

“The Power of Persistence”

By Lex Shuler

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I guess it was when I was in the 7th grade when I learned the power of persistence. It was one of those great things you learn without studying or even trying. It just happened and I have remembered it all my life.

Jane Stevens (or more properly Jane Walker Stevens) was my teacher all 8 years of grade school. She was a stately, proper lady with rimless glasses and grey hair that she wore in a bun. I think she did that so she would have a place to put her pencils. Mrs. Stevens always wore a dress and stockings while at school and to a small child she could look very stern at times, but she was fair and had a good sense of humor.

It was the start of the school year and there was a first grader named Ruth Ann and on the very first day of school, Mrs. Stevens called “First grade reading, turn, stand, pass.” When the students heard their class being called, on the ‘turn’ they would turn in their seats, then on the word ‘stand’, they students were supposed to stand next to their desk. On the word ‘pass’, the students would proceed to the recitation bench that faced the teacher’s desk. Well, Ruth Ann did none of those things, and just sat defiantly in her seat with her arms folded. Mrs. Stevens quietly walked back and leaned over, pulled Ruth Ann to her feet and marched her to the front of the room and sat her down on the recitation bench.

This scenario played over and over, every day, every first grade class, for what seemed like weeks. We wondered what would happen each time the first grade was called. Then one morning Mrs. Stevens called, “Turn, stand, pass”. The first graders, turned, stood, and passed. Even Ruth Ann! Everyone in the school house gasped and jaws dropped at the sight. Mrs. Stevens beamed with a twinkle in her eye and gave a nod to the class.

I have always thought of this every time I was about to give up on something. I quietly say, “Turn, stand, pass.”