Alumni Profile

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Linfield College

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John Paul Creasman '59 is a miracle worker to the thousands of people whose eyesight he has helped restore.

Creasman, assistant professor in ophthalmology and department chair at the Mayo Clinic in Arizona, has devoted his life to humanitarian work and education around the world. Over the past 35 years, he has regularly offered his skills and materials in underserved areas of Africa, the North Pacific and South America.

Last year, Creasman received the Mayo Clinic Alumni Association Humanitarian Award for his contributions to medicine, education and humanitarian missions.

“Most of the blindness in the world today is due to cataracts, and that’s easy to fix,” said Creasman, who, after graduating from Linfield College, earned his medical degree by Baylor University College of Medicine. “And the rewards for the patient, and for me as well, are dramatic. It’s exciting to watch people see for the first time in many years.”

Humanitarian work is second nature to Creasman, who grew up near the San Carlos Indian reservation in southeastern Arizona and often helped his parents provide food, clothing and shelter for those in need.

“You don’t just take, you give back,” Creasman said. “I wouldn’t know how to do it any other way.”

His primary focus has been a small clinic in Vera Cruz, Baja, Mexico, which he founded in 1972 and travels to several times every year.

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“Every summer I return to the same community building projects and recruit a dentist, a family practitioner and a nurse practitioner to help them provide care. In addition to hands-on patient care, Creasman is a proponent of medical education and has hosted conferences for physicians around the world.

His love of science took hold in a Melrose laboratory during his first year as a student. Although he initially came to Linfield to play baseball, he took zoology from Jane Claire Dicks-Edrums in the off-season and was hooked.

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Instead, he double majored in chemistry and biology, participated in the debate team and served as student body president, thriving in Linfield’s familial atmosphere. Years later, he established a endowed fund in ecology at Linfield in the name of Dicks-Edrums.

“I would have disappeared into the woodwork at a large university,” said Creasman, who, during his first week on campus, was invited to play pool with then-President Harry Dillin.

“He said, ‘The back door’s always open. Come over any time you want.’” Creasman recalled. “Linfield was literally a family in many ways. Many of my Linfield classmates are still my closest friends today. In this environment you learn that friends make last.”

— Linda Darrow