

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.

DADDY'S ADVICE

Plock, plock, plock ! Heavy raindrops assaulted my two-door Nissan's roof. Driving slowly along the right lane, I signaled and turned into a red and white Gate gas station. The downpour hammered on its metal pump canopy, drowning all other sounds as cool mist from exploding drops enveloped me. Holding down the trigger on black gas hose, I recalled another Southern storm years before when lightening had flashed and thunder had assaulted my courage.

The skies above Georgia's Interstate 75 gushed. Alone in my red Chevy Monza, Daddy's words came from nowhere, "Never get off the road. No matter how hard it rains, or how slow you have to go, just keep driving. You'll eventually drive out of it. It isn't raining everywhere."

He was right about the last bit. It had not been raining that morning when I left University of Florida's red brick college dorm and turned north onto Route 441. It was the beginning of my thousand mile journey home to northern Indiana for summer vacation. Several hours up the road distant sky flashes and rumbling began. Twenty minutes later I drove into a wall of rain. Rear lights glowing, stopped cars lined the roadside. Ahead I could see only flashing brake lights. Through my half- fogged back window the rear-view mirror showed amber flashers blinking like Christmas lights.

Not a car-length ahead, brake lights blazed then dimmed. My speedometer bounced near zero. I crept along and slowly rose to ten.

I'm driving out of this!

In my mind I saw Daddy nodding. But he faded as rain continued and my fingers grew numb from gripping the wheel. A gnawing pain built between my shoulder blades.

Windshield wipers flapped, barely clearing the torrents. My defroster blew and I cranked my window an inch, but vapor continued to collect inside the windshield. Eyes on the road, I leaned across and opened the glove compartment. I felt for a Kleenex inside, pulled one out and wiped fog from my vision area.

After miles of poking along, I shouted to my empty car, Daddy and God, "Why doesn't it stop?" I blinked tears then sniffled, *Get a grip!*

I clicked on the radio. Turning the dial slowly to the right I hoped to catch a local station with news of the storm, music or even a baseball game to remind me of the outside world.

Daddy had been right. Though it poured for nearly an hour, eventually I drove out of that storm. By then I was emotionally exhausted, and still miles from Chattanooga, which was to be my last big city before stopping for the night. (*See next page.*)

I began to weep again. Slowed by the storm, I would not make my first night's target. Worse, since I wouldn't drive longer than eight hours at a time, I could not reach my Indiana home before sundown the following day.

Finally my tires hit dry pavement but I pushed to keep my speed up. My energy was drained but it was too early to stop for the night. When I saw a large interchange ahead, I ramped off and rolled into a red and yellow Shell station. Sun shone as I filled my tank. Inside the restroom, I splashed my face with cool water. Before stepping up to pay, I chose a Three Musketeers and a Styrofoam cup of steaming dark coffee. Caffeine and sugar were my recipe for renewed pep and several more hours on the road.

Nowadays it's not rain splattering my Nissan that worries me, it's life's storms that have me white - knuckling the wheel, wondering if I should pull off the road. I am tempted. But when I think I can't stand another lightening strike, I hear Daddy's words again, "Never get off the road ... You'll drive out of it. It isn't raining everywhere."

Frances Fritzie

Frances, Fritzie, Editor, adds, "Thank you Daddy."

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

Dear Frances,

I just received the latest issue of *Ninepatch* yesterday. It was a moment of serendipity. That day at work I had just been telling a friend about *my* first experience drinking. Although I don't write often, you and JK are in my thoughts and prayers, always.

Take care.

Love,

VLB

VLB (Oct. '06) says, "Recently I ran across a website for finding long lost friends, <https://namesdatabase.com/1l.pl?c1=46007687916&s=nsender1>"

Dear Frances,

After all the heat of summer, my family situation got hot, too. The last two weeks have been full of our adult daughter, Anita and her problems. Anita (who is in the social services system) is now an in-patient in a rehabilitation hospital. It's a load off my shoulders, but it didn't come easily.

My daughter lost her job over a year ago and wasn't really following the outlined processes to find another. *(Continued on the next page.)*

She was not taking care of herself very well either. She was two months behind on her rent which our church and another friend had covered until now. Anita had pet rats and rabbits. That was probably OK, except she let them run her apartment "for exercise."

The landlord got tired of waiting to be paid and told her he was coming with an eviction notice on the 21st. She begged everyone she knew for money. Meanwhile, the landlord came to see her. When she wasn't home, he used his pass key. When *he* saw the animals running around, the mess and smelled the place, he was mad. So, when Anita came home he told her, "That's it! I'm pushing up a dumpster to the back door. Everything goes!"

She called me and I had to help -- again. When I got to her apartment the next day with my brother (who had agreed to take the rabbits), the police and the landlord were already there. They were ready to clean out the place. My brother talked the men into giving us a week to clear out the place ourselves. So, I was there a couple of times after work the next week trying to pack up anything worth keeping. (What a stinking mess!)

Next, Anita's caseworker got involved. She said my daughter's living conditions had gotten out of hand. She told me she would go before a judge and explain the situation and take some steps to help her. I thought that would take some time, but before the week was out, I had a message from the woman on my answering machine. She said Anita was with her and she was taking my daughter to a hospital/ rehabilitation center.

My husband and I have been there to see her twice. She is mad at all of us. The caseworker tells us medication may help her. However, it is likely she will no longer live alone, but go into a group home. Of course, Anita hates the idea. She keeps calling me and crying. I hear she has also called my brother and her sister, begging to live with them. (No one wants the stress.)

Sunday I went to church and put Anita on the prayer list. Then I worked Monday and Tuesday. Today I have the day off. I have a counseling appointment. (Thank the Lord.) I also washed and packed up more of Anita's dirty clothes.

It's back to work tomorrow, but it is good to get out of the house. My dad has helped a lot. He's stayed sober and still takes me back and forth to work.

I hope things are well with you! Take care. God bless you!

Love and Prayers,

Linda Sue

LindaSue (Sept.07) says, "It's good to have an uplifting book to read. I went to the library with a list of 'Christian' titles from a flier Frances sent me. I am now reading one of my favorites, an Amish book – Beverly Lewis' The Brethren."

Dear Francesca,

Next week I'll meet with the doctor who will approve or disapprove of my ECT (shock treatment) procedure. Then I must have a physical and some blood work. I just don't know much about how all of this works in terms of the actual procedure, and I hope to find out all the details. I'll have my questions ready.

My husband will drive me to the hospital, arriving at 6:00 AM, every other day for as many treatments as are deemed necessary. He'll wait until I am finished and then drive me home. *(Continued on the next page.)*

The process itself includes a physician, and an anesthesiologist.

Of course, all of this could go bust if there is some reason I'm not qualified to receive the treatments.

Thanks for listening,
Elaine

Elaine (Sept. '07) says, "I have been trying to do something about how I feel about myself by losing some weight. (I'm told that the older one gets the harder the weight loss becomes.) I've been going to Weight Watchers. They are all strangers and it seems no one really cares whether I'm successful. I don't feel part of the group at all and rarely participate in their discussions. But, I have had a little success. I've lost five pounds in three weeks. It's a start."

Hi Frances,

These days I'm keeping busy with volunteer work and family. I spent a week with one daughter and her husband at Virginia Beach in March, then a week with another daughter and her family, at their home in Texas, in April.

The first week in June I went to Boston with my girlfriend from California to attend the Annual Meeting of our church. We spent three days there (too short) and had a great visit.

The end of July, my grand-son got married here in Michigan, so I had a third daughter (also from Virginia) staying with me two weeks.

While she was here, she interviewed and got a new job. She went home, packed and came back two weeks later. She is here now training for a managerial position, but will be living in a nearby state once this part of her new work is done.

Thanks to God for His guidance, governing and loving kindness,
Diana

Diana (Jan. '07) adds, "I am continuing to grow in Grace."

Fritzie,

Thank you for your prayers. My son in the military has finished his training for Afghanistan. He said they took guns from three of the men, my son included. I'm not sure what that means, exactly. I do know it means he will not be going with the rest of his training group. He is going to be at home with his family for the next couple of weeks.

Other family situations seem to be getting better. My other son's drinking wife is still a problem to their marriage and they are still separated. He is coming to live with my husband and me for a couple of months. Not sure what the estranged wife is going to do. At this time I don't much care. I do pray that she will get some help.

Hope all is well with you and your family.
Talk to you later my friend.
Patricia

(Continued on the next page.)

Patricia (Sept.'07) says, "My son with the marriage problem has gone back to his old job and is doing well. He is looking for apartments and trying to get his finances in order. His coworkers were glad to see him back. Will keep you posted"

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***You can change
your past
with your future.***

James (Sept.'07) adds, "The key word is c-h-a-n-g-e."

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

(Our Experiences)

A LESSON LEARNED FROM UNCLE JERRY

Uncle Jerry has shown me there is a positive side to criticism. At best, a negative appraisal needs to teach knowledge and not show negativity or harm.

However, this tactic is not often used. Instead, many folk seem to find satisfaction in negative comments instead of employing a "spiritual" kind of "good" criticism. For example, I have a friend who is in the habit of criticizing me, no matter what I do or say. She knows it all and always tries to top me.

Most people I am friends with are wonderful, some of them have degrees and others have a lesser education. But to hear this woman talk, her friends have double and triple degrees. She has met most of my friends, but I have never met any of hers. It's hard to be friends with someone with such an attitude.

It is a sad fact that some people try to make life difficult for others. They seem to want to destroy our faith and hope. But no matter how hard these folk try, Uncle and I show them smiles. We are always strong, but also kind and friendly. We hold the attitude that the negative purveyors are those who suffer, while charmed with a better point of view, we rise above it all. A positive outlook builds confidence, self-esteem and fosters

better communication. It also promotes a healthier environment and helps maintain the focus of a good relationship. *(Continued on the next page.)*

Uncle Jerry and I always have been criticized even though we helped others in need of our aid. Uncle never let negative comments bother him, even when they might be warranted. Instead he said, "Those who criticize show their inferiority." At times of apparent attack, he'd quietly counsel, "Try to understand, it is not you these people are assailing, but a part of themselves. They fear their own failure."

I have tried Uncle Jerry's approach. Turning a positive attitude to negative comments has helped me. I feel stronger, healthier and very fortunate, indeed.

Lotte deRoy (Aug. '07) adds, "When I changed my life and attitudes, it became fulfilling. Happiness and prosperity followed. Even in the darkest moments of one's life, the sun is always shining somewhere."

A FALL RETREAT

I have known my girlfriend, Sheri, for about ten years. We get together regularly for brunch, walks, movies and cut-and-paste creativity. Last August we decided to try something different. After dinner on a Friday night we joined others, (mostly families) from my church at a lakeside camp for a retreat.

Sheri and I picked the "tree house," area to spread our bedding. It was a screened-in, roofed platform on ten-foot stilts. Nestled in the forest, it contained four cots, but the two of us had it all to ourselves. I spent an amazing night snug in my bed, waking occasionally to listen to pouring rain and singing insects while enjoying fresh, humid air.

After breakfast, Saturday morning, we attended a two-and-a-half-hour workshop. It combined a peaceful meditation exercise and an opportunity to write some haiku.

After lunch, Sheri took a nap while I joined a group on a walk on a wetland trail. It meandered for about a mile along a dirt path and boardwalk through a sphagnum bog. In some areas, the sphagnum formed a wet, acid peat that was as much as forty feet deep. The dark green ferns were about six feet high.

Right after dinner Saturday night, we started packing to return home. While we were toting our gear to the car, a couple of young girls hunted for toads, frogs and salamanders near our tree house. I stopped to see what they found. They showed me about ten tiny toads, and a shiny, rubbery-feeling black salamander with blue spots and a greenish frog. I laughed when one girl actually kissed it hoping to turn it into a prince!

Carol (Sept. '07) says, "I did not follow the 5-7-5 syllable rule for haiku, but at the workshop I did manage to write four poems."

One:

Rain-soaked twigs
Torn from trees
make a hand-held bouquet.

Two:

Fallen green acorns
Mark summer's end.
Some hatless.

(Continued on the next page.)

Three:

In the path
Marble or planet?
White spots on red orb.

Four:

Toadstool
Snaky white stem
Miniature tan umbrella
A platform filled by a raindrop.

FLIES AT THE PICNIC

Recently my friend, Ellen, and I went out for lunch at a local restaurant. She smokes so we chose to sit in the outdoor patio where smoking is allowed.

After our food arrived, flies began to pester us. As I brushed them away, suddenly an old memory came back to me and I began to laugh.

My friend looked at me and said, "What? What!" She waited for me to stop chortling uncontrollably, a quizzical look on her face. When my guffaws ended I told her this story.

In the summer of my senior year of high school, a few friends and I planned an afternoon of picnicking and swimming at a nearby lake. I persuaded my mother to go with us. It was her half day off and I thought she needed to relax.

She was a solemn, stoic person with little sense of humor most of the time. Although she was hardworking, church-going, and conventional in most ways, she was often harsh and unyielding.

After we spread our picnic meal on a blanket over the grass, flies began to gather and annoy us. As we complained and slapped at them, I noticed a mischievous twinkle in my mother's eyes. Her lips began to twitch in an effort to conceal the beginnings of a smile. Relaxed and smiling broadly now, she asked the group, "Do you know how to keep the flies away from your face?"

One of us immediately asked, "How?"

Fully grinning and enjoying herself, she said, "Pull down your britches!"

By then she was howling with laughter and we all joined her.

Sitting outside with Ellen I noticed she listened intently and smiled at my obvious enjoyment. She has a wonderful sense of humor. By the time I finished the story she was laughing heartily with me.

Later I realized that reliving those moments of long ago with my late mother, I felt a rare warmth and closeness that we had not often shared. I am grateful for that. Somewhere in a distant corner of my mind I was aware that my outburst of laughter sounded like that of my mother.

June Poucher (also has a story in FABRICS). She adds, "I have often been told that I resemble my Mother and I have come to see that is not a bad thing."

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(On the next page is INSTRUCTIONS.)

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

THE KITE RUNNER

This best selling novel is by Khaled Hosseini. The author is a doctor from Afghanistan who came here in 1980. The tale is a heartbreaking story about two young boys growing up in Afghanistan during the 1970's.

Amir became friends with Hassan, the son of his father's servant. Unbeknown to them, the two boys were half brothers. Amir could not understand why his father always treated Hassan with loving-kindness. Amir wanted his father's affection all to himself and he started to resent Hassan. This situation developed a web of jealousy, lies and betrayal.

When the Russians invade Afghanistan, Amir and his father escape to America. Years later one of Amir's friends calls from Pakistan. He wants Amir to come and see him. Instinctively, Amir knew it is time for him to go back to his war torn country and make amends for his sins.

This author writes with simplicity. It's easy to read, and has a good plot. Readers will enjoy turning the pages of this novel.

Lynan (May '07) adds, "I just bought Khaled Hosseini's new novel, A Thousand Splendid Suns. I also read a little volume titled, The Secret, by Rhonda Byrne. The second book tells how to use one's energy within to improve one's life. I need to lose some weight so I am going to see if the secret really works."

MOLAKA'I

I was gripped by the human drama of this book by Alan Brennert. It tracks the grim struggle of a Hawaiian woman who contracts leprosy as a child in Honolulu during the 1890s. She is deported to the island of Moloka'i, where she grows to adulthood at the quarantined settlement of Kalaupapa. I learned a lot about leprosy as an illness and its social impact on our modern culture through the middle of the 20th century.

Can you imagine being taken from your family at seven years of age? Can you imagine feeling fine, and looking fine, yet being housed with disfigured strangers? What about receiving the same staple food allotment for nearly all of your life, never enjoying new foods or restaurants. Or, living and growing up in the same fourteen square miles, away from the new inventions of the world, with little to do but be repeatedly poked and prodded by doctors--while you watch people you love deteriorate and die? Where would your hope and courage to face life come from?

While weaving an intricate story of people given almost no choice in how they lived their lives, I found myself compelled to look at my own freedom and the times that I waste it.

(Continued on the next page.)

Georgene (Sept. '07) says, "It's easy to forget that not long ago our American life was - - as so many others still are - - limited. I have so much!"

MY COUNSELOR’S RECOMMENDATION

I'm reading, A Return to Love, by Marianne Williamson. It was recommended by my counselor. The book has reflections on the principles of “A Course in Miracles” which the advisor also suggested to me.

I like prayers the author mentions. Here’s my favorite:

“Dear God,

I give this day to you, the fruit of my labor and the desires of my heart. In your hands I place all questions, on your shoulders I place all burdens. I pray for my brothers and for myself. May we return to love. May our minds be healed. May we all be blessed. May we find our way home, from the pain to peace, from fear to love, from hell to Heaven. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. For Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power, and the Glory. Forever and ever. Amen.”

Another I like is:

“Dear God,

My desire, my priority is inner peace. I want the experience of love. I don't know what would bring that to me. I leave the results of this situation in your hands. I trust your will. May your will be done. Amen.”

I enjoyed this book and recommend it.

Dottie,

Dottie (July '07) adds, “There are so many areas of this book I related to. One particular portion is, The focus must remain on ourselves. We're affected by other peoples' lovelessness only to the extent to which we judge them for it. Another quote I liked is, The ego tries to put the focus on the other person. Trying to clean up someone else is just an ego trick to keep you from applying yourself to your own lessons. In order to learn the most from relationships, you have to focus on your own issues.”

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WATER FOR ELEPHANTS

This book is a haunting romantic novel by Sara Gruen. Set in the Great Depression of the 1930’s, it portrays all the drama and excitement of the old-time traveling circus.

The story is framed by the recollections of the very old protagonist as he looks back on his life. He cannot quite remember whether he is ninety or ninety-three years old. He led a colorful life as veterinarian to the circus’ menagerie and traveled with the show for seven years.

He tells about the conflict that arose when he fell madly in love with one of the married performers. Fond of animals, he formed a special attachment to a smart performing elephant named Rosie. Later, at a critical moment, Rosie saved his life, earning his unending gratitude.

June Poucher (Aug. '07) says: “This is an enjoyable thoughtful read.”

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OUR SPECIAL TOPIC (A Defining Moment)

FINALLY FINDING MY WAY

According to someone who has known me since I was an adolescent, I've always wanted to be a writer. Still, you could have knocked over most of my friends with a feather when, three years into college, I switched majors, (again) and began pursuing a degree in creative writing. When I met most of my bowled-by- a- feather buddies, I had every intention of attaining a degree in musical theatre and acting.

That change itself is not so surprising. Trying new areas of specialty was not new to my college career. Soon after beginning my first semester, I switched my area of study to music composition. Once I realized there was no money in writing choir music, I turned to a music *business* major...only to discover that I was awful at economic mathematics.

Then, deciding to follow in the footsteps of my grandmother, I looked to the sciences and took up chemistry. It was fun, though as you might expect, from my venture into music business, I struggled with the math.

By the time I began my pursuit of the aforementioned creative writing degree, I was already three years into my schooling. While trying to decide what area to choose I had spent one entire semester taking nothing but fun classes like painting and French. After my semester of entertaining studies, it was obvious to me that I needed to make a final decision about my direction as an adult.

Becoming a creative writing major was a defining moment in my life because it paved the way for choices I made for years afterward. After I graduated, people asked what my “fallback career” was. They were shocked when I'd answer that I didn't intend to “fall back.” And I haven't.

Though life has taken me in many unanticipated directions, I am still writing!

Christa Weber Terry (Sept.07) adds, “House hunting is OVER. We made an offer on a cute, relatively small four bedroom home north of our city and it was accepted. The house had only been on the market for two days and ours was one of four offers. We really wanted it and were willing to go as high as our budget cap even though the entire upstairs, comprised of two rooms, needs to be redone ...one of the two rooms is entirely un-finished. (The floor is planks and the walls are bare insulation!) It does have a finished basement, which is nice and adds quite a bit of space. Right now our new house is nice, but totally chaotic!”

(MANAGING THE HOUSE is 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:

A courageous person I remember is...

Liz (Sept. '07) says, "Whenever I think of a courageous person, I think of my niece who was addicted to crack cocaine. She is courageous because she grew up in a family (mine) where substance abuse and inability to accept personal responsibility is the norm. She grew up in a family that has to get completely out of their minds on alcohol or other intoxicants just to be together in the same room. She grew up in a family that offers little support to the person who is in recovery. My niece had the courage to take the first step and admit that she was powerless over her addiction.

Last I heard, she was clean and in recovery. I don't know if she still is. Now that I think of her, I will give her a call and see how she is doing."

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Next month's GET TO KNOW ME question:

I'm a bundle of nerves when...

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

(Gail's poem follows in its entirety on the next page.)

WILD ONIONS

**The Potawatami look down
awed by flowering pink and white wetlands
brilliant in the morning sunrise.
Chicago – their name for the abundant
and unmistakable odor of wild onions.**

**A curving necklace of land
faces Northeast gales.
Harsh winds at its back
sweep treeless plains.
Those early dream seekers
tame the warlike wrestle
of wind and water.**

**In warp time three centuries later
from the highest peak,
we gaze upon lacy green treetops,
ribbons of turquoise water,
purple shades in the deep and narrow canyons of
the white city singing its jazz.**

**Our Sears Tower lookout sways.
The grand blue throat of Lake Michigan
wears her jewel proudly.**

**We gaze in wonder
at this thriving field of humanity,
rising from a vision, raw courage and
the sacred sweat of the wild onion swamp.**

Gail (Sept. '07) adds , "My photographic impression of Chicago from our several stories high lakefront room near the Art Institute, and the view from Sears Tower prompted this poem. Reading the history of Chicago in the Tower certainly encouraged my imagination to see Chicago from its inception."

October 's Birthdays

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