Who is Ryan Stander?

The senior history and political science major took second place on Jeopardy last Thursday.

BY BLAISE HART SCHMIDT

Patrick McDowell can now die a happy death.

After years of saying she couldn't die until she saw her grandson, Truman senior Ryan Stander, on Jeopardy, she said she can now die peacefully.

Stander competed on the game show, which aired last Thursday. In January 2009, Stander took the online qualifier quiz for the show. He said he received a call to audition in Kansas City in June and was put on the waiting list. Around Thanksgiving he received an invitation to Los Angeles, Calif., to tape the show.

"The only problem was that my taping was during finals week, so I had to get permission from professors to fly out to L.A. for finals week to film the show," he said. "I used the show in December and told Alex Trebek about my grandma's wish. I told him that I don't have any other siblings or relatives that would be interested in the show. I wrote down five things about myself that are interesting in the green room, and with the staff, we go through them for rehearsal." Stander said about the taping.

"We went on the show and I was like, 'I got it! I got it!' Now that I'm on Jeopardy, she's probably going to croak at any moment, but thankfully she's still alive," Stander said.

Stander sat through all five games Tuesday and one Wednesday before his name was drawn to play. He took the lead and had $16,000 at final Jeopardy, more than the winner.

The final clue, "This country has the most nuclear reactors, more than any other country," stumped Stander, who guessed France instead of the correct answer, the United States. However, he had risked half of his money and walked away in second place. He won $2,000, which he said he will receive in late July or August.

"My original plan was to have a five game run, win $100,000 and pay off all my student loan debt," he said. "But that's kind of hard to do with only $2,000." Stander said he is not sure what he will do with the money, but he was grateful for the opportunity.

"I didn't mind losing, mostly because I saw myself as Rocky. Rocky got to fight Apollo Creed, but he ended up losing. That's just how I see it ... because being on Jeopardy is just as good as winning on Jeopardy," he said.

Jeopardy began in 1984 and averages nine million daily viewers, according to the show's Web site. It holds a patent for the trademark status of "America's Favorite Quiz Show," and has received 28 Daytime Emmy Awards.

McDowell said she was proud of her grandson, and she was glad she was able to see him on the show.

"He's such a smarty," she said. "I can't believe he missed that last question. Even I knew the answer to that."