

# Persistence

Category: Unsung Heroes

written by Kelley Rae Jewett | April 3, 2023

She was twenty-three years old and had four children. She lived in a small town, and her husband used their one vehicle to get to work each day. She had loads of diapers to wash and put through the wringer, then hang on the line to dry. She had meals to make, a lawn to mow, a garden to tend, a house to clean, and a husband who expected meat and potatoes for supper every day.

I was three years old and ill with a fever, not eating, lying lethargically on the couch. She took me to the clinic we used, 30 miles away. She told the doctor she thought I had appendicitis, and he replied, "Kids don't get appendicitis—it's just a stomachache," and sent me home. When I became more ill, she took me back to the clinic. By then, my appendix had ruptured and I had to have emergency surgery. I recovered enough to go home but was still sick. I lay on the couch with abdominal pain, unable to eat or play. She knew something was still wrong and took me back to the clinic repeatedly, sometimes five times in a day. When she finally realized we weren't going to be helped, she took me to the town's competing clinic.

The doctor there told her he would try to find out what was wrong with me and took me into the operating room. Upon opening my abdomen, he found a nick in my intestine; fluids leaking into my abdomen were the cause of my ongoing illness. The leaking stopped after he sutured the accidental intestinal incision, and I went home again. She changed the gauze on my abdominal "drainhole" every day and nurtured me back to health amid all her other daily work.

She subsequently dedicated 50 years of her life to donating blood and organizing annual Red Cross blood drives in our community. When I asked her what her impetus was, she replied, "I saw you gray and almost dead, then saw you restored to life after receiving two pints of blood."

In my 27 years of being a family physician, I have never missed a case of appendicitis. It is because of the persistence and courage of my now-80-year-old mom, an unsung hero, that I am here today to tell this story. Thanks, Mom.

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