

Mom and daughter share the spotlight at UWO graduation

By Peter Geigen-Miller
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Graduation ceremonies find most mothers beaming proudly from the audience as an offspring receives that cherished degree or diploma.

Not Ruth Oben.

When daughter Ann graduated from the University of Western Ontario on Friday, Oben was sharing the limelight by getting a degree of her own. Oben received a BA in sociology, Ann a BA in visual arts.

"It feels very good to be graduating together," Oben said before the ceremony. "I'm very proud of both of us."

"It's really exciting," agreed Ann. "I'm really proud of her."

Although mother and daughter reached their educational goals at the same time, they arrived by different routes. Oben, a Huntsville resident, earned her degree by studying part-time and through correspondence courses. Ann studied full-time after entering Western three years ago.

Oben taught school after finishing high school in Toronto 32 years ago and earned credits by studying at the University of Toronto, but not enough for a degree. Eventually, studies and career were side-tracked while she raised a family.

Two years ago, Oben decided it was time to go back to school and earn the credits needed to complete a degree.

Going to school at the same time was not a problem although some people thought it might be, mother and daughter agreed. They even managed to take an astronomy course together.

"Some of my friends wondered how we did it but there was no feeling of competition," Ann said. To make it more fun, they occasionally skipped class together to grab a treat at a favorite restaurant.

Now that she has her degree, Oben is looking for a job. Ann starts work for a London optometrist in a couple of weeks.

The Obens were among 671 students eligible to receive degrees and diplomas from the faculties of arts and social science during the second day of Western's annual fall convocation Friday.

Western honored one of its own during the ceremony by presenting an honorary doctor of laws degree to Angela Armit, former dean of the faculty of part-time and continuing education. Armit, who retired in 1979, was honored for her contributions to part-time studies during more than 30 years at Western.

She's credited with helping tens of thousands of people in Southwestern Ontario achieve degrees through part-time studies and extension programs she helped to develop in London and other communities.

In a convocation speech, Armit traced the history of part-time learning at Western and urged graduates not to quit learning just because they've earned a degree. "There's always something new to learn."

She told graduates it's important to have a sense of humor when dealing with life's problems. Armit, a renowned wit, said her sense of humor has been her most valuable asset.



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Ruth Oben gets a hug from daughter Ann before they each receive a degree Friday at UWO convocation.