

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 journal.*

The sun shone brightly the morning JK and I drove to the new Publix grocery's Grand Opening in a large strip mall. Walking back to the car, we passed a Footworks store. I pointed to a sign in the window behind a display of Converse All-Star tennis shoes. It read, "Sale! Buy one pair get one half price!"

"Let's take a look, I said.

JK nodded, "Ok."

Less than an hour later, we pushed open the glass doors carrying matching high tops, sizes eleven and seven. The design we chose, "Star Jumble" was the only one still stocked in both sizes. It was a printed canvas profusion of white, black and gray stars.

At the time, I thought our style choice was accidental. However, after an experience two days ago I thought, *Maybe the design has been waiting for me to really see it.*

I was getting ready to put on my shoes the morning my perspective changed. Perched on the edge of a chair, I leaned over, pulled on the Chuck Taylors and double bowed them three holes from the top. As I made the loops, the tri-starred design of white, black and grayish stars jumbled on the sneaks took on new meaning. The design reminded me of my busy life.

Typically a juggling act, my days feature reading books, writing letters, cards and stories, meeting with charming people (e-mail and in person) and projects that include *Ninepatch*. Like the profusion of stars on my Converse, I can be too busy. At times I long to stop jumping from white star, to gray star, to black star and sink into one to rest.

Considering rest, I saw the Chuck Taylor insignia, a large black star on a white circle. Like a great star once attracted three wise men to Bethlehem, the haloed dark star looked over the others.

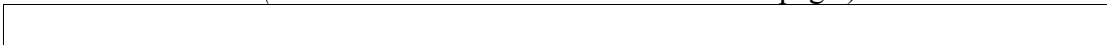
Like the God of my under-standing, it metaphorically called, "Come rest in me." I imagined entering it, like a warm dark cave. Inside I found an elevator and rode it down, leaving behind all sound and light. The uninterrupted quiet revived me.

Once rested, I ride the elevator up and slowly exit the large dark star. Again I have energy for leap-frogging the smaller gray, black and white black stars in my life.

Whatever the reason, I bought those canvas high tops that sunny day JK and I shopped, from now on they will remind me of my busy life and the large haloed star that looks down on it all.

Frances Fiitzie

(AROUND THE FRAME is on the next page.)



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

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(Letters to the Editor)

Dear Frances,

Thanks for the *Ninepatch!* I love all the stories of different journeys, especially the freedom of the river travel and dancing of Le's "Canoe Trip." I felt like kicking off my shoes and dancing in the sand!

Speaking of rivers, yesterday I went for a hike on the Alachua (Florida) trail. I was amazed to see the sensuous curves of many alligators catch-ing the warming rays on the banks of the canal there. The Sandhill cranes are apparently hanging out somewhere else this year. I saw some in the sky but none on the ground.

Love,

Liz

Liz/Moscar (Nov.-Dec. '09) says, "I enjoyed my footloose and fancy holiday freedom. Now it's back to work and school."

*

Frances!

It is so good to hear from you and about your work. We still have many common interests. As for rewriting, editing, emending or whatever you call it, it is all part of the work of writing. I see interviews with best selling authors who speak of six years, eight or nine years in getting the book written, many requiring much research.

My own book-in-progress moves in fits and starts, many detours and distractions, but weekly progress. The harder I work, the more the ideas flow!

Reading eats up time I could be writing, but I am hooked on books! Currently, I'm halfway through Stones Into Schools, Greg Mortenson's new book released this month, a sequel to Three Cups of Tea.

I need to go back and skim The Left Hand of God to capture a quote which I partially remember. It's another great read, and fun to watch it as an old movie with Humphrey Bogart.

Don

Don (Sept. '09) adds, "USA TODAY named The Help by Kathryn Stockett as book of the year ... maybe next on my reading list."

Hi Missy,

I love winter and yes, it is cold enough for me. I don't much like the temperature to go below 30 degrees, though. And, I don't care for ice on the roads even though it is beautiful when it clings to the trees. *(Continued on the next page.)*

The cats are doing well. I'm still giving Merlin and Maggie their daily insulin. I really miss Andrew... but Mr. Gray takes up some of the slack. He is such a spoiled baby.

On another note, my middle son, Keith, is working part time at the YMCA. Since he lives there, his job pays his rent and also gives him access to their gym. He remains a concern since he still won't do anything about his mental being. I have to remind myself: can't do anything about that.

Talk to you later.

Patricia

Patricia (Jan. '10) adds, *"The bright side of this cold season is, as of the 21st of December the days are getting longer."*

Dear Frances,

How nice to hear from you! My house is empty for now, my daughter and grandbaby have moved out. I am adjusting to the aloneness and am usually busy enough that it's bearable. Spare time finds me mostly cleaning and sorting in preparation for my friend/tenant to move in.

I'm looking forward to this new year -- the year of the Tiger. I'm not conversant with the Chinese astrological system, but know enough to expect big things of the Year of the Tiger because it offers opportunities for prosperity and advancement if you're willing to "pounce" on them.

Last time the Tiger rolled through was twelve years ago when I grew in leaps and bounds!

Love,

Lynn

LynnTROR (Jan. '09) adds, *"I made gifts for Christmas -- beaded Victorian decorations and knitted blankets."*

Dear Frances,

You noticed I was in a sad and gloomy mood last time I wrote. I am getting that way again today. I think it's due to too much time with my husband and the kids. They seem to get on my nerves. I feel like I have no private space.

When I was trying to write in the dining room, I had your letter laying beside me. My husband stood behind me and read over my shoulder. He said, "So you feel you have to shut me out sometimes!"

My spouse has gone from paying no attention to me, to following me around. I wanted to listen to old records but he walked behind me and turned the speaker up full blast. That was too much, so I put the records away. I tried to read and he kept interrupting me saying things like, "Are you comfortable? Do you want a snack or something to drink?"

It's either him or my younger daughter. Even the cats follow me! Today I have
(Continued on the next page.)

retreated to my room and no one has found me -- yet.

Life goes on. Work. Housework. Church. I am still working on my baby steps to a better life, too. I want more peace of mind.

Thank you for listening.

Love and Prayers,

LindaSue

LindaSue (Jan. '10) adds, "I am still reading Amish stories by Wanda Brunstetter. I have completed two series: 'Daughters of Lancaster County' and 'Brides of Lancaster County.' I am started on 'Sisters of Holmes County,' and now reading the third book"

Dear Frances,

As I am taking steps to simplify my life, I look at the yin, the circular and sometimes undefined part of myself and I think of you and *Ninepatch*.

I invite other readers to give their thoughts. It could be a way to spark the *Ninepatch* community to grow and be more pro-active. It could also be a way to invite closure to a wonderful journey your contributors have shared. Following are my thoughts.

Have you ever considered retiring from *Ninepatch*? The newsletter was a wonderful way for you to stay in touch with your out-of-state friends and build community in Florida when you first moved from Michigan. But that was before email really took off.

Now that you have strong roots in both Florida and Michigan, is it really so necessary for you to stay in touch with us *Ninepatch* contributors in this fashion? If you were to let the newsletter go altogether, you could focus more on your other writing. As a first step, you could simply discontinue the paper issue.

I am interested in thoughts of other readers.

Love and hugs,

Carol

Carol (Jan '10) says, "As part of simplifying my own life, I have given the Ninepatch Board notice and will resign as Membership Coordinator at the end of 2010. Perhaps that opens the position for another reader."

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Beginnings and endings are the most memorable.

James (Jan. '10) adds, "First impressions, like 'my first day of school,' and 'my first date' are important remembered beginnings. Last impressions, like 'the last time I saw my mother...' and 'the last time I was badly hurt' are also timeless."

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

THE MOTION OF SILENCE

In a college class, I learned about a certain Greek philosophy that believes that true being (or consciousness) can understand itself through reason. This consciousness had to create material beings such as people who possess the ability to ponder abstract thoughts. Greek mathematicians who subscribed to this philosophy felt that mathematics had to create mathematicians in order to express its own reality.

I've heard Deepak Chopra convey a similar sentiment. He noted that ancient stars exploded and spread clouds of carbon, oxygen, and minerals throughout the universe. Eventually, this matter coalesced into planets that produced creatures with eyes. He said that the stars wanted to be able to look at themselves.

As a child, I lay down in a lawn chair in the back yard of our family home late at night and look at the stars. We lived in Clearwater, Florida, so most nights were warm and perfect for star gazing. I loved to look deeply. The silence wasn't silent at all. Out of those deep, still nights, I was connected to the whole universe.

I always felt a strong desire to learn, to be involved, to study, to make a list and get that list done. In equal measure, I've been attracted to stillness. I meditate, even before busy days. Meditation is a discipline where you don't pay attention to your thoughts. You sit still. There are concentrative methods where you focus on a symbol or repeat a word. I practice a receptive method where you let things go. My intention is that I'm in prayer, just sitting with God. When my mind chimes in with thoughts, impressions, feelings and sensations, I let them float by like leaves on a river.

I find that I know things outside of mediation -- like I'm getting a job or I'm going to move. My friends have described similar experiences -- getting a phone call from someone that they were just thinking about or having pieces of a difficult problem fall neatly into place. I believe this is the fruit of being still.

Perhaps my understanding of the practice of silence is not a whole lot different than how the ancient Greeks used to explain mathematics. There is a reality behind or underneath our material world that moves us along.

Karen Louise is single but used to a large family. She is one of six daughters. She has no children but three grown nieces. She loves to walk outside, read, surf the web, and is an avid sports fan. She says, "After many years of living out west, last year I moved to Florida to be close to my parents. Three of my sisters are flying in for winter holiday visits. We're talking about trips to the beach or museums. From reading

Ninepatch, I was inspired to ask each to make and share a list of all the books we've read this year."

Editor's Note: See her list in our blog, "I Love Books" on the web site: www.Ninepatch9.org

IS THERE A GOD FOR CATS?

Last month my husband, our Border Collie mix, Maggie, our cat, Schwatzie, and I drove down from frigid upper New York State. The trip with pets, was a little complicated, but otherwise uneventful. However, trouble began when we arrived at our condo in Gainesville, FL where we would be spending the winter.

Our cat could not poop. She was a sick kitty, so settling into our condo had to wait while we took Schwatzie to the local vet. Vets have a way of manually removing hardened stool. She had that, followed by an enema, and we were on our way back to the condo.

We breathed a sigh of relief until she got constipated again! This time it was over a weekend and we had to take her to the pet emergency room on a Saturday. The emergency vet reamed her out and gave her an enema and sent us on our way. However, on Monday she hadn't peed or pooped.

Again, I took her to our vet, who did an x- ray, reamed out more poop, hydrated her and said, "Try some wet cat food."

We have had the cat eight years and all we have ever been able to get her to eat is dry food, a mix of Iams, and, Prescription Diet CD, but, at this point, I'd try 'most anything so I bought a small can of Fancy Feast. Guess what? She loved it.

Today is Tuesday. We had some progress. She has peed, but still no poop -- even though she is eating Cat Lax every day.

Is there a God for Cats? If so, I pray for poop.

Louise (Jan. '10) adds, "Prayer answered. We got POOP! Kitty is happy and so are we."

THE SPACE WINDOW

Last fall, I was privileged to visit the National Cathedral in Washington DC. It was lovely.

The light that filtered through the stained glass windows played a patchwork palette of color across a great forest of pillars lining the central aisle of the great house of worship. A private service was in progress and a muted, gentle voice full of soft priestly tones reverberated where I stood, transfixed.

As the service ended, a musician stepped up. We were delighted with a swelling blast of darkness as Bach's "Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor" flowed from the great pipe organ into every corner of the building.

My distracted eyes gravitated to the "Space Window." Its deep blue glass mosaic was ablaze in the early afternoon sun. Circles like planetary rings rolled my smile over the window surface and the rich sparkle of a starry night. A line of infinity lassoed a central circle: the mysterious moon, new in its phase, like the cutaway of a nautilus, drew my eye finally to the embedded piece of lunar basalt given as a gift to commemorate the Apollo 11 mission.

The window looked like hope. After exploring the old church, I walked back to view it again -- one last inspiration before I departed.

(Continued on the next page.)

Linda Rosenthal (Jan. '10) adds, "I was happy to return to the laidback Midwest. After a week of the fast and crowded pace of Washington D.C. and area, being in my homeland was like letting out a deep sigh or a balloon full of air."

OUR LAST DAY OF CANOEING

(Part two of "My 2009 Canoe Trip")

Sunday was our last day for canoeing. We shuttled our truck and trailer ahead to our designated take-out landing then loaded our life jackets, food and drink into the two canoes. We spent a leisurely eighty-degree afternoon on the beautiful Namekagan River. It was late afternoon when we reached our take out landing. We took the canoes out of the water along with the coolers, lifejackets and supplies. We loaded it all onto the trailer, and returned to our campsite where we settled in and cooked dinner.

We put a hollow log vertical over our fire to provide a "chimney fire" late into the evening. The chimney fire blazed and lit the whole campsite. The night was still and dark. I saw many stars as well as satellites moving across the sky. I hated to go to bed, but finally gave in and climbed into my sleeping bag.

Monday morning we woke fairly early and ate a breakfast that included the sausages, and apple sauce given us Thursday by our local friends. After allowing our meal to settle, we broke camp. Breaking camp is quite a chore as we had two spacious tents and the kitchen tent to take down and store in the trailer/chuck wagon. Then there were the cots, sleeping bags, food, cooking utensils, and other paraphernalia. Even with four of us working hard together, breaking camp took a couple hours. I waved goodbye to the other three men who headed back to Brookings, SD.

My trip wasn't quite over. I got into my new Malibu and headed north to my home town of Ironwood, in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

Le (Jan. '10) says, "This is my third year with this group from Brookings, who call themselves, 'BARF' -- Brookings Area River Followers."

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

(Reading Listening and Viewing)

HAVE A LITTLE FAITH

I just finished Mitch Albom's 2009 book, Have a Little Faith. It's about life's purpose, about losing belief and finding it again.

The volume begins with a request from Albert Lewis an eighty-two year old Jewish rabbi, the author calls, "The Reb." The man is from Albom's hometown and asks Mitch to deliver his eulogy. *(Continued on the next page.)*

The Reb told him a story from the older man's youth. During the great depression, he had only two sets of clothes. On the day of his Bar Mitzvah, a celebration honoring his be-coming a Jewish man, the boy's father gave him a new suit.

A few weeks later, wearing that same suit, he and his father took a trolley car to see a relative, a well-to-do attorney. Since they were going to the man's house, his father carried a cake his mother had baked.

At the house, a teenage cousin came running up to the pair, took one look at Albert, and burst out laughing. He squealed, "Al (The Reb), that's my old suit! Hey, guys! Look! Al's wearing my old suit!"

Albert was mortified. On the trolley ride home, he fought tears as he glared at his father who had traded his mother's cake for a suitcase full of clothes. The son now saw the exchange as rich relatives giving to poor ones.

When they got home, the boy couldn't hold his hurt any longer. "I don't understand," Albert cried. "You're a religious man. Your cousin isn't. You pray every day. He doesn't. They have everything they want. And we have nothing!"

His father nodded, then answered, "God and the decision he renders is correct. God doesn't punish anyone out of the blue. God knows what his is doing."

It was the last time The Reb judged life by what he owned.

From a sermon by The Reb: "My friends, if we tend to the things that are important in life, if we are right with those we love and behave in line with our faith, our lives will not be cursed with the aching throb of unfulfilled business. Our words will always be sincere, our embraces will be tight. We will never wallow in the agony of 'I could have, I should have...' We can sleep in a storm... And when it's time, our good-byes will be complete."

His conclusion was my favorite part of the book. I need to remember this wisdom and abide by it.

I recommend the book. It was humbling.

Dottie (Nov.-Dec. '09) adds, "The book tells the secret of happiness. Be satisfied. Be grateful -- for what you have, for the love you receive and for what God has given you."

Ninepatch Birthdays

February

Palma 10

Frances 20

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

FULL CIRCLE

Roly, poly,
Small and fat,
Pat a-cake, pat-a- cake,
Rata-tat-tat.

Babykins, Babykins,
I love you,
Ring around the Rosey,
Goochy, goochy goo.
Little girl, little boy,
Where will you go?
A quick trip to Disney,
Then on with the show.

Old woman, old woman,
Rocking in her chair,
Thinking of her children
And plaiting her hair.

Where have they gone,
Those sweet little fat ones?

A phone call on Fridays,
A Hallmark on birthdays,
A package for the Lords' day
And off they go, on their way.

Roly poly,
Rata-tat-tat,
Ring around the Rosey,
How 'bout that?

Devora (July '09) says, "I know they are a little melancholy. I don't even remember writing them but it must have been around the time I decided I was leaving my husband of seventeen years. I was sad then."

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POETRY TO EAT

Today we're going to eat our words.
We like nouns better than verbs:
nouns like candy, cakes and shakes,
chocolate squares, or cookie bakes,
ice cream cones and scones
and more,
tortes and tarts and breads galore,
donuts, Danish, delicious dips –
we like to smack our lips on chips.

When we are hungry for bananas,
We'd leave Savannah for Montana.
Sometimes we'll do
some fancy kickin'
to taste some finger-lickin' chicken.
If we are tickled for a pickle,
we'll give you more than just a
nickel.
We roll our eyes up to the skies
at the thought of apple pies.

This is our menu for today.
Bring on the words, we'll be okay!

Gail (Nov.-Dec. '09) says, "This is a poem that I wrote as a result of a poetry writing group at the assisted living facility where I worked several years ago. It's always pleasant to talk about food. Someone can always add a little something to a poem like this."

*

WINTER

Softly through the night
It came so quietly white
Dampening the noise all around
As it slowly covered the ground.
Naked trees reached up to the sky
Trying to grab snowflakes on high.
Their limbs just turned white
As snow swept into the night
And seemingly without reason
Winter became the final season.

Simon Stargazer III (Nov.-Dec. '09) adds, "I love writing about snow and the imagery of winter trees. For some time I've had the thought floating through my mind of

trees reaching to the heavens perhaps beseeching God to return the Earth back to the renewal of springtime and the warmth of summer. Or, perhaps, for those concerned about man's effect on the Earth, maybe the trees are looking for help in reversing the damage man does to the Earth. In my optimistic mind, I prefer the former."

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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 for this issue was, "***My idea of shopping is...***"

Liz/Moscar (See her letter this issue.) says, "The annual clearance sale at whatever happens to be my special clothing store is my favorite shopping. Now my fav is Jams World" but it used to be Java Wraps. When I lived in St. Thomas, I used to wear their batiked clothes in rich colors and floaty styles. It was great to find clothes for five dollars during their sale! I loved the ones with shiny threads woven into them. Bright, shiny, floral clothes. Mmm. Heaven!

I have a pair of predominantly red and green batik de-signed pants. Recently when I was wearing them an acquaintance asked if they were Java Wraps. I replied "No."

She asked, "Do you know what Java Wraps are?"

Turns out she stayed in Saint Croix during the same time period I was living in St. Thomas. Now we are both in much colder North Florida and She's going to school here, too. Small world.

Our next question is: "The bravest thing I ever did was..."

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OUR SPECIAL TOPIC

"Special Topics" are ideas intended to run longer than one month. Until June 2010, our theme for the beginning of this year is, "One area of my life that is on hold at this time is..."

When I look back over my life, I see that I have had both "silent" and intentional holds. For example, when I was working and raising my children, there was no time for writing and reflecting. My writer's life was there inside me, "on hold."

On the other hand, now I am on hold making greeting cards. Years ago, I gave up Hallmark and made all my own. I've wanted to do that again, but right now, other projects claim my time and creativity.

Whether intentional or un-conscious, I usually have some-thing on the back burner of my life.

Editor, Frances

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(MANAGING THE HOUSE continued on the next page.)

BUBBLES!

Here's our second in a series of comments featuring readers' responses to our 2009 game. It appears in Nov.-Dec.'09 and was from Kokology, The Game of Self-Discovery by Tadahiko Nagao and Isamu Saito.

Readers were asked to visualize themselves as children again, quietly blowing soap bubbles with a plastic wand. Once mental pictures were made -- or drawn, authors provided four choices for the images: 1) bubbles float high, 2) hundreds of tiny bubbles, 3) a single huge bubble and, 4) bubbles are carried behind you on the wind.

The authors also provide suggestions for one's pictures. For many bubbles that float high and away they say, "... You see your own dreams as elusive and unattainable... whatever the (reason) may be, the gap between your dreams and reality is wide..."

Like Palma, who shared her bubbles last month, Jane does not agree with the authors about the meaning of her image.

Jane (Sept. '09) tells about her bubbles, " I am outdoors. The sun is shining and bright. There are a few clouds in the sky. I blow some bubbles and they float away. Higher and higher they go in all directions. Like me, they like new experiences. Like me, they like to look at things from different perspectives. Like me, they reach a point where they will settle -- or burst. But, this is not a negative thing. It is a completion of a journey to be enjoyed before a new journey begins.

John (Mar. '99) also played our game. Like Jane, his many bubbles flew up in the air. He commented, "I made the bubbles fly away. It was easy to draw."

NINEPATCH :END-OF-YEAR FINANCIAL REPORT

Ninepatch Treasurer, June Poucher, presented the following report at our January Board Meeting. Members approved it and agreed it was very similar to the 2008 report.

Ninepatch Annual Summary
12/31/09

Cash carryover	\$189.40
Contributions	741.00
Donations in Kind	<u>16.90</u>
Total income	947.30

Expenses:	
Printing & Copying	194.66
Postage	164.58
Office Supplies	5.00
Website, AOL, LD	229.90
Licenses	81.25

PO Box rent 60.00
Total expenses 735.39

Cash balance
12/31/09 \$211.91

IN MEMORIAM

*Julie,
Daughter, Mother, Wife
Grandmother,
Great-grandmother,
Mentor, Sponsor,
and Friend
Left this earth
January 9, 2010.

May God, her Higher Power,
bathe her
generous and gentle spirit
in love.*

*Eternal joy grant unto Julie, Father Mother God, and let perpetual light shine
upon her.*

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