10/23/2014

Janet, I want to thank you for your letter explaining how I helped you. I have images of the situation regarding the paper, which is surprising. I also have an image of what you looked like so many years ago. Just don't know if it is accurate or not. The situation with Donny is equally interesting. I remember thinking I had to win that one to get anywhere with him. Luckily I did. To me it was just about helping people do what they wanted to do even if they didn't know it.

Your perception about helping young women is correct. To me it was always an issue of fairness and still is to this day. In fairness, I think it was my wife who helped me realize some misconceptions I had.

I also feel irritation when I work in a crowded city school with teachers and their children, knowing those students are going to have a harder time than the children I taught in Princeton. But enjoying their excitement when their faces light up makes up for the irritation. Do feel somewhat powerless to do more than my efforts. Those in charge do not seem to like change.

I now teach college courses on how you teach science to children and am presently pushing the class on providing evidence for what they investigate, which is the theme of the NGSS (Next Generation Science Standards.). They have great difficulty writing or explaining why they feel a solution is correct. That will change.

Used your letter along with other incidents to talk to this college class about what happens if a teacher's attitude is focused on children of any age. You make decisions based on what you feel and usually they are right. The decision may have to be explained to someone else, but the decisions are right.

Anyway, am very happy I was able to make the right decision at the right time for you and I really do appreciate your thoughts. A person liked to think they made the right career choice, which I did.

With great appreciation for your letter and your life. Am glad I had a part in it.

Jim Messersmith
jcmessersmith@comcast.net