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Communication Is Easy for This Natural-Born Talker

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Communication is easy for this natural-born talker

Aron Larsen '08 was born into a family of talkers. Whether he learned it from his grandma, who told incredible stories, or his grandfather, “a barber with the soul of a poet,” Larsen knows how to keep a conversation going.

“Both my parents are social, especially my mom who likes to chat it up with people,” Larsen said. And it’s clear he got that gene – he can’t go more than five minutes without waving to someone across the room or having a friend stop by to chat.

Larsen, a communication arts major, has parlayed his natural talent into success as a debater and speaker, participating in several tournaments as a member of the Linfield forensics team. He recently placed fourth in the Mahaffey Memorial Tournament, hosted by Linfield.

But he struggled to express himself while studying in Costa Rica his junior year. His host sister, Yuli, helped him overcome obstacles presented by the Spanish language.

“There I was, a communication arts major, learning how to speak English effectively and persuasively, yet when I’m in Costa Rica, I’m outdone constantly by her and her language,” Larsen said. “It became a goal of mine to really learn the language so, in a way, I could compete with her.”

Larsen’s competitive spirit and wide-ranging interests pushed him into film last summer, when he served as a production assistant and actor on a film directed by Kevin Curry '92 and Devon Lyon '97. The movie, *Age, Sex, Location*, deals with the dangers of the Internet. Larsen’s primary responsibility was to check for continuity between scenes of the movie. He also became familiar with copyright issues and removed or hid any products in a scene that could present copyright problems. A bonus was the chance to use the Spanish skills he had polished in Costa Rica by serving as a translator on the set.

“It was rewarding because I was able to take the (study abroad) experience and actually apply it to real life,” he said.

This spring, Larsen is exploring his passion for music as he completes his senior thesis on the impact of country music on American impressions of Mexican culture. Larsen hopes to demonstrate that songs such as

“Margaritaville” and “The Seashores of Old Mexico” depict stereotypes of Mexico that do not necessarily reflect reality.

At the same time, he is applying for a new and unique Fulbright award. MTV and the Fulbright organization have teamed up to sponsor a project that investigates how contemporary music can be used to facilitate intercultural communication. If he receives the award, Larsen will examine some ways reggae music may ease tensions between Costa Rican citizens and Nicaraguan immigrants.

“My goal would be to select bands from both Nicaragua and Costa Rica to perform in front of an audience made up of Costa Rican citizens and Nicaraguan immigrants to provide an experience that they can both enjoy and build upon,” Larsen said. “All relationships begin with a shared interest, and in this case it is music.”

Linfield has been a perfect fit for Larsen, who has developed deep relationships with classmates, fraternity brothers and professors such as Jackson Miller, his forensics advisor.

“Many of these people have become like family to me,” Larsen said. “The people you find here are the people who genuinely care and who see you not as a number but as a person. They want to see you succeed.”

– Kasey Richter '09

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During last fall’s homecoming celebration, Aaron Larsen '08 interviewed and recorded alumni who shared memories of their college years.

