

# *Ninepatch*

*Stitch - by - Stitch*

*W - e - C - r - e - a - t - e - O - u - r - L - i - v - e - s -*

*Editor's Note: The following is a recent page from my spiritual journal.*

March 2006

Dear Friends,

The match flamed with a small *whoosh*. Our presenter touched it to her small candle as members of the spiritual retreat waited in silence. Lighting the candle signaled the start of our last session.

"Thanksgiving," she began, "is an attitude -- a way of looking at life." Then, she gave directions for our first exercise: writing a blessing for the person seated to our right. I handed three paragraphs to the right, then picked up mine. I marveled at many things a stranger said about our brief encounters. I was just reading her words when our leader announced our next activity: making a list: *Things I like about my life*.

I paused to consider this, then wrote as fast as thoughts came:

- \*freedom to choose
- \*love of friends
- \*worthy work
- \*enough \$
- \*adventure
- \*seeking the holy
- \* glimpses of other worlds
  - dreams
  - stories
  - reading in general
- \* being cherished as
  - wife/partner
  - mother
  - friend

I was just finishing when a third activity began: a visualization.

Our director began, *Close your eyes... Picture a door. You are walking toward that door. It is an ordinary door that is slightly open. When you reach the door, finish opening it. Through it you see a path and further along is an archway. Step through your door and begin the trail. Along your course, you see obstacles preventing you from reaching the archway.*

*Now open your eyes and draw the scene you just saw. Include the objects blocking your path and name them.*

I had seen rocks of various sizes. Some of these were stones, small enough to lift with both hands. Others were boulders so large I could not budge them. *(See next page.)*

I immediately connected to symbolism in this image. The first *ordinary* door was my “regular” life, a portal I passed through. The path represented my day-to-day progress toward a *spiritual* goal: the archway.

I counted: nine blocks. Most were piled together -- yet thank-fully, each was self-contained. For weeks I had felt uneasy, upset that I planned to move away and *change* my life as I knew it. I could not name the cause of my unrest. Now, the visualization allowed me to both *see* and *label* the rocks -- a great *weight* I felt in my impending move to another city. A few of the stones were about the move itself -- for example, the financial costs, energy and good health required. Others included leaving friends, my support groups, doctors and familiar ways as well as questions about relationship issues of living with a partner full time.

Through the image, my Higher Power showed me what I had been feeling, but unable to name. A few of the stones I could manage with *focusing* on the slogans, *One Day at a Time*, *How Important Is It* and *Easy Does It*.

Others, I could not handle alone. They required other *spiritual* tools: prayer, silence and taking care of *my* part then asking for help. I realized that the larger boulders would roll away only with the aid of my Higher Power.

I had come to this retreat to experience a connection between writing and spirituality -- and, to explore my abilities. However, the four sessions produced other, unexpected spiritual gifts. First, a near- stranger blessed me, telling how I had touched her life. Then, I produced a list of positive aspects of my life. Last, the visualization gave me perspective and *hope* for relieving a weight I carried.

The experience was -- as our presenter had defined it -- a *thanksgiving!* And, I was blessed.

***Frances Fritzie, Editor***

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

Dear Frances,

In a typically synchronistic twist, Frances’ Editor letter from Nov.- Dec. ’05 fit beautifully with the book I’m reading No Death, No Fear by Thich Nhat Hanh, In it, the author explains that popular concepts of birth and death are illusory, and keep us from understanding our true nature. While Frances is (admittedly) no psychic, she shares her experience of connection and communication with Mark (her cousin who took his life in 2004) -- after his passing -- and the sense of peace it brought her.

Despite feeling sadness for Frances and her loss, I couldn’t help grinning just a little as I read. I was thinking of all the times *deceased* relatives have sent messages to me. I wanted to say to Frances, “Why shouldn’t Mark speak to you, My Dearest? After all, he’s right there with you.” *(Continued next page.)*

Like Thich Nhat Hanh, I believe that life and death are illusions and that it's only our expectations of a *beginning* and an *ending* that keep us from experiencing *existence* as a continuity. Cousin Mark's spirit, his essence, *was* before he was ever born, and continues despite his apparent death. He manifested when the conditions were sufficient and has -- since -- simply changed form. I also happen to believe that everyone, (to one degree or another) is aware of this deeper reality of existence, and able to see beyond it ... *psychic* or not.

Reading Frances' letter, I couldn't help wanting to hug her, to let her know that I *was laughing with her*... that despite my *learning* and *belief*, I've all too often missed messages because I didn't *expect* them... and that I've also received many. And, like Frances, I found them to be comforting and illuminating.

Well, it's a new day. As I tackle the "have to" chores, though, I'll be smiling ... thinking of my *Ninepatch* friends with love.

Lynn TROR

**Lynn TROR** (Feb. '06) adds, "Thank you, for sharing Frances ... glad I'm not the only one!"

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Dear Frances,

I read Georgene's comments about *independence* and *interdependence* (Feb. '06) with interest.

This year my husband and I will be married five years. For a while, I wasn't sure we'd make it. We're still getting to know each other, accept and understand each other. Independence, and interdependence, I struggle with all that -- and, so does my husband.

For example, I need quiet time, a space of my own to read and listen to classical music. On the other hand, he likes to be close, watch TV and listen to country-and-western music. It doesn't bother him to have TV *and* the radio on, then start a conversation with me!

We are still learning each other's habits. Life goes on...

Much love,

Diana

**Diana** (Feb. '05) says, "I'm looking forward to finding my place in my changing life, finding more harmony, peace and joy."

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Dear Frances,

We are our own worst enemies ... harder on ourselves than anyone else. You said you spent a lot of time thinking about yourself (and your plans). True, to a point. But mostly, you think about everyone else -- and what's good for them.

I hate to see you plan to move elsewhere. Here you are loved -- not because of what you do or don't do, but just because you're you. Your husband loves you -- right now -- just the way you are and, you told me he is willing to live with you any-where.

(Continued next page.)

It's OK to accept that willingness and have him move here! Moving somewhere else and starting all over seems like an interruption of your personal growth.

Maybe you think you know yourself well enough. I know I *thought* I knew myself before I came here, but through the friendships and support I have here, I finally feel loved and accepted. My Higher Power seems to be guiding me to let my defenses (invisible walls) down. Now I can begin to see myself with love and compassion.

I guess I'd like you to stay and keep growing here, too. I wish you well no matter what.

Nancyann

*Nancyann (Apr. '05) adds, "I am learning to give up mental control and allow myself to feel vulnerable. I have also stopped judging myself -- telling myself, 'You should have done some-thing else.' Now, I can take a chance and at last be myself, warts and all!" ☺*

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

Dear Frances,

Hello again! I received your letter and *Ninepatch* today. Thank you.

You sent me two books. I finished one by Beverly Lewis, The Postcard, last night. (Now my husband is reading it.) I started the other one, Janet Evanovich's mystery, Visions of Sugar Plums.

After cleaning the house and doing lots of laundry, I spend days off from work getting groceries and running errands. Either our married daughter or her mother-in-law has been taking us everywhere we have to go. My husband still can't drive and remains in therapy twice a week. (I have not been able to drive since I had a brain tumor removed nearly thirty years ago.)

Our daughter, Anita, who worries us so finally agreed to let her case manager help her make out her bills. She was not happy about doing this. She did not call us for two days.

I can't do it all forever. I asked her, "What will you do when I am gone? No one lives forever." All she could say is, "I don't want to think about it."

Thanks for the books, your well-wishes and blessings. God bless you.

Love and prayers,

Linda Sue

*LindaSue (Feb.06) adds, "Some cycles of my life are harder than others. We are doing OK, one-day-at-a-time."*

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Frances,

So, you and hubby are going to look for a house together. It is interesting to note that young people in love do that immediately -- while those with some life experience may choose to take their time! I'm glad he will sell his, too -- that way both of you are taking steps toward "us".

A recent vacation was what I needed. My son and I went to Texas. There were no fights with my father, and the time with my teenage son was exceptional. *(See next.)* When we were around my family he was my loving son -- not so much the arrogant teenager who tests me but more MY protector. I don't want him to feel like he has to take care of me all the time -- but when he stands between me and my father and keeps the peace I am nothing but grateful. Period.

I'm continuing to struggle at work -- and have become particularly aware of the toxicity of my negative work-related thoughts. This morning I dreamed that I quit -- and instead of feeling relief and joy -- I felt a confused emptiness. I started searching for comfort -- but I knew it wouldn't satisfy. This dream tells me that I must push forward at work, and search for a greater fullness -- not rush into a void ( quitting this job) out of anger.

Best of luck finding the perfect marital home.

Hugs,  
Sherryl

*Sherryl (Feb. '06) adds, "I cannot imagine ever living with another person again. Another dog -- yes -- but not another person."*

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

#### THE END OF MR. GRAY'S STORY -- I THINK

I wrote my neighbor (the one who started out with Mr. Gray) a note and enclosed my name card with my phone number on it. I asked her *(Next.)* to give it to her step-daughter who originally owned the cat. I wrote that when her step-daughter wanted the cat, to give me a call.

I told her what all was going on with Mr. Gray. I said he was no trouble, but if there was a problem with my taking care of the cat, to let me know. I wrote the note because I didn't want the owner to think I was trying to keep the cat. Tonight, really late in fact, my neighbor came by and said she got my note, that she didn't know, "...it was so important..." She took Mr. Gray and said she was going to keep him indoors. She said, she would not let him out, "... no matter what..." *( Continued next page.)*

My husband thought my neighbor acted a little “put off” -- not very friendly. Well, she isn't “friendly,” but she was at least cordial. She thanked my husband for taking such good care of the cat. I hope she does in fact keep the little fellow in.

*Patricia (Feb. '06) adds, “The day after my neighbor took the cat back, I noticed the step-daughter’s car next door. If she takes her little cat again, I hope she will continue to take care of him.”*

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### CHILDHOOD ON A MICHIGAN FARM

In the 1930's, our country was experiencing a deep depression. Food was scarce, employment was low and millions of men out of work. Our leaders were struggling to cope with the situation. President Roosevelt introduced many ways of correcting the problems. One was the introduction of Social Security, WPA (Works Progress Administration), NYA (National Youth Association), and the Civil Conservation Corps. I was just a kid then, but memories of those years are vivid.

I remember we provided most of our own food. We lived on a sort of farm. I suppose it might best be described as a *truck-farm*. We produced many kinds of vegetables and some fruit. For example, we raised carrots, radishes, rutabagas, celery, potatoes parsnips, cauliflower, rhubarb, apples, straw-berries, currants, black and red raspberries.

When I was seven or eight years old, I already helped harvest cabbages. We loaded them onto a wagon pulled by a team of horses. Once full, I rode on top of the load all the way into town where we unloaded the cabbages into box cars.

Celery was a favorite of mine. It was always “blanched” by lining the rows of celery with cedar boards to cut out the sun-light. (Whiter celery is more tender and less stringy.) The boards home-made, sawed from cedar trees we cut from our land near Lake Superior.

One of the unique marketing ideas we used was storing excess celery in ditches. These were dug about four or five feet deep by three or four feet wide. I can still see those holes in the dark upland soil across the road from our house.

Once we filled them with celery, we covered the trenches with boards, leaves and soil. This topping kept the celery from freezing while we waited to market it. Then, about Thanksgiving time, we uncovered stored bunches, removed them and took them to the ware-house. There, we removed the outer sloughed-off leaves and exposed the heart- of - the- celery. We shipped this product to some residence hotels in Chicago. The celery hearts brought a higher price than the whole celery brought at fall harvest!

Our farm's root houses were always filled after harvest. Some vegetables we stored were pota-toes, rutabagas, carrots. Even the basements of the warehouse, and our house were used for root crop storage. In addition, to our basement and the root houses, the floor of the top floor of the warehouse was covered with onions which were laid out to dry. I can still smell their pungent odor.

In late summer we loaded up the 1934 Dodge panel truck with wash tubs, pails, a tent, and a couple days supply of food. Then, the whole family drove over to Wisconsin and picked blueberries. *(Continued next page.)*

About that time of year, Mom and Dad canned hundreds of quart jars of fruits and vegetables. This cache lasted nearly a year. So we had veggies, (*Next.*) fruit, jams, jellies, all from the farm and our own efforts.

My brother and I added to the food supply, too. Speckled trout! We caught this fish in creeks some three or four miles north of the farm. It was informal fishing in those days. Most of the time, we had just a stick, line and hook. Bait was no problem. There were plenty of red and dew worms available near the creeks. Of course, on hot summer fishing days, we also swam one creek. Unfortunately, immediately we attracted blood suckers. But there is a bright side to every story. Those leeches also made good fish bait!

The depression was a hard time for many. However, looking back, providing most of our own food was just our family's way of life. As a kid, it was not a hardship -- it was an adventure!

*Le (Nov.-Dec. '05 ) adds, "I've been writing a memoir of my WWII experiences. In the midst of telling about a miserable period before I was shipped overseas. I was stationed at a repl-depot ( pronounced: ree pull - dee pull). It was a temporary stop for soldier between permanent assignments. The food there was poor. Oh how I longed then for some of mother's cooking and the abundant variety of vegetables from the fields of that Michigan Upper Peninsula farm!"*

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***Quality and quantity seldom coexist.***

*James (Feb. '06) adds, "Quality is often the sacrificial lamb of quantity."*

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#### QUENBY

Last weekend my husband and I attended another service at the Garden of Innocence. As you might remember, volunteers participate in these memorial services for children whose bodies have never been claimed for burial.

This time we had a singer/ guitarist as the music minister. He sang loving lullaby-type songs that I am sure he wrote. It was, as always, a lovely service.

A few months ago, GOI gave my husband and me the privilege of naming one of the children. We chose the name "Quenby". I always thought that if I ever had a little girl that is what I would name her. (Quenby struck me a bit like my own name, Georgene. It is unusual without being "weird.") My husband agreed to the name because he knew my story.

Anyway, it turned out that I was not able to attend the service for Quenby. However my husband was there and read the poem I wrote for her.

Last weekend, at the service for two different children, I glanced down and saw the grave-stone for Quenby. It hit me like a board in the stomach. I had that defining

moment of a life-long desire for my own child now lost forever. I held my composure at the service but wept bitterly when I was home alone. *(Continued next page.)*

Fate, destiny and God's hand were part of a process that made my desire for a child, Quenby ... into the real child, Quenby ... into the memory of my "lost" Quenby. The entire process was symbolized by flesh, life, death, name, and finally, the eternal monument.

*Georgene (Feb. '06) adds, "I'm still reeling from the emotions I'm experiencing through this kind of answer to prayer. I'd like to share my poem for Quenby."*

Your face is soft as a rose petal,  
and your hair as soft as silk.  
Fingernails so tiny but,  
no breath that smells of milk.

You should have received butterfly  
kisses—  
eyelashes fluttering on your cheeks

You should have given butterfly  
kisses—  
while giggling and smiling sweet.

Dear Quenby, your promise lies in  
heaven  
our place is here, to mourn.  
Your death does not dampen our  
lovin'  
We sing praises because you were  
born.

So give angels your butterfly kisses,  
we give them up and humbly pray  
that when we arrive in heaven  
your butterfly kisses will come our  
way.  
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**- - I-N-S-T-R-U-C-T-I-O-N-S - -**  
(Reading and Listening)

#### ORDINARY WOLVES

Seth Kantner, the author of this novel, is a native of northern Alaska where the story takes place. The main character is Cutuk, a young boy as the story opens. He and his two siblings are being raised by their father alone. They remain though their mother fled the primitive life they lived in the wilderness. Their father is an educated resourceful artist. He chose their survivor lifestyle and educates his children at home.

(See next page.)

As Cutuk grows into manhood, he holds a devotion and reverence for the land and its animals. Then, in order to experience a different culture, a naive Cutuk moves to Anchorage for a period. There, he is stunned by the way city people live and their lack of harmony and appreciation for their environment. Conflicted by what he sees, he searches for resolution. Therein, the plot evolves.

**June Poucher** (Feb. '06) says: *“Although it requires patience with the use of Eskimo words, it is a book that contrasts our consumer culture with the last frontier of North America.”*

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## ZIPPORAH, WIFE OF MOSES

Second book in the  
Canaan Trilogy

Zipporah was an easy read. The story fleshes out a few details about Moses' wife found in the Bible, books of Exodus and Numbers.

However, while Moses is a character in this story, author Marek Halter tells *Zipporah's life*. Hers includes her love affair with Moses and part of Moses' finding and delivering his calling, too. The tale begins in Midian, before Zipporah meets Moses. She lives near a mountain in the dessert with her adopted father Jethro, sage of the kings of Midian. When Jethro's women first encounter Moses, he has already discovered he is Hebrew, not a son of Pharaoh. Moses is in self- exile after killing an Egyptian guard.

Jethro has an ability to see others' lives as they do not. He also understands his God, Horeb: On page 73, he tells the nature of this God:

*“What makes Horeb all-powerful is that he doesn't do what we expect him to do. He surprises us, and, through these surprises, he corrects us, encourages us and shows us the path to follow. Let him surprise you. Have patience...”*

Like her father, Zipporah has a similar understanding of God. With it she guides Moses and encourages him to find his power from the Hebrew God. After a few years, Moses does *hear* his calling: to set his people free. He returns to Egypt to see his dying Egyptian mother, to face Pharaoh, and to lead his people out of slavery. Zipporah's story ends with her death before the slaves are freed.

I learned much Judeo-Christian history embedded in this tale. And, the author also includes cultural details I found interesting. For example, Egyptians were habitually bare-chested and needed to be clean-shaven when they prayed.

I also learned that the tribes of Midian descended from Biblical Abraham's second wife. The Hebrew God (according to Jethro) had gone silent except to show anger. Jethro said this was because His people had so displeased Him.

An interesting interwoven theme was a racial one. Moses was a “White” man and Zipporah was “Black,” a “daughter of Cush.” This was not a problem to them, but quite a stumbling block to many in Midian and also the community of enslaved Hebrews. I found it interesting to follow the effects of racial judgment on Moses, Zipporah and their two sons.

I recommend this book!

**- - T-H-E- -V-A-C-A-T-I-O-N - -**

(Our Special Topic)

**ROMANCING ARIZONA**

I saw a great travel video presentation last night on Arizona -- one of my previous passions. I fell in love with Arizona in 1987. It was my dream to move there, not just vacation. And, I did.

However, my full-time life in Arizona was short-lived. Mom got sick and I had to return to Michigan. Still, I had five Eden-like weeks in Arizona that year. (I recall the heat was an enemy to a cold-blooded Yankee type like me. My rear-view mirror melted off my windshield one time.) But, I still love that country.

I've taken many hikes in many parts of Arizona since 1987. The Verde River Valley, where Sedona lies, gripped me. It seemed like the waiting room to heaven. I also hiked to the mesas on both east and west sides of the Verde Valley. These hikes to table-like mountain-tops made me soar like an eagle when I reached each peak!

I also climbed to the tops of Mt. Baker, Squaw Peak, Camel-back, Cave Creek and the Superstitions in Apache Junction, to name a few. (In addition to hiking, I rode a paddle-boat around Lake Powell.)

My time in Arizona was more like a sojourn than a vacation or relocation. I have nothing but fabulous memories of Arizona from '87 to '94. I could probably write an entire book about those adventures! Actually, I did write a poem about a hike in Arizona's Sycamore Canyon:

**SYCAMORE CANYON  
WILDERNESS**

**Two rivers meet  
In a verdant pocket of high desert  
ranges  
Where javelina roam and eagles  
hunt.  
Beside the Sycamore Creek  
we step through the soft red silky  
sand –  
a potter's powder.  
Southwest wind has whipped the  
cliffs to dust.  
Lulled by seductive babble,  
warmed by the deepening canyon  
floor,  
we cross rocky uncertain trails  
in search of cairns to guide us.  
Each step brings promise  
of a deep cool pool around the bend  
of the crimson canyon wall.**

*(Continued next page.)*

That paradise comes into view:  
an eighty-foot sheer red rock rise  
to a patch of periwinkle sky.  
A late day sun hones its beam  
upon a lone prickly pear, an isolated  
yucca.

That is all  
to view on the barren wall  
as shadows fall.  
Waters deep in canyon heat  
anchor this mountain retreat.  
I doff my socks and feel it soothe  
my searing feet.  
We have found Eden – a respite  
before  
we slowly trek back  
along the rock-padded path.

*Gail (Feb. '06) tells of the vacation/trip that gave birth to this poem in THE VACATION about this poem she says, "This particular hike with my daughter and her boyfriend took place shortly after my move to Arizona in May of '90."*

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IN MEMORIAM

*Jim,  
priest,  
husband,  
father,  
grandfather  
and Ninepatch author  
of Sept. 2001  
Left this life  
January 2006.*

*Eternal joy grant unto Jim, Father- Mother -God, and let perpetual  
light shine upon him.*

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*ABOUT Ninepatch, Inc.*

*MAILING ADDRESS:*

*Copyright 2006*

*Ninepatch*

*PO Box 1263*

*Avon Park, FL. 33826*

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*\*ISSN 1094-3234*

*\*E-mail: [Ninepatch9@AOL.com](mailto:Ninepatch9@AOL.com)*

*\*Website: <http://www.ninepatch9.org>*

*\*Annual newsletter donation rate: \$15-\$35*

*\*The IRS recognizes Ninepatch, Inc. as a nonprofit corporation, category 501c3.*

*Documentation is available for a small fee on request.*

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