

June 2008 e-Ninepatch

Ninepatch

Stitch - by - Stitch

W - e - C - r - e - a - t - e - O - u - r - L - i - v - e - s -

Editor's note: I was ten hours into my bus ride north when I had a delay. Last month's story ended:

Like stumbling into a puddle along my path, suddenly I was wet with "what- if's." "What if I'm stranded here? What if I don't make my Cincinnati connection? What if I don't get my Detroit bus? What if I arrive at my Grand Rapids destination after the last city transit bus run?"

LETTING GO OF OUTCOMES

What could I do after all? It was after midnight and I was stranded in Atlanta's Greyhound Terminal. Assembled near Gate 9 with fifteen others in varying states of distress and dismay, I waited.

About 2:30AM, the ceiling voice announced, "Passengers for Dalton, Knoxville, London and Cincinnati, Bus 26 is now boarding through Gate 9..."

I calculated. A two- hour wait had been scheduled between my original Cincinnati bus and my Detroit connection. *I might still make it....* "It'll be OK," I told myself, "Just get on and ride along."

Though sleep-deprived and dull, I put on a smile and nodded to the new driver as I climbed aboard. His face remained straight -- even grim. *This must be a replacement coach... Maybe an extra run for him.*

Grabbing the first set of double empty seats, I shook my head a little. I was still four rows back from the driver's aura of protection *Oh well.* I climbed in and set my large black bag on the seat near the aisle, hoping to again ward off a seat mate. Then I closed my eyes and laid my tired head against the window's cool glass. *At least now, I can relax and sleep.*

Already drifting off, I started when I heard, "Is this seat taken?" Shaking off zzz's, I sat up and shook my head. "Hi, I'm Kathy!" said the round blond clad in a loose long-sleeved green T and blue jeans.

Unable to be polite and also avoid words I responded, "I'm Frances." I smiled and pulled my black bag down, stuffing it by my feet. Though the coach was loaded, without a word of explanation our new driver stepped off the bus and closed the door.

No one was talking. *They're all numb, too!* After a minute or so, a new passenger a few rows up and to the right leaned into the aisle. Looking past Kathy, I saw his tan shirt nearly matched his thirty-ish face. "My name is My- kay- el ." He spelled it, "M-i-c-h-a-e-l. I have some information I want to share ..." He spoke loud enough for everyone to hear.

Mi-cha-el continued, warning of the coming of national identity cards, "They'll replace drivers' licenses," he added, then predicted everyone would have to get one by 2010. He went on more quietly but still projecting his voice, "... a government control scheme..."

He stopped, and glanced over his right shoulder toward the bus door. *Bet he's not supposed to be talking like he is.* (Continued on the next page.)

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Then, he leaned back into the aisle and continued his discourse, “In May of 2005, President Bush passed a bill that will lead to these national identity cards.”

He lowered his voice, “Soon we’ll all be numbers!”

Caught up in his oration, my seat partner’s eyes grew wide.

Everyone seemed to be listening as the neatly groomed man continued, “The government wants to implant tracing devices in our children. They’ve already started with pets! They appeal to owners to have their dogs and cats implanted so they can be traced in case they’re lost or stolen.”

Kathy breathed, “I knew it! ... I warned my son to be careful about operations! You never know what they can put into you!” Absently, she pushed up her long sleeves and I noticed a small black cross tattooed on her inner forearm.

“Before long everyone will be traced by satellite...” Mi-cha-el began when suddenly the bus door opened and our driver climbed the steps then slid into his seat. Abruptly, Mi-cha-el straightened in his seat and stopped talking.

I wonder what he’s selling.

When the interior went dark and road sounds began, I drifted off to sleep, waking only to reposition myself several hours later at the Dalton stop in northern Georgia.

It was daylight when we reached our next stop, Knoxville, where the driver announced fifteen minutes for breakfast. I’d slept a fitful hour or two. Groggily, I stepped into the aisle to file off, stretch and get something to eat. *I hope the restroom is clean.*

Returning, I traded seats with Kathy who had taken the open seat next to the aisle originally, but had mentioned she preferred the window. I didn’t need to lean on it, now. I doubted I’d sleep much more since sunshine streamed warmly into the coach. As the bus roared out of our breakfast stop and bumped along to I-75, I looked down the aisle one row and to my right where I studied sleeping Mi-cha-el’s shaven head. *Hmm.*

I pulled Long Quiet Highway out of my canvas bag, opened to the book mark and reentered the story. In her memoir, Natalie Goldberg wrote of learning Zen, and how using the Buddhist sitting meditation enhanced her writing. *Being silent can be meditation....*

Now and then I’d look up. Mi-cha-el was directly in my line of vision. Red lettering on the left of his polo shirt indicated he represented some company, though I could not make out the name. Once when I looked up from my book, he awoke and stepped into the aisle. Stretching, he reached up to the luggage rack and pulled down a frosted plastic gallon jug of something clear. He poured a little in a small white paper cup and drank it before returning the jug to its place above his head. *Hmm ... Water? Something else?*

After a while I tired of guessing about Mi-cha-el and the contents of his jug. I laid my head back against the seat, closed my eyes and drifted.

Suddenly I heard a commotion. From behind me a man hollered, “Hey Driver! This guy back here’s disturbing everyone!”

Frances Fritzie

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

Hi Frances,

I finally had time to read through the April edition of *Ninepatch*. I thoroughly enjoyed your description of the waiting in the Atlanta Terminal.

I was struck with how different we are -- in small ways. It's good to know that we are different and yet share so much, too. I remember my mother worrying about how clean a bathroom was. I never noticed until I became an adult. Now I notice, but it's usually no big deal.

When I wait for a plane or bus or train, I don't pay too much attention to my surroundings. I might notice some of the people. But, to me the waiting time is a chance to read!!!

Jane

Jane (May '08) adds, "This month I am reading A Map of the World by Jane Hamilton."

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Hi Frances,

I've been traveling. I had a wonderful trip across country to the west coast on the train. The best part was going through the Rocky Mts. I have never seen anything so fantastic and we had a whole day. I sat in the lounge area that has larger windows. It had snowed. Fluffy white sparkled over the already semi-frozen Colorado River. Limbs of the evergreens hung low with so much weight. Later, The Sierra Nevadas were also full of evergreens but they lacked the rugged terrain and the great Colorado River.

Eventually I did make it to Washington, a beautiful area with lots of pine trees and inlets. Then I re-boarded the train and headed for the Los Angeles area where I will visit before leaving for New Mexico.

This trip has been very relaxing. I've enjoyed every moment of it -- not worrying over the past or trying to figure out how to have a good future, just living wonderfully in the present!"

When more in my life happens, I'll write!

Much love,
Patience

Patience (May '08) adds, "The train is one of the best ways to see the United States and all its wonder. I'm already looking forward to my next trip."

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Dear Frances,

Making big changes requires much research, thought, counsel and prayer.

Since I haven't lived up north for many years, I thought I had better try a winter there before I sell out here in Florida and return. I put an ad in the Indiana paper regarding trading houses. I've gotten several responses. One is a widow with a girl-friend. She has a four year old house about half an hour from my grandchildren. But, she can't come until January and would stay until the end of March. I hate the thought of driving that distance to Indiana in January. Bad weather is likely and there's not so much daylight to use and snow and ice are always possible. Of course I could stop in a motel if the weather was bad. Really, I have wanted to go earlier when weather isn't so bad. Lots of details to go through and I'm not sure I'll do this yet.

This might be a crazy idea... I continue to pray and meditate about it.

Best wishes.

Sending hugs.

Dottie

Dottie (Mar. '08) adds, "My boyfriend and I went to Books- a- Million where we read for awhile and then shared a pumpkin spice drink. (Yum!) Peaceful time. I enjoy being there. They have a children's reading area where I smile to see parents reading to their children, sometimes sitting on the floor with them."

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Hi Frances,

My daughter Cate's pretrial was postponed. I wish I could say her drunken tragedy brought her to her senses. While she is in rehab (and will need treatment for a long time), she continues to behave -- at least with her attorney -- like a still-sick person. Our hope is a new therapist will be able to help her.

The good news is her partner and father of the twins is becoming a changed man. He seems a changed in that during the moving of "Cate's things," he engaged in a compassionate exchange with my son, who was picking up her belongings.

Thank God for good friends and neighbors in our subdivision. I'm especially grateful for my 12-Step friends. A few are coming on Sunday to plant a tree in our yard in Kelsey's memory.

God bless,

Gail

Gail (May '08) adds, "Between families we are in the 'forgiveness' stage. Blame and guilt still surface from time to time. God bless us all."

Dear Frances,

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Thank you for sending me the letter and book of readings. I will read one every day. My dad also wants to look at it, too. That's nice -- we can talk about what it says later.

In your letter you said you had to put off an overnight away to celebrate your fourth wedding anniversary due to guests. *(Continued on the next page.)*

My husband and I have been together, separated and together again for thirty-eight years. Sometimes our wedding feels like yesterday. Sometimes it feels like a hundred years ago.

It's nice that your hubby, JK, is sentimental and remembers your special date. Enjoy it while you can. My husband used to be romantic, too. We took lighthouse tours, walked on the beach and talked for hours. This year he didn't even remember our anniversary! (If it weren't for our kids and grandkids, I don't suppose he'd remember my birthday, either.)

You wrote, "Love has to be the frosting on the marriage cake, not the whole cake itself." Guess we have a cake with no frosting. We are married, but I don't feel loved. We don't seem to share anything any more -- we don't even sleep in the same bed since we moved into this house. We don't seem to have much in common except the bills! So, what is the wedding cake supposed to be made of?

My husband talks to our younger daughter, Sally, about everything he used to discuss with me! In fact, one way I know what he is doing with our finances and is planning is, I listen in when he talks to her on the phone.

I feel like an outsider in my own family. Luckily, I have my dad to talk to and I still pray a lot to my Heavenly Father, too.

Thank you for your concern. Please pray for me.

LindaSue (May '07) adds, "I still repeat slogans I leaned when I could attend my 12 Step group. I say, Easy Does It, But for the Grace of God and One Day at a Time over and over every day."

Results trump actions.

James (May '08) says, "An act may last only a few seconds but the result may linger for years."

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

(Our Experiences)

40,000 BOOKS

I love to read everything from art books to fiction and non-fiction. I have been a kind of collector. I had books from my college days-- decades ago.

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Since I was never able to toss out one book, I had a storage unit full of boxes and boxes filled with my books. However, after my thyroid cancer operation, it was time, to part with my treasure. *(Continued on the next page)*

I thought that somebody else might be able to enjoy some.

So it was "The Friends of the Library" came every day and loaded up. Sometimes they even brought two cars.

In those days, I never threw out a nail, either -- whether it was rusty or not. In fact, after my purge I still have a couple of railroad nails. I kept them as a reminder not to hold on to anything except lovely memories.

Lotte deRoy (May '08) adds, "I am presently reading *The Brotherhood of the Holy Shroud* by Julia Navarro."

SMILE POWER

My friend Joyce and I were heading to a dance in a neigh-boring town. Being a bit late, I was pushing the speed limit by ten percent - - or more.

Too late, I spotted an on-coming highway patrol car. The diligent patrolman immediately made a U-turn, put on his red flashing light, and pulled me over.

Then followed the usual sequence of conversation, "Hello Sir. Do you realize that you were speeding?"

I nodded my grey head.

Thereupon, the officer asked, "And why were you speeding?"

Lifting my shoulders and cocking my head slightly I said, "Well sir, I was heading to the dance at the Senior Citizen Center. I was anxious to step out on the hardwood, and show off my lovely date, Joyce.

The officer looked at his watch and replied, "You *are* indeed late for that dance-- you've missed thirty minutes already." The man in blue bent down and looked across the car at Joyce.

Joyce gave the officer the brightest, warmest, ear to ear, most devastating smile you can imagine.

I saw the officer go weak in the knees and his mind go blank. Mentally I shook my head. I empathized with him. I had often -- and luckily still am -- graced by Joyce's smiles.

Le (Apr. '08) adds, "The officer gave me a warning ticket and told me to tear it up -- Joyce and I enjoyed the dance immensely."

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CONSERVING MY ENERGY

As I approach the end of another decade, I am feeling my years. There is definitely a decline in my energy level. I am learning if I stop and rest before I get overtired, I recover more quickly. However, it has been difficult to identify the exact point when I need to stop. I saw a rather amusing lesson in a recent incident.

Cleaning out files in my den, I shredded discards. After more than an hour, the machine stopped working. I looked up the warranty and found it had expired a few

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months previously. (I wasn't disturbed, because the shredder didn't 'owe' me any-thing. It had given good service. I hoped a new one would be as dependable.)

(Continued on the next page.)

The following day, an inkling told me to try the shredder again. It worked perfectly! I realized the shredder had an automatic shut-off to prevent its overheating! I thought how aptly that experience would serve me in learning to manage my own energy.

Rather than focusing on completing a task, it would be a great help to just stop and rest. That way I won't 'burn up my motor'.

June Poucher (May '08) adds, "I'm happy to know I'm still teachable!"

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

BOOKS ON MY BEDSIDE TABLE

Editor's Note: Readers' monthly reading.

June Poucher (See her story above in FABRICS) says, "Here is the latest list from my bedside table:

A New Earth: Awakening to your Life's Purpose, by Eckhart Tolle. The author shows how the ego creates much of the dysfunction that leads to unhappiness and what to do about it.

Desperate Passage :The Donner Party's Perilous Journey West by Ethan Rarick. This book tells the full story of eighty-one people trapped in the Sierra Nevada mountains in the winter of 1846.

Still Life With Chickens: Starting Over in a House by the Sea, by Catherine Goldhammer. This is a delightful memoir of a newly divorced woman's fight for survival.

J.D. ROBB

It is so funny that Frances asked what I am reading since I have been on a reading marathon.

Currently I am rereading all of Nora Roberts writing as "JD Robb" IN DEATH science fiction /murder mysteries that take place in the 2050s.

This is a series (so far about 20 volumes) that follows the day-to-day career of Detective Eve Dallas, her romance and marriage to Roake. Each book contains one or two murder mysteries, beautifully realized character development of multiple people around Eve, and her funny, poignant, and deep discoveries of what it means to go from being alone to being married.

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I just finished Seduction In Death and I am about to read Reunion In Death. The wonderful part about these mysteries is how the author really brings out the pathos of murder. She also connects the reader to how Eve Dallas suffers and fights for the dignity and justice for “her” victims.

I highly recommend Roberts under the name “J. D. Robb.”

JW/ Joy (Mar. '05) adds, “I left Florida two years ago and am living in Alabama with my eighty-six year- old- mother who recently complained of feeling old for the first time!”

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NOT AT MY BEDSIDE TABLE

I used to read in bed before going to sleep every night. Now, we keep the bedroom just for us, no TV or books. Instead, I read in our front living room or our guest bedroom/meditation room or (weather permitting) our sun porch.

Currently, I'm reading four non-fiction books. First, there's The Vein of Gold: A Journey to Your Creative Heart by Julia Cameron. I have several of her other books and find them helpful and inspiring in my own writing. Let me also add, I don't follow her course entirely. Specifically, I don't do “Morning Pages” each day as she suggests.

Second, though I'm not an “Oprah Book Club” person, I have been on board with her recent book, A New Earth by Eckhart Tolle. As far as new-agey, self-help-ish books go, I have found this book very beneficial in my own life. The author brings readers on a fascinating journey of our lives and how we can see ourselves more clearly and live better and really create “a new earth” with a change in our self-awareness.

Finally, I'm getting great understanding from two companion books, If Grace Is True: Why God Will Save Every Person and If God is Love: Rediscovering Grace in an Ungracious World, by Phillip Gulley and James Mulholland.

Both authors are ministers in different faith traditions. They make an excellent argument for their stand, “I believe God will save every person.” They go into great detail how humans treat each other and judge each other and how humans can live in fear and hate.

Throughout their books, they bring their argument back to discovering ways to live together in grace, love and hope. These two wonderful theological books are for anyone seeking spirituality and understanding.

Peter (Apr. '08) adds, “While I am not reading any novels right now, I do have favorite fiction authors: Graham Greene and John Irving. While I read for enjoyment, I also seek insight and inspiration for my own creative writing.”

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A WONDERFUL MOVIE

If you haven't checked it out already, “Starting Out In The Evening” is a wonderful movie with deep insight into a writer's passion to write.

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Leonard Schiller is an aging novelist. Formerly famous, he's been all but forgotten by the readers, colleagues, and publishers who once praised him.

Battling illness, he is struggling to finish a novel that has been in process for ten years. A graduate student asks to interview him as the subject of her thesis. She convinces him that she can re-introduce his writing to the world.

It's a marvelous story of what happens when he lets her into his reclusive, controlled life.

Georgene (May '08) adds, "Things are pretty good here. I'm battling a bit of depression. Old stuff, but I know what to do. I have to own what is real and not create my own world."

ANOTHER LOOK AT *EAT, PRAY, LOVE*

I have my nose buried in a book titled, *Eat Pray Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert. (Liz/Moscar also mentioned it 1-08)

It's a memoir. Elizabeth tells of her difficult divorce and depression. Then she sets out on a journey to heal herself. First she travels to Italy, where she goes to class to learn the Italian language, and also indulges in Italian food. (She wants to regain her grieving weight loss.)

Next she goes to India to live in an Ashram. She does physical labor and her Guru teaches her meditation with the help of a mantra. She says, "You can talk to God through prayer or you can listen to God or have a union with God through meditation." Before the latter can happen you have to clear your mind of all thinking.

Elizabeth was struggling with this part of the meditation. Then one day while she was meditating, she thought she went to sleep and she felt a blue energy pulsing through her body.

It scared her so much that she called out, "I'm not ready yet!" She opened her eyes and the electrical energy went away. That blue energy is called kundalini shakti. People who encounter the divine, experience this energy.

Elizabeth read up on divine encounters and stated, "Saint Teresa of Avila described her union with God as a physical light through seven inner 'mansions' of her being, after which she burst into God's presence. She used to go into meditative trances so deep that the other nuns couldn't feel her pulse anymore." The seven inner 'mansions' are probably what we know as chakras.

Towards the end of her stay at the Ashram, Elizabeth spent four to five hours a day in the meditation caves experiencing shakti or just quiet contentment.

When she left India she went on to Indonesia and stayed on an Island called Bali. There she befriended Ketut, a medicine man and Wayan, a medicine woman.

It was in Bali she completed her journey. She learned to help others and to love herself.

Lynan (Mar. '08) tells of a recent trip to California, "My son took us to church at the San Juan Bautista Mission. This mission is over 200 years old and the San Andreas Fault line runs along the side of the church. (You can actually see the fault line in the ground.) At the little gift shop, my husband had to buy Alfred Hitchcock's movie "Vertigo" because

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it was filmed at the mission. When we got back to Florida and watched the movie we saw that James Stewart had parked his car at the exact spot in front of the church where we parked our car! What a strange feeling that was.

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SOLE MATES

Currently I am reading an obscure book called, Sole Mates. It's a true story of, "One Couple's Walk across America," written by Jerry and Cindy Schultz. They are part of the Habitat for Humanity family and many people from across the country are hosting them and acting as liaisons during their travel.

I was afraid it might be slow reading but after starting it yesterday I'm already half way through. It reads well.

Palma (Mar. '08), adds, "I was visiting relatives in California this winter and picked up this title at a library book sale in Manhattan Beach when on a Sunday drive with my son and his wife."

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**- -M-A-N-A-G-I-N-G- - T-H-E
- - H-O-U-S-E- -
(Ninepatch Business)**

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

This month's question:

"When I am feeling overwhelmed, I usually..."

Christa Terry (Feb. '08) says, "When I'm feeling overwhelmed, I usually panic for a bit. That could mean crying or getting very angry for no reason or even cleaning up the kitchen in an agitated sort of way. (Messes are an easy target for my irritation when I'm feeling overwhelmed.) It's also when I'm most apt to nag my husband. After my panic, however, I get down to business.

Plenty of things have overwhelmed me in the past year. For example, I planned a wedding taking place in Florida while living in Massachusetts. Not long after that, my husband and I shopped around for and bought our very first house. Then a major publisher asked me to write a whole book in just two months!

The problem about feeling overwhelmed is it does nothing to help me get out from under all of the stuff that caused the trouble. That's why I give myself the "time to panic." In a way that time is wasted, but I seem to recover more quickly once I've just flailed about miserably a while . Once my tears are out and the anger has dissipated, I

usually feel more ready to tackle the tasks at hand. Right now those are: promoting my book, *iDo: Planning Your Wedding with Nothing But 'Net*, finishing up a new book proposal, and trying to stay on top of the weeds in my yard”

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Next month's question:

“Where do you go to meditate or pray?”

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- -O- U-R - - S-P-E-C-I-A-L- - T-O-P-I-C-

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*(Would the girl/guy I used to be,
be proud of the woman /man I have become?)*

Editor's Note: This new topic will continue through Nov-Dec. '08.

Frances, Editor says, “I was eight years old and in Third Grade when I tried to write my first book -- a sequel to *Black Beauty*. My eight-year- old self would be delighted I am close to finishing the “guts” of *Bus Ride* which at this time stands at 19,000 words.”

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

(Our Knowing and Our Spirituality)

PATCHWORK VEST

On Harry's birthday

We laughed until our sides hurt.

Our cheeks tired

from talking, words falling

over each other in red neon sparks,

squeaks, shrieks

glasses clinking.

Sarah sucked a lemon, spewed juice.

Tears streamed down Don's face.

I blew my nose.

We snorted like horses,
stomped our hooves,
slapped our withers
- and each other.
We looked like a gay patchwork vest.

(Continued on the next page.)

Gail (May '08) says, "This poem was written as an exercise in writing poetry. It was not an actual happening, but it was typical of get-togethers with our friends. The names of friends at the time are actual. Harry is a barrel of fun. We thoroughly enjoy ourselves."

MY GRAMPA

If I may be ever so bold,
My Grampa has always been old.
A wrinkle here, a wrinkle there -
I'd know him just about
anywhere.

But the best memories of mine
Come from special together time
And now I remember so well
Stories of the past he'd tell.

Yet, then all the life he'd live:
Was the real legacy he'd give,
I have such a lasting pleasure
From this rich paternal treasure.

Simon Stargazer III (May '08) adds, "I was born so late, my grandparents died when I was still young. However, Grampa lived the longest and I hold sweet memories from our short, infrequent visits. He taught me how to use a sling to throw stones like David did when he slew Goliath. And I liked to listen to him strum the guitar. He also made me realize the power of words when he asked me to describe the leaning tower of Pisa and a spiral staircase -- without using my hands. My words impressed him. He said I had a good imagination and the ability to describe things well."

JUNE
Ninepatch Birthdays

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(*THREAD is continued on the next page.*)

A JOURNEY BACK

The journey I desire
Is one that would take me
Back in time to that day
I knew I was a sinner
I needed Christ
The day He drew me to Him
From there
The path I'd take
Would be different
Many roads
I would not go down
Things passed by
Would not be overlooked
I would still stumble
But this would not stop me
The uphill road would still be steep
Yet I would trudge on
Going downhill I would not slide
But use that time for reflection
And when the fork in the road appeared
I'd stop to pray
And choose the direction
God was leading me
And wouldn't be driven
By fear.

Angie (May'08) says, "The thoughts that led me to write this poem were many. Mainly I was regretting all the mistakes - - real and otherwise -- that I felt I made as a parent. In the last month my remaining two left home. It is a bittersweet time in my life. I know the Lord has a purpose in all that has crossed my path during the past year. I truly want to follow Him."

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