

I was asked to write the next two poems upon the occasions, in consecutive years, of the retirements of a pair of totally dedicated teachers from my department. Then, on my own, I wrote a third, again on the occasion of a retirement. Each was the consummate professional, in her way. One spent a lifetime of energy and belief teaching children born in other countries to speak English. The second developed the literacy skills of every student she came into contact with as she worked at a desk near mine in our Study Center and helped us all give individual attention to students who came to us (or were assigned) for assistance. The third combined a love of math with a love of Golden Oldies and a beautiful singing voice to add life to our department. ALL did so much more than that, creating courses and lessons, overseeing class trips, producing a literary magazine written by new Americans and visitors to our nation.

Each of the first two was celebrated by her peers at an end-term gathering at least partially in her honor, and the third would have been also had not the pandemic of 2020 eliminated our school's annual retirement party (although we in the Study Skills / ENL Department still managed to give her a virtual retirement celebration using Zoom). Each was promised that she would be remembered by her fellow teachers --- and, speaking for myself, I miss each one every day. I have been fortunate to share the occasional dinner with one of these women (together with my wife, her gentleman friend and, more recently, fellow teachers). I have hopes that I will see the other sooner or later, but we all have lives that take us in various directions.

I am grateful that I wrote these three poems. I am equally grateful that I have known these three women professionally, and I wish them great happiness and contentment in their retirement. In a way, each poem is my way of saying thank you to them for having been role models not only for the hundreds of students who were fortunate enough to be in their "classes," but to me, even at my age. It isn't age, after all, that makes one a professional; it is actions. Each was a class act in more than the literal meaning of the word.

I miss all three, professionally and personally speaking.