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Riding High in Pendleton

Laura Davis
Linfield College

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he also learned about the difficult and sometimes conflicting issues of lumber and development versus recreation and wildlife habitat.

“(Foresters) are assigned enormous spans of acreage that include great diversity,” he said. “It takes years to understand all of the different considerations of terrain, climate and wildlife.”

The students came from both the Adult Degree Program (ADP), where students pursue their bachelor’s degrees while working full time, and from McMinnville’s more traditional-age student population.

Mike Marshall ’06 of Chehalis, Wash., an environmental studies minor working on his degree through ADP, is a logistics manager for a wood products firm. His father was a forester for Boise Cascade, and Marshall spent a great deal of time in the forest while growing up. He was interested in getting a broader knowledge about the products his company ultimately puts out. “The majority of what we manufacture is made from Douglas fir and Western larch,” he said. “Here I can study the species and its climate and get a better understanding of why it is so dominant.”

Del Rayo, a business major on the McMinnville campus, took the class to explore a different field. “I learned the effects of wildfires in ecosystems and how they play a big role in saving forests. Thinning forests to reduce fuel buildup can make a big difference,” he said. “It was a fun class because I could see for myself how things are really done.”

The best part of the class was the chemistry among the students, said Chris Huikill ’09 from Monmouth, who works full time at Hewlett-Packard.

“We really bonded,” Huikill said. “Everyone had an attitude that fostered good learning and took it seriously. Everyone had respect for the learning and respect for the knowledge people brought to the class. It was good to have the diversity of ages.”

Schoonmaker is the founding board president of Illahee, a non-profit organization that provides a forum for environmental innovators to exchange ideas and increase the scientific rigor of public discourse about the environment in the Pacific Northwest. He has worked with conservation organizations, government agencies and natural resource businesses to craft mutually beneficial forest, fisheries and watershed partnerships throughout the region.

Schoonmaker likes teaching field-based classes, where a question is posed and the students pursue an answer in the field, instead of the class being defined by a text. “In the course of asking a question, the students usually have to tackle all those things they see in a text and I think they learn it better,” he said. “They are learning the theory holistically, in a hands-on way and I think at the end of the class they see the whole picture.”

— Mani Milheim

With an effervescent smile, the graceful wave of a hand and lots of hooting and hollering, Darlene Thompson ’07 fulfilled a lifelong dream this summer.

Thompson, an accounting and math double major from Weston, served as a princess for the Pendleton Roundup, one of Oregon’s largest and most renowned rodeos.

“Ever since I was a little girl I’ve been going to the rodeo, sitting in the stands and waiting for my turn to be out there riding,” said Thompson.

Her turn came in September when she successfully maneuvered the Pendleton grand entry, one of the most difficult entries in the Pacific Northwest. Riding Red, a 16-year-old sorrel gelding, Thompson entered the arena at a full gallop, jumped two fences, came to an abrupt halt in front of 20,000 spectators, then raced around the quarter-mile track twice—all one-handed while waving to the crowd. “It’s dangerous,” Thompson admits. “It’s a pressure cooker for horses, too. A horse has a mind of its own so anything can happen.”

The Pendleton Roundup, which began in 1910, is practically a family affair for Thompson, who has attended the rodeo every year since age 5. Her grandfather has led the dress up parade for 42 years and family members are devoted volunteers. So it was only natural that Thompson, a skilled horsewoman, would take her turn in the spotlight.

The five-member court spent the spring and summer appearing at elementary schools, nursing homes, luncheons, banquets, rodeos and parades, leading up to the roundup. But Thompson was unfazed by the hectic schedule.

“It was lots of work, but the roundup organizers want to have girls representing them who are involved in their communities and doing something with their lives,” she said. “Those are the kinds of things Linfield looks for, too.”

As if the responsibilities of the rodeo weren’t enough, Thompson interned with Chris Cockburn ’91 of Fife, Cockburn and Co., LLP, an accounting firm in Pendleton. Cockburn is a director for Happy Canyon, affiliated with the roundup and understood the demands placed on Thompson.

“The experience introduced me to a different side of accounting,” said Thompson, who audited school districts along with Ronna (Ayers) Lindstrom ’98. “I’m thinking about coming back to the area and this will help me decide.”

Now back on campus for her senior year, Thompson’s pace has not slowed. She sings in the choir and took part in the Opera Workshop performance last year. She played volleyball, served as a peer advisor and is a member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Phi Sigma Sigma sorority and three national honor societies for business, service and academics.

This is a typical Thompson achievement, according to Mike Jones, professor of accounting and Thompson’s advisor.

“She’s probably accomplished more in 24 years than many people do in a lifetime,” Jones said. “She’s involved in so many different things and she’s usually at the top of the heap. I’m proud to know her.”

Jones traveled to Pendleton to watch Thompson “spin around the track on her horse at what seemed like 90 mph.” And he wasn’t the only Thompson fan there. Other Linfield community members also made the trip.

“Faculty and staff cheer you on,” said Thompson. “So many of them were excited for me when they found out I made court. A school like Linfield is interested in their students and wants to celebrate with them.”

— Laura Davis

Linfield instructor Peter Schoonmaker explains a point to the students after recording the number of rings on a stump. He prefers teaching field-based classes which approach a subject holistically and give students hands-on experience.

Riding high in Pendleton

Darlene Thompson ’07 completes a grand entry jump atop Red, one of three horses the rodeo as a princess for the Pendleton Roundup in September.

— Laura Davis