

You can measure her love of learning by degrees

By Allan Farberman
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Danbury resident Rosemarie Scott is writing an illustrated storybook that begins with a young girl who is delighted to be starting school but runs afoul of her stern teacher on day one.

Overwhelmed by the simple joy of getting a piece of paper to write on, the girl turns to a peer to share the feeling and is sentenced to spend the day at her desk with a strip of packing tape over her mouth.

The book is based on Scott's real-life experiences growing up in Queens, N.Y. She will finish it as her master's thesis in the Creative Writing Program at Western Connecticut State University.

At 80 years of age — 75 years after the tape incident — Scott is completing work for her second graduate degree.

The ugly start of school episode left her reluctant to speak unless spoken to for years, but it did nothing to diminish her joy of learning. Scott graduated from high school at 16, by virtue of skipping fifth grade. Her mother told her she was going to be a bookkeeper, leaving her believing college wasn't an option.

While in her 20s, Scott took some piece-meal courses at various colleges in New York City to improve her communication skills, but she never considered studying for a degree.

Decades later, in 2000, she enrolled at Marymount Manhattan College in Tarrytown, N.Y., which was soon absorbed by Fordham University. After four years, she had dual baccalaureate degrees from Fordham in law and liberal arts, with minors in studio art and interior design. In 2006, Scott was awarded a master's degree in science teaching from Fordham.

Still not sated educationally, Scott enrolled in a literature class at WestConn and was hooked. She then entered its graduate school to study creative writing.

Dr. John Briggs, Scott's thesis mentor, has found her a delight to work with. "Her voice has a certain kind of innocence. She still looks at the world with wonder. ... Even the painful stuff is viewed with wonder."

Scott integrates particularly well in the workshop classes she favors, sharing writing and critiques with groups of students 60 years her junior.

According to Briggs, "Her classmates always enjoy her work, and her enthusiasm is contagious."

An illustrated book was a natural project for Scott, who has been painting with watercolors since she was $\frac{7}{8}$ years old. She waited until her late 40s to teach painting in adult



MICHAEL DUFFY/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Rosemarie Scott waves to a fellow student on WestConn's midtown campus. Dr. John Briggs, her thesis mentor, says, "Her classmates always enjoy her work, and her enthusiasm is contagious."

education classes at Richter Arts Center and Rogers Park Middle School. After a 20-year hiatus, she resumed teaching at Escape for the Arts in Danbury.

Diane Montuoro, 58, of New Fairfield, took private lessons from Scott, in addition to being a student in all her local classes. Montuoro, who paints landscapes and the occasional portrait, gives Scott high grades as a teacher:

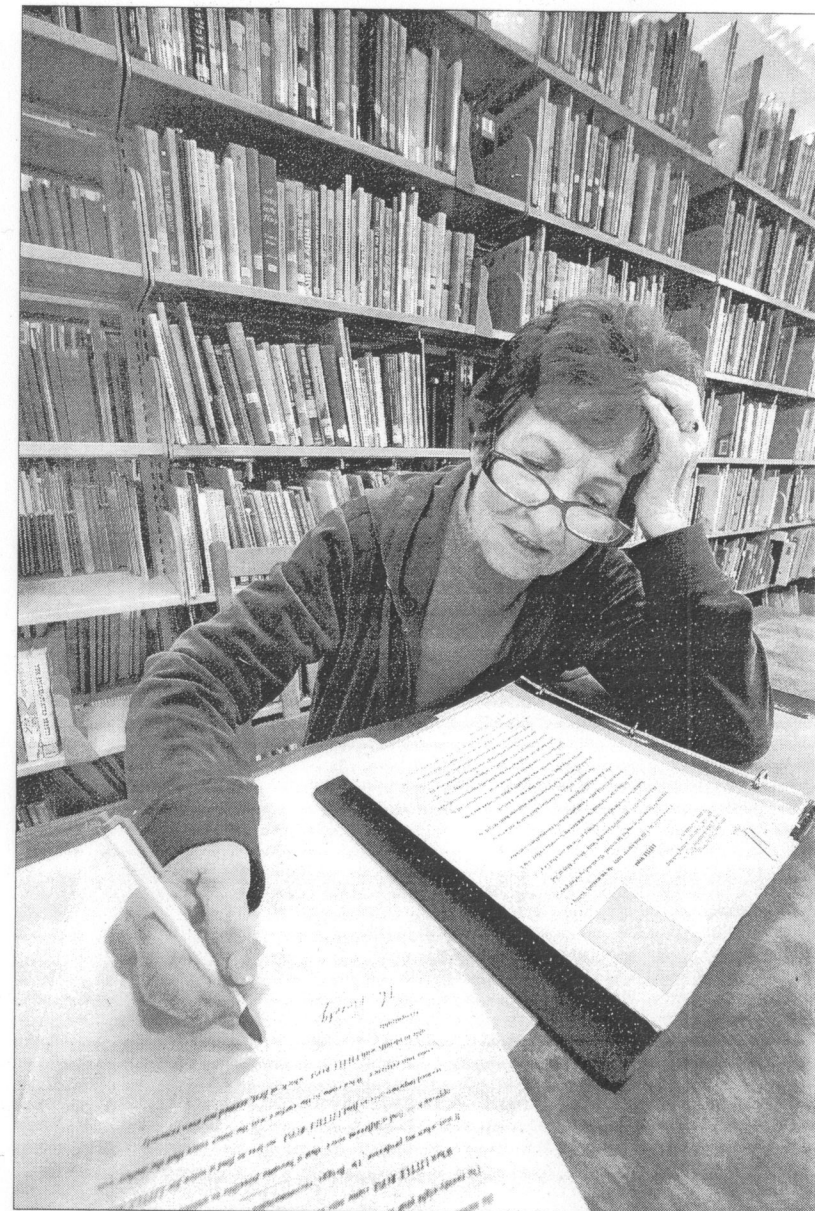
"She's great. Patient. Some teachers take the brush out of your hand and fix your work. Rosemarie guides you while letting you work your way through your problem."

Montuoro may have pinpointed Scott's academic success when she said, "She's just non-stop. She has amazing energy."

While completing her thesis, Scott is also writing and illustrating an adolescents' version of "Romeo and Juliet" for a class on William Shakespeare, whose work she only recently grew comfortable with.

Her turning point on the classic playwright was a WestConn course taught by Dr. Ingrid Pruss, who made Shakespeare accessible and Scott a fan.

If Scott's autobiographical storybook is an indication of her appealing writing style, she might well publish her book on the Bard of Avon, too.



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Western Connecticut State University student Rosemarie Scott, 80, does work for her master's degree in creative writing in the school's library. She already holds dual baccalaureate degrees and a master's degree in science teaching from Fordham University.

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