

April 2006

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,

In the quiet of my Sebring house, I sat and sorted contents of a plastic crate of miscellany I'd lifted down from its perch on a closet shelf.

I picked through the box, placing items to donate or toss to one side. In the middle of the crate, I discovered purses not recently used. I felt through the bottom and sides of even the ones I decided to keep. The last one in that crate belonged to my deceased mother. I forgot I still had it.

I was with her when she carried that bag on her last trip in 1995. Before reaching her destination, Mother became ill. She ended up in a hospital and died about two weeks later. Seeing her purse whisked me back to that year. A strange feeling came over me as I opened the slim blond, patched- leather shoulder bag and peered inside. Reverently, I examined its contents.

First, there was an unopened paper envelope of *Fisherman's Friend -- extra strong cough drops*. Mother relied on these to quiet her persistent bronchitis. I laid these aside. Next, I picked up a small blue-flowered make-up bag. I unzipped it and discovered *cash*. Gingerly, I lifted the stack of bills and ruffled through them. On top, there was a paper-clipped stack of ones, then several twenties, a few tens and a bunch of fives. Mother was a seasoned traveler and obviously prepared for tips, quick purchases and unexpected needs.

Money in hand, I recalled a money lecture. *I had driven the eighty-some miles to visit Mom and Dad. I arrived with my two children and the car loaded with clothes and toys, but only six or seven dollars in cash.*

First, her eyes grew wide then her brows pulled together. Mother scolded me, "Is that ALL the money you have? What if something happened?"

When I mentioned my credit card, she countered, "What if you needed cash?" She shook her head, looked at me and wagged it again.

Several days later, I stood by the car piled again with children and belongings. Mother stood with me, saying goodbye to everyone. As I turned to step into the driver's seat, she pressed a twenty in my hand. "What's this?" I said, and tried to give it back.

Mother just closed her eyes and tuned her head sharply once left, then right. Sternly, she directed, "Take it! ... You never know!"

The day she carried the blond leather bag, she was thoughtfully prepared in the just the way she had long ago directed me. *Hmm...* I put the cash back and zipped the tote.

Then I opened her coin purse. It held a Medic Alert card and *more money!* I smiled at this. It was *typical* of the women in my family to keep money in more than one place.

(Continued, next page.)

The odd places my aunts, cousins and I still keep money made me think of my first car-dates. Mother instructed me to carry "mad" money. *Those first few times I went*

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out in a car, she tucked a five into my bra. She explained, "You always want to have extra money -- for a phone call or to get a different way home. You just might get mad at your date!"

That last travel day, Mother's coin purse held a few bills and change: eleven pennies, a dime and a *Kennedy Half-Dollar*. I frowned over the *half*. Mother had been a bank teller and also had a coin collection. She knew the value of such a piece. Then I recalled she encouraged my sons to keep special coins, too. I thought, "She must have been planning to give that *Kennedy* to one of the boys." Holding the coin, I smiled. Then, I returned everything to its resting place.

One more item lay inside. It was a blond leather credit card carrier. I opened it
It held:

- Social Security card
- driver's license
- prosthetic heart valve data
- credit cards
- bank money card
- photo of one grandson
- Medicare & insurance cards.
- A band-aid

As with the money, returned I everything to the purse and closed it. Then, I leaned my head on one hand and gazed at the floor where shifting shadow patterns from the window played across the carpet near my feet.

*Why did I leave the money and all Mother's cards when I sorted her things before?
Why did it put it all back now?*

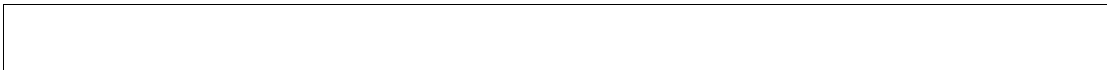
I don't know.

Perhaps this purse and its contents still carry Mother's *essence*. Thus, it remains a kind of memorial to her. I am blessed to have Mother with me – if only in this way. I am blessed.

Frances Fritzie

Frances Fritzie Editor adds, "Someday, I may need or want Mother's money. Today, it is more valuable undisturbed -- part of a memorial to her and who she was."

Continued, next page.



- - - A-R-O-U-N-D - - T-H-E - - F-R-A-M-E - -
- (Letters to the Editor)

Hi Frances,

Your Jan. '06 article about the pennies and your Nov.-Dec. '05 letter about Mark, your cousin who died, were most intriguing. I like your thinking. If, indeed, nothing happens by accident, it behooves us to be aware of every grain of sand. Your revelations about your encounters with Mark were rather like reading a mystery, Frances. Well done. I enjoyed the entire Jan. '06 issue.

Frankly, I don't read each issue thoroughly. I read some, then lay it aside in my reading pile next to the bed. And, I keep all of them in a file.

Speaking of keeping things, my packrat gene is alive and well always. I actually feel a shift in my brain when I go into the "clean out mode." It's the weirdest sensation. It is like shifting gears, moving into high, if you will. Some people seem to fall into lethargic thinking, to wit, disarray. I feel myself struggling to avoid it. But, I do go on ...

All the best with your moves.

Gail

Gail (Mar. '06) says, "I predict that you will not move again for a very long time. You are using up your 'moving' quota energy on this one!"

Dear Frances,

It is interesting that you wrote about *doors* in your Mar.'06 letter. I had a strange dream last night and it had a door in it that attracted my attention.

In my dream, I had to repossess a house my husband and I once owned and it needed some fixing up. I remember one door in particular that didn't close properly.

I wondered what I would do with two houses since I was still living where I am now. I didn't want to give up either one.

It occurred to me that the two houses could relate to separate bodies -- the physical and the spiritual. So, I opened my dream dictionary to see what it said. The comments told me a "house" is usually associated with the physical body, personality or current situation or experience. It also said the condition of the house you dream about is a clue to one's mental and emotional condition. Then, I also looked at *door*. It said that portal represented an opportunity, experience or an idea.

I thought my dream was worth pondering. And, it was even more striking that you had written about *doors*, too!

Bless'd be,

June

(See next page.)

June Poucher (Mar. '06) adds, "I loved Lynn TROR's book review in Mar. '06. It made me want to rush out and get the book she mentioned, No Death, No Fear, by Thich Nhat Hanh." **Editor's Note:** June also has a story in this issues' *FABRICS*.

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Dear Frances,

I wanted to respond to Carol's Feb.'06 letter about *blogs*. I was glad to know that a *blog* is short for, "web log." I was all ready to read the ones she found that she liked. Next thing I know she's telling me to find my own blogs! (I wanted to actually read the ones she liked -- not look them up for myself.)

Also, I'm enjoying the ongoing saga of "Mr. Gray" by Patricia. Since I love cats but don't have any of my own, it's fun to follow this story.

I also wanted to comment on Joan H's recent review of the video, "What the Bleep do we know?" The January '06 review in *Ninepatch* was the third time I'd heard about this movie, so I went out and rented it.

It was mind-boggling to say the least. It really gives credence to the idea of our thoughts creating reality -- and *being* reality. I want to watch it again and ponder the connection of our emotions and our addictions that they talk about.

The fact that science can see the effect of our thoughts gives reality to prayer, also. So maybe just thinking good thoughts about someone is enough to act as prayer!

Well, Frances, I hope you are feeling my good thoughts this week. I know you are away packing up JK's belongings to move and thus getting ready for your new phase in life.

Bye for now,
Love,
Palma

Palma (Feb. '06) adds, "I have only two more weeks in Florida. I sure do enjoy the sun and am going to miss it and my Florida friends.

Hi!

When you wrote, you said, you probably "owed" me an e-mail, because you had not heard from me in a while. I have also been a poor correspondent -- as usual. I think I'm a *paper* letter kind of person in an e-mail-paced world. With a paper letter, I can take my time and think about what I'm going to say. With *e-mail*, most people want to hear back from you right away!

I've enjoyed reading about Mr. Gray. People really ought to keep their cats indoors -- it's much safer and healthier for the cat and less stressful for the owner. Many of the cats at the shelter where I volunteer were (or are) someone's pets. The people who run the shelter can't differentiate between "indoor" and "outdoor" cats, so they just scoop up any loose cat they see and bring it in.

Did I mention that my beau got me a *third* cat for Valentine's Day? He's a lovely flame point Siamese named Mannix. (The cat, that is!)

Best,
Christa (See next page.)

Christa Weber (Feb. '06) adds, "We recently had a patch of warm weather here near Boston, so I dragged a bit of furniture outside to sand it. And I did sand a little, but then the very next day the rain came and I had to drag my little table right back inside. Now it's cold and I'm not particularly keen on bundling up and sanding! Thus, the little table waits."

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***Time has
no favorite.***

James (Mar. '06) adds, " We are all caught in the web of time."

*

Dear Frances,

Thank you for your letter. It sounds like you have been very busy. My husband and I have our busy days -- and, some *quiet* days, too. (Thank Goodness!)

I am still improving from recent eye surgery. It was two hours long -- I had two weeks off work then lots of doctor's appointments. Seems we are in a doctor cycle!

First, my husband had the concussion then lots of doctor visits. He is back to work, and continues to improve, however, he still has "his days."

Then, I had this surgery followed by many appointments. To top it all, the week of my surgery, my dad had medical problems. He ended up spending three days in the hospital and now is living with us! (It was either this or a nursing home.) Seeing more doctors came with that event!

Sometimes, I feel like a nurse doing all the doctors tell me. It seems all I do is care for the men in my life! But, *life goes on...* I concentrate on, *One day at a time.*

Good luck with your challenges coming up. May you find a place to live where you and JK can both be happy.

God bless you and keep you safe!

Love and prayers,

LindaSue

LindaSue (Mar. '06) says, "I am sure thankful for some helpful slogans to tell myself when I get caught up in all that's happening."

(See top next page.)

Dear Frances,

In early March we got some cold, snowy weather here in the Allegheny Mountains. It had been a very mild winter -- the warmest January on record.

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This chill will be very good for my spring bulbs which need the frozen ground to develop properly. I'm just glad that they hadn't sprouted early and that we didn't lose the whole bunch of them.

I can't imagine living in a place where the seasons didn't change and I couldn't watch the turning of the Wheel of the Year. Working my garden and living in the country has really given me an understanding of time as a never-ending circle rather than a linear measurement.

The beautiful mountains around here call me to hike, camp and backpack. I get to spend some glorious times with my grandchildren and that's what life is really all about. It took me quite a while to figure that out. I wandered any number of strange paths to find the simple truth that was on my doorstep.

Hope you are well and that all continues to go happily for you!
Bright Blessings!
Ed

Ed (Aug. '97) adds, "The annual cycle of birth, death and rebirth continues to comfort me as I grow comfortably older."

Dear Fritzie,

Thanks for the Feb. e-issue of *Ninepatch*. I feel bad that I am not contributing lately. Here's the reason: I am busy gathering my writings together. I am hoping to create a book or two for the family.

Then, I am also still adjusting to our move, too. It has not been easy getting used to a smaller living space. Also, the rat race here in the Northeast takes some getting used to. We were really spoiled in Florida. (Guess I did not realize how much!)

I hope that your move is a success. Say hi to JK for me.
Love, Peace, Joy,
Lee

Lee (Nov.-Dec. '05) says, "When I get a chance I will send you some of my new writing. My daughter thinks I am reliving the past too much. Not everyone understands my need to write about my life and experiences."

(See *FABRICS*, next page.)

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

April 2006

(Our Experiences)

MR. GRAY IS BACK!

Guess who is back visiting? Our neighbor's cat, Mr. Gray. He got out of their house a couple of times, came to visit and after he was satisfied we were still here, my husband took him home.

The neighbors kept him in for the next two weeks. Then, yesterday, he was out again. This time they knew it, didn't come for him or leave the door open a crack for him. I watched from the window as he tried to get in. (The little animal really wants to be at *their* house.) He went to the front door and jumped up. He also climbed to the window and looked in. I felt bad for him. Then, he came over here.

We just leave our garage door cracked and food and water in the garage like before. It was fifty-nine degrees today and he was outside. So, I took pity on him and brought him into the house. He went to the master bedroom and got in his basket like he always did. If he doesn't get into his own home, he just comes in here.

I told my husband we were not taking him back to the neighbors anymore. I guess between the two families, we can surely take care of him.

He is a nice cat.

Patricia (Mar. '06) adds, "I give up. I suppose the neighbors know where he is... I figure if they want him, well, they can just come and get him! We just keep him in now. He seems fine with that."

A BALLET OF BIRDS

When I arrived home one evening not long ago, I saw a flock of tall graceful white birds filling my neighbor's yard, overflowing into the street. They balanced delicately on long slender legs. We native Floridians call them "cow birds" or "pond birds" because of their habitat.

As I grabbed my camera, winged stragglers swooped in over my head, and landed softly among their fellows. All this time, the flock moved, gently swelling and receding, in a generally forward direction. They were in constant motion, ever changing, graceful and choreographed, like a ballet. I clicked my camera, hoping to catch a frame of their dance.

They seemed to be sourcing themselves from life itself. In a moment of reflection, I saw the feathered flock as a comparison to life -- evolving, ever changing, ever becoming.

Unlike my senses, the limited camera failed to catch the magic I saw with the naked eye.

(Continued next page.)

June Poucher (Mar. '06) says: "The sight of those birds was a special gift."

LIFE GOES ON

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When I look back on 2005, it was a hard year. I think I could call its theme, "Life goes on".

My husband and I returned home from our yearly travel in our motor home in May. It was then that we realized we really needed to sell it. We had spent the funds we had set aside for its use. We had to deal with that sense of loss one has when you change your lifestyle. We both will miss it. Life goes on...

Then, in June, my sister and I had to make the decision about finding a good care center for my aged mom. She needed more care than we could manage. We found a great place and are still happy with our choice. However, again, I had a sense of loss. It was very overwhelming. I felt like I was losing my mom and I was not being a loving daughter.

At first, Mom felt out of place and didn't know what to do. I often felt guilty. My brothers and sister made a visiting schedule, but it hasn't held up. Sometimes I feel angry, other times, I am jealous of my siblings who don't seem to struggle with a sense of visiting duty. Again, life goes on...

I think change brings progress, and with God's grace I find my place as His/Her beloved woman, wife, daughter, sibling and mom.

Diana (Mar. '06) says, "I am still working at the Reading Room once a week. I also communicate with my friend regarding a better understanding of God, as Life, Truth and Love."

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

ORDINARY MIRACLES

Recently, I was reading past, archived *Ninepatches* on the web site and ran across our Miracles and Answered Prayers issue. That issue reminded me of a book I'd been wanting to share with readers. It's called, Ordinary Miracles and is by Jasmine Smith. The author is an *ordinary* wife and mother who loses the love of her life, but finds herself.

What's extraordinary about this book is its *ordinary*-ness and its real-ness. It's the sort of book women can enjoy because Jasmine's story could be their own. It's also the kind of tale men might like because it reveals what goes on in the minds of ordinary women.

For example, at one point Jasmine realizes that she's been hauling around emotional events -- like parental rejection -- and dragging them out periodically to examine them again like items at an antiques road show. (*See top of next page.*)

Jasmine is not the only character in this book, though. She describes others. There's Al the man with the cute bum, Teddy, the attentive teddy bear and Rosie the pig. Rosie turns out to be a wonderful role model. It seems pigs love well, forgive easily, enjoy a good scratch, and live life.

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Perhaps you can tell this book is also funny in a dry sort of way, and not all that ordinary after all.

Lynn TROR (Mar. '06) adds, "A friend lent me this book. Since the volume has a pig on its cover, I thought she did it because I like children's literature. Turns out, that book was exactly what I needed to read since I am an ordinary thirty-nine year-old wife and mother who's just left the 'love of my life'. It was comforting to know that I'm not the only one who's got a head full of non-sense to figure out!"

"The Vacation"
remains our special topic through May of this year.

DREAM STATE:

Eight Generations of Swamp Lawyers, Conquistadors, Confederate Daughters, Banana Republicans and Other Florida Wildlife

This volume is by Diane Roberts, a journalist and National Public Radio commentator. Roberts cuts to the core of the subject, telling the history of Florida -- her native state. From the book's extended title, the reader immediately savors an irreverent style that is entertaining and factual.

She tells the history of the Conquistadors as well as the political debacle of the 2000 presidential election. In fact, many of the skeletons she brings out of the closet into the sunshine are those of her own family!

Roberts is a first- rate storyteller who doesn't miss a trick!

June Poucher (Mar. '06) says: "Diane Roberts' style is reminiscent of Molly Ivins' political essays on the state of Texas."

THE ORDER
OF THE PHOENIX

I just finished reading the latest book in the Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowlings. Quite frankly, I found it to be extremely "dark". In fact, believe it or not, I am finding it kind of hard to get over the ending to this book.

Although I am enthralled by all the fantasy and magic in these volumes, I couldn't help but contemplate how Harry dwells on the death of his godfather, Sirius Black. At the end of this novel this charming character dies at the hands of Death Eaters, warlock cronies of Harry's arch enemy, Voldemort. (See next page.)

Even worse, at the close of the tale, Harry finds himself dreading spending a week at Privet Drive with his Uncle Vernon. This links directly to the loss of his godfather.

Usually, I don't get emotional over books, but this one was kind of an exception. The only other novel that made me morose towards the end was a novel called, Shock Wave

by Cussler. In that story, the main character, Dirk Pitt is not able to save the life of the woman he loves at the end of the novel.

Bookworm is single and has finished his school years. Besides being a big book-reader, Bookworm is also interested in classical organ music and is at the moment studying to become an organist himself. He also enjoys surfing the net and strategic computer games are also one of his favorite pastimes. He adds, "Recently, I started on a series with more of a positive theme: C.S. Lewis' The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. I went to see the movie based on this book and I found it to be an enjoyable two hours. I highly recommend it."

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

A MONTHLY QUESTION FOR READERS

In our never-ending quest to help our circle get to know each other better we are introducing a new feature in *Ninepatch*. Each month we'll include a, "Get to know me" question for you to answer. Your answer should be short -- no more than a couple sentences long! This will take little time and yet will offer insight for us to get to know you.

Our first, "Get to know me" question is: "What is your idea of a perfect day?" My answer follows this introduction as an example and will also be our first question for YOUR response --which will appear *next* month.

For those with email capability please send your answers to:
Ninepatch9@aol.com.

Others can write to the address on this newsletter. I look forward to learning more and *more* about you all!

GET TO KNOW ME

The question: What is your idea of a perfect day?

Comments:

Georgene (Mar. '06) says, "Sunshine with billowy clouds on a deep blue background while I walk with my husband on the beach at low tide."

(See top of next page.)

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PICK-A-BLOG

So, we've mentioned 'blogs' and 'blogging' a few times, but maybe you're still not sure what a blog is. Well, a blog is an online journal or web log. It is an online space where you can share your thoughts, experiences, or anything else you care to write. The only limit is your imagination.

But, how do I get a blog?, you ask. If you don't have a friend to tell you how and are unsure about searching the net for one, you could try a popular source like, Yahoo (<http://360.yahoo.com>), MSN (<http://spaces.msn.com>), or Bravenet ([http:// journal.bravenet.com/](http://journal.bravenet.com/)).

A few of the things you'll want to keep in mind while looking for a blog are:

- 1.) Are they free or do they charge a premium?
- 2.) If they're free, are you willing to have advertisements on your blog? (Free blogs are almost always free because ads are displayed on your blog).
- 3.) What are the terms of service? (Yes, you should actually read ALL of the terms of service BEFORE signing up!)
4. Do they offer any bonuses?

Of course, we don't have the space here to go into descriptions of how to get started with each and every one of these blog sources, but a quick visit to any of these sites will give you the gist of what they have to offer. And remember, if you start a blog and let us know, we'll link to you from our *Ninepatch* web site!

Have fun!

Lynn/TROR (Mar. '06) adds, "In the case of the three sources I've mentioned (Yahoo, MSN, & Bravenet), each offers clear terms of service, easy-to-use interfaces, advertising based – free – blogs, and they also let you integrate other features like photo albums and chat capabilities."

IN MEMORIAM

*Mary:
Daughter,
Mother,
Wife,
Teacher,
Ninepatch author,
and month note-writer, MM,
Departed this earthly plane
January 26, 2006*

Eternal joy grant unto Mary, Father Mother God, and let perpetual light shine upon her.

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