

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 page from my spiritual notebook.*

TAMING THE WILD DREAM

Turning its metal top, I popped the lid off the glass Nestea bottle and took a swig. I raised my eyebrows. *Diet Peach is good!* I set the bottle on my bathroom vanity for overnight sipping, and looked at the cap I still held in one hand. I noticed writing on its underside and held it up to see better. It read, "'Real Fact" #830 "The average human dream lasts only two to three seconds." *Wow. I get some long stories in a short time!*

I glanced at my open spiral notebook on the marbled sink top beside the Nestea. As I set my gel pen on the empty blue-lined page, I recalled twenty years earlier when I began considering my dreams.

After my divorce and early retirement, I tasted many new activities. I joined spiritual discussion groups. Meditation and positive-thinking brought inspiration. New friends spoke repeatedly of hearing or knowing God's guidance. OK. My own decisions weren't so great... I'll work harder to hear God's direction.

However, after decades of using every waking synapse of mental energy, my waking mind automatically filled with errands, worries and ideas. As soon as I released one, like water filling a seaside sand hole, another took its place. *No space for God to speak.*

Seeking God, I went to church. Services brought me quiet. I soaked up familiar songs and prayers. Sitting peacefully, I heard Bible stories from my youth. I nodded at Joseph in Egypt who dreamed of seven fat years and seven lean, and young Samuel whom God called during sleep. The Holy had spoken to them in dreams. *Maybe It will speak to me the same way!*

Even back then, I recalled stark black and white nightmares and laughed at vivid Technicolor dreams of burglars, policemen, old friends, frogs, cats and dogs. However, remembering my nightly dreams wasn't easy. Those creatures were *wild!* They came as they pleased and turned tail and fled when I opened my eyes. In order to understand any holy direction, I'd have to tame and collect the unruly things. *How? Hmm ... the library can help...*

I carted home a stack of dream books. Authors agreed on general directions. Their first advice was, *Be prepared.* So before sleep, I opened my notebook to a fresh page and dated it. On top, I placed a never-fails-to-write Flair pen. I set both on my bedside table and moved a lamp there, too.

Then came the "*nots.*" Do *not* move when you wake. Large muscle movement inhibits dream recall. Do *not* pay attention to spelling or writing on line. Do *not* "think." Just record whatever comes: a word, a phrase or even sketch a quick image.

At first I managed only a word or phrase. I was elated when I recognized an image -- a circle with a dot in the middle. It appeared as a chocolate pie with whipped cream topping around the edge and a dollop in the center. Another night it showed up as a road sign O (with a dot in the middle), and a third night I saw a playing card that someone (whose back was to me) held in a game. *What can it mean?* Maybe the circle and dot meant my general direction was "on target." (A bull's eye?)

As I ventured on with my nighttime exploration, phrases and random drawings appeared in my notebook. *It's at least something!* Before the first year was out, most nights I collected a full page of dreams

Now, I'd like to say dreams tell me God's way. I discovered there are many kinds of dreams. A frequent type is "daily residue." Like blowing off steam, stories and characters rise from experiences of the previous day or two. These dreams rise from the surface of my life. *(Continued on the next page.)*

A deeper spiritual part I get through on-going themes. For example, since January '10, I have seen *green.* In separate dreams I saw, "a green quilt made by God," a "smooth chartreuse worm and fuzzy

caterpillar,” and “shiny spring green grapes for my (deceased) cousin Mike.” I also recorded, “long thin Catalpa beans hanging on the tree.” Just last month I saw “greenbacks in my brown ground coffee,” and “green snakes among my string beans.” Last week I wrote, “An Asian woman -- maybe a foreign informant -- wore an embroidered green dress slit up the side. I tried it on -- too small, so I draped it over my back. ”

What do these bits mean? I’m not sure, but green is a *growth* color, so smile at the images. They encourage me to continue on my path. Of course -- I also want to watch for those “snakes among the green beans!”

Frances Fritzie

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

Dear Frances,

I started reading February’s *Ninepatch* and somehow it got shoved under some books. Yesterday I rediscovered it. The next thing I read was the philosophical piece by Karen-Louise. I really enjoyed it as it gave me something to think about.

I had heard it said that “God” or “All”-- as my mother described “Consciousness”-- had created humans to describe itself. This description with the examples gave me a greater understanding of this idea. I also found her description of meditating helpful for my understanding of that process. Thank you, Karen-Louise.

I try to do the type of meditation that lets the thoughts, impressions, feelings and sensations float by when I go for my daily walk. This often lets new ideas pop into my thoughts. Sometimes I get insight into a problem I’ve been musing on.

But I do the other kind of meditation, focusing on something, when I swim two times a week. Then I breathe in and out in a steady rhythm and count the Number of strokes from one end of the pool to the other. Since I do four types of strokes there is a different number each time and that keeps my focus. I find myself very relaxed and serene when I finish this practice.

Palma (Mar. ’10) adds, “I call it a ‘practice’ because that is what my daughter calls her daily Buddhist meditation.”

Frances,

I liked your opening letter in Mar.’10 *Ninepatch*. Lately I've come to realize that spiritual time is time when I stop all outside input and listen solely to my inner voice. Then, I let the inner dialogue die down - and listen for MY INNER VOICE.

I was recently reading Eckhardt Tolle, and trying to answer the question, “What is the real ME.” I have decided -- so far -- that the real me is a fierce iron will to live -- wrapped around a heart-breaking vulnerability. *(Continued on the next page.)*

I don't think Tolle would agree with my interpretation, but that of course is none of my concern! So far -- that is how I see it.

Take care, Girlfriend.
Sherryl

Sherryl (June '07) adds, "See ya' again in Michigan!"

My dearest Princess Fritzabella,

Sorry it's been so long. I've been in the weeds with finishing up online classes, preparing for a lengthy and challenging interchange for a live class from the play (and film), "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead." I also had my first meeting with the literacy study position.

I loved the diversity of this month's *Ninepatch* and smiled at your reflective nature. I love your desire for order and re-evaluation in and of your life. You leave no stone unturned and I admire that. (It is such a part of your personality.)

Namaste,
Liz

Liz/Moscar (Mar. '10) says, "We received a standing ovation in class and now I think I'm hooked on acting!"

Hello Frances,

I'm sorry for my complete lack of response to *Ninepatch* and your newsy monthly e-mails.

I want you to know it was never about you.

I have been...and continue to be...in a very dark place. I have ABSOLUTELY no desire to write about it...or talk about it, for that matter.

Mike

Michael (May '09) adds, "I felt I at least owed you the consideration of some response, albeit long overdue."

Dear Frances,

Thank you for your letter and *Ninepatch*. I have some ups and some downs. I try to take life one day at a time and pray a lot.

Since my work asked me to, I called my older daughter's caseworker and asked for help in applying for "disability." The woman gave me phone numbers. The clerk I dialed asked me, "How long ago did you have your brain tumor removed?"

I answered, "Twenty-five years ago."

She laughed and said, "That was the time to apply!"

Though I can't drive as a result of the operation and have also needed other little surgeries over the years, none of it counts. Because I worked myself back up and have been employed all these years, I am not disabled.

(Continued on the next page.)

Now they ignore me at work. Guess I'll keep my job as long as I can do my work-- and on time.

On my days off I spend time with my dad who still lives with us. He makes me laugh. We dream together about a perfect home, one that is peaceful and quiet with no people running in and out all hours and we can turn off the TV or watch what we want.

He needs to dream so I imagine these things with him to give him hope. I want him to be happy -- I feel good when he smiles. But, reality is cold and hard. Now neither of us can drive. He doesn't see well enough anymore. He doesn't walk very well, either. Like him, I feel older every day.

I don't tell Dad, but have given up looking for a new future. I just ask God's help to get through each day in the life I have.

Love and Prayers,
LindaSue

LindaSue (Mar. '09) adds, "I still look for God and try to find something good in every day."

Dear Francesca,

Ever since last month when my husband got sick while we were visiting our son, we've been enduring rounds of medical tests and diagnoses.

My husband's latest development involved a kidney scan. We'll get a call in about a week to see what's what. It could mean renal failure, but I'm hoping if it is, it can be treated. He has always enjoyed extremely good health and is very naïve about medical matters. (I can see that he is better off that way. He has me to do the worrying.) He has graduated from the wheelchair to a walker and is now using a cane, with the walker as a fall back if he is extra tired.

He has surrendered his driver's license. (You can imagine what *that* means.) In order to get out of the house, he rides with me just about everywhere.

I feel bad for him but he seems to be taking his life changes in stride.

Elaine (Mar. '10) adds, "I need some time to myself and will gradually try to wean him from going everywhere with me -- but now is just not the right time."

Hi Fritzie,

You mentioned you were washing combined loads of clothes and doing little "motherly" things to help your son, David, while you were in Michigan. Are you not staying at your condo?

My son, Keith, is in trouble -- again. I think he is about to be evicted from the YMCA where he's been living and working.

I do know he has decided, as of a few days ago, to go live with his son in Delaware. I continue to hope Keith will get some mental help then. He gets really mad when I tell him he needs it. Too bad. His getting angry doesn't change the truth.

His son lives in a four bedroom house. He has one roommate already and they seem to be doing well. I hope this works out.

Going to close now, my friend.
Patricia

(Continued on the next page.)

Patricia (Feb. '10) says, "Did you get snow while you were in Michigan? We did. I remember having lots of white stuff as a child. I like its beauty -- just glad I don't have to go out in it. I must say, I am really looking forward to spring."

Frances, my friend,

Please know that I thought about you so often through your oncoming birthday in February, but let my good intentions fall through the cracks.

We had such a busy week! We attended a Valentine’s Dance and saw “Cats,” (a Christmas gift from my kids). I painted furiously on my portraits of my daughter, Kristy, and her family. Then we took a trip to see Hubby’s sister and, of course, also my own Cate who’s in prison for manslaughter done in a tragic drunken car crash. I topped it all off with a birthday party -- though not yours.

But, Frances, I hope your birthday was as special as you are, that you have a glorious year. YOU are one busy lady yourself. You have done such a great job with *Ninepatch*. I think we readers may take you for granted.

Are you thinking maybe of setting it aside and concentrating on other writing? Maybe that’s what you need. We find so many distractions to procrastinate doing the thing that gives us the most pleasure. It’s as if we wear a hair shirt and must sacrifice ourselves to others or to in-consequential activity. That is what I do anyway.

Keep me posted on your life.
Much love,
God bless,
Gail

Gail (Mar. ’10) adds, “The painting I did for Kristy gave me so much satisfaction. I want to continue to paint. I did the portraits in watercolor pencil, but then I covered them in paint. I was worried that I’d lose their character and was pleased when it didn’t happen.”

***With the
Snake of Life,
the tail
follows the head.***

James (Mar. ’10) adds, “The tail points to the past while the head creates the future.”

(FABRICS begins on the next page.)

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

MY JOURNEY INTO THE PAST

(Part 1 of 2)

My fiancé and I went to a matinee the other day. We enjoy watching movies together. “The big screen” is reserved for the titles we expect are the best. I was drawn to the tale from previews. It was, “The Law-Abiding Citizen.”

The story opened with a spiraling and lifting dramatic panning of a city I recognized immediately as Philadelphia, Pa. The movie’s “life’s not fair” theme was direct from the offset. A man was at home with his wife and daughter, peacefully enjoying his hobby. Two men broke into his house, wounded him, raped and killed his wife and murdered his little daughter.

I don’t like gory movies and was beginning to think I had made a mistake in my choice. After the first half hour, I knew I made a mistake but was riveted. It wasn’t the violence that held me. It was the unraveling plot that pulled me back to a nightmare I lived through a few years ago. In Philadelphia, the same city where the movie was set, I experienced my horrific introduction to the workings of the corrupt judicial system which presided over the case of my daughter’s murderers.

In 2003 my daughter was hit and killed by two drunk drivers. After her funeral, I attended the trial of her killers. (You may remember how I found out the prosecution is done by the system, the district attorney’s office and not by the family and their lawyers.)

What I learned when I had to deal with the DA’s office and the prosecutorial system was not good. For example, I can be sitting quietly on my porch talking to a girlfriend on a lazy afternoon. A strange man can pull up in his car, exit, and approach my friend sitting in the porch swing next to me. He can shoot my friend point blank killing her on the spot. This murderer can calmly tell me his name, address, phone number, the caliber of the weapon, and ask if you want to take pictures, fingerprints or anything else.

I can gather all evidence you want, but I can not do a blessed thing with it or against that man. I can not hire a lawyer to prosecute or submit my evidence. In fact, I can not even testify at the hearing or trial -- unless I am so requested by the DA’s office. The entire process is driven by the appointed court lawyers, judges, and if it ever comes to it, a jury.

In “The Law-Abiding Citizen,” I watched the victim begin to experience the same unfairness. The injured man stood in the shadows of grief and watched in horror as his family’s killer made a deal with the district attorney’s office. This pact was known to the presiding judge and the killer accepted the bargain. The rapist and murderer got three years in prison and an early release. His partner-in-crime had stood by the door and watched the rape/ murder. That man got execution by lethal injection because of the deal his partner had made.

The killer testified against his accomplice.

(To be continued April ’10)

CaT (Jan. ’10) says, “Just when I thought it safe to go to the movies to be entertained, I had again felt the pain, the horror and the sadness of my daughter’s death.”

LOTTE’S JOURNALS

Following is the conclusion of Lotte’s most recent medical journey with Uncle Jerry.

January 20, 2010

Uncle Jerry was kicked out of the rehab due to insurance non-coverage. Have been fighting with Medicare. He needs physical therapy! They will not cover. Now, I am appealing to another ‘independent agency of Medicare.’

The doctors want him to have physical therapy. Meantime, I do exercising with him.

Had to hire three private home health care aids to assist me with Uncle Jerry -- shaving, bathing, get him dressed and out of bed into his wheelchair.

Have to keep working in order to pay for this service.

Friday, we are moving to a different apartment, which is handicapped equipped.

**

February 2, 2010

So upset with the choice I made. The new handicapped apartment is a total disaster. No closets to speak of. Everything is packed in large Ziploc bags. Like living in a shelter.

I cannot blame Uncle Jerry, although I couldn't leave the rehab without him calling me every five minutes. (He was fine as long as I was there...) The management pressured me in taking this disastrous apartment and it cost me a lot of wasted money. Meantime, whenever I have a moment I write letters to other Senior Citizens apartments.

There is an organization (non-profit) supporting me in my claim with Medicare, They are fighting to get him physical therapy for an extended time. Even the doctors are proud that I am pursuing this matter. They said, "Go! Beat the heck out of Medicare. You will succeed." I have lost the first two appeals and now I am going for the third level.

I have written to our congressman and asked if he could assist us in finding another place to live. We will find another place.

Our lawyer came by and he is filing a lawsuit against the management where Uncle Jerry tripped and fractured his left kneecap.

Uncle Jerry keeps telling me, "We make the best of a bad situation." He is right.

He is still in a wheelchair and his spirits are so high. It is amazing.

**

February 6, 2010

Uncle Jerry is doing great. His spirits are high and he is able to find humor in a bad situation. I love him for that.

The kids in school were out of control. Didn't listen. They all wrote apology letters, some of them couldn't spell even if their lives were hanging in the balance. For the time being, I am not doing the PM school. Waiting 'til Uncle Jerry is able to walk. Hopefully, by May or June. I pray.

Weather people had a stern warning out regarding the upcoming snow blizzard. When we woke up, there was not one snowflake on the ground.

It made me happy.

Lotte deRoy (Mar. '10) adds, "Uncle Jerry is doing really great as long as he listens to me. Many senior citizen housings already responded to my request. Sadly, there is either a long waiting list or I cannot move in with him. Meanwhile, I take care of him, because I am still working -- though I make a hard living. "

(FABRICS continues on the next page.)

ONE BRAVE THING

The brave thing I will take credit for is learning to ice skate at the age of thirty-seven. First, I signed up for group lessons and went from that to private lessons in a figure skating club. It was there that I found that I loved ice dancing and teamed up with a partner. My partner wanted us to attend a weekend of ice dancing in Toronto. I had to give up my fear of looking like a jerk among more experienced ice-dancers but finally I agreed to go.

The rink was in downtown Toronto and dedicated only to figure skating so it was totally different than the usual hockey rink look I was used to. There were no boards separating the edges from the ice. Large mirrors reflected the skaters at one end of the rink. An organist played the dance music on a ringside organ. It was similar to being on a dance floor with couples all doing the same dance but in prescribed patterns.

We skated Friday evening, most of Saturday, and again Sunday morning. Friday evening after skating, a cocktail party was held in a lovely room in the same building as the rink. On Saturday evening there was a dinner party at our hotel followed by ballroom dancing. The final event was an elegant luncheon after the skating sessions ended.

We attended four such weekends over the years. I am grateful that I had the courage to start skating and that I was able to keep at it for twenty-six years.

Louise (Feb. '10) adds, "I read all the time. I just finished a memoir called Merle's Door, Lessons from a Free-thinking Dog by Ted Kerasote. Merle is a rescued dog. When I got to the last chapter, I began to cry -- sob actually. I can't remember when I last cried like that. It is a beautiful book. Now I am reading, The Elegance of the Hedgehog translated from French and wonderful. It is a stretch for me, more intellectual than I usually choose. I sometimes need a dictionary, but I want to be ready to discuss it with my book club back home."

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

(Reading Listening and Viewing)

READING HABITS

Recently, a friend asked me about how many books I read every week. I had to stop and think. I am not really sure. For one thing, how many volumes I finish varies partly with the type of book I'm reading.

Right now I am reading Sweat, a short story by Zora Neale Hurston. The bound volume also includes critiques that have been written about her writing. These comments go into a lot of detail about Negro dialect and expression. This is slower reading. In Micanopy, Fl., I found the book when we were visiting near there. I enjoy reading books set in an area where I am visiting and authors from that area -- such as Zora Hurston.

In the last couple of years I have begun to get into stories about and by real people. Recently I read Julie Andrews' memoir: Home: A Memoir of My Early Years. I also enjoyed, Finding My Voice by Diane Rhem which was more of an autobiography. IN the same vein, last year I read a biography about William Styron called, A Life. It was written by James W. West III.

At one time I was a fan, but in recent years, I have read very little about spirituality. Instead, I enjoy books about social justice, such as Half the Sky by Nicholas Kristof. The volume is on my desk, but I have not read it yet.

I go off in many different directions. The best part is, I never become bored!

Jane (Mar. '10) adds, "Female authors and detective stories appeal to me, but I don't limit myself to them. I like to mix in other types of books."

BOOKS ON MY BEDSIDE TABLE

Three books are finished and stacked on my bedside table to be traded, gifted or taken to donate. First is Ten Degrees of Reckoning: The True Story of a Family's Love and the Will to Survive by Hester Rumberg. In 1993 Judith and Michael Sleavin and their two children set out to live their dream: to sail around the world. Almost three years later, one night off the coast of New Zealand, a freighter carrier altered its course by a mere ten degrees and cut their forty-seven foot boat in half.

This is the true story of unbelievable loss and a meditation on the strength to survive.

Next in the pile is, Mommy's Little Girl: Casey Anthony and Her Daughter Caylee's Tragic Fate by Diane Fanning. This book presents the first in-depth account of the Caylee Anthony case, a three-year-old who disappeared from her Florida home in 2008. Caylee's mother became the prime suspect after the body was found. Casey's trial is set for later this year.

Most recently completed is Time is a River by Mary Alice Monroe. While she is recovering from breast cancer surgery, Mia is overwhelmed by her husband's infidelity and request for a divorce. She flees to the mountains of North Carolina to a remote cabin recently inherited by her fly fishing instructor, Belle Carson.

The cabin once belonged to Belle's grandmother -- a legendary fly fisher and journalist of the 1920's, Kate Watkins, who was accused of murdering her lover. The scandal plagued the family for generations. Mia is intrigued when she discovers Kate's journal.

This is a solid work in which a broken woman rediscovers her self-worth. Monroe is known for her lyrical style and this book is no exception. The tale comprises many layers of mystery, reconciliation and romance.

June Poucher (Mar. '10) adds, "I cannot imagine a life without books lying around."

**Ninepatch
April Birthdays**

Lottie's Uncle Jerry 21

(THREAD begins on the next page.)

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

HAVE YOU SMILED TODAY?

Smiles

Are small

Encouraging

Words from God

And you're the messenger.

Simon Stargazer III (Mar. 10) says, "I grew up as quite a shy guy, but after I started work in the health industry, I knew I had to become more outgoing. I forced myself to greet each person I met with a smile and a 'Hi, have a good day!' greeting. Being a Quaker and believing in that 'still small voice of God within,' it came to me that my smile might be a small encouraging message from God. In this poem I suggest that each of us is the messenger."

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

GET TO KNOW YOU

Our Question of the Month for this issue was, **"To feel successful I would have to..."**

Christa (Mar. 10) finishes that thought, "...have enough money not to have to worry about money! There's so much I still want to do in life, but so many of those things pay very little until one reaches the top of the field or becomes a big name.

Many people are happy even when money is tight. I want so much to be one of those people! Unfortunately, I was born a worrier, and when there are bills to pay, I can't help but think about them. My solution seems to be to continue chasing success by trying to make "enough" money doing what I love and hope someday I'll actually "feel" successful.

Next month's question is, **"One thing my parents/grandparents taught me was..."**

("MORE BUBBLE THOUGHTS" is on the next page.)

MORE BUBBLE THOUGHTS

Liz (Mar. '10) says, "An image of my older son as a little boy returned to me when I thought about my one huge bubble. It wraps around me as I stand on a grassy lawn and spin. I am recalling a birthday party for my four-year old son. I'd taken him to the park and had brought along one of those big bubble wands. The sun was shining as we blew massive multicolored bubbles."

At the end of 2009, *Ninepatch* included a draw-your-bubble game. This self-discovery exercise came from the book, *Kokology* by Tadahiko Nagao and Isamu Saito. Commenting on bubble images in general, authors wrote, "The shimmering bubbles you blow in your imagination are symbols of your hopes and dreams. The scene you described reveals how you think about dreams you hope someday will come true."

Kokology authors suggest seeing one large bubble means, “You have a single, all purpose dream or ambition that drives your entire life. Hold on to that desire and keep striving toward your goal. Given time, you’ll see that it’s not so far from your grasp.”

Liz agrees, “The one large bubble clarification sounds in line with my goals!” She adds, “Shiny airborne bubbles still make my heart leap with joy.”

Remember! Our on-going topic:

“A part of my life that's on hold right now is...”

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