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## 2 decades to get 2-year degree at Harper College

### World War II vet held a few jobs over the years as he attended Palatine school

By Robert Channick

Special to the Tribune

December 22, 2008

After dropping out of high school to join the Army near the end of World War II, George Rubschlager, 80, left some unfinished business that he will wrap up Monday when he graduates from Harper College.

"I've been in community colleges for over 25 years, and I believe he is the oldest graduate at any of the community colleges that I've been affiliated with," said Margaret Skold, Harper College vice president. "It's a pretty exceptional feat."

The ceremony originally was planned for the school's Palatine campus but was moved to a nearby nursing facility where Rubschlager is recovering from a fall.

After returning from the war, Rubschlager had a stint as a postal clerk, then worked for more than 25 years as a stereotyper for the Chicago Tribune, creating lead plates for the printing presses.

He later worked as head custodian of Pleasant Hill grade school near his Palatine home, a position he held for 15 years.

Rubschlager worked toward his associate's degree at Harper over nearly two decades, starting with his high school equivalency.

Of his much younger classmates, he said: "They were all right. They talked to me. I guess they respected me because I was old."

Rubschlager is less of a demographic anomaly than some might think. Sixteen percent of all community college students are older than 40, said the American Association of Community Colleges.

He took courses in everything from German to refrigeration repair. He even participated in the college's recently disbanded touring bell choir, despite not being able to read music.

Unable to attend classes after a stroke three years ago, an inquiry this fall brought the unexpected news that Rubschlager had achieved enough credits to graduate.

He said he continued his education at the urging of his daughter-in-law.

"She said why don't you keep going—you've only got a little bit more to do," he said. "I didn't have any idea it was going to take this long."

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