

**2008 My Next Chapter Grand Prize Winner
Kaye Moon Winters**

“My Next Chapter”

It was springtime, in every sense of the word; trees budding blinding green, blooms boasting heady colors, and graduates donning caps and gowns for a walk into their futures. So it was for me; at least for the donning part. But the future? Please. I may have felt it was the springtime of life, but at 60, more than a few leaves had fallen.

What was I going to do? *I bled for this BA, and I'm post-menopausal! What could I do? I've taught enough; I'm a grandmother! And summa cum laude-y have mercy, sister! I'm 60!*

These thoughts filled my head that spring of '07 as I sat in the foyer of San Jacinto College, the place where my dream of a degree began. My best-friend talked me into being the “Information Station” for the summer, greeting and guiding all who entered. It didn't pay beans, but did give me time to think about my limited options. And it was here, in this humble position, that I fulfilled George Eliot's promise: *“It is never too late to be who you might have been,”* and began my next chapter:

I saw it in her walk; head down, eyes averted, purse clutched tight. “Good morning! May I help you?” “Well, umm...” she whispered. Her story and fears were all-too familiar: 55 year-old recently widowed, never worked out of the house, on her third trip to the campus (the first two spent in the parking lot, too terrified to come in). “I can't do this; I raise kids. I haven't been in school for 40 years. Do you even take people as old as me?”

Aha!

Throughout summer, I signed up 93 like her to start a support group, *It's Never Too Late*, and worked for beans now spiced with passion.

Within a year, I climbed the beanstalk and became, at 61, who I might have been: Kaye Moon Winters, Advisor/Recruiter for Non-Traditional Students. By 71, as Director of the College for Working Adult Students (hey, creating a college takes longer!) I'll be well into a new chapter: *Grandmother Gets Her PhD.*