

Personal Reflection – August 23, 2023

Two Stories

I celebrate my long life with thanks and praise - not just the events of each day but all the people who have touched me, one way or another. I celebrate my remembering them, naming them, with love.

I have two stories – one from NCSU in 1979 and one from Santiago, Chile in 1993.

North Carolina State University, 1979

My first class as a professor was with a group of graduate students in the School of Education. I spent a frenetic day getting everything ready for the evening class. I walked into Poe Hall wondering, “Do I have everything I need: the right handouts, the names of all the students, the right room!” The class went well: all deeply engaged in learning tasks in their small groups. As they left, a young man came up to me to say, “Professor, I want to tell you what the woman next to me said. She leaned over to me and whispered: “*She loves us.*”

I thanked him, with tears in my eyes. My fear-full mind, through that three-hour class, had thought nothing about love. But she had perceived it! I will never forget that moment.

Medical School of the Catholic University of Chile, 1993

In Santiago, I taught professors at the Medical School of the Catholic University of Chile. I did not speak Spanish and it was my first time in Chile. I had been invited by a doctor, the Dean of that Medical School, who had taken my class at the School of Public Health at UNC. Again, lots of concern in me: “Can I do this?”

That doctor spoke with me recently: “I do not remember what you taught when you came to Chile,” he said. “However, I do recall the love you showed us.” Again, tear-filled eyes, as we laughed together.

Wow! In both of these beautiful moments I learned to say *Thanks and Praise*, often.

--Jane Vella