

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 Chapter 4 of reflections on my '07 Bus Ride.

EXPECTATIONS--

Manifesting my Spiritual Journey

Darkness had brought quiet to even Bigvoice. Lulled by the diesel's hum and tires' tum-ta-tum, I dozed before we slowed and the coach's squeaky brakes announced Atlanta.

Skies were black as we rolled into the city's terminal. Like a back-drop for a 1950s TV Western, tall street lights washed nearby houses and buildings in shades of gray. Turning slowly into his angled slot, our driver clicked on interior lights. I perched on the seats' edge, pushed my arms into my black vinyl rain-coat and pulled my messenger bag over one shoulder. As he announced gates for continuing passengers, I heard "Cincinnati," reached for my pen and scribbled "Gate 9" on my left hand.

Expectantly, I gazed down the aisle as the blue-shirted driver stepped out from behind the wheel. However instead of opening the door and leading us out, he stood next to his seat and faced us, "This is the end of the line for this bus. If you continue on, you'll pick up another. Whether you are continuing on or ending your trip here in Atlanta, may God bless you."

For a breath, silence enveloped us. Then from the back of the bus came, "Thank you!" and "Thanks!" Like confetti, more calls of appreciation filled the air. I smiled. The mustached driver grinned and nodded several times. Without another word, he turned and stepped off the bus.

As I moved into the aisle to leave, from behind I heard Bigvoice, "I've never heard that... I've taken a lot of bus rides, but I've never heard that..."

Ah! A reminder I'm on a "spiritual journey."

I claimed my luggage from the side of the bus and rolled it up a long cement ramp toward the brightly lit terminal that crowned the three-story building. As I walked the incline, lights along the path reminded me of a picture of pre-Christian temples. At night the zigguart's many layers, stairways and altar-top were torch-lit like candles around the edges and top of a wedding cake.

The incline zig-zagged. Finally at its top, I looked for the building's entry. I strode past several single glass doors labeled: "Gate 8" and "Gate 9" as well as in big red letters: "Do Not Enter." I thought of air terminal gates that opened onto stairs or a jet way and led onto an airplane and frowned, *Where am I supposed get in?*

At the very end of the walkway, double-glass entry doors wait-ed. However pushing into the thickly peopled area was like trying to reach a prize at the bottom of a full box of Cracker Jacks. "Excuse me ... pardon me," I murmured, pushing along. Then I stood and

(Continued on the next page.)

looked around the space. On my left stood solid blue-gray blocks that faced the gates. I had more than an hour to fill before my next bus. *Where shall I go?* On previous bus rides, I'd traveled with a group and guide. On this trip I'd explore alone during the two hours before my connection to Cincinnati. Deciding, I nodded, *I'll go straight to other end of the room.*

When I had extra time in airports, I'd buy coffee or a snack, then sit and read at the gate until the flight was called. A friendly aroma of hot French fries led me to a snack bar niche in the far end wall. Facing the snack bar, to my left was the area marked, "Damas/Ladies."

Checking restroom facilities came naturally to me. Years ago when I was still in elementary school, I had a "bashful bladder." On family car trips, I could perform only when the restroom was clean.

Once, tears ran down my face as I sat trying. Mother had pulled my one hand over into the tiny bath-room's sink and opened the warm faucet onto my fingers, "This will relax you." Trying to take my mind off the echoey blue tiled bath-room she began, "Once there was a little girl who lived near a waterfall. She loved to hear the water that ran so freely..."

Neither warm water nor suggestive story worked. After that, since I was unable to perform in places I considered "unclean," Mother and Daddy dubbed me, "Bathroom Inspector." When it was time to stop for gas and nature's call, my resigned father would park to one side of the station's drive and shut off the Buick. I'd push open the back door, jump out and skip ahead to "check the facilities." If the toilet was not flushed, the sink showed dirt stains or there was no soap, I'd walk back shaking my head. Daddy'd sigh and start the car while I'd climb back in.

In Atlanta's modern terminal, "Damas/Ladies" featured fresh-looking white tiles and even tissue toilet seats inside each stall. Sinks were clean and offered both hot water and soap. Ample hand drying came from hot air machines and paper towels. Because it lacked air freshener, I graded it B+ -- well above "acceptable."

The terminal's large clock on the wall still showed about an hour left in my layover, so I explored the gate side of the terminal with its nine glass doors. I pulled my lug-gage past a familiar red-lit Coke machine and another, dispensing bottled water with dark blue caps. I continued around red and blue vinyl-covered wire benches filled with people. Teens in low slung jeans and other hardy-looking fellows in lettered "Falcons" or "Braves" gear leaned against the terminal's outer walls.

Announcements sounded off and on but I perked up when I heard, "...boarding at gate 4," because suddenly all around me people were moving. Like steel filings pulled to an Etch-A-Sketch magnet, men and women walked toward the glass-door marked "4". Watching them line up to depart, I felt a little alarm. *I have not been paying attention ... Did I miss an announcement?* Glancing around, I didn't see anyone I recognized. Bigvoice was going all the way to my Grand Rapids, Michigan destination and beyond. A balding man in a green silk shirt had mentioned Detroit. *Oh- oh! I had better find my fellow passengers.*

Frances Fritize *Editor adds, "The journey continues."*

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

Frances,

You wrote to me about writing the tales of your long bus ride and trying to show use of spiritual tools. And then you added, "I am discouraged." So, I want to give you encouragement.

"Choosing Silence" (Feb. '08) was beautifully written. I loved the poignant story of helping the older woman open her carton of milk.

Peace,
Peter

Peter (May '07) adds, "For me, life is always the balance between the silence and the human connectedness -- both of which are so vital to life."

Dear Frances,

I like your Mar. '08 story, "Coping with Irritations" and the way you look at your options. I can certainly identify with having to deal with Bigvoice, the loud woman on your bus. Any irritating noise would invoke a reaction from me, because I am 'sound sensitive'.

I remember when my little ninety year old aunt lived with me for a time. Her 'eating noises' bothered me. I tried to look at the sounds from a positive perspective and came to be grateful that I have good hearing!

Another time, eighty-two pound Aunt May nitpicked about the fit of the shirts I had spent hours making for her. I did not want to lose my temper with the poor little thing so I literally got in my car and drove around awhile. I earnestly asked my Higher Power for help to change my outlook. Eventually I was able to see that she was really not complaining about my work but her life. I just happened to be a convenient target.

Bless'd Be,
June

June Poucher (Mar. '07) who has a story in FABRICS, says, "I often learn valuable lessons when I am trying to practice tolerance."

Dear Frances,

Spring is finally coming on full force here in Southern California. My home office-- where I now work full time -- has its window open most of the day.

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I've gotten so busy again that I'm looking out that window a lot. I repeatedly work on and on, obsessed over tasks involving quality and process. My job doesn't call for such detail and why I do it is beyond my comprehension. *(Continued on the next page.)*

It is almost as if I am choosing to "hide" in my work -- a dopey place to choose. Worse, when I am too busy, I am incapable of taking care of my spirit. Now that I work from home, I have a unique opportunity to be more free. However my discipline to be untethered wanes and instead of strengthening, I struggle.

Then last night my husband and I attended a gathering where a man whose son had been murdered told his story. A student, his son was delivering pizza on weekends. A fourteen-year-old shot the student -worker point blank when the kid would not turn over his pizza.

Now the kid's father works to educate youngsters about the dangers of gang membership. He toils in tandem with the grand-father of the shooter who killed his son. Together they tell their story of faith and forgiveness.

In light of that experience, my struggles with perfectionism are small.

Love,

Georgene

Georgene (Feb. '07) adds, I'm humbled because I've been given a much lighter cross to bear in the scope of grievous heartache that others must navigate. Yet, obsessive behavior is my cross so I dutifully wrestle with the fragmentation of my life that it creates. My perfectionism taints my relationships with others and isolates me. That is the greatest sadness of it."

Hi Frances,

Life is going pretty well. My sabbatical in Canada has been so good for me. I am learning more about myself.

I am participating in a holistic program so I look better, feel better and hopefully will really be ready to go to my next mission. This program is focused on holistic health. This perspective looks at all aspects of our lives. We (priests, brothers, sisters) live and meet in community. Living and working together is a great opportunity to broaden my perspective and have a greater understanding of others. I will be on sabbatical several more months and then I look at where -- exactly -- I will head on mission. Much will depend on my congregational leadership as well and my own abilities to really be helpful to the people there.

Know that you continue to be in my prayers and, even though I don't write a lot, you are in my thoughts.

With love,

Patience

Patience (Mar. '08) adds, "It is not always easy to look at oneself but when connected deeply to the God who loves us so very much, many improvements in our actions can be made."

(Continued on the next page.)

Dear Frances,

Oh dear. Our problem with Anita continues though these days I do keep the doors locked so she can't just walk in.

The last time she came, she had a man with her. My dad and I hid until they went away. (I didn't trust the looks of that guy!) My dad says if he is home alone and they try to get in, he will call the police.

Dad and I work together on this and I keep on praying!

LindaSue (March '08) adds, Luckily, I found another couple of books by Beverly Lewis. This one she wrote with her husband, David. It's called, Coming Home."

Editor's Note: Normally Gail's story below would unfold until June '08. Due to a publishing drag, much of it occurred months ago. She requested I end this strand of her story now. Thus, you will read three letters instead of one. They appear in chronological order.

Letter one:

Hello Frances,

I appreciate your compassion. I've been able to relax at home alone this weekend, following a whirlwind week concluding with a marathon-like day Friday.

Yesterday I did not leave the house or do anything inside. Today I'm rested and have washed everything in sight.

My daughter, Cate with the alcohol problem, is still staying with my other daughter, Marie. Cate is going to AA meetings there. Last week she spent a night with me in town and I took her to meetings.

Saturday night scared me because Cate went and stayed with her partner and their twin girls. He has always been her drinking partner. Until now he had not seen that he was slowing her recovery by continuing to drink in front of her. I think he is finally getting it.

Cate says she had a straight talk with him, saying he was losing his drinking buddy and if he couldn't live with it, she was moving on. I hope he gets it now. He brought her and their daughters back to Marie's. (The twins seem so much happier and Cate is happier, thank God.)

It has been a twenty-five-year road with her alcohol troubles and I'm finding it difficult to relax. I keep telling myself, "Let go and let God!" It is my mantra. Alas, I keep taking my worry back...

Gail

PS. I have been at Marie's house more than I have been at home the last ten days. I'm tired.

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(Gail's second letter follows on the next page.)

Letter Two:

Frances.

You ask how Cate is doing. I am disappointed. She has not latched onto the AA Program.

As soon as she returned to living with her partner (away from her family support), she gradually stopped going to meetings. Come to think of it, she was police ordered to three or four meetings a week. I don't know if she has even met their requirements.

I have little news from her. When she isn't doing what she knows she should be doing, I don't hear from her.

Thank God my dear friend, Barry, has come back into my life. Because of time I'm spending with him, I'm not focused on her dilemma as I was. Her life is not getting any better without meetings attendance and acceptance. That much is certain. So, I wish there was a happy ending, but it's not so --yet.

Blessings upon you and may optimism be yours,
Gail

PS. Barry actually swept me up in marriage after he came back into my life. Our wedding was attended by all of our children (in Michigan) and my grandchildren, too. The marriage was the happiest surprise of our lives and a big blessing for all. God only knows the outcome of my daughter's situation.

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Letter Three:

Frances,

My eyes are swollen from crying, my voice is worn out and my brain is tired of thinking.

Cate wrapped her Jeep around a telephone pole and instantly killed one of her twin daughters. It is thought the other might have a broken neck. She is not well though she has no cuts or bruises. (Cate has four broken ribs and a broken arm.)

My husband and I have been through the visitation, funeral, and Cate's discharge. Now a custody battle's going on over the remaining twin. I must pray for God's Will and a healing miracle for our broken family.

I thank God for dear Barry's support. Without our marriage, I could not have faced the tragedy with balance and serenity

Gail (Mar. '07) adds, "Everything is in Divine Order. I have to believe that, or nothing works."

FABRICS (*Our Experiences*) is next.

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

LOOKING BACK

Several months ago I took my friends' invitation to spend a week with them at a retreat center. A crew of volunteers was beginning the work of closing the center for the winter.

In recent issues, I have shared my feelings and experiences during those two and a half days. Now I am moving on, looking back at spiritual changes.

After a full weekend living and working with people who embody an altered sense of "what's important," I left the retreat center filled with a sense of hope and possibility.

Returning home, my heart pulsed with a renewed beat of miraculous-ness. I saw synchronicity -- ways in which life fits together-- all around me.

Years ago after I had a mountain top experience, before long its elation ebbed away. I used to berate myself. I thought I was somehow grievously flawed because I couldn't hold onto that high place.

A teaching I was given really helped put this cycle into perspective. The expansion (Lake-side weekend) is always follow-ed by a contraction (sadness/ depression/ deflation). Then there is a return to a new point of equilibrium and balance -- a place different from before.

My hope and intent is to integrate this Lakeside experience so that my life does become "different" and more full due to my time there.

I come from a background of perfectionism, depression and my personal inflated sense of ego self-importance (albeit, in my own quiet way). In the nine years since I left the mainstream world, life has just steamrolled me. (I tell you this not in a spirit of complaint, rather to demonstrate that before something new can be born, a lot of old thought patterns, and habits need to die.)

At this moment, I have a sense of the transforming power of the process where I come to find a new balance. If in my transformation I can disengage from the sense of being a victim and engage with the sense of the healing metamorphosis of the process, it will be a HUGE shift, indeed. IT will mean a change in my perspective from that of one flailing in the surf to one groomed to flow in union with the current of life.

Words are inadequate to capture this cycle of transformation. It is akin to trying to convey the three-dimensional reality of a place like Yosemite in a two-dimensional medium like photography. Much is lost in the translation.

I guess I can only summarize by saying I carry Lakeside and the people I met there in my heart while a part of my heart remains at Lakeside.

Michael (Mar.'08) adds, "I am very grateful to Tom and Martha for their intuitive knowledge that this weekend in Lakeside Retreat Center would be a profound experience for me. I am so blessed to have family like them. It worked. Something clicked."

***Now and later
are partners.***

James (Feb. '08) explains, "The actions of the present are followed by the consequences of the future."

THE OLD SONGS

As I sat in the sanctuary of our 'new age' church, we sang songs that most of the congregation did not know well. Some were written by our music director, while in other well known hymns, some of the words had been changed. As I stumbled along I gradually became aware of a feeling of nostalgia for the music of my childhood. I thought of a family get-together my daughter and I attended several months earlier.

It was the 95th annual reunion of my mother's family. As those types of gatherings generally go, there was much greeting, laughing, storytelling, sharing and good eating.

After the meal, one cousin suggested a sing-a-long. She had prepared folders with the words of the traditional songs most of us had grown up with. Another cousin stepped forward to play the piano.

Two aunts handed out folders. When they came to us, my daughter smiled and shook her head, "I don't need one. I know all the words."

Amused by her youthful confidence, I accepted a folder.

Smiling, everyone joined in the singing. That kind of true knowing-all-the-words togetherness overwhelmed me with a sense of joy and peace. Here, among members of five generations of Florida Crackers, I was loved and nurtured. I BELONGED. These are my people; honest, hard-working, God-loving, independent, neighborly family people.

When my attention returned to church and trying to sing its new age music, I felt a longing for the comfort and assurance of the old and familiar.

June Poucher (Mar. '08) adds, "While I believe in spiritual growth and new experiences, I still treasure my heritage, my grounding and the deep knowing of who I am."

RECALLING DARK DAYS

I sit at my laptop composing as the soft pinkish light of winter is beginning to fade away for today. I am content; my house is warmer, courtesy of the new pellet stove fireplace insert that we bought this week. Its comforting orange flames flicker in the living room. I have a frothy, tasty cappuccino nearby and I feel secure.

However, I'd just read of a friend's dreadful challenges of depression and attempted suicide. The tale took me flying back to the age of nineteen, when my life wasn't happy, warm or secure; it was brutal, mean and nasty. *(Continued on the next page.)*

APRIL 2008 *e-Ninepatch*

I can see myself sitting in the dirty parking lot of a local pool hall, blubbing and holding my wrists out as I looked at what I had just done to them. (This was one of those moments in my young life that I remember too painfully and well.)

That was a very wild and disturbing period. Other than sheer grace, how I survived it is a mystery to me. I was the girl-friend of a man who managed that pool hall. Danny taught me how to play billiards, snooker, eight- ball and nine- ball.

Back in those days, the drinking age was eighteen. Since I was just that age, I took full advantage of that. I spent most nights in that building; which had a very thin veneer of respectability since it held favored recreational status with local college students.

Boyfriend Danny had a degree in psychology. He was also nine years older and, I thought, a lot more mature than me. I was not a very worldly when I met him.

I spent hours in that large, smoky hall under his eyes. Perfecting various games on the green felt table, I bought my own professional billiards cue, thinking playing pocket billiards was “cool.”

Practicing pool was not all Danny and I did. Once after playing pool in the hall he and I spent some time “petting” out in the parking lot. Acting as if nothing had happened, we walked back in separately. I was only mildly embarrassed when I discovered I had negligently put my striped shirt back on inside out.

I was connected to that pool hall and to Danny like a fly stuck in a spider’s web. It was not a good place for me, yet I stayed -- I had nowhere else and no one else to go to.

Once I was even robed at gunpoint. After a drinking all-nighter at the hall to celebrate my nineteenth birthday, Danny and I had gone to a golf course where his brother-in-law worked. There we drank free until the bar closed. In the wee hours, the guys had dropped me at my car but drove off as I unlocked it.

My car wouldn’t start. I had gotten out and began walking to a nearby hospital to call for help. Alone, in a bad neighborhood, suddenly I faced with three young men pointing a handgun. The guys were looking for drug money. My life was spared, but the subsequent trial was trauma that I suffered through on my own, too. (It seems like I spent much of my young years suffering -- through my own ignorance and anger -- and through a lack of loving guidance from home. I was a truly a lost soul, putting one foot in front of the other getting through the days -- more like a zombie than a thriving young woman.)

One evening with no warning, Danny decided to unceremoniously reject me claiming he wanted nothing to do with my “designs on him” -- something that his sister had told him. I don’t remember if she lied about that or not, but a scene went down at the hall and Danny asked me to leave.

Of course, I did as I was told, but I stood in the parking lot weeping and frantic wailing, “I loved him and he rejected me!”

Without him I was cast adrift, a cipher again. In my profound isolated pain, there was no other target to attack but myself. I smashed a bottle on the ground, took one of the sharp pieces and began to hack at my wrists. (It was harder than I thought. I didn’t succeed in much more than superficial cuts and a lot of physical pain.)

A couple of patrons stopped at a safe distance and asked, “Can I help you?”

I seem to remember that Danny came out once to find out what was going on. Coldhearted, he threatened to call the police. So, arms dripping with blood and staining my shirt, I left.

(Continued on the next page.)

When I got home my mother heard me crying and called from the TV room, “What’s wrong?”

I wailed, “Nothing!”

Although she came into the hall where she could see that was a lie, evidentially she didn't know how to help me.

Somehow, I managed to survive that night without finishing the job of destroying myself.

Writing about that long ago incident has brought a flood of tears. What a relief that those chaotic days are gone! Now rather than allowing someone else the right to tell me how I should feel about myself, I am master of my own spirit.

Linda (Mar. '08) adds, “A year or so after my slashing incident I had a new boyfriend and I not longer went to the hall. That’s when Danny found me and wanted me back. By then I had moved on, but I remember enjoying the feeling of power I found in rejecting HIM.”

A DIFFICULT GOODBYE

Don and Myra are gone! My next-door neighbors’ son drove them away yesterday after lunch. I'll miss them.

Don is in his late eighties, legally blind, has balance problems and is also a bit forgetful. Myra was an army nurse during WWII and she, too, bears results of aging. She has difficulty walking. Myra recently had a knee replaced and went though a bout of infection. Not long after, she developed a blood clot in one leg.

As you might guess, Don’s care is a problem for Myra. For example, he fell five times in two weeks. Once, due to her own frailty, she had to call an ambulance. In fact, just the other day Don fell three times within two hours! That day Myra had to go out onto the street and get passers-y to come in and help her lift him.

But falling is not his only trouble. Don forgets recent events. One day he neglected to shut off the water in the bathtub. It resulted in flooding the entire room.

Couple of days ago Myra hailed me from her window and asked me to come over saying they wanted to talk to me. Once I was seating on their couch, Myra tearfully told me that they had to go home to Pennsylvania. She shook her head adding that she is no longer able to take care of Don.

I invited them for lunch the day they were to go, preparing homemade Cornish Pasties for us. Together for the last time, we sat at the table and never one to give up on living, Myra want-ed to know how to prepare her own pasty.

I will miss Myra and Don. Often times when I came home late after an evening of dancing, I would hear Don calling to Myra, “Le is home!”

It was nice knowing that they were there, and were -- in a way -- also “looking after me.”

Le (May '07) adds, “Myra is a real dear. She reminds me so much of my late wife, Audrey. (Both were nurses for one thing.) I know if she and Audrey had met, they would have been the best of friends.” (Read on for Le’s recipe.)

Editor’s note: Le’s own Cornish Pasty recipe follows.

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In a large bowl add one cup of ground beef, and one cup of diced yellow onions. Mix these together very thoroughly (with your hands), Add two cups of diced potatoes. (Be sure that the potatoes are at room temperature before peeling, if cold they will immediately turn dark gray upon peeling. You don't want that!) Season with salt and pepper, and mix thoroughly again.

Roll out a Pillsbury Pie Crust to about 1 and 1/2 its original size. Place one full cup of the mix onto the front portion of the pie crust, leaving about 1 - 2 inches free in front and on the sides. (Optional: add 1 or 2 small cubes of suet to the top of the mix.) Then, with your finger moistened in water, moisten the bottom layer of pie crust along the sides and front close to the mix. Fold the back portion of pie crust over the mix and press onto the bottom portion of crust.

Using a moistened fork, crimp the pie crust together. Poke some holes with the moistened fork into the top to allow steam to escape. Trim off excess pie crust (and reuse later). Place on a cookie sheet (covered with tin foil if you wish).

Bake for about 20 or 30 minutes at 275 - 300 degrees. Remove from oven and brush melted butter over the top of pasties, return to oven for another 20 - 30 minutes or more till done.

Note: One pound of ground beef, three or four potatoes, and 2 or 3 onions will make six pasties. Pasties can be frozen as fully baked or as half-baked. Never reheat a pasty in a microwave as it will ruin it.

Le adds, "One pasty is a full meal. Add some ketchup while eating and use milk to wash it all down."

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- -O- U-R - - S-P-E-C-I-A-L- - T-O-P-I-C- -
(Good Friends Earn My Trust By...)

EARN TRUST?

When I first read this topic, "Good Friends Earn My Trust By...", my eye got stuck on "earn." Why would a good friend have to "earn" trust?

Off I went to consult Webster. The dictionary said, EARN--"to receive as return for effort and especially for work done or services rendered".

Why would a good friend have to provide effort, work, or services to get trust? Isn't being a good friend enough to provide a foundation for trust?

Dorothy (Sept. '03) adds, "These are just my thoughts."

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INSTRUCTIONS- (*Reading and Listening*) is next.

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

BOOKS ON MY BEDSIDE TABLE

Editor's note: In this relatively new column you'll see books readers are paging through. It is intended to be a simple list of title and author but comments are appreciated. Enjoy!

Angie (Sept. '07) sends these titles and comments:

The Poet by Michael Connelly *I don't often read thrillers, but this one's pretty good.*

The Hills at Home by Nancy Clark. *I just finished this novel that was described as a modern -day Jane Austen. It was slow but rich with characters.*

Looking for Atlanta by Marilyn Dorn Staats. *I wanted to read this because I love Atlanta, Georgia. It will be especially appreciated by women who grew up in the south.*

The Problem with Pain by C.S. Lewis. *Here is a practical scriptural guide for those with chronic pain and spiritual battles.*

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Frances, Editor says, *I do so much editing and writing that my reading time has suffered. Thus, I listen to taped books in my car. I have enjoyed a series about a British "CIA" officer, the Mamur Zapt, of Cairo, Egypt during the early 1900s. The first book I "read" told about Middle Eastern Christian groups like Copts and Muslim Allah-praisers who dance and stab themselves but do not die or even bleed much. The mystery was called, The Mamur Zapt and the Night of the Dog by Michael Pearce. When those tapes ran out, I turned to tales of British "policeman," Superintendent Richard Jury of New Scotland Yard. I am just finishing, The Stargazy by Martha Grimes.*

At my bedside I have, What's Next? Predictions from the World's Most Compelling People by Jane Buckingham. Here are future- thought essays about surfing, bartending, credit, money, family dynamics, dating, politics and much more. With it is Minyan, Ten Principles for Living a Life of Integrity by Rabbi Rami M. Shapiro. Many of these ten ideas I know: meditation, attention, and repetition. However, I was especially interested in the interpretation of dreams!

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MANAGING THE HOUSE (*Ninepatch Business*) is next.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

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 is most helpful in remembering names is..."

Jane (Mar. '08) shares her experience, "I should state right up front that I don't always follow my own suggestions! (And my memory is also very bad.) But the following things help when I remember to use them! First, when I am introduced to someone and I hear the name, I immediately repeat that name to myself in my mind. Next, I use the person's name when I am talking with them. For example, I might say, 'It's nice to meet you, Frances,' and/or, 'It was nice meeting you, Frances.' After I finish the conversation, I try to replay name and the conversation in my mind, and /or tell my husband about the conversation, using the person's name. I have never had much success with mnemonics -- those picture or association tricks."

Next month's question: "I enjoy being around people who..."

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

MIND TIME

**Silent serenity is found
In centering down**

**To the quiet thoughts
Wafting through the**

**Softly lit corridors
Of your mind**

**On gentle wings
Of hope.**

Simon Stargazer III (Mar. '07) adds, "This, no doubt, is shaped by my early Quaker upbringing."

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(Continued on the next page.)

LIVE OAK

**Dappled shadows,
playing greens,
gnarled gray-browns
against
blue-gold sky.**

**Standing sentinel,
tenacious fingers
rooted deep
into the
Earth.**

**Twisting, turning
tentacles
defying gravity,
pulled down**

**only to sweep
upward,
reaching for
the sun**

**Ever searching,
savoring
the flowing
currents and eddies,**

**orchestrated
by
wind and rain
the
symphony of life**

**The live oak,
time scarred conduit
between
two worlds.**

**One
impermeable
and secure,**

**the other,
protean
but
vulnerable**

APRIL 2008 *e-Ninepatch*

(See *Wallace's* reflection on the next page.)

Wallace (Mar. '07) adds, "Years ago, when my children were young, our backyard had a magnify-cent Live Oak. The tree welcomed my son and daughter with open branches, provided them with a tree house and hundreds of hours of fantasy. The poem was inspired by that wonderful gift of nature."

CITY SKY

**The April heavens
hold me hostage tonight.
Far beyond the sunset, I glory in
a breathtaking deep turquoise sea
with ranging waves of midnight blue clouds.**

**An ordinary homely scraggly tree,
remnant of country,
leans eastward in elegant silhouette
wizened, but wise,
she grieves the fields of yesteryear.**

**The soft city glow lends
a golden cast to the wide sky
holding its breath above.
On the horizon dabs of neon light
quietly paint the final strikes.**

**I want to splash it down on canvas.
It was too real.
No one will believe it.**

Gail (Mar. '07) adds, "This scene made an indelible impression on me one evening in Grand Rapids, Michigan."

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