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13-YEAR NAVY NURSE TO GRADUATE AT TOP OF USD NURSING CLASS

When she was 12, Vicki Goff knew she wanted to be a nurse.

This Sunday, 22 years after she made that decision and 13 years after entering the U.S. Navy Nurse Corps, Lieutenant Commander Goff will receive a bachelor of nursing science from USD.

Even more notable, Goff and classmate Virginia Connelly will graduate with the highest grade point average among their nursing classmates.

Goff doesn't intend to stop at a bachelor's degree, either. She already has completed the first five classes towards her master of nursing administration degree at USD. She plans to complete her coursework by May, 1986.

The Navy is funding Goff's education through a new program it offers. The program pays for both a nurse's undergraduate and master's studies if the two programs are completed within 33 months. The program is part of an effort by the Navy to encourage all of its corps officers to earn at least a bachelor's degree.

Goff is quick to credit the Navy for much of her success. "The Navy has done a lot for me. I've received every career opportunity I've asked for. I'm very grateful."

She feels her degrees will help her Navy career. "I want to achieve that professional standard. It will provide more credentials as I move up through the ranks," she says.

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Once she has a master's degree, Goff will be qualified for a variety of administrative nursing positions.

Goff is one of five military nurses in USD's nursing program. She found a strong esprit de corps among the group. "It was a nice support to have."

Attending school at an older age than the traditional student didn't pose any particular problems for Goff. She attributes that to the nature of USD's nursing program, which is designed for registered nurses, who usually come to school after a period in the work force.

She found that her 13 years of work experience was respected by USD's nursing faculty. "The faculty recognize that we (the students) have a lot to offer. There is a sharing of knowledge among the professors and students that really enhances the education."

Goff's Navy tours have taken her to Yokosuka, Japan and Oakland, Calif., in addition to San Diego. She'll come up for reassignment after her schooling is completed.

A graduate of St. Joseph High School in Granger, Indiana, Goff is the daughter of Germaine and the late James Goff of Granger.

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