

# Irene Protopapas — living her dream

BY DOUG HARRISON  
The Acton Tanner

University of Manitoba student Irene Protopapas has a dream and will go to virtually any lengths to achieve it.

Even if it means nestling into the corner of the school library to study every day from 6 am to 1 am the next morning.

Even if it means searching through a mountain of notes to find that key piece of information to change a D-grade to an A.

And, even if it means spurning repeated invitations from friends to bask in the Manitoba night-life.

Because, what this dedication has meant to the 20-year-old Acton resident so far is a 98.5 per cent mark on her pre-entrance law exam, a \$20,000 scholarship and a

new-found love. The test is normally written by students who have finished their third year of study and received their Bachelor of Arts degree.

For Protopapas, who recently finished her freshman year, it has changed her life drastically, into a dream of studying law and starting her own firm — here in Acton.

"I was really nervous and found the test difficult. I'm amazed and couldn't believe it myself," says Protopapas, who adds she only took the exam as a joke to see if she would pass. "I was crying when I left the building, after I received my mark."

"When I came back here, my family and friends cried when I told them I got 98.5. It totally hit me then. My family was so proud and I had never seen them like that."

To attain this remarkable score, Protopapas put herself through an agonizing work schedule. She studied for six months straight and it wasn't uncommon to find her at the school every day from 6 am to 1 am the next morning.

"I take school very seriously, too seriously," admits Protopapas, who would take 10-minute breaks periodically. "It's summer and I'm

still studying." The long haul to exam day didn't go without some heartache.

Protopapas was given a D-grade on a 76-page assignment. She was then accused of plagiarism by her professor and immediately sifted through her notes for 30 minutes to prove otherwise.

"He (the professor) told me that if I proved in my notes that I didn't cheat, he would change my grade," Protopapas says. "He then changed his mind and decided not to change it. I had it re-read by one of the faculty heads and eventually had the mark changed to an A."

The Faculty of Education wants the Manitoba native immediately registered into law studies, pending she establish a sea of A's in the 1993-94 school year. If so, she would terminate her B.A. studies and enter law.

"This is my dream," Protopapas reveals. "They told me they're going to work me hard, but I'm ready for it."

Incidentally, Protopapas initially had plans to become a teacher, but made the mistake of signing up for a one-year criminal law course at the University of Manitoba. It consisted of one-and-

a-half hours of study every second day for one semester.

"I took it and fell in love with it," she says. "It sounds funny but I started to watch L.A. Law and Matlock on television and it (law terminology) sunk in and stuck with me."

So what does the future hold for Protopapas?

"I'd like to be married with children and open up a law firm in Acton or the surrounding area by the time I'm 25," declares

Protopapas, who mentions she'd like to transfer to the Universities of York or McMaster in '94.

"The town needs a firm," she adds. "A lot of kids are in trouble here; it's worse than downtown Winnipeg. I want to help some people."

And along the way she's assured of receiving support from her loved ones.

"I love my family very much and if it wasn't for them, I would never have been able to do this."



IRENE PROTOPAPAS



**AIR CADET OF THE YEAR:** Warrant Officer I and Air Cadet Squadron Commander William Jerrard was presented with the Air Cadet of the Year award last Monday at the Community Centre. It was part of Acton 197 Typhoon Squadron Royal Canadian Air Cadets' ninth annual inspection and promotions night. (Doug Harrison photo)

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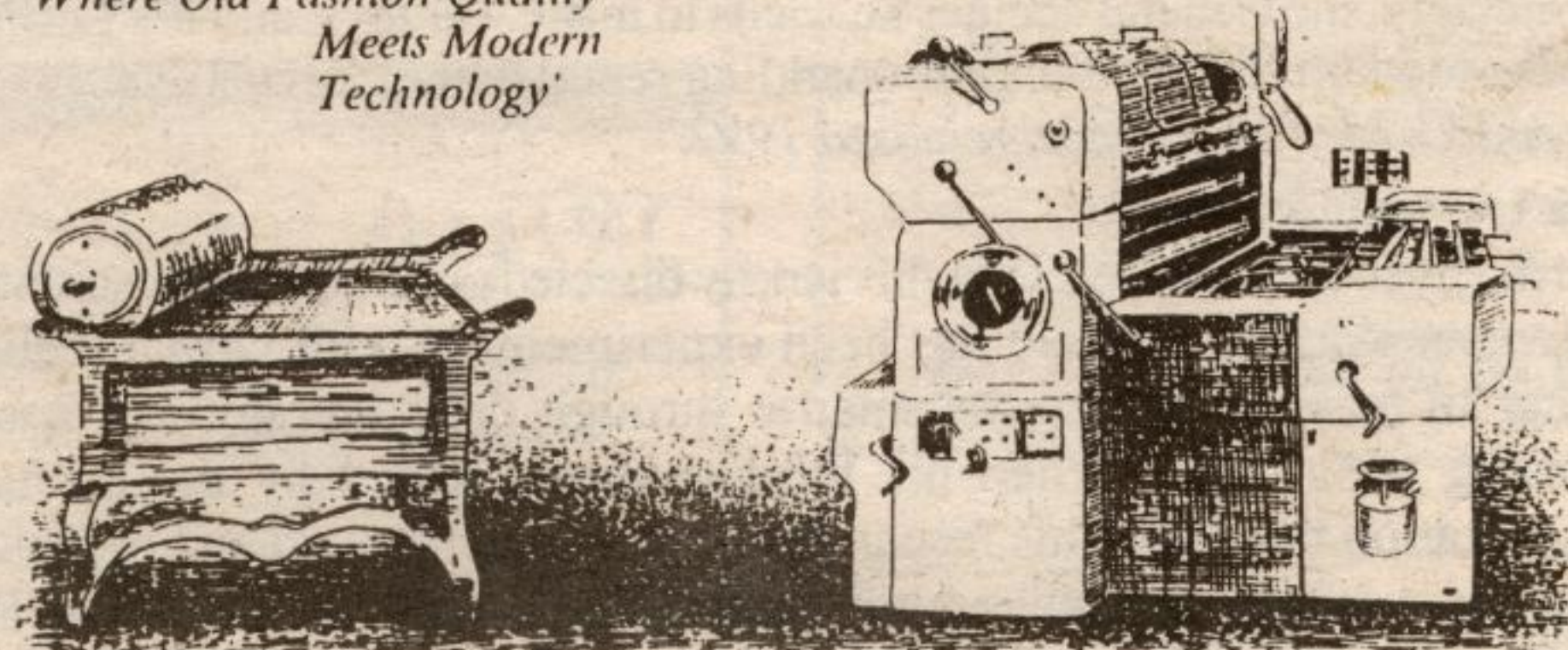
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