

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,

In my quiet home office, I clicked on the blue subject line of my e-mail. The message blinked open, "I just got a call... Helen died about an hour ago."

I breathed a sigh of relief. My friend, Helen, suffered a stroke just over a year ago and was partly paralyzed. She was unable to speak or eat regular food. After a brief rally, she went slowly downhill. Finally, her family and doctor decided to disconnect her feeding tube. She became a patient of Hospice.

After I knew she was dying, I lit a candle every day and prayed for Helen. I thought and prayed energy for her coming journey. Later, I attended her funeral and shared memories with others who loved her. I didn't cry then and I still can't. I wish I could.

Shedding tears is part of grieving. Cries of sorrow arise from the soul and begin to transform me. I want to honor my friend, and find the part of her spirit that still lives in me. I cannot do this with out feeling sadness.

Instead of feeling, I am like a leaf fallen on a slow-moving river. I float along life's surface. Waves of daily busy-ness carry me to and fro. *What's wrong with me?* I ask, and immediately I know: part of me wants to grieve, but a **bigger** part holds back -- afraid. Unfortunately, this is not new to me -- or my family. For example, I recall an incident after my uncle died.

I drove to Auntie's town when I heard the sad news. After the funeral and other formalities, I stayed with my aunt and tried to help out. Mornings, we worked a little, then we took coffee to her front porch. I'd settle on her swing and we'd sip the hot brew, talk and watch the world go by.

The first day we sat out, my aunt noticed a cat in the yard, near her house. She called to it, "Whose little cat are you? You're not from around here..."

She got up and started sweeping her front step, at the same time telling me, "That's not a neighborhood cat."

Finished with the broom, Auntie stooped by the step and touched dirt in her flowerbed. Again, she spoke to the cat, "Dry isn't it? Bet you can't find anything to drink." Then, Auntie stood, turned and went into the house. She reappeared with a dish of water and put it down near the door.

Next morning, when we carried our mugs out my aunt exclaimed, "There's that cat again!"

This time, the little animal came up on the porch. It twirled its tail around my aunt's legs. She bent, patted the little animal and questioned it again, "Who are you?... Where do you live?"

The third morning, when we ventured out, the cat was missing. Instead, a fuzzy kitten romped up to greet us. "Wow!" I exclaimed, "Momma-cat dropped off her kitten for you!"

I smiled and thought, "Perfect! Momma-cat sensed Auntie's sadness and also her caring. Thus, she left the kitty to a good home." I envisioned a happy future for Auntie and the kitty. In loving and caring for the little animal, I hoped Auntie's grief for her husband would lose its terrible edge.

Was I ever WRONG! Immediately, Auntie went inside and called her daughter on the phone. I heard her insisting, "Find someone to take this kitten!" (Continued next page.)

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Though I repeated my happy viewpoint, Auntie paid no attention. I was puzzled: "Could the momma-cat and I both be wrong?"

I questioned my aunt. Tearfully, she blurted, "I can't have something else to love! It will just die!"

Like Auntie, I am afraid to feel – either Helen’s love or our friendship. What can I do? Nothing except pray:

Dear God,

Let me feel the love Helen and I shared – not push it away. Open my heart! Let me grieve.

Frances Fritzie

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

Hello Frances,

Thanks for August '06 *Ninepatch*. I see myself in so many of these stories and letters. I, too, have problems with confrontation. Sometimes, I think I don't ask for what I want because I don't deserve it!

I know about anger-disappointment cycles. Elaine mentioned some of this in her letter. I also know marriage problems! I agree with Diana. I think I always get married for security. I think marriage can give me "the good life." Like Diana,(Aug.'06) I have to learn over and over that God gives me the real *Good Life!*

Lynn (Aug.'06) said she sometimes felt caught on the "hamster wheel" of life. I feel that way, too! Since my dad moved in and my husband had his head injury, I have really had my hands full! Just living, working and chores keep me *busy!*

I enjoyed your letter, too. I am happy to hear you and JK are working together on the house. My husband and I had plans like that. Then, my dad got sick and came to live with us. Somehow, that changed my husband. He won't even talk about projects now!

It's good to know I am not alone. Thanks for everything!

Love and prayers,

LindaSue

LindaSue (Sept'06) adds, "I worked this morning and when I got home, my husband went out. I have the stereo on and my dad is sitting in the sun in a lawn chair. I've done my chores and paid bills. This is time for me -- and I am writing letters!"

(Continued on the next page.)

Dear Friends,

I read *Ninepatch* -- front to back -- for the first time in a while -- just to see if anything struck me, in terms of a theme.

What ‘struck’ me was *birthday* and ‘bonus’ ... For example, there was a time when birthdays were a bonus -- magical events, with all the wonder and dread that *magic* implies.

Frances’ introductory letter about a prayer-mediation experience brought to mind images of a shaman consulting the Powers That Be for portents of a new life to come. Whether she connected with her higher self or a Higher Power (like so many others), she found worth in the meditation experience.

Births in spiritual groups used to be a time for prayer, the drawing together of community, and comfort. These themes play parts in letters from George and Nancyann.

Birthdays are still about new bonds and hope. I feel the hope and expectation Patience experiences as she makes new friends in a strange land. I’m excited (expectation), too, for Christa who’s formed a special *engagement* bond with her fiancé.

Births can also be a time for dread. They are times when our ancient fear of Nature’s beauty and capriciousness are high-lighted. Linda’s letter about spiders and Cat’s unfortunate turn- around with a family gathering bring these thoughts to mind. And finally, Georgene’s missive about her experience with the Garden of Innocence speaks of the miracles of life and death ... birthday themes to be sure!

Even our September, GET TO KNOW ME entries about ...*what I want to be when I grow up* speak of the hope and excitement new life brings. Of course, as LindaSue points out, “Life’s not always fair”, but it is what it is ... and the September issue is what it is, too!

LynnTROR (Sept. '06) adds, “It seems that, intended or not, Ninepatchers highlighted the magic of our newsletter’s twelfth b-i-r-t-h-d-a-y.”

Dear Frances-

I enjoyed reading *Ninepatch* while I was away from my support group this summer. I felt less alone.

I recall in one issue Elaine wrote about her issues with her mother. I have a lot of concerns there, too. Some, I understand, and some I don’t. I do know that mothers can’t give us what they never had.

Elaine also said she was concerned that her comments were always so “dark.” She wanted to sound more upbeat. In the last few years, I’ve also thought that of myself.

Recently, though, I believe I am turning a corner. I’m glad I did not give up when the spiritual tools didn’t change me right away. For one thing, I just keep using the slogans:

- * How important is it?
- * First things first.
- * Take care of myself.

I think the last of my life will be much happier than the rest.

Nancyann (Sept. '06) adds, “One thing I know (A biggie, I think) is I don’t have to take offense -- at anything!”

(Continued on the next page.)



***Truth does not
need to shout.***

James (Sept. '06) continues, "Truth does not have to defend itself: truth and reality are the same."

Frances...

It's been a hard and fast few weeks and so far my lady friend with bone cancer is still with us. Watching her waste away, is just awful!

I recall how my husband John got this odd washed away/ wasted away/ lost- too- much- weight- too-soon look. It was in his face ... and in his eyes, no matter how much he smiled. It was so sad.

Pain is probably part of the look, but the other part -- I don't know WHAT it is, unless it's somehow just the knowing -- the knowing they are leaving this life soon and not happy about it. I dunno, but it's a miserable thing to behold.

I am sending prayers for all kinds of things now! On Sundays, I hope my congregation is not tired of hearing me go on! I started a while back by asking God to look over certain individuals, but now I'm asking *miracles* for researchers, doctors, hospitals, nurses, new drugs, you name it -- whatever is connected.

OK ... Hope you are doing well. Keep in touch!

CaT

CaT (Sept, '06) adds, "Not long after I wrote the letter above, Anita began to fail quickly and she was soon lost to us. The "key for her last days" strength seemed to be another friend who was having surgery in another state. The morning that friend came to visit Anita, she let go of her agitated state, said she was sleepy, closed her eyes and never woke up again. It's funny. It seems there is always a key. With My John, his let go key was our anniversary, my grandma's was, her birthday. In a way, it makes sense that Anita's "key" would be concern for someone else's well-being!"

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

(Our Experiences)

PATRICIA TAKES A STAND

This morning, I let Mr. Gray out and he went straight across the street onto a neighbor-man's porch. The guy who lives there promptly chased him off. I had been wanting to talk to that family for sometime. (They -- as well as others in this neighborhood -- think Mr. Gray belongs to me.)

(Continued on the next page.)

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So, I went across the street and introduced myself. Then, I explained the situation with Mr. Gray. (People around really don't appreciate the fact that this cat roams and does pretty much what he wants to do. They thought I was responsible for him.)

I *had* been trying to take care of the little cat, but I also treated him as the “owners” had been doing, too. That’s why he still roamed. (Now, I talked to the across-the-street man, I am angry with my other neighbors -- Mr. Gray’s supposed “care-takers”-- all over again.)

I have decided to treat him as if he were really MY cat. So, now, I keep him in the house. If and when and if the “owners” approach me about the little animal, I am afraid I will not be very pleasant. I plan to tell them what the other neighbors think about roaming cats and that I do not appreciate being *thought of* as irresponsible because I am taking care of *their* cat.

Most of the people around here take care of and are responsible for their animals. (I keep my own cats indoors, always.) The guy I talked to this morning said the little cat was seen down by a major highway at the car dealership. If I had any remaining fears about keeping Mr. Gray in, that story did it. I am afraid he is going to get hit or someone might poison him to stop him visiting their business. (I don't like to think that of anyone, but some people just don't want stray animals on their property.)

Anyway, Mr. Gray, the vagabond, is having a hissy fit inside. He wants out. However, in time, he in time will calm down and accept the fact that he is IN.

Patricia (Sept. '06) adds, “My husband and I are diligently going to try to find a home for Mr. Gray. I will keep you posted.”

MISSION IN DOMINICAN REPUBLIC,
A Second Letter

Editor’s Note: *The following letter was received from **Patience**, via the Mission Diocese courier, dated June 18th, 2006. It is the second of four from her during her two months in the mission field. The Dominican Republic is the eastern half of a rather large island that lies just east of Cuba — basically between Cuba and Puerto Rico. Los Guayuyos is deeply inside a mountainous region that covers the southwestern side of the country.*

Dear Everyone:

Life is good in Los Guayuyos, Dominican Republic. Today we celebrated the Feast of Corpus Christi by having a procession through the pueblo. Though we don’t have much here, the people are very creative. Our cross was two sticks put together, our incense container was a tin tomato can filled with coals from the fire. (It had holes in it for a string so the person who carried it could swing it.) We carried five small candles. We cut index cards and used them as candle protectors! We all sang, prayed the rosary, and then ended with a wonderful feast of rice and beans with a couple small pieces of pork.

After that, my house-mate and I rode our mules to another pueblo to see the missionaries there. This was about a one hour journey. Luckily, we arrived back right before the heavy afternoon rains began.

Our classes are packed! Besides about fifty children, we have fifteen teens and sixty adults. These learners come every day to be taught to read and write in Spanish -- and to speak English.

Again, thank you for your support of our work here. We keep you in our morning and evening prayers.

With Love,

Patience

(Continued on the next page.)

Patience (Sept. '06) adds, "We are quite busy, but we go to bed each night very excited about the enthusiasm of the people."

<p><i>Ninepatch Readers'</i> <i>BIRTHDAYS FOR</i> <i>OCTOBER:</i> <i>Ilene Oct. 6</i> <i>Georgene Oct. 15</i> <i>Anna Oct. 27</i></p>
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Note:

I incorrectly listed "Linda" Bruns Christensen in our birthdays. Her REAL name is not "Linda" but **Ellen!**

"DO" RAG

As I looked at the simple pattern, Frances' question, "What did you want to be when you grew up?" stood in the shadows of a more practical stream of thoughts. Why was I thinking about that question as I worked out the notion of how I was going to *engineer* a simple sewing pattern?

I'm not a sew-er. I do very elaborate beading and occasional knitting projects, but I don't enjoy sewing. But, I wanted to make myself a "do-rag", which is a very simple headscarf for use beneath my motorcycle helmet to protect my hair and keep the helmet liner fresher. However, I could not find a pattern.

I owned one do-rag and considered deconstructing it to use as a pattern. Instead, I used my copy machine to copy, match and tape together a workable alternative. So, how is this simple-turned-complicated sewing project related to Frances' question?

As I sewed the pieces of the do-rag together, the memories of the one- and- only home economics class for sewing that I took came looming back like a tragedy that won't resolve itself.

My junior high school counselor declared that as a bright new 7th Grader, I was more than ready to take Spanish as my first foreign language. (I was delighted! The teachers, whom I loved, thought I was smart!) But, I'm sitting here, after all these years, crying my eyes out at the memory of what happened. For, my mother told the counselor in an angry, controlling voice, "No, she will not take Spanish. I want her to take sewing and cooking!"

I was devastated; I went home and argued lamely about it. But I knew that Mother got what she wanted. I felt helpless about the course of my future and my education.

The cooking part of home economics (as they used to call it), was okay. Resigned as I was to not having a say over my life at that point, I was interested and encouraged as an excellent natural-born cook. Then along came sewing. I remember feeling like a prisoner, as I was taken in anger by my mother to purchase supplies I didn't want, for a class I didn't want to take.

The sewing was led by a student teacher. But, there was my regular teacher, too: a formidable, serious and tall woman who seemed very distant and ready to retire. Maybe I simply didn't want to *get* sewing and the project suffered for my despair and apathy.

Even so, everything about the jumper itself, though was joyless. I remember its color and type of fabric after all these years. I also remember how ill- fitting and ugly it was.

(Continued on the next page.)

We had our jumpers laid out at the end of the semester and my miserable creation received a D+. I was humiliated and broken-hearted. I burst into tears.

Today, though, I finished the do-rag in quick time. I sewed into it the joy of imperfection, as well as the satisfaction of not needing to meet a deadline or someone's expectations. Each time I sew something, I recognized the pain and the sorrow of an opportunity that was lost to me.

Moments like that help me to gather up the broken pieces of my youth and heal them. If the broken pieces are not recognized and looked at, they can hurt over and over.

Linda (Sept. '06) adds, "Those were the days of burning bras and feminist questions. I wanted to know: why I couldn't take woodworking or metal shop instead! Later I did beat the system, though. I managed to become the first female to take a small engine repair, and an auto repair class in high school."

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

(Reading and Listening)

RECENT READS

I stayed cool last summer enjoying a few novels, all of which were published in 2006. I want to share them with my fellow *Ninepatch* readers.

Magic Hour, a novel by Kristin Hannah, is about a girl between the age of five and seven. She shows up with a wolf puppy in a remote town in the Pacific Northwest. She is wild and mute. The town's police chief contacts her sister, a child psychiatrist in southern California and gets her to fly up to rehabilitate the little girl. Meanwhile, a search begins for girl's parents. The psychiatrist falls in love with the girl's local doctor. The police chief falls in love with a coworker in the police department and the mystery of the girl's family is solved. It is a sad fantasy with a happy ending.

Of Rice and Men, a novel of Vietnam by Richard Galli. It's about a half dozen or so soldiers. Their job is to rehabilitate the land and teach the South Vietnamese farmers what they *already* know about farming. The soldiers are frightened and depressed in a bad war. However, they serve their time and get their job done to the best of their ability. I liked how respectfully the story treated both the soldiers and the Vietnamese.

End of Story, is a novel of suspense by Peter Abrahams. It's a tale about a woman who's an aspiring writer, trying to get published.

She gets a job teaching a writing class in a prison, and is impressed by the writing talent of one of the inmates. She also comes to believe he is innocent and tries to solve the crime he has been convicted of committing. I enjoyed the writing style and the detail given about how to write. The story, and all of its twists, is entertaining and fairly easy to follow. Although I couldn't figure out how it was going to end, I wasn't surprised. There is justice, humor, and a sense of the human struggle to it.

Carol (Sept. '06) has a message to relay, "Tell Palma (Aug. '06) I'm still reading blogs. If she (or any other Ninepatch reader) gives Ninepatch permission to give me her email address, I'll send her the names of some I enjoy." **Note:** See Carol's 'Pet on the Couch' comment in later pages.

PRODIGAL SUMMER

Barbara Kingsolver has written a wonderful book. It tells the stories of three people whose lives are parallel in one major respect; they are all dedicated environmentalists in every sense of the word. They love the land and its inhabitants, both plant and animal.

First, there is a young forest ranger who has found refuge and peace in a cabin in a National Forest. Second, there is a lonely old man who has only his small tree farm and a cantankerous neighbor to fill his life. Finally, there is a young widow, a newcomer to the valley, who is groping hesitantly into a new way of life.

As the story unfolds, the manner in which their lives touch and intermingle in their small community in Southern Appalachia is heartwarming. Although the astute reader will pick up plot clues along the way, there are some surprises.

June Poucher (Sept. '06) reflects: "Kingsolver tells their stories with the homely, sly humor that is characteristic of some of the mountain people I have known."

LEVI'S WILL

I like to read about the Amish, a religious group who choose to live apart from the world as I know it. For example, most Amish do not have electricity or cars. They drive horses- and- buggies, farm for a living and read at night by kerosene lantern or gas light.

Recently, I was without "my reading list" at the large main library in the new city where I live. Without titles at hand, I was perusing the "new books" area, hoping something from my absent list would "click."

Soon, I was at the end of the new book shelves where large print volumes are shelved as a group. There, a man was seated on a stool, bending over to read books' spines. Curious, I leaned over to see what he was evaluating. That's when I noticed, Levi's Will, by W. Dale Cramer.

A new author to me, I pulled the novel off the shelf and read its paper jacket. Then, I turned a few pages reading bits here and there. Those "tastes" were good and large print seemed an easy, fast read -- and it was.

I'm not sure why I like stories about the Amish. Maybe it is because the characters are often searching, wondering where their life- path fits with "God's will for their lives." Since I often wonder the same thing myself, these stories are interesting and usually encouraging.

The title, Levi's Will, has more than one meaning. For example, "Will" is the name of the main character, and "Levi" is his father. However, as the story develops, I got other perspectives on the two words.

It is the tale of a teenage Amish boy who feels cornered and runs away from "The Life" to find a better way for himself. While he does that in some ways, he also finds himself repeating his own father's hurtful ways with his wife and children. His father's attitude and behaviors hurt him and were part of the reason he had run away. Part of the book is about Will's struggle to make amends with his father and his father's eventual forgiveness.

This is the first Amish book I have read that is written by a male author and is about a man's life. It was a nice change and an easy, interesting read. I recommend it to seekers of God's will, to those who wonder about forgiveness and making amends and also to anyone who enjoys glimpses of Amish life.

Frances, Editor

(Continued on the next page.)

--S-P-I-R-I-T- -O-F- - -M-Y- - W-O-R-K- -
(Our Special Topic)

Editor's note: This theme will remain our "Special Topic" through the Nov-Dec. issue.

This concept, the *Spirit of my work* requires some thought. Hmm...

Job/work- wise, the world is not very "spiritual." The mantra there seems to be "Worship money, forsaking all else." Working in this atmosphere has taught me patience. I cling to the idea, "Any job worth doing is worth doing well." It has served me, too.

Job/work has other aspects, though. It also lets me meet people. They sometimes share spiritual- type stories and thoughts with me. And, I have learned communication skills I've translated into other areas of my life.

Daily work-wise, I find menial tasks are my favourite. I enjoy those physical, repetitive chores that don't require a lot of thought. Doing that sort of thing lets me empty my mind and get into a *different space* that is almost like meditation. Some of my best "Eureka!" moments have come to me while I was elbow deep in a bucket of water.

Life/work-wise, raising my kids has been my 'spiritual work' and, it always will be. On a slightly different life/work tack, I've spent years working on my 'spiritual development'. I've long felt I have a 'mission' or missions in life. I have spent a long time figuring out what it/they are and trying to accomplish them while living a 'normal' life. For example, breaking the cycle of depression in my family wasn't something I set out to do, but it became one of my paths. I can only hope my efforts will help my kids and others.

Career/work-wise, I've been told I won't hit my stride until I am in my forties. As I enter that time, I find I am not as much concerned with salaries and positions as I am with being a good person. <Shrug.>

The complete *Spirit of My Work* is an unfinished story!

Lynn TROR (Sept. '06) adds, "Lately, my sister and I have talked a lot about the stages of life: maiden, mother and crone. As we move into the "crone" stage, she and I are confused about what it will mean to us. We wonder what new kind of work will we do as we age and mature. It's my secret hope that it'll be the best of all three stages since it seems that the "crone", a woman can finally know herself as a complete woman. That's when it's time to share with others!"

(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:

Do you always let the dog(pet) on the couch?

Responses:

Carol(Sept. '06) responds, "When I was growing up, our family had a cat and a dog that we loved very much. On rare occasions, the dog was allowed to lie down in the kitchen, but was not allowed in the rest of the house. The cat was allowed in the house for short periods of time to eat, but I never remember it on any furniture. At night I would sneak the cat into my room, but Mother always eventually came in and put it outside.

In my young adult years, I made a terrible mistake while visiting somebody's house. There were other guests, and I did not know the hostess well. A dog hopped up on a couch or a chair, and I spanked it to get it off. I remember being mildly rebuked. I never went back to that house, nor have I ever committed such an act again.

After moving out on my own, I never had a strong desire to own a dog, but I've almost always had a cat or two. I've patiently trained them to stay off the tables and counters by placing aluminum pie plates along the edges of the forbidden surfaces. However, my cats are allowed on chairs, couches and beds. At night, the cat I have now sleeps at the foot of the bed I share with my husband.

I've learned that every pet owner has their own idea of what makes a well-trained pet, and I respect that.

**

Georgene (Sept.06) says, "My answer to 'Do you always let the dog (pet) on the couch?' is, Almost always. My cat China likes to sit near me rather than on my lap and I like seeing how zonked out she gets when she sleeps. If she twitches I imagine she is stalking a mouse in her dreams. She yawns with her whole body -- mouth wide open down to stretching and spreading her toes.

You may ask, 'When does she have to stay on the floor?' She must stay down when I'm eating pizza while sitting on the couch. I love to watch a movie, eat pizza, and drink a beer while sitting there on Friday nights. (Now that my husband's Diabetes precludes eating pizza as we used to, it is a rare and wonderful occurrence.) I can't abide a begging animal so I put a treat in her dish and tell her she has to stay on the floor. Most of the time she gets it."

**

Next month's question:

What's your favorite kind of weather?

(Continued on the next page.)

IN MEMORIAM

October 2006

Helen,
Daughter,
Sister,
Wife,
Mother,
Grandmother,
Great-grandmother,
Teacher,
Friend and Ninepatch writer,
(Feb. '05)

Passed from this earthly plane on September 2, 2006.

May the God, her Higher Power,
embrace her loyal, faithful
and energetic spirit.

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

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