

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.

January 2005

Dear Friends,

The sun shone its slanted fall rays. It was just after noon on that late September day. JK and I had just finished our round of family visits on both sides of Lake Michigan. For our last event, my son, David (who does not drive), joined us, making his first solo overland bus trip from mid-Michigan to visit Goshen, in northern Indiana. Like us, he'd come to see the California branch of our family — folk we had not laid eyes on in nearly ten years.

My last motherly task was to return David to the bus depot and see him off. From there, JK and I planned to follow a route south for the rest of the afternoon. We were not going to push.

JK had been ill while visiting his kin and was still recovering. I was worn, too, but not so much from illness. I was worn from *people encounters*. I love my relatives. My family is dear to me. Yet, special occasions, like everyone gathering for a meal and then hanging out, sap my energies. This is not new. Even as a preteen, after eating, my thoughts turned sluggish and my legs heavy. It always began when folks laid their forks on the plates and pushed back from the dinner table.

Grandpa picked up his pipe and filled it before stepping onto the porch for a smoke. The other men followed. After that, they trailed off to the back near the old chicken coop and began throwing horse shoes.

Meanwhile, Grandma, Mom and Auntie pulled aprons over their good clothes, all the while chattering in long-practiced ways. Mom washed, Auntie dried, and Grandma stored food in various glass containers. I always carried plates to the kitchen and set them on the kitchen table.

My job finished, I had nothing much to do as the women worked on. I ambled into the empty living room. Clang ... clang... I heard metal shoes hit the iron stakes and paused to watch the men out the back window. Dad and Grandpa stood in one group. First, they each stepped near their post and threw a shoe toward the other's. Then they watched as the opposing team took their turn.

Lacking energy to play with my younger cousins, I pushed open doors into the unheated front bedroom. After closing the doors, I burrowed under visitors' winter coats laid out there. I laid my head on the chenille bedspread and drifted away. Later, I awoke in darkness hearing the men cheering a football game in the next room.

Little has changed in terms of my energy after time with a group. I felt depleted from days of visiting that September day. We were in a larger town near Goshen when I raised my arm in goodbye to David as the greyhound gave a diesel roar and pulled out of the parking lot. Then JK and I climbed back into our small two-door, packed high with coolers, suitcases and belongings.

Through city streets, I slowly headed south. Before long, we reached a four-lane . I stopped before turning onto it. The road sign read, “ **Goshen 12**” followed by an arrow to the left-- north. Below that, it stated, “**Indianapolis 192.**” That arrow pointed to the right--south. Aloud, I lamented to myself as to JK, “It’d be easier to go back...” JK didn’t understand what I meant. “We need to turn south,” he said.

I paused. I didn’t *want* to go on. I wanted to just drive back to Goshen. I was tired. Maybe I wanted to *go home* and rest but I couldn’t. Years ago, I stopped staying with my relations -- too difficult for us all-- and, we had checked out of the motel. Nothing was *at home* to support me. Still, the lure to “*go home*” pulled h-a-r-d at my gut.

Following that longing, I continued to gaze to my left. Apparently, JK thought I had not understood what he meant by his first statement. He reworded it, “Turn right. We need to go south.”

His words echoed reality: **Push on**. I took my foot off the brake then and turned the wheel right as I drove south. Yearning for *home* clutched at my gut and for a few miles, tears trickled silently down my cheeks.

I live in reality. Desire—however strong—arises from a different place. Like two circles intersecting like a “wedding Ring Quilt pattern, reality and desire are not fully over-lapping. They touch only in two places. However, no matter how sad I feel when the two round paths separate again, being *home* was a blessing!

Frances Fritzie

Frances Fritzie, Editor adds, “Looking back on that afternoon, I still cannot fully explain that s-t-r-o-n-g longing to go home.”

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-
(Letters to the Editor)

Hi Fritzie,

I reread your piece from last month where you wondered about your early obedience and later creativity. It is amazing how we managed to find our identity late in life after a childhood where obedience was the law.

My childhood was not so severe because the three of us boys did get moments of enjoyment. Discipline at home was more than bearable but at school, the nuns instructed us to *toe the line*. Still, after reading some episodes about my younger years, a recent writing instructor once commented, "You must have had a happy childhood."

I must say that between your contact and her assignments, I have persevered to keep on writing even though I haven't written much recently.

I appreciate you and all the *Ninepatch* contributors for keeping my spirit alive.

Love, Joy, Peace!

January 2005

Lee

Lee (Nov.-Dec. '04) adds, "In your last e-mail, you mentioned having so much to do (repairs, appointments and errands) that you never seemed to get your personal writing finished. I know the feeling. It seems that I get to do 'my thing' in the gaps in between chores. I don't know what we have to learn from all this except we must keep on trying to accomplish personal work."

Dear Frances,

I was glad to receive your letter. (It is always good to hear from a friend.) Glad you made it home safe and sound from your family visiting. Sorry to hear you and JK both had hurricane damage. Thank the Lord it wasn't any worse.

I think the weather has been crazy everywhere this year. It was so *cold* here in Michigan during August... then it was so **hot** the first part of September. The world has been messed up in so many ways since 9-11.

Thanks for giving me the new address and update on our mutual girlfriend. She seems to be having more than her share of problems. Life seems so unfair, sometimes. I'll send her a card.

God bless you and JK both, and keep you safe happy and healthy.

Love and Prayers,

LindaSue

LindaSue (Nov.-Dec. '05) relates more of her last lighthouse hunt, "This October, my husband and I went on one last lighthouse hunting trip before winter. Many people also came to see it. Some went to it by trolley around the point, and others went by boat. We went by boat. Our captain was very nice and the trip interesting."

Dear Frances,

Before I began my reply to give you an OK for my Nov.-Dec.'04 letter, I read it over. The part I wrote about hanging out my laundry got me to remembering.

Every summer when I hang out my clothes in Massachusetts, it reminds me a little of when I was a young girl. I was the oldest of six, so there was always plenty of laundry to hang out. We used a pulley-type line that ran from our house across the yard to a tree. Thus, I stood in one place, pinned up a wet piece then pulled empty new line for the next.

When fall brought cold weather, it meant sometimes bringing in cold, stiff pieces. We'd hang them all over the house until they were again warm and dry.

Love,

Nancyann

Nancyann (Nov.-Dec. '04) adds, "I do enjoy being outside. When I'm hanging laundry, birds sing and chirp. The sky is beautiful — all's right with the world."

Hi Fritzie,

January 2005

We are finally finished with the interior painting I wanted to accomplish. My husband helped and it took us two weeks. (I had no idea it would take so long.)

The first week, we took Wednesday and Sunday off but the next week we were so tired of painting we worked through Friday to get it *done*.. It looks nice and I am glad we did it, but after I paint the steps to the basement and help Bob paint the trim on the house, I am hanging up the paint brush and burning the painting clothes!

Talk to you later.

Patricia

Patricia (Oct. '04) adds, "We had some stress with our latest grandchild's arrival. The baby boy was born with fluid in his lungs -- something that has to drain or be absorbed into his body or something. Seems he was breathing too fast and couldn't eat properly. Luckily, he improved quickly and was only hospitalized a few extra days."

Fritzie!

Once again, I'm a scratched record caught on the word "Sorry". I'm sorry I've been so rudely unresponsive when you sent *Ninepatch* each month.

This summer has been like a black hole in space. I was planning to go to Korea and China with my wife, but my mother's health went into a downhill slide. Then, two business deals I've been working on for a couple of years reached a crisis point and came to a head and I had to stay put. Then Mother died. I've been in my "cave", working things out. Now, I'm remembering to breathe.

I know you planned on going to the annual Quilt Sale back home and visiting some of your family. My own visit home -- though dominated by Mom's funeral -- was very fulfilling. I saw acquaintances I hadn't laid eyes on since high school. Then, many of my old gang of "thugs" came to visit. Our class president came by, too, looking extraordinarily fit with his balding head and well-trimmed goatee. Our Valedictorian was in town and also stopped in. Of course, I also saw our classmate who owns a local watering hole.

The funeral was actually soul-warming. We can all hope to go like she did. It was as if she engineered it and was fully ready. (Of course, my sister and her family who all live in the county were the ones who carried the load in the last few months, but they seemed to value the experience in an almost sacred serenity.)

Fortunately, I visited Mom on Mother's Day earlier this year and had a huge batch of spongy Morel mushrooms. I have a picture of Mother with a big smile on her face holding a platter of the gems. That's the smile I still remember.

Lots o' love,

Fred

Fred (Nov.-Dec. '04) adds, "There have been times when I've wondered if the whole funeral experience would all come crashing down on me emotionally, but so far it hasn't happened."

Hi Frances!

January 2005

Lately, I've been working on our wills, laying out what will happen to our estate if my husband and I are both hit by a truck. I've had to be in contact with my brothers and their families. As a result, I've sort of been hung up with observing my own family interaction lately. It's led me to thinking about families in general. Now that you're getting to know JK's family as little, do you find his has as many foibles and challenges as any other, or do you see a warmer closeness in their interaction?

Speaking of relatives, I'm excited about a visit from my cousin. She has lived on the East Coast for about thirty years. She grew up in here in California and we met when we were ten.

We were pen pals all through the school years. Since then we've sent Christmas cards and made maybe twenty phone calls to one another. I've seen her less than ten times in the last forty years. But, tonight, she's coming for a visit. After her visit here, I'll go with her to be introduced to her siblings who all live here but I've never met.

Well, I have to get going so I can pick up the house before I head to work. I don't want this place to be cluttered when she arrives.

Hugs,
Georgene

Georgene (No.v-Dec. '04) says, "The holidays always increase my awareness of family brokenness. I expect I will not hear from my brothers ... and if we were in the same city, it's unlikely that we would get together. I find those realities hurtful."

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

Hasten slowly.

James (Nov.-Dec. '04) comments, "Thoughtfulness is neglected when one hurries."

January 2005

THE HOLINESS
OF LIFE

Editor's Note: In the November-December issue of *Ninepatch*, **Diana** described an on-going personal growth project she shares with a girlfriend in California. They use a common book by Mary Baker Eddy, Science and Health, with Key to the Scriptures . * In her letter from that issue, she explains the process: *Here's how it works. I use a Thesaurus to find words that mean the same as Life. Then I 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.* This month, Diana shares her side of the process as she and her friend share about, **The Holiness of Life**.

Life is holy because Life is God. *A Holy Life* is a spiritual, God-centered, Life. The more we dedicate ourselves to holiness, God-centered spiritual living, the more holiness we express. For me, this kind of holiness includes some activities: this word study, church attendance, lesson reading, prayer and pondering of God, and working in the church's reading room.

Sharing our trust in God and love for God with our children and grandchildren, siblings and parents, is another way of expressing the holiness of Life. Also, living each day with patience, understanding, kindness, and love, is the holiness of Life and living.

Life is whole, absolute and eternal holiness.

Diana (Nov-Dec. '04) adds,

"Thursday, I work in the reading room, then Friday night my husband and I go to a grandson's football game. Saturday, I'll be off to a granddaughter's soccer game. There'll be plenty of room in all this for me to express holiness." ***Editor's Note:** Please notice this is the correct title for the book also mentioned in Nov.-Dec.'04.

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DOGS RESCUE WOMAN

Something thought-provoking happened over the weekend that gave me some insight on myself. My son and family were away for two days, and I agreed to care for their two medium- sized, rescued mutts. The animals were quite special to the family when first adopted; however, the dogs have been relegated to the back seat since he and his wife have had children.

I'm a card-carrying softie when it comes to dogs, so caring for them was not a sacrifice for me. While giving the dogs a much-needed walk at the end of the day, I began thinking about how good it felt helping these animals get exercise and those other benefits from a long walk.

As I walked on enjoying their energy and playfulness, I became increasingly aware of their utter dependency on me. My mood continued to elevate. What a good feeling it is to give and to love.

I thought about how it would feel to have more of that in my life. The challenge now is to put actions to words.

Elaine (Nov.-Dec. '04) adds, *"Hope you can still use a doggy story. Certainly beats writing about that hurricane stuff, at least for me!"*

January 2005

COSTA RICA –
PEOPLE ON THE BEACH,
A Postcard to Ninepatch

I sat in the Jacuzzi tonight watching dark clouds pouring over the mountains, listening to thunder in the distance. I'd been at the beach, surrounded by surfers and body boarders, *turistas* and *rico* families.

There was also a man, haggard in a clean white shirt and much-washed black pants, carrying a basket of yellow pineapple slices, green limes, cashews, and some fruit I'd never seen before. He asked me if I wanted to buy. I said, "No, *gracias*," but later wished I had bought something because he looked so sad, so tired as he walked along the waterline and gazed over the waves toward the island.

I wondered then if many people wanted his fruit and if he had a family and where they lived—and if he worried about money a lot.

Christa Weber (Nov-Dec. '04) adds, "I finally did try the green, unripe mango with salt and lime, and it's quite nice, but not at all sweet."

-H-U-R-R-I-C-A-N-E-S-
And Other Weather Stories

(Our Special Topic)

MORE THAN A ROOF

Our small town was in the direct path of Hurricane Charlie in the early evening hours of last August 13. I “hunkered down” in my home, determined to ride it out. I watched in the growing darkness as the merciless winds tore at the surrounding trees, twisting off huge limbs and slamming them at my little house and barn. My lawn was rapidly covered with branches and other debris.

The next morning my son, Bruce, and his wife showed up. We exchanged hugs and assurances that everyone was all right. Amid the devastation left behind, he began to chain saw the largest limbs and we dragged them out to the curb to be hauled away. The following day, he climbed on my roof and put tar on all the places where the shingles had torn away and where leaks were likely to occur. I worked on the ground which was still littered with smaller branches, broken shingles, and other debris. With the unrelenting August temperatures in the 90’s, we toiled almost wordlessly. We sought comfort in trying to restore some normality. As we worked, my mind went back to another Sunday morning many years ago.

One Mother’s Day, my husband, and I helped our son, Bruce, and his wife put a new fiberglass shingle roof on their house. My husband was re-covering from some health problems but he was able to help. From atop the house I could hear the grandchildren, now wide awake, hungry and whining. After a bit, I asked Bruce if he wanted me to go down and make breakfast for them. He stood up, looked at me and said firmly, “No, I need you up here to show me how to line up and start the first row (of shingles).” Then he turned to his wife and suggested she go down and feed the kids.

Life truly is a cycle. When I think of later times and other roofs, I see an analogy for family caring and closeness, which is not about roofs.

While his dad was dying of cancer, Bruce took his vacation and he and a friend put a roof on the carport to our cabin in the mountains. Then, not long after my husband died, and using material he and I had purchased at auction, I helped Bruce square up and roof a barn he had built for himself.

Now as I watched my handsome son patiently applying tar, pride and gratitude filled my chest and rose in my throat. I knew I could cope with my losses and the almost overwhelming list of repairs and cleanup to be done.

In the weeks to come I would need this resolve when Hurricanes Frances and Jeanne sideswiped us.

June Poucher (Oct. ’04) remembers: “Being without air conditioning for thirteen days of unbearable high humidity and 90 - degree heat after Charley was the most trying part of the aftermath.”

JEANNE — HURICANE NUMBER FOUR!

Jeanne-- Yet another, a fourth hurricane was on the way! I had to again prepare to leave my residence. My thoughts went to Chuck, my husband of thirty- seven years, who passed away almost six years ago of cancer. I missed him so, especially at times like this

-- decision- making times. However, I can recall times I took Chuck's love, presence and all he did for granted. I console myself that at least I had time to thank him before he went on to his eternal home.

Questions crowded my mind. What shall I take? How long will it be this time? Should I take food? How much? Will my home be here when I got back?

I called my boyfriend, for the past seventeen months and cried a little. It was comforting to hear his voice and know I had a safe place to stay and someone who loved and cared for me. I have much to be thankful for.

Dottie (Sept. '04) adds, "I was fortunate. Only a screen door was damaged. I thank God I didn't have to go through the trauma many did with flooding, property damage and losing jobs. Again, I learned lessons of gratitude. I have so much to be grateful for: health, wonderful friends, grandchildren, children, my church -- my list goes on and on!"

HURRICANE HAIRDOS

I made my list to get ready for Hurricane Ivan: bleach, toilet paper, water, and loads of batteries: all sizes. But, I didn't know that the thing you have to do to prepare for a hurricane is get your hair done!!

Sadly, I learned one has to make the appointment a year before to guarantee a slot. One friend was kind enough to break this to me when I stopped by to see her. She was sitting in her kitchen getting a hurricane *permanent* by a home-visiting hairstylist. Once I got the word, I scurried over to my hairdresser. Her windows and front door were boarded up in the front, so I had hope that she would be grateful to do my hair due to poor business.

Alas! The room was FULL of savvy women getting beautified! They laughed when I tentatively asked if I could get an appointment to get my hair trimmed.

I may never live it down!

Joy

JW/Joy (May '04) adds, "Our family is all well, and our house is socially acceptable with our blue plastic FEMA roof like too many of the other houses in our neighborhood. Our truly wonderful neighbors and friends all pulled together after the first hurricane, Charley." *Editor's note: FEMA stands for Federal Emergency Management Agency.*

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

JOURNALISTS' STORIES

January 2005

During my recent recovery from open heart surgery, I did a bit of reading. I had a couple I especially enjoyed. First, I liked My War by Andy Rooney. The author also who wrote for *The Stars and Stripes*, a newspaper for GIs published in The European Theater during WWII. I recall reading his articles back there, so reading the book was like old times.

My other choice was, This Just In, by Bob Schieffer. The author is another TV journalist, but who relates things he couldn't talk about on that media. One example, one story he tells occurred while he was covering LBJ during his Texas campaign via helicopter. At airports and pastures, LBJ would finish his talk by waving his white ten gallon (expensive) Stetson and then send it sailing into the crowd. The gesture seemed magnanimous, but the cheap LBJ would actually send the hat sailing towards one of his assistants in the crowd who would be fired if he didn't catch the hat.

The employee would then sneak around the back of the helicopter where he got in and returned the hat to LBJ! LBJ had *only one* such hat!

Le (Dec. '04) adds, "Another activity I used to keep my mind functioning was/is to listen to dance music and concentrate on hearing the beat! Might not sound like a lot of fun, but it should help when I get out on the dance floor again!"

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