

UWO CONVOCATION**Grad took her classes by phone**

Injured in a tobogganing accident, Jennifer Wilcox was literally hooked into her UWO classes.

By Wendy McCann
The London Free Press

Jennifer Wilcox spent much of her last three months at the University of Western Ontario on the phone.

"It was similar to being a caller on the Phil Donahue show," says the 26-year-old London woman, one of 957 students who graduated Tuesday from the faculty of social science.

"I hooked up to classes through the telephone. I could hear the professor and the students, and they could hear me if I had a question or comment."

Wilcox couldn't attend her classes in person after a tobogganing accident in January fractured two vertebrae in her neck. "I was going down a rather steep hill," she says. "I lost control and kind of flew off a hill and landed on my head."

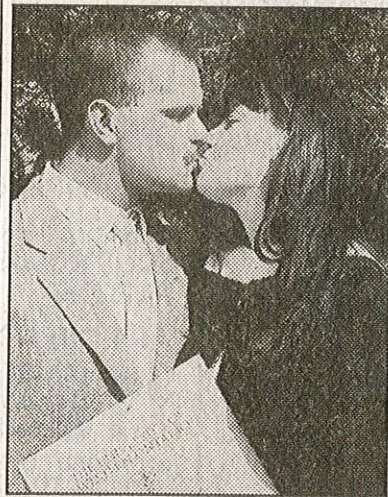
A head-and-neck traction device, known as a halo, was surgically implanted into her head making even small movements excruciating. "I could walk, but bumpy bus rides weren't very pleasant."

PAINFUL TO WATCH: Her mother, Joanne Brace, says it was painful watching her daughter's courage after the accident. "She had to go back every two weeks to the hospital and have the screws in her head tightened. A lot of other people would have given up, but she continued on."

Wilcox is left with only small scars where the head device was once attached. Her doctors, who have now given her a clean bill of health, tell her she is lucky to be alive.

Wilcox credits her professors and classmates for making her studies possible. Professors called to check on her progress and extended deadlines for papers when needed.

She also credits her husband, Owen, with giving her the moral support she feels was crucial to her recovery. "He was always there encouraging me."

**Degree earned via telephone**

Jennifer Wilcox is kissed by her husband, Owen, after convocation ceremonies Tuesday at the University of Western Ontario. A graduate in social science, she spent much of her last three months of classes on the phone. Injured in a tobogganing accident in January, the 26-year-old London woman "listened in" to her professors. **Page B3**