

Graduates show plenty of perseverance

A STUDENT politician turned parliamentary assistant, a woman who battled arthritis and a hearing loss to get her degree, and a litigation lawyer who became a library science professor are among this fall's graduates.

More than 1,400 students will be receiving their degrees and diplomas during the ceremonies for Western's 259th Convocation being held at Alumni Hall October 22 and October 23. Here are the stories of just a few of them.

Megan Cook studied for her MSc in Pathology part-time at UWO while working in the Bone and Mineral Research Lab at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit. She did all this while commuting from Windsor and raising three children.

She began her studies at Western in 1979, earning a BA in Anthropology through part-time studies while working full-time as a technician in UWO's Department of Anthropology. And on her vacations? She went to an archaeological dig sponsored by the Royal Ontario Museum in Egypt's Dakleh Oasis.

Wilma Koopman continued her work as coordinator of the neuromuscular clinic at Victoria Hospital while studying part-time for her BSc in nursing. She originally began her studies in 1975, then started again in 1980, taking one or two courses a year in between looking after her four children, now 12, eight, two and one.

Koopman says she plans to bring the two eldest with her to Convocation because they might remember something of UWO—she brought them to the university library with her when they were babies.

CFPL broadcaster Jayne Graham found it was hard work fitting her part-time studies into her busy schedule as a television anchor and reporter.

She alternated between correspondence courses and

classes taken during her days off during her six years of study towards a BA with a major in political science. It was her husband who convinced her to go back to school, she says, and she's glad she did it: "I find with my job it's really relevant. You work long days, but it's worth it."

Ten years ago, Margaret Ann Wilkinson was a busy litigation lawyer in Toronto; now the mother of two is the first professor at Western to have a joint appointment in the Faculty of Law and the School of Library and Information Science.

It all developed out of her fascination with the explosion of information in the 1980's, and her desire to find out what impact it was having on society. She returned to classes, receiving an MLS from the University of Toronto, and then began work at UWO in 1986 on her PhD in Library Science, which examines freedom of information and privacy legislation in Ontario.

Craig Shepherd, President of Western's Students' Council last year, took a whole weekend off before starting a new political career as parliamentary assistant to federal MP and Minister of State Tom Hockin in May of this year.

Shepherd's duties have involved everything from helping Fanshawe College with their capital campaign to organizing meetings in southwestern Ontario for the October 26 referendum.

A graduate of Huron College who switched his major from political science to French and history, Shepherd says his stint in the real world has made him realize he needs more education, and he plans to go back to school and get a professional degree.

Mother and daughter Reta and Dana Assaf both shared a common dream—to go to teacher's college, and tomorrow they both receive their BAs. But, says daughter Dana, her mother, a former teacher's assistant, got there first;

she's now studying education at York University.

The two took different majors while studying part-time at Western: Dana's was psychology, her mother's sociology. They shared studying tips, but only one class, taken this summer with Dana's younger sister.

Lynne Moran balanced books and babies without ever missing a class.

When she began her studies in 1989, she had a two-year-old and a four-months-old baby. She now has four children—one of them born a few months ago—and in the birth announcement, thanked one of her professors who was apparently anxious when she continued to come to class two weeks after her due date. She wrote a mid-term test, had her baby, and didn't even miss the next class meeting.

Moran's children were a familiar sight in the UWO computer lab; she'd bring them along with coloring books and toys while she did her assignments.

Moran's husband is also studying at Western, taking history courses. Now that she has her BA in Commercial and Administrative Studies, she's going to take a year off, but then she's planning to write the LSAT and GMAT and apply to teacher's college.

Cathy Wolfe, who works full-time as a nurse in the Kingston penitentiary, battled arthritis and hearing loss while completing her BA through part-time studies at Western.

For three of her courses, she commuted from Kingston during the worst winter weather for her weekly evening classes, often not arriving home in Kingston until 3 am.

At times the arthritis was so severe she was unable to dress herself, and problems with her hearing aid forced her to drop out of a class. In addition, during the 10 years of her studies she divorced and re-married, and went through the emotional upheaval of her daughter's divorce. Her husband and family will be joining her at Convocation.