

January 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 page from my recent spiritual notebook.

January 2006

Dear Friends,

As I drove back to where my husband was having his truck's oil changed, I thought of the penny I'd just found while running errands. Its date was 2005. I pondered the bright copper and tried to think of something memorable that happened in that year.

I was still pondering events of 2005 when I arrived at the garage. Stepping out of my car in the parking lot, I spied *another* cent. I stooped, picked up a pinkish one and checked its date: 2005. "Hmm..." This meant something! I wondered what...

Inside the garage bay, my husband chatted with two mechanic friends while one drained oil from JK's elevated truck. I said my hellos then strolled around the car-part supplies and clutter, listening to them, without commenting. Before they began to install the new filter, I noticed an open Christmas cookie tin on a counter. It was heaped with dark pennies. I smiled and nodded recognizing this prize of the day's penny trail! I turned to the mechanics standing with JK and interjected, "Whose pennies?"

One tan-uniformed man turned to me, "...mine." He went on, "Every day I empty my pocket change into my tool chest." He paused, "I use the nickels, dimes and quarters later for the pop machine. Left-over pennies ..." He smiled, "I'm saving them for *my retirement*."

The other men chuckled.

"Mind if I look through them? I save *Wheat Ears*."

He raised his eyebrows so I explained, "They are old pennies minted between 1909 and 1959. On the back, a ripe stalk of wheat arches along one edge."

The coin-saver nodded an "OK" then, turned and walked into the office.

I reached for a handful of coins and began to check them. Silent all this time, JK sauntered over before he followed others into the payment area and said, "You don't think you'll find any, do you?"

I shrugged, "There are lots of pennies here..."

I stood at that counter and squinted at the backs of at least some five hundred pennies. When I examined the last penny, my fingers were dark with mechanic's grease and felt gritty with grime. However, my search produced three *Wheat Ears*: 1956, 1953 and 1946. But, standing alone, focusing on penny- after- penny also produced another treasure. I remembered hunting through piles of pennies when I was six or seven years old.

In those days, after dinner, Mom, Dad and I usually gathered near the radio after dinner and listened to programs. Daddy read the paper, Mom ironed and I colored. My mother worked as a bank teller and had started a coin collection. So, some nights she brought home a tan cloth bag heavy with rolls of pennies in reddish sleeves. (*See next.*)

January 2006

Those evenings, I sat on the rug near Daddy's feet and dumped pennies in a pile. My job was to watch for certain dates, and mint marks: D (Denver) P (Pittsburg) and S (San Francisco). I replaced any *special* coin I kept with a "regular" from home. When I finished one sleeve, I stacked the cents in piles of ten. Then, I tried to drop them back into their jacket. But, my fingers were too short to push down any penny caught on an angle, so Mother did most of the rolling.

Sign off music from the 7:30 radio program usually signaled time to put away my coins and get ready for bed. While I brushed my teeth, Mother push-ed each found penny into its special slot. When I finished, she held up the open collectors' folder for me to see.

Maybe one reason I collect *Wheat Ears* is because of this indirect link to my mom and dad and memories of those simple childhood hours.

I am blessed!

Frances Fritzie

Frances Fritzie, Editor adds, " Our family lost their entire coin collection -- dimes, quarters halves and pennies -- in an auto accident. Both my parents were severely injured and far from home. No one else knew that years of collected coins were under layers of ash from an interior fire. The car was towed to a junk yard somewhere in Tennessee and disappeared. In a small way, I have started another family coin collection."

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

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(Letters to the Editor)

Dear Frances,

You've been in my thoughts and in my prayers even though you have not heard from me in a long time.

Since I wasn't home in August '05, to get my issue of *Ninepatch*, I was glad to see it when I got there in September. (I am sure you enjoyed your month off.) I was really ready for your editorial story about prayer connected to your Pilgrimage to Ireland.

I'm wondering, just what is effective prayer? Quakers talk about "holding someone in the light." To me this is holding them in God's light or giving them to God. In the Twelve Step Program's jargon, that is their slogan, "Let go (of the person) and Let God" (take care of them.)

You said you prayed saying, "Bless Emily, Bless John..." I usually thank God for the person and then "give" them to God.

I wonder do we have to do anything more than think of a person with love, for it to be a prayer? I often wake in the middle of the night with a person and their troubles or my trouble *with them* on my mind. I want to pray, but often don't know what I need to

January 2006

say. At times like those, I seem to just have thoughts rumbling around in my head -- nothing focused to pray. (See top of next page.)

I'm not sure I will come to Florida quite so early this winter. I may stay holed up here and get a jump start on the biography of my mom I have been talking about writing. Last year I took the material with me to Florida, but never got around to writing. I think I need undivided time alone to start putting it together.

Love,
Palma

Palma (June '05) adds, "I just received pictures from my third son's wedding in New York this summer. All my children were there and I got to spend a few hours with my grand-children, too. All-in-all, it was a happy occasion and the pictures show it."

*

Hi Frances!

In a recent e-mail you said we should get two boxes for matters relating to our kids and label one, *issues* and the other, *blessings*. It's a good idea to keep that in mind -- it helps me remember *both* sides of a situation.

Last summer I spent time with my children, grandchildren and was present at the birth of a great- grandchild! That birth was one of my visit's *blessings*. Of course, other situations with my family occurred, too.

One was with my daughter. She wanted to try a better life style and I helped her get started before I returned to Florida. After I came back, I talked to her on the phone. She seemed happier than she'd been in a long time. She told of talking about her kids and even cooking meals with them. She's continuing what I started there. It was nice to hear and a *blessing*.

On the other hand, her job remained a problem, an *issue*. She also called later on to say that she was discouraged about not getting enough hours and thinking of going back to a relationship she agreed is not good for her. Another *issue*! I know I can only encourage and pray for her. A *blessing*.

When I saw my boyfriend in Florida after I returned, he said the months apart were really hard for him. (He missed me -- a *blessing*.) I don't think he wants me to leave him for so long again. Another *issue*!

So life goes!
Hugs,
Dottie

Dottie (July '05) adds, "Issues and blessings! Life is such a mix!"

*

Hello Frances!

Wow, I just opened my *Ninepatch* file and it looks as if several months have passed since I made any input. The muse must be on vacation for I have written nothing of consequence during that time. On the other hand, perhaps I have been sleep-walking, experiencing nothing of consequence to write.

January 2006

In lieu of reading a lot, I have been watching, "Book TV", interviews with authors, publishers and booksellers. It airs on C-span 48 continuous hours on Saturday and Sunday. I record what looks interesting and watch it in patches during the week. (See next.)

I do have pacifist Coleman McCarthy's book, All of One Peace. It's a collection of his columns on non-violence he wrote for "The Washington Post". It's good stuff.

All for now,
Don

Don (Aug.-Sept. '05) adds, "I still observe the sacred morning coffee hour at Einstein's Bagels. I see many friends here. I enjoy an occasional game of cribbage with one of the new guys. Mostly, observe as old friends lives change and evolve. For example, one fellow recently changed careers, closing his law practice and joining a national investment banking development firm."

Hi Frances,

I'm stuck at home with shingles, of all things. (Like chicken pox, it's contagious at first.) Just knowing it usually hits those over fifty makes this illness a blow to my ego!

Guess it was stress, caused by the curse of life's curve balls. Physically, mental stress comes out in so many different ways. Author Louise Hay's classic, You Can Heal Yourself, is a good read for that sort of thinking.

It doesn't necessarily help to know which mental anguish causes physical sickness, though. In terms of a cure, I think I must pursue all avenues available. I look like I've been in a cat fight. There's a red line of blisters in the center of my forehead, a spot on the inner eyebrow and on the temple of my right side. Hmm. My third eye (intuition and knowing between the eyebrows) is sick! Luckily, modern medicine IS a wonderful thing and I am taking medication for healing.

It's nice to also know the upside of all this illness is that it is only temporary!

Later...

God bless,

Gail

Gail (Nov.-Dec. '05) adds, "I also think the blisters 'split' my face like the Greek god, Janus. It is true that I've been feeling 'divided' about my old flame, too. I swear off and end the romance, then he calls and writes and off I go again!"

*

Dear Frances,

Thank you for your letter. I have been busy, busy, busy with the move. My husband is no better and still is not back to work.

In your letter you said, "Moving is so physically stressful ..." I agree! And, now, I also have problems at work, and also with my husband who is "not him-self" after his concussion. He still has dizzy spells and "stutters," speaking with long spaces between his words. He's had two CAT scans, but they found nothing.

January 2006

Then there's always our daughter, Anita. She calls five or six times a day on weekends. She thinks her little problems are always more important and worse than anyone else's. *(See top of next page.)*

Add to that all that the changes that go with moving. You said last time you moved, it took a year to get all your details straightened out. It may take me more than a year to really settle in.

There's a bright side, though. Recently, we had our married daughter and her family over for a backyard cook-out. It was a nice time and pleasant to be in our own backyard, too.

I watched the poor people of New Orleans and Mississippi and told Anita there is always someone worse off than we are. That area looks like, "the end of the world." It reminded me of 9-11. It's as if the US is being lost, one piece at a time.

Thank you for your blessing. God bless you and keep you safe!

Love and prayers,

Linda Sue

LindaSue (Nov.-Dec. '05) adds a comment to Frances, "Enjoy your traveling with JK, your time together and your independence while you can. You never know what may happen... Conversation is important, too. It's good to keep the lines of communication open."

FABRICS

(Our Experiences)

MY LETTER TO GOD

In the latter part of each year our church has, as part of a Sunday service, a practice of writing a letter to God. It's sort of like New Year's resolutions.

We are each given paper and an envelope which we address to ourselves. After we have written to God about our hopes and dreams, we seal the envelope and put it in a basket at the door as we go out. Near the end of the year, it is mailed back to us.

I got mine before Christmas. There were twelve things I listed last year. As I went over them, I was able to check off nine that I had done. The other three were:

1. Finish a book I am writing.
2. Start to oil paint again.
3. Make time for the other two! ☺.

When I look back at the year, I am not critical of myself for neglecting these three. I remind myself that I have done other creative things which weren't planned a year ago.

June Poucher (Nov.-Dec. '05) adds, "I noticed that all of the twelve things on the list are positive thoughts or actions---no shall- nots. That, in itself is a gift!"

(More on next page.)

January 2006

MR. GRAY

Mr. Gray is a gray tabby tiger cat with white paws. My husband and I have “inherited” Mr. Gray, who likes to be around people.

He first appeared at our house in the beginning of last summer. It was a very warm day and I noticed him running around our neighbor’s house crying and panting. He wanted in. He was frantic. It seemed our neighbors had gone to work and left him outside without food or water. So, I put out some water for him on our front porch.

When they came home, I asked if the cat belonged to them. They said it belonged to their daughter who had moved in with her boyfriend at college and could not take him. The daughter asked her parents to keep her little cat.

Mr. Gray is declawed and fixed. When I first saw him, he was in good shape. It was obvious that someone had taken care of him. But, now, he was just left outside and mostly ignored.

I was angry. The parents’ actions seem typical of people who don’t know pet cats are really very *domestic*. They like to sit by the owner, and they don’t really like being outside all the time.

Over time, Mr. Gray became quite skinny. I felt sorry for him. He wasn’t getting enough to eat. I asked the neighbor why he was always outside. She said he didn’t want to come in. (“Yes, he does!” I thought.) She said he came in and ate and then went outside again. (I don’t know when he went in and ate because it seemed he was at my house all the time!)

Anyway, I purchased some kitten chow to give him to hopefully put some weight on his bony frame. Since we already have five cats who always stay indoors, I left food and water on our porch.

Later, as I sat and petted him, I noticed Mr. Gray had fleas that were driving him crazy. He also had ear mites. I told the neighbor I had some flea preventative for my cats. Since he sometimes came into my house, I asked permission to put some on him. She said OK. When I treated him, I also cleaned out his ears. He stayed real still all the while. The mites must have been quite bothersome.

Time went by and the weather began to get cold. The poor little guy he was still outside all the time. My neighbor reported that her daughter wanted to take the cat home when she and her boyfriend got another apartment. Meanwhile, my husband and I have made a bed out of straw for Mr. Gray. We left our garage door cracked so he could come and go as he pleased.

Now, every morning I open the door that goes to the garage, and he is there waiting! (He is the sweetest animal!) I sit with him while he eats and he purrs the whole time. He is finally gaining weight back.

This story is a little sad. My husband and I are both in our late sixties -- too old to take on another young cat. (Mr. Gray is about two years old). At least two of our own cats -- and we already have five -- will probably outlive us. We worry what will happen to *them*.

Patricia (Aug.-Sept. '05) adds, “Now, my neighbor says her daughter mentioned taking him to a friend who lives on a farm. I know what that means: he will become a

barn cat! Without claws he is defenseless against others. His survival chances would be slim. No matter what, if I can find a good home for Mr. Gray, I will!" *

Life is a precious journey.

James (Nov.-Dec. '05) continues with a blessing for readers, "May you experience the gift of life with joy and happiness."

*

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

THE HAND OF NON-VIOLENCE: *Five Steps to Honesty and Clarity in Communication*

Marshall B. Rosenberg's book, Non-Violent Communication is a valuable resource toward living with greater harmony and peace. He names a pattern of non-violent communication which helps us stop our habitual reactivity to life and helps us learn to respond with awareness, self-discovery, interpersonal integrity and wisdom. His four-step questions include:

1. What am I observing, using all my senses and intuition?
2. How am I feeling about it?
3. What is my need, related to it?
4. How will I respond to assert myself in addressing the moment, and get respect others' feelings and needs with humility, right timing, and compassion without blame or judgment?

I have added a fifth step which I feel is important to reinforce the learning of the first four:

5. What is the outcome of my response; what worked, didn't work? How would I do it differently?

I use my hand to remind me of these five steps. I use my thumb to touch each finger, beginning with the index finger: *What do my observations lead to?* Next finger: *How do I feel?* Ring finger: *What do I need?* And, the little finger reminds me: *Be humble and gentle in my response—not angry or insensitive to others' feelings and needs.*

January 2006

The thumb brings me back to the beginning and to deeper integration as I reflect on the outcome, and make further observations. This is how I refine my learning and response. It's a way to ground prayer and reflection involving my body.

This human process builds our trust in Wisdom's Way. (*See next page.*)

Julie D. Keefer (May '05) runs Morningstar Adventures, a retreat center in LeRoy, Michigan. This book comment comes from the center's Autumn 2005 newsletter.

“WHAT THE BLEEP DO WE KNOW? “

A Movie

Maybe you have heard about this unusual movie, or seen it at a special showing. Many friends who saw it reported to me something like, “It was wonderful! But I couldn't understand a lot of it.” Armed with this forewarning, I decided to take my time with the movie by watching it on a rented DVD in my living room. What I found *was* wonderful -- as my friends had said. But, it was also dense with exciting scientific breakthrough material that has applications to my thoughts about life. I was glad I had the opportunity to watch a little, turn off the set, digest it, and then go back for more.

The film introduces quantum physics as the physics of possibilities: new ways of thinking, being and choosing the “freedom” of being responsible. A few of the concepts follow:

For one thing, brain scans have revealed that our brains use the same neurological pathways to process events, and memories of those events. The brain does not know the difference between the two, and triggers identical body responses to both. Negative memories I dwell on affect my body negatively. For example, the fight or flight response of remembered fear sets the heart pounding as powerfully as the bad experience. So *getting over it*, releasing, forgiving, blessing, is not only “nice”, but very practical, from a health viewpoint.

Another concept is we take in over 400,000 bits of information a minute, but only develop 2,000 of them. We select data to process which matches patterns in our brains, created through early training and conditioning. We “miss” the other 398,000 pieces because they don't match our particular brain pattern.

Thus, I think it might not hurt for me to pay attention to something I missed and someone else points out to me. Perhaps this idea help explain why the partners I have chosen turned out to be the “same” person every time. Maybe it is possible for me to “open up” to experiences that up to now I have missed!

A last example involves Isuro Imoto, a scientist featured in the movie. He did some fascinating experiments with distilled water. He subjected samples to a variety of stimuli, and microscopically photographed the water molecules afterwards. Molecules which were “blessed” by Imoto photographed in beautiful snowflake patterns.

On the other hand, molecules which were told, “I will kill you!” were chaotically distorted in photographs.

Wow! And most of my body is water! I guess meditating and holding loving thoughts creates harmony at the cellular level as well as in my mental makeup. Amazingly, my body cells don't even need my brain to tell them to be happy. Converse-

ly, when I fuss at someone, I'm also changing their body, doing more harm to them than I ever intend.

These are just three of the scientific studies. There are at least ten or so more, all done by respected scientists, also featured in the movie. Most experiments are also matched with hypotheses about the spiritual implications of the findings. Many of the ideas don't seem entirely new, because they are like ideas that *(See top of next page.)*

Eastern religions and spiritual leaders have advanced or intuited since the beginning of time. Also, a few concepts have become more mainstream during the last fifty years.

The video is indeed fascinating! I urge readers to rent it at their favorite video store. Then, just take your time when you watch it.

Joan H. (Nov-Dec. '05) adds, "I'm still processing parts of it, and will probably end up buying the movie. Maybe I'll even have a "Bleep" gathering with friends. That way we can look, stop, and share our many viewpoints."

- -T-H-E- -V-A-C-A-T-I-O-N- -
(Our Special Topic)

ADVENTURES

When I was eight years old, my parents took me on vacation with them and their friends. We drove over night to Blind River, in Canada. There, I spent two weeks with the group on an island in a huge lake where we could barely see the mainland

We all slept in two rooms on either side of the main cabin. Grown-ups hand-pumped water and I had to use an outhouse. At night, lanterns and candles gave us light.

One day we took a group trip to a nearby tree-covered shore where we climbed a "mountain" they called, Ol' Baldy. That morning we got in a rowboat and two canoes. The big people pulled the oars and paddled until boat bottoms scraped the little gravel shore. We climbed out and waited while the men pulled the crafts up onto the lake's narrow stony edge. Then, everyone began to climb. We trudged up the steep slope through small trees and underbrush. My dad and others cheered climbers with choruses of, "On top of Old Baldy, all covered with rock..." I knew the tune, it was a children's song, "On top of Spaghetti, all covered with cheese, I saw my first meatball, 'till somebody sneezed..."

Before long, I panted and puffed. But, I didn't feel so bad because another grown-up also stopped to rest, her face red, and breath short.

I don't know why the group decided to make the climb -- or for that matter-- why anyone makes such journeys. However, I will say that I felt a sense of victory when at last, I scrambled onto Baldy's rocky top and stood up. My reward was a view over the vast, tree-lined lake and our small island across the way, now no bigger than my hand.

Frances Fritzie (Editor) adds, "One evening, supervised by "Uncle Doc", I stood and threw in a fishing line from the small wooden landing. Surprised, I caught my first-ever fish. Uncle Doc said it was a blue gill -- a good-eating fish. But, I was sad for Blue

January 2006

and let it swim in a big metal tub for several days. Finally, my parents insisted he had to be eaten and Blue became part of a “mess” of fish for dinner. I think I ate peanut butter that night ...”

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