

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.

Dear Friends,

It was a summer afternoon in sunny Florida. I stopped at a traffic light and glanced across the street. On one corner, I noticed a planting of bright pink flowers in front of a red brick half- wall. On it were metal letters spelling out, SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY.

Maybe it was the heat or the angle of the sun, but suddenly, I recalled another summer nearly half a life earlier. It was the first time I saw that wall announcing the place I would live and learn for the next several years.

I had never been to the campus before. I had chosen the school to get my mother off my back. Mother pushed me into college. She saw to it I took the required classes, tests and made application. She had *plans* for me!

First, she wanted me to be healthier in a climate different from Northern Indiana. Second, she dreamed I would meet and marry someone from Florida. Third, she wanted me to get an education. I was not to “count on *a man* for my living.” (*No, sir-ee!*) “Men,” she often said, “are unreliable. A smart girl learns to take care of herself.”

I did want to be a *smart* girl. Up to fourth grade I was, too. Then, my arithmetic trouble began. Numbers became a language I could not remember. My math grades did a nose-dive the next year. That’s when my banker-parents took turns nightly sitting with me at the dining room table. (I used to stay out of sight after dinner, hoping they would forget!)

However, no one-on-one explanations, extra time with flash cards, or repeatedly correcting my work helped. I still s-t-r-u-g-g-l-e-d. My folks decided something was “wrong” and decided to “have me tested.”

My class sat in rows of wood desks. At the back, boys near me whispered. A few chairs scraped the floor as students shifted in their seats. Mrs. Pike stood in front by a map, pointing out countries of the world. Then, there was a tap on the door. She stopped, laid down her pointer and went to the door.

In front of me heads bent in whispers. A few craned their necks to see who was there. Mrs. Pike stood a moment talking to a man I did not know. He wore a suit, but was not the principal or the speech teacher who came weekly to take out Ellen who stuttered.

Mrs. Pike turned back to us and said, “Frances, please come here.” The other students were silent as they turned to look at me. My face felt hot as I stood and walked to the door. I knew my classmates wondered what was “wrong” with me! (I wondered, too! Why was I so good at reading, English and other book- studies but so awful at arithmetic?)

Weeks later, I heard Mother tell my aunt there was, “... nothing wrong with Fritzie’s IQ.” (That must have been good because the nightly dining-room table sessions ended.) After that, when she bragged to family about some of my grades, Mother was quick to

explain my low arithmetic marks. With a wave of her hand she excused them, "Fritzie has a Mental Block."

Fortunately, there is always hope. In high school, I finally learned my times tables, and got at least a C in all math classes required for college. At SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY, I managed and even became a teacher.

Due to my own learning troubles, I had a *knack* with students who struggled. Teaching "challenged" students was my career for more than thirty years.

This strand of God's plan for my life developed and was revealed rather mysteriously. My early struggles later blessed me.

May your challenges bless you, too!

Frances Fritzie

Frances Fritzie, Editor adds, "Number work is still a challenge to me. I must be rested and 'in the mood' to tackle hard work -- like balancing the checkbook."

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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 enjoyed the June '06 issue of *Ninepatch*, as usual. Times of transition (and what times aren't!) are not easy. I know you and JK are both very special people. You will adjust to all the changes you have made.

Take care.

Love,

VLB

VLB (Mar. '05) adds an update, "My father has cancer and, despite treatment, has had to have another tumor removed, Now, doctors think the cancer may have spread. He is having tests... He sure is amazing as far as attitude! However, I can tell it bothers him more than he lets on. He just says, It's in the good Lord's hands."

*

Hello Frances:

I enjoyed your tale of the bathroom tile. (June '06) Sniffing out the trail of where some of those uncomfortable feelings originated (the triggers) is occasionally painful, but nearly always rewarding in the realm of self-awareness, isn't it?

I don't like confrontation, either. Coming from dysfunctional roots, my opinions were not valued in a confrontation. In my child mind, I'm sure that I felt as though my survival de-pended on going along to get along. How much of my adult life (*Next page.*) was ruined and wasted by not asking for what I needed because I didn't think/feel/know that I deserved to have it!

It's an ongoing struggle for self-awareness, and -- I am more aware these days. But as you know, that knowledge doesn't necessarily translate into action. I guess, like the alien in a new country, getting new ways takes time and patience.

Adios,
Linda

Linda (See her poem in GET TO KNOW ME) adds, "The farm field across the road from our house has been a playground this year for two young deer. Our road is occasionally busy with traffic and I am amazed that the deer often play so close to it, without being tempted to cross over and subject themselves to the danger. Somehow, that seems to be a metaphor for my life now. I don't know if that's good or bad, but today, it just is what it is."

Dear Frances,

I am glad to hear your house is becoming a home. I just finished reading the July'06 issue of *Ninepatch* and enjoyed it.

I had an occasion with what I think might be a raccoon also. My plants are on the front porch. One evening when I got home, I went out to water them. All of a sudden I noticed my amaryllis was missing entirely. (It is a large bulb with two long leaves coming up and out. The bulb is maybe two inches by three inches.) I'm assuming a raccoon decided it looked tasty!!

Nancy's comments about personal growth made a connection with me. (Maybe I always have a lot of growth to work on!) I am writing, putting together my mother's story. I am using my own memories and those of others as part of the work. My sister's recent response to my manuscript put me in a whirl! I let it lay for a while. Now, I think I've got my spin under control. Or maybe it was my higher power working on the whirl for me -- when I let go.

Love,
Palma

Palma (June'06) adds, "Also, I want to thank note-writer James for his notes on my last two newsletters. I really enjoy his sense of humor, simplicity, and his brevity. His last note said, Include love with your summer plans."

Hi Frances,

I was quite drawn into the July '06 *Ninepatch*. There were so many great stories! Your lead story pulled me right into the gut-wrenching, fear of conflict that you describe.

My family was quite isolated. So, the kind of confrontation that you describe (your dad against a neighbor) was terrifying. At our house, my father's anger was always directed at my mother or brothers. (Luckily, I usually escaped!)

June's comment about your June '06 letter was simply put, yet so insightful! In describing your conflict with JK, she said, "You guys don't work *Continued, next page.*

at the same pace or with the same priorities." I'm going to remember her comment as a way to untangling my feelings when I'm also conflicted. I think it will help me to walk in the other guy's moccasins and come to a resolution.

My heart goes out to Linda Sue. Much of her recent conflict stems from her husband's change in personality due to his head injury. That is a particularly tough situation. I'm glad she can vent with us through *Ninepatch*.

After reading stories about conflict three stories were calming: Dottie wrote about relaxing, Katie mentioned acceptance, and Nancyann talked of enjoying her life.

Joanne shared her cancer diagnosis proclaiming, "I am ready for whatever it takes and I'm not afraid of whatever the Lord has planned for me." She is inspiring. May putting those words on paper give her strength when she gets tired. (I think I'll tape them to my refrigerator!)

I liked Pam's story about seeing a past 'cut-and-paste' collage in her life. It's a good reminder that we are living a *process*. If we take time to notice we'll see the picture in the tapestry of life.

Le's story reminds me of how diverse our lives are. (He's a wilderness kind of guy!) I'd no more go out for a weekend in a canoe than fly to the moon -- and yet -- I was with him on the trip he described. But, I was safely in my chair drinking coffee, and that is the way I like it (Smile).

I've become addicted to the adventures of Mr. Gray! Patricia has me looking for the next installment every month. Her continued kindness to Mr. Gray warms the heart of this cat-lover.

The inspirational quotes from James are regularly seasoning the salmagundi of *Ninepatch*. Yummy!

Book reviews are always fun. Sometimes, as in the case of Bookworm's write-up on Angels and Demons, I have read the book. I like to compare my thoughts. Other times, I enjoy scribbling down the book title and author so I can try to find the volume later.

Those who gift us with an article on the "Special Topic" are really special people. They've caught the essence of our community. Perhaps they recognize that sharing on a topic with others really opens ourselves to one another.

I think of the Special Topic, THE SPIRIT OF MY WORK, as a vase and every person who writes adds a flower that blooms as the story unfolds. Christa's article gave us a trip "behind the velvet curtain" into the creative backstage mind of writers. Her descriptive "flowing" and "dripping" were so translatable to the way I think of my own work. Cool!

The "Get to Know Me" section is really insightful. I expected people to just jot down a few sentences and yet some have chosen to approach the questions as they would a Special Topic. (Yeah!) In either case, we see into each other in new ways. Carol's list was powerful because it was so easy to take each word and think, "Oh yes, she is right on -- that makes me mad, too!" In contrast, Linda told a whole story of *being mad* -- beginning, middle, and end. It was also thought-provoking.

Yes, the July '06 *Ninepatch* really packed a punch!

Love,
Georgene

(Continued on the next page.)

Georgene (July '06) adds, "I'm eagerly anticipating the stories in the next Ninepatch!"

Hi Frances,

In your e-mail with the last issue, you wrote that you and JK went to see fireworks on the Fourth of July. It sounds like you had a lovely holiday! Mine was a bit of a disappointment.

My beau and I had a real whopper of an argument and we missed the city fireworks. We'd had a lovely day before, though. We drove up to New Hampshire to see a possible archeological site. However, in my mind, the ruined evening of the Fourth has thrown a pallor of gray over the whole weekend.

Regarding the July '06 issue, I sure know what you mean about feeling the "icy gut." I get that, too, especially around conflict. I hate to point out when someone else is wrong or initiate a difficult discussion.

That's exactly the feeling I get when I try to do either of those things.

Anyway, hope you're well! And not too hot!

Best,

Christa

Christa Weber (July '06) says, "My beau and I made up and talked things out. But boy, did I ever use some language while we were arguing! (I am embarrassed!)"

Hi Francesca!

Thanks for sending along July '06 *Ninepatch*. I meant to write something about anger, but I forgot to write in time.

I did think about it for a while and realized that these days, I don't get too angry too often. However, in the past, my husband could push my anger button. If I had had a few cocktails, I often became very argumentative. I'd arouse his anger and that fed my own.

Under these circumstances I felt that he was totally obtuse and wondered what I was doing with such an unenlightened person. I felt quite superior to him and I didn't like being so dominating in the intellectual arena. The underlying problem was -- of course -- elsewhere.

Another kind of anger I experience is when I'm in a meeting and someone heatedly addresses the group or group leaders making accusatory remarks. Then, I do a slow burn. I want everyone to be "nice" and politically correct.

I'm thin-skinned and probably not realistic about human behavior. On the other hand, I am making a little progress in addressing some parts of the problem.

Love you,

Elaine

Elaine (June '06) adds, "To help in my fight with my depression, I have twice seen a female psychologist. (So far, so good.) She seems really neutral and I haven't picked up on any judgmental tendencies from her. My depression has lifted a good bit and I think seeing a therapist causes me to feel less hopeless."

Hi Frances,

I got July '06 *Ninepatch* today and already read the whole thing. I so enjoy hearing about every body else, mostly good, some bad, but I don't feel so alone when I read everyone has "stuff" to work out.

My husband and I didn't buy a condo on Lake Michigan after all. In fact, I'm living alone now. Part of the reason is to free me up to pursue my spiritual life without distraction and resistance. I'm sad my marriage didn't work out, but joyful that I know God takes care of me.

I think I always get married for security, thinking marriage can give me the "good life". I'm learning again and again that God gives me the "Good Life" and I should be thankful to Him/ Her. I have always had my needs met whether married or single so I find joy in the "Good Life" now. It's wonderful to have the time and no distractions to learning more about God and His/Her Love for me and all mankind. This is a continuing life purpose.

Georgene sent a nice note, stuck to my newsletter this month. It said "Learn to write your hurts in the sand and to carve your benefits in stone".

It's good advice.

Love,

Diana

Diana (May '06) adds, "I am still writing to my friend Laurie (June '06). We discuss the Bible lesson each week and keep in touch regarding our daily experiences. She is always positive and encouraging and loving, as Frances is. I so appreciate thoughtful, enlightened friends. Ninepatch is always a welcome friend, too, though a different kind."

Dear Frances,

Thanks for the July '06 *Ninepatch*. I haven't been on the computer much of late, though even if I'm not bugging you online, I still do think often of you and all our *Ninepatch* friends. I guess I've just been 'living' life ... or caught on the hamster-wheel-of-life, might be better.

My life has been busy. For one thing, my daughter graduated! I want to look into an apprenticeship for her in the fall... (I don't see much of my son who still lives with his dad. He's still treating me like a stranger since I left.)

Then, there was the visit from a suitor from the other side of this continent. He's a nice fellow, but (sigh) I don't dare get really involved with someone who lives so far away. And now I feel bad because I think he's taking it hard.

I've also been sick and stressed. I got hit with a financial crunch and work has been insane -- firings all over. Meanwhile, I'm trying to figure out what to do. My job isn't enough to live on and there's no way for me to get better there. It looks like the next best thing is to lose it and try something else. I'm just don't know what I'd rather do -- and am physically able *to* do! On the up-side, I have picked up a new hobby, beading! I have been making myself jewelry, something I've never really had before. It's kind of nice.

I do hope this letter finds you well. You're always in my thoughts and my heart,

Love

Lynn

(Continued on the top of the next page.)

LynnTROR (May '06) adds, "The ex- still hasn't said 'boo' about support. I'm still struggling with feelings, baggage, and his new relationship. I'll have to figure out how to get a settlement out of him sooner or later... Well, sooner I guess, and then start on a divorce, I suppose."

Dear Frances,

I hope you are having a better holiday weekend than I am. Dad is sick -- maybe from the heat -- and asleep in his room. My husband is watching old movies and napping off and on. I have done laundry, worked in the yard and cleaned the house.

I *am* grateful for the time off, for our freedoms and for all those who made this special day possible. I am also thankful for past holidays I spent with family and friends. However, these days I seem to spend every holiday remembering the good things and good times from before.

Holidays can be rather sad. In your last letter you mentioned a few rituals of remembering -- ways of honoring the good things about those we have lost. One was visit a gravesite. Another was get out a photo, set it up then put flowers by it -- if only for a day. You said that candles were good, too, that you lit a candle and said a prayer then let it burn a while. I light a candle almost every night. It is comforting. Another thing I find relaxing is to go downstairs to the "playroom" and color in a coloring book. Also, I got myself a rug to hook. Putting the various yarns in to create a design is something I like to do when I can find the time.

Thank you for writing and thank you for the comforting ideas. Thanks, too, for thinking of me. Sorry about all the complaining. I know God is watching over us and, *This, too, shall pass.*

God bless.

Love and prayers,

LindaSue

Linda Sue (July '06) adds, "I pray a lot. I think God is trying to teach me "patience."

Dear Frances,

I made the decision to go up north again for the summer as my husband prefers. This year I have a better attitude about it. I decided not be so negative. I have planned lots of reading and maybe I'll even start on some writing or artwork I've always wanted to do.

Perhaps I will even take a closer look at myself now that I can see myself and my life more clearly. One thing I already know: I am more fear-based than I knew. Some of my fears are very *o-l-d*.

My inner "little girl" is peeking out of the protective box where she has hidden for a long time. I am still sort of surprised by this. I thought I had it all together!

Love,

Nancyann

(Continued on the top of the next page.)

Nancyann (July '06) adds, "I enjoy the old stamps on recent Ninepatch issues. I use special stamps, too. I inherited the interest from my mother."

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

MR GRAY'S MYSTERIOUS ADVENTURE

Mr. Gray, our "adopted" cat, came in late last night -- which is unusual for him. He acted scared. He meowed and pawed the door. He could hardly wait for me to let him in. As soon as I opened the door, he darted in-side. I noticed his back was wet and he was limping.

I picked him up and examined him a little. Then, I opened the door and stepped onto our porch. I looked around, but saw nothing unusual. I have no idea what he had been into.

Today, I kept him in to rest and heal. I didn't need to worry about "keeping him in", because he really didn't *want* to go out. Instead of his usual routine, he slept in his favorite spot in the basement most of the day. He came upstairs only long enough to eat and take a brief nap on a chair. Then he went back down to his bed.

Maybe someone turned a hose on him. Maybe he got chased through a sprinkler. Whatever happened, it was a BIG deal to him! He had to seriously rest up!

Patricia (July '06) adds, "Mr. Gray did go out the next day. His limp was gone."

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It's best to try to live with one's choices.

James (July '06) adds, "Careful thought will lead the way."

(Continued on the next page.)

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

(Reading and Listening)

THOUGHTS ON DAN BROWN'S, DA VINCI CODE - BOOK AND MOVIE

I thought Tom Hanks and Ian McKellen did a wonderful job portraying detectives Robert Langdon and Leigh Teabing in the recent movie, "Da Vinci Code". After I read the book, I enjoyed the movie version of the story.

It is an interesting story, but I am very skeptical when it comes to the concepts presented in both the book and movie. For one thing, if Mary Magdalene indeed gave birth to Jesus' child, the Church would have had a difficult time covering this up for nearly 2000 years. Also, the *Templars* are depicted as being guardians of this particular secret. In my opinion, the *Templars* may have been guarding something else! For instance, they may have been protecting a religious artifact such as the Ark of the Covenant. That relic might have been discovered while curious men dug at the Temple of Solomon site during the Crusades.

On the other hand, I definitely have to give Dan Brown credit for presenting other, more plausible ideas in the book. For instance, there may have indeed been some religious symbolism of a pagan nature in paintings like the "Mona Lisa". Also, the gap between Jesus and John (Mary Magdalene?) in Da Vinci's Last Supper painting may have actually been in the shape of an upside down triangle -- the pagan symbol for a womb.

Whatever you believe and think, I invite you to read, The Da Vinci Code .

Bookworm (July '06) adds, "If you have three hours free during the week sometime, stop by a local theatre and catch the movie, "The Da Vinci Code" with Tom Hanks. This film may be winning some Oscars next year!"

WE

I want to tell about the book, We by Robert Johnson. Johnson is a Jungian analyst and his book is about how to understand the psychology of romantic love.

One portion talked about how strange it is to seek a so-called "love" for the sake of one's fulfillment. It went on to list other irrational ideas of what love should bring: thrills, dreams - coming- true, fantasy, satisfying a need to be loved, completing an ideal of the perfect love, security and plain old entertainment.

The book went on to say that if one genuinely *loves* another person, it is a spontaneous act of being, an identification with the other person. That connection causes affirmation, value, and honoring. It also leads to desiring that person's happiness and well-being. Johnson stated the suffering of romance is ultimately no different than the suffering of mysticism and religion. It is the pain shared by all mortals who would give birth to the divine world within their own lives.

Suffering is the inevitable path that must be trod on the way to consciousness, and is the inevitable price paid for the transformation. (Continued on the next page.)

One transforms only when suffering is taken consciously *and* voluntarily. Attempts to evade anguish (and the pain of transformation) bring on life cycles that repeat endlessly and produce nothing.

The seeker longs for the branding pain of conscious change brings. Yearning to know what is on fire inside oneself is motivating.

Dottie (July '06) adds, "I can see what Johnson describes in my relationship with my boyfriend. Our struggles make me more aware of my own character defects. This realization gently brings me into awareness -- which is the first step in growth. Becoming more aware also makes me conscious of my many choices and the pain in making them."

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MANY LIVES, MANY MASTERS

This true story by Brian L. Weiss, M.D., may very well shatter some old beliefs about reincarnation. Dr. Weiss is a graduate of Columbia University and Yale University School of Medicine. He went on to become chief resident, Department of Psychiatry at Yale. He is currently Chairman of Psychiatry at the Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami.

Weiss is a man of science and medicine. He makes it clear at the beginning of the book he had no confidence in parapsychology. He saw it as farfetched. He did not trust anything that could not be proven by scientific methods.

Then he met Catherine, a lab technician who came to him because her many anxieties and fears had begun to worsen. She was having nightmares and sleep-walking episodes. After many months of intensive psychotherapy with Weiss, she had not improved. He suggested hypnosis.

Many sessions followed during which Catherine recalled ten or twelve past lives. She was a female American Indian on the shores of southwest Florida, a seaman; a Confederate soldier, and a Spanish prostitute. She also recalled being the illegitimate daughter of a titled father, a male teacher in Japan, living a religious life in Florence, Italy, and in ancient Egypt being involved in burial rites.

During some of the sessions, she was able to remember events of being "between lives" during which several *Masters* spoke through her, using different voices. At times the *Masters* spoke for the benefit of enlightening Weiss himself. He was greatly surprised at what they told him about his own life.

As a result of his experience with Catherine, he says his life has changed almost as drastically as hers. His family's and his own psychic abilities have grown.

June Poucher (July '06) adds: "I highly recommend this book to anyone who is seriously interested in what happens to us after our physical bodies die."

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(Continued on the next page)

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

GET TO KNOW ME

Editor's note: Here is the third of the responses to our monthly questions—our new effort to get to know our readers better.

This month's question:

What makes you smile?

Responses:

Carol (July '06) replies, "Waking up by my husband, even though we've been together for more than thirty years. Greeting him when he comes home from work or errands. Feeling the first drops of a shower on my face and shoulders. Balancing my check book every month. Watching "So You Think You Can Dance" on TV. Seeing friends or getting a phone call from them. Getting jokes in my email. Receiving my Ninepatch in the mail. Getting an unusual postage stamp in the mail. Sitting down to a delicious meal. Finding a difficult jig-saw puzzle piece. Seeing beautiful flowers, a rosy sunrise or sunset. Being greeted by my cat when I come home. A smile from a stranger. Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens ..."

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Georgene (July '06) gives her answer, "I smile easiest when my husband smiles at me. Other events that make me smile: watching my cat sleep, watching birds bathe, a joke that makes fun of life (not specific people), natural beauty, another's smile, and a job well-done."

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Linda (July '06) shares a poem:

WHAT MAKE ME SMILE IS THIS:

Across the road lay 14 rolls of hay,

**Scattered like stones in a sacred
place.**

**Black and white cows stand in distant
peace,**

**The sun flares out its spectacle for
this day.**

(Continued on the top of the next page.)

Approaching on my bicycle, I spy a

fox
Busily gnawing and dragging at a
road kill.
Rare to see, tough to out-stealth,
It dashes for safety to my laughter.

Where the lake spreads, shines and
sparkles for me,
The wind is soothing on my face.
Caught up as the motorcycle rises to
a hill,
The pungency of summer is in my
nostrils.

The sharp curve of my boat's sail
'gainst blue sky,
Clouds slide about in aimless shapes.
We flow in a simple existence,
Relaxing, with nothing to fear or
need.

Chairing my first recovery meeting,
Enjoying the grateful comments.
After many years of darkness,
Suspended numbly in the grip of
shame,
Depression, anxiety, rage, misery,
I can now write of things that make
me smile:
The words are true and the feelings
are felt.

**

*Beth (Apr. '06) tells what makes her smile, "All the little joys in life. Talking with friends
Watching my grandchildren and being able to enjoy what is going on and not trying to
change anything. Just accepting things as they are. (I missed most of "accepting..." with
my children. So, I've got a second chance. Isn't that wonderful!)"*

Next month's question:

What did you want to "be" when you grew up?

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Ninepatch Readers'</i> BIRTHDAYS FOR AUGUST: <i>Lori Jordan – Aug. 24</i></p>

NOTE OUR NEW ADDRESS!
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