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A View from Melrose

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Two months *and counting*

From 1989 to March, 2006, my wife and I lived in a densely populated Chicago neighborhood, just three blocks from the Chicago Cubs' Wrigley Field. Not surprisingly, everyone now asks, "How does it feel to move to the small town of McMinnville, Oregon?"

Of course it feels very different. But it also feels comfortable because we are back on a college campus. I've spent my entire career serving colleges in one way or another, but for years I've done so

There have been many highlights in our first two months at Linfield. I met the three Linfield students who won Fulbright Awards this year – an incredible success rate at a college so small.

After eating lunch with Linfield softball player Kendra Strahm '09, I began to attend the women's softball games – and watched in awe as they won their region and went on to finish fourth in the NCAA national championship.

I listened in on a "Cat Cab" coffeehouse performance by Chris Engbretson '07, and then saw him conduct the college's superb Concert Choir a few weeks later.

I met with the Oregon accreditation officials who were evaluating our teacher education program. They eventually told me that Linfield had earned a perfect score – the most favorable evaluation they had given anyone in a long time.

I entered Linfield's intellectual life by attending lectures by guests and faculty, most notably our own history professor, Dr. Scott Smith. I began to hold personal appointments with each of Linfield's professors. And I went to my first faculty meetings in years.

As I met with alumni these past two months, I was struck by their characterization of what makes Linfield special. They invariably named a particular professor who inspired and challenged them – someone who helped them find their passion. The relationship between professor and student is the center of the Linfield experience. Again and again, that lesson is repeated. It is our bedrock, our foundation.

So do I miss Chicago? Well, I may miss a few friends, and perhaps the pizza, but I am inspired by the people I meet at Linfield, and I feel privileged to join a community that is so supportive, stimulating and good. There is plenty of work to do here, but much of that work is simply to remain focused on quality, to tell the Linfield story and to enhance the education of our students.

In short, I feel that I've come home.

– Thomas L. Hellie, President



Thomas L. Hellie with Alan Hubka '68 during a reception at the Oregon Historical Society in Portland, sponsored by the President's Club.

from an office in downtown Chicago. I feel good here, perhaps because everyone has warmly welcomed us.

There's been a lot of excitement at Linfield. For example, during my first week I was called onto the dance floor at the annual L'uau, where I got to dance in front of 500 people. When I announced my weekly office hour for Linfield students, I was visited by four topless male members of the Linfield Ultimate Frisbee Club, who informed me that my office was the 16th hole in that day's golf Frisbee competition. And I was astounded to see flip-flops on the bare feet of innumerable graduating seniors on a very damp, cold commencement day. To tell the truth, I wouldn't miss these experiences for the world; they are part of the color and joy of college life.