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Alumni Profile

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Circling the globe for science

John Dolan '71 grew up in the shadows of the Oak Grove and now lives nearby, but his expertise in high-performance liquid chromatography has taken him around the world.

His father, the late Win Dolan, was a math professor and served as dean of faculty and twice as interim college president. The younger Dolan thinks he attended every Linfield graduation during his childhood, as well as numerous campus sporting events and concerts.

Linfield was not his first college choice, however. Accepted at Stanford and some Eastern colleges, he chose Redlands in California, his sister's school. But after one year, he transferred to Linfield because "it just didn't feel like what college should be," he says.

So he came home.

A biology major, Dolan worked at the Linfield Research Institute with Tom Allen, an adjunct entomologist who had retired from the University of Wisconsin and was studying termite control. That research set Dolan on the path of his life's work.

Allen guided him to graduate school at Purdue University. There Dolan worked with an analytical chemist who got him interested in chromatography, the process of separating mixtures of substances into their components. Dolan received a master's in entomology and then earned a Ph.D. in agricultural chemistry and environmental toxicology at the University of California, Davis.

He wanted to teach, but opportunities were scarce in the mid-'70s. So, after completing a postdoctoral fellowship at Northeastern University in Boston, he joined Technicon Instruments Corp. in New York, doing instrument development. "I was like a kid in a candy shop – it introduced me to a whole new world of scientific development."

That's where Dolan met his business partner for the past 25 years, Lloyd Snyder. They founded LC Resources Inc. in 1984.

Since then, Dolan has become a top international expert in high-performance liquid chromatography, the most widely used analytical tool in the world today. He states this matter-of-factly, modestly adding, "Of course, it's a very small pond."

By 1987, Dolan and his wife, Connie '72, had two children and were living in San Jose, Calif. He decided it was time to come home again.

He now works out of his Amity home when he's not leading professional workshops around the world. He also

writes a monthly column on troubleshooting liquid chromatography problems for a technical publication.

The McMinnville laboratory of LC Resources that he founded was bought by Indiana-based Bioanalytical Systems Inc. (BASi) in 2002. Although no longer formally associated with the lab, Dolan consults for what is now called BASi Northwest Laboratory in McMinnville. The lab mainly tests drug levels in blood to support clinical studies of new pharmaceuticals. Dolan now is vice president and a principal instructor for LC Resources, sharing his expertise with pharmaceutical companies around the world.

"I love what I do," he says. "I get to teach only the subject I'm best at, essentially part-time, earning more than I would have in academia, and see the world."

He has written hundreds of articles on liquid chromatography and co-authored three books. Among his many accolades, he received the prestigious 2001 Palmer Award from the Minnesota Chromatography Forum and 2007 Dal Nogare Award from the Delaware Chromatography Forum.

He recently spent six weeks conducting short courses in England, Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany and Belgium, accompanied by his wife. "Other people talk about traveling when they retire. We plan to stay home and garden," he said.

Frank Bumpus, a retired Linfield psychology professor and counselor, says Dolan has "a great mix of innate ability, curiosity and rapport with people. If I were to build the ideal Linfield alumnus, I'd build John Dolan." 🍷

– Beth Rogers Thompson

