

OCT. 27/90

UWO CONVOCATION

After 40 years and a stroke, mom finally gets her degree

Doctors said Gertrude Crossman would never walk again, but she proved them wrong.

By Alison Uncles
The London Free Press

It wasn't the university classes that were difficult for Gertrude Crossman.

It was getting to them.

After she suffered a stroke eight years ago, doctors said she would never be able to walk or drive again.

On Friday, Crossman, 58, of Port Stanley, proved to herself she could do all that and more as she walked across a University of Western Ontario stage to collect her diploma, more than 40 years after she originally began her degree.

HANDLED PAIN: "It was the physical getting to class, getting into class, carrying my books, trying to handle my pain — that was the hardest part," Crossman said. "I didn't think about it ... until I couldn't do it."

Crossman, who earned her bachelor of arts degree in English, began her degree in 1949 but took 26 years off to raise two daughters.

She started back at school in 1975, taking one course a year. Crossman said her 1982 stroke slowed her down, but she was back at Western a few years later, taking night classes, summer school and correspondence classes.

"Not only did she walk again, but she darned well got her degree," said Crossman's 31-year-old daughter Susan Crossman-Christie.



Mike Hensen/The London Free Press

Gertrude Crossman, 58, centre, didn't let a stroke or the passage of time stop her from receiving her degree Friday at University of Western Ontario. Daughters and granddaughters, clockwise from top at left, are Susan Crossman-Christie, Debbie Colliver, Stephanie Colliver, 4, Heather Christie, 3, and Jennifer Colliver, 6.