

# SOUTHWESTERN NEWS

Contact: Ann Harrell  
(214) 648-3404

## YES, SIR, THAT GRADUATE STUDENT IS AN AIR FORCE OFFICER

DALLAS — November 21, 1994 — Just because you join the U.S. Air Force does not mean you will learn how to be a pilot. You may learn how to be a missile-launch officer, an administrator, a public speaker, a drug counselor — even a psychologist.

Just ask Capt. Kate McGraw — she's worn the first four hats and more during her military career. And now she's a graduate student at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas, where the Air Force is underwriting her education for her next assignment as a clinical psychologist.

McGraw is a second-year student in psychology at the Southwestern Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences, compliments of a new armed-services program that sends qualified officers back to college for advanced degrees. After she earns her doctorate, she will be required to work as an Air Force psychologist for as many years as she spends in graduate school.

When McGraw was finishing high school in Athens, Ohio, in 1979, becoming a clinical psychologist was as far from her mind as the idea of being an Air Force officer. In fact, McGraw wasn't ready to make any career decision when she graduated from high school, so she took advantage of an opportunity to go to Holland as an exchange student for a year.

Because she loved music, McGraw decided to study at the University of Hartford's Hartt School of Music when she returned to the United States. She majored in piano, joined the adjunct opera faculty during her senior year and was accepted for graduate school in music criticism at Johns Hopkins University.

But realizing that she did not want to make music criticism her life's work,

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McGraw took a timeout and became a certified fitness instructor and worked at a women's gym.

"Many of the women I worked with at the gym had problems with weight and eating issues," she recalls. "I noticed that they began to change as they gained control over their own bodies. And I found I liked helping women feel better about themselves."

For the first time, she began thinking seriously about the career opportunities for women and the problems they face. "I realized I wanted to be involved permanently in helping people," she says.

McGraw returned to school and took classes in math, science and psychology, to which she was especially drawn. She discovered that what she had learned as a fitness instructor about the power of taking charge of one's body and health meshed with what she was learning in psychology class.

Feeling a need for more structure in her life, McGraw turned to the armed services. With her language skills and her desire to help others, she thought she would be a natural for intelligence work. She chose the Air Force. Convincing the Air Force to choose McGraw was another matter.

"I didn't do very well on the first testing, which was for pilots and navigators, but they told me I showed evidence of creativity and self-discipline," she recalls. "I scored high on the second board, which was for nonflying officers."

The only assignment McGraw intended to accept was that of intelligence officer. "Instead, I was offered a choice of missile-launch officer or missile-launch officer," she says. "I took it."

She spent the next three months in officer training school at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio where days were an exhausting blur of physical exercise, drill-team practice and training in public speaking. Then she moved to Vandenberg

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Air Force Base in California for four intense months of learning about monitoring and launching missiles.

Graduating in the top 10 of her class, McGraw earned a regular commission and an assignment to a missile base in Montana manned by 200 men. Only four women had ever served there.

"We had to know how everything worked," she says. "We had to take care of ourselves."

McGraw did well in missiles, but she wanted to acquire more skills so she sought more education. With the Air Force footing the bill, she enrolled in evening humanities classes in Great Falls, Mont., eventually earning a master's degree in psychology.

Her next assignment was to work as an aide to a base commander, a job that included public relations. "I had no administrative experience," she says, "but he threw me in the water, and I swam."

Then McGraw was appointed chief of social action at an Air Force base in Wichita, Kan. There she developed a drug- and alcohol-treatment program open not only to base personnel and their families but also to anyone in the community. Her program was named "Best in the Air Force" by the secretary of defense.

In the years that followed, McGraw served the Air Force as a counselor, group therapist, investigator on disciplinary complaints and anti-discrimination educator. She did management consulting and research on conflict resolution.

Although well-established in her Air Force career, McGraw had another goal — a doctorate in psychology.

She heard about a new armed-services program leading to doctorates. A scholarship could enable an officer to study full time and serve only a month and a half a year on active duty. But scholarships were fiercely competitive, with only

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two or three granted annually to applicants from all branches of the armed services.

McGraw was the first Air Force officer to apply for the full-time program. She was also the first to win a scholarship.

So McGraw looked for a quality psychology program in a city where her husband could find suitable employment and where there was a stable environment for their children. UT Southwestern met all her criteria.

"I was impressed with Southwestern even before I came for an interview," she says. "Many schools don't require interviews. They just look at you on paper and don't see the person. Southwestern wanted to see the person behind the paper. It turned out to be a good indicator of the quality I found here."

McGraw's husband is another former missile officer, Dan McGraw, who earned a master of business administration while in the Air Force. He has since left the military to pursue a career in business. They have two children, Karra, 5, and Daniel, 9.

McGraw gives her husband a large share of the credit for her success in pursuing her goal. "Without Dan's help and support, there is no way I could have followed this dream," she says. "One of these days, it will be my turn to help him follow his."

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