

UWO grad ceremonies wearisome?

Many new teachers skip event, professor says

By Paul Berton
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Are convocation ceremonies tedious?

No way, said Don Fedy, who enthusiastically watched his son graduate from the University of Western Ontario's Althouse College on Saturday.

You bet, said Shawn Quinlan, who dropped in reluctantly to Alumni Hall the same day to see a friend receive her degree.

An hour earlier he was at Stonebridge Farms watching a horse auction and "rubbing elbows with (television stars) Morgan Fairchild and Stephanie Powers — after that, this is boring."

Quinlan said he attended the 250th Western convocation "because I owe it to her. It's like going to church. You have to do it."

Professor John Walsh of the fac-

ulty of education said about 30 per cent of graduates didn't attend the ceremonies Saturday. About 700 people from Althouse College and Huron College showed up to receive their degrees.

"It goes up and down. For a while it wasn't the thing to do."

In accepting an honorary doctor of laws degree, Marnie Paikin, former chairman of the Ontario Council on University Affairs, acknowledged many students find some aspects of such events tiresome.

Speaking about the dilemma of choosing a topic for her speech, she asked her son, a recent university graduate, for advice.

"He said, 'Be sure it's a KISS speech.' That meant, Keep it Short Sweetie."

She did. After cracking a few jokes about boring speeches by honorary degree recipients, Paikin spoke words that were termed by various listeners as "meaningful,

poignant and wise." The audience loved it.

Fedy was particularly impressed. This was his third son to graduate and it wasn't any less exciting than the first time he experienced it. Fedy loves convocation ceremonies, regardless of whether the speech is boring, and isn't bothered by the monotony of name after name being called. "When your son's involved it doesn't matter. It's always exciting."

After all, UWO information officer Kelly Mills said, it's for parents as much as for graduates. "They get to see where the money and care packages have gone and they get really excited about it."

When medical students were called to the stage to accept their degrees Friday, Mills said parents anxious to capture the event on film jostled for position and one woman ended up on her lap. On Saturday UWO president George

Pedersen asked those wishing to take photographs to line up in an orderly fashion.

After 200 names were called some people were jolted in their seats when a man shouted "Way to go, mom!" as Joyce Nelson, a mother of five, received her degree.

After the applause, Nelson said in an interview: "This is going to sound soapy but it was important to me and I really wanted to do it. I feel they (family) got me through this year. It was delightful."

Graduate John Stephenson conceded things became a bit monotonous but said it was justified. "Everybody's got to get their name read. There's no other way."

Sam Hilland and Todd Lafraniere were there to see friends. "Sure, you get a little restless. I wasn't even going to go but then I thought it was the last time we'd see a lot of these people," Hilland said.



Julie Matus/London Free Press

Joyce Nelson, a Waterloo mother of five, graduated from Althouse College on Saturday.