

May 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: Following is my fifth story from my '07 Bus Ride — a spiritual journey.

From end of Chapter 4: I had not been paying attention ... *Did I miss my bus departure?* 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.*

EASY DOES IT

Eyes wide and senses alert, I scanned the terminal for someone I recognized. Seeing no one I began touring the room with my suitcase like a kid pulling his Radio Flyer, inspecting the neighborhood.

When I discovered my own gate, I sighed in relief. Tucked behind a half-wall, Gate 9 was beside the glass double doors where I had pushed into the terminal hours earlier. *How did I miss this?* Frowning, I mentally replayed entering, then nodded. *The room was so packed then I was overwhelmed. Looking only at the back wall, I pushed through the crowd without seeing the gate right here. OK, OK. Easy does it.*

Surveying the assembled band I noticed many waiting postures. Leaning against duffel bags, several folk had their eyes closed. A Wrangler-clad couple who narrowly made the bus in Florida exchanged words. The young man was bending solicitously over his wife as she sat sulkily on the floor leaning against a suitcase and clutching a pillow. She shook her head dully and shrugged listlessly, refusing whatever it was he offered.

Beyond them, Bigvoice sat alone, head back and eyes closed. Unfamiliar others sat with their backs to me on a wire bench, faces tilted up to David Letterman on the giant TV screen hanging from the ceiling. At my end of the bench I noticed the slightly balding head and silk shirt of the man who had sat in front of me all the way to Atlanta. I'd watched him at our dinner stop.

Different from other blue-jeaned riders, the Detroit-bound man wore designer denims sparkling with leg and pocket stencils. Stylish gold wire-rims perched on his nose in addition to the smooth green whose sleeve I had noticed on the bus. Tall and sounding educated, I heard he tell a seat partner, "I've been in Miami, visiting my daughter and a new grandchild."

Behind the bench where Silk Shirt and others relaxed, a little train of suitcases stood ready in front of the gate's door. *It must be OK to leave your things here. No one looks concerned.* Adding my green suitcase as caboose to the others, I sat down on the end of a second bench behind Silk Shirt and Bigvoice. *I'll keep on eye on them. They are going my way and seem to know what to do.* Sitting behind Silk Shirt as I had for more than two hundred miles, I breathed more easily.

However, before long he stood up, stretched and walked over to where I sat. Smiling and lifting his eyebrows as though to say, "What else can we do?" he said, "We wait ..."

Looking up at him from the end of the bench, I turned up the corners of my mouth and nodded. As he sat down next to me, I looked down at my open spiral-bound. Wanting to keep my commitment to a silent journey, I hoped to discourage casual chat.

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Taking my cue, Silk Shirt turned away from me and started a conversation with a couple seated there. Before long, an unexpected voice from the ceiling blared: "Attention Gate 9 passengers! Bus 35 scheduled to depart at 12:20 to Dalton, Knoxville, London and Cincinnati is delayed."

I caught my breath, *Oh no, a delay!* Exhaling slowly, I shook my head, *My friends warned me!*

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?"*

Frances Fritzie, Editor says, *"Telling my story is healing."*

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

Dear Frances,

Many thanks to all *Ninepatch* readers who sent along compassionate comments and for your prayerful words of comfort during our family tragedy.

The family situation continues to unfold. Keely, the surviving twin, is living with her father's mother a mile or so from her dad and in the same school district. Since my daughter Cate's partner is also culpable in this case, he has just one hour a week physical supervised time with Keely.

Our family seems to be on the outside looking in as Cate awaits court dates and charges. However, three of us have offered to take custody of Keely. We are hoping that my son will be chosen. He may be smiled on because he and his wife are involved with their church and scouts.

According to her other grandmother, Keely is doing better than "the rest of us." Eventually, I'm sure her frozen feelings will come out. (God only knows how, when and where.)

It is a sad, sad situation. We are trying to accept what we cannot change and do the loving thing. It's not easy.

God bless.

Gail

Gail (April '08) adds, *"Our family is in the process of set-ting up a trust fund for Keely's welfare."*

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(Continued on the next page.)

Dear Frances,

I have read books by Jan Karon and Beverly Lewis. Right now I am reading mysteries. In fact, my life is a kind of mystery. It goes around and around. It seems to come back to the same place and starts over again. Like a confusing mystery, my clues never seem to go anywhere.

Today I have the day off and the house to myself for a change. My husband lost the part-time job he had, then he lazed around the house for nearly two weeks eating and sleeping. He said nothing. I had to take care of everything, alone.

That went on until last week, when I took my dad and went to look at apartments. (My pay can cover an apartment better than this house, which I never wanted in the first place.) Anyway, that's when my husband started looking for work again and now he's got a job.

Yesterday our troubled daughter Anita, showed up where I work. She was full of anger. She said she is tired of staying in shelters. My husband had said to ignore her... easy for him to say! He's pushed her away from the day she was born.

I think of what James said, in the Feb.'08 issue, "Love is the key to happiness." I don't agree. I've had love and it doesn't seem to be accompanied by tender feelings of good will. (Maybe it did at one time, but it has faded.)

Instead, hope is happiness, God's love is happiness, and peace for myself and the world is happiness.

LindaSue (April, '08) adds, "For me, today, sharing life and goals would be happiness. I feel very isolated now my husband doesn't talk to me anymore. If he isn't sleeping, reading the newspaper or watching TV, he is at work."

Hi Fritzie!

I think about you a lot, my friend. I often miss Florida and our home there. However, I do not miss the hot weather.

Though I like the cold weather in Ohio, I have to admit, that I am glad to see winter finally leaving us behind. This has been a long one. I like it chilly, but last winter was too cold for too long!

The thing I like the most about Ohio is the spring time smells: grass and the fields when they are planted. In fact, I love our storage shed because of its odors of dirt and fertilizer. I also like to visit Lowe's because of the aromas in their garden shop.

I can see our asparagus peeking through straw covering our garden. Soon my husband and I will pull the straw off my plants so they can have the sun.

My son, who's in process of divorce, is still living with us. (We have given him until the end of May.) He is making some progress putting his life back together and now really needs to get his own place.

Going to close now, my friend. Take care. I will talk to you later.

Patricia

Patricia (Feb.'08) adds, "Mr. Gray is still full of energy. He is the cutest cat, Fritzie. My husband and I laugh at him all the time. He has such big eyes --they

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look at us in such innocence. *****

Dear Frances,

As you know, during the last several months I have been on a sabbatical in Canada. It has been a life-giving experience for me as it gave me time to do some inner work, spiritual renewal and relax.

My congregation has asked me now to go to New Mexico. I will be there toward the end of next month. We are still working on establishing some mission work in Mexico and Colombia. However, first there is a lot of collaboration necessary with other governments, church arms and missionaries.

Meanwhile, I will work with the very poor in the inner city and rural surroundings of Albuquerque. I am very pleased about this.

Much love to you.

Patience

Patience (Apr. '08) adds, "This is turning out to be quite the adventure as I will learn much about New Mexico and its people."

*

Dear Frances:

In answer to your email question, yes, we still have my horse Katie, though I no longer try riding her since she threw me. I intend to take her to a young Amish man we found through acquaintances, for evaluation and further training. Then I'll decide whether to keep her or sell her and buy a different horse. Right now, tending to her needs gets me out of myself during the day and keeps me active.

My partner is definitely back to himself after his eye surgery. He is and has been driving for a while now, has new glasses and life is back to normal, whatever that is. He seems very happy and I am happy for him. To be able to see again is a great gift.

It's also a relief not to do all of the chores. Yet that experience and Bill's reconciliation with his father has shaken loose a lot of stuff for both of us in an extremely positive way.

I haven't even looked at the latest *Ninepatch* yet, either, and I usually get to that right away. I so enjoy them.

Be well and happy,

Linda

Linda (Apr. '07) adds, "I'm back to myself, and feeling centered though I think I have been missing a spiritual connection with a faith group. It is difficult to find a group because my beliefs are complex. Nevertheless, I am considering a couple of options."

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(FABRICS--Our Experiences begins on the next page.)

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

MAY DAY

I was substituting in an ESOL (English Spoken as Other Language) class on May first. A student from Mexico asked me if this day were a special holiday here.

“Not that I am aware of,” I replied. “Why? Is it a special day in Mexico?”

Gabriella told me that in her country, this day is a festival for children.

I replied, “When I was a child in England, we used to dance around the maypole on May Day.”

I recalled somewhat fuzzy images of us, primary school students, prancing around a tall pole that magically appeared every year at this time. Then more memories percolated up from the depths.

This pole was festooned with long, wide ribbons attach-ed to its top. Each child held the free end of one of these ribbons. We stood in a circle around the maypole -- every other child facing in one direction while the counter-parts faced opposite. As we danced our hora -- we wove our ribbons in and out of those held by other children. Thus it was: step one - ribbon under, step two- ribbon over and so on until the adults told us to stop.

Was there music playing while we hopped and skipped our merry way? I don't remember. What lingered are the sensations of joy, excitement and freedom as we scampered happily around the proscribed circle.

When we finished, our maypole was crowned in the glory of a multicolored weave of ribbons whose ends fluttered in the breeze.

Liz/Moscar (Jan. '08) adds, “What a wonderful day! No wonder I used to look forward to going to school in those heady times.”

TWO MOTHERS

As Mother's Day approaches, I am in no doubt as to what I am thankful to my mother about. But, which mother am I thankful to?

I do indeed have two mothers. In modern times, it is no longer odd to see a child in a store calling two women motherly names. Nor is it unusual to see a child alternate between two women for motherly affection. It is clear the child has two mothers.

It has not always been so clear in my life. Modern life has changed greatly and were I a modern child, I doubt I would have been blessed with two mothers.

I am positive my life would have been completely different. Would it have had more texture? Or perhaps would I have had other skills than I hold now?

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Certainly I would have had different experiences, but I don't know that life would have been any better. *(Continued on the next page.)*

You see, I am adopted. It was never hidden from me. I was never made to feel the shame that I see other adoptees try to assuage. I grew up with the notion that I was chosen by the parents who raised me because I was special.

My birth mother gave me that most unselfish gift a woman can give a child. She gave me the gift of life. I am ever so grateful for the life I have had so far. In addition, my birth mother gave me a chance to live a life she could never give me.

The mother who raised me gave me another unselfish gift. She gave another woman's child a chance to live a life the child would not have otherwise. I am grateful to her for all my many advantages.

Like children I see in supermarkets, I call more than one woman "Mother." Thus I know it isn't that name or the blood relationship that matters. It's the love and gratitude you have in your heart.

Devora is single and has one grown son. She has many interests, in addition to writing, she plans and maintains gardens, and enjoys weaving. She adds, "When I take time to be still and quiet, I prepare myself so that when I close my eyes and jump, I'll know where I'm landing."

*

DEAR MOM

Dear Mom.

It is just about time! In a few minutes you will be back from breakfast with "the girls." I will make my 10:00 AM Saturday phone call to Florida.

This is our special time to chat. Our conversations tend to wander: small things: "Why do pickles have to cost so much?" and big ones: "What is the purpose of war?"

If we ask each other a question, the truth will be told. Once in a while, the truth will not be pleasant.

I am getting excited. Then I remember-- you won't be answering the phone this Saturday. You won't be answering the phone any Saturday.

Calls won't work any more. But our connections will never end.

The Universe knows.

Love,
Dorothy

Dorothy (Apr. '08) adds, "It's important to take care of oneself and remember to schedule an annual physical."

A GIFT FROM
MY MOTHER

As I became a young teen in the 1950's, my father frequently expressed his opinion that women should not go to college. His reason for this was that women who graduated from college and had careers did not make good housekeepers.

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As I neared the end of eighth grade, I thought about what course I would take in high school. What career path would I choose? *(Continued on the next page.)*

Being a housewife did not appeal to me, al-though I assumed that this is what I would do. I also knew I did not want to be a secretary or a nurse.

Becoming a teacher was a possibility, but this could not happen because my father did not approve of women going to college. Thus, I was quite confused. My father had made his pronouncement. In my family we did not discuss these things. Neither did we disagree with our parents.

Toward the end of that school year, I received a piece of paper which listed my options for our high school course: academic, business (secretarial), home economics, or general. What would I “choose?”

The day that the paper was to be turned in, I still did not know what I would mark -- and hadn't discussed it. I got up that morning, dressed, and went down to breakfast. Over cereal and milk, my mother said to me, “You are going to sign up for the academic course.”

I would be able to go to college! (I never again heard my father say that women should not go to college.)

Not only did I graduate with a degree, I went on to graduate school and got another. Not in teaching, either. I chose Social Work as my profession.

Years later I even returned to study and earned a doctorate. I began those studies while my father was still alive, but by the time I graduated, he had died. When I received my degree, my mother said, “I wish your father were alive. He would be so proud of you.”

As an adult, I thought back to that day when my mother told me to choose the “academic course.” I realized that she had stood up to my father so that I could choose a career other than housewife, teacher, nurse, or secretary.

I think that this was the greatest gift that my mother ever gave me. So many times I have thought about how grateful I am for that gift that my mother gave me that day.

Jane (Apr. '08) adds, “My mother was one of five sisters who grew up in poverty. When they graduated from high school each sister helped the next pursue her career. How-ever, by the time my mother graduated from high school there was not enough money for her to go to nursing school, which was what she wanted to do. I appreciate the step she took for me!”

***Life is
a gradual process.***

James (Apr. '08) says, “From sunrise to sunset, each day is a microcosm of life.”

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

THE LAST DAYS OF DOGTOWN

This book was written by Anita Diamant, who also wrote The Red Tent. The author says she found a pamphlet entitled “DOGTOWN: A Village Lost in Time,” which contained a walking map of the area, and tales of some of the actual characters said to have lived there.

Inspired by this sketchy historical record, Diamant has written a novel that shows the reader that the death of a village is not a trivial thing.

The story is set in the early 1800’s in a harsh, isolated area called Cape Ann, less than fifty miles from Boston. It tells of the remnants of Dogtown, a small group of eccentrics and misfits.

The inhabitants of Dogtown are mostly widows, orphans, whores, free blacks and ‘witches.’ At the center of this collection is Judy Rhines who lives a hard, lonely life as a spinster. She builds an independent life and helps those around her even though her life is torn by an impossible love for the wrong man.

In spite of inhabitants’ hardships, there is a sense of community among the people as they struggle to survive. Their endurance and their tenacity are inspiring.

June Poucher (Apr. ’08) says: “This work will stand alongside Diamant’s previous books as memorable.”

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BOOKS ON MY BEDSIDE TABLE

Editor’s note: Here 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!

Lotte deRoy (Mar. ’08) says, “I never look if a book is fiction or not. If the author’s name or the title intrigues me, I read.

I have three to four books at one time for reading. Have several books in the car, in case we are stuck in traffic or have a doctor’s appointment where the wait is long. Three of the last books I read were:

The Chase by Clive Cussler

Dragon by Clive Cussler

The Eighth Trumpet by Jon Land

Now I am reading:

Thieves of Heaven by A. Doetsch

Stalked by Brian Freeman.

I also get monthly magazines:

“Writer's Digest,” and “Body and Soul,” to name favorites. (Continued next page.)

I used to accumulate many books and magazines. Two years ago when I moved, I donated 40,000 to Friends of the Library. They distribute to libraries all over the country, and also hold used book sales to raise money.

Editor's Note: more on that book collection next month.

THE FUTURE OF FOOD

I haven't even seen a good movie lately, although I would recommend a documentary called, “The Future of Food.” It is a compelling overview of how America's “big business” (providing seed to farmers) has resulted in a monopoly that continues to crush the family farmer and endangers the quality of the food we produce.

Can you hear, “genetic engineering?”

Georgene (Apr. '08) adds, “Not much that's serious is on my bedside table -- just mind-less crime/ mystery like James Patterson's The Quickie I noticed on a reading shelf at Curves where I work out.”

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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

Editor's note: Here is the latest set of responses to our monthly question.

This month's question: “*I enjoy being around people who...*”

June Poucher (See also her book review.) *I enjoy being around people who are positive-minded and have a good sense of humor. I seem to gravitate to those whose conversations go beyond the mundane and reach the deeper issues of life.*

**

Jane (Mar. 08) says, “I enjoy being around people who:
Laugh deeply from the belly and the heart...
Can see things from an unusual point of view...
Share stories about their life experiences...”

**

Carol (Mar. '08) tells us, “I enjoy being around people who are my family and friends, of course. I like to watch travelers at airports, in grocery stores, libraries, parks and at cultural events. I like to see children playing outdoors and my neighbors working in their yards. Helpful, knowledgeable, wise, courteous and happy folks inspire and

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encourage me. I like artists, naturalists, researchers and volunteers -- people who are passionate about creating, learning, exploring and sharing. I enjoy articulate, sensitive people who are also good listeners. I like company when I go for walks, do yard work and put together jigsaw puzzles, (Continued on the next page.)

but I also enjoy these activities in solitude. I like being around men and women who take care of the environment and each other. I am blessed, because my life is full of these people.

**

Joan H. (Jan. '06) says, "I enjoy being around people who have tolerance in their world view, who are 'easy' on me and themselves and every-one else. They don't make assumptions about what they think someone else knows or is thinking, and are willing to listen to widely disparate points of view without the need to correct or defend. They don't need to win an argument. They don't have to catch the anger ball when someone lofts it at them and are willing to let it drop untouched to the ground and roll away. Some would say they have no back-bone, no desire for the 'truth.' I believe it takes a strong person to stand in the middle, keeping open to new information, respecting every thinker, and not hastily joining an opinion club. This is a form of truth-seeking. Actually, I don't know anyone this perfect, but some of my dear friends that I like most to be around achieve this state a lot, and I'd like to be like them."

**

Next month's question:

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

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May Ninepatch Birthdays	
Linda	10
LynnTROR	17
James	19
Le	19

June to November 2008

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

is

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

*

(THREAD-- Our Knowing and Our Spirituality follows.)

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

(Our Knowing and Our Spirituality)

HE SHOUTED WITH A GRITTY LOOK IN HIS EYES

Adjectives

Words that make other words sing.

Or shout or cringe.

How I wish more words would stick in some file box of my brain.

So I could draw them out when I want to explain

That weird loneliness that creeps

over me.

How do I describe the combination of a smell and a breeze

That is like time travel?

Just a hint of fried chicken at 5:30

On a spring early evening

Takes me back to age nine and a safe

feeling

Mom would be in the kitchen

And I would eat supper

And I never worried about having

enough

**It wasn't the crispness, greasiness, or
warmth.**

It wasn't just the sun and shadows and sprinklers running.

It wasn't even the thought of home.

It was somehow all these together but I don't know how to say it.

I felt secure, contented, sheltered,

But never then could I have said that.

At nine I'd have said

Hungry or happy or playful.

It's the looking back I can't express

I think it's complete, tender, soft,

sweet.

I think it's innocence and green and

light.

It's a dream and a wish and a reality.

No gritty looks, no evil eyes.

Just blue and love unspoken,

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Yellow and love lived.

(Continued on the next page.)

Angie (Sept. '07) adds, "While reading stories written by fourth graders I've come across quite a few humorous phrases, such as the one used in my title. I began the poem with one idea in mind, but then my thoughts were led down another path."

*

SONG OF THE PINE

**You would think it is Christmas.
But, no. It is May in Michigan.**

**They celebrate Spring,
growing little candles
in their piney holders,
as if remembering,
"O Christmas tree, O Christmas
tree,
your branches green delight us."**

**New green cones appear,
caramel flower clusters form
and last year's barn brown cones
fall away to decorate
their silky skirts.**

**They raise their new hands
to Heaven in praise,
looking like a joyous crowd
singing "Alleluia!"**

**Sweet shelters, keepers
of furry, fluttering secrets,
dream of when
the glittering snow in sunlight
will grace their uplifted
evergreen wings.**

Gail (Apr. '07) says, "I used to walk in our condo complex and notice the fabulous pines."

*

(Simon Stargazer's poem follows.)

I WENT TO A WAKE

**I went to a wake the other day...
Something strange was there
at play.**

**Everyone was smiling that I saw
Even down to the distant in-law.**

**What could account for this
behavior?
Didn't someone just meet their
maker?**

**Memories of her life well spent
Came to brighten this event.
Fabulous stories and pictures
revealed
Events and celebrations of a life
well- heeled,**

**Not in money but in family
and friends
Like the Love from above
that just never ends.**

**They were celebrating the
continuation of a life,
Which was now surpassing
earth-bound strife.**

Simon Stargazer III (Apr. '08) adds, "Yesterday I attended a wake for the beloved grandmother of a fellow worker. It made me think..."

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