



By WILLA STEVENSON

"Me? Go back to school? But I'm too old...I'd feel out of place. I've been out of school too long, and besides, wouldn't my family life suffer?" These represent some of the anxieties felt by twenty-five per cent of UNB's student population, a substantial group of largely inconspicuous men and women who frequent our campus: the mature students.

While the majority are part-time and female, mature students reflect a wide range of people whose interests, backgrounds, and motivation for resuming their education are varied.

Re-entering students range in age from mid-twenties to over sixty-five. Most are married, some are single, some are divorced and the majority are working parents who have managed to combine three roles successfully. Out of the formal educational system for as long as thirty-one years, these students have thought carefully about re-entering, and motivating factors include mental stimulation, improved job qualifications and self-confidence, or simply in order to fulfill a longtime ambition.

The problems a re-entering student must face are numerous, and include budgetary worries, family friction, and time constraints. Colin, a full-time freelance interior decorator, says that it is easier to find reasons not to go back to school but the things one worries about beforehand turn out not to matter at all. "The biggest thing of all is taking that first step, and the period immediately before that first class is really frightening. But - understandably," he says - "it's a more than worth it." An avid interest in literature combined with need for intellectual stimulation brought Colin to an English seminar offered in the evening, and though it has been a "tradeoff of responsibilities," his wife and children have warmed to the experience.

Whereas Colin re-entered for pure pleasure, Joan is pursuing her B.A. in sociology on a part-time basis while holding down office an office management career in a doctor's office. A highschool dropout and a housewife for fourteen years, Joan decided "overnight" that she needed a goal, an outside interest to "beat the grind of simply working day-in, day-out".

Though time-constraints and job-sharing have posed problems, Joan enjoys her days at university immensely, and has had no problems assimilating with other students.

"You feel a bit self-conscious at first, but that can happen to anybody. The kids here are very friendly, and it's easy to develop a rapport." Asked if a support such as the one at St. Thomas or the transition-to-learning workshop offered jointly by UNB and STU - would be of help to mature students at UNB, Joan says that, though a good idea, there really seems to be no great need. "On a social level, it would be nice, but intellectually, it isn't necessary at all." Other mature students have indicated that the transition workshops gave them the courage to try university.

In response to that heady question, "What is the most important thing university has taught you?", Joan replies without hesitation: "You learn that if you want to do something, you have to just get up and do it. Ultimately, you learn to rely on yourself."

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Next week: Professor talks about mature students; some daily guidelines and helpful ideas.

Pay raise for staff

The Board of Governors of the University of New Brunswick recently ratified collective agreements providing for five-per-cent pay increases retroactive to last July for some 392 support staff personnel represented by the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).

The agreements will run for two years -- and in the case of secretaries, accoun-

tants, library assistants and clerks -- provide for additional increases of three per cent to make their salaries more comparable with those offered by other public sector employers.

UNB President James Downey, in announcing the ratification following a special board meeting, said he was pleased that the negotiations had been

brought to a successful conclusion.

CUPE Local 1326 -- representing general labour, trades and allied workers -- ratified the agreement reached with the university Dec. 1. Members of the local representing the secretaries, accountants, library assistants and clerks ratified their agreement yesterday.

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STUDENTS PLEASE TAKE NOTE...

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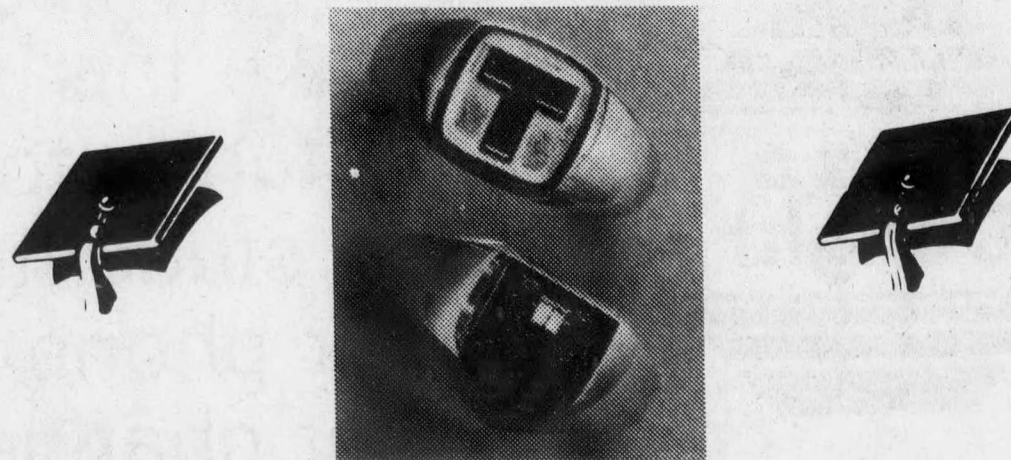
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