

To Jest Is Divine



Angela Armitt, retired dean of the Faculty of Part-Time and Continuing Education, photographed at her home in London

Retired dean of the Faculty of Part-Time and Continuing Education, Angela Armitt, was once dubbed the “president of the night shift”. On another occasion, with reference to her hobby of calling square dances, she was introduced as “a call girl from London”. Armitt is known for her love of a joke and takes the barbs in stride.

It was Angela Armitt’s day to bear the palm and accept the recognition of her peers at the conferring of an honorary degree during autumn convocation. Characteristically,

however, she managed to turn the tables and divert the accolades to faculty members with whom she worked so closely in 32 years at Western.

Western faculty who teach night school, summer school and extension courses are the unsung heroes of this university, claims Angela Armitt, retired dean of the Faculty of Part-Time and Continuing Education. “Faculty members travel all over Southern Ontario in order to provide extension courses in small towns and cities. It’s a real labour of love,” she emphasizes, “especially in the winter!”

Armitt made her comments on the occasion of her selection by Western as recipient of an honorary doctor of laws degree. The degree was conferred during autumn convocation ceremonies in October.

Margaret Armstrong Beckman, Executive Director of Information Technology at the University of Guelph, was also awarded an honorary doctor of laws degree during autumn convocation. Beckman was selected in recognition of her distinguished contributions to the field of library science. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the founding of Western’s School of Library and Information Sciences. It is also the 10th anniversary of the creation of the Faculty of Part-Time and Continuing Education.

Approximately 1,500 students received degrees and diplomas during autumn convocation.

To hear Angela Armitt tell the tale of her tenure at Western in the administration of summer school, extension and part-time studies, one wonders if there was ever a dull moment in 32 years!

In anecdote after anecdote, she relates the history of the Faculty of Part-Time and Continuing Education and its predecessor, the Department of Summer School and Extension. Armitt served as Director of the latter department, until it became a faculty in 1977, at which time she was appointed dean.

“In the early part of my career, she explains, “it was my job to get the faculty on the road for their classes in Owen Sound or Woodstock or St. Thomas or Sarnia. It was nothing to get several calls on a wintry evening from stranded professors, notifying me that they were on the edge of the road somewhere and unable to make their class. There was one professor from the English department who liked to teach courses in the centres we had on the Bruce peninsula. She would teach on Saturday morning, then spend the rest of the weekend skiing!”

According to Armitt, the department would

get requests from all over Ontario to set up courses. One such request came from Port Elgin. Armitt explained to the caller that, since a program was in place in Owen Sound, only 20 miles distant, it wouldn’t be feasible to hold courses in Port Elgin. However, she agreed to attend a meeting of interested students if such could be arranged. It turned out that she had underestimated both the potential market in Port Elgin and the industry of the woman who had made the inquiry. “The meeting room was packed to the rooftop,” Armitt recalls, “I couldn’t get out of there without promising at least two courses.”

Armitt’s sense of humour and optimistic outlook have made her a sought-after speaker at various events throughout her career. By her own estimate, she has spoken to more than *(continued on page 18)*

