

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:

CONSIDERING "BUS RIDE"

I sat back on my office chair and frowned at the computer's write-mail screen edged with powdery blue. A reader had sent me a four-page personal story. Touched by its voice, I had wanted to use it for *Ninepatch*, but its length concerned me. I thought about presenting it in parts and I had just typed, "Serializing a long story isn't the best idea."

My fingers froze on the keyboard. *Wait a minute! ...I've been doing just that with Bus Ride!* I shook my head. *I have been going against my own advice!*

Looking back, I remembered why I'd made the choice to present a story chapter each month. I was desperate. Creating a monthly Editor's Letter and story chapters during the same month was impossible. *Hmm. When did I start the Bus Ride in Ninepatch, anyway?*

A rainbow of vinyl archive notebooks lined a nearby shelf and I pulled down a red one: 2008-2009. Turning blue, green and yellow index tabs, I scanned issues for my journey's first installment. Finally I read my opening line, "What have I done?" The page heading read, "January 2008." I sighed. *I've been working on Bus Ride more than two years.*

Memory carried me back to October of 2007 when I had started using travel notes to tell about traveling to my forty-fifth class reunion. An unknown urge had propelled me from chapter to chapter, and had me tapping at my Dell hours each day. I had not finished the story that 2008 January when "Finding a Solution" appeared, but expected to complete it before March. However, through March, chapters continued to unfold. Encouraged by *Ninepatch* readers, other stories appearing in The Florida Writer magazine and my Monday Night Writers' Group, I pushed the travel note stories into summer. *If I write enough, I might have a book!* While I knew there was more to writing a book than typing the story, I was perplexed. Unsure what "more" was, I counseled myself. *Relax! If the story is meant to be told, God will guide me through it.*

Looking over the past twenty- seven months, I see the hand of My Long-term Planner at work. Spirit led me from typing my travel notes, to The Florida Writers' Association lectures, a critique group and sharing progress with other unpublished authors. The Higher Power directed me through inner urgings and the synchronicity of meeting people at the time I needed them. It was a slow pace but I pushed to keep up.

Now my first draft is done and I meet with a new critique group to help me polish chapters. I'm back to my 2007 situation. I can't produce both a monthly Editor's Letter *and* rewrite BUS RIDE. In time the Spirit will guide me. But at this time, my choices are unclear. As I look into the mists of the future, I think of you -- my faithful readers and audience for BUS RIDE. As I wait for my *Ninepatch path to clear*, I know you are there, listening.

May God bless you***

Frances Fiitzie

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

Dear Frances,

Thanks for your letter. It's a gray cloudy day with rain now and then. I am having a day off work.

I just found out an old friend died -- last year. She was my best friend in high school and Maid of Honor at our wedding. Over the years, we'd drifted apart. Maybe it's the weather, but I feel sad knowing she's gone.

I thought about your comment that maybe I am like my dad in ways I look at life. You are right. My dad was proud to work and support us. Sometimes he worked two or three jobs to keep us going, but he didn't complain.

I am proud to have a job, but just getting tired of carrying the burden alone. I remember my husband saying, "No wife of mine will ever have to work!" Now he sleeps half the time and is no help with anything. What happened?

I think I am like my mom, too. (I used to be anyway.) Mom cried a lot. The difference is, I decided crying does no good. I am trying to change myself in-stead. The way to do that is taking baby-steps in terms of what I do with my free time and how I think about things. In my counseling group, we talk about that all the time. It's just not that easy.

Love and prayers,
LindaSue

LindaSue (Nov.-Dec. '09) adds, "At least I have my own room where I can shut out my kids, grandkids, husband, TV and just do anything I want -- even be messy!"

Dear Frances,

This morning I was thinking that maybe once my daughter moves out this weekend I can start getting back to doing the things I love. No, I'm not thrilled about her leaving but I have to find some good in it and maybe getting time to work on the web site and some of my other hobbies will be one of them.

For today, though, I do have to get moving. I've been trying all week to get hold of my brother because a mutual relative died. I've also got to get hold of my son who's apparently in deep financial doo-doo and see if there's anything I can help with there. Then, it's groceries and a run to work -- and quickly back here to help my daughter pack and try to spend time with the baby before they go.

The part that's getting to me right now, is knowing I'll be coming home from work and our baby girl won't be here to play with and rock to sleep.

They'll only be in the next town over. I am going to be so worried when I don't know who's baby-sitting and all.

Sorry! I didn't mean to get rambling. Hope all's well with you and JK my dear.
Love,
Lynn

(Continued on the next page.)

LynnTROR (Nov.-Dec. '09) adds, "Sometimes it's hard to trust that things happen for a reason and to set aside my ego that makes me want to cling to the people I love ... but I'm trying and hoping that letting go will turn out to be the right thing to do in the long run. I just wish it didn't have to be so hard."

Hi,

I drove my new (used) RV alone to Texas this winter and left October 15th -- earlier than expected since it was cooling fast in Michigan. I planned a five-day trip and had all my stops selected and reserved. Every thing went well, giving me confidence for the rest of my travel.

It rained when I first arrived, but the next day welcomed me with a beautiful blue sky and sunshine. I just needed a light sweater.

One of my daughters lives in Arlington just south of Dallas/ Fort Worth. She has five children ages twelve through seven and she works full time. She was able to take time off starting October 20th and wanted me to be there.

We spent some wonderful mom and daughter days, shop-ping and having lunch. We also went to the Fort Worth Botanical Gardens during Japanese Festival (the weather was soft and wonderful). The Japanese gardens were beautiful, restful and calming. We watched a demonstration of martial arts. We also saw dances by Japanese ladies young and elder.

My grandchildren all go to school full time and are good kids. I stayed a bit longer than planned so I could go to school and see one of the grandchildren perform in a school presentation.

It was great visiting with my Texan daughter and family.

Love to you,
Diana

Diana (Sept. '09) adds, "Thank God, He/She is with my daughter, guiding her, giving her strength, prospering her life and protecting the children."

Dear Frances,

I've enjoyed your e-mails, notes and postage stamps on *Ninepatch* mailings and I still enjoy reading the newsletter itself. Your "Bus Ride" series has kept me looking forward to each new issue, and I am happy that you are working on taking that tale to the next level as a book.

I have thought often of a story I sent you more than a year ago. It was too long for one issue and I also had some privacy concerns. I started reworking it last January, but the project kept getting pushed back.

These days, I never seem to catch up on more immediate projects, and I distract myself with fun things like hanging out with friends. Also, I have started pursuing an international post-card exchange with stamp collectors who have posted their address on blogs or given them to me via the Internet. So far, I have made trades with individuals in Finland, India, Malaysia and Thailand.

I have not been writing much chatty e-mail to you or anyone for a long time.

Love and hugs,
Carol

Carol (Oct. '09) adds, "I guess I am slowing down. For sure I am focusing on more than writing."

(AROUND THE FRAME continues on the next page.)

Ya' know Frances...

Your newsletter is always chucked full of interesting anecdotes. I'm done traveling now. Just returned from a bowling tournament near Lancaster, PA. I placed in the top ten of my day's squad so think I might actually come into a check ... perhaps only \$7.98 but it's the meaning that counts!

My fiancé and I are in what I am calling "negotiations." We are talking about the future -- where we'll live and such. We are pretty much taking it one day at a time. (How else can you do it, right?)

I think we are going to expand my "earth home." At first, I thought the idea rather grandiose, but we are proceeding and looking for a local architect. Since my house is built into the side of a hill, it'll be complicated to say the least. I am concerned about new work hurting the integrity of the earth home. My hubby-to-be says he already envisions the heating of the new room and water separate from the existing house -- and geo-thermal! He is very handy with this sort of thing which assures me it will be done right and well.

I hope this finds you and yours well. Keep in touch!

CaT

CaT (Oct. '09) adds, "We broke a hundred- year record here! SNOW on October fifteenth. I recall as a child in the Pocono region of Pennsylvania, I trick-or-treated in the snow and also hunted Easter egg in the snow. But, early snowy weather vanished the last ten years or so, In fact, we have had one brown Christmas after another. Hopefully the 'real' weather of this region is returning."

Dear Frances,

Uncle Jerry and I wish you and fellow readers a *Happy New Year!*

My apologies for not writing. Since I am filling in for a teacher on medical leave, I am working full time. It is hard on Uncle Jerry and me. During breaks, I run home to prepare breakfast and lunch for Uncle Jerry. I get home for the day around 6.30 pm, cook dinner and do chores around the house.

No time for writing.

We are not going away over the holiday, but that's not unusual. Normally we stay home a lot and rest. I am really tired and hope the other teacher comes back soon.

I long for my old life. Extra money is not everything. I went through this kind of upheaval once before. It messed up my family and my health (thyroid cancer). I promised myself, *Never again.*

Warmest regards,

Lotte (and Uncle Jerry)

Lotte (Oct. '09) adds, "As a treat for Christmas, Uncle Jerry and I went to see Christmas Spectacular at Radio City Music Hall. He enjoyed it and it was also nice to be away from school."

The brain is printed with indelible ink.

James (Nov.-Dec. '09) adds, "Like once-folded paper, it will not lose its crease."

(*FABRICS* begins on the next page.)

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

FAMILY PATTERNS

A phrase in October 09's *Ninepatch* got me thinking about my family of origin. LindaSue's comment after her letter struck me. As I recall she said, "Sadly, our family doesn't get together any more." When I read that I thought, "I remember having that perspective but, no longer!"

Being the only girl with three brothers I used to try to guide any family event towards an "Ozzie and Harriet" moment. I would try to cajole my brothers into leaving old hurts and grudges at the door, sit and steam that my sister-in-laws didn't help keep the peace. I would pout that I had traveled fifteen hundred miles west to come home -- but there was no family dinner to celebrate being all together, even if it was Thanksgiving or Christmas.

What I tended to forget was our history... why we didn't get together. What slipped my mind was the drinking to excess, the inevitable arguments, accusations, and once in a while -- a thrown punch. In the midst of it all my mother and I were always trying to keep the peace, hoping our family could experience just one "Norman Rockwell" holiday maybe even hoping that experience would miraculously change them and we would enjoy a meal and conversation from start to finish.

One visit, when the in-avoidable patterns were in full swing. I just blew up. I got so angry that I screamed, shouted and pounded from my soapbox. Why can't you guys just get along for two hours? Why do you think you are the only one with childhood scars and pain? Why continue to bring it all up? Why can't you suck it up and PRETEND we are a close family? Uh oh.

It took me a long while to admit it, but a happy event with my entire family would have to be a game of pretend and I was the only one willing to play it. And for what? What good is a game of pretend?

As with all of our family explosions, we got past it. Now, I communicate with each brother and his family in different ways. One has even come to visit me. I do more to stay in touch a few times throughout the year instead of avoiding the day-to-day and then steeling myself for vacation visit or holiday encounter. I enjoy what I can -- the strengths and faults of my family. I find it easier to excuse myself when the old patterns emerge and I am not tempted to participate, or wear myself ragged with peace-making.

Like LindaSue, I used to think my family was "sad" because we couldn't all be together. Now I know that my family is happy and part of "happy" comes from NOT getting together!

Georgene (Nov.-Dec. '09) says, "I feel jealous when I hear friends talk of their warm family get-togethers, but it now passes quickly. Often, those feelings prompt me to make a call to one of my brothers. We'll chat and laugh, and I'll feel better because I remember that we really do love each other."

(FABRICS continues on the next page.)

FINDING JOHN AGAIN

I had come to the island with my husband and his young Boy Scout troop. I expected small adventures, but never a huge discovery.

That afternoon my husband was off with the boys and I have gone off to visit a local graveyard. I squinted at the brass soldier's medallion stuck into the ground. Afternoon as shafts of green-tinged light beamed throughout the old Mackinac Island cemetery. I was drawn toward the curving flow of letters: "Korea".

I stared down at the name on the headstone and my eyes widened. John! I had not expected to find this grave, after more than a decade. Beside him, lay Rick, his partner of more than twenty years.

As I stood in that silent place, memories came flooding back. My dog-groomer friend had called me to deliver the news when he died. "Are you sitting down?" she asked.

"No." I sat down at our Illinois farmhouse kitchen table.

"John committed suicide," she said in a numb voice.

"Oh, no," was all I could muster to say followed by, "How? Why?"

John had lost Rick a few years before, a victim of cancer. I knew the man was lonely -- we used to trade stories about our boyfriend problems and exchange words of encouragement. The last, brief note that I had received from him was in a Christmas card. He said that he had a new love and was doing well.

The groomer friend continued, "He left a note, he said he couldn't stand the pain anymore and that he wanted to go be with Rick. His sister found him slumped in a chair. He swallowed a bunch of tranquilizers."

"What are they doing about funeral arrangements?" I asked.

"I'm not sure," her weary voice replied, "He's going to be buried next to Rick on the island, but with the scare going on about AIDS, I don't know if the authorities will allow it. I don't know what's going to happen."

Thinking of John, we burst into tears. He was a good and gentle soul who lived his life without harm to anyone. I found the address of the Mackinac's Catholic church and requested prayers for John's spirit. It was all I could do. A letter of response came from the church a few weeks later with the information that candles were lighted for his soul. That was the last I heard about any of it.

My first husband and I had looked for his headstone when we were island tourists in the mid-1980s. That search was vain, yet, here it was now.

I noted that someone had placed a small rock on Rick's side of the stone and I immediately picked up a similar sized one to add beneath John's name -- the start of a memorial cairn.

Out the corner of my eye, I noticed some of the boys from my husband's Scout troop were heading over to where we were standing. I mouthed a quiet farewell to both of the deceased men and walked quickly away. I didn't have the power or strength or character (or whatever) to try to explain to small town Mid-western adolescents why two men were buried together in the same grave or how I came to know them. I had even less patience to deal with giggling or cruel words if that might have happened.

It had taken me twenty years to find this pair again. Perhaps in another twenty years I won't have to explain and grief won't be confused with shame.

Linda Rosenthal (Nov.-Dec. '09) adds, "Recently I saw a bumper sticker, "God Bless Everyone -- no exceptions."

(FABRICS continues on the next page.)

MY 2009 CANOE TRIP

(Part one of four)

Every fall three guys and I go on a canoe trip. We pack up our tents, canoes and gear and drive from South Dakota to the Namekagon River near Spooner, Wisconsin.

The river is designated "scenic" and is off limits to power boats. The campsite we use every year is called Howell's Landing. Like other stopovers, it is a natural beach and cleared from the forest area. It includes picnic tables and fire pits.

Since we usually go in mid-September, we've had the place to ourselves and enjoyed the quiet, serene atmosphere of the north woods as well as the river itself. Over the three years we've made this annual voyage, we have become acquainted with some local residents who often stop by to sit around our campfire at Howell's Landing and visit.

After we arrived on Thursday and set up our tents, two guests came to say hello and brought gifts: homemade sausages, apples, canned beets, and canned apple sauce. Yum! After we exchanged our stories, it was late and we turned into our cots.

Friday we put our canoes into the serene river and admired the wild setting for several hours. After we returned, a group of about ten Sierra Club members set up camp at the same landing. We sat around their fire pit and swapped tales while two adult brothers and one's two sons arrived and set up their own site. That afternoon, we ambled around meeting new folk and talking to others.

Saturday morning we put our canoes in again, paddled ten miles to our take-out location, and returned. During that trip we encountered a bear being chased by the dogs. Fall colors were popping and the weather was balmy.

Late Saturday we were inundated by a troop of about thirty-five Boy Scouts and their scout masters! They were very well-organized and did their assigned tasks. The boys' big grins told us they were having a wonderful time.

But the high point of Saturday occurred that afternoon when a group of about twenty young ladies came tubing down the river and landed at our location. They had brought floating coolers and offered to share refreshments with us. In return, we offered them hospitality. They stayed and entertained us with antics and wild poses for our cameras. The girls were really a lot of fun.

That evening -- as we have done in the past -- we stopped at Pappy's Leatherneck Tavern which is nearby on Wisconsin Hwy 77. To our surprise, many of the tubing ladies also came by and we continued our fun with them. Pappy's is a very popular place with the tourists like us, but locals enjoy it, too. Over the years, we've come to know the owners of the tavern and many of their local customers. When we were canoeing that river last year, we happened upon a weekend of free food, beer and music at Pappy's as well as a group of party animals. Invariably dancing became a topic of not only discussion, but an activity too. The juke box had mostly disco music -- no waltzes or swings pieces -- but we all danced!

Le (Nov.-Dec. '09) adds, "I'm very fortunate in being teamed up with Tom as a canoe partner. Being a senior citizen, I find it not easy to get into and out of a canoe. Tom is a bit small in stature, but he's run five or six marathons, competed in and completed two Iron Man triathlons. His power stroke with a canoe paddle is second to none!"

(INSTRUCTIONS begins on the next page.)



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

(Reading Listening and Viewing)

ANNE RICE

I have started reading Anne Rice's books since she stopped with the vampire stuff. Not my style. However, she has written a couple books that have Jesus as the story teller.

Rice was raised Catholic, then in her adult years turned to atheism before recently turning back to Christ and the church. Her books are fiction but written from a lot of research.

She also wrote a book after she returned to the church about her walk in "darkness" and return to "light." The name of the book is, Called Out of Darkness.

I remember seeing pictures of her a few years ago and thought how pretty she was. Now since she has embraced Christ again, her appearance is really different. She is still pretty, but also peaceful.

Patricia (Nov.-Dec. '09) adds, "Anne also had a new book due in the stores the end of October '09."

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:
What the Dead Can Teach Us
About Life

This book was written by James Van Praagh. He is the author of Ghosts Among Us and other books about his experience as a medium. Among other projects he is also the co-executive producer of the highly rated CBS series, "Ghost Whisperer" which stars Jennifer Love Hewitt.

In Unfinished Business Van Praagh focuses on the communication of the spirits who have crossed over and want to bring messages to their loved ones. These spirits tell stories of the unfinished business they left behind with the emotional baggage of fear, guilt and regret.

The author leads his readers through steps to resolve our old issues, make amends and bring closure now during our current lives. After crossing over, spirits are anxious to share their new-found knowledge with the living. He writes: "When people shed their physical bodies at death, their spiritual selves see life from a whole new perspective. It's as if they had Lasik eye surgery. They can finally take off their glasses and see everything clearly."

June Poucher (Oct. '09) adds, "Like Van Praagh's other books I have read, this one is captivating."

(MANAGING THE HOUSE begins on the next page.)

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

GET TO KNOW ME

Our Question of the Month for this issue was, ***“The most surprising gift I ever received is...”***

Louise (Oct. '09) says, “It was 1948 and I was twelve years old when a truck delivered a brand new blue bike for me and a red one for my sister, Ruth. Our parents called us out front to watch as the driver opened the back of the truck and brought out the bikes. We couldn’t believe our eyes.

We had been longing for bikes. The five-dollar “Victory” bike we had been sharing was neither a thing of beauty nor dependable. There was not money for new bikes -- hardly enough for even basics.

Our step-father had gotten a job in a downtown department store called, Sibleys. It was their delivery truck that brought this wonderful surprise. I never found out how this unbelievable gift became real, but I’ve often thought how excited our parents must have been watching our delight.

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Christa (Sept. '09) comments, “The most surprising gift I ever received was my daughter, who was an unexpected gift for Valentine’s Day. My husband and I don’t usually do much for the holidays because money is almost always a little tight and we try to do small loving things for one another throughout the year. This past Valentine’s Day, I was pregnant (due on March 28th) and all we had planned was a dinner in featuring my husband’s homemade Alfredo sauce with chocolates from one of those Valentine’s heart boxes for dessert.

However, on the day before February fourteenth, I was admitted to the hospital with labor contractions, but everyone from the nurses to the midwives to the obstetricians was convinced that I wouldn’t be having my baby any time soon. They sent me home on Valentine’s Day morning.

Even though I was pre-scribed bed rest, we made a quick stop at the grocery for Alfredo sauce supplies since there was no reason not to have our special dinner. But only a few hours after we returned home, my contractions returned with a vengeance. Back to the hospital we went. Just a couple of hours later, my daughter was born.

We didn’t have our Valentine’s Day dinner, but we received a nicer, more surprising gift in the form of a healthy baby.

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The question for our February 2010 issue is, ***“My idea of shopping is...”***

BUBBLES!

This ongoing column will feature readers’ response to our 2009 game. It is from Kokology, The Game of Self-Discovery by Tadahiko Nagao and Isamu Saito and appeared in our Nov.-Dec. issue.

Readers were asked to visualize themselves as children again, quietly blowing soap bubbles with a plastic wand. Once they made their mental pictures, authors provided four choices:

(Continued on the next page.)

1) bubbles float high, 2) hundreds of tiny bubbles, 3) a single huge bubble, and 4) bubbles are carried behind you on the wind.

Palma (May '09) writes, "When I think of blowing bubbles, I see them going all directions. They are big and small and many different colors shining in the sun. They dance in the wind."

I did the exercise without looking at the answers. Authors provide possible meanings for each set of bubbles, but my picture doesn't seem to fit so their suggestions don't, either. I'd say my bubbles mean I have many dreams and have attained them large and small."

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Editor's Note: We are still collecting bubble drawings and/or comments and will use at least one every month --more when there is space.

Ninepatch Birthdays

January

Dorothy	4
Nanacyann	10
Fred	20
Liz/Moscar	25

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