

PATHWAY TO SUCCESS

Over a number of years it was traditional for each senior class at Seneca High School to choose a boy and a girl class member for a number of “superlatives.” Included among the list of superlatives were “most intelligent,” “most athletic,” “most creative,” and especially “most likely to succeed.” Chosen as the girl from my class as “most likely to succeed” was Sherry (Johns) Spence. During her high school years Sherry consistently demonstrated the enthusiasm and work ethic that are essential to success in life. Yet perhaps her strongest asset was her ability to recognize a problem and from there use the tools available to her to come up with a workable solution. And all of those traits came to the forefront prior to Sherry’s entering Seneca High School when as a sixth grader she participated in the Bashford Manor Elementary School talent show.

Sherry’s act for the school talent show was a rendition of “Moon River,” a 1963 hit song written by legendary composer Henry Mancini and made a hit by singer Andy Williams. As was her personality Sherry walked onto the stage fully prepared for her moment in the spotlight. But as Sherry burst into song it became readily apparent that this was a performance that people would remember as opposed to a memorable performance. Put more simply, Sherry had not been gifted with any natural musical talent. Yet it was at this moment that Sherry began to put to use the skills that would make her successful in life. To start, she recognized midway through her performance that her future was not going to be as a professional vocalist. Next, she determined that to have a stable long-term future she would need to get more serious about school. Finally, she made a commitment to herself to fully utilize the resources available to her in order to achieve a successful outcome.

Sherry (Johns) Spence was an outstanding student during her high school years. Yet that was not all of her involvement in school life. She was active on the yearbook staff, served on the student council, was president of the Future Teachers of America, and was a member of several class executive boards. After high school Sherry completed her college education and evolved into a successful long-term career in personnel management for two large corporations, retiring at the age of 49. At present Sherry enjoys family and friends as well as the benefits of a comfortable retirement.

Success in life is something all of us aspire to. Yet often the beginning of the pathway to success is initial failure. It is ultimately what is learned from that failure that determines our future. Perhaps in a way life is a long-term series of courses as to managing failure. And graduation, whether at school or in life, ultimately comes but one way—that being by achieving full awareness of our limitations as well as our strengths.

Sam Denny
Class of 1969