America is known as the land of opportunity. People like Eleanor Boswell are taking that opportunity and running with it, or in this case walking across the stage with it. Eleanor Boswell is 77 years-old, but that is not stopping her from striving for academic goals. “I am so excited that I have actually passed and graduated from college,” she said. Boswell graduated from Shelton State in December 2010 with an associate's degree in general studies.

She was first inspired to get a degree while she was teaching ESL, English as a Second Language, in China and people with a degree were paid more for the work, but Boswell makes it clear that money was not an issue when it came to her decision to pursue higher education. “I was teaching English in China and the school paid me 200 dollars less because I did not have a college degree,” she said. “The money was not a great factor because I teach ESL in Tuscaloosa for free.” It was then Boswell decided she would go back to school and get a degree. She would later enroll at Shelton State along with her grandson in 2002. In her time as a student at Shelton State, she would return to China for a year to continue teaching ESL.

Her story was not without its struggles, however. She willingly admits that math was a point of difficulty in her educational journey, but she is thankful for her professors who helped her through it. “The teachers were always willing to help me,” she commented. “It was great that there were resources in the Learning Center and library, along with free tutors.” It does not just stop at Shelton State for Boswell; she is anticipating enrolling at the University of Alabama and pursuing a degree in history. Many people would say that Boswell's educational pursuits at her age are a waste of time; however, she is shrugging off her naysayers and continues towards her goals.

Boswell credits a lot of the faculty and staff who have aided her journey through academia at Shelton State. One of these particular faculty members is Channing Howington-Marlowe, one of Boswell's instructors at Shelton State, who has nothing but good things to say about Boswell and her drive for academic success. “Ms. Eleanor makes me smile and is an example of why I love teaching,” Howington-Marlowe stated. Howington-Marlowe also compliments Boswell's attitude and perseverance. The most inspiring part of her story is her dedication to succeeding, she said.

Others at Shelton State admire what Boswell is doing and encourage students to follow her lead. Dr. Peggy Shadduck Palombi, Dean of Academic Services, believes Eleanor Boswell's story is inspiring. “I commend Ms. Boswell for choosing the earning of a degree as a way to stay active and enjoy life,” Palombi added. “Using our brains and challenging ourselves is one of the best ways to stay mentally and physically healthy as we age.” “Eleanor is a very determined student and eager to do what is necessary,” Ivey Biddle, a transfer specialist at Shelton State, said. “She is also very kind and caring as you would expect a grandmother to be.”

The story of Eleanor Boswell is far from complete, and she is hoping to gain some scholarship to help her continue her education, but she remains hopeful about reaching her ultimate goal of
attaining a bachelor’s degree from the University of Alabama where she will be enrolling this fall. When asked about what type of encouragement she would offer to people who are considering going back to school or for the first time, she simply states, “You can do anything, if you believe.”