

THE ART OF PERSISTENCE

Ronnie Rios, Sergeant at Arms



I am extremely honored, humbled, and full of gratitude to serve in the position – Texas Bandmasters Association Sergeant at Arms. Serving on a board of this magnitude

where I may bring your voice to the table is not only my mission, but a HUGE deal! Like most challenges in our world, persistence and determination are the key to overcoming almost anything. People working together, not separately, can surely make our 'band world' a better place.

May we all remember the words of Calvin Coolidge, "Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; The world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and Determination alone are omnipotent!"

I am originally from a small town outside of Corpus Christi – Alice, Texas. It was a small town with a big town band. My band director was Bryce Taylor, who was an icon in our profession. He continued to teach us all for decades even after he left the classroom with every conversation and with every sentence. While in high school, he exposed us to the works of Respighi, Giannini, Husa, Shostakovich and many more. Although lucky to partake in one of the best music education programs in the country, I had so

many obstacles outside the band hall creating a challenge that almost anyone would struggle to achieve their big goals. This is when the art of persistence and determination came into my world. For I did not want to take "no" for an answer.

My university campus was 30 miles away. One summer while living at home, I enrolled in summer classes to graduate sooner. I had no car but secured rides through a carpool group with other students from Alice. The bad news was that sometimes I missed my ride because our classes didn't always align. Please never try this today – but I hitchhiked to the school several times, out of

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desperation, I guess. I believe my drive and determination within me cancelled my fear (either that or my bad decision making.) I also spent that summer selling vacuum cleaners with some friends where I really learned rejection early on. However, I realized that if I could sell a vacuum cleaner to a stranger, I could probably sell flute vibrato to 11-year-olds. And this is when I learned that to memorize, execute, and master a system

would lead me to much success. Perfecting that system led me to the top sales award and a free vacuum cleaner. I share these events with you as a reminder that through the tough times, we may have to pick ourselves up after a weird episode, after a rehearsal, after a surprise visit from an unhappy student or even parent. These hard lessons of life are meant to make us better, not bitter.

Determination and persistence are our allies. As cliché as this sounds, we cannot let anything stand in our way. World Champion Boxer Mike Tyson had a profound quote that resonates loudly, "Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth." That said, grab your dreams and go after them with super determination. If those big dreams don't make people laugh or look at you awkward, make them bigger! And along the way, work with people, not against them. Don't be like me and learn the hard way. Most people in your world like parents, administrators, etc. just want to be communicated with. They just want the band's "6 O-Clock News." People/Parents love to be communicated with. People/Parents love simplicity! And administrators love solutions, not problems or "feel sorry for us" vibes. This is when your true leadership and determination can shine the best and lead your program to lofty heights!

I wasn't the best student or musician in high school, but I had a pretty respectful relationship with my band director. So much so that after graduation, he loaned me an instrument and practice room every day during the summer before college to prepare accordingly. That may not sound like a big deal, but it did lead me to this destination today.