

## **You are an inspiration** – by Martyn Stearn.

Having been a teacher almost fifty years it was with a certain amount of pride that I listened to two people, within the space of half an hour, telling me that I am (not was) an inspiration. I have to admit however, that this was nothing to do with my teaching, but occurred at the ARR awards evening and that both of those who flattered me had probably had a glass of wine or seven. Hopefully, this just gave them the courage to put in words what they felt rather than cloud their judgement. Whatever the scenario, there comes a time of life when you are willing to accept praise from whatever quarter – and I have undoubtedly reached that age.

On reflection I think that both who spoke to me (I will protect their identity to spare their blushes) were probably focussing less on my sporting prowess and more on the fact that just a year earlier they, and several others, didn't think I'd get to the end of the month let alone the end of another race. Kindness in whatever form is always welcome and I listened as they talked about how they used to try to keep up with me, while I couldn't help wondering if those days would ever return. It made me think about the word 'inspiration' and my mind drifted back to when I started running.

I was approaching fifty and had for some years competed on the windsurfing circuit, racing regularly throughout the year. For those who need some clarification, the correct term for windsurfing on a racing circuit on flat inland water is boardsailing, but windsurfing sounds a lot more glamorous. The other competitors on the circuit were getting younger and my physique was crying out for a wetsuit in a maternity style! I decided as a new year's resolution to start running with the aim of completing the Wakefield 10k in the April of that year. That was going to be it and after running for ten minutes around Ackworth, which involved passing four pubs, two clubs and various take-away establishments, I really began to question my sanity (not for the first or last time).

Needless to say, I stuck with it and reached the start line at Wakefield, my first proper running race since picking up the bronze medal in the cubs' sports some forty-two years earlier. I finished in 49'52" which I was pleased with but couldn't help noticing that an old grey haired chap finished in front of me. I stuck with the running inspired by this seemingly frail figure who left me in his wake, little realising at the time that it was the running legend Mr Ken Bingley. He wouldn't have realised that he inspired me, just as I hadn't realised how I have in turn inspired others.

Just remember, you don't know who is watching you and who you are inspiring. Whether you run like a gazelle and finish first or inspire by knowing that you will never win but demonstrate true grit and determination. Never forget, each and every one who runs can change a life without ever realising it. Keep on running.

Martyn Stearn, May 2020