

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 Bus Ride's chapter about using the spiritual tool, silence.

CHOOSING SILENCE

As I stepped up three steep metal stairs onto the cool Greyhound coach, I prepared to not talk for the twenty-eight hours of that ride. Not making eye contact helped me begin my silent Greyhound journey.

When I started down the aisle to find a seat, I did not look at people and smile in an attempt to be friendly. Rather, I looked at seats. The coach was more than half full. I scanned right and left hoping to see a pair of empty places. Inching up a path of black rubber tread, I found a set half-way back. I edged into them, plopped in the space next to the window and piled my black canvas bag and coat on the place beside me as a silent message, "This seat is taken."

This trip would not be the first time I chose silence for more than a day. In 2001 Shalem, a non-denominational group that offers ministry courses, pilgrimages and retreats, provided the experience in the rolling hills north of Bethesda, Maryland. Our retreat house nestled in a glen not far from the northern beltway that circles Washington D.C. The stone-faced, L-shaped two-story set in the side of a small hill that sloped away into woods.

I had flown into Baltimore's airport from Florida and a taxi delivered me to the facility late Thursday afternoon. The next day I exchanged hellos with other retreatants who straggled in from morning until night. The program began Friday evening at 7:00 with a gathering for an overview, introductions and a brief program. Before we departed into about thirty-six hours of silence, the leader reminded us that "not speaking" included roommates and spouses. Since I had no roommate or spouse, that part was easy. However, eating our first meal together was more of a challenge.

A line of strangers formed at the self-serve warming pagodas. Spooning fluffy yellow and white scrambled eggs and lifting firm brown bacon sticks onto my plate required no words. I poured a cup of coffee and tonged a Danish onto my plate, then followed a gray-haired woman I recognized from Friday night. We left the serving area, crossed a hall and entered a room marked, "Silent Retreat". Four large round tables were each set for eight. I turned to the one where the woman was unloading her tray and set my plate, cup and saucer to her right.

Stiffly I sat, shook out my napkin and bowed my head a moment before picking up my fork. Chewing my eggs, I glanced up and began to watch others arriving at the other side of my table. A slender blond woman set her plate, cup and saucer on the table then turned to a lady in a multicolored jacket who rolled up beside her in an electric wheelchair, one hand holding the tray across her lap. As the seated one waited, the blond lifted a chair and set it beside a nearby wall. Suddenly I felt uneasy. Looking at the woman who could not walk seemed rude. I half expected Mother to poke me and hiss, "Don't stare."

Sipping my coffee, I looked at my plate and thought back. I could not remember ever having a silent meal while sitting with others. I frowned. Maybe I was quiet at the dinner table when I was in elementary school. When Mother called, "Come to the table!" I ran and I sat. After our prayer I wordlessly ate then drank my milk, wanting to finish and escape the big people's talk. Cleaning my plate, I pronounced the magic words, "Excuse me, please." Showing my empty plate, this request commonly earned me, "You are excused," and my getaway plan was complete.

But the summer I was thirteen, things changed. My parents decided it was time I learned some social graces. I was expected to sit until everyone was finished. If that wasn't bad enough, I

also had to learn to drink coffee and participate in the after meal conversation. From then on, mealtime and conversation were like peanut butter and jelly. However, on this retreat I had to consciously not make chat, "It looks like rain," or curiously ask, "So, where do you live?"

Back at the retreat, another lady stepped to my right side and began to unload her tray. I looked up and met her brown eyes. She smiled and bobbed her dark curly head. I returned the gesture. Sipping my water, I glanced around. Others were cutting their ham or biting into a sweet roll. On my left, the gray-haired lady was struggling to open her pint milk carton with gnarled fingers. I laid my hand on her arm. When she looked up, I reached for the small carton, gently pulled it open, and handed it back. Her blue eyes twinkled me a "thank you" and she nodded too, before turning to pour her milk into an empty glass. I could relate to others without words.

Silence transformed time at the table. My brain quieted and other senses seemed stronger. Freed from talking, I watched bright spring green leaves dancing together as large nearby trees waved their branches across the room's picture window. I heard forks and knives clinking against the plates. They set an uneven tempo like a kindergarten rhythm band. My spoon had a percussive solo as I stirred sugar into my coffee. And my Danish! I sunk my teeth into its firm body and the cheesy topping melted smoothly against the roof of my mouth. *Ooo!*

Now, seven years after the Shalem retreat, I began putting silence to work on the Greyhound bus. As I began my overnight ride north I wanted to avoid all contact with others, especially passengers looking for seats. I turned my face to the wide cool window for a few minutes and stared at the cloudless blue sky. Then, once the diesel began to hum, I glanced at the seat next to me and smiled. *Ahhh!* I was alone in both seats.

My silent journey had begun.

Frances Fritzie, Editor

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

Dear Frances,

Your Jan. '08 story, "Finding a Solution" is a nice little story; much better than the earlier draft. The readers (and I) will be wanting to know how the trip turned out and if you were able to change your attitude, as you say you must.

One of the things I noticed you said was, "Just getting ready to go had worn me down." Part of your solution for future trips might be not to overdo before you leave.

Bless'ed be,
June

June Poucher (Jan. '08) also has a story in FABRICS.

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Hi Fritzie,

I especially enjoyed the Nov.-Dec. '07 story from Palma, "Using My Gratitude List." Generally I don't read the paper from front to back but this time I did. It seems everyone has some kind of problem with a child or children.

My son who is staying with us while he gets a divorce has finally decided to stay a few more months. I'm glad. I want him to get everything worked out (including finances) so he will be able to carry on without coming home again. It has been a troubling journey for him but he will be fine. Luckily, he is finding a great deal of comfort in his faith.

Our cat, Mr. Gray, has decided my son now belongs to him. When the young man comes home from work, Mr. Gray waits for him to come in then runs to his bedroom and waits to go in with him. Walking down that hall, I hear Bryan speaking to the cat and Mr. Gray "talking" back.

Talk to you later my friend. Regards to you and JK.

Patricia

Patricia (Oct. '07) adds, "During my son's family trauma I lost twenty three pounds. The first thirteen I shed on purpose. (I had become heavier than ever before and was very depressed.) Now I have lost ten more pounds and am down to a weight I carried most of my adult life. I feel great."

Dear Frances,

Life goes on and on and on. When you think things can't get worse, don't say it out loud. Don't even think it.

The end of last month my husband pulled into the driveway an hour early. That should have alerted me right away something was wrong. He called, "Linda Sue! Get out here right now!"

He pulled me into the back of the garage and said, "I am no longer employed ... and you will not tell your dad! I won't give him a reason to go out and get drunk! We will not discuss this. I will find another job."

He told my dad (who lives with us) he was taking vacation time. He said that he wanted to find a job closer to home.

My husband was home more and on top of that stress, my daughter, Anita, was calling or showing up every day. She was typically crying and screaming, "Why can't I live here?" It wasn't long before my dad was back to drinking, even though we never told him about the job loss.

We won't let her sleep here, but Anita still refuses to do what she needs to: get a job, cooperate with her counselor and doctors. She's at our house most days while I am at work. Dad tells me she cries and screams while making phone calls. She and my husband got into a fight one night. She's used up her days at the shelter so she ended up driving around and sleeping in my brother's driveway. He lives out on a farm. When he got up early to do chores, there she was in their driveway sleeping in her car. He told Anita she couldn't stay at their house or their driveway. *(Continued on the next page.)*

Since then, the situation with Anita has not gotten any better. Today I got home from work and Dad told me she was at the house all day on the phone, crying and yelling.

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He said he just bundled up and sat outside a while so he didn't have to listen to her.

My husband hasn't found another job, either. I tell myself, "This too shall pass," but nowadays add, "I hope." I pray a lot.

Thanks for listening. God bless you. Take care.

Love and prayers,

LindaSue

LindaSue (Nov.- Dec. '07) adds, "Life is sure a roller-coaster ride sometimes."

Frances,

My daughter went to jail for six days after all. The blessing is, the family has been fired up!

Some got on the phone, got her out, and went to court with her yesterday. (They'll go with her again tomorrow, too.) We've all been attending AA meetings with her -- the whole nine yards of giving support.

She seems intent on finally getting help in AA. She will lose her girls if she goes out drinking again. Dilemma: her partner is in denial of his drug problem and the effect it has on my daughter. Ugh.

God bless us everyone,

Gail

Gail (Jan. '08) adds, "Right now Cate and her twins are staying with my other daughter, Marie. Unfortunately, the twin girls will go back to their father -- probably this weekend."

*

Dear Frances,

I have a quiet hour this Saturday night, my partner Bill has gone to bed for a "nap", but he will likely be out for the count. The days are short and the winter clouds bring snow. So the inevitable circle of the year and seasons moves!

The last time that I heard from you, I was touched by your words. My Twelve Step friends are more than a lifeline, they ARE life. They help me in choosing life over misery in times of woe and that is what your words and the words of another person whom I consider a sponsor, too, have done for me during this ordeal. The stories and the sharing wash over my soul like a balm, you understand that, too.

So now to the meat of it all: Bill's recovery from eye surgery is progressing on a very positive path. He is beginning to see clearly again. The recovery is s-l-o-w, which is frustrating for him (and me, as I am still all things to all people), but it is happening. We've been blessed by the support and caring of so many folk. I also believe that my own spiritual recovery rubs off on Bill and helps keep his spirits buoyant. God's blessing! It shines back at me like a mirror and I am grateful.

Bill's vision problems have forced me into parts of the business that I am not normally involved in, which is good, too, but stressful. I've had to learn quickly and handle more responsibility, so Bill and I are both at new levels. *(Continued, next page.)*

He's had to turn over control to me. He can not drive a vehicle, so I a chauffeur for us in both work and personal life. I run the survey instrument in the field and am learning how to make CAD (Computer Assisted Drafting) drawings for our clients. It's kept me

from worrying too much, thinking too much, and as such, kept me somewhat sane. Of course, I continue with my Wednesday night CoDA meetings and that is my real rock of sanity.

I think that I told you that this dire situation has also created a minor miracle for Bill as he has reconciled a 20-year rift with his father, Bill Senior. That reconciliation has opened the door for much for both of us, more than I will relate here. Bill has his father back and it has lightened his spirit considerably. I prayed a long time for this to happen. As you can imagine, the reconciliation was healing for both of them, with many tears.

Unfortunately, although Bill's mother is still alive, she has dementia related to a brain tumor operation some years ago. She's nearly catatonic, which is a real shame, but Bill's reuniting with her was no less special. Recently, we spent Friday night at the house with all of his family at dinner and it was a positive evening. I guess nearly losing his sight and his livelihood has been a bottom of sorts for Bill. Now the changes must be dealt with suddenly, like a dam bursting. But, it is a good thing.

I so appreciated your words to me during the beginning of this crisis. They were accepted and gladly so.

Love,
Linda

Linda (Jan. '08) adds, "As Bill gets better (and I less harried) I'm finding bits and pieces of time to string together for my-self, Frances. I am making the effort, although it is not particularly easy. We are through the worst of this and we are wandering towards the light again."

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Francesca,

Well, I'm doing it. I've had two ECT (Electro Convulsive Therapy) sessions and all went well. We've been getting up at about five AM and heading for the hospital. I'm the first of four or five patients to arrive so I get the first treatment session.

We are in and out of the hospital in roughly an hour. After that we go home and go back to bed. There is some headache, nausea, muscle pain and weird memory loss but it isn't debilitating in any way.

I'm quite hopeful about this -- already I don't feel so weepy and negative. I started to think of something sad and I was able to just refuse to think about it.

I received your encouraging card, too. My family has really been supportive of what I'm doing and I'm relieved about that. It is an awkward thing to talk about and everyone is making the best of it. However, I need to say that my one son, is the exception. He is avoiding the topic even though I sent him an email telling him about it after each of two sessions.

Right now I just can't worry about what he thinks or doesn't think.

Thanks for giving me your support, Francesca. It means a lot.

Love,
Elaine

(Continued on the next page)

Elaine (Jan. '08) says, Last time while lying on the table, I asked what determines how many treatments I'll have. I was told that it depends on how I feel. I was thinking straight right then but I neglected to ask who determines the standard for how I feel."

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

IT'S HEREDITY, BUT NOT FROM MY SIDE OF THE FAMILY

I was raised in an alcoholic family. A common trait I share with others who grew up the same way is that I'm controlling. My father was the alcoholic and my mother, who could not control him or his drinking, tried to control everything else.

One day I was trying to explain to my mother how Al-Anon-- a Twelve Step Program I attend -- works. I told her how I am learning to be less controlling.

She nodded and said, "Yes, you do like to do things your way."

"Well," I replied, "the apple doesn't fall very far from the tree."

After a long pause, she nodded again. "You're right; your daddy was the same way."

June Poucher (Jan. '08) adds, "I have found that these old character defects tend to follow generation after generation until we decide to change them."

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Love is the key to happiness.

James (Jan. '08) expands, "Love is accompanied by the tender feeling of good will."

*

LEARNING TO BE IN COMMUNITY

It was my first morning at the Lakeside Retreat Center. My life had become stress-filled and dreary. I had come to the center at friends' invitation, hoping for a spiritual reconnection. Arriving for breakfast, I volunteered for apple picking. As I wrote my name on the sign up sheet, I envisioned myself alone in the orchard, working hard and lost in my own thoughts. But before I left for the orchard, my friends Tom and Martha (who'd invited me here) arranged a facility tour for me.

I had misgivings about going off with guide Carol, a "stranger," but the tour was great. Carol was a grounded and well-spoken woman. Before long I became totally relaxed and even a little awed that she spent so much time with me, and gave me such individualized attention. *(Continued on the next page.)*

When we got back, I saw people already working out in the orchard and I was rather taken aback about starting late. It worked out just fine, though. As we worked, I fell into a rhythm of camaraderie and community.

My friend, Martha was there, always a joy to be with. She is very loving and serene. Glen, with several heart attacks under his belt and stents in his heart, was assailing those apple trees with pole and hook like a warrior laying siege to Troy. I enjoyed the delicious full-bodied eccentricity of Thelma. Her mouth was non-stop, but her recollections and shared experiences were an elixir. Ben was a caring guy who helped break the conversational ice, asking what I did out in the world. Because of his quiet and laid back nature and his own personal asymmetrical path, I felt a kinship and ease in his company.

Those apple-pickers were the portal that helped me engage with the weekend life of the larger community instead of standing off like the “lone wolf” I can sometimes be.

Michael (Jan. '08) adds, “Ever since my return from that weekend experience of service and community, I have continued to have a strong sense of something larger than myself. Although I am self-employed and work just about 24/7, I have become more actively engaged in the lives of my neighbors...many who are single and/or older. Whenever I start to feel stressed about going the extra mile to meet someone else’s need, I think back to my weekend at the Lakeside Retreat Center, and the memories of those experiences even me right out. Community and outreach are important at whatever level one can participate. I have found that they nourish my very soul.”

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2008 RESOLUTIONS

Every month our e-issue readers get a little note from me in place of the sticky note the paper newsletter readers see. In January I wrote a bit about my New Year’s Resolution for 2008. It follows in part:

“...a New Year’s Resolution apparently comes from breaking apart and analyzing the “solution” of events in my 2007 then deciding what “part” I might like to change. Looking back, there seem to be so many pieces to examine. I am overwhelmed by analyzing each one to decide which I might like to alter.

In fact, focusing on many parts is a habit I want to transform. Most nights, I make myself a ‘do’ list before I go to bed. Before sleep I write down items for the next day. Most are small: “call Nancy,” “thank- you to Sally,” “mail letters,” and “get an allergy shot.”

Completing these small tasks can be the focus of my days. Added to my domestic routine and spiritual focus, days are full. My challenge is to be “in” my active life, but not focus on the hectic little parts (or getting them done). I want to occasionally take a deep breath, and relax my shoulders. I want to allow my hands to be still and watch shadows shift or listen to a breeze in the leafy trees. I want to read, draw and get into my creative side where “time” is not a measure.

So, there’s my resolution. What is yours?”

Several e- readers responded. First I heard from **Lotte** (Jan.’08), “I haven’t made any new year’s resolutions except that I want to become wealthy, either by playing the lotto or otherwise.” Next, I read an e-mail from **Vicki** (Oct. ’02) who said, “(I want to) Start the year off right with easy ways to stay in shape in the new year.” (*Continued, next page.*)

The next day, I heard from **Fred** (Aug.’07). He wrote, “No resolutions this year. Just hoping I can accept the things I can’t change and am successful at changing the things I

can and 'should.' (Whoops, there's that 'should' again.) Now that I think about it, I think I'll resolve not to use the word 'should' in 2008."

As far as my keeping my own resolution goes, I am remembering the slogan, "Progress —not perfection!"

Frances, Editor

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

HONEST AND LOYAL

Good friends have earned my trust by being fine, honest, and loyal people. I tend to hold the individuals I care about to the highest of standards and I'm sorry to say I'm crushed when they don't meet my expectations.

Of course, I don't always meet those same expectations either, so I have to also give them the benefit of the doubt -- at least once. I tell myself, "We're only human."

Trusting people is easy for me. I almost always assume that people I meet will conform to the same set of moral and ethical beliefs that I do. Unfortunately, this isn't always the case!

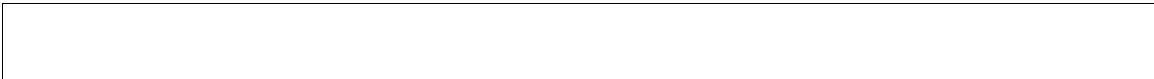
When a friend or relative disappoints me, it takes me quite a while to resign myself to the fact they made a mistake. For some reason I begin every new relationship thinking the other is a better person than I am and I will learn something valuable from him/her.

Sometimes, the thing I must learn, though, is patience. I find we don't see eye to eye on issues like dependability or faithfulness. Other times I discover trusting people easily is not always a good idea. And last, I realize what's right for one person isn't always right for another.

Sadly, it's a lot more difficult to regain trust once I've lost it. Sometimes I never again completely trust a person who has let me down.

Christa Weber Terry (Jan '08) -- see her book list on page 11-- adds, "The book I wrote is making its way through the publishing process and I'm excited to see the final results!"

THREAD – Our Knowing and Our Spirituality, is on the next page.



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

AWAKENING

**Wisps of fog whirl like angels dancing
on sleeping water.
an indigo horizon yields
a giant fiery orb
casting its glimmering gold finger
to our shore.
Lapping waves gently
inhale the pebbled beach
in measured breath.
A fish ripples
the stillness.
Bird songs begin.
Daisies laugh and Queen Anne's bow.
Handsome birch and shapely bough
dress in summer green.
Gazing East
in ageless rite of morning
we greet the timeless light.**

Gail (Jan. '08) adds, "In the summer of '93, my friend Harry and I watched the sunrise from the Lake Superior shores of a town in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan called Christmas."

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February Birthdays
Palma 11
Frances 20

(THREADS continued on the next page.)

WHAT EXCITES ME

**The birth of my first child,
Sailing in the Pacific Northwest with
a pod of orcas arching past,
Kayaking on the Rio Grande
in Big Bend National Park,
Getting the results of a mammogram
that shows no problems,
Climbing a mile and a-half uphill in
Tonto National Forest to see
Upper Cliff Dwellings,
Sharing my daughter's excitement
graduating from law school,
Starting a journey, whether it's
physical, emotional, intellectual,
or spiritual,
Sailing at night and taking the tiller
while my husband slept,
Watching my nine year-old
grandson climb a fifty-foot
climbing wall to the top,
Seeing old friends,
Making new friends,
And living in this wonderful world.**

Jane is married for the second time. She has two children, a daughter and a son, both in their thirties. She also has a nine year-old grandson she thoroughly enjoys. Jane says, "I am retired but still work part-time in the summer and fall. This leaves time for traveling, sailing, and kayaking. I am developing an interest in pre-1840 exploration of the American West as I participate with my husband in attending pre-1840 reenactments. As a result of these experiences, I have learned to weave on triangle and inkle looms. I am also beginning to work with beads. And, I love to read. I always have my nose in at least one book. Right now I am reading, Buddy Holly: A Biography by Ellis Amburn" She adds, "I find that I love new experiences and always have more things that I want to learn. I see learning about myself and growing as a life-long experience."

*

THREAD continues on the next page.

REMNANTS

**We would
carve in
stone,
some of
life
passages.**

**A mute
reminder to
the gods
that we
are.**

**A comic
absurdity --
bordering on
the courageous,**

**reflecting not
only our
mind's folly --
but
the majesty of
our souls!**

Wallace is married and father of two children, both entering middle age. He says he enjoys, "Wondering about wonder and the human condition."

*

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

ON MY BEDSIDE TABLE

Editor's note: This new column will be ongoing. In it you'll see what various readers are paging through. Designed for the busy person, it is intended to be a simple list of title and author. Enjoy!

Christa Weber Terry (Jan.08) lists her bedside stack:
One Perfect Day: The Selling of the American Wedding
by Rebecca Mead *(Continued on the next page.)*

Les Misérables by Victor Hugo (a re-read)

Making a Literary Life

by Carolyn See

Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis

... and one magazine:

“Domino Magazine,” a sort of lifestyle publication I’m reading for work.

**

Don (Mar. '07) says, “Currently I have these six books within arm’s reach:”

Ten Poems to Set You Free

by Roger Housden

Ten Poems to Open Your Heart

by Roger Housden

Seven Sins for a Life Worth Living

by Roger Housden

Why I Wake Early

by Mary Oliver

God, The Failed Hypothesis

by Victor J. Stenger

The Last Stand of the Tin Can Sailors

by James Hornfischer.

This is the story of one of the greatest naval battles of WWII, meticulously researched and beautifully written. Highly praised by all other naval historians, probably of interest mostly to us Navy folks and WWII buffs.

It will be fun to see what other 'Patchers are reading.

<p>- -M-A-N-A-G-I-N-G- - T-H-E</p> <p>- - H-O-U-S-E- -</p> <p>(Ninepatch Business)</p>
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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: “Where do you volunteer?”

GinnyLee (Apr. '07) says, “I volunteered to be a bell ringer for the Salvation Army during the recent holidays. I did my first two hour shift at Walmart. It was a real blessing. Many folks who looked quite poor gave change, one man who was looking quite homeless even poked around in his pockets for some money. (Continued, next page.)

The generosity of people amazed me. Many thanked me for being a bell ringer and one person even verbally blessed me. Just watching the men, women and children come and go in and out of the store for two hours made me realize what need there is in my community. I would encourage anyone to consider holiday bell-ringing. You will be richly blessed!"

**

Don (Feb. '07) responds, "For about ten years I have volunteered for Adult Literacy, first as a tutor, then on the Board of Directors, now on the Speakers' Bureau. Few of us realize that about 20% of our fellow citizens are functionally illiterate ...unable to read at 4th grade level. This means they are unable to fill out a job application, follow written instructions, read their mail or the instructions on their medicine bottles. They are also unable to help kids with homework or read the menu in a restaurant. These folks become candidates for crime, domestic violence, multigenerational welfare recipients and a host of other social problems. We tutors work at the problem, one reader at a time and rejoice to see lives turned around with the gift of reading.

Georgene (Jan. '08) offers these comments, "Long-time readers of Ninepatch know I volunteer with The Garden of Innocence. Our mission is to provide dignified burials to abandoned children. I am their webmaster and monthly newsletter writer, as well as coordinator for all the volunteers who participate in the burial services. I also volunteer as a Board member for Ninepatch, helping to set direction and contributing to ideas for writing topics such as: "Where do I volunteer!"

A third place I give time is compiling and sending out a weekly news-letter to our church high school youth group, giving them information about activities and links to subjects of interest.

Further, I'm involved in several groups with spiritual purposes; a Bible study (I volunteer to periodically facilitate group study), a fund-raising group (I volunteer with numerous Catholic Daughters events), and a spiritual growth group (creating Cursillo environments to support a deepening relationship with God).

I volunteer as often as I can, because I believe that it is in working within the community that I am the community.

However, volunteering takes a lot of energy and organization... much of which I am losing as I age.

Carol (Jan. '08) says, "I have volunteered for my local school district for more than ten years laminating teaching aids and special projects, mostly for second and third grades. It is a very easy, low-stress job that takes about one hour a week.

I also do some volunteering through my church for a couple of agencies. One is a United Way agency which provides housing for people in need. I donate basic items, such as bedding and hygiene products, and help assemble these items in welcome baskets, which I then help deliver to people moving in. I do gardening with other volunteers for another agency that houses troubled children.

On a more personal level, I have regularly helped one of my friends who is physically disabled. (Continued, next page.)

Volunteering gets me out of my comfort zone and opens my eyes to the needs of others, which I might otherwise ignore. It encourages me to ponder more seriously how to make the world a better place.

***Elaine** (See also her letter in *AROUND THE FRAME*) says, “My volunteer work is limited to a humane shelter where I work with dogs and cats waiting to be adopted. This work is good for me. It makes me feel useful; the animals are a source of love; and, they provide me with an opportunity to give care and comfort.*

Next Month’s Question:

“What or who do you daydream about?”

*Are you a blogger? *Ninepatch* is planning a blog. If you ideas to share or can take a turn at writing, please tell Frances at the email address below.*

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