

October 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 journal.**

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Dear Friends,

Traffic was light that late summer morning. My husband drove silently and our little car's engine hummed. Air breezed around the windshield as JK and I wound our way down into an Interstate-24 valley among the Tennessee Smoky Mountains.

I stared out my side window at white-gray skies behind the green, tree-covered mountains that rose sharply beside the road. We rounded a curve and in the distance more of the gray-blue range appeared, cloaked in a veil of thin cloud. Suddenly, the car became a time-travel capsule. It carried me back to 2002 and the second week of my Ireland pilgrimage.

*Our coach engine roared as we wound down through the Wicklow Mountains around a curve and down again. I leaned my head against the window and gazed at the steep green slopes by the road.*

*Every morning of that September week I met others gathered at the foot of those same mountains. While other hotel guests slept, pilgrims met at 7:00 AM in the silent lobby. Then, bundled against heavy mist and fifty-degree temperatures, I followed others out into the ancient city's graveyard. There, we circled for morning worship at the foot of a giant green hill. Awe held me mute as mist veiled both ends of the valley and more distant mounds were painted a water-color of blue and violet. Then, as morning fog rolled down the valley, its damp lips kissed my face and its ghostly presence wrapped me in its arms. In the same way that kisses and hugs change me, praying embraced me and subtly changed my life.*

I knew little more than the *pilgrimage* definition, "... journey to a holy site" when I signed up. I thought it would be a kind of historical tour of holy places. However, the journey also gifted me with a holy presence evoked by the landscape. In addition, it taught me how to be part of a prayerful group and to practice a new way of praying for others.

My lessons began soon after I was officially accepted. A few days later, the mail brought a large brown envelope. I lifted its flap, reached in and pulled out a stack of blue, green, yellow, tan pages topped with a white welcome letter. One of the things that page requested was to join our leaders in praying every day for the pilgrimage. There were no details about *how* to pray or *for exactly what*.

I wondered about this as I shuffled through the carnival of other papers in the packet. Eventually, I came on a tan page of participants' names with brief biographies. Using that list, I made up little cards with pilgrims' names. Then, every night, I shuffled through them, praying for every pilgrim -- myself included. Since I didn't *really* know the others, I simply prayed, "Bless Emily, Bless, John, Bless Jane..."

Another page asked every pilgrim to choose a "job." For example, one task was *sacristan*, a person in charge of worship materials. I chose *anamcara*, a "spiritual friend who prays for you." Since I had already begun praying at night for our little band, once we assembled, I added an individual morning blessing before our mediation time and another one once we boarded our bus for our day's tour.

I don't recall ever before praying for a trip or people involved in it. So, it was surely my pilgrimage experience that led JK and me to pray for the friends and relatives we visited on our trip North. As with the pilgrimage, we began during our planning stages and continued to bless each person or family we saw during and after our tour of several states. *(See top of next page.)*

As my pilgrimage touched me with new experiences of *the holy*, so our more ordinary trip was also transformed. First, we knew external blessings. Our visits went well. We had no travel, vehicle or health

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problems and we enjoyed many happy hours of visiting. But even more, about the time we returned through the Smokies, I also felt a subtle *shift* deep inside -- a gift of increased faith and trust. Praying brought me unexpected grace.

I am blessed.

*Frances Fritzie*

*Frances Fritzie, Editor* adds, "It seems that, in a spiritual way, every trip can be a sort of pilgrimage. All that is necessary for the journey's transformation is to pray for its purpose and people before, during and afterward."

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

(Letters to the Editor)

Dear Frances,

I was touched by your letter about your son, David's pipe organ recital in the July '05 *Ninepatch*. It was beautifully presented in a way that expressed the challenges of the parent of a special child. You never quite made it clear about who you felt worse for ... David or yourself.

I don't mean to sound harsh or accusing. I'm trying to say that your story left the door open to feeling pain of all types--a spectrum of reasons and depths.

Peace,

Georgene

*Georgene (Aug-Sept. '05)* says, "Living in Southern California means losing the seasons I experienced in Michigan. This morning, I rose at my usual time (5:20 AM) and noticed how the sky is darkened. We are losing our wonderful early morning light! It's taken me a while to find the new rhythms of seasons for this area."

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Dear Frances,

In my last letter, I talked about life "cycles"(maybe they are changes or waves). What I know is they come and go, one after another and I go with them. I try to see what I am supposed to learn from each one.

When my husband started complaining about the hassle of living where he worked, he ended up talking about moving. I agreed with him about problems where we lived, but I didn't really want to move. It would be a change, starting over new, somewhere else.

But, we started looking. Condos we looked at seemed so small so we ended up in a little house in our price range near where I work. My husband just fell in love with it when he first saw it. It's just down the street from a house he lived in as a child!

It all went so fast. We moved near July 4<sup>th</sup>! What a crazy weekend: so many papers to sign ... so much packing and unpacking! (See top of next page.)

Then, six days after we moved, my husband fell at work and hit his head on the cement floor! He has a mild concussion. He is dizzy, sick to his stomach and light-headed. He stutters and mumbles and is

sometimes hard to understand. He is upset easily and sleeps a lot. He's angry he can't help me unpack and move things around. His work gave him quite a hassle, about insurance and time off, too. Then there's back and forth to the doctor with help from the kids since now, neither of us can drive. I don't know when he will be able to go back to work.

I tell myself: *One Day at a Time!* Life and its changes are not easy!  
I hope you are doing well!  
God bless.  
Love and prayers,  
LindaSue

*LindaSue (Aug.-Sept. '05) adds, "Our adult daughter, Anita, is all upset about the move. I told her, now we have house payments and our own utilities, I can't hand her money anymore. I keep waiting for her to grow up and accept responsibilities. Maybe now she will have to!"*

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*Failure is the seed of success.*

*James (Aug.-Sept. '05) exhorts, "Don't be afraid of making. Mistakes can be the stepping stones on the pathway to learning and success."*

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

**A LABYRINTH EXPERIENCE**

Several months ago, my wife and I walked a labyrinth. This eleven-circuit labyrinth is at a retreat center. It occupies a large open area between two buildings. The path is tucked behind a Mediterranean-style entry which has two sinuous sides. This doorway contains a stone court yard, fountain and four concrete benches built into the two side walls.

Behind the entry, lies the circular path. It is patterned after the labyrinth inlaid in the floor of the Chartes Cathedral, in Chartes, France. During the Middle Ages, religious pilgrims could not walk to the Holy Land due to the crusades. So, they simulated the external trip by walking the labyrinth which creates an inward journey. ( See next page.)

I stood at the start of the labyrinth. Its curves were a mystery hidden by a two foot hedge. I removed my shoes and stepped in. Slowly, I followed the path, not wanting to expect anything. I centered myself with prayer I started with The Serenity Prayer:

*God, grant me the serenity,  
To accept the things I cannot change,  
Courage to change the things I can,  
And wisdom to know the difference.*

Time slowed and dappled morning sunlight warmed sections of the cool concrete.

At each bend was a marble bench with inscriptions as a memorial to a generous soul. I sat on one and visualized a spiritual place where so many of my departed friends and loved one dwell. I felt joy. (Perhaps their spirits danced around me.)

At another bench, I sat with eyes closed and felt a warm, loving presence. I opened my eyes and found my wife standing above me, her eyes closed in prayer.

As I continued toward the labyrinth's center, time continued to slow and creation happened around me. Ants crossed my path; a bumble bee flew by --a myriad of brilliant colors. White seagull wings flashed out over a lake that bordered the retreat center. Like ancient beards hanging in nearby trees, Spanish moss waved in the cool breeze.

When I reached the labyrinth center, I faced each direction in turn and said a prayer. The journey back was different -- I seemed to reenter time. When I stepped off the labyrinth, I felt a sense of peace.

*Garrett is married and father of two grown children. He says, "In my free time, I enjoy reading, gardening, fishing, writing in my various journals, and spending time with my wife. She has one of the wackiest senses of humor and is a delight. I'm presently reading, A Vision of Eden, The Life and Works of Marianne North, a 19th century botany painter and world traveler."*

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FIVE WEEKS IN  
THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

It was a wonderful experience to minister with the country people of the Dominican Republic (DR) for five weeks in the summer of '05. I truly hated to leave and should a chance to return arise, I would go back -- eagerly.

I was high in the mountains close to the Haitian border. (The Dominican Republic and Haiti share a large island in the South Atlantic.) The view was fantastic! The mountainsides were lush and green with the crops of beans and corn planted by the residents of the small mountain communities.

The DR was under a dictatorship for over thirty-one years, and during that time not much changed for the people. They were not educated. (If you want to keep a people at a low level, cut out all monies for education.) Now, the people work hard and want to improve. They walk two to three hours along rutted mountain paths to be able to come to the classes!

I rode a mule from community to community. The mule only bucked me off once -- I got on again thinking that he could be as stubborn as he wanted, but he was NOT the boss! So I mounted again and off I went.

I helped in the little schools that my US Catholic diocese helped to build. I taught writing (of course, in Spanish) to the teachers who are also the parents. They are committed, yet so many of them are just one step ahead of the children in the Kindergarten through Second Grade. These are the three levels their schools now offer. (See top, next.)

The government now has a school system but the teacher shows only one or two times a week. The children walk two hours to get to the school then often find no teacher! (Who is going to check up on these teachers high in the mountains where there are no roads or electricity?)

I also cleaned up all the books and other teaching materials, then organized them for the new school year. This was a huge job as there is normally no one to categorize and keep the supplies in order.

So, I was pretty busy the whole time I was there. I started a little learning center for the children where they could come and play learning games after school. They called it “casino” because I gave them a poker chip if they won one of the games. After the games, we graphed how many poker chips they won that day on a chart (sneaky way of teaching them graphing!)

Everyday one designated kid would come to where I was cleaning and sorting teaching materials and say, “Casino?”

If I nodded and said, “Sure! Come on in!” I would hear a huge shout from thirty others hiding behind her. The following rush to come in and play was wonderful!

I hope that everyone had a summer as wonderful as mine!

*Patience (July '05) tells us more of her time in The Dominican Republic, “Part of the time I stayed at the Mission House in La Cucarita, a small community where the school’s central supply was kept. There, I lived with a Dominican Sister from Spain and a lay woman who was a nurse from Florida. She volunteered four months to be there with the people helping them with health issues. Also staying with us was a woman from DR who wants to be a doctor. She volunteered six months to work with the people in the mountain regions.*

*All in all, it was a good experience. I didn’t lose weight as the food was fried and full of carbohydrates. Also, we didn’t have Mass the whole time I was there as there is only one priest who ministers in the whole area. He could not get to some areas due to the heavy rains – it does rain EVERY day and very hard -- that creates lots of mud!”*

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### SHOWING MY DAUGHTER MY ROOTS

During the summer, my daughter and I had a whirlwind trip through a time tunnel into Upstate New York and Vermont where we visited roots of my immediate family. We visited cousins (new to her) and searched four cemeteries for proper family spellings and dates.

Though it was mid-June, the weather was cold and uninviting. Still, we drove to the top of the highest peak in Vermont. However, the wind whipped around, warning us to "get off my mountain!" A cousin took us to taste *maple creamies* at a maple sugar farm owned by a friend of his, and we stopped at the famous Ben and Jerry's ice cream place.

We stayed in my Vermont hometown at an inn (originally the Governor's Mansion) where I was a chambermaid in the summer before my senior year of high school. We had a tour of the house and saw rooms I had once cleaned.

My daughter also witnessed all the houses I lived in as a girl. We drove two miles to the top of Breezy Hill, one of the places I lived in while I was in junior high, and hiked a quarter mile to Stellafane, an observatory, where international telescope- makers have been convening annually for seventy years. (It's my hometown Mecca. I wrote a poem about it.\* )

Before leaving Vermont, I introduced my daughter to my first husband, my high school sweetheart. I showed her my life as a girl growing up, giving her another view of her mother.

*Gail (Aug.-Sept. '05) says, "I feel that this experience has done a great job of (See next page.) rounding out my character for her –much as a writer does in building his characters for a book. Knowing a person in his youth helps one to see how short the distance is from childhood to adulthood. It seems that I keep replaying the scenario of my childhood. Three acts – over and over again.” \*Editor's note: See this poem on a later page, in *THREAD*.*

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

(Our Special Topic)

MEMORIES OF MY DAD

When I saw the topic, THE KITCHEN TABLE had come up, the first thing I thought of was the game my father and I used to play. He had a huge encyclopedia -- what we always called 'the big book.' While I did the dishes in the evening, he'd sit himself at the kitchen table and use it to quiz me on everything from species of animals to word spelling and meanings. Once the dishes were done, I'd sit with him at the kitchen table and we'd play my favourite part of the game. I'd close my eyes and circle my hand over a world map and then point to some place. When I opened my eyes and saw where my finger pointed, I was expected to tell him something about that country, ocean, or what have you. Of course, I was never very knowledgeable, but Dad would help me out and, more often than not, he'd also tell me stories about the places.

By playing our game, I learned about everything from pirates to how the World Wars got started. I also learned about far away places and people, and events that happened long ago, but that somehow and sometimes affected me... And always, my dad seemed to find a way to help me see the adventure and the wonder in these distant times and lands.

Dad passed away years ago, and I eventually gave 'the big book' (one of the few things I had of his) to my little sister. The book is gone, but I've still got my memories of our games and the wonderful, imaginary adventures Dad and I had while sitting at our kitchen table.

*Lynn/TROR (Feb. '05) adds, "The best lesson Dad taught me before he passed away was how to 'question'. That lesson's shaped my life. Now, when I miss him, I picture him captaining a sailing ship and exploring the furthest reaches of heaven ... and I smile ... and think one day I'll join him and we'll share the adventure."*

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(See top of next page.)

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

(Reading and Listening)

NEW BOOKS IN MY LIBRARY

I just purchased a wonderful little book, Walking in the Light, 30 days with Pope John Paul II. The book has thirty days of the former Pope's reflections. Each is followed by a scripture passage, a prayer and a suggested act to do for the day that corresponds with the daily reflection reading.

I also got another interesting book, When the Heart Waits. It's an autobiographical story of Sue Monk Kidd's spiritual crisis. Maybe you have read this book because it was printed in 1990. This book is interesting, too. Sue tells of her midlife crisis. She spent most of her life playing roles for other people. She said that she was someone's mother, someone's wife, someone's Sunday school teacher, someone's employee... She lost track of who she *really* was. That was when Sue Monk Kidd embarked on a journey to find herself.

*Lynan (Aug.-Sept. '05) adds, "I also took a novel on vacation with me, Snow Flower and the Secret Fan, by Lisa See. I haven't read anything by this author so I don't know what I am getting into. On the back of the book jacket Amy Tan writes, 'It is a story so mesmerizing that the pages float away...' After I read the novel, I'll let you know if the pages float away!"*

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LAY THAT TRUMPET IN OUR HANDS

The above title is a novel by Susan Carol McCarthy and based on historical fact and her family's experiences. McCarthy is a native of Central Florida and well qualified to speak on the violent racism in Florida in the mid 1950's.

The events in the book occurred before McCarthy was born. She uses the literary device of creating an older sister, twelve- year- old Reesa, who is the narrator. The story opens with the brutal beating and death of a young black man, Marvin, who is her friend and an employee of her father's. Reesa's family are transplanted northerners who are shocked by the violence of the Ku Klux Klan. The courageous stand they take against the KKK puts their lives in jeopardy.

Reesa tells of meeting Thurgood Marshall who, at that time, was an attorney for the NAACP, and later U.S. Supreme Court justice. She relates the story of how her father, Warren, and Marvin's father, Luther, cooperate with the FBI to dismantle the Klan in their county. They uncover evidence that the Klan had also organized and carried out the murder of Harry Moore, president of the Florida NAACP, and his wife Harriet on Christmas night 1951.

One irony in the story that I found particularly satisfying was the organization of the maids from 'the Quarters.' They picked up much valuable information in the homes of the Klan members. They quietly passed it along to Warren and Luther through Marvin's mother, Armetta.

I recommend this book to anyone who is at all interested in Florida's history and especially in the critical years just before desegregation took place.

*June Poucher (Aug.-Sept. '05 ) says; " Being a native Floridian and an avid reader, I appreciate the rhythm and the accents that come naturally to McCarthy. This is the real thing."*

**- - -T-H-R-E-A-D- - -**

(Our Knowing and Our Spirituality)

**STELLAFANE**

**Looking down more than fifty years  
at Stellafane, I sight  
the lofty Vermont Mecca  
where I trekked  
as if it were Delphi giving oracles  
to my youthful wish for flight.**

**Its observatory  
and mountaintop cabin  
make history,  
still hosting sleuths of the  
universe,  
telescope-makers who traverse  
the globe each year to perfect  
their instruments and detect  
cosmic mysteries.**

**Its high altar  
now anchors  
me to home ground  
in my golden sail  
around this choppy course.**

*Gail (Aug.-Sept. '05) has a story about her journey to Stellafane in FABRICS.*

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

**Editor’s note:** Part of the “business” of *Ninepatch* is to allow readers to get to know each other better. In that spirit, the “Bernard Pivot Questionnaire” and responses will appear in this space.

*(See next page.)*

THE BERNARD PIVOT QUESTIONNAIRE

In *italics* are *Skylar*’s answers.

1. What is your favorite word?

*ULU. It's a curved Inuit knife with the handle above the blade.  
Very efficient to rock it back and forth on a curved board to chop or dice food.*

- 2. What is your least favorite word? *Rhymes with "duck".*
- 3. What turns you on creatively, spiritually or emotionally?  
*Colors*
- 4. What turns you off?  
*Destructive, untrue, and/or hostile criticism*
- 5. What is your favorite curse word? *Sh-t! (Technically, it's an obscenity not a profanity.)*
- 6. What sound or noise do you love? *My cat purring.*
- 7. What sound or noise do you hate? *any loud mechanical cacophony (See top, next.)*
- 8. What profession other than your own would you like to attempt? *Marine biologist*
- 9. What profession would you not like to do? *Nurse*
- 10. If Heaven exists, what would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?  
*"Good story!"*

*Sky (Apr. '05) adds, "Life is too sacred for anything but truth and too beautiful for anything but love. We have to learn to understand each other because we are in each other's care."*

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In italics are **Joy /JW's** answers.

- 1. What is your favorite word? *The last words my Dad said an hour and a half before he died:  
"Thank you."*
- 2. What is your least favorite word? *hateful words*
- 3. What turns you on creatively, spiritually or emotionally? *love*
- 4. What turns you off?  
*angry words*
- 5. What is your favorite curse word? *dingbat or fiddle sticks*
- 6. What sound or noise do you love? *babies cooing, mockingbirds practicing, people laughing with*

(See top, next page.)

*love*

- 7. What sound or noise do you hate? *hateful words, booming music from people that I know are going to damage their own hearing with it so loud.*
- 8. What profession other than your own would you like to attempt? *writing well*
- 9. What profession would you not like to do? *clerical work with no people contact*
- 10. If Heaven exists, what would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates? *"Welcome back/home, Child."*

*Joy/JW (Mar. '05) adds, "I just got back from Alabama, helping my Mom give my Dad a peaceful death at home. Yesterday, I drove to an airport about two hours away to pick up my daughter's fiancé. I am numb and exhausted, but the two love birds are a joy to watch!"*

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In *italics* are **MM's** answers:

- 1. What is your favorite word? *Love*
- 2. What is your least favorite word? *Can't*
- 3. What turns you on creatively, spiritually or emotionally? *Music*
- 4. What turns you off? *Conflict*
- 5. What is your favorite curse word? *Sh--!*
- 6. What sound or noise do you love? *Children reading aloud.*
- 7. What sound or noise do you hate? *Trucks, shifting gears*
- 8. What profession other than your own would you like to attempt? *Acting in plays*

(See top of next page.)

- 9. What profession would you not like to do? *Medical – I don't like to see blood.*
- 10. If Heaven exists, what would you like to hear God say when you arrive at the Pearly Gates?  
*"Welcome—your reading class is waiting for you to help them."*

*MM (May '05) Before this issue went to proofing this month, MM had a sudden trip to the hospital in response to a Cat scan that showed a spot on her pancreas. We wish her well. Editor, Frances*

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## **WRITTEN IN THE STARS**

*(A Self-Discovery Game)*

**Editor's GAME Note:** Our self-discovery game comes from Japanese psychologist authors, Tadahiko Nagao and Isamu Saito in their first book, Kokology. *(For those of you who can't recall the instructions, basically, the player is to draw three stars of varied sizes, then attach a comet's tail to one.)* Authors suggest the stars represent your career, job or — as I also see them, roles or goals. The star's *sizes* indicate how dedicated a person is to the main job or goal. If the stars are more alike the size, it indicates less dedication to the largest star. (Perhaps a change is needed or coming?)

On the other hand, if one star overwhelms the others, perhaps one is putting too much energy into that area. Balance is a key to life.

Throughout history and around the world, comets have been seen as harbingers of doom or cataclysmic change. So, the authors suggest that the star that you put the comet's tail on is an area of your life to monitor.

Following is the drawing from one of our readers and, after it, he comments on his drawing.

### TWO VIEWS OF MY STARS

I first drew my stars in Nov. of 2004 when Frances was getting the *game* ready to send with that Nov.-Dec. issue. After I drew my stars, we sat together on her couch and she made notes of what I said.

Almost a year later, she asked me to comment on my stars, and pulled out my paper from last year. There, in the corner of my paper, I saw where she had written my three comments from last year. Here's what I said then. The largest star (the one with the comet tail) is the spreadsheets I continually improve to help me with my commodities trading. The next larger star is my career of house painting which I followed for most of my life. The smallest star, I saw as my first career of ten years, teaching.

Now, as I look at these celestial bodies, I see the largest star -- the one with the large fluffy tail -- is *Frances*. She is the love and biggest interest of my life. My second largest star represents my continuing work to keep my spreadsheets current. The third -- and smallest -- star represents my life-long interest in playing chess. *(See top of next page.)*

*JK (Feb. '05) adds, "These three areas -- Frances, spreadsheet development and chess -- represent my current main interests in life. Since Frances is most important to me, she is my biggest star, with the other two being a distant second and third. My balance comes from it all working together"*

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INFORMATION  
ABOUT *Ninepatch*, Inc.

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