

## WAYNE STATE GRADUATION: Dream finally is fulfilled

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Of her four children, the third, Eric, was different from the beginning. He loved school. No, he *loved* it.

He earned excellent grades and squeezed in as many after-school activities as he could. So it was no surprise to Terry Calloway that her son planned to be the first in his family to attend college.

The surprise came one afternoon when 18-year-old Eric Bruner came home with his high school sweetheart to tell his mother and stepfather, Tom Calloway, that Sandra was no longer his girlfriend. She was his wife. The teens had secretly married in a Detroit church, with the church gardener as their witness.

College was off the table; Eric and Sandra wanted to get jobs, buy a house and start a family.

Terry Calloway was speechless. She stood, walked into her bedroom and shut the door.

That was 18 years ago, and thinking of it Saturday on her way to see Eric, now 36, graduate from Wayne State University all these years later, Calloway could only laugh.

"I guess it goes to show you, you never know," said Calloway, 60, a retired Detroit school board employee. "You want things to work out a certain way for your kids, and when it doesn't, well ..."

In the beginning, she'd had her doubts about Eric and Sandra, but they stayed married, worked their way up to management level in their careers and raised two smart children in a happy, lively household. Calloway was proud of them. She let go the old dream of being the mother of a college graduate.

In 1998, Eric and Sandra decided they wanted to be teachers and pursue degrees in education.

It was slow-going. The couple worked during the day and took classes at night as part-time students. The Bruners and their two children, Eric II and Shelby, now in high school, often did homework together.

"They were competitive when it came to grades," said Shelby sitting with her brother at their parents' graduation. "They would compete over like 1 point on a test."

Their parents' example put Shelby, 15, and Eric II, 16, firmly on the college track. Both said they plan to enroll right after high school graduation, a statement met with a chorus of "mm-hmm-ing" from older relatives nearby. "Oh yes you will," one aunt lobbed from the back row.

Calloway finally spotted her son and daughter-in-law among the 2,471 graduates. She pushed forward to get a better look. Eric saw her and waved madly in his cap and gown. "There he is!" Calloway said, suddenly staring at an old, dear dream resurrected on a field, in a crowd, on a bright Saturday afternoon in Detroit.

She clasped her hand over her mouth. Eric had left her speechless again.

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