

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.

PARTY GIRL

It was my turn. The other gals had told their "first drink" stories. Most of them had started drinking as teens or preteens, many sampling parents' supplies. I wasn't having a lot of luck remembering my *very* first drink, but then a story my folks used to tell came to mind. My party-loving parents used to look at each other and act like they had a big secret. They'd tell a new party guest not to set his beer bottle on the floor. When the guest looked puzzled, Mother and Daddy would look at each other, open their eyes wide, and say in a secret voice, "Our daughter likes beer, too" Then they'd all laugh.

Like watching a movie, I remember the party that started their story. I am four-going-on-five. It's night and big people come to the door. The men say, "Hellooooo Frank!" and slap Daddy on the back. Ladies nod when they say hello and a few put out their hand to my dad. Mother stands at the kitchen counter pulling glass bowls from the cupboard for pretzels from a blue bag. Behind her on the kitchen table, pale yellow potato chips make heaps in aluminum bowls.

Ladies climb our wood stairs to lay coats on my parents' bed. I stand back and watch from the living room doorway. A few people smile and nod at me.

The doorbell keeps ringing. Before long the living room has people sitting in every chair. One side holds all ladies. Facing each other, they sit on our mulberry davenport and nearby red vinyl chairs. One sits on the floor by a blond end table. Their lips are bright and smooth in red flower colors. Some have their fingernails painted to match. A few ladies sip foamy golden liquid from a glass and use metal coasters on the coffee table. Others set their tall brown bottles by the side of the couch on the rug. Ladies use matches to light white cigarettes held between two fingers. As they blow out smoke, pretty red lip prints are on one end.

Through the living room, men stand in clusters on the sun porch. Most hold a brown bottle with a red label. One man clicks open his lighter and bends his head over its flame. He snaps the lighter closed, straightens, turns his head and blows a stream of smoke over his shoulder as he drops the silver lighter into his pants pocket. Sometimes one of the men throws back his head with a big laugh.

Opposite the davenport the RCA record player has its lid up. I look inside and see a stack of black platters. The top one has a round blue paper in the center. I like the songs and stand close. When I lean my ear to the speaker after a song ends, I hear *whoo- whoo- whoo*. After that there's a pause, then *clack* as the next record drops. A *tho-wok* tells me the needle has landed on shiny outside black grooves. Then another tune starts, "The stars at night are big and bright..." Talking stops. Eyes wide and smiles bright, the guests look around, then sing along, adding the "clap-clap-clap-clap" before "deep in the heart of Texas!" I clap, too.

(Continued on the next page.)

The evening wears on. Before long, glass ashtrays on the coffee table fill and the air is blue with smoke. Most of the men drift to the dining room table. It is covered with a special green cloth. Red and white poker chips I sometimes like to play with are stacked at every place. In the kitchen I see a few ladies lean their elbows on the kitchen table talking and eating potato chips. In the living room several women still sit close to one another talking. They do not look over as I wander in.

I explore the floor. I see black high heels under the coffee table and filled glass ashtrays on it. Ladies' purses sit under one end-table. I just look at those black and brown bags. It's naughty to touch ladies' purses. Brown bottles also sit around the couch, and beside chairs. I peer in them. Some are empty. Others still have some liquid in them. I pick up a bottle and drink what's left. I look around. A few other bottles are on the porch. I empty them too.

Then I'm sleepy. I climb on the porch's empty daybed. I plop down in all my clothes and take a little nap.

I told my girlfriends a shortened version of this memory. They just nodded. None of our stories seem very smart, funny or cool now. I don't know how the others felt as we sat a moment in silence.

Looking back, I wished I could take that little four-year old to a quiet upstairs room and read her a book.

Frances Fritzie

Frances Fritzie, Editor adds, "Memories continue to bless me."

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

Dear Frances,

I read over your August '07 story, "Mountains", a couple of times. I can identify with the winding mountain road and the sharp drop-offs that can be deadly. (I recall such roads...) As you said, there's no guard rail; the local people just think you're SUPPOSED TO KNOW!

You had mentioned that you had mountains on your mind; I like the way you brought it all together and figured out the possible meaning of it all.

Hope you had a good day.

Bless'ed be,

June

June Poucher also has a story in FABRICS.

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(Continued on the next page.)

Dear Frances,

At our writers' group, I heard your original writing of, "Mountains" (although I think of it as the bee story). I enjoyed your reworking of it in Aug. '07 *Ninepatch*. This time I noticed the scenery a lot more. Maybe that's because I quenched my desire for the story with prior reading.

Recently, I watched Joyce Carol Oates (a favorite) on cable TV's "Booktalk". I was enchanted by everything she had to say as well as her calm and wise manner. The nugget I hold onto the tightest is about "finding a way into a story".

Oates had been asked to write an article on boxing and felt she could not measure up to the task. She felt as if her life was over because she just couldn't "get at" the subject. Then she came to see that boxing was really a story of failure (as is any sport) and that for all the success stories at the apex, there is a pyramid of underlying failures.

I related to the tale because that's how I look at problems. First I experience the overwhelming fear of defeat, but then the "way in" suddenly shows itself.

Meditation often helps -- well let me be honest -- it always helps.

Namaste'

Liz

Liz (July '07) adds, "I just returned from a week in Maui, Hawaii. My first reaction to the wonder of Maui was completely emotional. "The first morning I walked out of our hotel, I burst into tears at Maui's intense beauty. I was blessed to be in its presence. I know I am also blessed by life and thank my Higher Power for the opportunity to fulfill my dream of being there."

Frances,

Again, thank you for the August '07 *Ninepatch*. I like the article you wrote, "Mountains". It was a very powerful story. Today I am thinking back to, "At the Movies", the July '07 story you shared. It brought back a memory for me.

My three siblings and I were brought up to be honest at all times. At home we were never exposed to any kind of sweets, candy, biscuits or cookies. One day there was this crystal jar filled with cookies standing on an antique credenza in the drawing room. Not knowing that my father had brought them home, my brothers decided it was time to taste one. Each of us took one. My oldest brother rearranged the cookies and we went upstairs to his room and sat on his sofa. We all took tiny bites, hoping the delectable cookies would last a lifetime.

When we came downstairs, our father was waiting. He invited us to sit down and said, "Please, tell me who ate the cookies."

We looked straight at our father and none of us said a word. My father did not seem angry or upset. Instead of punishing us, he invited us to go and see the movie, "Pinocchio". In that story, Pinocchio's nose grew and grew because he lied. Sitting in the darkened movie theater, all four of us began crying and sobbing so my father took us outside and we returned home.

That was enough punishment for us. I can't speak for my siblings, but I learned never to tell a lie.

(Continued, next page)

Thank you again.
Regards from Lotte and Uncle Jerry

Lotte de Roy *(August '07 also has a story in FABRICS.) "To this date, I have never been able to watch the entire "Pinocchio" film."*

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Dear Frances,

Summer has been b-u-s-y for me. (My busy is a good!)

This weekend, for example, I started by taking an hour or so for 'me time'. Then I was off to spend the afternoon at the beach with my friend Teresa. After that I drove to my friend Michelle's where I had dinner. Afterwards, we went to a farm where she taught me more about horses and I got more riding lessons. When I left Michelle, I went to my friend Jen's house. I visited a bit with her before I at last went home to sleep.

On Sunday I hung out with a friend from Buffalo. He and I watched TV and dozed while it rained.

So, it's all good. Life is good. Hope yours is too.
Love,
Lynn

Lynn TROR *(July '07 adds, "Friends are betting that I'll have my own horse in a year and I like to think it's possible. Being as busy as I am though, I barely have time for my fish -let alone a horse. < Sigh > Maybe..."*

Dear Frances,

I have a weekend off and it is nice. The doors and windows are open and a breeze is blowing through the house. Dad is outside sitting in a lawn chair soaking up sun. My husband is in the garage working on the lawnmower. I have the house to myself.

We slept late, then my husband drove us through the countryside where we stopped and bought fresh sweet cherries at an orchard. Then we ran errands and shopped for weekly groceries. Then it was home to this lazy afternoon.

Sometimes my husband is real nice to me -- and sometimes not. It is like he has a split personality. But, I guess lots of wives feel taken for granted at times.

I started the last book of the series "Brides of Lancaster County" by Wanda Brunstetter. It is called, The Hope Chest. I have enjoyed these gentle stories and wish there were more.

I continue to pray for my husband, Dad and my trouble-some daughter, Anita. I ask for patience and understanding.

I know no one's life is perfect. Nothing in this life is. Thanks for listening and sending your ideas, too. Take care of yourself.

Love and prayers,
LindaSue

(Continued on the next page.)

LindaSue (August '07) adds, "Besides doing errands and getting groceries, my husband and I go to church every Sunday then out to lunch. In a way, we have lots of dates."

Hi Fritzie,

Sorry to have been silent for so long. My one son has been facing family problems and has separated from his wife who drinks too much. Another son is in the military and training for a few months until he finds out if he has to go to Afghanistan. Of course, I don't want him to go.

I had to take one of my cats, Maggie, to the vet. She had been eating like there is no tomorrow but losing weight. The blood work shows she is diabetic. So she will need to have insulin shots and prescription food. If I can keep her weight to where it is now, she might not have to stay on the insulin forever.

My pet is a concern, yet my heart breaks for my sons. If only a medication could help family problems and keep the other from war. Life isn't so simple sometimes.

Going to close now my friend. Talk to you later.

Patricia

Patricia (Feb. '07) reports all is well with her vagabond cat, Mr. Gray. "He did accidentally get out a couple of times, but just stood like he was frozen. I was able to pick him up and bring him back in."

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Yes Frances!

Life is being good to me at the moment! I say that as I know my life pattern is an extreme roller coaster ride. (Tee hee!) Whose life isn't, eh?

My summer was excellent! I finished my vacation with my grandson, completing a goal of visiting the forty-eight contiguous states in my lifetime. Add to that, I fell in love again with a great man. And I also rode in the super big Veteran's motorcycle run in Scranton, PA. It had about seven hundred bikes in it this year.

I keep fit and happy. With all the bad stuff that has happen-ed in my life, it's hard to believe, but I can again say, "God is good to me."

Luv to you and yours,

CaT

CaT (July '07) adds, "When your choices are live or die, you really can't imagine if you pick the right one how wonderful things will turn out in the end."

Dear Frances,

You thanked me for sharing my "defining moment" story. I thank YOU for acknowledging my difficulty in telling that story.

My CoDA (Codependents Anonymous)12 Step group held our monthly step meeting last night and the topic was the 7th Step: *(Continued on the next page.)*

“Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings”. One of my shortcomings has been, -- as I discovered with the story of my brother -- and still is isolation.

Like the murderous narrator of Edgar Allan Poe's “The Cask of Amontillado”, I bricked my-self behind a wall for protection from the soul murderers in my family. I don't know if you have ever read that complicated story, but it fits so well that it popped immediately to mind while I was thinking about disinterring my past. (Wow, what a revelation.)

I used to read and love Poe's work as a youngster. It makes sense now. The stories are, on one level, metaphors for madness, alcoholism, drug addiction and just plain any addiction/ dysfunction.

The very short synopsis of the “The Cask” is the narrator lures a friend with the promise of a rare wine to an isolated place where he overpowers him with the drink and chains him up in a wall to die. The narrator commits this deed because of a perceived insult that he doesn't discuss with his victim.

Amazingly, its theme is parallel to my childhood experience. I explained a bit about my own story at the meeting last night. It was very freeing.

Best wishes to all,
Linda

Linda (Aug. '07) adds, “My boyfriend and I have both ridden our horse Katie! It seems so anticlimactic, after all of our bridle and bit work and the tremendous amount of work that we have done on the pasture.”

Dear Frances,

Sorry I've been so bad at communication. I've been job hunting all summer and it's been a new experience for me. I was not rehired at my school, (a very l-o-n-g story) and could not get an interview anywhere in the county. Last week I finally got a job at a private school that works with kids who have fallen through the cracks so to speak. I'm taking a pay cut but my husband and I will survive. We can cut back and perhaps one of us may get a part-time job, too.

At the beginning of the summer my motto was, “When God closes one door he opens another, but sometimes it's hell in the hallway.” But now I'm through the other door and I thank God for preserving me despite my faithlessness at times.

Needless to say, my writing took a back burner to my emotional upheaval, but I hope to be back on track soon.

Thanks for keeping me in your circle of friends.
Love,
Angie

Angie (Apr. '07) adds, “I've also found a new doctor who is an MD but also practices alternative medicine. This has been a great help to me.”

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(Continued on the next page.)

The future belongs to today.

James (Aug. '07) says, "Our daily decisions determine what happens tomorrow."

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Dear Francesca,

I'm wondering how you are doing with depression this summer. I hope it has improved and that the hot weather hasn't 'done you in.'

I have something to tell you. It looks like I'll be trying ECT. (Electro Convulsive Therapy) Commonly known as shock therapy, it actually causes a seizure similar to an epileptic seizure, but under highly controlled circumstances. ECT is used as a last resort, when intervention is needed for some reason or when medications are no longer indicated. I am in the last group.

I'll know more later in the week. I'm pretty scared about doing this. It's a big step. One of the side effects is short term memory loss. That can't be predicted. For some people it takes up to three months to get over that. Others have an improvement in their memory since depression can take its toll on memory. I just can't imagine what short term memory loss would be like.

My husband is not happy about this. He said, "What if it doesn't work?"

At this point, I make my own decisions. If it doesn't work, it doesn't work. I'll keep you posted.

Love you and hope you are OK.

Elaine

Elaine (Aug. '07) says, "They tell me If I decide to do ECT, I'll be at a hospital in their funny farm pavilion. It's most unglamorous. No one can come visit unless I've authorized them. Also, no visitor can bring in belts, nail clippers, mirrors, hair dryers and the like. Sounds like fun, no? I'll be an inmate for one or more weeks."

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

THE TEDDY BEARS

The midway at the County Fair was brightly lit and crowded that night. My husband, Milton, and I took our four- year- old daughter, Judy, and her little friend, Linda, to see the sights. (Continued on the next page.)

As we approached one of the game booths a huckster was encouraging people, “Step right up! Three balls for a dollar!”

The object of the game was to knock down a stack of weighted ‘milk bottles’ and win a big teddy bear. The little girls were squealing with excitement as they watched another child’s father win.

My husband smiled and reached for his billfold. The booth attendant handed him three baseballs and stood back. Milton’s third ball scored. Smiling, the attendant congratulated him and handed over one of the big teddy bears.

Linda squealed and grabbed the bear, “It’s mine! It’s mine! Now get one for Judy!”

At first Judy was stunned as she watched Linda hugging the bear. Then she looked up at her dad, a question in her eyes.

My husband spent several more dollars with no success. Realizing it had become a sucker’s game, we moved on.

Down the midway we saw a similar game in which the same teddy bears were the prize. We stood back while Milton and I worked out a plan. These carnival workers were smart people; they knew a man with two little girls couldn’t quit with just ONE teddy bear. I asked Linda to let me hold her bear, and my husband took the girls and walked up to the booth ahead. I stood back and watched.

The ball hustler in front of the booth saw my spouse coming and urged him to play the game. When Milton won on the first dollar, he put the bear in Judy’s eager arms and walked away with two happy little girls.

June Poucher (Aug. '07) remembers, “I couldn’t help noticing the difference in the two children’s attitudes.”

A SPIRITUAL RETREAT PROGRAM

My husband and I recently participated in retreat weekends designed to help kick off a new pattern of spiritual growth. We've known about the program for a long time but weren't ready for the joint commitment (when married, hubby goes to the first retreat, the wife retreats the following weekend, and afterward.)

The retreat is called Cursillo (for Catholics) and DeColores (for Protestants). If you've heard about it you probably haven't heard much. People who have participated usually smile like the Cheshire cat and say, “I know you will like it.”

I always wondered about the secrecy but after participating I see that one of the major strengths of the program is its surprise factor. Once I went through it, I was ready to protect it, too. With my Christian publishing background, and my own need to re-create, I have been to over a hundred retreats or conference type events. I didn't expect that I could be surprised by anything -- but I was.

All doesn't end with a one-time retreat. The man and woman oriented retreats provide a foundation. The follow-up helps us to execute what we have learned. I suppose it is a little like a Twelve-Step Program in that it provides the framework for you to build

your life around, and that framework is what makes the difference in your ability to reach your goal.

(Continued on the next page.)

Georgene (June '07) says, "I can't tell you any more about Cursillo or DeColores. But, if you are ready to makes changes and decide to go, I can say, "I know you will like it!"

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UNCLE JERRY

Uncle Jerry was born with Cerebral Palsy. Throughout his life, he was mistreated, abused and even abandoned. He was never invited for family holiday celebrations and his own brother wanted nothing to do with him. However, Uncle Jerry never lost his humor, spirit and love -- even for those who mistreated him.

Nowadays, no matter where Uncle Jerry and I go, people are drawn to him. They start up a conversation and before long begin telling him their troubles. Even animals are attracted to him. Perhaps Uncle Jerry can communicate with them. They seem to sense they need to be cautious around him due to his unstable legs. People and animals drawn to Uncle Jerry become spiritually energized.

Last year when I was diagnosed with cancer of the thyroid, Uncle was there to support me mentally and spiritually. He made me laugh. He also advised, "You have the time. Finish your children's book during your recuperation."

I followed my uncle's suggestion. Working on my book seemed to speed the process of healing. Positive healing.

Lotte A. deRoy (August '07) adds, "Thanks to Uncle Jerry, after Stringfellow's death and my total thyroidectomy, our lives have changed. What once was so important now seems out of place. Our lives have become filled with laughter. We have a better outlook and take every day in stride."

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OUR SPECIAL TOPIC
(A Defining Moment)

MANY DEFINING MOMENTS IN MY LIFE

I am not comfortable going into detail, so I will make a list of defining moments in my life, instead.

- *When I was about seven or eight years old I said "no" to an older boy who wanted to diddle with me.
- *I've said "no" to alcohol, cigarettes and drugs countless times. (Saying "no" can be very empowering. I consider each time to be a defining moment.)
- *I started a diary at the age of nine. It was the beginning of a life-long creative and therapeutic outlet for me.

*My father died when I was eighteen. I believe I would have at least earned a Bachelor's Degree if he had been able to guide me through that after high-school period of my life.

(Continued on the next page.)

*My marriage and the birth of my child were both obvious joyous defining moments.

*Quitting my job to raise my child was a huge defining moment.

* The moment I met a new friend (or said my final goodbye to a loved one) further defined me, even though I may not have been aware at the time.

*Each skill I've learned has been a defining moment: walking, speaking, reading, math, driving, typing, doing housework, giving first aid, and gardening.

On reflection, my defining moments have been a combination of choices, circumstances and gifts. Some are universal, but the combination is unique to me.

Carol (Aug. '07) adds, "Interestingly, there have been no well-defined moments in my spiritual journey, but nature, religion and 12-Step programs have been an influence."

Ninepatch Birthdays

September:

Carol	10
Ellen Bruns Christensen	17
Gail	22

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

(Reading and Listening)

FATAL CURE

Imagine for a moment that you are a doctor and you've taken the chance to work your dream job in a small, quiet picturesque New England village. Soon after arrival you discover that things are not quite as they seem. The local towns-people appear to be covering up serious crimes that have been committed by the son of one of the hospital bureaucrats.

In Fatal Cure by Robin Cook, doctors David and Angela Wilson are living in Boston when a hospital administrator from the small town of Bartlet, Vermont offers them both jobs. They decide to accept the offer because their daughter Nikki has a rare respiratory condition called cystic fibrosis and the city air in Boston is gradually killing her.

They settle into their new dream house in the countryside on the outskirts of Bartlet, but trouble begins to brew when Nikki discovers a body buried in their basement.

But when Angela calls the police and asks them to probe into the death of this man, she is snubbed and told to keep her nose out of “police business”. Angela's curiosity eventually leads her and David to a private investigator who finds murder links to the paranoid schizophrenic son of one of the hospital’s administrators. Finally David must confront the mentally disturbed son in order to protect his family. *(Continued next page.)*

I really was impressed with the way that Robin Cook spins the plot of this book as well as his vivid descriptions of the town of Bartlet and the serene Vermont countryside.

Down to the last page, the plot leaves the reader guessing as to what is going to happen and who is hiding what.

Bookworm (June '07) gives us his rating, “Out of five stars, I definitely give this one a ‘four’. It is worth a look.”

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- -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:

The best news I heard lately is...

Anna (July '07) says, “Great news! My sister who was diagnosed with breast cancer, came through surgery with her breast still there and a biopsy that showed she could have a new radiation method treatment. Sis is six years younger than I am and we were never close until she was raped in college during the ‘70s. She wouldn’t tell our parents and came to stay with me for a while. Since then we have really been sisters. Although we live thou-sands of miles apart, we are wonderfully connected. It’s amazing how bad happenings often bring unexpected goodness!!

Next month’s question: A courageous person I remember is...

NINEPATCH READERSHIP

Ninepatch puts out both a paper issue and an e- issue. The paper issue appears in three columns and has simple illustrations as well as occasional black-and white photos. Each copy includes a sticky note from another Ninepatch reader. These little messages are thoughtful quotes to brighten one’s day. The folded issue is commonly mailed to readers during the first full week of each month.

The e- issue appears in Word format using just one column, like a business letter. It is attached to an e-mail the editor sends out the week after the paper issue is mailed.

The paper and the e- issues each have thirty-one readers.

(Continued on the next page.)

<p>- T-H-R-E-A-D - (Our Knowing and Our Spirituality)</p>

NO ONE KNOWS

Rain

Slips down her unlined cheeks

Salty tears hidden

Splash of boots on the sidewalk

Covers the gentle sob

Wind carries

The soft gasp

Where none can hear

Passersby in the street

Don't see

This soul

No one knows

The desperation

Behind the smile

Of the young mother

At the flower stand

In the rain.

Angie (Apr. '07) also has a letter in AROUND THE FRAME.

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AUTUMN SYMPHONY

Choirs of apple trees,

march row upon row,

parade their bounty

of red, green and gold.

Their promise of cider

and donuts and pies

sing to our senses,

drift by our eyes.

**symphony of colors
dance in the leaves
that rustle and flutter
in brisk autumn breeze.**

(Continued on the next page.)

**Canning and pickling
and quilting are reasons
our harvest, a concert,
is best of the season.**

**School bells start ringing.
There are bonfires and song,
the sunsets more golden
the days, not as long.**

Gail (August '07) adds, "Fall is my favorite time of year. This poem is meant to celebrate the senses, filling the mind with new ideas, new life."

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