

Ninepatch

Stitch - by - Stitch

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

Editor's note: The following letter is a page from last summer's spiritual journal.

Dear Friends,

The midmorning sun promised another sultry August day. My husband and I were driving north to visit our children. From the start, we closed car windows and ran the AC.

I aimed our packed-to-the- windows two-door north on I-75 and sat behind the wheel for the first two hours into Georgia. During that drive, we passed power company trucks and vehicles. They also rolled north -- probably home.

Just two weeks before, JK and I were working on the roof of his new garage when the first major hurricane, Charley, threatened Florida. Weather maps projected its path north along the Gulf side of the state then across the northern part of the peninsula near JK's home.

The day before the anticipated landfall, we filled water jugs and collected candles, matches and flashlights on the dining room table. In town that day for last-minute groceries, I joined others in a Disney World- type line at the nearby town's one grocery. Nearly every person held a bag of ice. I guessed they anticipated a long power outage causing refrigeration failure. That evening local TV news announced school closings, cancelled community activities and showed storm shelters already filling.

But on the day the storm was supposed to hit, Charley suddenly turned inland, south of evacuated Tampa and Sarasota. There it veered east into the state. Its tornado-like winds cut northeast across the midsection. At JK's, we completely missed its winds.

Over the next weeks we followed photos of destruction and watched efforts of Red Cross and other volunteers. We heard that nearby states had sent men and trucks to help the state regain power.

That August day as we traveled north on 1-75, I saw major evidence of loaned power crews. After passing the first few vehicles, I began counting. License plates identified their home bases: Alabama, Louisiana, Georgia, even Tennessee, Kentucky and North Carolina. In fact, one company contributed more than three fourths of the teams I counted.

Rolling northward, we drove by many groups of three to five tall, bright yellow trucks, each painted with a blue lighting bolt and the name, PIKE. Even in the *intense* heat, these everyday heroes drove with their windows down. The driver's suntanned elbow stuck out his window.

As we journeyed through Georgia, a strong sense of wonder at America's *real* strength came over me. These men had left their homes and families for two weeks. They slept in strange beds and labored in ninety- plus heat and humidity — all for the sake of

fellow Americans. And, what I saw was just a fraction of the aid that had poured into Florida

In the presence of this selflessness, a wave of gratitude struck me. When JK took a turn driving, I tried to show a little thanks on behalf of other Floridians. As we sped by the slower-moving trucks, I stuck my arm out the passenger's side window. And, if the driver looked down, I smiled and gave him a big *thumb's up* **Thank you.!**

Hail to the true spirit of our United States: our country's everyday heroes!
I feel blessed to be an American.

Frances Fritzie

Frances Fritzie, Editor adds, "I counted fifty-four electrical trucks before we left Georgia that first day. Then after visiting our families, JK and I drove back to Florida. It was right after the last hurricane, Jeanne. TV news had said the Florida Governor was having trouble getting help again. Still, when we got into Georgia, I nearly shouted HOORAY when I saw ahead familiar bright yellow trucks, marked, PIKE. I doubt the workers anticipated a 'Florida vacation,' yet I counted nearly fifty vehicles before we left I-75 in northern Florida.

Thank you, PIKE. And, thanks to all the men and women who gave time and talent to the forlorn in Florida."

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

-

(Letters to the Editor)

Dear Frances,

Your Feb. '05 letter was a touching story. As a reader, and fellow-writer, I felt your pain. Your honesty is sometimes startling.

As a longtime friend, I would say that you were over-tired and over-stressed from too much company. You failed to honor those signals from your body and spirit.

I offer a couple of questions for you to ask yourself: was it a matter of losing your solitude and serenity? Did JK change when others were around? If so, did you feel shut out, as if you were there only to serve? It was all there in your story.

I can relate in terms of my own experiences; I am learning to identify and honor my feelings. Otherwise my anger and frustration turn inward. I have observed that you have been pushing your limits for the past six months or so.

Many times your thoughtful insight has helped me sort out my memories and emotions. I wish you the best, my friend.

June

(Continued on the next page.)

June Poucher (Feb. '05) adds, "I am always grateful for Ninepatch and to you for giving us a forum."

Dear Frances,

I recall when you told me the story your Feb. '05 Editor's Letter was based on. At the time, you wondered if you had experienced a panic attack. I got to thinking that sometimes when we come close to losing a loved one (like a spouse ... ahem...) we can experience anxiety attacks because there's a sense of potential loss and/or the reality of death that hits us. When we don't do anything about the attacks they just get worse. It happened in my family.

A few years ago, my mom's mom died and then only one week later my dad's dad died. Their other parents were already gone, too. It was very difficult and scary for them to realize that they were the "heads of the family." They had no one to talk to or consult when they needed to. About a month later Daddy went hunting. That is when Mom experienced several panic attacks. She told me she became afraid that something would happen to Daddy and she would be left all alone. She didn't think she could handle that. Well, according to her story, she sat down and had a heart- to- heart talk with herself.

She decided that she had two choices. One was she could live her life in constant fear and miss out on the things she most valued in life. The other was she could feel the fear but do whatever she wanted to do anyway until the fear went away.

Now, it's thirteen years since those deaths and five and a half years since my dad had a stroke. He is in a nursing home, paralyzed and speechless. Daily, she visits him and watches my father slowly pass away. She has momentary bouts of fear when he takes a turn for the worse, but she has learned that she can do just fine on her own ... even if she doesn't want to.

Pam

Pam (Feb.05) says, "Recently my dad had to go back to the hospital with pneumonia and some other complications. True to her word, she went against her feelings and signed the paper for 'no resuscitation', in honor of my dad's wishes, not her own. He's over the worst (again) and back in the nursing home. When I grow up I want to be just like my mom ...and I never thought I would say that!"

*

Hi Frances,

Your Feb.'05 *Ninepatch* e- issue's introduction, was interesting, indeed! You wrote,

I suppose no marriage or relationship is without its problem no matter how much in love one is. In this issue I write about a problem I had with JK. It was a BAD time for me. I did not get over it for days. I thought the end of my love for him was at hand. But, the angst finally passed.

Then, you'll read a comment from JK at the end of this newsletter. It all happened in quite unplanned way. I had two writers who did not get their OKs back to me in time. I was left with half a page, b-l-a-n-k.

I was worrying around, saying, "God will send something, He always does," but fretting nonetheless. (Continued on the next page.)

It was then that JK said, "I'll write something."

I never questioned what. He is verbal and does write a little, so I just thought, "Whatever it is will be OK."

It's interesting what he wrote.

I think my man and I clash over writing, subtly. We're both conscious of being too frank about our opinions of each other's work. But that's neither here nor there. JK sounds like an understanding man. Not every guy (person) can handle other people's emotions with grace. And nothing is nicer than a public Valentine .

Anyway, I've downloaded the February issue and am looking forward to going through it later today. I've been swamped this weekend, writing a trial article for one company and also writing my regular articles for a web magazine about health and spiritual wellness.

All the best!

Christa

Christa Webber (Feb. '05) adds, I am also working on an article I am writing for free for the local paper. I am not sure how long that bout of volunteering will last, since I'm not in a position to spend hours each week working for free. But, at the same time, I need Boston-based clips. Freelancing is a real messy business!"

Hello Frances!

As for feedback on *Ninepatch*, I first felt like the new kid in school as many seemed to have long histories of relationships and talked a lot of "Chic-Lit". Hey, I'm still hanging around.

All the best,

Don

Don (Feb. '05) says, "Thanks, Frances, for your gentle but persistent goading to get my pen moving."

Dear Frances,

Thanks for your letter. It's always good to hear from you.

I continue to think about our old friend and all she is going through. My prayers are with her. My mother always said, "If we think we have it bad, there is always someone worse off than we are."

I read your Jan. '05 letter about the strange longing to return home. I know that feeling and I wonder, *What is it?* Is it the longing for the "old days"? Were they really better? Or, do we only remember the best of those times?

Take care of yourself. God bless you and JK.

Love and prayers,

LindaSue

LindaSue (Feb. '05) adds a personal update, "My husband and I are fine – busy with our jobs and grandkids, as always."

Dear Frances,

I want to comment on a recent topic we discussed in our letters. To refresh your memory, I was telling you I *didn't have much time* because my long-time partner (who lives apart from me) was with me. You mentioned that you had the same experience when JK was with you.

I don't know why I *don't have time* when my partner is here at my house. Maybe it's because I have someone to hang out with, so I hang out a lot! Actually, I've not been so busy working lately, and I've been a little lonely. So, I am looking forward to being with him while he's here.

Love,
Palma

Palma (Sept. '04) adds, "I really enjoyed your story about your calling to Ninepatch, (Sept. '04). I also liked the one about your choosing to marry, (May'04). Actually, I always enjoy reading my Ninepatch."

Frances,

My friend, Jim died last night. I had planned on going to see him today.

Yesterday, I was thinking about him and called his home to see if it would be okay if I came to visit today. There was no answer; except for the answering machine message with Jim's familiar raspy voice.

I knew he'd been fighting cancer and was in pain, so I wondered why he wasn't at home. I left a message and said I would pray for him.

His wife just called me. She said she took him to the emergency room last night and he had passed on. She also said, "He was ready."

In a way I'm glad because now his pain is over. But I am sad, too. I will miss him.

George

George (June '04) adds, "I owed Jim a dollar from a men's meeting a week and a half ago. Some day I will pay him back."

*

It's never too late for a
Valentine.

James (Feb. '05) observes, "Love is never out of season."

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

LIFE/HOLY

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, we read Laurie's reply to Diana (Jan.'05).

HOLY/ **Life**

My dictionary defines "Holy" as, "set apart to the service of God." So, my goal must be to set my life *apart* to the service of God. What does it mean to be *set apart*?

I am not afraid to be seen as being different from the mainstream of life if it means those tastes, motives and desires are not in accord with God. My life and mind are *set apart* in not getting caught up in the strife of political turmoil and instead being calm in the knowledge that God governs and guides.

My emotions are *set apart* from anger and strife and reactionary feelings. Instead they are focused on the harmony that I know I live and move and breathe in. So, I am free to be of service to God.

The dictionary definition of holy goes on, "... is characterized by perfection and transcendence." Transcend means to rise above or go beyond the limits of; to be prior to, beyond and above (the universe or material existence): to outdo in some attribute, quality or power; to rise above or extend notably beyond ordinary limits. Transcendent means, "...transcending the universe or material existence." To be *prior to* means, "before the world was, I am." This tells me I must hold to my preexistent and eternal spiritual state of perfection that has never been interrupted.

My physical manifestation of **Life** is the temple of God. It serves him in perfect expression of beauty, form harmonious action and grace. There is nothing that can limit my expression of poise, control, and holiness in my expression of **Life** every moment and every day.

I have set my life apart to the service of God.

Love
Laurie.

Laurie is mother of two grown children, a son and a daughter. She says, that she is a spiritual seeker, like many who are trying to bring their lives and thoughts ... and most importantly, their daily actions to be obedient to the supreme being, whatever name they choose to call Him. She finds that starting her day trying (Continued on next page.) to expand her understanding of Him helps tune her up to better listen for His guidance. And working with Diana keeps her faithful so she doesn't tend to slide away from that discipline.

She is currently working full time but looks forward to retiring soon to oil painting, reading, writing, hiking, and having the freedom to visit her three delightful grandchildren more often."

RESOLUTION FOR 2005

I have a wide creative bent that I want to continue to nurture. So, this year I resolve to create faux fur hats. (Since first writing this, I have made nine of them and have also knitted five men's caps!) I tend toward creating one clothing accessory or another. One year I made button bracelets, another year I knitted scarves. It has been rewarding to fashion beautiful things.

In addition this year, I hope to complete a chapbook. This will be a little paperback book of fifty poems which I have written over the last ten- plus years.

Another goal is to cull the old family photos and create a wall- of- history for my upstairs hallway. While I have my photos out, I am also planning to put together albums for each of my kids. These will include our genealogy along with ancestor photos. It is a b-i-g order, but I have much of it done already. It is a matter of focusing on *completing* it.

Last, I want to continue to make and maintain lasting relationships. In 2004, I mended a relationship with a family member. It was one I struggled with for over five years. Our renewed connection is a comfort to me. There is another relationship in my life that needs repair, too. With prayer, I will reach my goal with it this year.

So, God willing, 2005 will find me living on a higher prayer and meditation plane, experiencing balance and exhilaration!

Gail (Feb. '05) adds, "God bless the consistent great uniting work that you are doing, Frances, God bless your relationships, one and all, and God bless you. Thanks for allowing my participation in Ninepatch."

*

COW WATCHING

Recently this spring, I was driving through the country to a nearby town. The road winds through pastures where large dairy herds graze.

As I glanced to the left I saw a cow lying on her side in the field next to the road. Her four legs were stretched straight out and her belly was distended. The other cows in her field had made their way over to the feed troughs, leaving her totally isolated.

In the minute or two it took me to drive by her, there was no movement in her at all. I was upset and had a talk with my conscience about leaving that poor dead cow isolated and unremarked. (I thought she must have died overnight because her body had that painful swollen look that death brings to roadkill and obviously the dairymen had not yet noticed her carcass.)

After that conversation with my conscience, I decided to proceed with my business. If, in the half hour that it would take me to return to this stretch of road, she had not yet been discovered, I would try to find someone to notify.

(Continued on top of the next page.)

(I thought that since it was a DAIRY farm, it would be extremely important for public health reasons to determine her cause of death.)

I was given a gift on the way home. The field was now to my right, and the cow in question, while not standing, had righted herself. She lay with her legs tucked under. A lovely, sturdy, and quite large calf teetered at her side.

Joy/JW(Feb. '05) adds, "In the next few days the mother and calf were moved to a smaller adjacent field with other mothers and newborns. It took 'my cow' a couple of days to recover her strength. Twice more I saw her lying down, legs tucked under, resting. Her calf is by far the largest I have seen so far this birthing season."

A LABOR OF LOVE AND HONOR

Last night, I lined a casket for the *Garden of Innocence*, a non-profit organization that buries children abandoned in death. The little pine casket was made by a friend. A light blue coverlet was knitted by another friend. I provided the material and labor to line the case. I chose a blue and white tiny-checked flannel and used it for the inside bottom and sides of the box. Then, I appliquéd a blue bow that dangled a yellow star on the fabric inside the lid. (Nothing really "dangled," it was just a pattern on a damaged quilt top I bought at the fabric store.) I cut out the bow and star then fused it onto the checked fabric. A simple white lace finished the edges. Later, my husband and I placed the blan-ket, a little chenille bear and a poem that I wrote in the now-ready casket. I wondered what baby boy would be buried in it.

Baby Boy

**Little boy blue, come blow your
horn,
The sheep in the meadow, the cow
in the corn.
Baby boy, we love you,
We shout out loud with glee.
Though not our child by blood --
Our child, by God's decree.**

**We want to read to you nursery
rhymes,**

We want to toss you a ball,
We want to teach you the A, B,
C's,
We want to watch you grow tall.

But wants like this go
unanswered --
Too soon you've gone far away.

You now have angels for
playmates,
And leave us behind for today.

Little boy blue, come blow your
horn,
Be happy in heaven,
For now you're at home.

Georgene (Feb. '05) "We chose the project to honor the baby my husband's then-wife miscarried years ago. The name he had chosen for the baby was Christopher. However, that name has already been assigned to one of the eighty children buried in the Garden of Innocence. So we left the name open. Someone else would make that choice."

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

WE RAN AWAY—ONCE
November 7, 2005
(An E-mail)

Dear Frances and JK,

I'm glad to hear you didn't have much more than shingles missing and roof leaks during the hurricanes. It is as if the month of September went by in a day -- one storm after another.

Don't know if I told you but my daughter and I went to Atlanta during Hurricane Frances. There, we stayed with my sister and her husband.

When we got back it took a day or two to return to normal. We took down sheets of plywood window-boarding and put back things we'd moved inside to protect. Then suddenly, the weather people were saying we should again evacuate the East Coast Island where we live -- Hurricane Jeanne was on the way! But, this time we stayed home.

Compared to Charley, it wasn't too bad. I did lose some shingles and also some roof flashing came down. Of course, tree debris was every-where. Still, that was all, thank God.

VLB

VLB is a single parent of a high school-aged daughter. She says, "In my limited leisure (Ha! Ha!) time I enjoy reading and walking." She continues, "I wanted to pull out my file of quotes (Continued on top of the next page.)

I've collected and find something to share-- maybe next time. For now, I don't know why but this is the only one that comes to mind (I don't even know who said it.), S/He not busy being born is busy dying."

DEVASTATION AND HEAT

November 4, 2005

(An E-mail)

Hi Fritzie!

We are back in Ohio after visiting my son and his family in Florida. What devastation!

We saw a lot of blue roofs there. My son's yard was a mess. It had been full of old trees that have been there for awhile. They were uprooted. He had to have them cut and hauled away. It's especially sad, because the trees were part of what drew him to buying the house. Now they are gone, but luckily, his house was not damaged.

I feel so sorry for the people of Florida – so much destruction from the storms.

Patricia (Jan. '05) says, "I did get the basement steps painted. (We leave the door to the basement open because of the litter boxes and I place the cats' food on the landing, too.) The basement is nice but the steps were peeling off their old paint. Now the steps are freshly painted and look nice.

With this house, I tried to take our painting projects really slow. I have a tendency to want to get it all done in one day and burn out trying."

- I-N-T-R-U-C-T-I-O-N-S-

(Reading and Listening)

WINTER READING

This winter I have done quite a bit of reading. One of my recent heroes is Ted Kooser, lately named Poet Laureate of the United States. For thirty-five years he worked as an insurance executive, rising at 4:30 A.M. to write poetry before going to work. His

poems, Delights and Shadows, reflect his Midwestern surroundings and stir the latent childhood memories of this corn-belt reader.

Kooser's prose Local Wonders, is also poetic as he relates the details of daily life. Read him for the beauty of our language and the beauty of his daily life.

Another author I read was Coleman McCarthy. He was a writer for the *Washington Post* when he was invited to teach a writing class at an inner-city school. He replied, "I'd rather teach peace," a reply that became the title of his book.

(Continued on the next page.)

The book relates twenty years of McCarthy's teaching non-violence, pacifism and conflict management to over five thousand students in high schools, and colleges. He relates peace applications to family life, street gangs, organizations and nations. I pray that he gets invited to the State Department and the United Nations.

Don (See letter in **AROUND THE FRAME**) adds, "Multiple radiation treatments have left me quite listless, but I do keep reading."

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

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

KINDRED SPIRITS AND TRUSTING

It seems to me *Ninepatch* is about trusting kindred spirits with our stories and experiences. It's a safe place to share.

June Poucher (See letter in **AROUND THE FRAME**) says, "Opening ourselves to others' thoughts and beliefs enables us to continue to grow in a comfortable setting."

ABOUT NINEPATCH, Inc.

P.O. Box 1263

Avon Park, FL. 33825

ISSN 1094-3234

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.)