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80-year-old graduate's story inspires

Occasionally a story comes along that perfectly fits the description of inspirational, so much so that it makes us want to draw additional attention to it. Mildred Atherton's story is like that.

As reporter Keith Lawrence described in Friday's Messenger-Inquirer, Atherton graduated Friday from Owensboro's Daymar College at the age of 80, finally fulfilling the dream she first held more than 60 years ago.

In 1945, when Atherton graduated from Calhoun High School, going on to college wasn't the path most high school graduates followed anyway, but it happened to be Atherton's desire. There were no colleges in Owensboro, however (Kentucky Wesleyan College and what is now Brescia University weren't established until the early 1950s). The closest college was in Bowling Green and with gasoline still scarce during the final months of

World War II, the traditional college experience didn't work out for Atherton, a native of Livia. After that came marriage, children and moving from place to place as a military wife.

Nevertheless, the desire to improve her education never left Atherton, as evidenced by the fact that she found time to take college classes here and there, often in foreign languages.

Then, just two years ago, Atherton's desire to keep learning

prompted her to buy a computer. Next she talked to her granddaughter Michele Heil about taking a computer class. Heil, a Daymar employee in the registration office, suggested her grandmother enroll full time.

We suppose that was a moment when a 78-year-old might have said no thanks. Such an endeavor would be a daring move for someone half her age. But Atherton plunged in. Friday her perseverance was rewarded when

she received her degree.

According to Heil, Atherton "amazes and inspires" her family. From our perspective, her accomplishment and the obvious value she has placed on lifelong learning should inspire anyone, regardless of age, who may be thinking about returning to school, and perhaps wondering if it's too late.

It is rarely too late, is it, Mildred?

Way to go.