

June 2007

# *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 scrapbook.*

Dear Friends,

Morning light cast sun-spotted leaf shadows shifting across my path. As I walked, my ankle ached from an old injury. I sighed. Suddenly I was struck by a parallel -- my psyche also aches from old hurts.

A memory from early elementary years bubbled up. Ballet classes began during first grade and the next year I added tumbling activities on the same night. My small town did not have a dance studio. Teacher Anna Marie instructed in Elmwood, a city about twenty miles away.

Though other women carpooled, Mother said she was, "too busy for that" and always drove me after she got home from work about 5:30. Thus, during the school year by 6:00 on Tuesday nights, Mother and I climbed hardwood steps up a narrow echoing hall that led from a street door to the second floor studio. A landing opened to a large wood-floored room, with windows that faced mirrors along the opposite wall.

Sometimes a lady played an upright piano at the far end of the room. More often, a record player sang strains from the Nutcracker Suite for a dozen of us in black leotards. One hand on the practice bar, we lifted our pointed toes to the front, side and back, then brushed our soft-soled slippers on the floor to the side.

At first Mother observed with other moms who sat cross-legged on straight-backed chairs next to the full-length mirrors. By the time I was eight, I had danced for two years and she rarely stayed.

One fall night I recall, after splashing through heavy rain, we climbed the stairs but stopped at the observation chairs. Mother perched on the edge of a wood seat and bent over her open check book. Using one knee as a desk, she scribbled "Anna Marie Samson" on one line and numbers on another. Then she tore off the blue paper and laid it in my hand. As she closed her purse, she leaned toward the nearby mirror, and touched her hair. Watching her image, she made an O with her mouth, eyeing her lipstick. Satisfied, she turned to me, "Give Anna Marie the check. I'm going to go see Marta."

I shrugged, "OK." Marta was some Elmwood friend -- a lady I never met.

Mother straightened her skirt and added, "Have a good lesson. I'll be back."

I finished both lessons but Mother didn't appear at the top of the stairs. Other ladies from my town collected their car-pools and left. Then, older toe-dancers assembled at the practice rail. Their moms settled with me on the wood chairs.

"Where is Mother?" I watched the landing and sighed. It wasn't the first time she was late. Anna Marie noticed me still sitting on the straight backs. The toe-girls tied up their hard-ended satins, crisscrossing their legs with matching pink ribbon. Then one by one they propped one leg on the wood bar and bent their heads to that knee. Anna Marie walked over, her eyes full of concern, "Is your mother coming for you?"

I nodded.

"OK then." She smiled, dipped her chin to me, and turned back to the older girls. I squirmed when she glanced over at me a second time. When my teacher wasn't watching I ducked into the stairwell and stepped slowly down until I reached the big glass street door. *(Continued on the next page.)*

I leaned my forehead against its smooth coolness. My breath made fog. I drew a face and wiped it away, then stared at headlights hoping Mother's big green Buick would pull over to the curb.

Minutes passed. I pushed the door open and let it close -- pushed it and let it close. The next time it opened I stepped out on the side-walk. Though puddles shone on the dark pavement, the rain had stopped. I let the studio door close behind me and walked up the block a ways studying oncoming cars for the round lights of our Buick. The air was damp. *Mother won't like me out in this.* I turned and meandered back to the glass door. I pulled, but it was locked.

I was leaning against the dark brick building when Mother finally drove up the rain-slicked street.

As I pulled open the passenger side door, she leaned across the seat, her eyes blazing, "What are you doing out here? You'll catch cold -- next thing you'll be sick!"

Inwardly shrinking from her verbal assault, I stepped into the car. My door closed, Mother gunned the engine and the car leapt from the curb.

In a strained silence I stuttered, "I came out to look for you ... but the door locked." Sitting straight at the wheel with her jaw clenched, Mother fumed, "You are supposed to wait inside."

I whined, "I did wait... a long time."

She hissed, "That's no excuse. You are to wait i-n-s-i-d-e."

I turned my face to the side window.

Then as if I had asked why she was late, Mother began, "I got to talking with Marta and just lost track of the time."

I stared at the blur of house-lights as we sped down Elmwood's mostly empty main street.

Silence wrapped us in our thoughts. At a stop light, Mother fumbled in her purse and pulled out her gold lipstick. She turned it up, leaned to the rearview mirror and drew on brightness. The light changed and we drove on. After a few minutes Mother said, "We won't tell your dad about this. He would only worry. We can't have him upset."

I nodded, "I know."

Though my psyche sometimes aches with old memories, I am grateful for them. Honoring my hurts is a step toward the healing of acceptance.

Frances Fritzie

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

Dear Frances,

Even though your May '07 story about hitting Uncle Bill is true, I have trouble seeing you physically attack someone! It seems so out of character for the Frances I know.

This simply demonstrates how much a person can change after the teen years. Still, I have a couple of questions. For example, when you realized what you had done, were you surprised by your behavior? Did it make you resolve to control your temper in the future? *(Continued on the next page)*

Inquiring minds want to know...

June 2007

Bless you, My Friend,  
June

*June Poucher (May '07) adds, "I can remember when I would have reacted in much the same manner, but thankfully, I have mellowed out considerably."*

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Hi Frances,

I think your story of Uncle Bill was excellent. It held my interest and surprised me. Stories about children, in their innocence, struggling to protect parents or other loved ones might leave some people uneasy. But life is equal parts of disease and comfort, and your story had a gentle amends at the end that was reflective of the growth and ease that maturity can bring.

More and more, I'm working on easing into life, especially the messy conflicted parts. I want to accept what really is, respond with loving compassion, and let it go.

I also enjoyed this *Ninepatch* quite a bit. I liked the variety. "My Best Birthday Ever" choked me up! I look forward to the day when my currently 19 year old son shows a little sensitivity toward Mom!

Ah well . . . it will come.

Peace to You,  
Sherryl

*Sherryl (March '06) adds, "A friend often asks me to put a positive spin on various situations that she experiences. But sometimes, my pragmatic realist just wants to say, 'It's rotten -- just accept that!' More and more I believe that reality is my friend -- regardless of how she's cloaked."*

Hi Fritzie,

Grandfather Turner died recently and I went to the funeral. Today is a day of relief and knowing that he is in a better place. However, the world is not a better place for him being gone. He was a man who gave to everyone all his life.

Sadly, he was ill for seven years and though his wife went to see him in the nursing home, he had no idea who was who. How sad is that.

What a great funeral though -- it was a nurturing experience. It made me think about my life. I am very somber today and feel a need to use and remember the power of prayer.

The power of prayer... Wow. The thought of it makes me remember a dream from last night. I was looking at my hand and there was a ring on it. It looked as though it was a class ring although it did not name any of the schools I attended. Instead, the ring read, "Meditation."

I have to think about that.

Love,  
Jodi

*Jodi (Mar. '07) adds, "It's hard to explain a series of events, the death, funeral and then the dream, but maybe I have found the peace I need. I think so."*

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Hello Francesca,

June 2007

Recently my therapist asked me how my father's alcoholism and other maladies effected my life. I really didn't have a good answer until I thought about it later.

Anger, disgust, disappointment, embarrassment and repulsion best describe how I felt and feel. After I described some of his aberrant behavior to her she said that sometimes psychotic behavior can accompany mania (He was also manic-depressive.) with the possibility of over- active sexual tendencies. How unfortunate he couldn't have been treated with modern medications. I doubt that my mother fully understands what was going on with him. Maybe it doesn't matter. Understanding all this doesn't take away my hurt -- yet. It does seem to help, though. So perhaps someday the hurt will go, too.

Did I tell you that I had to put my fourteen-year-old dog to sleep? It was good to see her die so peacefully but I just can't seem to get her dying face out of my memory. And I also keep seeing her whiz by in a car or even in the house when the cat dashes past me. A friend who put a dog to sleep about three years ago told me she never really got over it.

I remember your little cocker spaniel. What ever happened to her?

Love you dearly,

Elaine

*Elaine (Mar. '07) adds, "I've been playing the piano a bit and I'm also trying to get my skills back with the recorder. It's a positive note because in my usual depression I could care less about just about everything."*

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Dear Frances,

Thank you for your letter, ideas and prayers.

I have healed from my second leg surgery and my surgeon released me to return to work. Everyone there was happy to see me. It felt good to get out of the house and have someone different to talk to.

At work, my supervisor changed my hours and I have to start an hour earlier. This made my husband mad. He refuses to get up with me or take me. (I no longer drive after brain surgery years ago.)

Now my dad takes me. Dad seems to be in a much better mood and has stopped drinking again. It seems to help that I need him to get back and forth to work.

At least my quiet, normal routine has returned now that I go to work every day, I am thankful for that. I do pray a lot, too. Always, I try to remember to take one day at a time.

Thanks for listening.

Love and prayers,

LindaSue

*LindaSue (May. '07) adds, "My daughter Anita lost her job and keeps asking me for money. She calls a lot and stops by, too. Since my dad is living here he hears Anita and her dad. He says, They are just alike. That's why they don't like each other -- they are too much alike."*

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Frances,

I do continue to discern. I just got back from my mother-house in Michigan. I met with leadership there and they suggested that I take a sabbatical before I go to the mission work.

I have worked and worked to fine tune God's will for me. I agree with them. I do need some time to pull it all together. Then I will be able to make a better decision. (Continued on the next page.)

I still plan on going to mission but I am unsure of where that call is leading me. I do have to be patient.

With love,

Patience

*Patience (May'07) adds, "When I read your monthly stories I do believe we are of kindred spirits!"*  
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Frances,

You asked if I wrote during my grieving. Yes, during the later stages of my hubby's illness I wrote a diary entry into a word processing system on my computer. After John passed, I revised them and put them into his kinda' journal/ story.

I even started a few pages of my life, before the recent tragedies. I saw clearly all I have lived has led me to the precious life I have now. (Thanx to my Lord.) Looking back it's hard to believe, but when my husband died, I sort of lost the will to continue writing. (Then when my daughter died I no longer appreciated music.)

You may be thinking..."Ah, she shouldn't give up on her story." But it's not giving up, Frances. Two years after my second loss -- in talking with others -- I realized there are so many out there who have gone through what I did that there was no need for a book about it.

What I mean is that once I could start talking openly about my losses, I found I am DEFINITELY not alone. For example, the United States' statistics for losing someone in each mother or father's family during their lifetime is staggering.

Take care.

CaT

*CaT (May'07) adds, "Last fall I finally bought a motorcycle of my own. Yesterday, I was out riding for the third time this year. It was a marvelous day. Some people look at me like I'm crazzee. How can you ride again after your daughter's loss? they ask. But I reply, You know people who have died from car accidents and you still drive a car..."*

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***Reflection accompanies the death of an old friend.***

*James (May'07) continues, "Longevity creates a memory book with many pages."*

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(See FABRICS on the next page.)



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

A WINTRY ADVENTURE WITH KATIE

I have started a pasture for my new pet a horse named Katie Scarlett. It is growing, but the stormy weather has put a crimp in our plans to expand her range and give her run of the land.

I've been reading volumes about horses. But, as far as actual learning about these magnificent creatures and their needs, chalk up the electric fence as a memorable one.

The neighbor who gave me Katie helped me cobble something of a fence together when Katie first came here in early winter. Unfortunately, the old fence was brittle and wasn't holding together very well.

One day I drove home from the grocery, only to see my new horse galloping around in an unfenced area on our property. That wasn't so bad, but she was heading towards the neighbor's home and horses.

Fortunately, that property is in back of where we live, away from the road. Unfortunately, it was about five degrees Fahrenheit and the snow was thigh deep.

I pulled into the driveway, got out, and took off running down (or rather, slogging down) the edge of the field after her.

I had forgotten to get a lead rope, but luckily, Katie was wearing her halter. She had stopped to visit one of my neighbor's horses, but saw me as I came panting up.

My new pet came to me without my having to make any further effort. I held onto her halter and led her slowly back to the corral. It was slippery in the snow and I prayed that I wouldn't fall.

My boyfriend helped me make some repairs to the fence. Sweaty with exertion on a frigid day, we vowed to redo the entire corral and put in a proper electric fence device. What a drama!

*Linda (May '07) adds, "My actual experience list is growing by leaps and bounds. Luckily, now we have the electric fence installed, we have no more corral problems."*

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TREDWAY'S FEN

I have a piece of property in the Upper Peninsula (UP) of Michigan which I call, "Tredway's Fen." I bought this piece of bare, undeveloped land in the fall of 2002, because I fell in love with it.

It was a really good price, and even though I had vowed not to buy any more property, it just seemed too good an investment to pass up. Much like my personal relationships, I tend to fall head over heels in love with pieces of real estate. These land relationships are also like my love relationships in another way, too. They involve a lot of work, love, joy, and disappointment.

The reason I call the property, "Tredway's Fen", is twofold. For one thing, my maiden name is Tredway. My dad really wanted a boy to carry on his name, but I was another girl and his last child. Since there is no one left to carry on his name, I decided to carry it on with this piece of property near Munising, the place where he spent most of his adult life. A second reason for the name is the property is almost half wetland. 'Fen' is an Old English word that means "marsh". *(Continued on the next page.)*

It's been an experience trying to develop this 60x 200 foot piece of Lake Superior lakefront because of its "wetland" designation. First, I set about planning a boardwalk across the shortest path of wetland that was located between the road and the lake. I had to petition the Dept. of Environmental Quality for permission. Luckily, that was granted and I built the boardwalk right away. (I was having fun!)

June 2007

Ever since moving back to the Upper Peninsula of Michigan for a couple years in 1971 I had this dream of owning a little piece of Lake Superior. Now I had that dream.

I bought a chain saw and learned how to use it. After building the walk, I began other projects. I carved paths to the lake and built an outdoor fire pit. The first summer I enjoyed camping on my place and sitting looking at the lake.

Half of the fun was planning. The next year I drew plans for an RV pad -- complete with electricity -- and executed them. I watched the excavator cutting down the trees, bulldozing out the stumps, and bringing in fill to make a driveway and a level pad. At the last minute I also had him carve out another small space for a storage shed.

The shed idea created yet another project. I made the little storage area into a place where I could stay -- sleep, eat and all. There was already a small screened window in this 8 x 8 foot space. So I got a remnant of linoleum and a piece of carpet for the interior. I hung a curtain in the doorway, for privacy as well as a bug screen. I planned to sleep on my Thermorest, self-inflating mattress. I even fixed myself a kitchen. I picked up some shelves at a yard sale and bought a mini-fridge. I explored the used store and bought a microwave, too. At last the kitchen was complete. Now, all I needed was a bathroom. But, that's another story.

*Palma (May'07) says, "The saga of developing my property continues."*

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UNCLE JERRY AND STRINGFELLOW

April 21 was approaching fast. Invitations were sent and Uncle Jerry's eightieth birthday was about to be celebrated. Unfortunately, the party had to be canceled because Uncle was hospitalized with infected swelling in one leg.

Luckily, surgeons were able to save his knee without removing Uncle's implant. (However, he will have to take penicillin the rest of his life.) The infection was due to a scratch from his beloved cat, Stringfellow. You'd think he might be angry at the animal, but he never blamed Stringfellow.

While Uncle Jerry was in the rehabilitation center, the little animal was just not himself. Perhaps he was just missing his master, but the beloved cat was also diagnosed with diabetes at that time. To console his prized pet, Uncle phoned home every night and spoke to Stringfellow. When I held the phone to the cat's ears, they perked up and he meowed for a couple of seconds.

Uncle Jerry's love for Stringfellow was so strong he was determined to return home soon.

*Lotte A. de Roy is divorced. She had three sons. Two have passed away, the other is now grown. In her spare time she loves to read, write and meditate. At the moment she is reading, Opus Dei by John L. Allen, Jr. and Knights of the Black and White by Jack Whyte. She is also a devoted lover of animal magazines.*

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( See INSTRUCTIONS on the next page.)

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

FLOOR SAMPLE

Editor Frances recommended a book to me called, Floor Sample, a Creative Memoir by Julia Cameron. Frances wrote, “[Cameron’s] is a Twelve Step story -- which I didn't know -- and she also had an episode of manic depression when she was forty- something and another one almost a year later. When I read the latter, I thought of you.”

I have a somewhat creative identity and am acquainted with Cameron’s, The Artist’s Way, and I’ve gone through a Twelve Step program myself. I have also addressed my depression, gotten counseling and have used pre-scribed medication, so I was intrigued.

Cameron is a creative teacher and a “floor sample”, someone whose life we can emulate or not. Her wide, staring expression in her photographic portrait on the back cover of the book was disturbing. In a way, so is her story.

Cameron is fascinating, candid and diplomatic, and her tale reads like testimony. She makes no pretensions about being perfect. Many of the choices she makes are poor ones, but there is no denying her creativity and her ability to teach and inspire through example.

I had a hard time reading through her drinking, drugging, partying and first divorce, but I loved her recovery, spiritual journey and career successes -- teaching and writing. I admired her when she talked about her childhood and parents lovingly without blaming them for her choices. I’m not so sure I agreed with her parenting, but found it understandable that she got divorced twice. Through all of her difficulties she did not act like a victim. I admired the fact she treated her parents, enemies and ex-husbands with dignity.

Throughout her life Cameron has used many coping and survival techniques, such as Twelve-Step programs, prayer, prescribed medication, diet and exercise.

Her story is both a gift of hope and a cautionary tale.

*Carol (Apr. '07) says, “I really do love to read autobiographies with which I can identify -- like this one. If you can recommend any others, please email me at: carolouise@hotmail.com .*

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FAT GIRLS AND LAWN CHAIRS

This book is a delightful read and Cheryl Peck’s first book. It is irreverent, serious, laugh- out- loud funny, and completely entertaining.

The story is a personal memoir. The title comes from Cheryl’s experience that lawn chairs are often reluctant to let go of her three hundred- pound body.

I was struck by the following paragraph which, to me, captures the spirit of *Ninepatch*.

“I’m beginning to understand why so many of the stories my grandmother told me were about her mother, who died before I was ever born. Her stories were threads sewing us all together, one generation

*( Continued on the next page.)*

after another, exactly as bits and pieces of used experiences come together to make the patchwork of shared memory. This is where you came from. This is what you could become. These are the women who shaped your life. This is how we survive.” *(Page 43.)*

*June Poucher (May'07) adds: “Peck is the sister of well-known author, Scott Peck.”*

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CONTACT

Once again, I have finished a novel that truly reached through to my emotions. Carl Sagan is an author who is truly a master of blending science fiction, politics, and romance. There is perhaps no better example of this than his book, Contact. In this volume, the reader sees the world through the eyes of Eleanor Arroway. She's on a quest to find a radio signal from intelligent life in outer space. Her scientific studies challenge directly her belief in God.

She contacts a star, Vega, and receives instructions for building a space machine. These are encoded in a radio signal. She shares her findings and world leaders and scientists finally agree to build the machine designed to take five passengers on a journey to a distant star system. They hope to meet an advanced race of beings. Eleanor is eventually chosen as one of the five people who will make the journey.

Once the machine is activated five cosmonauts (*Continued on the next page.*) are whisked through time tunnels. They meet the aliens, who assumed the guise of people they love. Eleanor is told the tunnels are part of a galactic transportation system built millions of years earlier. However, they will not be allowed to return again to visit the aliens.

Eventually, the cosmonauts return to earth only to find that their video recording equipment had failed. They have no evidence of their visit to the alien world. Our skeptical world doesn't believe their alien story. Eventually, Eleanor goes back to her job of searching the stars for more signals. However, because of her journey to the stars and her contact with the aliens, her belief in God ultimately grows much stronger.

This book has an ending that took me quite by surprise, but I enjoyed it. I will look into other novels by Carl Sagan.

*Bookworm (May'07) adds, "This book was made into a movie in 1999. It starred Jodie Foster and Matthew McConnaghey. Some of the elements of the book were left out and a few characters were changed, but I admire the job that the director and producer did with this film and give it my thumbs up."*

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*June's NINEPATCH BIRTHDAYS:*

<i>June</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Serena</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Joy</i>	<i>18</i>

*(See MANAGING THE HOUSE 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 latest set of responses to our monthly questions—our new effort to get to better know our readers.

**This month's question: *What pets do you have?***

**Georgene** (May '07) tells about her pet, "I have a wonderful cat named China. My husband and I adopted her when she was almost three years old and she is now ten. She is a Birmin mix--lots of cream, a beautiful black mask, black-tipped ears and big blue eyes.

*I've had more cats than dogs in my life. I love how independent they are. It's so easy to live with a cat because the litter box means you don't have to make any mad dashes home to let them out. I also love to watch a cat sleep. Ahhh!*

*My biggest mistake when we got China was to turn on the bathroom faucet so she could get a fresh water drink. Now, after she eats, we can hear her in the bathroom 'singing', Please come turn on the water so I can wash down my dinner!"*

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**Gail** (See her poem in *THREAD*) says, "Once I wrote a poem for Ninepatch about my pet, "Miss Kitty Good Girl". About all I can add about my pet is: I have a new name for her -- Puppy. She seems to follow me around and land in front of me wherever I sit! She's my bodyguard!"

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**Next month's question:**

***What is your favorite song or other piece of music?***

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(See *THREAD* on the next page.)

**- T-H-R-E-A-D -**

(Our Knowing and Our Spirituality)

**LONELINESS IS AGELESS**

I took myself to therapy  
to heal my broken heart.  
My daughter kept on leaving home.  
I spent my life on her.  
    And the others.  
I felt so very much alone.  
I learned that she did too.  
I'm 57, she's seventeen;  
we both were feeling blue.  
    A real bummer.  
My therapist asked me to think  
and feel the way it was  
when I was growing up,  
the hurts, the shame and such.  
    Guess what?  
It feels the same at seven  
as it does at seventeen,  
and even now at fifty seven  
or somewhere in between.  
    It's not over.  
I need a purpose in my life;  
She needs to know I care,  
so, I'll get started with a plan,  
forget this graying hair.  
    And problems hearing.

*Gail (May'07) comments, "Remembering thirteen years ago through this poem, I am reminded that, This too shall pass, and everything is temporary. Today, I have a loving relationship with my youngest daughter, who now has 4 children of her own. She is sweet and thoughtful. I thank God."*

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OUR SPECIAL TOPIC

This month begins our new, Special Topic, "A Defining Moment in my Life". Further comments on "Something Stolen" are always welcome and will appear in the **FABRICS** section.

*( Concluding comments follow on the next page.)*

**Editor's note:** *When I looked at the words, "defining moment" I wondered, Which one? Maybe it was the day I first menstruated -- sealing forever my fate to be a woman. Possibly it was my first decision to marry -- ending painful dating years. Perhaps it was the night I conceived my first child -- initiating me into the clan of mothers... What are your ideas of "defining moment"?*

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