

e - Ninepatch February 2009

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 a last bit from my previous chapter of BUS RIDE, my 2007 spiritual journey. *"The man in black approached me for a reason. God is showing me the way out of my trouble!"*

FEEL THE FEAR AND DO IT ANYWAY

Dropping my cell phone into my carry-all, I pushed through outer glass doors where the man in black had disappeared into a bunch of other men. *He asked me about a cab for a reason. I have to trust God. I am being led. I will be all right if I relax and follow God's lead.*

Warm, moist air greeted me as I stepped onto a wide walkway. I glanced up and down the road which was empty except for three cabs waiting at the curb behind the circled men. Warily, I approached the group of Black men. When I saw the big guy I quietly said, "Excuse me..." He turned and I finished, "I think I would like a cab after all."

He smiled and stepped toward me.

Just then, another man in the group said, "Wait! It's not your up."

The large man stopped and turned back. Heads bent together, the men murmured about whose turn it was to take a fare. The big fellow stepped back from the bunch and turned to me. Eyebrows like sides of a gable roof he shook his head, "Sorry, Ma'am."

But God brought this big man to me... My courage faltered. I took a breath and held it. I had heard when plans did not proceed smoothly, God's will was not in that path. *Is there another option?*

Just then a slender man in a white formal- looking shirt and matching pants emerged from the group of men and said, "Where do you want to go?"

I hesitated, but heard The Counselor, *Just go on with your plan.* Answering his question I exhaled, "I need a rental car. Where's the nearest?"

He confirmed my guess, "The airport."

"How much?"

"Forty dollars."

That was nearly as much as my bus ticket! *I have the money...* I swallowed but nodded, "OK."

Hand out for my suitcase, he walked over. I pulled the bag up beside me and presented its handle. Pulling my suitcase, he walked ahead and I followed toward the far end of the tan brick terminal. Street side, we passed two yellow cabs, and a white one. On the terminal side, we passed Silk Shirt leaning on the building and smoking a cigarette.

"What're you doing out here?" I called to my fellow passenger.

"Waiting for my ride."

I nodded recalling his destination was Detroit. Still behind the cabby, I waved, "Bye!"

(Continued on the next page.)

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Then I stopped and looked back, "Wait! What's your name?"

He smiled, "Joe."

"Bye, Joe! God bless!"

He raised an arm to me as I trailed away toward a corner.

White Tuxedo did not stop at the intersection marking the back of the terminal. He rolled my suitcase down a smooth place in the curb and started up the street. I reached the curb and stopped. The situation suddenly seemed odd. *If he is "next up" why isn't his cab first in line?* I called to him, "Where are we going?"

With those words, suddenly I fell into my past and was again a pre-school five-year old. I had been standing on the busy corner waiting for Jerry, my older playmate, to get out of school. I waited there most afternoons and had seen the teen-ager before. Other days, the kid had nodded at me from the other side of the two-lane truck route. But, that day he crossed over and approached me, "Want to see something?" When I didn't answer, he opened his eyes in delight as if licking an ice cream cone on a hot day, "You'll like it." He turned and coaxed over his shoulder, "Come on, I'll show you."

Even though I didn't know him, he had acted friendly other days. I trailed behind him, "Where are we going?"

"Up the street."

As we walked past my house, I suddenly decided to ask my younger next-door neighbor Barbie to come along.

"Wait! I want to take Barbie along."

"OK." He shrugged and he walked past her house then waited at the alley next to it.

I rang the doorbell. Inside I heard Barbie's baby brother crying. When her mother opened the door, she held JD over her shoulder, patting him. Feet together I asked politely, "Can Barbie come for a walk with me?" Hearing my voice, Barbie ran to the screen and grinned. She always wanted to play. Since she was four and too little to color, we usually walked.

White apron over her blue housedress, Mrs. Arch patted the baby she held over one shoulder inquiring, "Where are you going?"

"Around the block," I lied.

She nodded and Barbie burst out. As soon as we were away from her front door, I told Barbie we were walking with the boy to "see something." I opened my eyes wide like he had.

Up the dusty alley we followed the young man. But reaching the next street I stopped and looked at him, "I'm not allowed to cross Seventh Street."

"I wanna' see something!" chimed Barbie.

Frowning, I hesitated.

"Come on!" the little girl urged.

"How much farther?" I asked the brown-haired stranger.

He tipped his head across the street, "Just up the way..." adding with a shake of his head, "not as far as 6th Street."

I looked at Barbie who pranced by the curb, wanting to go.

"OK."

(Continued on the next page.)

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We scuffed up the alley to an open garage. "In here," the kid said, nodding toward the empty stall. We walked in and he followed us in.

"Where is it?" asked Barbie. I glanced around, too. A rake and shovel hung on the open wood stud wall. I didn't see anything but I felt funny.

"Let's go!" I pulled Barbie's hand and stepped back toward the alley.

"Wait!" the boy walked in front of us, deeper into the space, "I'll show you something good!" Back to the alley, he stepped toward the wall and unzipped his pants. Barbie craned her neck to see better.

My eyes got very wide and stomach hurt. *I'm going to be in trouble!* "Come on Barbie!" I took her arm but didn't move, fascinated as the boy pulled on the fat pink member he had pulled out of his pants. Suddenly it spit white stuff. Barbie's eyes were glued to the show. My stomach really hurt.

"We have to go!" I said. Holding my little friend's arm, I retreated to the alley.

As I took big steps back toward Seventh Street, pulling Barbie along she wailed, "What's the matter?"

Something I could not name was so wrong I could hardly talk. Scared of the kid now, I glanced over my shoulder to be sure that boy was not following us. I felt better when I saw him at the opposite end of the alley turning onto 6th Street.

I had confessed to my mother who had called the police after Daddy got home. While I had never seen that kid again, I never forgot that terrible feeling.

Standing on the curb in Detroit, my stomach felt like it had that long-ago day. Thinking back on my five-year old episode, I shook my head. I had had at least two warnings. First when he wanted me to follow him, and again when I stopped at 7th Street. My stomach gripped that same way now. *Is this a warning? Maybe I'm irrational -- after all, I'm an adult now...*

That's all for now. More next month!

Frances Fritzie

A-R-O-U-N-D - - T-H-E - - F-R-A-M-E-

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(Letters to the Editor)

Frances,

Phew! I just finished the Jan.'09 installment of your bus journey. I'm so relieved you don't have to spend twelve plus hours in a bus terminal. Those places can be energy

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vortexes. Le's story "The Birth Certificate" has me salivating. What a great mystery! I hope we discover its resolution.

(Continued on the next page.)

I've been continuing my job search and have also spent time giving without pay. Luckily, changes have begun. I've been accepted into a degree program at a local university and have also been hired to work in their tutor lab for this new semester.

For now I'm just putting one foot in front of the other.

Shalom,

Liz

Liz/Moscar (Jan. '09) adds, "I've just come in from a stroll along the Loblolly Woods trail with a friend: bird-spotting, creek-jumping and story telling!"

*

Hi Frances,

Please start sending me the e-version of *Ninepatch*. I will be moving to my oldest daughter's home in Virginia. That will be "home." I will live and travel in my newly acquired RV from there. It will take a while to move and get settled, but I hope to begin my adventures this coming summer.

I got the RV-urge (again) last summer when I went to visit my cousin at her campground. By the end of our weekend together, I was ready to get back in an RV-- my own! I thought if I find one I could afford -- and in good condition -- I'll go back to traveling. Well, I found one, and love it!

I'll start out close to Virginia and stay on the East Coast. (I haven't spent much time there.) Perhaps I'll go just short trips at first. I'll have to wait for more planning and see how my ability to travel alone develops. Also I have to keep an eye on costs.

My family and friends are excited for me. They think it's "... so romantic!" Of course, I know there's work involved. I have to learn how to travel alone. But, I could use an adventure so I'm willing to try. I'll take it one day at a time, and trust God.

I have butterflies leaving here. It's very secure, (maybe too secure) and I've made good friends. On the other hand, I'm so bored. I need more to look forward to. So, as long as everything is moving smoothly, I'll keep going with it.

What does that say about me? Let's ask your very thoughtful and thought -provoking readers!

It is all a new adventure and I'm excited (as well as a little scared).

Love,

Diana

Diana (Sept. '08) adds, "I am getting a Thousand Trails Park Membership from a friend, I just have to pay the transfer fee and 2009 membership fees, then I can go to any of their parks all over the US for free. I'm also looking for a Woman's Travel Club to join, so I'll have companionship and security. I am even considering getting a small dog to keep me company!"

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(AROUND THE FRAME continues on the next page.)

Frances,

I will miss seeing you this winter. At the same time, I am pleased that I will get to see my friends here in the mountains.

To strengthen my heart and increase my general well-being, I am still trying to work out. I go in to the university three mornings a week. I enjoy exercise once I am there, but if I don't go in the morning, I don't do it.

As the time for having the lumpectomy comes closer, I am having more difficulty staying in today. Yesterday I went online and looked up mastectomies -- just in case I need one! And, of course, I may not need one, but it's hard not to think about it!

I know that if they do find cancer there is a lot the doctors can do in terms of treatment and that it's not an instant death sentence. Still, it is hard not to think about the possibility.

Peace,
Jane

Jane (Jan. '09) adds "I'm still reading books and more books! Right now I'm reading Jan Karon's first book about Mitford. If you haven't heard of Karon, she's from Blowing Rock (about fifteen miles from us) and has based a series of books (fiction) on Blowing Rock. So far, it's pleasant reading and I'm enjoying it more than I thought I would."

*

Frances,

I am continuing my discernment process here in New Mexico. I have really wanted to work with the very poor, but for now this does not seem the path that God wants for me. I am not sure where it will all go.

Time will tell.
Much love,
Patience

Patience (Feb '09) says, "I have been advised by people I trust to just stay open right now, so that is what I am doing."

Dear Frances,

I have the week off to use up some vacation time. Since I can't afford to go anywhere, I enjoy sleeping later than five AM. I can read, write letters and work on my hook rug.

I told my husband and my daughter who's living here now to pick a project and every day try to get at least one thing done on it. If they don't, the basement will never get done. They both seem to sleep a lot. Such a waste!

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In your last letter you wrote, "You need to make and/or find your own peace -- your own happiness. You have to do whatever you can think of to enjoy life. It's the only one you have..." I've been thinking about happiness. Everyone has their own idea of it. I have a verse hanging under my needle point Serenity Prayer in my room:

(Continued on the next page.)

*Happiness is not getting what you want,
but wanting what you have*

I'm happy with my job. It keeps food on the table and a roof over my head. I try to think positive and try to be with others who do the same. I still pray a lot and take one day at a time.

Thank you for your letters, your thoughts and ideas and for listening.

Love and prayers,

LindaSue

LindaSue (Jan. '09) adds, "I still focus on the thought that God has a plan for my life."

Hi Fritzie,

During the winter holidays I thought about my middle son. He lived with us last year while he was getting back on his feet after a divorce.

Now I think he has gone off the deep end. I can't reach him by phone. I understand a concern called Net Care (a mental health group) has also been trying to reach him. He has his telephone programmed to be answered with a message that says the person you are trying to reach is not taking calls at this time.

I do not know what happened to my son while he was married, but he has changed. His saving grace used to be his kindness. When he lived with us last year he was often nasty and demanding.

I have done more for him than my other children because he was so needy. However, I can not allow him to treat me like he does. He behaves as if nothing is ever his fault.

He is forty-five years old and I am really through. He is definitely on his own now. Talk to you later my friend.

Patricia

Patricia (Nov.-Dec. '08) adds, "I pray for my son daily. He is now in God's hands."

*

Love is the multivitamin of happiness.

James (Jan. '09) adds, "Many happy moments are returned by a loving spirit."

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(Continued on the next page.)

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

AT THE PHARMACY

Today, I was sitting and watching the world while waiting for a prescription to be filled at the Publix grocery pharmacy. A young father pushed a food cart to the “Advice” window of the counter. A boy about three and a half sat in the basket. The youngster's legs easily fit through the openings in the cart and moved in the perpetual rhythm belonging to children.

At first my glance was quick and moved on to survey the rest of the store. But, some-thing had caught my mind's eye and I turned back to look at the young boy.

The father was talking urgently to the pharmacist behind the counter. I couldn't hear his words but I understood concern from his tone and tense body. A crisis or at least an inconvenient problem had occurred. I focused on the child. The boy looked blue to me, both psychologically and physically.

Initially I had thought he was wearing streaked blue pants and shirt. But, as I moved closer I saw that the boy did not have on long sleeves or long pants. His skin, at least all of the skin that I could see, was streaked blue.

His neck, his ears, his face, forehead, cheeks, nose and chin, his throat, his arms, his hands and palms, his legs from thighs to ankles were all streaked indigo. Then I heard the father say to the pharmacist, “We were getting ready to go to church and Brian here,” he gestured to the child in the cart, “was in his room getting dressed. When I went to get him, I discovered he had covered his body with magic marker. He said he was giving himself tattoos.”

Somewhat hang-dogged in appearance, the boy looked like a small Maori tribesman from New Zealand. Swirls, and circles, harsh lines and blotches of cobalt, some heavy, some spaced out, covered every part of his exposed body. Absently, I wondered what the rest of him looked like under his clothes.

Wallace (Jan '09) adds, “Whether in my nightly dreams or during my daily trips around town, I am always looking for surprises and wonder in the ordinary.”

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THE BIRTH CERTIFICATE

A Mystery Solved-- Mostly

My brother Jim and I went to the Gogebic County Court-house and Social Security Administration. There we gathered some information on Dad's name change from "John Johnson" (which was on the birth certificate) to "George H. Johnson."

(Continued on the next page.)

At the courthouse we found records that Mom and Dad were married in Ironwood, Mi. on Oct, 14th 1920. Witnesses listed were Mr. and Mrs. Irvin Johnson -- not related to us. Their marriage license listed Mom as "Sophia H." and dad as "George H."

I recall back in 1933 on the way to church, a car pulled out in front of us, and we (Dad, brother Paul and I) broadsided the car. Paul hit the windshield and had stitches put in his face. We look-ed up the accident report and there Dad's name was listed as, "George H. Johnson."

Records show in 1963 Dad began collecting Social Security payments in March 1963 under the name, "George H. Johnson."

We never found any reference to a *legal* name change.

Brother Jimmy and I agreed that Dad just didn't like the name John and had "adopted" a more uncommon name he liked.

Le (Jan. '09) says, "Dad's father's name was Christian J. Johnson! Could the 'J' stand for John? Probably. So that is where Dad's parents got his birth certificate name, John."

*

MY BEST MONEY EVER SPENT-- *Revisited*

On page six of the June 2004 issue of Ninepatch I mentioned a used bureau I acquired for \$25 in the 1970's at a flea market. It may have been the best money I ever spent.

That old, distressed, serpentine bird's-eye maple bureau had five drawers, each possessing four crystal knobs. There was just one problem with them: three were missing.

I had always wanted to find three matching pulls to replace the missing ones or find a new set. However, a little research taught me that it would take a lot of hunting and more money than I had paid for the bureau itself.

When I was at a home improvement store the other day, I happened to notice they had a vast variety of knobs. My financial circumstances were such that I could afford them, too. I went home to measure the distance between the screw holes, thinking that I might be able to buy ten handles, instead of twenty knobs.

On my next errand day, I returned to the home-improvement store and brought a set of handles home. Unfortunately, the screw holes on the drawers were at the wrong angle.

Another few days passed before it was convenient to make a third trip to the store. On that trip, I forgot to take the handles with me to return. I went ahead and purchased twenty brand new knobs, anyway. They weren't as flashy as the crystal ones. In-stead, they were a simple round shape with a couple of bevels, manufactured from metal and

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brushed with a dark reddish-brown metallic stain that complimented the dark reddish finish of the maple.

When I started attaching them, four were not drilled deeply enough. I had to add washers so that I could screw the pulls snugly to the drawers.

At last! My old bureau looks complete.

Carol (Jan. '09) adds, "I returned the handles to the home-improvement store and found an antique store to purchase the seventeen old knobs. It took me more than thirty years to accomplish, but that bureau-knob project is now done!"

BEAD SHOP EPIPHANY

I was driving home from Holland, Michigan heading north on U.S. 31, when I decided to make a famous Michigan U-turn and head back to a little strip mall I had just passed. I had seen the word "beads" printed on a sign, tucked into one of the corner stores and I was hooked. I love bead shops. It's my personal choice of crafting and anytime I can visit a new shop, I do it.

I entered the shop and hovered around and around the bowls of shiny baubles, selecting just a few to take home and play with or put away for some future project. The shopkeeper was pleasant but unobtrusive, a good talker when questioned or encouraged, but savvy enough to know when a customer wanted to be left alone to browse. That impressed me. As I stepped to the counter to check out, the lady cheerily offered me some cake. It seems her business was celebrating a third anniversary. I handed her my MasterCard along with my driver's license for my modest purchase as I filed away the store's location in my mind for future visits.

"Ah," she said as she read my driver's license, "What a cute name! My mother was going to be called 'Linda Lou,' but my grandmother's neighbor beat her to using the name. She was called 'Linda Ruth' in-stead." She shook her head and chuckled, "My grandmother was so mad at that neighbor!"

"Well," I replied, "Perhaps she was lucky that she didn't get stuck with that name. I used to be teased about it! A brother-in-law was always calling me "Loo loo." I said it in a way that perfectly illustrated that brother-in-law's inflection of tone.

The shop owner frowned, "Oh, that was mean. Shame on him. If he were here, I'd tell him to stop it."

I shrugged, "He's gone on to his reward, so he doesn't do it anymore."

A fellow patron who had walked up chimed in with, "I doubt he's gone to a reward!"

We all laughed and I wished them a good day as I walked to my car.

"Wow," I thought as I headed my car north again, "What just happened there?" I felt a sense of relief, a sense of relaxation, the good kind of sweet feeling that I have after a particularly powerful 12-Step Meeting.

Linda (Jan. '09) adds, "I can breathe easier after I have those little epiphanies."

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February Birthdays:

Palma 11

Frances 20

- - I-N-S-T-R-U-C-T-I-O-N-S- -

(Reading and Listening)

BOOKS ON MY BEDSIDE TABLE

The book on my bedside table include the following:

Conversations with God, Book 1 by Neale Donald Walsch. This is a book that changed my life, and I frequently return to it.

Also there is, Spot of Grace: Remarkable Stories of How You DO Make A Difference, by Dawna Markova. The author quotes a passage from Mark Nepo's Unlearning Back to God: Essays on Inwardness in which he says "Each person is born with ...an umbilical spot where we were first touched by God. It is this spot of grace that issues peace." The book is a collection of stories from people whose lives have been deeply affected by a simple act of kindness from another, often a stranger.

Last on my bed stand is Elegy for Iris by John Bayley. The author has written a shining memoir of Iris Murdoch, his wife of forty-two years. She was a philosopher and contemporary writer. Bayley tenderly cared for his wife through the darkness of her descent into Alzheimer's disease, until her death in 1999.

June Poucher (Jan. '09) adds, "I usually read several books at a time. What I pick up depends on the time of day. (Or night.) I read what I call the 'heavy' books in the morning when I am fresh, and lighter reading at night when I want to relax."

VISIT OUR WEB SITE!

Check our website for a new reader-response column: BOOK BLOG, "I LOVE BOOKS." Started Jan. 30, this is a first attempt to involve e-readers and other Internet users in blogging of various kinds. Reading, listening to recorded books and watching movies seems to be an activity many of our readers share. Thus we chose to begin our new effort in that area.

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You can read the current comment which we plan to update at least twice a week at:

www.ninepatch9.org

Enjoy!

-Frances, Editor

(*THREAD follows on the next page.*).

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

(Our Knowing and Our Spirituality)

NURSE ASHLEY (AND OTHERS)

*Written for the nurses of St. Vincent Hospital
Who cared for my wife, Pat Altman, along with
A full house of patients. Thank you for caring.*

**Nurse Ashley with smile so bright
You really helped me through the
night.**

**I know I was demanding and in pain
And I kept calling you again and
again.**

**But you were patient and kind
You didn't even seem to mind --**

**And I probably forgot your name
But you cared for me just the same.**

**You were probably a lot of nurses
Hovering over pain caused curses.**

**While I fought to rise out of the
anesthesia
With it's side affect of short term
amnesia.**

**And if I was not nice
Please follow this advice:**

**Know that it wasn't me
But the pain attacking thee --**

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And know that I thank you with all
my heart
For caring for me, and each doing
your part.

Simon Stargazer III (Jan. '09) adds, "Nurses understand, but like all of us, some-times forget, that it is not you that is complaining, it is the pain speaking through you."

PUNXSUTAWNEY PHIL PREDICTS AGAIN

The shadow knows, or so they say.
We find out on Ground Hog's Day.
This furry creature has long been
around,
burrowing from his hole to peer
above ground.

In Roman times back 2000 years,
They sited hedgehogs when full moon
appeared.
They called it Festival of February.
Everyone partied and made merry.

In present times here in The States
We look for groundhogs without
mates.
If he sees his shadow, he gets jeers,
and if he doesn't, he gets cheers.

At other times throughout the
seasons
we frown on him for many reasons.
He chews the roots out of the garden;
This heinous crime we cannot
pardon.

At other times he tunnels our lawn
and wreaks his havoc from dark to
dawn.
His annual fame goes back to Rome;
we wish that we could send him
home!

Gail (Jan..09) says, "I had fun researching Groundhogs' Day when I worked for the retirement community in Grand Rapids. After an activity of talking about it with community members, I wrote this poem."

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- -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: What's the longest line you ever stood in?

Elaine (Nov.-Dec. '08) says, "The longest line I have ever stood in is the line at the Times Square TKTS booth where same-day tickets to Broadway shows are sold. I don't know the line's length since it wrapped (and wrapped!!) around barriers. The longest I stood in the line was probably ninety minutes. Among the shows I saw in the '80s after `` standing in line were "Cats," "Lullaby of Broadway," "Woman of the Year," and "La Cage Aux Folles."

**

Next month's question: "When I feel a distance growing between a friend and me, I usually..."

Editor's note: Do you have a question you would like to see others' comment on? Send it to Editor Frances at one of our addresses at the bottom of page 12.

YOUR HOUSE BY THE WATER

A Self-Discovery Game

Editor's note: Included with our Nov.-Dec.'08 issue was a self-discovery exercise. We hope readers will use it get to know themselves better.

Palma (Jan. '09) sent us her drawing which appears to be, "A babbling brook running through one corner of the property." She gives us a bird's eye view from the air.

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In Kokology 2, the games' authors, Tadahiko Nagao and Isamu Saito suggest this might mean, *You don't make a clear distinction between your social and private lives. You maintain an open door policy to the world and think of strangers as friends you just haven't met yet. That openness and spirit of hospitality ensures that come what may in life, you will never have to face it alone.*

Palma, comments, "I'm not much of an artist but I chose #3 because I love the sound of running water. Also, I'm not big on rivers-- I prefer lakes or oceans. I was surprised when I read the interpretation It really fits me!"

(LOOKING AHEAD follows on page 14.)

LOOKING AHEAD

Next month, you'll read *Elaine's* thoughts on our theme "How do you *really* feel about being a parent?"

Also waiting for March '09 is another of *Le's* family-name tales and *Wallace* tells more about seeing the little tattooed boy "At the Pharmacy." Among our letters are one from *LindaSue and Jane* who had recently found another lump in her breast. In addition, there'll be book reviews and BEDSIDE TABLE comments. Of course, you won't want to miss poems by Gail and Stargazer!

Hope to see your comment in our MONTHLY QUESTION, SPECIAL TOPIC I mentioned above or a plain ol' *letter!*
