

80-year-old woman is senior grad



Genevieve Salisbury was the senior diploma recipient at Copper Mountain College's graduation May 28. She said her education included inspiration from fellow students. (Jimmy Biggerstaff photo)

By Jimmy Biggerstaff
Hi-Desert Star

Published: Saturday, June 5, 2010 1:38 AM CDT

TWENTYNINE PALMS — Genevieve Salisbury is a great example of a non-traditional college student, although her college career is running a few decades later than most people remain in the classroom.

"I'll be 81 in July," Salisbury proudly said. Contrary to being sensitive about her age, the student exclaimed, "I'm glad I made it!"

She began taking classes at Copper Mountain College six years ago, usually just one at a time and no more than two classes in the same semester. Slowly but surely, the credits accumulated until Salisbury received her associate's degree in liberal arts in graduation ceremonies at CMC May 28.

Of the decision to enroll in college at that point in her life, Salisbury shrugged slightly and said, "I just wanted to keep my brain going, you know. To keep my mind active."

Salisbury has been involved with CMC from the time when the area where the campus now stands was still open desert.

Now on the college's cultural committee, Salisbury has influenced the growth of CMC over the years as a member of the school's fundraising foundation and the original Friends of CMC that nurtured the dream of a stand-alone community college in the Morongo Basin to reality.

Salisbury, her husband of 52 years, Ed, and the couple's six children came here in 1974 when Ed was assigned to the Marine Corps base.

Salisbury's previous academic achievements include an associate's degree in real estate from College of the Desert and a Bachelor of Science in nursing from St. Louis University in 1954.

The hardest course she took at CMC? "Algebra," Salisbury exclaimed without hesitation. "Here's the thing: I was doing OK through quadratic equations but after that it was downhill. It damn near killed me."

Most enjoyable class? "I've had a lot of fun ones," the graduate remembered. "I enjoyed world history. I also had a great teacher — Cathy Itnyre. History classes are my favorite."

Salisbury intends to return to school probably in the spring after a well-deserved breather from the books. The recent graduate says she'll miss the academic environment.

"It's been a joy being on this campus," Salisbury said.

Much of her learning took place outside the classroom.

"The most wonderful education I've had at this college is my acquaintance with my fellow students," Salisbury said. "I admire these young people, so many of whom are raising families, holding down jobs and carrying academic subjects."

The school's senior student paused for a moment of reflection before adding, "These students are my heroes."