

# *Ninepatch*

*Stitch - by - Stitch*

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

*Editor's Note: Here is a recent page from my spiritual notebook.*

November-December 2004

Dear Friends,

On three sides, JK's curtain-less windows framed a woodsy darkness. We sat on a loveseat opposite our small TV and watched a PBS special on C.S. Lewis. Engrossed in the tale, I was moved. Lewis was aware of his thoughts *as a child*. He wrote down life experiences and questions that "struck" him. I pondered this, since I read that psychiatrist and dream analyst, Carl Jung was also a reflective child and wrote of very early dreams. Since I tend to be this way *now*, I wondered why I was not like that as a child. I put it off to being a *girl* and thus, different.

Not long after, I started reading Amy Tan's new book, The Opposite of Fate, A Book of Musings. In it, she tells stories from her childhood, and also comments that, as a child, she wondered about "fate" and "why things happened as they did."

I mused, "Hmm...Amy Tan is a *girl*..." and wondered again why I was so late in coming to this line of inquiry. One evening, I said as much to my husband. He observed, "You were an obedient child. Obedience blots out other thoughts."

I pondered this, too. I nodded slowly. My question was, "Was I obedient?" I considered my early days. Since I am an "only" child and my parents are both deceased, I turned to family stories for clues about my early behavior.

I notice that although an *only*, I belonged to at least three large *families* — all of whom probably kept me "in line." First, there were my *relatives*. Both grandmothers "kept" me over the years. Also, mother's two sisters lived with Mom and me until "the boys" came back from "overseas" (WWII) when I was two and a half. After I was six, my aunt who lived closer, continued to watch me quite often. Thus, I was in the "family eye" a good deal of the time.

Second, I belonged to a *neighborhood*. More than once I was punished because, knowing my parents were not home — neighbor-women "told on me."

Last, I also belonged to a larger *extended family*: "The Bank." Both my parents and one grandfather worked at the same bank, one of two in town. The family story says at one time, I was known as the "Bank Baby." It seems Mother went back to work there soon after I was born, rolling me there in a baby carriage. A few of the long-time employees occasionally called me, "Bank Baby."

I also spent time at the bank in later years. Since both banking hours and elementary school ended at 3:00, I walked the few blocks downtown and waited for my folks to be done with work. Looking back, I see myself on a typical afternoon.

*I stood on the concrete step at tall plate glass entry doors. Nose to the glass, hands cupped around my eyes, I looked for Grandpa. As janitor, he was mopping the lobby about then. I pulled and pushed door handles, rattling the lock to get his attention. At the sound, he looked up and saw me. Then he stood the mop in it's wringer on the bucket with wheels. Pulling his keys out, he walked over, bent down and pushed in the selected one. Click!" the bolt slid. Grandpa pulled open the heavy door and let me in.*

*Grandpa never said much. He nodded and I skipped off to check in with my mom. Afterwards, I wandered off to entertain myself until time to go home. I poked into storage closets, opened and closed my dad's desk drawers and looked into baskets of colorful wastepaper, jumbled like large confetti.*

Although I was f-a-r from perfect — especially as a teenager -- I can see how my husband was right. I was so busy being “good” that wondering about life didn't have a chance. However, once I began to loosen the ties of *should, ought, and must*, a whole new vista opened to me. Learning on my own was often painful, yet considering how far I have come, I have surely been blessed.

Frances Fritzie

*Frances Fritzie adds, “Once, when I was about eight, and waiting around for my folks, my mother introduced me an old man (a Director) seated behind a big desk. ‘Mr. N., you remember my daughter, Frances...’*

*He chuckled, stood and walked around the polished wooden piece. He leaned his gray head down and said to me, ‘Of course I know you ... I used to change your diapers!’*

*My folks and others nearby laughed. Not knowing what to say, I just stood there.*

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

Dear Frances,

I took your Oct. '04 *Ninepatch* letter with me when I went to a doctor's appointment this morning. I read it while I sat in the waiting room.

It flows at a relaxed easy pace and seems fitting for this time of year when some of the trees and plants are dying back, preparing for winter here in Florida. I noted that you “unloaded” some of your emotional burdens with your spiritual advisor that morning and then took on the physical burden of hauling siding for the barn (garage, you called it.)

I am happy to say that, as I write this my day is finished and I can kick back. There has been too much excitement in my little Florida town of late. It is good to rest a bit.

Bless'ed be,  
June

*June Poucher (Oct. '04) says, “While there is still much hurricane devastation around me, I look for hopeful signs of returning to normal. Today, I saw the first bloom on my azaleas.”*

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Hi Fritzie,

My heartstrings were blissfully humming as I read your opening piece in the October '04 issue of *Ninepatch*. The way you wove driving JK's truck into the tapestry of the cicadas, your beautiful '56 Chevy, night insects in Indiana, and your dad's vision of his hotshot high school girl- in- a- hurry was intoxicating. What a collection of descriptive phrases: "climbing into your grand-father's truck," the "slam of the door," and "swinging onto the road." That resonated with me!

I had a parallel experience with my own grandfather. I remember loading the milk cans into the back, then slipping into the passenger side of his '37 Ford truck and going into town. I can still smell the dust in the feed mill where we stopped to load some feedbags from the loading dock. You're absolutely right: that truck seat was a throne and riding along, an unforgettable adventure.

I'm glad you are recovering from the hurricane and that whatever were your losses, they were not larger.

Your friend indeed,  
Fred

*Fred (Sept. '03) adds, "I've always paid my bills -- which are relentless and constantly growing -- with commission income that's tenuous and sporadic. Perhaps this deep memory of a childhood truck ride explains why the prospect of becoming a long haul truck driver has been a faithful psychological escape route. After all this time, I still look back every two or three years and wonder if I should have been trucking instead."*

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Dear Fritzie,

I finally had a chance to read the Oct.'04 issue of *Ninepatch*. This issue contained an excellent presentation of what we are all about. I was moved in several areas but especially by the plight of one in our company.

I was just finishing translating (from original French) a section dealing with bulimic personalities from, Qui Es Tu when I read *Elaine's* plight. I then decided to investigate author Lise Bourbeaus's insight on depression. Here's my summary of that.

*Depression is found in people very psychic. They cease having the flavor of life and find themselves useless. This occurs when there is a split with some one or fear of having such a separation. Their individuality becomes completely obscure. They arrive at a point where they fail to realize their importance. As they take flight in their depression they avoid facing the events in their lives. It is possible that there is something within that wants to die to make room for something new and they resist that death. To be able to fight it is essential to rediscover one's proper value, renew contact with his or her interior God and this is accomplished in practicing love oneself.*

I am not an authority on such a subject but my observations on human behavior agree with hers.  
I wish *Elaine* all the best and hope she recovers soon.  
Love,  
Lee.

*Lee (June '04) adds, "Oh Yes! The simple life! Just being aware that there is a simple and wholesome life is an attribute in itself. Again I wish you and JK, LOVE ! JOY! PEACE!"*

Dear Frances,

This October we went on one last lighthouse hunting trip before winter. We had tried to find it before. After we saw a newspaper clipping about it, we were determined to finish our search.

This fall I celebrated my birthday! My daughter and her family came over for supper, ice cream and cake. She and her girls made and decorated a cake for me. It was cute.

We are busy with the usual things: our jobs and the kids. We enjoyed our lighthouse trip—it was a chance to get away from it all!

Love and prayers,  
LindaSue

*LindaSue (Oct. '04) says, "Thank you for your letter and Ninepatch, Frances. In your Sept. '04 letter, you mentioned the book, Plain and Simple by Sue Bender. You lead me to read that book and I enjoyed it very much. I saw myself in it. Also, I have always admired the Amish. (You have helped me find so many wonderful books through the pages of Ninepatch.)*

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Dear Frances,

No, I haven't forgotten about you. First, it was supposed to be summer, but felt more like spring. Then, when I got done with the summer stuff – which keeps me very busy—it became more like summer. (I'm talking about weather here in Northern Michigan.) So, since the weather was nice, I had to stay outdoors and do more boating, swimming and gardening. Now, the weather is more fall-like and so—finally — here I am...

Going back to spring, in May I had a really exciting time developing the Lake Superior frontage property in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. I mentioned this property in my story about using a water-douser (Jan.'04).

I had a house/RV pad cleared and filled. The excavator, himself, did the work with the help of the dump-truck driver and a laborer who also helped load tree-tops to haul away. (The tree trunks were saved, in rather large pieces, for me to prepare for burning.) Finished, the area looked like something I could use.

I went out and bought a wooden, barn-shaped 8'by8' storage shed to put on the pad. I had a window with a screen put in the back of the shed so it would serve two purposes. One use was to store stuff—especially tools — so I don't have to carry them there and back every time I visited. The other reason for the shed was for me to sleep in if I wanted to stay overnight. Once I added electricity, I had a campsite!

So, there is an update on my life since April.  
All for now,  
Love,  
Palma

*Palma (July '04) adds, "The result of all my work was that my partner and I stayed there over the Labor Day weekend. It was great — the beginning of that summer weather I talked about before. We built a fire pit out near the lake so that when we sat listening to the fire crackle, we could also hear the waves lapping on the rocky shore."*

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Hola!

No PO Box yet here in Costa Rica, though I'm going back to el Correo to check tomorrow and to send out some mail (including a *Ninepatch* "postcard," finally).

I'm writing this from another Internet café. Before I left the house today, I finally found the disk with September '04's *Ninepatch* on it. I very much enjoyed the story about the builders in ancient Ireland. I've written about a few ancient monuments and am quite interested in old civilizations and what they've left behind. I always say that if I were to go back to school, I'd get a degree in anthropology or archeology.

I am, unfortunately, not teaching. I say unfortunately because it seems that there are so many hours in the day and not enough to fill them. Some people might be satisfied with lying about on the beach or swimming in the pool, but I prefer to be doing something more productive. Even when I'm walking around on the beach, I'm picking up interesting rocks and shells, thinking about things to write, and making to do lists in my head. You might say my days are slow ☺

I'm beginning to regret coming to Costa Rica, though I can leave as early as the end of November '04, if I wish it, and I think I might. I'm lonely, though I've been socializing at least once a week. It seems that the locals here are real "beach bums," far more suited to relaxation than myself and so it can be hard to relate. Also, a lot of the people I meet are leaving in three days or a week. Also, I miss my fella', and am starting to realize that perhaps I may have hurt him by leaving, at least more than he let on.

Many people I know are envious of my time here, and can't accept that I might not be entirely happy, but I've come to realize that in coming here, I took a risk, and like any risk, the outcome could have just as easily been negative as positive. There was no guarantee I'd have a great time so I don't feel guilty about not having the time of my life. Still, it's beautiful and ex-citing here, new and unusual. There is a lot to see, but not that much to do unless you have a car or are willing to shell out cash for tourist activities.

Ah well. Life is about learning.

Christa

*Christa Weber says, "I'm still planning on working on my book, though I haven't yet. (I do have various stories complete, though.)"*

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Fritzie,

After I wrote to you last, I did see my internist and he put me on a new medication for depression. I felt well enough to apply for some jobs and had an interview earlier this week. I think the ability to look for a job and take an interview may have been more a result of my r-o-a-r (see Oct.'04) and less because of the medication. (Who knows.)

I agree with what you said about everyone feeling alone who deals with mental health issues. I know that I feel alone and also ashamed. My family knows very little about what I've been through over the years. We're a "pull yourself up by your boot straps" kind of family. It is hard to share when you've lost your boot straps and you know you are expected to give them a tug.

You haven't said anything about the hurricanes. Have your and JK's homes been OK?

This has not been fun.

Love you,

Elaine

*Elaine (Oct. '04) says, "I read a book called Blessings, by Anna Quinlan. Frequently I thought of you and your generous Blessings."*

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Hi Frances,

Glad to hear you're OK and will make the best of the weather and its effects.

After I told you about caring for my mother, you asked me what I was doing "for myself." For my personal growth, my girlfriend in California and I are doing a study. First, we exchanged synonyms for *God*. Right now we are working on *Life*. We have also exchanged words and phrases on *Truth* and *Love*. These synonyms are found in a book my friend and I study daily. It's called, Science and Health, with a Key to the Scriptures, and is written by Mary Baker Eddy.

Here's how it works. We use a Thesaurus to find words that mean the same as *Life*. Then we look up those words in the dictionary. Each day, I take one word and send it to her. I include my thoughts on what that means to me, how I live it and relate it to my spiritual journey. In turn, my friend does the same thing.

I've loved the study. It blesses me and fills me with meaningful use of my time and energy.

Peace,

Diana

*Diana (May '04) adds, "I also volunteer for my church one day a week. It involves reading which I enjoy. I also like to hear what you're reading. I often thought I would read the books regarding women in the Bible but just can't seem to find time. I'm sure I will when it's important to me!"*

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Dear Frances,

I took time to read this summer. I finished three of the Harry Potter books. By August, I also read Pat Conroy's Prince of Tides, Alice Walker's The Color Purple and Virginia Woolf's, A Room of Her Own. I loved them all!

Without my computer, I wrote letters, too. Taking pen in hand, I knew I would like to *write seriously*, too. But, I had so much to say and no idea (then) how to begin or where to begin. So, I wrote letters. It was a start. Reading and writing was fun. I had a good summer.

Take good care of yourself.

Love,

Nancyann

*Nancyann (Feb. '04) adds, "One thing that was quite different about my life last summer was doing the laundry. I had a washing machine, but no dryer. I hung my laundry outdoors and I enjoyed doing it."*

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Dear Frances,

My husband and I had such a good weekend. First, Saturday night we had a picnic dinner while listening to the local Pops Symphony. It was held out on the lawn near the bay. We let Burt Bacharach take us back for a blast from the past.

On Sunday, we had a "convalidation" marriage ceremony, which means our civil marriage is now recognized as a Sacrament by the Catholic Church. It was so sweet. We felt bathed in God's grace. What a mountain-top experience that small ceremony turned out to be. We had invited a small contingent of witnesses. Afterward, we went to lunch at one of the restaurants on the bay.

By evening and alone again, we commented how we finally seem to be at a point where our lives are quiet again. Not long ago there was our move across the country, the illnesses and deaths of my parents, family squabbles, my husband's job hunt, my own job hunt, and the pursuit of the convalidation. All have been sources of energy drain for so long.

November-December 2004

As happens in life, all has worked out and hindsight is 20/20. It all brings us to here and we're content and at peace.

We hope all is well with you and send this prayer,

**May today there be peace within.**

**May you trust your highest power  
that you are exactly where you  
are meant to be.**

**May you not forget the infinite  
possibilities that are born of  
faith.**

**May you use those gifts that you have  
received,  
and pass on the love that has  
been given to you.**

**May you be content knowing you are  
a child of God.**

**Let this presence settle into  
our bones,  
and allow your soul the freedom  
to sing, dance, praise and love.**

**It is there for each and every one  
of you.**

--Saint Therese – known as  
the Saint of the Little Ways

Hugs,  
Georgene

*Georgene (Oct. '04) adds, "My husband has been looking for a new carpenter buddy to help him with building the little Garden of Innocence (See next.) coffins. The other guy has lost interest and for all the wood-working equipment John has, he does not have what he needs to cut the angles for the flared sides of the coffins. My lining waits... Then, I finally wrote a poem for a little boy last weekend--after weeks of only getting the first stanza pulled together. As happens with me, I wake up extremely early in the morning with thought rolling around in my light sleep stage. At some point I feel compelled to get up and get it down on paper before it drifts away. I did not name the child this time."*

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Dear Frances:

Thanks, as always, for sending me *Ninepatch*. Glad to hear your place survived all the rough weather.

In answer to your question about college, yes, I'm doing tests, papers, projects -- and it's pretty overwhelming. All I can do at this point is take it one day at a time and do my best. So far that is working okay. I am now half way through the professional program for pharmacy, planning on graduating in April '06.

It is fun to now know quite a bit of information and at the same time it's scary because I feel like I can't tell all I know.

I used to work part time at a pharmacy as a technician. Legally, I could not answer any questions then. Through the college, now I work one day a week with a practicing pharmacist who also teaches and advises me. I have also earned an Intern License and can answer *some* questions. However, I have to be careful which

ones and how much I say. It is a matter of knowing how far to go with the information I have. I don't want to mislead or confuse patients.

For now, I want to continue to ask questions and learn from my acting teacher how to best handle answers. I just have to take the leap of faith as I encounter more and more direct patient interactions.

Wish me luck and wisdom!  
Blessings to you and yours.  
Namaste,  
Maeve

*Maeve (Apr. '04) adds, "My husband and I are taking a yoga class every Tuesday night. It is great."*  
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**- - - -F-A-B-R-I-C-S- - - -**  
(Our Experiences)

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**When in doubt –  
Look for the obvious.**

*James (Oct. '04) expands, "Sometimes it's easy to get tangled in too many thoughts and choices."*

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THE VISIT

I was lying in bed, on my back with tubes, wires and needles protruding from most every-where in my body. It was the second or third day after major heart surgery and I was still on a ventilator, receiving medications, and a lot of attention from the staff. My children and their spouses would enter for a brief visit and then retire to the hallway.

During a short time when there was no one present, I suddenly felt someone poking me on my left side near my ribs, then on my left leg, then on my foot.

I was wide awake and looked to see who it was. But, there was *no one* there! The next day, again while alone and awake, I felt the same sensation, this time on my right side. The poking began on my right foot, then proceeded up my right side to my thigh, then my rib cage. (The poking itself was not the type one guy would give another. It felt more like a *feminine* nudge.) Then I felt a hand on my right shoulder. It gave me a gentle squeeze, then a slight shake on my shoulder. This was the type of squeeze and shake one would give to reassure someone. It is precisely what my *late wife* would have done.

Was it her? *Was it her?* **Was it her?**

*Le* (Sept. '04) adds, "All went well with my recent aortic valve replacement. They used a tissue valve which is better in some ways than a plastic one, However, since it's from a pig, I just might be saying, oink, oink, oink once in a while." **Editor's note:** A version of this story may appear this month in *The Sioux Falls Argus Leader*. (So. Dakota)

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

BONE

I am reading Bone written by Canadian author, Marian Woodman. It has a copyright of 2002. Marian is a dream analyst which is how I got interested in her books and tapes. I have heard her interviewed and from that and tidbits on books jackets, I pieced together something of her life. However, this is her first personal material I've ever read.

This book contains daily journal entries for about a year beginning just before Marian was diagnosed with uterine cancer. Her journey with cancer allowed me to *glimpse* the inner workings of her life. For example, she gets up earlier than her husband and is already at work in "her room" writing when he arises. She calls him her *soul mate* yet writes of "working on their marriage." Marian writes of arranging fresh cut flowers and enjoying them through their varied stages of fading. Flowers and poetry seem the two artifacts of life that give her strength through her surgery and later radiation.

These details are indirect and woven in the story of her days. More directly, she writes to God. Though a proclaimed Christian -- with books on the subject -- day after day, she writes of and to *Sophia* the entity she knows as the feminine side of God.

Her journals are not a straight- through read. Many are dense with meaning. I have to read, then lay the text aside to absorb ideas and images. Like water, new ideas have to soak in!

*Frances Fritzie, Editor* adds, "I have an unread Sue Grafton, K Is for Killer, on the shelf, unread and waiting -- just in case my brain needs to relax!"

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

(Our Spirituality)

**I HAVE WALLS**

**I have walls,  
so very high.  
Oh, these walls,  
they out- reach the sky.**

**These walls were built  
over the years,  
Protection from pain,  
protection from fears.**

**There's pain I feel  
outside my shell.  
Turns walls to steel,  
worlds to hell.**

**How do I lift them?  
and set myself free,  
There has to be something,  
why can't I see?**

**There's love and trust  
of somebody new.  
But it seems not enough,  
it just won't do.**

**Wish I could find  
a way to break through--  
Turn myself loose.  
see the world anew.**

**Just when I think  
it's safe to come out,  
There, you see them?  
Fears lurking about.**

**I'm afraid to get  
to anyone too close,  
What is it I fear  
I will lose the most?**

**My decisions and losses  
have caused me great pain.  
Am I afraid it will happen  
all over again?**

**I can break the walls,  
I can free the ghost,  
But my fear and pain,  
hurts me the most.**

Maybe over time  
the walls will crumble.  
I guess until then,  
forever I'll stumble.

So, yes, I admit it,  
inside me, and tall --  
Though you may not see them,  
I have walls.

*Pamela (Oct.04) says, "It definitely makes a point, I think."*

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***MANAGING THE HOUSE***  
*(Ninepatch Business)*

CHANGED THEME

I have received many e-mails from readers who rode out one or many hurricanes. In order to best accommodate these stories, the theme January-May '05 will be, HURRICANES AND OTHER WEATHER STORIES .

The planned topic, KITCHEN TABLE will be nudged back to June, '05. Letters and drawings for that topic are still welcome at any time.

*Frances Fritzie, Editor*

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ABOUT NINEPATCH, Inc.  
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