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Class Notes

Linfield Magazine Staff

Beth Rogers Thompson

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Jennifer Butcher earns bronze medal in swimming at Paralympics

Two weeks after the 2004 Olympic Games ended in Athens, Jennifer Butcher ’95 won a bronze medal in the 100-meter backstroke. She was competing against other swimmers with visual impairments in the Paralympics, held every four years shortly after the Olympic Games in the same venue.

It was her final race, said Butcher, “I knew it was my last race,” she said, adding that she’s been in the water only twice since then. “I still love swimming, but I know I’ve done all I can do.”

All she can do includes setting records in the 50-yard backstroke, 100-yard backstroke and 200-yard relay at Linfield, where she received a degree in health education. The sport has been her guiding passion over the years. “My life revolved around swimming,” she said. That was a major reason the native of Issaquah, Wash., chose Linfield.

And the swim team competed in the NAIA National Championships all four years she was on it. In all four years, she finished second in the 100-meter backstroke.

Butcher had intended to major in nursing until she realized the nursing program was offered in Portland, not on the main campus. “I made the choice to stay with swimming,” she said, adding that it was a satisfying decision. “I knew I wanted to do something in the health field.” She continued her education at Portland State University, earning a M.S. in special education in 1999.

Her vision had began to deteriorate in elementary school but wasn’t diagnosed until she was a sophomore, she was diagnosed with Stargard’s disease, which affects the macula and retinas. That was 1993, the year her blurry vision reached the legally blind stage.

Butcher said her sight has stabilized in recent years. She has lost her central, or detailed, vision and can read only with a magnifying glass or with large fonts on a computer screen. Her inability to decipher the numbers led to her holding the wrong bus, which has been a huge concern on for transportation since she can no longer drive.

Butcher and husband, Bryan, who was her swim coach, live in Vancouver, Wash., where she teaches health and fitness at the Washington School for the Blind. Butcher now works with students aged 3 to 21 at the school. The emphasis is on workout routines and strength training. And, of course, the swim.
Jennifer Butterworth earns bronze medal in swimming at Paralympic Games

Two weeks after the 2004 Olympic Games ended in Athens, Jennifer “Butch” Butterworth ’85 won a bronze medal in the 100-meter backstroke. She was competing against other swimmers with visual impairments in the Paralympics, held every four years shortly after the Olympic Games in the same venue. It was her final race, said Butterworth, “I knew it was my last race,” she said, adding that she’s been in the water only twice since then. “I still love swimming, but I know I’ve done all I can do.”

All she can do includes setting records in the 50-yard backstroke, 100-yard medley and 200-yard relay at Linfield, where she received a degree in health education. The sport has been her guiding passion over the years. “My life revolved around swimming,” she said. That was a major reason the native of Issaquah, Wash., chose Linfield. And the swim team competed in the NAIA National Championships all four years she was on it. All four years, she finished second in the 100-meter backstroke.

Jennifer Butcher, former Linfield swimmer, currently works with students aged 3 to 21 through the Paralympics, held every four years. She competed in the 100-meter backstroke in the 1996 Paralympics in Atlanta. She has now competed for four years at the Paralympics, held in the same venue.

She is one of four siblings, all of whom competed in swimming. All four siblings are: Jennifer “Butch” Butterworth ’85 (sister), Sarah (Morris) Pullen ’68 (sister), and Gary Stevens ’63 (brother).

Butcher said her sight has stabilized in recent years. “Butcher said her sight has stabilized in recent years. It’s now where she can read in a library or a bookstore without a magnifying glass or with large fonts on a computer screen. She is able to see details that were once blurry and difficult to distinguish.

Butcher has lost her central vision. Vision in her left eye is so poor that she can only see objects up close. She relies on her right eye for long-distance vision. However, her peripheral vision remains strong. She can still see objects in her peripheral vision.

Butcher has been a professional swimmer for more than 30 years. She competed in the Paralympic Games four times, winning a bronze medal in 1996 and a silver medal in 1999.

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titled registered nurse anesthetist in Bangor, Maine.

Sean Cost ’88 of North Plains is a math teacher and head girls’ basketball coach at McMinnville High School.

Todd Davis ’94 of Beaverton is a supervisor for the Bureau of Emergency Communications 9-1-1 Center in Portland.


Katherine (Pittman) Harrison ’88 of McMinnville and Jennifer teaches in the Seattle Cancer Care Alliance.

Special Olympics Washington State and staff events coordinator for the Home Builders Association.


Phil Renshaw

Phil Renshaw ’31, longtime trustee of Linfield and one of the college’s most avid supporters, passed away Feb. 22 in Portland. Renshaw was born July 6, 1907, in Farminton, Idaho, and came to Linfield in 1927. He was known as “Uncle Phil” to many of the students.

Jennifer (Pittman) Harrison ’88 of McMinnville and Jennifer teach in the Seattle Cancer Care Alliance.

Sandra (Connolly) Jonas ‘89 of McMinnville adopted a daughter, Julia, from Russia. Brian is an attorney for the immigration firm of Fox, Grant, Same and Whelan.

Hughes and the Flying Boat,

Karin (Young) Crouch ’89, Jennifer (Ward) Thompson ’96, and Melanie (Bortz) Daniel Langsdorf ’96 of Portland is a school principal.

Lisa Overbeck ’91 of Gig Harbor, Wash., teaches in the market-research department at Regence Blue Cross/Blue Shield.

Kamehameha Schools Hawaii Campus.

Theological Seminary.


Jay McEntire ’93 of Redmond, Wash., married Melissa McQuiston Dec. 5. Jay is a commercial loan officer at Key Bank.

Karl captures character and structure in 10,000 words. Most students write 800 to 1,000 words, and the minimum length is 600 words; it is a combination of technical skills and pure personal expression.

S. M. A. is a master of international and multicultural studies offered at Roger Williams University in Rhode Island. She joined the faculty in 2005 and is currently serving as Linfield’s director of multicultural studies.

Tiffany Risser ’00 of Arlington, Va., is pursuing a master’s degree in music education at George Mason University and begin seminary studies in the fall of 2008.

The Mackay’s contribute annually to Linfield as well, supporting the college now for the future.

Amita J. Khan ’94, a clinical psychologist, recently returned from Japan where she taught English for two years with the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program.

GeoffBeam ’90 of Eugene, Ore., married Lisa Cook Aug. 17. Lisa is a commercial loan officer at Key Bank.

Kristen Collins ’96 of Bellingham, Wash., graduated from Western Washington University with a master of education degree in elementary education. Kristen works in the market-research department at Regence Blue Cross/Blue Shield.


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We had such a wonderful time and terrific opportunities at Linfield.

Todd DeWeese ’88

Dream to Fly: Howard

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of Reston, Va., and her husband, Barry, had a

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Lila Ashenbrenner

Lila Ashenbrenner received her liberal arts degree from Linfield in 1974, a year of economic double-durmins. She saw her lack of specialization as a strength, not a weakness. “So many people were graduating and not getting jobs back then. I thought it would be better to be well rounded. And it couldn’t have worked out better.”

She graduated with no career goals, but with an open mind. After working in a veterinary clinic for several years, she got to know a County Sheriff’s deputy, who invited her on a ride-along. One thing led to another, and eventually she was working with animals again – on the Hillsboro Police Department’s K-9 unit. She was only the second woman hired by the department and at that time the only female K-9 officer in Oregon.

“Talk about a branch not falling far from the tree,” she said, laughing at her entrenchment in this corner of Oregon. “Our mayor right now was my high school student teacher at Aloha High School. She may not have ventured far from home, but Ashenbrenner has worked in some exciting areas of law enforcement – narcotics and undercover operations, as well as public information and administration. She has risen steadily through the ranks in nearly 28 years with the department, from patrol to detective, sergeant, captain and commander, culminating in her promotion to Hillsboro’s deputy chief in 2003.

Now that she’s spending more time at a desk, she said, she misses the immediacy of being on the streets. “You never knew what you were going to be doing next,” she said. “And I really enjoyed narcotics. It always felt good to put the bad guys away.”

But the work is not always as glamorous and high-tech as it is portrayed on television. “I wish we really had that equipment available,” Ashenbrenner said. Her biggest challenges these days are hiring personnel, she said, adding, “We’re looking for people who want this career, not a job.”

— Beth Rogers Thompson

“Talk about a branch not falling far from the tree,”

— Beth Rogers Thompson

When Rick Turner ’63 entered Linfield, he was one of only seven African-American students. He knew he had entered a world far different from his urban home-town, Hartford, Conn. He knew acquaintances back home were saying he’d soon return in defeat. He was determined to prove them wrong.

Turner came on a basketball scholarship, thanks to his high school coach’s friendship with Paul Durham ’36, then Linfield athletic director. Curtis Manns ’62, who had graduated from Weaver High a year ahead of Turner, had come to play football.

Turner calls Linfield “a saving grace.” He had to overcome academic deficiencies and loneliness. He was 17 years old and 3,000 miles from familiar faces.

“In retrospect, I’m really thankful for the opportunity to go to Linfield,” says Turner. “I know it made me a better person. These were the most important four years of my life because I learned how to endure. It made me a stronger person.”

Turner may not have found many African Americans at Linfield, but he did find a caring, supportive environment. “The people at Linfield were helpful, they were nurturing, they respected me, and I respected them. I don’t think I could have survived if the environment wasn’t warm and conducive for me at that time.”

Turner did return to Connecticut, but not in defeat. After receiving his B.A. in sociology from Linfield, he earned a master’s degree in social work from the University of Georgia. He returned to the West Coast, completing a Ph.D. in higher education administration/public policy at Stanford.

Many scholars base articles and books on their doctoral dissertations; Turner has built a successful career on his. It is titled “The Academic Achievement and Retention of Black Students at White Institutions.”

Since 1988, Turner has served as dean of African-American Affairs at the University of Virginia. Among his celebrated accomplishments, one stands out: the University’s African-American graduation rate has steadily grown for his watch to 87 percent, among the highest in the nation for public institutions.

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