

BACHELOR OF ARTS

70-year-old makes it all in the family

Rita Malone, who graduates from Western today, proves it's never too late to go back to school.

By Burt Dowsett
The London Free Press

Seventy-year-old Rita Malone catches up to the rest of her family at the University of Western Ontario's fall convocation today.

Malone, of London, will become the 17th member of her immediate family to hold a university degree when she is granted a bachelor of arts.

All her five brothers, all five of her children and their spouses, and husband, Joe, are university graduates.

Malone, who graduated from convent school in Quebec during the Second World War, decided then to go work instead of seeking higher education.

"My brothers (all younger) were too young to go to war. They continued on (to university) after high school. My mother would have liked me to go on, but jobs were easy and I told her I would prefer to do that."

She took a secretarial course, worked for 10 years, then married and never worked outside the home again.

ITCH TO LEARN: But the desire to learn was always there. And when Sister Cecily Carlin at Brescia College encouraged seniors to enrol, it planted the seed.

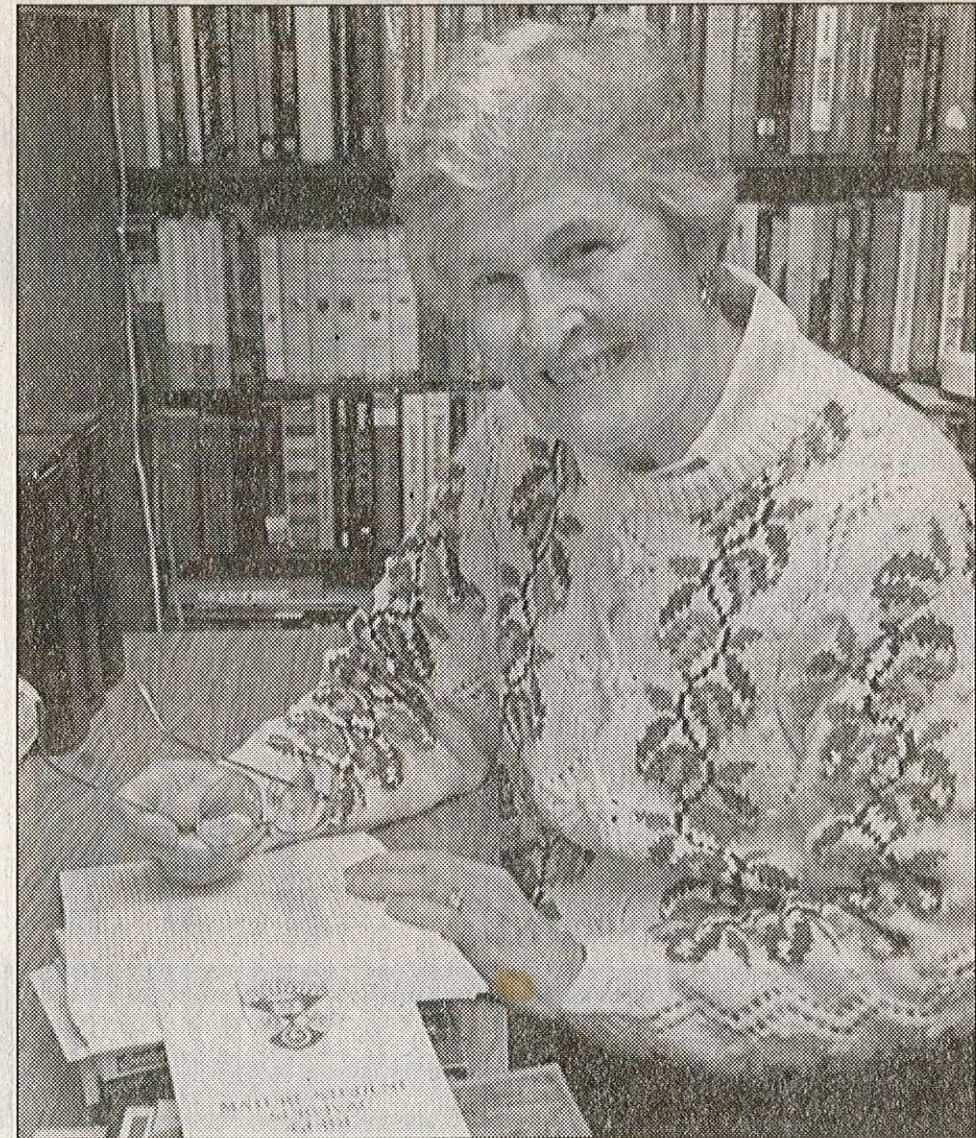
"I mentioned it to my children and they said, 'Why don't you take it?'"

Her first class was an English course on novels, most of which she had already read.

"Before writing the final exam, I walked into the room and said 'What am I doing here?'"

She received an A.

She kept on taking courses, at



Rita Malone of London will graduate from UWO today with a bachelor of arts degree.

SUE REEVE
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the beginning just one a year, but later accelerating to two a year and one in summer school, majoring in history.

During the summer, she completed her final course — in visual arts, women artists of the Western world — and was notified in writing that she was eligible for graduation in October.

"I couldn't believe that. I kept reading it over and over again. Did I really do it? I want to give credit to the faculty at Brescia because they encouraged me to go on."

Husband Joe Malone says:

"She looked forward to going to every class. She always felt she was giving something to herself."

ACCEPTED: While going back to school more than four decades after high school graduation may have been a culture shock for some, to Malone "the environment wasn't very strange at all."

She was familiar with the "university atmosphere" from her children attending and by taking in events on campus over the years.

She found acceptance from students, some of them half a century her junior.

"They asked me to work with them if we had to form groups. They never left me out."

While Malone stresses that what she has done is not unique because more seniors are going back to school today, she found one of her more satisfying experiences was encouraging another woman she met who had just started back to school.

"Seeing what I had done encouraged her to make the attempt."

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