

# Triumph over tragedy

## College followed death of daughter

By Peter Geigen-Miller  
London Free Press

When her comfortable, well-organized life was shattered by the death of her eldest daughter, Valois Cheyne decided to go back to school.

"I felt so empty," said Cheyne, 43, of London. "I didn't know what I was going to do. I turned to education as a means of survival."

After a 26-year absence from the classroom, she enrolled in refresher courses in English and mathematics at the Wheable Adult Learning Centre in London.

It was the first step on a journey of discovery that has changed her life from tragedy to triumph.

She'll celebrate her latest victory tonight when she delivers the valedictory address at Fanshawe College during graduation ceremonies for students in adult education programs.

And new conquests are on the horizon. She has enrolled in a visual arts course at the

University of Western Ontario and will begin full-time studies in September.

Cheyne is one of 100 students eligible to graduate from adult education programs during tonight's ceremony at Fanshawe's main campus in London.

Three years ago, Cheyne would have had trouble imagining herself graduating from Fanshawe, let alone delivering a valedictory address.

Life seemed wonderful, she recalls. Her husband, David, was becoming increasingly successful in real estate and she was operating a hair-dressing business in her home.

Family life was good. "I thought we were on easy street."

But that comfortable existence blew apart one day in February, 1986, when Cheyne's daughter, Marjorie Moulton, 25, was killed in a traffic accident.

Moulton, the mother of three, was returning with a co-worker from a shift at Fleck Manu-

facturing Inc. in Huron Park.

Moulton's car skidded on an icy road and slid into a transport truck. The co-worker died instantly, Moulton four hours later.

Grief tore her family apart, says Cheyne. She and her husband had difficulty sharing their pain and anguish. "My husband and I became strangers. Eventually we separated."

Cheyne found no solace in her hobbies of poetry, painting with watercolors and dancing. "I couldn't do anything. I tried to paint and I couldn't do anything beautiful."

Seven months after the accident, she went to school at Wheable. "I had all this extra energy and I knew I had to do something. I wanted to do something for myself."

It was tough at first but success came with hard work. New-found skills helped her cope with grief and communicate with her husband. After three months of separation, they got back together.

Early in 1987, Cheyne was ready to move from refresher courses to Wheable's regular semester program for adults.

A hectic five months followed during which she remembers balancing family responsibilities, her hair-dressing work and studies. Some weeks, she got only 35 hours of sleep.

But hard work paid off in marks ranging from 75 to 92.

Although four short of the credits needed for a high school diploma, she enrolled in Fanshawe's university/college entrance program last September.

"I was scared of making the move but I liked the courses they had at Fanshawe."

She finished the Fanshawe program with a straight A average and is ready to tackle full-time university studies.

Cheyne says teachers and family helped her succeed. Her husband, daughters Janice, 22, and Susan, 19, and son Dave, 13, provided support and inspiration, she says.

Education has made her stronger mentally and physically, she says. Since returning to school, she has brought her diabetes under control and no longer requires medication to control an irregular heartbeat.

"Now, thanks to education, I have a song in my heart all the time. Education to me is the secret to the fountain of youth."



**VALOIS CHEYNE:** education a means of survival after tragedy

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