

Ninepatch

Stitch - by - Stitch

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

Editor's Note: following is a recent page from my spiritual journal.

August-September 2005

Dear Friends,

Around me, an assortment of beach sitters dotted the sand like plants in a garden. A few even bloomed colorful beach umbrellas. The light breeze stirred feather-like fronds of Royal Palms growing near the beach café where I sat near the Gulf of Mexico.

I stood and trod through loose sand toward the water's edge where I began to stride along the hard-packed shore. I collect shells and before long, I noticed a violet-pink and white *scallop* partly buried in white sand. I stooped, dug out the shell. About the size of a half-dollar, it rested in one hand as I continued on.

The gentle *soo-wash, soo-wash* of waves freed my mind of all thought. It wasn't long before a second shell caught my eye. It, too, was partly buried -- only a dime-sized dome protruded. I bent, and pulled out the entire piece, a little larger than a quarter. I walked over and dipped it in nearby waves. It was a second *scallop*, yellow-pink and smaller than the first one. I put it with the other in my left hand, as I strode on.

After a few minutes, I came to a stretch of sand speckled with bits of lava rock. The bits were black and full of holes, yet smooth from much battering against the sand. I gazed at the area, then leaned over and chose a piece a little smaller than a quarter. I carried it in my right hand as I walked on.

I walked farther along the beach, then stopped at a familiar one-mile landmark. There, I turned back. When I did, the beach scene immediately changed. Now, the sands glittered with pearlized fragments of oyster shells.

I walked a different, drier, path on return. When I happened to kick some loose sand, a fourth unique shell appeared. I stopped, dropped to my knees and picked up a *cat's paw* about one-third the size of a dime. I added it to the lava rock in my right hand then stepped on.

Returning to my café seat, I carried two scallops in my left hand and a lava rock and cat's paw in the right. I set them on my notebook, sat and pondered the lot. They seemed to represent four parts of my personality. (Years ago, I read somewhere of these aspects and the knowledge had stuck.)

Like the half-buried scallops, two aspects of my personality are recognizable, but only partly known. I picked up the first *scallop* I found. It is the largest of the four and, its violet-pink markings are the most distinct. I thought, "*This shell represents my intellect, the part I use to manage my life in the world and solve most problems.*" I nodded. This felt right. I set the shell on my notebook, and picked up the smaller, yellow-pink *scallop*. I considered it and decided, "*This one represents my intuition --compared to my intellect, it is smaller, and its knowing, surely is less distinct.*" I laid that shell with the first *scallop*, satisfied with my conclusion. (*See next page.*)

Then, I looked a moment at the remaining two beach treasures before I picked up the chunk of black lava. It seemed to represent my “dark” (unknown) personality aspects. I turned it in my fingers, and remembered that lava is born of fire. “*This rock surely represents my emotions,*” I thought. “*Luckily, the sands of time have softened the sharpest edges. And, the rock is full of holes — so, emotions can be holy!*” I smiled at this. Then I took a breath, and set the lava with the *scallops*.

I turned my attention on the last shell, a *cat’s paw*. Smallest of the four, the orange-striped shell looked like the paw of a marmalade cat. Gazing, I suddenly thought of my mother: her *Tabu* perfume, her tasty cooking and her bright red hair. I held those impressions a while, then decided that shell represented my sensate self. This part hears, tastes, smells and touches. Like the *cat’s paw*, it is the smallest aspect of my personality. And, like a cat, my sensations choose their time to make me aware of them.

I love visiting this beach and collecting shells. Doing what I love has also brought me further understanding of my self.

I am blessed.

Frances Fritzie

Frances Fritzie, Editor adds, “Kathryn, my mentor and friend, used to walk this same stretch of sands with me. Afterward, we’d sit at the café, sip coffee, tell stories of our lives, tales of shared friends’ adventures and discuss the nature of God. Though Kathryn is gone from this earth, as I walk that beach and drink coffee at the café, memories of those times return.”

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(Letters to the Editor)

Dear Frances,

I received my July’05 *Ninepatch* yesterday, and in her stick-on note, Gail referred to Thoreau's quotation, “*Simplify, simplify, simplify....*”

I read somewhere that one of his listeners responded, “I should think one *simplify* would be sufficient.”

Bless’d be,

June

June Poucher (July ‘05) adds, “I always love a well-placed quotation.”

Dear Frances,

It is always good to hear from you. You seem to have ESP lately. You can sense my feelings, even over a long distance. When you called recently, my husband and I were in the middle of a heated discussion. It was about all the money he spent (*See top, next.*)

after he lost his (volunteer) job at the race track. Now, it will be hard to travel this summer the way we usually do.

Anyway, I needed the break, something else to think about and, talking with you *did it!* Later, when your letter arrived, we were in the middle of yet another cycle -- change in our lives—whatever you call it.

Now, my husband is unhappy with his paid job. He has put in application to work elsewhere. The thing is, our home goes with the job here.

So, we were out looking at condos and now we have bought a house. This is *another* expense I am not sure of! I do like the little house, but we have not been homeowners in a long time. It is close to where I work, though, and I can just walk there and back. Time will tell how this all works out!

Meanwhile, my husband says we can still take vacation time this summer — only now it will be to move and work on the house! (There go my little summer trips!) I will just have to give it all time.

Love and Prayers,
LindaSue

LindaSue adds, “One good thing about living closer to work is I will not have to depend on my troublesome daughter, Anita, for rides home. That will be good for both of us!”

Dear Fritzie,

I'm so sorry to hear of your lady-friend's stroke. We are at an age where we will continue to experience more death- related situations. Your story reminded me of a sad experience just a week ago.

I've been quite fond of my next door neighbor, who is about forty-five years old. She has bone and liver cancer. She was given six months to live but is still alive after **two** years! It has been two years of continued treatments and *courage* on her part.

We had to say good-bye to her and her family since her husband had been transferred to Minnesota. Her hospital bed was the last thing to be loaded on the moving van. Thus, we said good-bye to her in the bedroom just before her husband drove her to a hotel for the night. She cried as we said good-bye, each of us knowing that it was unlikely that we would be together again before she passes.

My husband and I are sad. She is a wonderful mother and wife. She has also always maintained her strong humor. I'm so grateful that her faith is unshakeable.

Be strong with your friend's illness, Fritzie. Let your emotions come. Cherish them.

Love,
Elaine

Elaine (July '05) says, “I needed someone with good eyesight this morning. My hairdryer kept cutting out. I'd wait awhile and then it would come back on. I was just about certain I would have to replace it, but I peered inside the end of the nozzle and saw something peculiar. I could barely tell what it was. I banged the nozzle against the sink a few times but nothing came out. I sicked the vacuum cleaner on the nozzle and guess what? A fried palmetto bug became dislodged. The dryer is back to working properly.”

Hello Frances!

You asked about my work life. (Heh!) Yeah, I'm still working more than one job. I have my full time, go-to-the-office job and then I have regular weekly assignments for an on-line spiritual support site. I do those at home. I also occasionally write profiles and easygoing stuff for a weekly specialty newspaper.

Yes, it takes a lot of energy for this. I'd like to say that I have a lot of it, but I don't feel like I do. Sure, I'm capable. Still, I also feel like I'm operating right at the edge and hanging from the skin of my teeth.

I come home after work, do some *more* work, and then I can hardly do anything else. I'm usually asleep pretty early and often fall asleep during movies or when my fella' reads to me. I don't have time for much fun, at least not on weekdays.

The good news is that our new apartment is really starting to come together. When we got the couch and the bookshelves, we suddenly had floor space and a place to sit and watch movies. (Up until then, only one person could be in the living room at a time unless we wanted to sit on the floor!)

I think we have a good partnership. He's better at some things and I'm better at other things. We try not to go to bed angry, which sometimes means not getting a lot of sleep! ☺

Best,
Christa

Christa Weber (July '05) adds, "I'm looking into starting my own weekly newspaper. I would still be bound by the production week, but at least I would be writing about what I want to write about and wouldn't have anyone telling me what to do. Luckily, I have talent willing to work for free and a planned format and so forth. I just need to find out what is step one when starting up a free arts weekly!"

Hello Frances!

I have been traveling off and on since first of May and my life has been hectic to say the least. I will be doing a bunch more, this summer.

When I travel I find the "real people" places and not so much the touristy ones. The people I meet are always so nice and overwhelmingly, the good outweigh the bad.

Some of my friends say, I attract the nice "peeps" but I don't think that's it. Instead, I want to believe that the evil stuff we are fed day after day by the media is not so b-i-g, that there are just lots of good folk out there.

Right now, I want some down time, some *me* time and stay- at- home- time.

Thanks for writing! I am so pleased you have time for writing!

Luv to all,
CaT

CaT (May '04) adds, "I've been to two dances recently. My hubby and I used to love the "round and square" dances they have here. I miss John. It's been f-o-u-r years in August since he passed..."

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(Our Experiences.)

CATTAILS

When I was a youngster, I grew up on a farm in Wisconsin. I loved the furry brown cattails growing in our marsh. I marveled how the cattails would age, dry up and explode into white fuzzy fluff.

Every year I wandered down into the cow pasture to pick cattails. It was never an easy task. I had to inch as close to the murky water as I could without getting my one and only pair of shoes wet. Sometimes, I would precariously balance myself on soggy grass bogs but I had to be careful not to slip off into the marshy water. Besides getting wet, there was a good chance that my shoes would also stay mired in the muck.

It seemed like the best cattails were always out of reach. I would try to step closer and closer then, REACH -- R-E-A-C-H -- REEEEEACH. Sometimes I was successful and my little fingers could grab onto a cattail. Other times, my little fingers would just grasp thin air.

Now I am still REACH -- REACH -- REEEEEACHING. This time of my life it is for my goals. Cattail- picking taught me to have perseverance. If I didn't succeed in reaching my goal, I would try harder the next time. I did this all through school and continued into my adult life. There will always be a soft spot in my heart for cattails.

Lynan (July '05) adds, "This morning I drove to my workout place in a downpour. The parking lot transformed into one big puddle. By the time I walked through the door, my feet were sopping wet. Fortunately, there were extra socks available for anyone to use. So, I exercised my biceps, triceps, quadriceps, hamstrings... I got the kinks out of my body and now I feel spry enough to compete in the Olympics. (Just kidding!)"

A SQUIRRELLY QUESTION

During the hurricanes last year, I prayed that the large oak tree in my back yard wouldn't fall on my house. (My Higher Power granted my request.) Although I loved that tree, it made sense to take it down before another hurricane season.

Recently I hired a crew to remove it. Now, all that is left is a mute stump, naked and defenseless in the merciless Florida sun. I am not the only one who misses the grand old tree, though. A few days ago, I had to laugh when I saw a confused squirrel sitting atop the stump, looking up and all around as if to say, "What happened? I thought there was a TREE here!"

June Poucher (See her letter in AROUND THE FRAME) adds, "The stump has become a playground for the squirrels, so it still has a useful purpose."

MY SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

After I asked Frances about her spiritual journey (July'05), she wrote about it. Then she asked me about my own. I'm not quite sure how to relate my spiritual journey. I can't ever remember not being involved with the church. My mother and dad started taking my brother, sister and me to Sunday School and church as small children.

Then, as I grew, I have always had the privilege of a praying mom. She definitely believed in the power of prayer. I do, too. Without Christ in my life, there is no hope. It seems that I walk and talk with Him all the time.

I also remember my mother getting up in the morning, long before we kids did, and taking her coffee and Bible into the spare room. There, she prayed and read -- spending her first hour with God.

After that, she got us up and fixed our breakfast. Just like my mom, I get up before anyone else, feed my cats, then take my coffee to the living room and spend time with God. If I don't start my day like that, I feel something is missing.

In the same way my mother did, I passed along another spiritual practice to my children. Many times, over my young adult life, I called my mom and asked her to pray for me. So, many times my children have also called me and asked for prayer.

My mom passed routines on to me. I shared them, and more, with my children.

Patricia (July '05) adds, "Recently, we had a family crisis when one of my grandchildren was born too early. That crisis would have been over-whelming had I not been able to take it to Christ. There are times when, like Frances (June '05), I feel He is not there -- but He is and I know that."

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WOMEN'S GROUPS IN MY LIFE

Women's groups have been an important part of my life since I was in my twenties. That's when I finally settled down in a monogamous relationship with my husband. Back then my "group" was women's life drawing. I was also in a life drawing group that had both men and women, but the women's group was much more social.

In my early thirties, I coordinated a journal- writing workshop. It was for both men and women, but -- I preferred to hang out with the women. Then, when my daughter was born, I started a play group. Sometimes the husbands joined us for pot lucks. However, the play groups were exclusively women and children.

When I was forty, I joined two Twelve Step groups at my church. Going to those meetings was good for my sanity. I also attended a few years of women's spirituality groups at my church. I got bored with those after a while. Then, as a result of a serious depression, I dropped out of Twelve Step groups.

Now, my women's book group and Saturday outings with a lady-friend are my main social outlets. Without them I would isolate myself completely.

Throughout my adult life, I have attended women's groups for many reasons. No matter what the reason, they always brought me in touch with other women. That contact has helped sustain my spiritual self.

(See top of the next page.)

Carol (May '05) adds, "Without my present women's group and outings, I would isolate myself more than I already do."

Make happiness your favorite dish.

James (July '05) adds, "Happiness is the doorway to a healthy heart."

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- T-H-E- - K-I-T-C-H-E-N- - T-A-B-L-E-

(Our Special Topic)

MY MOTHER'S KITCHEN TABLE

There it sits in my mind. The table has a silver metal base with a round, white Formica top about forty-two inches across the middle. The side chairs are maple, Early American, low-spindle backs with a hand-hold in the top cross-bar. The arm rests are worn down to the bare wood from years of elbow-resting during morning coffee.

My mother's kitchen table was used for morning coffee, food preparation, and an extra buffet space for family get-togethers. Though the set didn't match, she liked the functionality of the Formica top and the comfort of the wooden chairs--especially when a soft seat cushion was added.

My mother was barely 5' 1" and ninety-five pounds. The kitchen counters were too high for her to adequately roll the tortillas, knead pizza dough, slice tomatoes or grate cheese. So, the kitchen table was pressed into service as her primary meal preparation space.

I married and moved to another state when I was nineteen years old. My mother died when I was forty-nine and, except for one year after a divorce, I never lived in my home town again. Over those thirty years I probably went home to visit less than twenty-five times. What I remember best from every single visit is sitting at the kitchen table -- me be in my pajamas and mom in her gown, robe, and slippers. There, we chatted over morning coffee. For some reason those early morning talks were vulnerable and deep --

very different from chats over lunch, dinner, or during our little window-shopping trips. During that early morning kitchen table sharing, family secrets were revealed, emotions explored, and hurts salved.

When there were others in the house, our talks started even earlier so we could visit alone. In later years when she lived alone, our pattern was already set (*See top, next.*) so we still got up early and took our places. Tradition, I guess.

Mom liked her coffee hot, *hot, hot*. In earlier years, she got up to re-heat it on the stove but, once she had a microwave, she repeatedly popped it in for a minute or two. I, on the other hand, let mine go stone cold. Sipping away, I also drank in her beautiful face and wisdom, knowing that it would be too long before I sat at the table again.

Georgene (July '05) adds, "I miss my mother very, very much. We often talked on Sundays by phone. She died several years ago and now my Sundays are too quiet."

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

WAY LEADS TO WAY

In the poem, "The Road Not Taken" Robert Frost opines, "way leads on to way", or as we non-poets say, one thing leads to another. I was reading Neale Donald Walsch's recent book, Tomorrow's God, where he made reference to Karen Armstrong's writing. Since I was on my way to the library I checked out Karen's, The Spiral Staircase, her spiritual auto-biography and read it non-stop.

Then, "way leads to way" and, as I returned Karen's book, I passed the new book display, and Anne Lamott's new book, Plan B, Further Thoughts on Faith jumped off the shelf and occupied my attention for the next few days.

Perhaps way will now lead me back to finish, Tomorrow's God.

Don adds: "I am doing all possible to avoid Florida's 90°+ heat and matching humidity. In my seventy-seventh year I finally hired someone to take care of the yard as I no longer have the stamina to keep up with that. This frees up some time for reading. So many books, so little time!"

A NEW STEPHANIE PLUM NOVEL

I finished reading the new Janet Evanovich book. It's called, Eleven On Top. It features female bounty-hunter and crime-solver, Stephanie Plum. The characters in this story really made me laugh.

In this mystery-adventure, Janet introduces another grand-mother character, Mama Macaroni. She runs the Kan Klean dry cleaning business. The way she describes this woman is so real that I could just picture her in my mind.

If you are wondering if Grandma Mazur — Janet’s original grandmother character is jealous... don't worry. Mama Macaroni is mean and despicable.

Lynan (See also “Cattails” in *FABRICS*) adds, "I loaned the book to a friend. She and her husband were driving out to Yellowstone National Park. They were pulling a camper, (See next.)
so the travel would be slow. I figured she would enjoy something to read in the car on their long trip — and — she just happens to be a Janet Evanovich fan too."

- - -T-H-R-E-A-D- - -
(Our Knowing and Our Spirituality)

BEGINNNINGS

**A new life and new friends,
A beginning always follows an end:
The end of a loved one’s life,
The end of being called someone’s wife,
The end of being part of two,
And beginning the part of me without you.
Finding my way on the road ahead,
Sometimes I’m so filled with dread.
But then I stop, to think and pause,
And see this fear just has no cause.
I’ll start my path forward today:
Slowly, bravely, but on my way.**

Joan V. Spies (July '05) says, “Even though "Beginnings" was written more than ten years ago, it takes on new meaning in my life right now. Recently I made a big move to an apartment up North (my part time home). Packing and moving for me is always hard. The move was to a good place with lots of services and amenities I need. Now I'm almost all unpacked and getting comfortable with my new surroundings.”

**INFORMATION
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