

It's Never Too Late to Learn

As a young woman, Dr. Mallah Horowitz earned a doctorate in Chemistry at the Sorbonne in Paris. When she retired from her research career at the Weizmann Institute, she decided to start studying for a Bachelor's degree all over again at the Open University and when she completed the Bachelor's degree, she enrolled for a Master's. At the age of 84, she earned an M.A. in Democracy Studies at the Open University. Now she plans to study something new – towards another B.A.



The first book that Mallah Horowitz received as a gift from her parents when she was a child was a collection of Greek legends. She loved them so much that when, at age 66, she decided to study towards a B.A. at the Open University, the first course she chose was Ancient Greece in the History Department. But that was far from the first university course she had taken.

Dr. Mallah Horowitz graduated from Hebrew University in Chemistry in 1951 and subsequently received her doctorate from the Sorbonne. Then she worked as a researcher at the Weizmann Institute of Science. Her field of expertise was how life began on earth, and she smiles, "This was a very easy subject, because you would never know if you were wrong, and also, it's a subject that you can work on all your life."

"I'm not the sort of person who sits and plays cards. I went to exercise classes, which I still do four times a week and I also volunteer in the community by helping old people, most of whom are younger than I am. But that wasn't enough. I wanted to study, but not at a regular university, because I wasn't able to commit myself to completing a degree in four years. I wanted to do it at my own pace and enjoy my life. So the Open University was the ideal place for me."

When it came to choosing a course of study, she decided that she had had enough of natural sciences in her working career and turned to history instead.

A Long-Term Project

Earning a degree was a long-term proposition; in fact it took ten years, studying one course a semester. "I wanted to relax and enjoy the courses, not work hard," she explains. Her tutors were a little astonished, she recalls, to learn that she already had a PhD. And when she finally graduated, then-President of Open University, Professor Elisha Nissim said when he handed her the diploma, "This is the first time that I have ever given a first degree to someone who already had a doctorate!"

Once she finished the B.A., she immediately decided to continue. Why? "Because I love to learn. I took a number of courses in history and then decided to continue towards an M.A. in Democracy Studies, in the History Department."

This degree took her eight years to complete. Most of the meetings with her tutors were in the Kfar Hayarok Study Center and because Mallah does not drive, she took a taxi. Soon she found a permanent driver, who she says today also played an important role in

achieving her degree. The M.A. studies, she says, were even more interesting because she was required to do more research – "and I love libraries."

She prefers searching libraries to the Internet because, she says, "you can find things by wandering around in the stacks that you would never imagine were there," such as a letter from Heinrich Heine that she once found at the Tel Aviv University library that explained his attitude to his conversion to Christianity. "It made me cry," says Mallah.

Another reason she prefers libraries to the Internet, frankly, is that she is no expert on the computer. "I took two courses in computer use, but I am embarrassed to say that I still can't really manage. I prefer the library."

Now having completed her M.A., Mallah plans to continue to study something entirely different. "I thought about studying music after I went to a series of lectures on Beethoven. I loved them so much that I started listening to Beethoven at home, at full volume. No doubt it drove the neighbors crazy, but then the rock music they listen to drives me crazy."

So what is next in her academic program? "I don't know, but something new. I am aiming to earn another B.A. at the Open University."