

September 2006

Happy Birthday, Ninepatch! Twelve Years old, this month! Blessed be!

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,

A group of men and women pulled up chairs and sat in a circle. A few bent heads in quiet conversation. Others chatted and laughed. Then, like dusk, silence spread over us. It was time to begin our centering prayer.

I suppose everyone has a personal way of entering sacred silence. Mine varies. This time I asked blessings on my family and others then, I climbed onto my imaginary elevator, open on all sides like a *dumb waiter*. S-l-o-w-l-y, I descended into a space of swirling color -- familiar now, after years of meditating.

When the elevator stopped, I watched colors of blue, green, black. Like a lava lamp, a splotch of white and or burst of yellow swirled into the mix. Shapes and colors shifted like a liquid kaleidoscope. I concentrated on the show.

Suddenly, out of color- clouds, an image emerged. It reminded me of a curved path I first saw years earlier when I was listening to Cat Steven's song from the 70's, "Peace Train."

The house was empty and silent as I sat on my sofa. On the floor in front of me was a brown packing carton, its lids open like petals of a flower. On the carpet lay two stacks of audio tapes. Strains of the old Cat Stevens' tape filled the room as I gazed out sliding glass doors into the green of my backyard.

When I heard the line, "There on the edge of darkness, there rides the peace train..." an image appeared in my mind's eye. I saw a Yin/Yang circle with a tiny train chugging slowly along the curve where black meets white. That image triggered a revelation: peace was neither black nor white, but was to be found in the meeting of opposites.

During this group meditation, I saw again the "edge of darkness." However, it was not a Yin/Yang, but a curved *seam* in two pieces of fabric. One side of the cloth felt calm, the other, felt tense. Stitches in this cloth's seam were evenly spaced, but somehow reminded me of the ticking of a clock. Suddenly, time went too fast and the seam puckered! The stitches needed loosening.

I imagined pulling the thread free. As I did, the image of the seam morphed. No longer was it a fabric, held by thread. The cloth became empty tennis shoes, their laces loosened, the tongue lolling free. As I beheld the loosened laces, I was suddenly a child again.

I stood in the Weatherbird shoe store, looking through the view-scope down into the "x-ray" machine. Mother and the salesman had taken turns using the same machine to view my feet inside new shoes. The man had pointed out greenish space between my toe bones and the sides and ends of the shoes. He had pronounced the fit, "good". Mother had nodded and said, "Yes, they fit." Now, she held my box of new shoes and talked to the salesman. Their talking went on and on! I wandered around the store empty of customers. I knelt and pushed around little plastic toys in the "prize chest", but nothing interested me. I looked back at the big people again. Mother was smiling and still talking. I ambled back to the foot-viewing machine, stepped up and put my feet in. (Continued on the next page.)

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The bones of my feet glowed a strange white against a light green. I wiggled my toes and, the glowing whitish shapes moved like white grubs in a new- dug garden hole. That was the best part.

I don't know about others' meditation experience that evening. But, I was reminded about the nature of peace, and enjoyed a happy childhood memory. My quiet time produced a twofold blessing!!

May quiet times also bless you!

Frances Fritzie

Frances Fritzie, Editor adds, "Like shoe laces that can be tightened for support, the structures of my life can be tightened. However, those same supports can also be loosened for relaxation and freedom."

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

- (Letters to the Editor)

Francesca:

The best thing about *Ninepatch* is that your readers are trying to do their best. I respect but am a little angry at them at the same time. That's probably because I don't think I am doing *my best*.

Elaine

Elaine (Aug. '06) adds, "One thing I wish is that I could be a person that my children are proud to call Mother."

Dear Frances,

Thank you for your letter and for sharing your ideas.

You are right, I have been quite down-hearted. Life seems very unfair, sometimes. When I was a little girl I said that to my mother. She always replied, "Life isn't fair. It isn't supposed to be. We have to work for what we get." I *do* work. I work, eat and sleep.

On the other hand, I have it sort of good. I don't have to cook. My husband likes to cook and does most of it. (I clean up and do special things for birthdays and holidays.) We also eat out, pick up or have food delivered once a week. That way neither of us has to bother with a meal.

My husband's silences bother me so! I do what I can to brighten my mood. I take a break from housework and hook my rug or, I write letters. I also walk to work (and back) most days -- when the weather is good. I enjoy the breeze in the trees, hearing birds singing and kids calling to one another.

And, I ask God for help. He *does* help. I've seen it in the past. It just takes time. I am feeling a little better -- one day at a time! Good weather and *sunshine* help!

Love and prayers,

LindaSue

(Continued on the next page.)

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LindaSue (Aug. '06) adds, "Sometimes I think my problems are too small to bother God with them. But, I guess I do underestimate God when I think that."

Dear Frances,

Wasn't it yesterday that I was responding to *Ninepatch*? I am in a much better personal place than I was when I wrote last. I have made the transition to the North where I will spend several months. (Maybe *this* is the year for me to get well from all the hurt that happened here.) My husband and I actually had a pleasant trip driving up. We each compromised and cooperated.

Then, when we got here, it *rained* -- and r-a-i-n-e-d some more! One day we were actually marooned by flooding. So, there I was with a husband who hasn't the foggiest idea of how to entertain himself and gets negative when plans are hampered. Add all that to my trepidation about even *being here*, and I was depressed.

The good part is I have begun to learn to take care of myself -- even to love myself. So, I just kept taking one little self-care step after the other. For example, I kept up my daily routine of morning spiritual read-ings. And, since I enjoy books in general, I also set aside other time to turn pages. A couple of the volumes that are helping me now are Louise Hay's You Can Heal Your Life, Scott Peck's, The Road Less Traveled, and Joan Anderson's A Weekend to Change.

All of these provide much comfort and direction. They are helping me make choices *for me*. I see so much of myself in others who write in *Ninepatch*, too. It's wonderful to feel less alone.
Love,
Nancyann

Nancyann (Aug. '06) adds, "I loved Frances' June '06 story about her 'fight' with JK. I identified and remembered those frustrations. So many times, I wanted to run away, but where would I go? Plus, I could not live with the thought of abandoning my children. So, I stayed and felt stuck -- trapped and angry. How wonderful to have a husband who put his arms around you in the middle of it all -- who loves you ANYWAY. I'm glad she has that."

Ninepatch Readers'
BIRTHDAYS FOR
September:

Carol - Sept. 10
Linda Bruns Christensen - Sept.17
Gail - Sept.22

Be sure to tell Frances of YOUR birthday -- officially -- for example, "You can use my birthday, Oct. 26..."

Hi Frances,

I got engaged! I'm excited but nervous! I'm not so anxious about getting married as I am about planning a wedding. As a part time job I write an online column about wedding planning and wedding paraphernalia. However, writing about it is not the same as actually doing it! Just the same, I'm motoring along! I have a dress chosen, a wedding web site chosen, a loose menu chosen, and the site is "booked". (It's my grandma's house!) *(Continued on the next page.)*

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We have chosen the style of our wedding bands, too. All this has happened and I've been engaged only two days! Whew!

Christa

Christa Weber (Aug, '06) See also her comment in GET TO KNOW ME, adds, "Being engaged adds a new but welcome element of busy-ness to my life."

Dear Frances,

Recently, I have been thinking of going back to what was just a simple, serene way of living that I knew worked for me years ago. I wanted to see if it still worked. So, I started going to Catholic Mass every day. Also, when I take my morning walk, I say The Rosary. I don't really know what's come over me, but I know it's something.

There is a special warm feeling that I get sitting in the church pew surrounded by all the church's stained glass. It doesn't matter if it is cloudy or if the sun is shining outside, it is always bright inside. And it is not just the sights that strike me, there are smells and sounds, too.

Churches have a smell. My present church does not burn candles except for those on the altar but, I can still smell the burning wax. The hymnals have an odor and the wooden pews also have theirs.

As a preteen, I was an altar boy. Altar boys assist the priest during mass. One thing they do is light candles for the service. Even then, I remember even the altar linens had their own smell. Of course, I recall the incense that is still used for high holy occasions.

There are sounds I hear when I am sitting quietly, too. I hear the people coming into the church. I also hear hymns that were sung long ago and are still being sung now.

Years ago, most of the time I spent in my home town church, St. Michael's, was as an altar boy. But, when I was not serving mass, I also sat in the pew with my father, mother, brothers, sister, grandpa and grandma. I liked to sit next to my grandpa. He and I were buddies. I concentrated on his bent up hands and used to think how hard he worked. Even as a child I felt sorry for him.

Now, when I go to daily mass, and sit in my pew, sights, smells and sounds bring my family back. They are all still there with me. Living the "old" simple life does work!

Geo.

George (Mar. '05) adds, "My memories of churches are all good. Even the sad occasions of funerals are OK."

Hi Frances!

Remember my girlfriend Anita? She's the one we bought our earth-home from eight years ago. (I fell madly "in love" with her in an instant. She is a real, one-of-a-kind lady! We had an immediate friendship. I even had you send a *Ninepatch* to her for a year.)

She has bone cancer -- discovered the month after I buried my husband, John. Now, she is in her final days. Living this long is pretty good considering they gave her only six months at the cancer institute. She moved on to four more years! That's four more birthdays because she had the guts to tell the doctors she would not do "the usual" therapy! (By heaven, it paid off!)

Now, My John has been gone five years, my daughter (who was killed by a drunk driver) three years. Recently, when I went to baby-sit a weekend for my grandchildren in another state, (*See next page.*) I was involved in a surprise death and funeral rite. My son's father-in-law died that weekend. So instead of staying with grandchildren while their parents went to a wedding, we all went to a funeral.

What's this cycle all about?
CaT

CaT (Sept. '06) adds, "I hafta' get over today and see Anita. I got a call last night from her hubby. He said that the hospice people say she may only have two weeks left. So sad... I'm sorry my letters are always sad. I guess I'm always just a little sad most of the time -- even though I don't dwell on it. When I 'talk' to you, I always seem to reach in the deepest part of me."

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

MR. GRAY STARTS HIS DAY

Mr. Gray awakes before I do. He gets up on the bed in the morning, lays across my chest and purrs. He wants me up but first he wants to be *smoozed*. So, I pet and caress him a while then, we both get up.

After he eats, he likes to go out. From a window, I sometimes watch his antics. First, he likes to harass the insects and birds in our back yard. Then he goes into the garden to check things out in the rows of corn. He disappears there for a while. When he reappears, he wants back inside in for a little something more to eat.

He is the funniest cat.

Patricia (Aug. '06) adds, "Three weeks ago we had to have one of the two oldest calico "ladies" put to sleep. Charlotte was her name. She was 15 1/2 years old. (Nancy is the other calico, the same age). Charlotte was in a lot of pain because of arthritis and some pancreas problems. She was not able to go downstairs to the litter box so we moved it to the garage. Then she couldn't control her bladder and we knew it was time. She is missed."

JOY AND BRUTALITY

Something disturbing and amazing happened yesterday. The Garden of Innocence held a memorial service yesterday. There was no burial of an unclaimed child, rather it was a special memorial for *all* the children.

There was music. Poetry, and thoughtful words were spoken. One speaker noted the beauty of the day. He was an Indian Shaman. He sang and taught a lesson through story. He commented that a red-tailed hawk flew in the sky earlier in the service. (We all looked up but saw nothing, of course, since the bird was long gone.) To bless this little cemetery and its children he sang a prayer about the eagle who flies the highest of all birds ... close to the creator. We had each been given a flower as we entered. Near the end of the service, we were asked to pick a child and leave the flower on his or her grave. *(Continued, next page.)* I chose Quenby -- the little girl my husband and I named earlier this year in memory of the child we never had. I wept as I laid the flower on her marker.

Then we gathered for the final prayer. Afterward, the names of all eighty-eight children were read. At the end, two dozen white doves were released.

The doves were barely twenty feet away and five feet above the ground when the red-tailed hawk dove into the flock and pulled away one bird. It was over in an instant. It was terrifying, but it was a *miracle of nature*. The hawk landed and held the bird in his talons. No one moved.

The man, who owned the doves ran towards the hawk, chased him away and picked up his bird. Words cannot describe the look on his face or tenderness of his hands as he caressed his bird. The bird fluttered from his hands and flew a few feet. We cheered.

In seconds he caught the bird and again stroked it, and checked its' wounds. A moment later he looked up and announced, "This bird has joined the children."

What? My heart sank. I said a prayer of thanks for the gift of this little bird. In that moment, I remembered the sound of the doves cooing in the background during the service. My body remembered the grip of grief and release of comfort through out the ceremony. I thought of the scripture passage, "*Blessed are those who mourn...*"

In my minds eye I saw again the majesty of the hawk diving, wings laid back, turn, talons forward, then white dove's feathers drifting in the wind. The event was a microcosm of the joy and brutality of life.

Georgene (July '06) adds, "The next day, I heard from the dove man again. His bird survived! It came to life in the basket on the way home and is recuperating nicely. Man, what a story!"

MISSION IN DOMMINICAN REPUBLIC,

A First Letter

*Editor's Note: The following letter was received from **Patience**, via the Mission Diocese courier, dated June 9th, 2006. It is the first 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,

I arrived safely without a problem in the wonderful mountain village, Los Guayuyos. It is located in the mountains. I traveled with another gal from Florida. We rode in the back of a truck part of the way and on mules the rest. The rutted paths were passable because it had not rained for a day. The people all greeted me warmly.

I am living with the other woman from Florida. She is also on the mission for part of the time I am here. (We get along fine!) She speaks no Spanish but teaches English to the children. I teach English to the adults and help in the school with the children teaching reading and writing -- in Spanish.

Many adults also want to learn to read and write so I take them in the evening after they work all day in the fields. The people are so happy! They are so hungry to learn.

In the afternoon, my house-mate and I started a learning center. The children crowd in to participate. (They do not have to come -- they want to be there! A few children could not come and cried.)

Our living situation is very primitive. We live in a one-room "house". We have four walls, a roof, a hot plate heated with gas, a cabinet, two beds, a table and a couple of plastic chairs. The outhouse, where we also bathe with a bucket of water, is down the road.

All is well! I love the people because they are so welcoming. I love the work because they are really interested in learning.

Much love to all of you and thank you for your prayers!

Patience

(Continued on the next page.)

Patience (June '06) says, "Today, we rode a mile to go to La Cucarita -- an hour's journey."

MAKING PEACE WITH SPIDERS

I can recall with vividness, my first campout with the Girl Scouts. I don't recall how old I was at the time, but I do remember the anxiety of that separation from home.

In the corner, above my bunk in our assigned tent was a huge black spider in a web. I was convinced that it was going to wait me out as I finally fell asleep and come, in some undefined way, to get me during the night.

That didn't happen, but I'm wary of spiders, anyway. Maybe it's the foreignness of their bodies, their spindly legs, their speed in movement, or watching too many horror movies as a child, but I find them unsettling. I assign them an intelligence that they don't have and a ruthlessness that they do. They are predatory, trying to survive like any living creature.

A few years ago, I had the good fortune to visit and hike Isle Royale National Park in Lake Superior, with some friends. Some of the youngsters on the trip grabbed a broom out of the outhouse and were using it to sweep their tent. Unfortunately and unknowingly, they gave a ride to huge wolf spider, which they later discovered crawling around inside the tent. It was tarantula sized! Watching several adults and the kids hopping around in a disturbing panic over the beastie was memorable. One of the men stomped the spider to death. (Even after several stomps, it did not go easily into that good night.) I felt sorry for the creature, but it was very intimidating.

Last summer, a fat black spider took up residence in our mailbox. It seemed reserved and not aggressive to me, so I left it alone. Each day, when I went for the mail, I checked for it, and made sure that it was out of the way when I closed the box. I considered that it had a working agreement with me. I wouldn't kill it and it wouldn't jump at me or do anything else obnoxious.

Sadly, the mail delivery person didn't have this same agreement and one day, I saw that the spider had been smashed in the door of the mailbox. I missed it.

We forget that we have these relationships with nature and that although they can be uneasy relationships, they are part of what makes the world sing.

Linda (Aug. '06) adds, "I've realized that fear- inspiring creatures are interesting and, bless them, they have their place in the world. The Book of the Spider: A Compendium of Arachno-Facts and Eight-Legged Lore, by Paul Hillyard, is an excellent general book to understand these arachnids."

Wisdom outweighs gold.

James (Aug. '06) adds, "Gold has value. However, wisdom is priceless!"

(Continued on the next page.)

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

(Reading and Listening)

GRANNY D: *Walking Across America in MY 90th Year*

This book is written by Doris Haddock with Dennis Burke. The female author is “Granny D” of the title. Hers is an inspiring and intriguing story of one old woman who stood up in support of campaign finance reform. Her walk of more than 3200 miles across our country has won attention and admiration for her cause.

She writes in an easy conversational style of the people and places she encounters along the way. Her descriptive talents are witty and insightful. For example, she describes the oil derricks in Texas as “...those countless, copulating metal sculptures...”(page 107) and “...looking like a praying mantis with its head nodding up and down to a ten- second beat...” (page 122).

Doris Haddock has an uncanny ability to connect with people on her walk. On one occasion as she talked with the driver of a garbage truck, he stated that he got his political information from a Christian broadcasting station. He said while campaign finance reform was okay, he thought that the capital gains tax and the inheritance tax were the big problems in America. When Granny D asked him if they were a problem for him, she received only a blank stare in reply.

The essence of her book is captured in the following quote from page 155: “I think it is fascinating how the poorest of people have had their political interests hijacked by the wealthiest of the wealthy, who have sometimes been able to use religious fundamentalists to push their agenda.”

I highly recommend this book to everyone who is interested in the future of our political process.

June Poucher (Aug. '06) adds “Granny D is an inspiration to her gender and to her age group.”

MY RECENT READING

While visiting my sister, children and grandchildren in the North, I read a few books. One seemed meant for me. I picked up the second -hand book for only two dollars while on a short shopping trip with my sister and her husband.

The volume is a memoir called, It Must Be Moonglow by Phyllis Green. In it, the author writes about being a widow. She lives in Ohio near where I lived when my husband first got sick. Green was married fifty-six years, as I recall. I could relate to a lot of her feelings since I lost my husband after thirty-eight years. However, her story was a little depressing, too. It made me think about increasing difficult situations due to aging.

Dottie (Aug. '06) adds another book she enjoyed. “I’m now reading, You’re Wearing That? by Deborah Tanner. In one part Tanner quotes a daughter who said she got mad at the slightest thing her mother said when she was young. Now, the daughter has realized her anger was because she was envious of her mom at the time. She felt she couldn’t measure up, even though she was only fourteen years old at the time.”

(Continued on the next page,)

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

GET TO KNOW ME

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

This month's question:

What did you want to be when you grew up?

Responses:

Lynn/TROR (Aug. '06) shares, "When I was little I wanted to be a 'witch'. (Go ahead. Laugh. I was a pre-teen before I figured out it wasn't exactly a popular career choice. I mean, if Samantha on T.V.'s 'Bewitched' could do it, why couldn't I!) Actually, I'm not exactly sure what I figured being a witch was all about, but I remember talking with my sister -- late at night when we were supposed to be sleeping -- and planning it out. We'd live in a house with an overgrown, wild-looking garden with lots of pets, especially horses and dogs..."

Well, life goes on. I've also wanted to be a fashion designer, graphic artist, auto mechanic, librarian, teacher, tour guide, author, and veterinarian (not necessarily in that order). Thing is, the older I get, the more pressure I feel to decide on a career, and the less certain I become that a career is all that important. After all, what is 'success'? Making 50k and being 'head' of this or that, or who we are as people? (Shrug.) Or...I could just be rationalizing again.

Sometimes I fancy that if we're 'judged' by anything when we pass away, it's by the kids we leave behind, so I've raised them as though my life and soul depended on doing it well. Being a mom wasn't a job I planned on having, but it's been the most important and challenging career of my life."

**

Christa (Aug. '06) says, "Funny thing, I wanted to be a writer and a mom when I was little. One down, one to go!"

**

Carol (Aug. '06) considers the question, "What did you want to be ...? This is a tough question for me! I never had a clear picture of what I wanted to be. I hated being a girl, although I loved playing with dolls. (I admired my grandmother's talent for sewing doll clothes and crocheting afghans.)

I loved playing cowboys and Indians, and pretending to ride a horse. I wanted to own a horse as a kid, but never did. Adults thought I'd make a good ballerina or a school teacher, but those occupations were too "girlie" for me. I loved playing softball and competitive swimming. (I had dreams of swimming the English Channel!) I wanted to be an explorer, but the world had already been discovered. (Continued, next page.)

I loved drawing, took art lessons, and thought about being an artist, but I never got good enough to believe in myself. I loved creative writing and thought about being a novelist, but lacked the self-discipline to take classes and get good at it.

As I got older, getting a job and being able to support myself was very important to me, and I achieved those things. Finding true love became important to me, but not marriage, motherhood, or being a housewife. (My peers were the hippy, "free love" generation.)

When I was nineteen, my father, whom I loved very much, died of cancer. My grief was deep, but my mother's grief really frightened me. I knew I never wanted to experience that. She outlived him by thirty-one years and loved him until she died. And, here I am: married for decades and a housewife! My husband is almost ten years older than my father was when he died. I don't know if I will outlive my husband, but if I do, I hope I will have the kind of strength and grace my mother had to bear it.

I guess my dreams were influenced most by my parents and grandmothers. In some ways I wanted to be like them and in other ways I wanted to be different from them. I wonder if I will ever have grandchildren and if they will want to be anything like me."

**

Next month's question:

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

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

IN THE EYE OF TODAY

In the *eye of today*

I seek my heart's desire!

What can this desire be?

Is it wealth of money power?

**Is it love of another that will save me
from the loneliness of Hell?**

**Or is it simply the peace that comes
from being myself.**

**Is my heart's desire driven
by the insanity of the past –
of the child lost?**

**Or, is my heart's desire
the loved -one within
that sees the warmth of my soul,
the gentleness of God.**

(Continued on the next page.)

Where is my heart's desire?

Is it in the *eye of today*

or in the pain of yesterday!

Is the desire born of love or
raised in fear!
For myself, I know not the answer,
I seek only the promise.

The promise that burns in my heart
is a treasure so fine
its warmth would fill my
heart for all eternity.

An ornament crafted
in the eye of God –
that would be me!

The *eye of today* opens the second
that I behold the love
of being me.

*Fred Jose is single. He is father of one grown son. In his
spare time he enjoys writing and working out physically.”*

IN MEMORIAM

Joanne:
Daughter,
Wife,
Mother,
Grandmother,
Pianist,
'Pink Lady' hospital volunteer,
Friend,
and *Ninepatch* writer (July '06),
was "called home"
August 7, 2006

Our world has lost a gentle and generous soul.

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

(Continued on the next page.)

ABOUT *Ninepatch*, Inc.

*ISSN 1094-3234

*E-mail: Ninepatch9@AOL.com

September 2006

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

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

*The IRS recognizes
Ninepatch, Inc. as a
non-profit corporation,
category 501c3.

Documentation is available
for a small fee on request.

NOTE: NEW MAILING ADDRESS!

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Ninepatch, Inc.

PO Box 358445

Gainesville, FL. 32605-8445