

July 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.

I leaned toward my husband, JK, and whispered, "I'm going to the bathroom." Then, I slid down to the end of the pew, stood and walked toward the back of the sanctuary. It was participant recital day at the Pipe Organ Encounter for adults at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. My son, David, was playing the piece he'd practiced all week -- and I had forgotten to bring *Kleenex*.

When he began, I held my breath. Though his playing was strong and confident, my throat tightened. Just half an hour earlier, David hurried up to me when JK and I arrived. Excited, his words nearly ran over one another. "Did you hear me?" he asked, "I had a perfect run-through!"

I shook my head, saying I was outside, then smiled and added something like, "Great!" or "Wonderful!" Beaming, David turned and walked to the front where he sat with other participants. Sadly, I had a hunch that his perfect practice would not lead to a faultless performance. I hoped I was wrong.

My hopes sank as my premonition began to materialize. He misplayed notes. Unfortunately, I didn't think positively, "*David has really improved since we were here four years ago!*" or "*He has such courage — just last night after a 'bad rehearsal' he was so upset he considered not playing at all today.*" or even, "*For someone who can't even drive a car, he's doing well: playing four key-boards and pedaling with his feet, too!*"

Intellectually, I knew David's ongoing struggles. However, I had no idea how his partly- *grand* performance would affect me. It hit me hard. My stomach knotted, my throat tightened. I sniffled, and wiped tears on my fingers through his first piece. Then, when he began second piece -- an improvisation -- my heart broke with his music's sweetness, his effort -- and his stumbling. That's when I slid out of the pew, headed for the bathroom: a paper towel and a little relief from the heartbreak of David's music.

Fortunately, I noticed a box of tissues some thoughtful person provided for the sanctuary. They stood fluffed and ready on a table near the rear doors. Gratefully, I pulled a tissue from the box and dried my nose and cheeks. Then, as I pulled second tissue, I noticed Dr. Joyce, the Encounter's virtuoso and director, walking toward me from the opposite side of the church. She stopped when she caught my eye and, nodding several times gave me a big smile. Then, she raised both hands over her head and showed me a silent applause.

As I smiled back and returned her nod, I recalled her comment on the second day of the Encounter. In her quiet, fast-talking and breathy manner she said to me, "David is so improved! His instructor ... and I ... are so *pleased*... with his progress... over the last four years."

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Now, honored by the great lady's silent tribute and touched by her effort to support *me*, more tears came. I wet the second tissue and was reaching for a third, when David played the last note of his improvisation.

He shut off the organ, slid off the bench, and bowed -- beaming at his applause. But, before he left the stage, *he looked back at me*. I gave him smiling nod, and signaled a "thumb's up". He grinned in response and descended the steps to his seat.

My Higher Power gives me unusual kinds of support. That day it was a simple box of *Kleenex* followed by a woman-to- woman reminder of David's success.

I am blessed.

Frances Fritzie

Frances Fritzie adds a little prayer, "Thank you, God, I was not in the bathroom when David looked for my support. Instead, by the grace of Goodness, I was standing in the chapel to smile and nod my approval."

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- - - - A-R-O-U-N-D - - T-H-E - - F-R-A-M-E - -

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(Letters to the Editor)

Frances!

Thanks for including Carole Crumley's, "Morning Prayer" in the June '05 *Ninepatch*. She and Mary Oliver are in sync. I hope she knows Ted Kooser, the US Poet Laureate, also.

Don

Don (May '05) gives up an update, "Life here in Florida is beautiful, if hot. My strength improves, my writing moves forward, friends and family are my joy. I am heading for MN in September to greet a new generation!"

Dear Frances,

As I read your June '05 letter, I think you are right. The situation was/is a crisis of faith --not faith in God so much as faith and confidence in yourself. When I go through those 'dark nights of the soul', there are several things I am certain of. One is that the darkness will pass. Second, my experience has convinced me that my Higher Power is

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always with me -- like a high- powered FM frequency. However, I may not always be 'tuned in'.

For example, I had a break-through several months ago in being able to forgive my deceased mother. The relationship was always cold and inflexible. *(See next page.)* Finally, I understood that I needed that particular experience of forgiving. I wonder how many times and in how many ways God tried to show me that? It wasn't that I was doing anything wrong; nor was God punishing me.

Last, this is my truth. I don't know if any of this helps you but I know that we are OK. God loves you and I love you.

Bless'd Be,
June.

June Poucher (June 05) says, "Above all, I believe that whatever happens, it will be OK. I am at peace with God."

Dear Frances,

You wondered if I had been sick. No, I am fine and I am glad. There has been a lot of illness where I work.

Thank you for your concern about my feelings when my husband spent a bunch of money after he got dropped from his job at the race track. The worst part was he never talked to me during this cycle, he just *did* what he wanted.

Besides writing to you, I talked to a friend at work about it. She also thought it was his disappointment over changes at the track and nothing against me. Then I thought, "We can't afford to take trips this year because he spent so much money." We had a few discussions about this. Maybe I over-reacted. Maybe, as a woman, I am more suspicious about his behavior, too.

When he was first dropped, he said, "If they don't want me I will never go there again. We will find things to do together."

Well, when race season started, his friends kept calling and all of a sudden, he said, "I'm going to the races." He invited me, but I said that I had no interest in going.

Then, when he got home he told me he had a great time. I was angry. I wondered, "Am I *jealous*? Maybe *suspicious* -- I think he is up to something because I am not around?" I didn't know what to think.

So, I concentrated on the things I like to do. I went out to eat lunch with friends. I wrote letters. I cross-stitched and took walks. Now, I am in a much better mood. (Time passing helped too.)

We are talking now about taking small trips instead of staying home all summer.
Love and prayers,
Linda Sue

Linda Sue (July '05) adds, "Sometimes we (women) just have to share our upset with another woman."

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Frances,

Recently you told me about a call you got from a cousin up north. I certainly can understand. I, too, find it hard to not just jump into the stress mode when I get a disturbing call from my family.

It should be interesting this summer when I go back to visit. Here, I'm so used to being with my boyfriend and -- for the most part -- (*See top, next page.*) being serene about whatever happens. Of course lately, things have been considerably better in the northern family nest. However, there are always shifts -- just part of active family life.

You said your relative was quite upset about the outrageous behavior of one self-ostracized member. Your story also re-minded me of some of the people in the park where I live. Most of their conversations are about what *other* people are doing!

Sending hugs,
Dottie

Dottie (June '05) adds, "I try to stay away from the gossipers if I can."

*A "guard down"
is no guard at all.*

James (June '05) says, "In matters of the heart no guard is the best guard."

-----F-A-B-R-I-C-S-----

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(Our Experiences.)

11:30 AM,
TUESDAY, MAY 10, 2005

Today, my sister, Janet, finished her final journey to God. Gary, her husband, faithful and loving, was close by. Over the last two years, he helped with her care. Time and time again she faced tumors, severe infections and nausea. The cancer took over her body, but never her soul or willingness to live her life to the fullest.

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Janet was our “baby” sister -- the one we loved to spoil and tease. Our brothers, and other sister had all been to visit. With their spouses, they prayed, laughed, talked and cried with Jan. Then, they said their “good-byes”. Nieces and nephews also came by as they could and brought their thoughts, prayers and love.

Her daughter brought the grandchildren over each day to laugh and bring new life. The little ones are bright lights, full of life and excitement. Her son also came, but found it so hard to see his mom sick -- he always wished that she would get back out of bed and be with him.

Special friends came to visit to pray and sing with her, too. And, as Gary and Janet walked this hard trail together, church members and people from all around the world were also praying for them.

I flew in to be with Janet on Saturday, May seventh. Each day that I sat by her bedside and helped to care for her. In return for help, she always had the gentle, “Thank you.” and “I love you.” These were words from deep within -- from many years of gracious loving.

She and I prayed together. She tried to say the words with me, but often just listened then mouthed her, “Amen”. Janet was a faith-filled woman who loved God, her family and friends. By May tenth, Janet was ready and all her earthly work was finished.

On Tuesday morning about 6:00AM, I heard Janet calling, “Help me!” I went into her room and found her with arms reaching forward and saying, “Help me! Help me!” Then she said quietly, “I’m sorry.”

I thought, “Sorry for what?” and “How can I help?” But, it wasn’t me she was calling for. Janet was surely on her way out of our world into the next -- eternal life with God. She opened her eyes, but their focus was far away.

From that moment on, a peace came over her. She closed her eyes, breathed quietly and seemed to lie, waiting. Gary came in to sit by her. Then, at about 11:30 that morning, he decided to go out for the mail. He had noticed that her breathing had become more shallow and further spaced. Moments after he left the room, Janet stopped breathing completely.

I waited and said to myself, “Come on Janet -- take another breath.” I sat and waited, but there were no more breaths. I ran out and called Gary back. The two of us just sat with her and cried a while.

Janet had left us to be with God in a very peaceful manner. There was no struggle, just a last breath and then no more. After a few minutes, Gary decided that some family members needed to be informed and allowed to come before we called Hospice or the mortuary with a death notice. I agreed that the family needed to have quiet time with her.

First, her daughter came rushing over from work. Others followed. All had a final chance to be with the earthly shell of Janet. Then my other sister and I prepared Jan’s body. We washed and dressed her. What a privilege! Our culture’s “sanitization of death” has ways of doing things here in the United States. These ways have taken away this precious washing and dressing experience which brings closure and peace. I was so glad that Hospice had given us the dignity of being with our loved ones as they die.

Janet’s room was free of all medical “junk” and this allowed family and friends to come together again for a final blessing of Jan’s body. In a ceremony, we took holy water from Lourdes (A vial I had given her.) and each of us used a drop or two to bless her body. We remembered her first baptism into God’s family -- the family she had now joined in heaven. Next, we read from Sirach (A book in the Catholic Bible). We took

turns reading 26:1-4, 13-16 40: 17-26. (See top of next page.)

These verses tell about the wonderful wife and how prized she is. We also read from John 11:25-26. These verses speak of the resurrection of all who believe in Jesus.

*Janet,
We love you, and will
always hold you close in our hearts.
Lovingly,
Your Big Sister*

Patience (June '05) adds, "Janet was a faithful and loving wife, mother, sister and friend. We are all proud to have our "baby" sister counted among the saints in heaven."

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

(Our Special Topic)

THE GREASE CAN

Recently, I was cleaning out kitchen cabinets when I came across my old grease can from the '50's. It is a round squat container made of pure aluminum.

On the front, in fifties -style bas relief letters, it says grease; not shortening or oil but an honest, straight- forward "grease." Someone gave it to me at a kitchen shower when I married. That was a time when every Southern kitchen had a receptacle for bacon fat, or sometimes it was lard. We fried everything, then strained the fat and saved it for re-use. The only exception was grease in which fish or seafood had been fried. The lingering odor made it unusable.

My grandmother had a three quart lard can on a shelf by her wood stove. She used the bacon fat to season vegetables, to make biscuits, and to fry all kinds of meat, and some vegetables, such as okra, squash, eggplant, potatoes and sweet potatoes. Decades later, when we learned it was not healthy to use bacon fat or to fry so many of our foods, I switched to vegetable oils and the grease can became obsolete.

I puzzled over the reasons why I had kept it; and what I could use it for now. It reminds me what an awful time I had learning to cook; all the food I burned, and how I could never coordinate different dishes so that all of a meal was ready at the same time. I did eventually learn to cook fairly well but I never learned to like it.

As I held the little grease can in my hand, it was a reminder of who I was so many years ago. I thought of all the changes that have happened in my life since that time. I have grown and evolved in so many ways; most of my fears have vanished; my confidence has grown, my ideas have matured, my boundaries are more clear, and my spiritual beliefs have changed considerably. I have moved on. That person I was does not

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exist anymore, except in memory -- and the person I am today has no need for a grease can. It has served its purpose. It will be recycled, as I have been.

June Poucher (Jan. '05) adds: I am fond of a comment made by the actor, Ossie Davis on the TV program, 'Touched by an Angel.' He said, "People don't keep things for what they are, but for how they make them feel."

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

I'M AN AMY TAN FAN

I have become a big fan of Amy Tan whose first book was The Joy Luck Club. Others are: The Kitchen God's Wife, The Hundred Secret Senses and The Bonesetter's Daughter. I love to read her novels. Her new book is called, Opposite of Fate. Unlike her others, it is non-fiction, a collection of stories about her writing life.

She tells how she became a writer even though she had studied to follow another career path. Amy uses many of her Chinese and American family members' true life experiences as a basis for her own fiction.

Amy recalls her childhood as a Chinese –American, growing up in California. She also tells of a long bout with a recent illness. (She is still recovering from its effects.)

Her new book is a pleasure to read.

Lynan (June '05) adds, "Since my husband bought me a laptop computer, I find myself reading less and less. Now, I am learning to allot my time to include both reading and using the computer in my life."

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

MY BEREAVEMENT GROUPS

Following the death of my husband and then my mother, I chose to attend Bereavement Groups. We gathered to share our pain and "our stories". The pain was often diminished if only for a little while. It also gave me a glimmer of hope (*See next.*) that, in

time, I would find myself enjoying "Better Days". The following poem describes how I felt a Bereavement Group helped me through a very difficult and painful time in my life.

BETTER DAY

**You reach out and touch my pain.
It doesn't lessen it or take it away,
But it makes a difference, hard to explain.**

**You see my tears, but you do not hurry away.
I speak, if I can, or just listen to you.
You give me hope for a future, a brighter day.**

**Feelings that were kept inside for oh, so long
Can be released -- slowly, safely with you near.
You help me to see -- feelings have no right or wrong.**

**This journey seemed endless to me – impossible, at first
As I stumbled along, so sad and alone.
Then I came here; you helped me see: better always follows the worst.**

Joan V. Spies (June '05) adds, "I eventually found my "Better Day". Lots of hard work on my part and attending Bereavement Groups made that possible. I also learned how to really listen to someone in pain from a loss in their life."

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

THE JUNE '05
Ninepatch BOARD MEETING

It was as w-a-r-m for members on the East Coast and the West Coast (See top, next.) as it was in The South that Sunday afternoon in June when the *Ninepatch* Board (June, Christa, Georgene and Frances) called each other to discuss business matters.

Georgene was kind enough to dial up Christa and Frances (where June picked up an extension.) Thus, we made our bi-annual *connection*. After "hellos", we opened with a word of prayerful intention from each member before we launched into our agenda for the meeting. (See top of next page.)

Following are reports that may interest readers. First, is June's Mid-year Financial report :

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Cash carryover from
12/31/04 ----- \$421.88
Subscrip./Contrib. ----- 300.00
Donations in Kind ----- 38.75
Total -----730.63
Expenses----- 470.70
Bank balance ----- **\$297.93**

Next, was Carol's Membership report (before mid -year renewals):

We currently have 40 *Ninepatch* subscribers, including Frances. Nine subscribers were notified of their 6/1/05 renewal dates.

Third, Lynn's website report was given by Frances: Due to a life crisis and a move, Lynn was off-line for three months. She is now posting back issues to the website: www.ninepatch9.org

Fourth, we discussed Frances' E-reader report.

As of June '05, I send 21 e-issues each month. Of these, all but one are "active." By "active," I mean twelve readers have either offered a letter or story to Ninepatch in the last year. The remaining eight have responded to the receipt of the issue with a "hello", or an e-mail unrelated to the newsletter.

Last of the items readers may find interesting is the selection of new *special themes*. Our present special theme, THE KITCHEN TABLE, will continue until the Nov-Dec. '05 issue. Other themes and their start date follow:

Jan.'06- THE SPIRIT OF MY WORK
June'06- THE VACATION
Jan.'07- SEASONS
June'07- DID ANYONE EVER STEAL FROM YOU?

We set our next meeting date for January, '06.

The Board is always interested in readers' input. If there is a matter or theme you'd like us to discuss in January '06, please tell Frances in an e-mail listed in the information below or at the PO Box listed on our last page.

Editor, Frances

ABOUT *Ninepatch*, Inc.

*ISSN 1094-3234

July 2005

* Ninepatch, Inc. PO Box 1263, Avon Park, FL. 33825-1263

*E-mail: Ninepatch9@AOL.com

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

*Annual newsletter donation rate:

\$15-\$35

*The IRS recognizes *Ninepatch, Inc.* as a nonprofit corporation, category 501c3.
Documentation is available for a small fee on request.
