

April 2005

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 notebook.

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Dear Friends,

I stepped down into the yard of the little white house where one of our spiritual groups met. The Florida sun shone its slanted winter rays on men and women standing in clusters in its yard. Like smoke from scattered campfires, laughter rose from these groups.

I threaded my way among the groups toward the front walk. Suddenly, someone took my arm from behind. I turned and there stood my friend, Darla.

"Hi," I said, raising my eyebrows in question.

Pointing over her shoulder toward the house we'd just left she said, "That was great – what you said in there."

I paused, trying to remember what I'd said. I must have looked blank, because Darla prompted, "The two hands ..."

I nodded and smiled.

She went on, "You should write that! It was good!"

My mind whirled. I'd first come to know Darla when I heard her read at a local writers' group. Though I had commented on her articles I'd seen, this was the first time she ever talked to me about writing. I had not thought my comment was anything special, but finally I stuttered, "OK..."

Her serious face creased into a smile. She nodded, and said, "Good!"

I pondered her suggestion and made notes when I got home. Since she made a point of encouraging me, here is the story.

After the clock struck noon, the group prayed and heard readings. Then the chairperson brought up a discussion topic. That day it was, *Living a spiritual life*. One- by- one, folks seated around a long table told how that idea worked for them.

That day, I was the last of the group to speak. I identified myself then said,

It seems to me there are two big parts to my life. I held up both my two hands, thumb-to- thumb. The parts are alike, yet different. On one hand ...

I dropped my right to the table, leaving only the left. ... is the spiritual life. On the other ...I dropped my left and put up my right hand. ...is the world.

I have to use all the components of my spiritual life in order to stay balanced in my worldly life. I paused and rest-ed my hands on the table a moment.

My worldly life... I raised my right hand. ...is made up of... I showed only my index finger ...my relationships with my children ... I added the tall finger ... my other relatives ... I went on, holding up my ring finger, ... my job ... I raised my pinky, ... my house, car and all manner of daily muddle ... I paused. Last, I displayed my thumb. ... and , the media: TV, newspaper, magazines, radio and all that stuff.

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I went on. *...These parts are necessary, desirable and enjoyable. However, if they start to take up too much of my total life, my well-being starts to slide... (See next page.)*

I took a breath, remembering the painful experience of a recent slide. Then, I dropped my right left hand and raised my left.

...On this hand are the elements of my spiritual life... I ticked off the fingers of my left hand as I named the spiritual components ...Prayer... meditation ... attending meetings ... friends who also seek the spiritual life and ... I ended, ...talking with a mentor or sponsor to guide me.

I continued, *...Neither part alone can manage my life. I need them both... I interlaced the fingers of both hands as I was taught to pray as a small child.*

...See how it looks when I put both hands together? ... That's how the two parts work together best ... I ended, That's all I have.

As always, the group responded only, "Thanks, Frances."

My friend, Darla, blessed me with a suggestion. I hope you liked my story as much as she did!

Frances Fritzie *

Frances Fritzie, editor recalls meeting Darla, "When I lived in Michigan, I took my Ninepatch Editor's Letter to a writers' group. There, I'd gather their comments then rework it. When I moved to Florida, I met Darla in a writer's group here."

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

Hello!

Thanks for sending the Mar.'05 e-issue! I haven't been able to even *think* about reading it yet. First, my laptop was in the shop for a big repair and then I had to figure out how to survive without using my writing program, *Word*.

Then, just last week, my fella' and I moved into our new place – a feat made none too easy by his habit of doing everything at the last minute – including packing.

On moving day the hours slid by as I watched him frantically trying to pack most of his things. We didn't even get to the new place until about 10:30 PM. Naturally, our new landlord was tremendously unhappy – though not unhappy enough to refuse a large check!

Since then, there have been services to set up, including the telephone which is not yet on and the oil heat, which is also not started yet. There is what looks to be a blizzard raging outside here in the Northeast. I'm sitting at my fella's desk (mine doesn't arrive until Friday) wearing a great number of layers and a thick wool hat. Luckily, the building has double-pane windows and the people above and below us have their heat set high enough that we stay above freezing.

I feel like an urban pioneer!

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Have a great day!

Christa (See next page.)

Christa (Mar. '05) adds, "I'm hoping the snow doesn't block my trip to the insurance agency tomorrow. I put a deposit down on a used car and need to get everything squared away on that front. As always, there is also the ever-present job hunt to contend with as well."

Dear Frances,

You attached a note to my last copy of *Ninepatch*, asking how I was and saying that you hadn't heard from me in a long time. Here's my report.

I am currently at home recovering from surgery, yet again. I had my right hip replaced in Jan.'05. I struggled with the problem a good part of last year. My activity level was greatly reduced.

That's all behind me now. I am making excellent progress in my recovery, but I am not back on my computer yet.

These days I write my poetry with magnetic tiles on my refrigerator! Here's a recent one:

*I'm a poet.
I give voice to
Joyful or sad thoughts forever –
It unites my spirit with God.*

Fond regards,
Joan V.

Joan V. Spies (June '04) adds, "I'm taking it day-by-day. Some days are good, some are not so good – it takes a long time to get back to being whole again."

Dear Fritzie,

Hope you and your family are in good health. It's tough when you don't feel good.

Two weeks ago my blood pressure was high and I had pain in my chest. Since I am my husband's caretaker, I called my neighbors. (I call these folk the *Honeybears* since they have helped us out so much.)

After an ER visit, and a brief hospital stay, I took all the tests and went to see my own doctor. My attack was just a combination: frustration, doctor appointments, IRS stuff — and "normal" tiredness.

My life keeps changing. It's a challenge to keep up with it!

MM

MM (Oct. '04) adds, "I am reading *The Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren. I like this statement of his, God smiles when we praise and thank him continually. I would like to see God smile and hope I am one of the people that help Him smile."

Dear Frances,

I am getting ready to go to the Dominican Republic in the West Indies – part of the island of Hispaniola. Our church's diocese has a "sister diocese" there. It is in a very poor region and we help them in many ways. I volunteered to spend my summer up in the mountain region helping out in whatever way they wanted.

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The persons in charge of my request to help there noticed in my resume that I had a background in teacher education. So they want me to help the teachers in the little country schools. I will walk from village to village to spend some time with the teachers and the students. I will model teaching methods and assist the teachers. Also, I will be teaching the adults of the village how to write paragraphs and letters. It will be quite a challenge as all this will be in Spanish -- not my native language.
(See next page.)

I will be in The Dominican Republic for six weeks. I expect the experience will improve my Spanish skills as well as their Spanish and English ones.

Much love,
Patience

Patience (Sept. '04) adds, "The last time I worked in Spanish, I was in the mountains of Honduras, in Central America. I was there a few years ago doing some missionary work connected to a training in preaching."

Hi, Frances!

It was really good to hear from you and to know you're still publishing. I don't remember if I told you that I'm divorced. I left my husband three and a half years ago, a couple of months after our 40th anniversary.

I don't know which is the more interesting question -- why I stayed around so long or why I finally left. Suffice it to say there was a "last straw."

I didn't threaten or give ultimatums, but simply informed him that I was moving out. I might have been able to keep "my" house, but I had trouble evicting anyone when I was working in a homeless shelter! I couldn't bring myself to even try. However, letting the house go did make everything else proceed more smoothly!

I could at least imagine a new life in an apartment as a creative venture. (Such a drastic move might well have killed him.) Though I grieved over the house and the life I had and the life we might have had together, I have never regretted either the decision to leave or the decision not to fight for the house. (Now, he says he could "almost" thank me for leaving because he's freer and more fully himself than he was before.)

It took me about three years, four wall murals, and a cat named Honey for me to feel at home in my apartment, but I am truly home here.

Blessings and peace to you and all in your life,
Love,
Sky

Sky (Jan.02) adds, "I still make quilts and help with 'interpretive arts' at church. We don't just have flowers there, we also try to create a display that interprets the scripture as well. It's interesting and fun."

Love flowers don't bloom in ash
trays.

James (Mar. '05) adds, "Love is found where the heart is happy."

-H-U-R-R-I-C-A-N-E-S-
And Other Weather Stories
(Our Special Topic)

A SUMMER DAY IN ANTARCTICA

As a member of the US Navy's Antarctic Support Team in 1964 and 1965, I spent thirteen months on the Antarctic continent. The weather there in the summer season, (October-February) could change in a matter of minutes from calm -- with unlimited visibility -- to raging blizzard-like conditions -- with zero visibility.

My duties there required flying around the continent to the five U. S. scientific research stations. One day I was flying in a C-130, a huge, four-engine cargo plane equipped to land either in snow or on the runway. We had taken off from Byrd Station, headed to my home base, McMurdo Station.

We received a radio message that McMurdo was experiencing a storm with zero visibility. It directed us to turn back to Byrd. Then Byrd Station notified us that the weather there had closed in behind us and it was impossible to land there, too. That left us only one alternative. We'd have to land at a small, temporary weather station manned by three persons.

When we skied to a rough but safe stop there, our arrival quadrupled the population. Extra people put a heavy burden on their food supply and sleeping spaces. For three days we lived, elbow-to-elbow, in this remote and isolated facility. When the weather finally cleared at Mc Murdo another plane flew in to refuel us and escort us back "home."

Shortly thereafter winter set in, and all planes departed for the U. S. The sun slipped below the horizon, and we did not see it again for several months.

The long Antarctic winter is another story for another time.

Don (Mar. '05) adds, "Most people think of Antarctica as the white spot on the bottom of the globe. It in fact covers an area larger than the USA and Mexico combined."

Plant flowers along your path if
there are none.

GinnyLee (May '04) offers this sage advice.

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

“GUM”INATIONS

After a recent meeting, I stopped at the grocery for a few things. When I came out to get in my car, I stepped in *gum* some ignorant #\$\$%^&^ had spit out. It took quite a while to get the sticky stuff out of all the nooks and crannies in the sole of my shoe. As I cleaned, I wondered if there was a message in this experience!

If there was, I think it was that it takes us a long time to get out the “stuff” that we have buried and stuck inside ourselves.

Nancyann (Jan. '05) adds, “I just heard about the finding of that little missing Florida girl's body. I can't help but think at least I lived though my childhood ... hurt and handicapped, but I lived. And I have been able to search for my 'lost' self. Isn't that my lesson when I see someone visibly handicapped? We're all handicapped, one way or the other.”

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

GIRL WITH A PEARL EARRING

This book is by Tracy Chevalier. It gets its title from a famous painting by Vermeer. The story gives one explanation for how that painting may have come to be. It is an historical novel that takes place in Delft, Holland in the 1660's when the artist was actively painting.

Griet, the story teller, is sixteen years old when she becomes a maid. In the household she serves Vermeer, his pregnant wife, his wife's mother, and their five children. Griet comes of age as she is pursued by the butcher's son, Pieter, and Vermeer's patron, Van Ruijven. Griet, however, is attracted to Vermeer, himself.

The story shows the confusing situation of youthful attraction vs. life's reality and convention. The story also beautifully tells the dynamics of a large 1600's household.

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The story reminded me of my days as an artist's model and how fine the line sometimes became between becoming a lover or a muse and remaining a model. It also reminded me of my attraction to my uncle, an older man with family ties.

(See next page.)

There is a video by the same name. When I watched it, I found it more simple, but beautiful in its own way. Some of the characters were taken out of the plot, but the story still worked.

I highly recommend both this book and video to *Ninepatch* readers.

Carol (Jan. '05) enjoyed a trip with her husband, daughter, sister-in-law and niece to Paris, France last Christmas. She is involved in her hometown with a book study group where this book was read and discussed.

PROPHECY

This book by well-known psychic Sylvia Browne opens with a lengthy history of prophets, spiritual beliefs and their connection to religion. From there the author covers a broad spectrum of subjects.

One area she comments on is the earth. She gives frightening predictions about the future of our planet. For example, The 2020s will be a desperate time for us; acid rain will change our way of life for generations to come. Also, tidal waves will occur on opposite sides of the world -- the Orient and Florida -- between 2025 and 2030. In 2028, tidal waves will be part of an onslaught of hurricanes in Florida.

Flooding and plagues of insects -- mosquitoes, flies, roaches and locusts--will follow. By the end of that decade, because of the alarming increase in pollution and breathing disorders, the people will live in huge domed cities. However, around 2012 five major international corporations will form a coalition to revitalize our rain forests.

Finally, around 2060 when the earth's atmosphere has healed itself enough for us to go outside again, she believes Atlantis and Lemuria will reemerge.

She predicts that a president elected sometime after 2008 will die in office of a heart attack. The Vice President then will have the mistaken intent to declare war on North Korea, which will have weapons of mass destruction by that time.

About 2020 our government will be restructured resembling the ancient Roman Senate. It will be divided into two groups -- the Liberals and the Conservatives. The executive branch will be absorbed into the legislature.

Browne says we will be motivated to become more self-sufficient and there will be a return to the barter system of trade.

On the topic of religion, she sees two major changes. The first will be in the Catholic Church. When the present Pope passes away, there will be only one more elected Pope. After that a College of Cardinals will share the duties and responsibilities.

Between 2015 and 2018 there will be a Christian congress in which most religions will take part for the good of the community of mankind.

On the positive side, Browne sees many advances in the treatment and cure of numerous disabilities and diseases such as cancer, paralysis and immune deficiencies. Stem cell research will make enormous progress by 2012 to the point that it will be possible to exchange old body parts for new ones.

By 2015 improved laser techniques will have replaced traditional invasive surgery. Arthritis will become a minor annoyance by about 2007; there will be an important vaccine breakthrough against HIV/AIDS in 2005.

By 2020, marriage as we know it will come to an end. 'Family values' will still be alive and well but defined differently -- no longer "the two biological parents and their children living under the same roof, no

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matter what, as long as they all go to church together on a regular basis.” (page 257) There will be a return to communal living and it will become acceptable for everyone to have several partners. But, by 2075 multiple partnerships evolve back into a preference for monogamy. (*See next page.*)

I found this book mesmerizing; I couldn't put it down. Browne writes in a conversational style that makes her work a pleasure to read.

June Poucher (March '05) adds: “Browne says that extraterrestrials are already living among us. But, the most startling prediction is that by 2020 there will be an end to IRA's, mutual funds, pension and retirement plans, and the stock market. Although she doesn't say specifically, the implication is that there will be no Social Security; deficit having wiped all of it out.”

NOT A TYPICAL MYSTERY

My friend came to visit holding a book in one hand. It was one she'd recently told me she'd enjoyed. She was so eager to have me experience this intriguing tale, she had checked it out of the library and brought it over.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time is by Mark Haddon. This is an unusual tale told by the main character, a high-functioning autistic teen. Since I have a son who also is autistic, my friend thought I should read the story.

However, for the same reason, I was not much interested. During my son's growing-up years, I read book after book*, always searching for new or better ways to help him. I was exhausted in those years. I used all my energy trying to help him. I was not eager now to read about new approaches or ideas I *might* have used.

Finally, I pushed through my reluctance to begin the book, and was rewarded by a *good read*. It was not a “how – to” or sad story and read quickly.

This novel is *unusual* for two reasons. For one thing, the story is unpredictable. For example, when the “*Curious Incident...*” concerning the “dog” (in the title) was explained, I looked at my bookmark and saw I was only half way through. Typical mystery - solving comes near the **end** of a book.

A second remarkable aspect is the story is told from the understanding of the handicapped teen. His way of seeing the world, his understanding life and the events he lives through are quite unique.

As a young man, author, Mark Haddon worked with autistic young people. Thus, he can show readers how an autistic person understands (*or doesn't*) the world. For instance, an autistic person lacks understanding of social clues and other subtleties. Functioning with others must be taught. For example, an autistic person must be taught how to follow meaning in a conversation.

Through the main character, the author illustrates this. Beginning Chapter 29, Christopher says, *I find people confusing. This is for two main reasons. The first main reason is that people do a lot of talking without using any words. Siobhan (his school helper) says that if you raise one eyebrow it can mean lots of different things. It can mean 'I want to have sex with you' and it can mean that 'What you just said was very stupid.'*

Siobhan also says that if you close your mouth and breathe out loudly through your nose, it can mean that you are relaxed, or that you are bored, or that you are angry, and it all depends on how much air comes out of your nose and how fast and what you said just before and hundred of other things that are too much to work out in a few seconds.

Of course, when you think about it, all this is true. However, you and I never stop to think about it — we just understand it all. Imagine having to figure out all the possibilities of a simple facial expression or gesture while also carrying on a conversation!

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I'm glad my friend brought me this book! Try it for an entertaining, informative read. You won't be disappointed!

(See next page.)

Frances, Editor adds, "These days my autistic son, David, is nearly thirty. He lives on his own and, though he must use bus transportation, works at a 'regular' job. With a little help from his Michigan family, David needs only the special support of a caseworker." * A notable book is Son Rise by Barry Neil Kauffman.

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

Editor's note: This month, Georgene comments about *Ninepatch*.

Ninepatch is a forum to express the voice of the heart. It's designed for the ordinary person--not for professional writers ... to share defining moments of their lives. Those moments of "being"... being lost, being found, being at rest, and being on the journey.

Georgene (Mar. '05) adds, "The voice of your heart is the voice of your spirit. Sharing and listening within our circle strengthens us and helps us find peace."

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