

WESTERN'S 'BORN-AGAIN' STUDENTS

On the day of the interview, Geoffrey Clarke arrived early and wearing a suit. Not unusual in itself except for the fact that Western students don't often attend class decked out in a three-piece with a hat and tie. "If the kids give me a hard time, I'll tell them I've been at a funeral," he smiles.

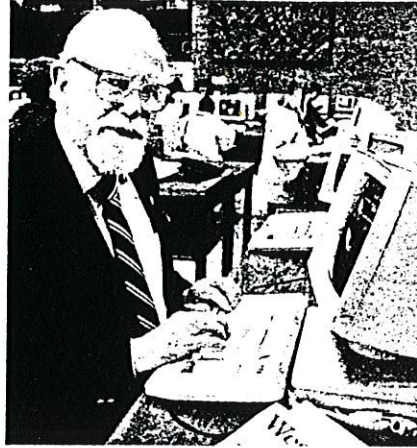
Actually, they probably wouldn't blink an eye. For those who know him, there's nothing predictable about Clarke.

For one thing, he's 74 and working on his seventh and eighth credits from Western. That's after graduating in 1990 with a BA in English from the University of Toronto. For the 25 or so years before that, he was a Metro Toronto court reporter.

Clarke is one of 300 senior students currently registered in part-time degree studies through the faculties of Arts, Science and Social Science at Western. Another 250 senior students are registered with the Faculty of Part-Time and Continuing Education to pursue professional, academic and personal development courses such as language learning, computer programming, business and management, creative writing and dance.

For Clarke, returning to school was "one way to keep me out of mischief." He also refers to the challenge of learning and camaraderie of new friends as an ideal way to combat the loneliness and frustration that sometimes accompany retirement and aging. "The students keep me rejuvenated by osmosis," he claims.

For others, going to university fulfils a lifelong goal. "I always said I would return to



GEOFFREY CLARKE

school when I finished work," says Mary Reid, a 70-year-old nurse who retired last year. Three of Reid's four sons have graduated from Western, and now she's determined to follow in their footsteps. "Education has always been important to me and I made it important to my family."

For some, it's surprising to learn that Western's 60-plus students find acceptance from the 20-somethings. Some seniors are reluctant to consider the opportunities at Western for fear of not fitting in after spending so much time away from a learning environment, says Sandy Reid, Assistant to the Dean, Counselling and Community Services with the Faculty of Part-Time and Continuing Education.

Reid and Clarke prove there's no reason for such fears.

"I'm a born-again student just having fun," says Clarke. *Christine Ward BA'89* ♦