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# Education shaped him into 'the person I prefer to be'

BY ADELA TALBOT

**FOR THE LAST** 43 years, life simply got in the way for Victor Young, 71.

Growing up in Ireland, he left high school – Kilkenny College, a school that counts Jonathan Swift and George Berkeley among its alumni – at 16. Technically, he is a high school drop-out, Young said.

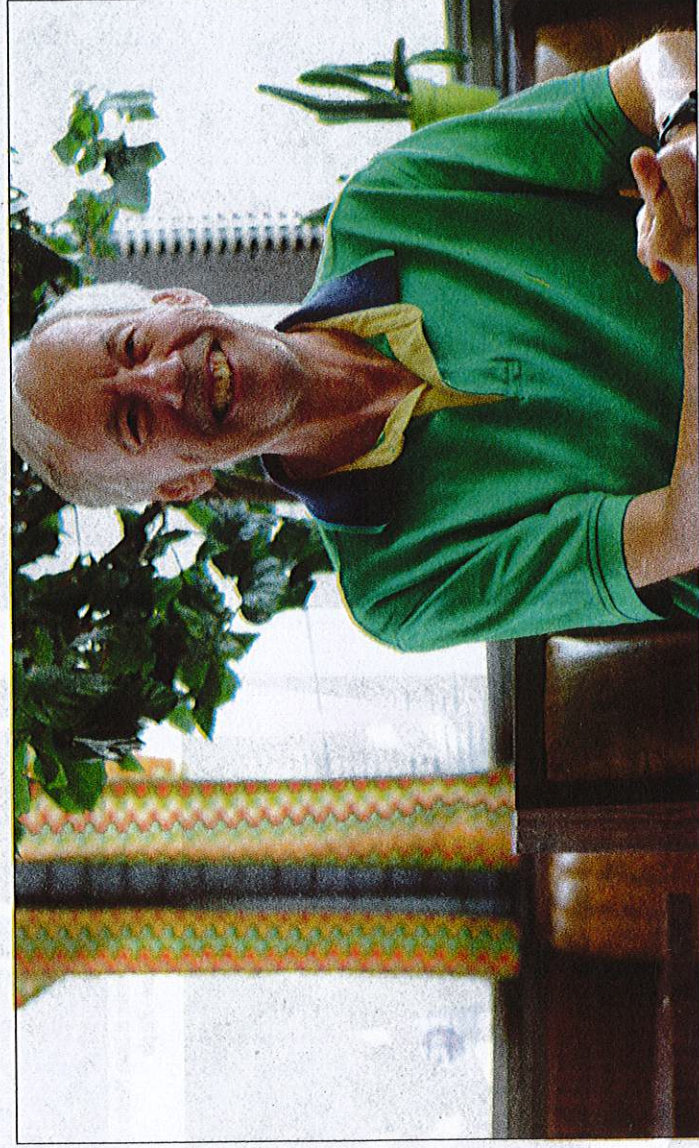
"My father managed a farm and my future would have been as a clerk in a hardware store or grocery store. But at age 11, I set this exam and got a full scholarship to go to Kilkenny. I've always done well in school and I had four years there," he said.

"At 16, my parents thought, 'You've had more education than anyone in our family's ever had. Now, it's time to get a job.' I didn't fight it. I had gained another scholarship to do more (studies), but I turned it down and got a job."

Young worked for an insurance company in Dublin until he got married in 1967. With his wife, he then came to Canada – on the day of their wedding. By 1972, he had completed his insurance exams and moved from Toronto, to Montreal, and finally, to London, where he started his post-secondary studies with two Calculus courses at Western.

"I made my mark in the insurance business, with a company called Commercial Union, today Aviva. I left them in 1978, to start my own broker business here and I did it for 20 years, to the day. I sold my business and retired 17 years ago, and started taking more courses," Young said.

For decades, his dominant focus had been providing for his family and ensuring his three sons were on stable



ADELA TALBOT // WESTERN NEWS

Having taken time to focus on family and his career, Victor Young, 71, took 43 years to complete his degree. He will graduate June 16 with a Bachelor of Arts. "It's a little bit weird. My life has been upside down, in terms of education. I'm doing my university degree when it's absolutely no use to me at all. But I think I'm a different person as a result," Young said.

footing, able to pursue their own studies.

He travelled with his wife for a bit following retirement, but the desire to return to the classroom was too strong to ignore.

"At 65, I thought, 'I have these credits and I'm either going to just forget about them or go on,'" he said.

He opted out of the "carefree life"

of a retiree and went on to complete more than half of his required credits – aching just about every one – all after the age of 65.

"I did the odd course here, a half course there. I switched to Arts & Humanities, took English, Film, Psychology, Philosophy of Law – things that interested me," Young said.

"When I took the exams, I could look

around the room and there were people, an awful lot of young people, all children compared to me. But it's been a great experience, really."

In the coming days, he will cross the stage in Alumni Hall to receive his Bachelor of Arts.

He's unsure what he'll do next. He might take up a musical instrument. More courses. He will certainly con-

tinue his with interests in film and his love of reading. His list of holds at the London Public Library is always at 40 – the maximum allowed.

"My feeling is, education might not be the only answer, but it is an answer. Coming from Ireland, I'm well aware of its squabbles. I've always said an education would fix that. A young university graduate in Dublin or Belfast has no interest in squabbles," Young said.

Education benefits both for individuals and society, he said. His three sons have earned a total of eight degrees between them – three undergraduate and five graduate.

"It's a little bit weird. My life has been upside down, in terms of education. I'm doing my university degree when it's absolutely no use to me at all. But I think I'm a different person as a result," he added.

"I think I might have been, perhaps narrow minded, being in business. I might have been extremely right wing. But I'm not now, as a result of my studies. It has softened me and made me the person I prefer to be now." ■■■

