" sand; which is the kind that allows the wheels to spin down to the axle and become hopelessly stuck. It's a lot like quicksand.

All during my visit, I pushed back my anxiety about getting the car out. My father was an absolute fanatic about taking care of the car. If I got stuck and he found out about it, I would catch hell for sure.

Sarah's younger brother had watched me park in the wrong spot. When I was ready to leave, he asked if I wanted him to back my car out. I accepted, with (See next page.) some uncertainty. I knew, and I assumed he did, that the secret was to back straight out, being careful not to turn the wheels. He backed part way out and then turned the wheels. I groaned as the car sank.

We dug for hours on our knees, but our efforts only buried the car deeper. Finally I gave up and called Daddy to tell him my problem. He didn't say much but promised to come the following morning with a tow truck.

The next morning after my friend went to work, I sat in the kitchen with her mother waiting anxiously for my dad. I dreaded what he would say after having all night to think about it. Finally I saw the tow truck turn off the highway with my father sitting beside the driver.

The truck backed up to where the car sat and Daddy got out. He walked gingerly around the car, careful not to get dirty. He was a fastidious man; he inspected the car from a distance.

The tow truck driver hooked up the cables, revved up his motor and, as he began to pull, his dual wheels spun a couple of times before the car began to move slowly forward.

When the car was clear of the sand and the cables unhooked, Daddy paid the driver and then turned back to the car. Meanwhile, I had stood quietly by, fearing to trigger his hot temper.

He got behind the wheel and with me in the passenger seat, pulled carefully away. The silence was menacing. Finally he burst out: "That cost eight dollars!--you should have known better! You're going to have to pay me back."

Meekly, I agreed, "Okay. I'm sorry."

For some time I had been saving \$2.00 bills, which were becoming rare even back then. When we got home that day, I brought out my collection; a total of only four bills, and handed them to Daddy.

He didn't mention it again. Nor did my mother. If Daddy was satisfied, she was content to let matters lie; especially since I paid the bill.

June Poucher (Feb. '04) adds: "That was a lesson in responsibility I never forgot."

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(Our Knowing and Our Spirituality)

(See below.)

SPECIAL CHILD

They say you are a *special* child,
I know that's very true.
Many things are hard for you--
Hard to think of, some harder to do.
I know that you also understand,
How much I love and care.
But sometimes I have to stand aside,
And watch you struggle through--
(The closeness of our spirits
Makes that so hard to do.)
Still, I know that it's important
That you learn to stand alone.
The times we bore together—
They had their own reward:
We came to love—appreciate--
Each other all the more.
So *special* child, I'm grateful:
Having a *special* child,
Made us a *special* family.

Joan V. Spies (Apr. '04) adds, "Frances, Your experiences raising your special child (Oct. '03) made me think of this poem I wrote in the 1980s. During the years 1965 to 1970, I worked as a nurse on a Pediatric Unit. We had a large number of children with Spina Bifida and Cerebral Palsy, who were frequent patients. (See top, next.) One day I asked one of the children's mother, to tell me what was the hardest thing about being the parent of a handicapped child. She replied the hardest part was, "Standing back and watching them struggle to do something on their own."

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COMING UP!

June 2004 begins, our special topic, *The Best Money I Ever Spent.*

Rogets' Thesaurus lists, among others for "Money, coin of the realm,

dough, scrip, , bread, *boodle*, **sheckels**, bucks, **green** and green stuff. "

ABOUT US

*Copyright 2004
Ninepatch, Inc.
P.O. Box 1263
Sebring, Fl. 33872*

*ISSN 1094-3234
E-mail: Ninepatch9@AOL.com*

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

**Annual newsletter donation rate:
\$15-\$35 (The IRS recognizes Ninepatch, Inc. as a nonprofit corporation, category
501c3. Documentation is available for a small fee on request.)**
