

## *Ninepatch*

### *Stitch - by - Stitch*

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

**Editor’s Note:** Following’s my continuing story from BUS RIDE, A Spiritual Journey. From last month’s chapter: ...*Tonight’s passport to Grand Rapids was at last in hand when I felt another jab from my full bladder. Oh, oh. The female agents still stood together, but when I approached them again they looked over. I called, “Which way to Gate 21?” The taller agent pointed to stairs. I stepped closer and lowered my voice a little, “Where’s the nearest restroom?”*

The terminal’s round clock showed 9:40. *Not a minute to waste! The flight leaves at 10:09...* Finally I had all I needed: ticket, Alamo’s 800-number, and directions to the concourse and nearest “Ladies.” Hiking my carry-all over my shoulder I again dug out my cell phone as I stepped into the elevator and pressed, “One.”

As the compartment descended, I placed my call to Alamo. I sighed in relief when I heard a male voice, “Alamo Rent-A-Car. We serve you best.”

“I hope so!” I countered, “I need an economy car in Grand Rapids, Michigan tonight at 11:30, for 9 days.”

As the elevator door opened, I stepped out onto an empty hallway of polished gray tile and glanced around for directions to the security area. I didn’t see any, so I stopped and concentrated on finishing my phone reservation. The Alamo agent reviewed my needs: economy, nine days, pick up and drop off at Grand Rapids International Airport... Yes Ma’am. That’ll be \$99. 98.”

Remembering the airport agency’s quote of \$ 698.00, I closed my eyes in a silent, “Thank you!” When I thought, I could not recall ever paying less than \$120 for a week and this quote was for nine days. *Something’s wrong...* “What?”

I must have sounded angry because the young man replied gruffly, “I’d think you’d THANK me for such a good rate!”

“\$99.98? Oh yes, yes! Thank you! I just couldn’t believe it.”

“You’re welcome,” he replied in honeyed tones. After gathering my credit card information he said, “Here’s your confirmation number.” As he repeated it, I scribbled “# 867432” on my hand under the recently penned phone number.

“Thanks.”

“You’re welcome. Thank you for calling Alamo!”

The cell phone screen turned dark as I finished my call. I scanned to my right again and noticed an overhead sign, “Security.” Its white arrow pointed down the hall. *Ah! Bathrooms are at security!*

As I hurried toward the check point, I remembered another time I had tried to find a Northwest gate. Twenty five years earlier I had held five-year- old David by his hand. We had been to New York where David had been examined by hearing specialist Dr. Harold Levinson. The doctor had written in medical journals that “disturbed” hearing led to children’s behavioral aberrations, including fears. My small, skinny blond son surely had unusual hearing. Bells, alarms and whining engines sent him running to hide, hands over his ears. His terrors began at age two and progressed until he panicked at the mere *sight* of a fire alarm or weed eater. Dr. Levinson offered help.

Our trip to Queens had been tense. Hyper-alert, David had required coloring books, stories, magic slate and little cars to quiet him on the flights. However, La Guardia’s terminal had fire alarms mounted high on walls and David panicked at each sighting. I’d barely been able to hold him, collect lug-gage and find my way out to the taxi area.

Finally, we’d arrived in Queens to see the famous doctor. When David was called, the bright inner office displayed metal equipment with dials and meters. A large black chair stood in its center with dental-looking apparatus

on both sides. Climbing into that seat, David looked very small. White-coated Dr. Levinson pumped him higher with a foot pedal. Quiet mannered, the doctor gently explained, “I’m going to just look into your ears...”

Nervous and suspicious, David squirmed. His eyes widened and darted around nearby machines with gauges and tubing. A white-skirted nurse and I managed to hold David long enough for the doctor to get pressure readings in each ear using a tool like a dental water squirt. Splattered from streams that missed David’s moving ear, the calm doctor nodded at my tales of David’s terrors. Before we left, the gray-haired gentleman wrote David a prescription and briefly reviewed three pages of instructions he hand-ed me. Pages in hand, I thought of my research, letters and calls to get our time slot and now flights and taxi rides. *I hope this trip produces results!* (Next.)

After a long flight back to Detroit, our Northwest tickets had called for a gate change. An agent pointed us to an outlying area. David and I walked an empty corridor so long that its end looked the size a pocket New Testament. The situation reminded me of TV’s “Twilight Zone” where a similar passage led the traveler into another dimension. Reaching the end of that hall at its gate, I gazed on a vacant waiting area and empty tarmac beyond. Exhausted from travel and trying to calm David, I wanted to sit down and cry.

Eyes searching the walls for bells, David pulled toward the plate glass where we should see our regional jet, “Where’s our plane, Mommy?”

I sighed and wagged my head. *If we miss our flight, who knows when there’ll be another!* I dreaded more waiting. In spite of swallowing little orange pills to calm him, David talked louder and faster than usual. I had to keep a hand on my anxious child so he would not dart away.

David’s small fingers were sweaty as we started back down that endless hall. I hoped to find correct flight information quickly. Our plane departed in less than an hour.

Twenty-some years earlier, I had found our gate, boarded and reached Grand Rapids. Tonight I hoped to have a parallel success. I thought of adult David’s yellow flowered guest sheets and hoped to eventually lay my head on a pillow at his condo.

## Frances Fritzie

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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 e-issue reflection on city walking in Michigan and learning names of wildflowers (weeds) reminded me of my English childhood. We also had bindweed with its milky sap and clinging nature. I recall glorious summer days of gathering Queen Anne’s lace, popping snapdragons, the brilliance of red-hot pokers and a tangy scent of elderberry trees in bloom. There’s such a sweetness to overgrown fields rampant with wildflowers. George Washington Carver believed that a weed is just a flower growing in the wrong place.

After all this recollection, I’m feeling the urge to visit the UK next spring break when the flowers (and wildflowers) are splendid. There is nothing like an English garden or an English meadow! And I will also meet my two new great-nephews!

Blessings\*\*\*

Liz

*(Continued on the next page.)*

*e – Ninepatch August 2009*

*Liz/Moscar (July '09) adds, "As a memorial to the incredible talent of Michael Jackson, I am working on my moonwalk!"*

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Dear Frances,

I like the way my poem, "IN" turned out last month. Thanks. You might be interested to know that where it is in my new book, Simon Sez: You're The Expert On You, there was (my error) a blank page inserted into the middle of the poem. I used that space as a challenge to everyone as I personally handed out a book. I asked each of the more than twenty-two people from my high school class to write down their most significant event or example of *dependence* and of *independence*, the topics of last month's *Ninepatch* poem, "In."

I issued the challenge again at my reunion during one of the group meals. My best friend from the class will gather the responses and send each of us the composite. Since conversations at a class reunion can only afford so much, perhaps we will become more committed to each other as we share more of our lives. So far eleven have responded.

Just imagine! It all came to be due to an error I made in preparing pages for the printer.

Simon

*Simon Stargazer III (July '09) adds, "The Lord does work in mysterious ways!"*

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Hello Frances,

How are you on this bright sunny day? My doors and windows are open letting in fresh air! Dad is sitting out in the sun in his lawn chair. My husband is playing with the cat. (Sometimes I swear he is a little boy in an adult body. He takes no responsibility for anything.)

It is a big day for me -- a day off work and my second appointment with a counselor. Workmen are here installing new carpet I bought with our income tax refund. This is something I have wanted since we moved in this house a couple of years ago.

The grand kids are in school and my daughter, Molly, is downstairs doing laundry. It's quiet for a while. I have some "space."

In your last letter you said, "It was my experience as I focused away from my family troubles I felt better and the problems shrank." You are right about that. I feel better when I think about other things.

God bless you.

Love and prayers,

LindaSue

*LindaSue (July '09) adds, "I went to the library and checked out Something More by Sarah Ban Breathnach and requested her first book, Simple Abundance. I also asked for, the other book you suggested Plain and Simple by Sue Bender. The library will call when they are available."*

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*(AROUND THE FRAME continues on the next page.)*

Dear Frances:

*e – Ninepatch August 2009*

I wanted to write you a quick note this afternoon and thank you for the lovely sympathy card and the gift of perpetual remembrance. That's very powerful. The card certainly brought tears to my eyes. It's a beautiful thing and greatly appreciated. I am truly blessed for the friends that I have.

It's been a rocky week, but I am going to be okay. Much life has passed in review and I find myself grateful for that, but also melancholy. I do not want to live in the past. I want to "be here now," yet I know that it is the past which informs who we are, what we do, and is the tool-box of what we will/can become. Mother was a deep part of that and the time to process that feels near, for lack of a better explanation.

So, blessings on you, my dear friend. You are a star in my family of choice and I am grateful for your friendship, your guidance, and your love.

Love,  
Be Well,  
Linda

*Linda (July '09) adds, "The sun is shining here and the temperature is chilly no matter what the thermometer says!"*

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Frances,

I am in the process of moving in. The more I work on this project, the more I am sure I will give away what I truly don't need! My house looks like a hurricane -- I'm going to have to get back to work!

I am happy to be here.  
Patience

*Patience (July '09) continues, "I have started to meet some of the parish folks and will meet more and more as time goes on. I hope the honeymoon stays!"*

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Dear Frances,

How do I work my way to finding time for the important things?

This month I made a list of five things I am doing and gave it to my husband so he can keep track of me. One was an appointment for acupuncture, and the rest were things pleasant -- but important? I sometimes feel like a gerbil on a wheel.

I love hearing from you and knowing that what you say comes right from your heart.

Blessings,  
Louise

*Louise (July '09) adds, "To comment on your Monthly Question for June, The thing that scared me most right now is... I think I'm afraid that when my life ends I will not have made full use of my gifts."*

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*(AROUND THE FRAME continues on the next page.)*

Hi Frances,

*e – Ninepatch August 2009*

To avoid Florida’s summer heat, I walked over to the health center to work out early this morning. It was still mostly dark. As I passed a round white object in the parking lot, I almost kept on walking but I thought, “Can that be a coin?” It was kinda’ shiny so I stopped, picked it up and since it was too dark to inspect, I just slipped it into my pocket.

When I returned home, I put on my glasses and examined my find. Guess what! It was a quarter! But wait... it was not just *any* quarter, it was a state commemorative quarter: 2004. We were married in 2004 on your birthday!

Marveling, upon further examination of the silvery coin, I saw that it featured the state of *Michigan* where you, my lovely wife, are spending part of the summer!

How about that?

I love you Frances,

JK

*JK is married (to Editor Frances.) In his free time, he enjoys growing plants from seeds or cuttings, analyzing economic spreadsheets and playing chess. He adds, “Finding that particular quarter was quite a coincidence.”*

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Hi Frances,

On the Fourth of July my town still had fireworks. Nice. I understand many towns and cities have cancelled them due to lack of funds.

I went to the VA medical facility last week, and for the first time saw a sign on the front of a new addition which reads: “Cost of freedom is visible here.” I will see that every time I go for my medical checkup.

Mostly the guys there were hurt in WWII and Korea, but many younger ones are there, too, in wheel chairs, using walkers or being helped by volunteers or relatives. It’s an eerie and humbling sight. I feel kind of strange as I walk-- unassisted-- to the blood lab, and into my appointment. I waited alongside many who are not as fortunate. I think it would probably be a valuable experience for others to visit a VA hospital lobby and see the guys and gals who served.

That reminds me of visiting the war memorials in DC earlier this year. It was May, a few days before Memorial Day and Brother Jim and I both wore our kaki Army caps and walked arm and arm with my lady friend. Lots of people there. Many of them spoke to us saying: “Thanks for serving!” I was surprised at the comment and neither Brother Jim nor I really comprehended at first.

Luckily, my lady friend -- who understood what was going on right away -- smiled and responded, “Thank you!”

Those wonderful strangers were recognizing our service!

Now I’m thinking of that headgear, I’ll wear my Army cap at the fireworks tonight.

Love,

Le

*Le (July ’09) adds, “I noticed my small South Dakota town has nine gas stations and ten banks! What do you suppose this means?”*

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*(AROUND THE FRAME continues on the next page.)*

Hello Frances,

*e – Ninepatch August 2009*

I miss you here in Florida! It's HOT here! We're running away to the mountains of NC for a week to escape the steam bath.

Life has been busy, as always. I've been grieving some for my much older sister, who's in her mid 80s. In June she fell and broke her hip while in Kentucky attending the wedding of her youngest grandson. Being away from home made her situation more complicated. For example, my nephew -- who had taken her to the wedding -- had to stay an extra ten days while she was in the hospital.

Sis had surgery and doctors put in a titanium plate and pins. She got through that and is now in a rehab facility there, near where her daughter-in-law and granddaughter live. Luckily, they are stepping up and being her medical advocates as well as making daily visits.

What really saddens me is that my sister's dementia seemed so much worse during this affair, but when I talked to her yesterday, she was coherent and not having delusions. Maybe the extreme confusion and delusional thinking was from anesthesia and pain meds. At least I am relieved that she is mentally more stable.

She is working with the physical and occupational therapists and seems to be making some progress. The problem is that a few hours after her session, she forgets what they showed her.

Doctors said Sis couldn't fly back to her home in Missouri for thirty days after the surgery. My nephew is returning to Kentucky this week to check on her progress, and if she's strong enough, in two weeks he will fly down and fly her back to her retirement community.

My sister really needs a great deal of supervision with her medications and personal care, so the good news is that she will be able to move into an assisted living space at the retirement facility.

Over the last year, I have watched her fail, both physically and mentally. Her husband went into a nursing home two hours away from the retirement community where she was moved so she saw him only once a month. This was a wrenching change for her. His death in December and a move to a different retirement facility compounded her confusion and worsened her short-term memory loss. Also, she's grieving for the loss of her spouse of sixty-plus years and a move out of the home she'd lived in for forty-plus years.

As I think of her decline, I feel as though I've been watching a light go out in her. The gregarious, sociable woman still lingers as a faint shadow within her, but in many ways she has become irritable, lonely, isolated. I can grieve for this diminishing or I can remember the spark that shone for so many years. I try to hold on to the latter.

Life is all about change, I know, and I work hard at accepting this sad change in someone I love and who played a big role in helping me learn to be a wife and mother.

Stay in touch.

Fondly,

Linda Kay

*Linda Kay is married and the mother of two grown children. In her free time, she enjoys exercising, listening to jazz and reading novels. She says, "Life is like clouds in many ways: dark ones cover the grey sky for a time, then they move on to reveal a blue sky and brilliant sun."*

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*(AROUND THE FRAME continues on the next page.)*

Francesca,

*e – Ninepatch August 2009*

Today I experienced a strong sense of déjà vu. My former neighbors have bought a house in north Florida and were back in my neighborhood today cleaning the house they are selling.

My husband and I had breakfast out with Mr. Neighbor, and this usually funny man was grumpy and complained about the work his wife wanted done today. Later in the day I saw Mrs. Neighbor, an ordinarily sunny person, and watched her hose off the porch, garage doors and garage floor. She grumbled about the condition renters had left the house in and griped about things her husband had or hadn't done.

I felt such tension in the air! It took me back to the days when my husband and I lived weekends on the Jersey Shore. On Sunday afternoons I used to clean, do laundry, and pack the car for returning to the city. While I was preparing to leave, my husband sailed, played tennis or sat on the deck and read. Talk about tension! I was always so angry -- and I behaved like quite the martyr.

The problem in both situations is, of course, communication. I could write the book on how (and when) to communicate effectively in each situation. My question: Why has it taken me a lifetime to see myself so clearly? I know, I know. Sometimes we just aren't ready. As I've heard in my Twelve Step program, "More will be revealed." Maybe I'm just a late bloomer.

Thanks for staying in touch.

Love,  
Elaine

*Elaine (July '09) adds, "I made an appointment with a new psychiatrist, which is a positive step for me. Also, I've been working out with weights in my little swimming pool. It feels fabulous. I'm tired and mellow when I'm finished."*

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*No road through life  
is toll free.*

*James (July '09)says, "No matter what choice you make, there is some cost."*

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*(FABRICS begins on the next page.)*



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

**Editor’s note:** I recommend Lynn TROR’s blog, “Secret Words” can be easily found on our website: [Ninepatch9.org](http://Ninepatch9.org)

ANDY CAT

My husband Bob just left to take Andy to the vet and have him put to sleep. He had a liver disease and thyroid trouble for the past year. Though he had been eating well, he had gotten really mean and hurt our other cats. (Maggie has four holes in her tail from him. I took her to the vet because she is diabetic and I was afraid she would not heal and get an infection.)

The vet techs said Andrew has probably been in pain. I do know he didn't feel good sometimes. He had been throwing up a lot, but I hadn't thought he was hurting. Now I think back, Andy had started to walk around the house at night and cry. Maybe he was in pain.

We have four other cats: Maggie, Merlin, Nancy and Mr. Gray. Since Andy turned mean, Merlin wouldn't come out of the closet where he sleeps. I really liked Andrew and I hate putting him to sleep. But fear for Andrew's pain and his injuring our other cats forced our decision.

We did not raise Andrew from a kitten. One of my relatives was moving and asked if I could take “Anna.” I went by to see the cat who ran to meet me and wanted to be picked up. I called my husband and he said, “Ok, we will find the cat a home.”

On my way home, I stopped at our vet to have the cat checked before I took her home. I didn't want to infect our other cats with anything. When I went back to pick her up they told me “Anna” was really healthy and in good shape, but I might want to change “Anna” to “Andy” be-cause the cat was a neutered male. Thus “Anna” became “Andrew.”

When I brought him home and let him in the house, my husband was sitting on the couch. Andrew jumped up be-side him and went to sleep. Needless to say, Andrew had found a new home-- ours.

From then on he was Bob's cat. He sat with Bob all the time. When Bob went out in the yard or into the garden, Andrew went too. When Bob worked outside, Andrew sat on the banister until he finished.

My husband and I will miss him terribly.

*Patricia (July '09 says, “Andrew was a Maine Coon cat. We read Maine Coon's have a distinct personality. If you want a cat with the actions and disposition of a dog, a Maine Coon is your best choice”*  
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*(FABRICS continues on the next page.)*

WHAT I AM MOST AFRAID OF RIGHT NOW

I am afraid that I will lose my job if I don't learn Spanish -- and I'm afraid that I cannot learn Spanish.

*e – Ninepatch August 2009*

I work in a church office in a part of the community that is changing rapidly from primarily Caucasian to Hispanic. One of my outreach responsibilities includes talking to anyone who comes to the church door looking for help. Every few weeks now I face a Hispanic who does not speak English well. We get through the conversation but it is not easy.

I have taken Spanish classes at least six times over the last thirty-five years -- even paying for private tutoring -- and the lessons never “stuck.” My mom was Hispanic, married to a Caucasian, in a time and place where that mixed marriage was met with a lot of prejudice. Our family kept to ourselves. My father expected his children to be “white” and even then we all got enough bad treatment so when I got into junior high and high school, I insisted I was of Greek heritage. Since we didn't have a Greek community in our town, that seemed to satisfy my friends and teachers.

I'm afraid to lose yet another job -- especially since I am fifty-six but retiring is not an option. It is very scary thinking when I try again, I still will not be able to learn Spanish.

*Georgene (Apr. '09) says, “Maybe this fear will turn into the push I have needed to break through old hurts. I have to believe that I have a lot of Spanish in my brain just waiting to break free!”*

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JOURNAL  
OF UNCLE JERRY'S REHAB

June 21, 2009

Uncle Jerry's operation was a success. When they opened him up, the appendix was bleeding heavily. They removed that, too. At least he recognized me for a moment afterwards. He is sleeping now.

We have to see how long the road to recovery will be. We just want him to feel stronger and get his hemoglobin back to normal.

June 25, 2009

Uncle Jerry is doing good. He is still on liquids. The doctor doesn't want to remove the tube that goes up his nose and down the throat. Apparently, not all the toxins have left his body (stomach) and until then he'll be on liquids. His hemoglobin is inching up. He is in good spirits.

The oncologist came by the other night and spoke to us for a few moments. He said, “As far as I can see, no further treatment is necessary.” (No chemo, no radiation.) We'll wait to hear what the pathologist has to say before we decide about further treatment.

Uncle Jerry is happy. I can do things for him, but most of the time, I let him do for himself. He wants his independence back.

June 30, 2009

Uncle Jerry is sitting next to me at the hospital computer. He is asleep. According to the doctors, he is doing fine. So far, the colon cancer was contained in one area. It didn't metastasize -- which is good.

In the next few days, Uncle Jerry will be transported to a rehab. Not the same as the last one. I went ahead to see what it looks like. It is very clean and organized. Much better than the previous one.

*Lotte (June '09) says, “Uncle Jerry has to get stronger -- muscle-wise -- and he has to put on some weight. He is still on a liquid diet and just skin and bones.”* \*\*\*\*\*

Ninepatch Birthdays

August

George 3

Lori 24

**- - S-P-E-C-I-A-L- -T-O-P-I-C - -**

(What’s the hardest phone call you ever made?)

**SCARED TO HANG UP**

The worst phone call I ever had to make was actually one I received. For some years now I have been a member of a Twelve Step Group. My first name and phone number are on the local answering service list.

One night a few years ago, I received a call from a woman named “Ethel.” She told me her alcoholic husband was deeply involved with another woman. She said she had already bought a gun and bullets. Her plan was to follow her husband, kill him and his lover, and then kill herself.

I suspected she was drinking and I didn’t know what to do. I was scared. I didn’t know how to help her. I didn’t know her last name, her phone number or where she lived. All I could think to do was keep her on the line and keep her talking. Afraid she would hang up, I listened as she poured out her pain and frustration. I tried to point out all the reasons she should not carry out her plan.

After hours of this, she finally agreed to change her mind and get rid of the gun. Before she hung up she thanked me and told me she knew me.

A couple of weeks later, she called back to thank me again, and said that she and her husband were going to counseling.

*Sarah Elliott (Apr. ’09) adds, “I still have no idea who she is.”*

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*(THREAD begins on the next page.)*

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

(Our Knowing and Our Spirituality)

**Rock N Roll**

**Not everything rocks  
Sometimes you gotta’  
Roll with the punches**

*Simon Stargazer III (July ’09) adds, “My profession really ROCKS and I love it. However, sometimes dealing with the places and times I have practiced my work has been a challenge. A couple of times I have gotten knocked down with the punches before I could roll. The good part is when I was able to get back up, I was able to put myself in a much better place to practice my chosen career. I am still in one of these better places and expect to stay until I finally slow down enough to retire.”*

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**AN IAMBIC TETRAMETER DAY  
The prospect of a poem seems bleak,  
but something there wants to speak.  
I’ve held the pen to write it down;  
The subject does not make a sound.  
I’ve pondered on events today;  
the health food store to find a way  
to curb the rash and joints that burn  
and tendons in the thumb that churn.  
I stopped to pay my dental bill,  
forgot my cleaning date, oh hell.  
I went to work, composed a poem  
for mothers living in “the home.”  
The thunder booming outside falls  
to underscore this poem that calls.**

*Gail (July ’09) says, “The poem tells what kind of a day I had at that particular time, and I chose to exercise the meter (Iambic tetrameter) to convey it.”*

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*(MANAGING THE HOUSE begins on the next page.)*

**- -M-A-N-A-G-I-N-G- - T-H-E**

**-- H-O-U-S-E --**  
(Ninepatch Business)

GET TO KNOW ME

Our Question of the Month: **“When I was a child I was given the nickname...”**

*June Poucher (July '09) says: “When I was a child I was given the nickname “Shorty” by my paternal grandfather. He was a colorful but rather insensitive person who teased all his grandchildren. Although he called my sister ‘Shug’ (for Sugar), most of the nicknames he applied were harsher than mine. One of my cousins answered to ‘Leather-britches’ and another to ‘Toe-knocker.’*

*Actually I preferred my nickname to most of the other names he called us. I was then, and still am, shorter than most of my female cousins. My nickname was hardly ever used outside the family circle.”*

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Next month’s “GET TO KNOW ME” question is : **The last time I said, “I’m sorry!” was...**

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