



Photos by Bill Ironside of The Free Press

Helen Knox, retired University of Western Ontario secretary and the second student to graduate on a 1975 policy

allowing bursaries to seniors to cover their fees, shows her joy at getting a social science degree.

BA or bust

Grandmother didn't give up on degree

By Debbie McGregor
of The Free Press

When 67-year-old Helen Knox signed up for her first university course four years ago, she hadn't read a book for 40 years.

The spunky grandmother of 13 decided then she was going to get her BA or bust. And get it she did.

At her request, Mrs. Knox was hooded at the University of Western Ontario convocation Wednesday by journalism Professor Mack Laing, who taught her first course.

"If it hadn't been for him, I'd never have made it," she said. "He once made me do an essay over four times before

Free Press and the paper printed it, she said.

Journalism was one of her favorite courses, and, she said, "I must have read 20 books for that first one." Geography was another favorite.

Shaking and obviously overwhelmed by the attention following the ceremony, Mrs. Knox said it really hadn't been all that difficult for her to return to school. She said she knew what to expect by listening to her children, who attend university.

"Actually it was harder at the last than at the beginning," she said. "Last summer I took three courses and near the end I was very sorry I'd done it. It really was too much."

courses she has her eye on is Oriental philosophy. "Nothing is going to stop me now."

Mrs. Knox was the first senior citizen to enrol at UWO under a provision which allows seniors free tuition. She says she would definitely encourage other seniors to go to university. "I know some who are far smarter than I am. I was motivated here. It was such a challenge."

Born in Ireland, Mrs. Knox came to Canada in 1929. "I was ready for university then, actually, but when I went looking for a job they told me BA's are a dime a dozen and that I should go to business college. So I did."

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