

TAKE ONE!

THEY ARE FREE!

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TAKE ONE!

...from the bush

Happy Valentine's Day

Number 19 February 2008

Charlie Thanks

Last night I had a relatively severe attack of Cabin Fever. It had been building for a while and was worsened by the 30 below temperatures outside over the last couple of days. I was snapping at Linda and making derogatory comments, on a small scale to be sure, but enough to upset the serenity of our home. The truth of the matter was that I was bored and couldn't do what I wanted when I wanted to do it, so I started to take it out on HER!

Now as far as cabin fever goes, it wasn't too bad an attack, I suppose, as I'm over it now and nobody got hurt. We still love each other and've decided to stay together. Besides, where else could we go? I did read about a bad case a few years ago, though.

These two young lads took it into their heads to canoe down the Red River from North Dakota, via Lake Winnipeg to Port Nelson on the Hudson Bay. They were the best of friends and had a great old time getting to Winnipeg and taking the ferry up the lake to Norway House. Then they entered the Nelson River, bound for the Bay.

The first part was OK, as they struggled around and through the rapids and fast water, but when they reached the flat lands that slope gently down to the sea, it began. The monotony of the muddy river's meandering and endless mosquitoes combined with the general sameness of the country they were going through began to tell and the cabin fever set in. The two best friends began to hate each other with a passion that was more than homicidal. The only thing that saved them was their greater need for survival. Each knew they needed each other alive if they were going to make it to Port Nelson and

home. The one thing they didn't learn was what I learned last night: to say "Thank you."

Now, Linda and I are basically in the same situation as those two young lads. We're alone in the bush and I need Linda to survive out here as much as she needs me. I figured I'd better stop my mental calisthenics right now and figure out what was wrong with me.

I did. I'd got caught up in the math of "I do more in this relationship than she does, so she owes me and I'll make her pay." I had to take the wider view and see the dangerous immaturity of this approach. As the Germans say, the man is the Head of the House, but the woman is the neck. Without Linda's guidance and wisdom, I'd be lost, no matter how much I think I do around here! Linda's never been unreasonably angry at me and thanks me for every little task that I do. In contrast, I rarely thank her for anything and I'd better change that. I'd better start finding ways to show how much I appreciate her.

I'm going to try reasonableness and gratitude to see if that works better than blaming her for the weather outside. I'm going to thank her for the great bread she bakes twice a week and for the dinners she makes and for her trips for supplies when I'm not up to a trip to town.

Don't get any ideas that I'm trying for sainthood here; I'm just attempting to add a few "Thank You Linda"s in my day. That should have a better outcome than a screaming row that could end up with me being brained by that lovely handmade Swedish Axe I bought her for Christmas a while ago.

There's no need to let you know the outcome---if you see me around town, it'll have worked.

Oh, and Happy Valentine's Day, eh!

All the best from the bush, Charlie.



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voice from the bush

BOUNDARIES

by Charlie Johnson

A friend of ours was starting to get on our nerves by "dropping in" at our apartment in Hamilton all the time, so we put up boundaries to give us some control on her contact with us. We told her to phone before she came, so if we weren't up for a visit, we could tell her so with the minimum of fuss. She had to test it, of course, to see if we really meant it and we did. When she next knocked on our door unannounced with her daughter in tow, I reminded her of our new deal and asked her if she had a quarter for the pay-phone round the corner. After looking at me twice, she left and always phoned after that. She's still our friend today.

The same sort of thing happened with my eldest daughter. I think she was very angry at me, as I was with my parents when I was at her age. When my grandson was born, I felt like it was open season for a while until I'd have enough. I explained in a letter that I no longer was the man she knew. I'd gone through so much therapy of one sort or another that I'd changed enormously and would she please treat me in a respectful way. The next letter I got was free of the double-edged comments that abounded in her letters before. Both she and I had grown up.

A couple of years ago, we had a dispute with some neighbours that was finally resolved in our favour. As a result of following the dispute process the boundaries of our property are now established in the minds of all the Ministries involved as well as ourselves. Thus I have the boundaries for my friends, family and home all safely established and now I need to do the same for my personal ones, too.

I knew when I made some of my past life's decisions that they would put me "Over the Edge," and they did. The 'boundary' then was life or death for me, pretty black and white, huh? They were simple decisions, not easy but necessary for my survival and required professional intervention.

Somehow, I have survived, with all my six separate types of insanity identified and under control or resolved and I'm in a position to choose what's comfortable for me to do and what's not.

When I was growing up, my mother wanted desperately for me to be the engineer she couldn't be. Women of her generation and breeding weren't allowed to do anything at all professionally, so she looked to me to live out her dream. I don't know how well it worked out for her, because when I got my promotion to Engineer, Class 1, I sent the confirmation letter to her and promptly quit the job. I was then well on my way to becoming a professional nut bar, Class 1.

Now that I've retired from both jobs, I can choose how much discomfort I want in my life, as well as what I want to do with it, free of the ghosts of my parents' dreams. I know I want to be a writer, but the other side of writing, publicity, is extremely uncomfortable for me. I plan to be 'Charlie' to you, Dear Reader, and use a pseudonym for my novels.

I've given myself permission to live my own life with more comfortable personal boundaries. I've given myself the OK to acknowledge the enormous efforts I've spent getting better from some seemingly hopeless states and try to learn to enjoy (!) the fruits of my labour. I've found the last few days very strange and realize that I've lots to learn about happiness and fun and a wonderful place in which to learn it.

All the best from the bush, Charlie

POSTSCRIPT: In keeping with my new boundaries I've had to abandon my plans to transform the legal sight requirements for drivers. My one attempt to the M.P.P.'s office was rebuffed in a sweet political way, and now I'm most grateful for that. If politicians and law makers don't know that old people who need a walker when they get out of the driver's seat and who are wearing glasses they can't see out of, *shouldn't be driving*, then they probably won't listen to little old me! What I'm going to do instead is watch other drivers very carefully and assume that they can't see me and can't reach the brakes either.

GRAMMA'S CHIPPER

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...from the community

Experience a "Stitch in Time" at Stitches & Treasures!

As a young man Rex arrived in Sudbury, all the way from Newfoundland, looking for a Life for himself. Like many of us who leave home early he was overwhelmed with loneliness and one day, wandering the Sudbury streets, he came upon a store showing a cross stitch design of an old Fisherman in the window. Having lost both his grandfathers to the Atlantic Ocean, as they fished the Grand Banks, he purchased his very first kit. His efforts to connect with the Spirit of his Ancestors were rewarded with a portrait of his Heritage and his feelings of isolation were reduced in the effort.

For me, Rex's experience illustrates the purpose of Crafting in its purest form; Quieting the emotions, putting things in perspective, allowing us a break from the pain of existence.

These traits of intuitive self awareness and the ability to deal with life on life's terms came across loud and clear when I was able to take some time with Rex in his store, "**Stitches & Treasures**", at the corner of Ferguson & Broadway in downtown Haileybury. With a career move for his partner as the catalyst, Rex has taken up residence in our area and we are the better for his presence here. Settling in nicely, at the store with the big windows, Rex has collected a wonderful selection of Cross Stitch kits, patterns, threads, beads and accessories for those interested in his Passion.

Thirty years of stitchery has resulted in some incredible Textile Art brought into being by Rex. A few of his pieces are for sale, beautifully framed, as are some Haileybury focused Paintings by well known local artist Laura Landers. Also available in the store is a selection of Watkin's Cremes, Oils, Spices & Extracts, lovely Woolens, Quilt tops and Beaded Jewellery. The Greeting Cards provide an exceptional range of choices for all occasions and the Pottery is hand thrown, of course.

Little Bear Crafts Bracelets & beaded Dream Catchers have started appearing there lately and, if it is in keeping with his concept for the store, Rex would be happy to showcase creations by local crafters, carvers, potters and artisans of all sorts!

This month I've included a Cross Stitch Craft on my Little Bear pages and will be purchasing a lovely little floral kit this week for only \$12.00 (my reward for finishing the newsletter on time!).

Valentine's Day is a great reason to fit **Stitches & Treasures** into your search for the perfect gift! And I'm not just saying that because I made some lovely bracelets with Valentine's Day in mind...♥ Linda



Happy Valentines Day from Linda & Charlie

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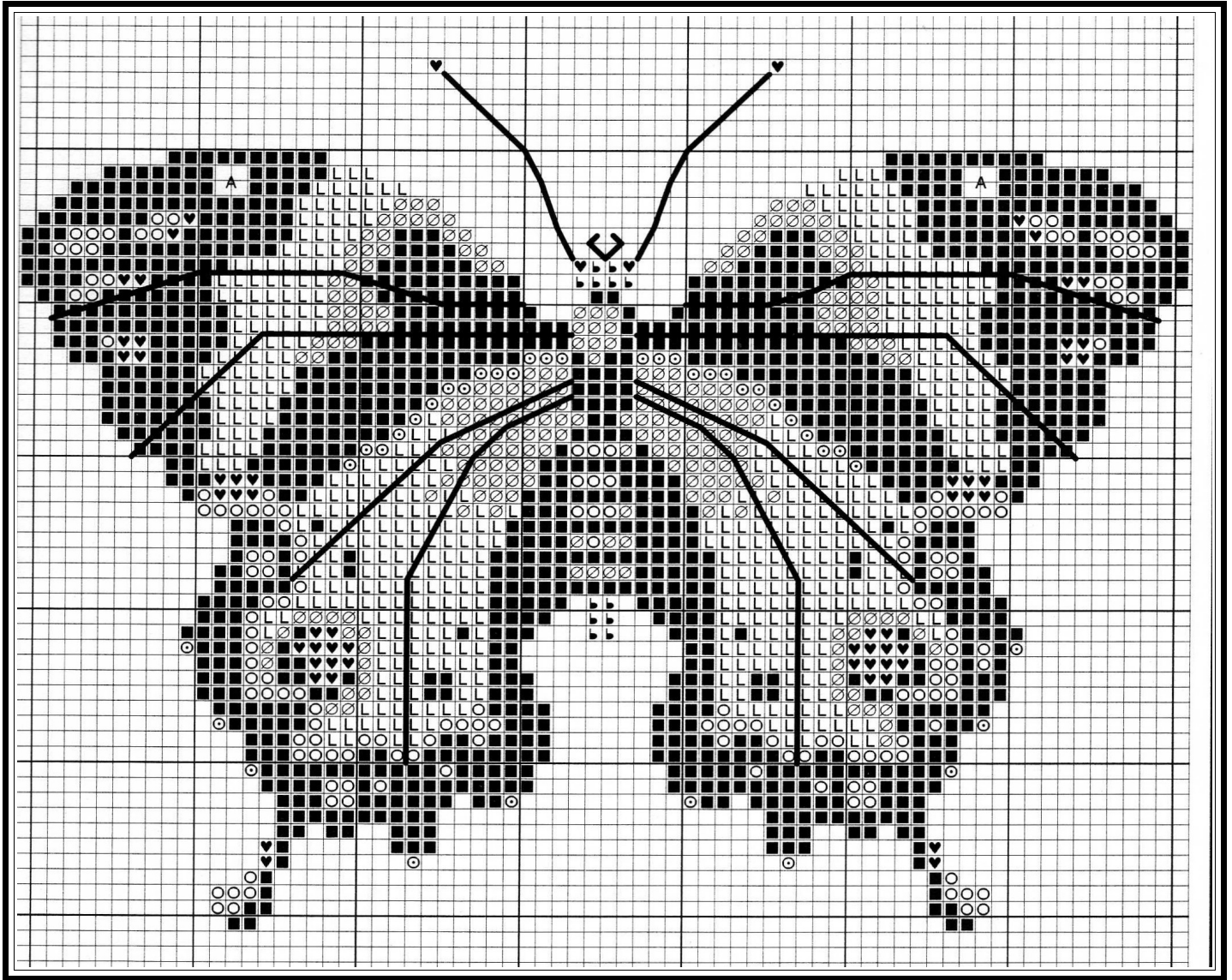
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CRAFTS...from the bush

Stitchery

by little bear

Gold Butterfly Cross Stitch



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...from the cave

Transformation

by little bear

Stitched on 32 count Natural Linen
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Stitched area is 4 1/2" x 3 3/4" with a
stitch count of 72 x 57.
Stitched (2 over 2). DMC floss used.

DMC Floss

■ 3371

Beads by Mill Hill

○ 02011

◎ 10041

♥ 03056

A 13007

Kreinik Metallic Thread
Very Fine (#4) Braid (one strand)

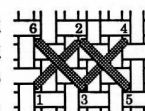
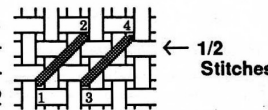
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Stitching Over Two Threads

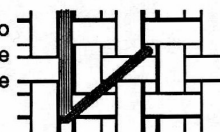
The Cross Stitch. Come up at 1. Instead of going down in the hole diagonally across, skip and go one more diagonal. Go down at 2. The diagonal is 2 squares long. Come up at 3 and repeat as above. Go down at 4. Come up through hole 5. Go back through hole 2. Come up through hole 3. Go back through hole 6. Notice that there are empty holes between each of the legs of the X and one in the center. Four squares are covered. Repetition makes the stitch easier and almost automatic. If one color runs consecutively, work all bottom diagonals in the same row and cross coming back.



The Back Stitch. The back stitch must also go over two squares, whether diagonal, vertical or horizontal.



Long Stitch. When stitching over two threads it is important to remember that one square on the graph equals two threads on the fabric.



*Backstitch veins in wings, mouth and antennae with 2 strands of 3371. Reproduced with permission Mirabilia Designs.

Butterfly Medicine represents the Power of the Mind to Transform our Thinking and then to Act on that Transformation! We all have the Egg, Caterpillar, Cocoon and Butterfly stages of Life. In fact those stages well represent the cycles of change experienced by the process or evolution of ideas, relationships, problems, successes, dreams and goals. With the egg stage we may have experienced a thought or idea. The larvae or caterpillar stage is the formation of that idea into something tangible, something evolving. The cocoon can represent the work and effort required to develop the idea and to prepare to bring it into reality. With the birth and unfurling of the incredible wings of the Butterfly we have completed the process and can appreciate the Beauty that the effort has produced.

With help from the stages of the Butterfly we can better analyze our present stage of development and see where to go from there. If I have a plan to change my behaviour but have not performed any activity to achieve the change then I am still at the egg (thinking) stage with the issue and may need to examine why I have yet to take action... What fear or old coping mechanism is keeping my plan from evolving? Why am I staying in the old way while aspiring to the new?

With the help of Butterfly Medicine we can take to the Air and fully experience the Beauty that we are!

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Herbs & Recipes...from the bush

CATNIP, HERBE A CHAT, *NEPETA CATARIA*

by Charlie Johnson

Every cat knows how good the herb Catnip is. They'll roll in it given half a chance and behave very strangely for a while before falling into a sound sleep. I've only known one cat not to go nuts over this one and that was my inside/outside cat in Hamilton, Patticake. There was a lot of catnip growing outside in my Wilderness Garden, but she remained quite unimpressed with the leaves I tried to feed her.

When we were leaving Hamilton to come up North, I went around collecting as many different plant seeds as I could, to save the world I suppose. When I came to this one catnip plant, it threw itself out of the ground root and all, begging me to take it away from the crazy weather that was happening around it. I mean, roses blooming in December? Come on!! Unfortunately, I was going through my "NO" period and I wouldn't bring it with us, although I got a lot of seeds from it. It got me back though. None of those seeds grew and neither did the packets of catnip seed that I bought for three years running. I was very sorry for my decision and The Great Gardener In The Sky must have been listening because now I've got several happy plants growing in our backyard.

I first used Catnip medicinally when I had the hiccups for four days straight. They were made worse because I'd given myself an esophageal hernia when I came into my first batch of the family money. Before then, I'd been spending \$40.00 per month on food and suddenly we were eating in the finest restaurants in Hamilton. Our favourite turned out to be the Shenai, a Northern Indian restaurant. We would order "too much" food because it was so

delicious and I would eat myself silly. I was so stuffed I could barely roll into the cab. Needless to say, something had to give and it was my esophagus. Would I do it again? You bet!! Anyway, it really hurt when I got the hiccups.

Linda got fed up of my moaning and groaning around the house and suggested I look in my herb books for a solution and there it was in the index of Common Herbs For Natural Health by Juliette de B. Levy: 'Hiccups: see Catnip and Cayenne'.

Cayenne pepper sounded a little extreme, but then so were the hiccups so I made and ate a butter sandwich filled with pepper while the kettle boiled for some catnip tea. The combination worked and I could sleep at last! Thank you Juliette. When I began to get tense again and felt the hiccups coming on, I quickly turned to my catnip tea and was reliably comforted. We've recommended it to poor sleepers since then, always with the warning "If it tastes good, it likely is but if not, don't drink it as it may not be right for you."

Juliette says that Catnip tea's good for colic, wind and stomach spasms in babies, a teaspoon of dried herb in a cup of boiling water, then sweetened with a little honey and cooled. You could try a teaspoon on the poor mite and trust their response.

She also says it's good with digestive and menstruation troubles, too. Although I'm post-menopausal, I'm still not above over-eating from time to time, so I'm glad of the reminder of this side of a common herb. Next time, I'll try it for *my* stomach aches.

All the best from the bush, Charlie.



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OPINIONS from the Bush

Taxes

by A. Buschmann

There used to be two certainties in life, Death and Taxes, but we've got another one out here, Change. All I can do about Death is have something of value to take to Judgement Day, or something to pay the Dark Ferryman for rowing me across the River Jordan, if you prefer. (I love a mixed metaphor).

Change is being thrust upon us and the best I can do with that is prepare for it. I try to be as honest as I can about what's likely to happen and how my situation'll fit into it, then do what I can to make adjustments beforehand. When the Big One hits, roll with the punches, pray and hope for the best. Who knows? When It finally comes, I might turn into a Born Again Christian after all.

This leaves the third one, Taxes. Since last year, our income has doubled to the heady sum of \$22,000 per year due to an increase in my pensions, so taxes could loom large in my life once more. Linda says she can keep us in Revenue Canada Obscurity by humbling herself and claiming 'Kept Woman' status, but if she can't then I've got a problem.

Now I don't mind paying taxes if I can see some benefit from them, but I get real mad if they're frittered away. Our property taxes, for instance, go toward the upkeep of our road to town, which I approve of. However, if I have to pay Income Tax to Steven so he can buy over a hundred war planes at \$3 to \$5 billion dollars apiece, whose only purpose is to kill other people in other countries that are poorer than me, I most definitely don't approve. Especially if Canadian mothers have to go without and Canadian children don't get the fun in their education they used to get because of a lack of money. On top of all this, the countries these planes'll be used against could be turned into friends for two billion a year. That's all the extra income Pakistan and Burma get to do whatever *they* want.

Some forward-thinking bean counter on the radio was saying that our taxation system's upside down. Instead of sending 90% of our money to "Ottawa" (it used to be Sudbury ON, now it's Shawinigan QUE, and maybe it'll be Sasquatch AL next) and hoping to get a pittance back, it should be the other way around. 60% of the taxes generated in a community

should stay in that community, 30% should get sent on to Toronto and the remaining 10% go to Ottawa.

If two thirds of all the retail tax, the GST, Income tax and property tax in our community stayed here, then we could fix our own roads, and our own schools and look after our own poorer people. If *OUR* hospital needed something, we'd have the money to buy it and so on. Of course there'd be some waste of funds, like excessive travel expenses, but we'd be on that like white on rice, and there'd be far less wasted than there is now with control being so far away. Right now, we all send our money to "Ottawa", beg for it back as far as Toronto, then beg again, and by the time we get any of it for stuff that really needs doing, it's much less than it was and it's got silly conditions attached, like 'Vote for me, or I won't give you your own money back.'

I've watched the people in the various levels of government at work and I'll tell you what I've seen. The local counselors run around like crazy and do a lot of stuff for us. The Provincial ones seem to do less and drive up and down the road to North Bay a lot, but the Federal ones I've rubbed shoulders with frighten me. "When in doubt, do ****nowt****" seems to be their motto and they looked like they were in doubt a lot of the time. Like I say, scary in their inactivity. (**Yorkshire for "nothing"!)

So, Aux Armes, Citoyens! Tax Revolt Time! Hmmm. Slow down, there Charlie, this is Canada. Storming The Bastille is not for us. A 'Boston Tea Party' would be politically incorrect these days, and when the Americans did it, it led to a real war. Maybe everyone should send all their taxes to our new City Hall for them to sort through first. It would take a bit of setting up, but it could be done. At least that way, the latest ergonomically correct luxury chairs, needed for every new government office, would be sat on by local people.

Failing these wonderful fantasies, Linda's going to deduct herself from my taxable income calculations and keep her kept woman status. That way Steven won't be buying those killer war planes with our pennies.

Anyway, that's my opinion, A. Buschmann.



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S P I R I T U A L I T Y

Secrets

When Linda and I planned to move up here, a friend advised us to keep quiet about our shady pasts. "Start anew, with a clean slate" she said, as she'd been bruised socially by her past life. Now, I can't keep my mouth shut about me and I'm proud of how many of my family secrets I've been able to uncover from a water-tight blanket of secrecy. Linda also took the 'Tell All' approach so the people she did business with would hear the straight facts from her first, rather than creative versions from others.

I won't bore you with the details of my past except to say this. A person, or in my case a family, is only as sick as it's secrets and my family was really sick. They were also very good at keeping those secrets hidden and I had to do some serious digging to get them out into the open. Like, I went to therapy seven twelves, non stop, for over four years before slowing down to a five day week of it. All that just to enjoy the wonderful new set of problems that I have now! I didn't find out all the secrets even then. For instance, what was there about my grandad and his dad that my mother never talked about? Why was my grandmother, of whom my mother was terrified all her life, so dead set against me becoming a writer? I think I'll stick to my own issues and leave the dead to sort out their own.

One thing about our little family secrets is just that: they really are little. One of my favourite inspirational speakers talked about this. She said that a friend of hers told her "If you hang out your dirty laundry on the line next to any one of your neighbour's for all to see, you wouldn't be able to tell whose was which." We're all the same underneath, folks. I think we're afraid of our neighbours judging us. Most don't, but I believe if they actually do, they're probably just as scared we'll judge them as well.

Living out here as we do, 5 km from the nearest neighbour and an hour from serious medical help, we cannot afford to have any secrets with anyone. This includes the trees, the wild animals, everyone. Any falseness could be fatal. The bush requires the truth.

When Linda and I got together, our pasts were important to each of us, so we talked about them a lot. We also talked about how we were going to handle our new relationship together. One of the essentials we agreed on was 'No Secrets. As soon as you know, I'll know second.' Me being me, I had to put this to the test. I remembered a serious relationship affecting issue and didn't tell Linda for a week after I'd remembered it. Why not? I was scared. Boy!! I didn't do that again. According to Linda the not telling was the real crime, not the issue itself. Her point was that I spent an entire week being false and keeping the unspoken issue between us. This experiment fell directly into my Differential Pain theory of 'Does it hurt more to do or not to do?' With Linda and secrets, it most definitely hurts more not to tell, so now I tell every time.

One side effect of all our public laundry washing is that people will share some of their secrets with us and so face up to them more easily.

They say a trouble shared is a trouble halved and that the more we talk about our common humanity, with its mistakes, corrections and eventual acceptance, then the freer we'll be.

I've found this to be true for me. I've found it's a lot easier to do what I want to do when I don't have a pile of old ghosts nattering away in my head all the time. I've got a life to live and a clear mind with which to live it.

The talking, of course, continues. Charlie



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