

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.*

RESOLUTIONS

As daylight dwindled in 2009, *The Gainesville Sun* and Channel 7's "5:30 News" carried features about New Year's Resolutions. As I sat on my flowered couch, I muted the news anchor and thought over my 2009 accomplishments. Lifting a pen from a side table, I scrawled a list of do-ings on the back of a nearby envelope.

"Bus Ride" was the first thing I wrote. I had begun re-writing my story in September. "*Ninepatch*" came next. I had published eleven issues.

I thought on. My drawer of Hallmark cards had thinned. *I'm doing a fair job of keeping up with my friends.* I had also embarked on a five year effort of being more "present" to my sons and grandsons. In May, I bought a condo in Michigan and went North to spend the summer near my kids.

While in Michigan, I saw a lawyer and executed a fresh will and new trusts. *I finally finished mountains of related paperwork, too!*

I considered my list. *I've been too busy.* My 2010 resolution was to cut my commitments and stay home two days a week. As I planned how to accomplish my goal, I thought my annual assessment was done.

But, when I lifted the January 2010 page of my 28"x24" desk calendar, February -- my birth month -- "spoke" to me. In the back of my mind I heard, *How's your spiritual life going? Are you becoming the person you want to be?"*

To address these questions, I settled down at my computer. Staring at the gray-edged white page of WORD, I tapped my keyboard.

"I do have intentions. One is to become 'a better person' which I define as being more aware of my behavior. *Am I accomplishing this? At the last pot luck, did I avoid the Darla who always seems sad? When I met with Paula for coffee, did I talk too much, and prevent 'real' listening? Have I been sharp with my husband over social activities? Did I tease him about not hearing well? The answers to those questions are yes, yes, yes and -- since teasing is negative -- yes."*

I got up and walked away from the illuminated screen. *That's surely not everything...* In the kitchen I poured a cup of coffee. I stood at the sink and looked out a window, sipping. *Yes, there's more...*

I padded back to my home office, sat down and resumed typing.

"I also aim to have 'a closer relationship with God.' *If I intend that, what actions am I taking? Do I pray? Meditate? Spend time in silence? Read inspirational words?*

I paused and recalled my New Year's resolution. *2009's busy-ness has taken a toll. I often slip into sleep before my prayers are done and I have no regular mediation practice. I have a quiet period just three or four times a week. I do read holy words -- but not every day.*

I typed, "My intentions aren't enough It's time to make a conscious effort to improve."

I paused and finished my evaluation with a prayer for my coming year, “May my next birth year carry me further with my intensions.”

May your birthday also bless you with spiritual considerations.

Frances fritzie

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

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(Letters to the Editor)

Hi Frances!

After reading June’s January 2010 views on the book, Unfinished Business, *What the Dead Can teach Us about Life* by James Van Praagh, I’m interested in reading it.

Right now, I’m reading, The Five People You Meet in Heaven by Mitch Albom – the same author of, Tuesdays with Morrie. Basically the teaching is that Heaven is where we finally learn what our life was about. There we’ll find answers to questions we pondered, and situations we felt angry about. Interesting, but done in a strange format.

Take care of yourself Frances. I have the picture of the two of us from this summer in Indiana. It warms my heart.

Dottie

Dottie (Feb. 10) adds, “I always looked forward to reading your next installment in BUS RIDE and will miss it.”

Dear Frances,

Great February issue of *Ninepatch*! I loved Devora’s poem, “Full Circle.”

After reading Carol’s letter in the same issue, I have to ask if you are thinking of leaving *Ninepatch* to pursue your other writing. I was surprised by her letter which suggested that.

I loved reading your meditation on the new starry sneakers. It reminded me of a day some years ago when I watched my wet sneakers drip from where I had hung them on a fence. I was grieving the untimely death of my beloved stepson. Watching the drops of water being absorbed into the earth somehow gave me a moment of clarity as to the everlasting nature of the soul.

See you!

Love,

Liz

(Continued on the next page.)

e- Ninepatch March 2010

Liz/Moscar (Feb. '10) adds, "I'm at that point in the semester where I have a lot of assignments due. Also, I've been informed I will soon be working in a literacy program for young people."

*

Dear Frances,

It was hard at first, but I'm getting used to having my daughter and granddaughter gone. I try to visit them weekly and call as often as I can.

I'm also enjoying having my roommate and her dog 'Monty' (a pitbull cross) here. Truth is though, my new roommate and I are both so busy that we've had little time to relax and enjoy each other's company. (I'll write more about this on my *Ninepatch* web site blog.)

I pray this note finds you well and happy.

Luv,

LynnTROR

LynnTROR (Feb.10) says, "In addition to writing regularly on my Ninepatch web site blog, as our web master, I also recently rebuilt our archives page. I'm always interested in reader's comments!"

Dear Frances,

Thank you for your letter, *Ninepatch* and the book ad featuring new releases. I took that flier page to my library and asked for titles at the information desk. They had one in and I grabbed it!

I am still reading and writing letters, walking when I can. I go to work, do house-work and attend church on Sunday. Recently an old friend sang at church. It was so nice to see her again.

Right now I am having some trouble keeping up at my job. Maybe it's my age, health problems or even stress. I don't know, maybe it's all these, but I've been asked to look into applying for a "disability pension."

If I do that, I won't be able to afford the mortgage or caring for this house full of unemployed husband, children and grandchildren. I don't know what my future holds. Maybe I will take my dad and move out. I've done that before, perhaps that's why it comes to mind. Time will tell.

In your last letter you advised, "Also, try not to ask *Why?* The answer is really just, *be-cause*. You have no power over any 'because' except the one that is *because I need to... because I want to... and because God tells me to...*"

I do try not to ask "why." I so want the answer to be "...because God tells me to..." That's why I pray so much. I keep asking God for help and guidance. I pray every day and night like those girls do in the Amish books I read. (Sometimes I wish I was Amish...)

I am still taking "baby steps" toward a better life. Thanks for listening.

Love and prayers,

LindaSue

(Continued on the next page.)

LindaSue (Feb. '10) adds, "I know I have to sit tight, wait and see what I can do, what I can handle ...see what God has in His plan. Dad and I talk all the time about God's Timing."

Hi Frances,

In January you sent us e-Ninepatch readers a reflection about finding a quarter. Your story brought smiles. I find coins, too.

I find money regularly, mostly pennies but also larger coins, and twice I have found ten-dollar bills as well as ones and fives.

When I find money of any kind, I always pause and give thanks. I take the discovery as a sign of abundance in my life. I never spend that money, but keep it in a special place until I sense the time to use it.

I sent over fifty dollars of found money for flood relief in New Orleans.

Don

Don (Feb. '10) says, "I think I may empty the bank again and send it to Greg Mortenson, author of Three Cups of Tea, to help build his schools."

Dear Francesca,

We were visiting our son in another part of the state when my husband -- who is ninety -- got sick. We were at the ER twice in less than twenty-four hours. He had fainted when the ambulance drove him there the first time. They diagnosed "dehydration," treated and released him. The second time -- in the middle of the night -- he was in extreme pain. He was so sick the boys and I thought we might lose him. That time the diagnosis was "enlarged prostate." Again, he was treated and released.

He is at home now, convalescing. He has graduated from a wheel chair to a walker. For the first four or five days, I fed him, gave him his meds, sponge-bathed him and emptied the catheter. Since then he has rallied. Not completely, though. He hasn't changed his clothes in six days. He sleeps in the same clothes he wears in the daytime. We have a nurse, a physical therapist, a home healthcare worker and an occupational therapist coming in. He likes the attention these women give him, but he is mostly uncooperative. I think he is resigned that he won't get much better. He might be a little depressed. Although he continues to read the newspaper, finish the crossword puzzle and watch "Jeopardy," "Seinfeld" and football, his changed personal habits say a lot. While I've struggled with depression most of my life, it is completely foreign to him.

Days ago, he agreed to give up his driver's license, but I'm not sure he remembers. Giving in to the idea tells me he doesn't expect to get better.

Elaine (Nov.-Dec. '09) says, "For the first ten days or so, I attended to my husband's every need but when I saw his lack of effort to get better, I became irritated. Fortunately, I made the decision not to act out. What I needed was to get out of the house so out I went. I'm back at the gym, playing in a music group, volunteering and will be starting a tennis clinic soon."

*

***The more choices one has —
the better the solution.***

James (Feb. '10) adds, "Diversification is the key."

*

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

VISITING MY BOYHOOD HOME
(Conclusion: "My 2009 Canoe Trip")

From our take out point on the Namekagon River near Spooner Wisconsin, I pointed my Malibu north. It was a three hour drive to my boyhood home. Ironwood, Michigan. It's near the Wisconsin border with Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

For three days I visited my old schoolmates who still live in the area. Kathy, one of my high school classmates, volunteers at the Iron County historical museum in Hurley, Wisconsin, just across the Montreal River from Ironwood. She was showing me around various displays when we entered the "Uniform Room." Glancing around, I spotted a tan wool WWII Eisenhower Jacket. A note taped to it referred to its owner as "Carl Timann, lucky 100,000th."

When I was growing up, Carl and his family lived just "over the hill" from us. He worked on our family farm and nursery for many years before and after WWII.

After that war, Carl was the 100,000th GI to return to the US from Europe -- through the port of Boston. According to the write-up, Boston's mayor and other city officials greeted him and gave him a Key to the City. There was also a downtown parade, an official dinner complete with a female escort, and a room for Carl at a luxury hotel in downtown Boston.

I recalled Carl and wondered how he took all of the hoop-la. He was quiet, and soft-spoken. Unlike some of our workers, he seldom said anything stronger than, "gosh," "nuts," and "durnit." All that celebrating may have been the high point of his life.

Le (Feb. '10) adds, "These days I am visiting Florida where I am giving dance lessons to folks in my mobile home park."

LOTTE'S JOURNALS

Following is Part I of Lotte DeRoy's journals during her most recent medical journey with Uncle Jerry.

December 16, 2009

Still full time at school. Working hard. Uncle Jerry fell in the doctor's office. His orthopedic surgeon is operating. His femur has been fractured. The doctor is putting in screws, rods and plates but the recuperating time is 12 weeks. On my way soon to look at a rehab where we will be spending 12 weeks.

Canceled all our little trips and dinner for the holidays.

I tell myself: keep the faith. Always a reason why things happen. Probably for me to take it easy and concentrate on other important aspects of my life. Uncle Jerry is a good trooper for eighty-four; he really went through a lot this year.

**

December 17, 2009

With Uncle Jerry in rehab. Have been reading a lot. We had so many plans ... gone! Oh well, what can I do?

Took this week off from school. It will stress me out more if I go back to work. Yet I have to go back in order to make money.

**

December 20, 2009

Uncle Jerry's left kneecap-- "rods, screws and plate are perfectly aligned." Doctor means "fracture/surgery is healing nicely." BUT, we had to spend a couple of hours in the ER today. Uncle Jerry had an allergic reaction. The doctor gave him a steroid and Benadryl. He's allergic too many things. The other rehab facility messed him up.

Contacted a lawyer and hopefully he is able to file suit. Uncle Jerry has suffered enough and so have I.

**

December 26, 2010

Uncle Jerry is doing much better. Have to go home and cook every day. He is highly allergic to anything that contains wheat, milk or egg products.

Nurse informed me that the x-ray which was taken of his left leg, the fracture shows it is healing quite nicely. Hopefully, he can start weight bearing exercises soon. It'd be nice if we will be home before his birthday, April 21.

It must have rained all night, because a lot of snow has melted. I hope the roads aren't too icy.

Lotte DeRoy (Jan. '10) adds, "Looking back, I sometimes wonder if I had left the planet earth!"

(INSTRUCTIONS begins on the next page.)

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

(Reading Listening and Viewing)

RECENT READS

I've read The Help, by Kathryn Stockett, a novel my book club chose. It is absolutely a "must read" novel about the relationship between black maids and the white women they worked for during the '60's in Jackson, Mississippi. It also examines the effects of the Civil Rights movement on them and their relationships.

Another volume I just finished is Blame: A Novel, by Michelle Huneven. It is the story of an alcoholic woman who goes to jail for killing two people while driving drunk. Most of the book focuses on how she attempts to overcome her guilt after she is released from jail after serving just two years. Toward the end of the book, there is an unexpected development that changes everything for this woman.

I was eager to get to the end of this book so that I could move on to a better book. On the other hand it was interesting and I did want to finish it.

Currently I am reading Where Men Win Glory: The Odyssey of Pat Tillman by Jon Krakauer. Tillman gave up playing pro football to enlist in the Army. He was killed by "friendly fire" but the information was hidden from his family and the public. This is a fascinating well-written book.

Jane (Feb. '10) adds, "For three months, I'll be traveling and helping my husband sail. We are now shopping for food supplies for the boat, and tomorrow we will start loading it. Next, we will put our sailboat, the Osprey, into the water and take off!! Then I can get to some really serious reading!"

*

THE HISTORY OF LAST NIGHT'S DREAM

Frances, Editor, told me she had started reading a title from my 2009 Book List, Rodger Kamenetz's, The History of Last Night's Dream. I began to recall how that title came to be on my list.

My friend Jennifer gave the book to me when I was living in New Orleans. Jennifer, born and raised in Louisiana, seemed to know everyone in town, including the author. Kamenetz is a full time English professor at Louisiana State University and a part-time Jewish mystic. He began his search to understand dreams through a series of little adventures.

After he studied with the Dalai Lama in Tibet, he wrote a book called A Jew in the Lotus which is a take off on the Buddhist writing, A Jewel in the Lotus. His book was read and enjoyed by Morrie Schwartz who was made famous in Mitch Albom's, Tuesdays with Morrie. On his deathbed, Morrie asked for Rodger to come visit him. This visit was the genesis of Rodger's quest to study dreams.

(Continued on the next page.)

New Orleans was flooded by Hurricane Katrina almost five years ago. The effect of the storm, including personal losses and the struggle to rebuild, dominated the actions and conversations of everyone I knew there. I found it amusing that Rodger does not mention Katrina until the last sentence of his "Acknowledgements" at the end of the book.

He included a little note to let others know that they were recovering well enough. There was none of the grief, over-whelming fatigue, frustration, or anger that typically accompanied people's Katrina stories.

Kamenetz seems to see things differently than most everyone else.

Karen Louise (Feb. '10) adds, "Personally, I think it's a very important book."

THE TIME IT NEVER RAINED

This novel by Elmer Kelton is based on actual events. The story is set in West Texas in the 1950s during a six year drought.

Charlie Flagg, a sheep and cattle rancher in his late sixties, personifies the best qualities of the legendary Texas rancher -- independence, strength of will and self-sufficiency. He loves and respects the land despite the hard times and his losses. He hangs on with pride and determination. His sense of right never wavers in his refusal to accept federal subsidies and price supports. He is determined to maintain his independence and his freedom from government red tape. Charlie says, "What I can't do for myself, I'll do without."

Charlie is one of the old breed that still retains his frontier heritage of fighting his own fight. He is part of a dying breed of independent farmers and ranchers who act from conviction rather than from convenience.

As the reader follows Charlie's struggle to survive the drought, he/she receives an in depth study of character and integrity. The book is a page-turner.

June Poucher (Feb. '10) adds, "Kelton is a native of West Texas and grew up among stockmen and dryland farmers."

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

THE SECOND CHILDHOOD

The second childhood is where
We go when we lose those
Skills we learned in the
First childhood

(Continued on the next page.)

e- Ninepatch March 2010

Simon Stargazer III (Feb. '10) adds, "The older I get, the more I see, reverting back is just for me!"

*

JOURNEY TO MY ANCESTRAL IRISH SOD

**Past Hungary Hill
near the tip of the Beara Peninsula in Ballydonegan Bay,
high green hills roll into craggy wind-swept giant fists.
Knaggy fingers push back the fierce Atlantic.**

**Dunboy Castle guards its cliff.
Wild breezes blow a desperate day,
changes to a broken sky
of clouds and sun, soft rain, the saints be praised.**

**Rainbows arc over my rosy-cheeked relatives.
Conversation sings with lilted economy.
Snipped words, clipped lines trip over each other,
Rush to the end of a thought, split and smile.**

**O'Sullivan's Pub jams with fiddlers and tipplers.
In Gaelic, "craic" means speed of wit.
Seamus Mullins says the "craic" is at 90.**

**We hike to the copper mine in Allihies,
awed by Irish ties to Montana silver mines.
We meet Father Maher, find our family in parish tomes,
find 6-generation links in "The Book" of ancestry.**

**Cows frolic in a pasture of fresh green grass,
sheep take right-of-way on narrow hedge-lined roads.
We celebrate our journey with salmon and Guinness,
delight in foxglove, heather and the odd palm tree.**

Gail (Feb. '10) tells of her Ireland visit, "Twas a lifelong dream to visit the ole sod and it exceeded my expectations a hundred fold. Ireland's west coast is an artist/writer's paradise. Finding the sod my beloved grandmother trod is still special in my memory. For anyone with Irish genes, it's a must-see travel scene."

**Ninepatch
Birthdays for March**

**Patricia 20
Dottie 25**

ORIENTAL RUG

Dust snaps and swirls madly in brazen air,
Indigo stained hands lift dripping wool
From water filled with stomping, laughing
Men, animals bray, camels, horses, thin,
Full of Parasites, fleas, tired reddened eyes.
Beasts of burden laden with patterns etched
Into centuries of cells. here are scorpions,
Flowers, the greatness of God, local heroes,
A knife flashes, a young girl grins upward.
The leathery face of her toothless
Grandmother who pushes and lifts,
Weft, warp, the heavy carpet rolls pass on,
While feet settle comfortably onto a surface,
Thinking only about magic.

Linda Rosenthal (Feb. '10) adds, "I love oriental rugs, the poem was a challenge from a friend. My knowledge about how these rugs are made comes from books."

- -M-A-N-A-G-I-N-G- - T-H-E

- - H-O-U-S-E- -

(Ninepatch Business)

DRAWING BUBBLES

In Nov.-Dec. 2009, *Ninepatch* included a draw-your-bubble game. This self-discovery exercise came from the book Kokology. Commenting on bubble images, authors Tadahiko Nagao and Isamu Saito 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."

Featured this month are two people who had an image we've not heard discussed: the single bubble.

About making one large bubble Kokology authors suggest, “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.”

Gil (Nov.-Dec.’09) says, “*I’m a big bubble person.*”

And **Georgene**, (Jan. ‘10) comments, “*My bubble represents feeling safe.*” She sent us picture of a bubble so big I wonder why it doesn’t burst.*****

GET TO KNOW ME

Our Question of the Month for this issue was, “**The bravest thing I ever did was...**”

Palma (Jan. ’10) writes, “*I think the bravest thing I ever did was to leave my husband. I married in haste without the benefit of my family's blessings. We eloped after knowing each other for only six weeks. We were madly in love (lust?) and I felt reckless. It wasn't 'til we were married that I discovered that he had a problem with alcohol. Not only did he have a problem but he tended to get physically violent and a little crazy when drunk.*

I was pregnant on our first anniversary, and when he came home drunk he threw me across the room. My arm was black and blue from elbow to shoulder. He then went back out and ended up in jail for the night on a “drunk and disorderly” charge. If I'd been smart, I'd have left right then but I was still madly in love.

Since I was such a responsible person, I felt bound by this commitment I had made for life. I also had this disease of enabling and really believed I could love him enough to cure him. Instead of me curing him, I became an abused wife, afraid, with no means of my own, and without the confidence to leave.

It took me thirteen years and four children before I got brave enough to get out of this situation. I had no money, no car and no place to go. I was afraid to stay and terrified of leaving, as I knew he would come after me. My mother offered that I stay with her and not go back when I came to visit that summer. I took her up on it.

He did come after me but being at my mother's gave me the confidence I needed to stand up for myself. I never regretted leaving him.

I do sometimes wonder if I had gone to Al-Anon during those years if things would have turned out differently.*

*Alanon is a 12-Step Program related to Alcoholics Anonymous but intended for the families and loved ones of a person with drinking problems.

**

June Poucher (Feb. '10) sends her story, “*The bravest thing I ever did was return for the summer to the remote cabin that my husband, Milton, and I had built in the mountains of North Georgia. Five months after his death, accompanied by his Australian shepherd, Red, I headed north from our home in Central Florida. I was making progress in healing my grief.*

When I arrived at the cabin, the full impact of Milton's death hit me again and I was back to day one. I thought about turning around and driving back to Florida. No one would have blamed me. But I knew I had to face my grief alone, with the help of my Higher Power. I was not the first woman to survive the loss of her husband; if they could do it, I could too.

Determined, I unpacked and settled in for the summer, alone except for my dog. I spent many long days completing the finishing details on the cabin we had worked so

hard to build. Red followed me for hours of walking in the woods or sitting beside our creek listening to the rush of water over the rocks.

I felt Milton's presence watching over Red and me here in the place he loved so much.

Gradually I found peace.

**

*Next month's question is, "To feel successful I would have to..."******

OUR SPECIAL TOPIC

This month, Christa comments on our topic for the first half of 2010, "**An area of my life that is on hold at this time is...**"

Personal development is the area of my life I have to ignore right now. Between taking care of my daughter (My Valentine is now one year old.), picking up some extra money sitting for other people's babies, and working (which I've done since my Paloma was born), there's not a lot of time left over to learn new skills or perfect the ones I already have. Once the baby is in bed each night, I usually have work to do -- and if not, there's always housework that needs doing.

After my husband graduated from college, we talked briefly about my taking some classes to learn grant writing or get better at writing fiction. But even if the time was there, the money to pay for classes just isn't. I know that this plateau I've found myself on won't go on forever, but for now I feel like I'm just coasting, not changing for the better.

Christa (Jan. '10) adds, "Still, I wouldn't change anything about my life right now because I know the baby years will fly by!"

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