

LOCAL/STATE

At 71, widow is back in school

By PAMELA NEWKIRK
The Knickerbocker News

GUILDERLAND — Nearly a half century ago, Mary Strassburg received her bachelor's degree in business administration from Hunter College in New York City.

Now a 71-year-old grandmother, Mrs. Strassburg is once again back in school, this time at the State University at Albany (SUNYA), where she is studying to be a paralegal in its Continuing Education Program. She says she may go on to law school and eventually practice law "if they'll take me at 80."

Mrs. Strassburg said her interest in law developed after her involvement in a car accident and a lawsuit against someone who had a contract to work on her house.

"Being involved in these things, I needed more than what I was reading," she said.

A widow for 16 years, Mrs. Strassburg, who has been retired from her work as an executive secretary at the SUNYA campus for two years, began auditing paralegal classes at the university last September. Because of her active participation in class, she said she was encouraged by her professors to take the courses for credit, which she began doing in January.

"Lawyers can't believe that I wanted to do this at this age," she said.

"I don't have cable television and a rocking chair," she said. "The interest is there. I took courses while I was working. . . I always liked school."

Mrs. Strassburg said she was not quite ready to make the commitment to law school at this point in her life because she still wanted to have time to travel and pursue other interests.

"I taught swimming at the Red Cross," she said. "I swim, I ski,



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STUDENT — Mary Strassburg, who returned to school at age 71, stands outside her Guilderland home with an armful of books.

horseback riding, I do everything."

Currently, she is fighting a town proposal to rezone her McKown Road property from business to residential. She has lived there for 37 years.

Mrs. Strassburg, who presented a six-page document to the town in support of her argument, was one of the most vocal residents to speak out

against rezoning proposals at a Town Board public hearing last week. She argued her home, which is surrounded by a gas station, paint store and electrical shop, is better suited for business than residential development.

"I have to stand up for my rights," she said. "When my fighting spirit gets going, I have to go to the end."