

Grace

Darkness enveloped me. Lethargy...Depression.

Then a spark of light from an unlikely source: a phone call from a Shriners Hospital nurse: a neighbor, a friend.

“Can you interpret for a patient, an 8-year old girl? A bus plowed over her in Cali, Colombia on her way home from school, and no one here speaks Spanish. She’s having spinal surgery.”

This was back in the dark ages when hospitals, at least where I lived, had no interpreters, no facilities for family members to stay. Little Claudia was alone.

“Of course,” I replied. My friend — the nurse — knew I was a translator by profession, and that I spoke Spanish fluently. But she didn’t know that buried beneath my resumé lay a woman in trouble.

I followed that tiny spark of light that day; I could help someone, could be of use.

My friendship with Claudia saved me. Not that day or week or month. But the darkness gradually lifted during my nearly daily visits to Shriners that year. I followed the light of Claudia’s friendship. The light of grace.

Now, more than forty years later, whenever she thanks me for my friendship, I correct her. “No. Thank *you*, for giving me back my life.”

