

February 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 notebook.

February 2005

Dear Friends,

I drifted up to awareness from sleep and rolled over. Then, JK asked, "Are you awake?"

"Mmm..." I twisted back to my original position and sat up a little to squint at the side table clock.

Large red letters read, "6:30."

I collapsed on my pillows. *Something* was up. He was seldom awake this early. I rolled back toward him.

"I want to talk to you," he murmured. He scooted over from his side of our bed and said, "I have been awake since 4:30."

My heart sank. It was never good for me when he woke up early, t-h-i-n-k- i-n-g.

"I just can't let you buy that condo. It's a hunk of junk."

I felt weak. That week I had looked at condos in a town near where he lives and put in an offer to buy one. Now, he went on, detailing the flaws he'd already mentioned to me during our pre-closing walk-through the previous day. That day, I ignored him. I wanted his comments, but did not agree with him and -- more importantly, *he* was not planning on living there. The condo was my choice and -- what I could afford.

Softly, he went on, "You seem desperate..."

I thought of my recent three- and- half- hour drive to his house. I had been fighting a sinus infection and woke the following day with an additional mouth full of canker sores. More than two years of living out of a suitcase -- even while in my own home -- had taken a physical toll. Like the heel of a worn-out shoe eventually affects one's gait, general weariness had affected other areas of my life. My body showed what I had known for some time: our "divided life" had to end. JK was right. By now, I *was* desperate: to move closer ... to make my life easier.

Gently, he gathered me in his arms. He admitted he had let me carry the brunt of solving our distance problem and had been "too uninvolved." He continued, "Life is short. We have only so many days. I want to spend those days with you -- not apart."

My nostrils contracted, then tears collected before trickling down my face. He wiped gently at the side of my face toward him. He held me tight and said he was ready to sell his property -- that we should buy a house together.

In happiness and relief, I just wept. Then, I agreed to honor his "don't buy" request. But, soon I thought of what I had to face in order to get out of my condo contract. Luckily, I was legally safe. The contract was still in the fifteen days of "think it over" time the developer offered. Still, I dreaded telling the two women working with me that I would not buy the condo after all.

Although JK offered what I had also seen as a solution to my weariness, he had also mentioned selling his property before. And, each time he changed his mind.

I rolled away from him and climbed out of bed. Standing, I gathered resolve. I turned back, and reminded him he'd said all this before.

"I know," he agreed. (*Continued next page.*)

"You have to take action this time -- prove you mean it: list your house -- today."

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He nodded.

“All right, then. While you are in class this morning, I’ll make an appointment for you.”

“OK.”

*

Now *both* our houses are listed and we wait. The future remains unclear. It’s not been easy, but, JK and I have taken a leap of faith -- together.

And *that* is a blessing!

Frances Fritzie

Frances Fritzie adds, “I have been trying to take care of myself and not push JK. I didn’t now how, so the process was exhausting. But, now it seems my Higher Power has stepped in to help.”

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

Dear Frances,

I liked your Nov-Dec. letter about your message from your deceased cousin, Mark. As you know I'm intrigued by mystical experiences, mine as well as others'. On several occasions I have felt the presence of some of my loved ones who have passed on. One of the most startling was when a music box in my bedroom began to play even though no one had touched it in quite some time. It was a gift from my granddaughters, whose mother took her own life.

It is so important to be open. But, it’s also often hard for me to realize when I'm not being that way.

Bless’d be,

June Poucher

June Poucher (Nov.-Dec. '05) adds, “I always feel as if I have been given a very special gift when I have one of these experiences.”

Dear Frances,

Thank you so much for the paperbacks you sent me since I can’t get out to the library. (What a nice surprise!) I think reading can be relaxing.

I finally reached my adult daughter’s caseworker. (Anita has a mild handicap.) We were on the phone two hours. It’s hard to have one I love be such a thorn to the family. I hope the woman can help me work on some matters with my daughter. *(Continued next page.)*

My husband and I were told head injuries can be especially tricky so, he is going for rehab to a special place. He is in a program to rebuild a normal life after a “closed” head injury. I hope he can return to normal and go back to work.

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Now there is another challenge -- new paperwork for our recently purchased house. Seems our mortgage company sold the contract to another company! (Never heard of such a thing.) What a headache! But, I am told it is now a common practice.

Still, my husband and I are going along -- working on things together. And, in answer to your encouragement, yes, I am getting my rest and taking my vitamins. ☺ I appreciate your concern.

Take care of yourself. Relax. Enjoy life. God bless you and JK and keep you both safe.

Love and prayers,

LindaSue.

LindaSue (Jan. '06) adds, "I started reading The Postcard, a Beverly Lewis book Frances sent me, as soon as it came. When I read of the faith those Amish women have it helps renew my own."

Dear Frances,

My week was crazy busy, but in a good way. Enough time to get things done: diversity, fun and work balanced.

Last month you told me that JK was not ready to sell his house, but that you were ready to move. You planned to buy a condo near where he lives to ease your burden of so much travel. I'm glad you can rest in your husband's decision about his house -- and justify it in your own mind so resentment doesn't grow. That is all that counts.

You mentioned that JK wants to be independent and also wants you to maintain your independence. I agree that you worked hard to find your independence and it is valuable.

I feel different about "independence." For me, I need a high-level interdependence with my mate to feel safe. Full dependence is not a safe place for me, but too much independence means that I disconnect and seek out that interdependence I want elsewhere. I know my weakness better than ever these days and I watch for its tentacles.

I had a good thing come out of my *Ninepatch* writing. I have been asked to write an article for the Garden of Innocence newsletter. In the last couple of years, I wrote in *Ninepatch* about my experience with this organization that buries unclaimed children. I've also been asked for a little article to go with a recipe in our new church cookbook. I'm going to take the base of the article I wrote about the Kitchen Table and include that with my mother's banana-oatmeal cookie recipe. It's interesting to look back at how things can work together!

Take care and remember I think of you often.

Peace,

Georgene

Georgene (Oct. '05) adds, "... the quilt of Ninepatch has been so helpful for me. I probably wouldn't recognize many of the women on the street if I saw them... but what a difference the circle has made to my woman-growth."

Hi Frances,

As usual, sorry it's taken me so long to get back to you. I've been very busy with my new job. I've gone from doing extra work for free -- to get my job's web site launched in time -- to doing extra work before the

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holidays for time off -- to just doing the work! Luckily, the pace has slowed down a bit, giving me more time to work on my novel.

I did take some time off to celebrate my birthday. (I had a costume party.) I also took part in a large puzzle contest run by a friend of mine. My brain was drained! I also managed to drive from New York to Boston and back twice in one week around Christmas-time.

My traveling this year took me to Reno, NV after Christmas. My fella' and I visited his family. Due to bad weather, getting from Boston to New York took roughly twenty hours and required five separate plane flights. I got to see the airports in Phoenix and Sacramento. It was, however, a working holiday as I had no time-off left!

And, to add to everything else, we adopted a second cat in December. Though she was fine at first, it turned out she had some stress-related problems. We've been handling them with a combination of medicine, behavioral therapy, and natural remedies. She's calmed down a lot and we hope she'll eventually be able to live without medicine. But even if she has to take medicine for the rest of her life, we'll still love her!

Best,
Christa

Christa Weber (Nov.-Dec. '05) adds, "I'm glad life has calmed down again and that the holidays only come around once a year!"

Frances,

Hey lady! You have not heard from me because I have been traveling a lot. Last year, I spent three weeks in China for work -- and I had a blast! Then I got home and had a falling out with my boss which kept me in a state of dread for a while. Lately, I'm sort of balancing out.

My son is now seventeen and will graduate this school year. He spends very little time with me since he's a teenager and he lives with his dad now. I miss him and I feel at loose ends. He is supposed to come for dinner once a week -- and he is fairly consistent about that -- but I miss him anyway.

He and I went home to Texas for Thanksgiving. I hadn't seen *the family* in a year -- and it's been a very rough year -- so I was ready to see them!

First, there were many health problems this year -- for me and for my little dog, Bandit, who has pancreatitis. (He has occasional flare ups which result in my having to get up as many as four times in the night to let him out.)

Also, I've not enjoyed the "little earthquake" changes at work. My company was purchased a year and a half ago. My job is changing rapidly and I'm trying to learn how to work more carefully in a political web of interconnected community members. Most of them are invisible to me -- and yet every move I make shakes the web and I never know who I might stir up until the feedback arrives. This new approach requires team work -- but, it's a sort of scary team work where I'd better learn fast. It is very difficult at times.

I'm hopeful that 2005 goes out like a lamb and that 2006 brings happiness.

Stay Serene!
Sherryl

Sherryl (Apr. '04) adds, "At times I feel at loose ends. I know I need to do something -- go back to school, change jobs, recommit to my work out schedule, start a new hobby -- SOMETHING. (See next page.) I keep toying with ideas. But so far, I'm just not sure. I'm in the pre-contemplative stage of change. I smell it on the air -- but I'm so unsure of the coordinates to follow that I wait."

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Dear Frances,

I just don't get Christmas cards out anymore but that does not stop me from thinking of you and keeping you very much in my prayers.

I recently went to California to see my mom -- she is ninety-two years old and closer, of course, to dying. It is always tough to leave her. This was the first time she talked with me about dying and joining her family in heaven. I could only tell her that that was OK if she wanted this and that I love her deeply. OOOOOOh, so hard!

I then flew to Grand Rapids, Michigan to participate in meetings with our Sisters. It is at this time that we do our "strategic planning" for the next six years and make important decisions for our congregation. It was like a retreat! I had time to talk with most of our Sisters for at least a little time and to participate in the process.

I always enjoy hearing from you. Thanks for your call in December when you were in the area. Sorry our schedules did not allow a reunion.

With love,
Patience

Patience (Oct. '05) adds, "I asked permission to go back to the mountain region of the Dominican Republic where I was last summer to do more missionary work. I received the OK and, if all else is equal, I will go for June and July '06 to work among and with the people there."

Love is the multi-vitamin of happiness.

James (Jan. '06) adds, "I try to take my vitamins everyday."

Dear Friends,

I am beginning to explore the world of blogs. "Blog" is short for weblog, a kind of journal done by computer and on line. I find these journals by going to:

<http://www.blogwise.com/>

I found one called, "Collecting My Thoughts."

<http://collectingmythoughts.blogspot.com/>

This lady has several blogs which are listed if you click on "View my complete profile." I especially liked, "Memory Patterns." "Coffee Spills" is about her visits to coffee shops, which coffee-drinkers like Frances will appreciate.

There is one by a Pennsylvania grandmother who wrote an entry on January 8 called, "Around the kitchen table." It reminded me of a recent *Ninepatch* writing topic. You can find her entry here:

<http://dlbk.blogspot.com/> (Continued next page.)

I look for recently updated blogs. It's kind of tedious at first, but I now have a nice collection of blogs I read from all over the world.

If any of you have a blog, I would love to read it! Perhaps you will share your address?

That's all for now.

Love,

Carol

Carol has a "SNIP" comment on page 9. She adds, "My daughter is home from college on her winter break and sleeps past noon. We had a nice holiday together and then she was off to see boyfriend. I'm happy and doing well."

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

MAKING PROGRESS

Maybe it's a "mother" thing, but I tend to idealize my children. During the holidays I visited my out-of-town son. On Christmas evening before dinner, my son burned his finger in some crab and cheese dip that had just come out of the oven. Even though I know it hurt him a lot, he had what I would call an inappropriate anger outburst and it seemed to be focused at me.

I concluded, later, that I was in his space when the burn happened and this fanned the fire of his anger. The situation brought back painful memories of his angry spells as a teenager. It helped me to see how imperfect my dear son is -- just like the rest of us. However, I had to come full circle to get to the point of view I just described.

At first I had catastrophic thoughts: he might be a wife-beater or might be violent toward his son one day. However, the plain reality is that my son is basically a decent, level-headed person.

I probably reacted the way I did because his teenage years were no picnic. I wouldn't relive them for anything. Not anything.

I was quite shaken following his outburst. Luckily, I have some growth and a little wisdom. After a few minutes, I left the house and went for a walk to collect myself.

While walking, I started talking to some of his neighbors. Before long, my son came out of the house looking for me. We didn't talk about the incident until the next day when we were both calm.

I felt compelled to say something, so I brought the incident up when I was about to leave for home. I said, "I'm sorry if I did something last night to upset you."

He said, "It's just that I was really hurt and you were in my way."

I said, "I really wasn't in your way. I turned on the cold water tap for you and backed into the living room." Then, he apologized to me very matter-of-factly but with no particular remorse. (That's *his* business.) I feel good that I said what I was feeling -- and, in a reasonable way.

(Continued next page.)

Elaine (Aug.-Sept. '05) adds, "I was in an auto accident in December. My husband was driving and I was hit on the passenger side. The accident, though unintentional, was his fault, and I've had to deal with some anger of my own as the pain from my injuries slowly subsides."

MORE ON MR. GRAY

Mr. Gray has made himself at home. I finally got rid of his ear mites and he is gaining weight. Our vet said Mr. Gray is a healthy cat.

Now it is cold, we let Mr. Gray sleep inside. He sleeps in a basket in the master bedroom. I guess my neighbor lady was right about one thing -- the little animal doesn't like to be indoors all day. The only time he wants in during the day is when it rains or the wind is blowing really hard. However, I think he will probably want in more often when the weather gets really nasty.

This morning he ate and then went outside. We were having flurries here in Ohio. They were nothing major, but enough flakes that he jumped and tried to catch them. Then he ran and chased after them. It was fun to watch!

Mr. Gray likes my husband. When the little cat comes in for the evening, and my hubby is using the computer, the cat gets on his lap. The cat perches there and watches movement on the screen with apparent interest.

I still haven't talked to Mr. Gray's owner. I want to give her my phone number so when she finally gets an apartment to take him to, she can call me. I will have him ready for her -- providing someone else doesn't provide him a happy home first! Mr. Gray's well-being is my first priority.

Patricia (Jan.06) adds, "Mr. Gray seems to get along with our other cats. He is even 'pals with' one of the females."

MY THEME FOR 2005

When Editor Frances was working on her annual Christmas Letter, she e-mailed me and said she decided her theme for last year was *travel*. Then, she asked me what I thought my theme was for 2005. So, I looked back.

There were challenges after two years of hurricanes and big changes after the death of my ninety-three year- old- aunt. I was responsible for her care over many years and I breathed a sigh of relief at her gentle passing. That took a tremendous load off my shoulders.

For most of the past year, I was trying to "fix" things, for myself and others. I helped my son and his wife repaint and refurbish their "new" house. Then I started in redoing my aunt's bedroom and my hurricane-damaged enclosed porch. All the fixing seemed to be an effort to have some control over the uncontrollable.

Recently, I have also been "separating the wheat from the chaff." I shed unused and un-needed items from my usual agenda, and from my house. I see this as a matter of "keeping up" or "catching up." Now that I am free of care-giving, I must first catch up in order to be where I want to be. Then, perhaps I can just concentrate on "keeping up."

June Poucher (Jan. '06) adds: "I have a much better sense of control over my time and energy these days although I seem to be busier than ever."

A BLIND DATE

When I was in high school, Saturday night was the big date night. I had been out with Mitch a couple of times and I was very taken with him.

One day he asked me about going on a double date the next Saturday night with his friend, Avery, who had the use of his mother's car. In those days, transportation was sometimes difficult for the boys to arrange. To make this foursome, Mitch asked me to find a blind date for Avery.

First, I asked my cousin, but she already had a date. Next, I asked a girlfriend, but her mother wouldn't let her go. Finally, I asked another, Nora, and she accepted.

For Avery and Nora, it was apparently love at first sight. After going to a movie, the four of us stopped by a lake and walked out on the long dock. It was a brilliant moonlight night made for couples. It worked its magic spell on all of us. When we returned to the car, Avery and Nora chose the back seat. I was a little bit surprised. I glanced back just moments later and they were all over each other. When Avery came back from the war two years later, he and Nora wed. They had five kids, and were married for more than fifty years.

We lost touch over time, but a couple of years ago when I learned that Avery had died, I went to the funeral. I was also a widow by then. Mitch had passed away many years before. Nora introduced me to her children, saying I was the one who had set her up on that blind date with Avery so long ago.

Recently, out of the blue, Nora called me and began reminiscing about that date. She recalled every detail. It was all there in the tone and softness of her voice -- she still adores Avery. It is her reality that "true loves never dies."

Sarah Elliott is single, surrounded by children and grandchildren, and still loves to do 'handyperson' projects for herself and family. She adds: "I am pleased that the blind date turned out so well. Who would have guessed?"

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

MY PAPER PALACE

I look around; I want to scream.
A sea of paper sets the scene.
I seem to be the queen of rag
As paper reigns supreme.
Computer hi-tech has occurred
And though I do process the word,
My world's wallpapered on all sides;
It's really quite absurd.
I've paper towels and paper plates
And pamphlets mailed by bulk
rate
And tissue paper, toilet paper, Wrapping papers, pads.
Legal paper, line paper,
Typing paper, tabs.
And plain paper and paper cups,
And magazines and bills spring up.
I've paperbacks and paper bags,
Crepe paper and books,
Sticky notes and calendars,
Recipes and checks.
And labels, letters, ledgers, too,
And stamps, receipts and tape.
That's me beneath the coupon cloud
Collapsed by paper weight.
If every piece of paper now
Should represent a tree,
I'm lost forever in the woods,
A paper majesty.

(Continued next page.)

Gail (Jan. '06) adds, "I'm glad it's the new year. I feel like starting over. I've had a surge of cleaning up and cleaning out -- paper included!"

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

KITCHEN TABLE WISDOM

I am reading a book I first laid hands on in an airport about four years ago. I didn't buy it then because I was flying and it was a heavy hard- cover to carry. When I later saw it in paperback, I bought it. It is called, Kitchen Table Wisdom and was written by Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D.

Its library note lists the book both as a "physician biography" and also under the category, "philosophy" -- an unusual, but interesting combination. The author is a female physician, and this book is a collection of her own healing tales -- observations of her life and interactions with others.

Naomi says that, as a child, she always had serious questions but her parents were "modern" and not interested in deep thoughts. She saved her queries to discuss with her rabbi grandfather when he came to visit. She enjoyed their long discussions.

Even though she followed her interest with an undergraduate degree in philosophy, she had been "marked" by her family to become a *doctor*. Her grandfather, the rabbi (who, it seems, might have known better), left her educational funds for this educational purpose alone.

Naomi's stories evolve as she became an MD, but eventually changed focus when she realized something is missing in all her success. That's when she began to nourish her soul. Thus, she entered the *healing arts*.

Naomi believes personal stories *heal*. In this vein, she shares her own wounded-healer journey.

Frances Fritzie, Editor adds, "I enjoyed this book. Its story evolves by episode and each chapter can stand alone. This is perfect for me since these days I don't have sustained time to read. It's good to have a book I can read in 'pieces.' It fits my present life."

- - - S-N-I-P - - -
(A Self-Discovery Game)

Editor's GAME Note: Our self-discovery game for 2006 was a gift to readers in the Nov-Dec. '05 issue. It comes from the book, Kokology 2 by Tadahiko Nagao and Isamu Saito. (*In case you may not recall, the game requires a sheet of paper and a pair of scissors. The directions are: cut the paper in two halves, any way you like.*) Authors suggest the following: "Cutting off a relationship is much like cutting a page in two.

There's no reason either of the processes needs to be complicated -- a few quick snips and you're done. But things don't always work out so easily in real life... sometimes a clean cut just doesn't suit the situation. Sometimes we like to get creative, to express the way we really feel."

Authors say the following about Carol's cut style: "a clean cut down the middle When you end a relation-ship, you really end it, without hand wringing, regrets or remorse. This stems from your belief that clean cuts are the most painless and heal without leaving scars, a surgical principle you apply with cold, objective precision in all realms of your life." Following is what **Carol** says:

MY "SNIP"

I made a clean cut straight down the middle. However, I feel more like the person described who cut curving back and forth several times -- like Frances did.

I "saw" the paper to cut in halves as an objective. I read the directions, "any way you want" as a creative option, but I did not feel creative. I took a lined piece of notebook binder paper, folded it in half, and cut on the fold between two of the lines. (This assured that I would not make a jagged-edged cut or a single gently rounded curve.) I did consider tearing along the fold -- something I often do when I create during cut-and-paste collage sessions. But, the directions clearly said to use a pair of scissors.

On the surface, the relation-ships I have ended have been "clean cut," but they continue to live on in my memory, haunting me. I sometimes wonder about those people and loved ones -- old boy friends, girl friends, and even a sister. Where are they? What are they doing? Are they still alive, or are they dead? I fear the answers to these questions, so I make no effort to revive my old relationships. For me the motto is, "Let sleeping dogs lie."

Carol (Aug.-Sept. '05) speaks of an earlier relationship in her life, "I did email a holiday card and note to an old boy-friend who very thoughtfully and briefly updated me on years of news." **Editor's note:** Dear Readers, Send us your cut paper comments, too!

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

THOUGHTS ABOUT OUR WEBSITE

We are planning to add a "blog" to the *Ninepatch* web-site. A *blog* is a kind of journal, one that others can read and even add their comments. Lynn TROR, our webmaster, says, "Every time I get a new issue and put it together for the site, I find myself thinking I'd like to comment on this contribution or that ... I can use the blog as a place to share those thoughts." The Board has discussed this and while we'd like to have a blog anyone could write to, it's not the best idea. First of all, I've tried adding different interactive content before -- like the section, *LETTERS TO THE EDITOR* -- but for the web site. I found no one using them much, if at all. Also, if *anyone* can add to it, many of the entries will be unwanted 'spam' and other comments from unscrupulous visitors.

Instead, we've decided to make a place on the main page that offers links to most popular blog sites... maybe, with a suggestion that people blog and link to *Ninepatch*. That way, people have the choice to make one or not, and the autonomy to write what they want.

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Chances are far better that only the truly interested folks will bother and be involved.

Lynn TROR (Nov.-Dec. '05) adds, "We will tell how to create a blog in coming issues."

THE VACATION

No vacation story appeared in time for this month's issue, but watch for *Gail's* adventures in the March '06 issue. Meanwhile, here's another tale from me! *During my "raising-children" years, annually, I visited Florida's Gulf Coast beaches with my folks. I arrived at those sandy shores tight from preparing the children, gathering necessities then riding two hours with my parents and two sons.*

Once there, I relaxed a little. Sitting with my dad on the sand, a winter sun warmed us. Then, as Gulf waves gently soo-washed the shore, my tension melted and ran out to sea. Those were afternoons of vacation. My little boy ran about, waving at seagulls -- not bothering a soul. Daddy and I watched that child and Mom hunted shells near the shore with my older son.

Nowadays, I return to that beach whenever I can. Echoes of those happy times linger there.

Frances, Editor

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