

e - Ninepatch March 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 another episode in BUS RIDE, my 2007 Spiritual Journey. From last month... "Is this (memory from my childhood encounter with a strange man) a warning? Maybe I'm irrational -- after all, I'm an adult now..."*

STEPPING OUT ON FAITH

I lingered at the intersection.

"My cab is just there," the dark-skinned cabby said cutting through my thoughts. He pointed to a white vehicle parked at the curb across the intersection. I looked at the driver and over at the cab. *Is this a safe choice?* I wanted to close my eyes and instantly travel to Grand Rapids like Dorothy in OZ, clicking my heels and saying, "There's no place like home, there's no place like home." Instead, I heard The Counselor in my mind, "*Just keep going.*" I nodded to the man and stepped off the curb.

White Tuxedo rolled my suitcase around to his car's trunk and lifted it in. As I reached the sedan, he pulled open the door behind the driver. Nodding to his outfit I smiled and tried to act normal, "That looks like part of a tuxedo."

He replied, "It is. I just got off work ... a wedding."

Clutching my purse under one arm and my black carry-all under the other, I slid onto the smooth seat. He closed my door, pulled his own and got in.

A clear plastic partition completely separated us, sealing me in the back seat. I leaned forward in the semi-dark and squinted at items taped to it. One was the man's Michigan photo driver's license, another was his Detroit permit. The picture looked right, but I did not make note of the name. In the front, a meter's red digital numerals glowed, "00."

The cabby started his car and we rolled slowly away from the curb. Deep in the bowels of Detroit's inner city after dark, I was completely in the hands of a white-tuxedoed man. God's will or not, I was scared.

On this humid September night, my driver had all four windows down. Like a convertible ride, late summer air blew in my ears. We ramped onto an express-way of some kind, but in a few minutes we rolled off. *This can't be the airport!*

White Tuxedo pulled into a brightly lit gas station empty of people and other cars, got out and stuck a black hose into the gas tank behind me. While gasoline gurgled automatically, he walked to the station and disappeared. *Where is everyone? What's going on in that station?*

Suddenly I saw tomorrow's newspaper headline in my mind, "WOMAN ATTACKED IN DOWN-TOWN DETROIT." *I'm being set up. I'm going to be mugged!* Girl-friends' e-mail warnings flashed through my mind, "Use your elbow on an attacker.", "Throw your purse and run the other way." and "Never look like a victim." Fingers shaking, I dug out my cell phone out of my bag and turned it on. *I'll call David in Grand Rapids or JK in Florida ...* I argued with myself, *What good would that do?* On the verge of panic, I took a breath and The Counselor spoke, *OK, OK. Calm down.* Hearing that, I thought more calmly. *I'll pretend to use my cell phone. It will make me look less a victim.*

About then, the man-in-white strode back across the drive to the cab. Determined to appear strong, I leaned out the window and asked, "Are we near the airport?"

"Oh, no! It's miles, yet. I just needed gas."

With a click, he hung up the black hose. Getting back into the driver's slot, he turned over the engine and steered back onto an expressway. *(Continued, next page.)*

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Cell phone out, I actually dial-ed David to tell him my change of plans. As the cell rang, I thought, *At least he can go to bed and be rested for work Friday.*

“Hello?” Unused to late calls, his voice was wary.

“Hi David! It’s Mom. Are you ready for bed?”

“Hi Mom! I’m in my pajamas, waiting for you. Are you at the Grand Rapids terminal?”

“Well, no. The bus was late so I’m only as far as Detroit.” I explained the situation, saying I’d rent a car and drive to his house.

David didn’t reply and I anticipated his thoughts, “Honey, I have your key. You don’t have to wait up.”

“OK Mom.”

“I’ll be as quiet as I can. Close your bedroom door, OK? See you in the morning! I love you, David. God bless you.”

“I love you too, Mom. Bye.”

As I held the button to turn off my cell, I thought of Robert Frost’s famous line,

“... and miles to go before I sleep...”

Frances Fritzie

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

Frances -

Your February BUS RIDE installment was wonderful! One more hanging thread on the journey, I see -- you leave me panting for more!

I’ve been doing lots of reading. One is a paperback version of Man and His Symbols edited by C.G. Jung. (I purchased on Amazon after they insisted on sending me a \$5 gift certificate.) I’m also finding Sacred Contracts by Caroline Myss is fascinating reading -- her religion and archetype comments make a lot of sense to me.

In your e-introduction/ reflection, you mention the spring color show we are beginning to see. I am always cheered by the intense hues of the azaleas and the gentle blossoms of dogwoods.

Namaste’

Liz

Liz/Moscar (Feb. '09 adds, “Before they began their migration in the middle of February, I bundled up (We’d been having a freeze here in Northern Florida.) for one last look at the fabulous cranes out on the prairie before they headed north. About a week later, I heard them honk-clattering as a cloud of them flew over. What an event!”

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(Continued on the next page)

Dear Frances,

In response to your observation, I do think my husband and my younger daughter, Molly, are alike in many ways. For one thing, they are still both sleeping all day again. On my day off last week my husband told me he had "a headache..." Today he says, "I think I am coming down with something..." Whatever the reason is, on my day off he is always sleeping.

I try to stay busy and just ignore him. I read -- my daughter gave me a Bible study book, Commitment- My Heart-Christ's Home by Robert Boyd-Munger I am starting it today. Next I plan to read, A Time to Mend by Sally John and Gary Smalley.

I have tried to help my husband and daughter get some of the work on the basement done by suggesting they work on just one thing at a time. Well, they thought that was a good idea and started on "a computer room." First they couldn't find all the cords for the machine. Then there were problems putting in the heating duct into that room. They needed more parts -- but no money! They gave up.

I work at being happy. And I keep on praying.

God bless.

Love and Prayers,

LindaSue

LindaSue (Feb. '09) adds, "My troublesome daughter Anita still calls me every day. She says she has everything she needs. Now she complains, 'I am lonely.'"

Frances,

You wondered how I am going about my present discernment. I have had several offers. Each time I have prayed about them and sought advice from my support group of four Sisters who will be honest with me and also challenge me. I have also consulted with others whose counsel I trust. Each time I have decided "no."

There are two other positions out there that I have not yet interviewed for. I'm not sure they will be appropriate. I will wait and see if I am called in. Does that answer your question?

I'm not running to any offer, and have decided that my new ministry must meet certain criteria -- the most important to me is that I be able to live with others in community.

Pray that the right thing opens up for me.

Love,

Patience

Patience (Feb. '09) adds, "It takes time when looking for a position in the parish. Something will happen, I know it."

(Continued on the next page.)

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Dear Frances,

No, I'm not a grandmother yet, although my daughter's anxious to have the baby out to be sure. She's got an appointment to be checked so guess we'll know more soon.

As for buying the house, we are set to close in three days. Things were rolling along fairly well until my present landlord decided to be a jerk and try to over-charge me.

Now, I'm caught between him and the housing organization fighting against having to put out an extra month of rent. I planned on that money to buy appliances and help with expenses of the move. I'll see what happens.

I am neck deep in packing. Have to go start another box!

Take care,

Love Lynn

Lynn TROR (Jan. '09) adds, "*MOVING in six days! HELP!?!*"

Dear Frances,

Thank you so much for your e-mail support. It really gives me a wonderful feeling that there is someone out in 'Gator country that cares enough to perk me up.

Uncle Jerry is in rehab for urinary problems, but in better spirits than I expected. I try to be at the rehab as much as I can, but I have been sick so I've been staying at home.

Luckily, I recuperated fast. I just went to bed rather early and ate well. (Lots of chicken soup and vegetables!) The pharmacist advised drinking ginger ale for settling my stomach and indeed, it worked!

I am still a bit tired but it is more mental anguish over Uncle Jerry. He doesn't speak up. He calls me instead. Then I write a letter with a copy to the lawyer.

I've had to put my life on hold: my writing, my bankruptcy, all long-range items moved to the back burner. First things first!

Again, thank you for writing.

As always warm greetings!

Lotte

Lotte (Oct. '09) adds, "*Uncle Jerry wishes he could be at home and here with me at the computer. Next week, I'll take my computer to the rehab. I am paying for the wireless connection, I might as well take advantage of it!*"

Your past and your future are connected...

James (Feb. '09) adds, "*...They reside in the same person.*"

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(FABRICS is on the next page.)

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

JUST THREE DAYS

Before my surgery, I started writing to my friend Frances. But, I never got around to sending the letters. In order to tell my story, here are all three un-sent letters.

Feb. 12

Hi Frances!

I just wanted to share that my lumpectomy is tomorrow. I have to be at the hospital at 6:30 a.m. I do not feel particularly nervous at the moment but am eager for this procedure to be over with. I had a lumpectomy five and a-half years ago, and it was cancer.

Today I saw an announcement about a workshop for people with cancer entitled "Spirituality and Suffering." I thought about how my spirituality has grown as I have gone through the last six or seven months with physical problems. When I focus on others and when I stay in today, my problems seem much more manageable.

I feel as ready as I can be for tomorrow.

Peace,

Jane

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Feb. 13

Frances!

The surgery is over. It went well. The doctor found two lumps, and the second was not a cyst as she had originally thought. She told my husband it did not appear to be malignant but didn't tell him anything about the first and larger tumor. I am feeling a little better now, although the incisions (there were two) still hurt. The doctor did prescribe a pain killer, but I'm trying to hold on without the pills.

The doctor said she will call me as soon as she gets the lab results, probably the middle of next week. I realize that there is a good chance that the report will be "cancer" but I am not freaked out about waiting to know like I was the last time.

I know if I have a re-occurrence, there is treatment and that I can still have some good years.

Peace,

Jane

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(Continued on the next page.)

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Feb. 14

Dear Frances,

My doctor called with the biopsy report today! NO cancer. My husband and I are thrilled and grateful.

The doctor called our house first. I wasn't home but she told my husband the good news -- which was nice. I was having lunch with a friend and the doctor caught up with me through my cell phone.

I had really expected bad news because I had cancer once before, so I was really surprised.

Gratefully,

Jane

Jane (Feb '09) adds, "I had worked hard on turning over the outcome to my Higher Power, and I was prepared to try to accept whatever the news was."

THE PULLEY- BONE

One Sunday my family was having lunch with my in-laws. After the prayer was said, the side dishes of mashed potatoes, gravy, black-eyed peas and biscuits were passed around the long table. My mother-in-law had fried up a big platter of chicken which sat in front of her husband.

There is only one wishbone in a chicken -- which my family always called the pulley-bone. At home, firstborn Judy always claimed her right to it. That was fine until my second child, Bruce, arrived.

Although he wasn't sure what a pulley-bone was, he wanted one, too -- of course. Using a little strategic deception, I managed to keep the peace for several years until that fateful Sunday at my in-laws'.

Three-year-old Bruce watched wide-eyed as his grand-father reached to the platter and forked a piece of chicken.

"Bruce, do you want a drumstick?"

My young son looked at the chicken and then smiled brightly. "We call that a pulley-bone at my house!" he chirped.

The adults all looked at me and laughed. I had been found out!

June Poucher (Feb. '09) adds: "My little white lie had kept family peace while it lasted."

AT THE PHARMACY

Conclusion

The scene of the young father and his "tattooed" boy -- probably now both late for church-- continued to unfold. As I watched the man, the white-coated pharmacist produced a bottle of clear liquid and a bag of cotton balls. The father handed over several bills. Opening the rubbing alcohol on the spot, with cotton swabs he dabbed and rubbed at the "tattoos" on the boy's arms. The cotton turned blue but the majority of the ink stuck fast to the boy's skin. *(Continued on the next page.)*

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I leaned back against an edge of a shelf that held shampoo and soap and other toiletries, enjoying the sight of the “tattooed” child.

I wanted to say to the father, “Great! Your son is on the long pathway of experience and exploring that makes life worth-while. He has discovered his imagination, wondered about the world, and decided to change his status quo. He follows in the footsteps of all of us who became curious.”

I pictured the child sitting on the floor of his bedroom, marker in hand. Naked and painting himself like our primitive forebears, he had changed who he was. He metamorphosed into an object of beauty that could only be understood by the pleasure and satisfaction he experienced while taking this leap into the unknown and discovering that he could create change.

My thoughts were interrupted by an announcement my prescription was ready. I paid for my pills and I moved on to finish my own journey of discovery -- exploring items that were on sale today.

I hoped the boy's parents would appreciate the humor in their son’s creative venture. When the boy went to preschool tomorrow, I also hoped his teachers and peers would take in stride a “new primitive” that now existed in their midst.

Over time, the child’s skin would do its miracle and slough off old cells. The previous boy would re-emerge sans blue. But he would never be the same. Having experienced this life-changing event, his soul would be ever watchful, ready for the next adventure.

Wallace (Feb. '09) adds, “I try to be thankful and make time to recognize and nourish the child that lives in all of us.”

*

MORE FAMILY NAME MYSTERIES

Now that I had my family all stirred up about finding my father’s correct or legal name was “John” Johnson--not George H.Johnson he used--they began to report other name discrepancies noticed over the years.

Brother Jimmy said his birth certificate lists Mom's middle name as “Hilija.” He thinks that’s the nickname for Lilly! I thought back. Mom's name on her tombstone lists her as “Sophia L.” On the other hand I had seen her name also spelled, “Sophie!”

While we were at the county court house Brother Jimmy and I also discovered some interesting trivia about how names had been inadvertently changed. The clerk went to a small file and pulled out a card from which she got the information necessary to find a larger record book.

This was an enormous thing, and all the entries were written by hand, and in alphabetical order. The clerk told us that the person or persons who made the entries had to decipher people’s handwriting to make the entries.

The clerk speculated that many times the entries could be in error.

*Le (Feb. '09) adds, “Until recently I had Mom's driver's license, When I locate that record again maybe that will shed more (diluted) light on her correct name: Sophie Hilija Johnson or Sophia Lilly Johnson!” ******

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

(Reading, Viewing and Listening)

A GREAT READ

Three cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace...One School at a Time is written by Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin.

I saw Greg Mortenson speak at a local high school via TV, and was so inspired I went to the library and got the book. It's a well- written story about Greg's experience and mission to build schools in Pakistan.

Originally a mountain climber, in the early 90's, Greg was on an expedition to climb K-2 over 12,826 feet high in Pakistan. When a fellow climber's life was in jeopardy, the climbing group aborted the climb to escort him to safety.

On the trip down, Greg became disoriented and wandered into a small village where he was nursed back to health by a family there. While he was recuperating, he noticed that the children were attending school out of doors, and the only tools for writing were sticks used in the dirt. He promised to come back and build them a school. This begins his story.

I learned much about the Pakistani culture and about the Moslem traditions. I found it very inspiring.

Palma (Feb. '09) adds, "This is a great book!"

READING DANIELLE STEEL

Last year I began reading books by Danielle Steel. As a rule, I don't like American authors, but I do like to check out books that are written about sisters. Ms. Steel has such a book, Sisters, and I really liked it. I also read one called, Five Days in Paris.

When I read Five Days, I developed a desire to go to France -- at least to Paris. My sister lived in France for a year and hated it, but I think I might enjoy France because I would only be visiting.

I still like my English (and Irish) authors best, but Ms. Steel's books are peaceful. So far, Ms. Steel has written ninety-seven books! This winter, I have been reading a new book every three to four days.

Danielle Steel has enough titles to get me though until I can get out and work in the yard again!

Patricia (Feb. '09) adds, "I first started checking out Danielle Steel because she is the exact age as my sister. In fact in her book jacket photo, she even looks a little like my sister! They both have the really long hair -- the difference is, my sister is blond."

BOOKS ON MY BEDSIDE TABLE

Frances lists a couple of reads of the last few months: Ordinary Victories, What Is Precious by Manu Larcenet is a graphic (illustrated) novel. It is the concluding volume of three. I did not see the first two, but found this last book interesting and thoughtful. If you enjoyed comics as a kid, you might enjoy a graphic novel.

The First Born Advantage by Dr. Kevin Leman is a new book by a favorite author. As a first born and *only* child, I found it interesting that a second or third child could still have the “first born advantage.” The characteristics also apply if you are the first son born after daughters, or the first daughter born after sons.

In families of six or seven children, you might even have first-born traits if you are oldest of several younger children.

In terms of understanding one’s self the book’s worth turning its pages.

Editor, Frances adds, “Our site was down a couple of weeks in February, but it is back up again. Do take a look the volumes I wrote about in, I LOVE BOOKS. Our web address is: www.ninepatch9.org ”

Ninepatch Birthdays for March

Patricia 20

Dottie 25

Julie 27

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

(How do you really feel about being/not being a parent?)

BEING A PARENT

The question of being a parent touched my core. Putting words to feelings is supposed to be therapeutic or at least cathartic. But I wonder, do I dare write honestly about this? Any answer I put together now will be from a depressed person. Would my answer be different if I weren't depressed? For the moment I'd push away the “What if's” of my life and write my comment anyway.

I enjoyed my children's childhoods and have warm memories of the shared love. However, there were times during their teen years that I honestly thought if there had been any way I could have known how much pain I would feel during the difficult times, I would not have made the decision to have children. *(Continued on the next page.)*

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Now, my two sons are educated, married to good women who are good mothers, and they have fine professional jobs. Both work hard at their parenting and I believe they are good husbands.

Both also give back to their communities. I can look back at my raising my sons and say that, with a lot of effort and some good luck, I was the best parent that I could be.

However, I find being the mother of grown men an un-settling experience. My boys are respectful to me and give me attention, but the calls and visits feel as if they come from duty and not from love.

While most of the time I feel that I love my boys very much, I don't know how to express it other than by being kind and helping them out with a thing or two. On the other hand, there are times I feel how far they have moved on and I see that my work is done.

At those times I feel empty and wonder if I will hurt less if I love less. I want to feel their love again and I'm sad that I either can't or don't. (At times I wonder if there is love left to be felt!) And I wonder, does wanting love make me needy? Are my expectations too high for this phase of our lives? Do I need to grow up? Why do I feel bereft? Is it them? Is it me? Or, is it us?

Elaine (Feb.'09) adds, "Oh-oh! The 'What- if' questions are back! Perhaps I will answer those another day."

**--A--S-E-L-F--D-I-S-C-O-V-E-R-Y--
--G-A-M-E--
(Your House by the Water)**

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.

AT WATER'S EDGE

About her drawing, *Carol (Feb.'09)* explains, "I drew my riverside house before looking at Frances' drawing or reading the Kokology 2 explanation.

I do not like floods! A house where I once lived in Tulsa, Oklahoma very nearly became a casualty to one. I do not remember my dreams, but I like to use my imagination to create guided imagery. My river and little bridge are far below in a canyon. The sky dominates. Life-giving rain is approaching me from the west. The rain will help my little gar-den grow. There is a shady oak to shelter me when the sun comes out. The bridge allows me access to explore the west, because I like to be free to move in every direction. (If I could draw better, there would be animals, especially horses, birds and a raptor.)

My house is isolated, although I have a rich social network. The other side of the canyon represents my past and old relationships that I still treasure. I am more focused on my side of the canyon and the present, because of the effort it takes to return to the other side. But, oh my, what a beautiful view and memories!

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

IRELAND BY ANOTHER NAME

**My native country calls me back -
a haven by the Irish Sea.
No, I wasn't born there,
but its spirit's calling me.**

**In waters of Lake Michigan
some thirty miles from shore
lies an island green and lovely
like the one I've known before.**

**I saw St. James in autumn mist,
in homely melancholy-
a light-housed harbor facing east,
that harkened to our ferry.
I felt the sadness penetrate
my cold wind-driven bones
like Irish spirits screaming out
from rock and rill and stones.**

**The Mormons too left unhealed
marks
that pale the moors and shore.
I pray dear Beaver Island
You'll make peace with your past
lore.**

Gail (Feb. '09) adds, "I felt sadness when we arrived and toured the island on a cold and dreary early October weekend. I learned the sad history of the island, while I was there, and it contributed to the general darkness I felt. The island is fraught with a sad relationship between the Irish, the Mormons and the land, simply by virtue of its wildness. My regret at that time was I felt a deep longing to go to Ireland but had not been able to go."

**MELISSA
AND THE REHAB STAFF**

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Written for Melissa and her fellow Associates, nurses, physical therapists, techs and others, in the Rehabilitation Hospital of Indiana, all of whom helped my wife, Pat Altman, recover from her leg injury and subsequent amputation. Thank you all for your care!

**Melissa, Melissa,
I'm gonna' miss ya'!**

**Your smiling face
Helps in this race**

**As I struggle to heal
This absent leg I still feel.**

**It takes great passion
To work in your profession,**

**And so I salute you this day
For your compassionate way.**

Simon Stargazer III (Feb. '09) remembers, "A tragic and horrible occurrence led to new understanding of the human spirit and of its compassion in times of need..."

*

EXPECTATIONS

**A child's song
A mother's dream
They fly together
In love they seem.**

**Who is to know
The days slip by
Their feelings grow
Still touches die.**

**Dear time is left
For them to see
The true reward
Of souls to be.**

James (See also page his one-liner, page 4.) says, "May expectations be tempered with love."

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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)

“When I feel a distance growing between a friend and me, I usually...”

June Poucher (Feb. '09) says, “When I feel a distance growing between a friend and I usually talk it over with him /her and ask if I have offended in any way. If so, I try to make amends.

However, there are degrees of closeness with friendships. Some friendships just sort of expire when one moves away or changes her/his work or social routine. I try to honor that.

I believe that strong, lasting friendships are developed when each friend respects what is important to the other, whether they agree with it or not. I have been fortunate to have a few truly close friends with whom I kept in touch when many miles separated us. I am blessed.

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Next Month’s question:

“The first words out of my mouth in the morning are...”
