

surgical planning, and the application of a directed intervention were all aspects that drew me to surgery immediately. At that point, I knew surgery was the field for me. It was just a matter of finding the types of surgical diseases that interested me the most. Neurosurgery fit the bill, and I did a rotation at the nearby county hospital and had a fantastic time. The team of neurosurgeons and one resident there introduced me to the range of tumor, vascular, spine, epilepsy, and trauma procedures regularly done there. Transitions between open and microsurgery were particularly exciting, and the ability to restore function and improve patient well-being, sometimes immediately post-operatively, was impressive to see. It was also clear that good patient outcomes could be difficult to achieve in some situations, particularly in cases of trauma. Regardless, neurosurgery

more or less the same everywhere when it comes to their core desires in life (have a safe home, happy family, rewarding job, etc). The people you meet and the things you learn about the world and yourself are things you'll keep with you for the rest of your life. You don't have to stay in fancy hotels and spend tons of money to see the world. There are resources out there if you want to travel for cheap, and if there is a place you want to visit, just stop by a bookstore and browse through some of the travel books and budget guidebooks about that place and you'll get an idea of what is possible on a given budget. Yes, sometimes you have to stay in a grungy place, or deal with annoying bunk mates in a hostel, or stay a night in an airport or something like that, but it's all part of the process. The most important thing to keep in mind when traveling is to keep an open mind. Some

Do any memories of Brandon ever pop into your head during your exploits?

Definitely. I think my Spanish classes in high school with Mr. Sherwood and Mrs. Marino were one of the reasons I wanted to start traveling. Now that I am in the medical field, I can't describe how happy I am that I put time in to learning Spanish. It really is invaluable, and I can't thank them enough. Another class that sticks out was AP Government. But overall when I think about high school, I just remember being pretty nerdy (I still am) and shy, but that's probably how a lot of people feel. You spend a lot of time in high school, and college for that matter, trying to figure out your identity and there are plenty of awkward, funny, sad, happy, and weird moments that you always remember.

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demanded a high level of performance at any given moment. I felt the challenges in a neurosurgical career were ideal for me personally and would allow me to keep growing as a person throughout my professional life.

Your travels are impressive. What would you tell high school kids who are wondering if they can get out there?

You just have to have an open mind, buy the plane ticket, do a little research, and go! In high school, I was working in restaurants to save up some cash for a trip to Western Europe before college started, and that was when I got hooked on traveling. You really have no idea how much you don't know until you start seeing more of the world, and personally I really like that feeling. I think it keeps you grounded, and you also realize people are

people have a hard time not sticking to itineraries and can get flustered when things don't work out ideally, but you have to look at that as part of the fun. Some of my most memorable stories and closest friends from traveling happened when I least expected it. Maybe that sounds cliché, but it's true. Lastly, the world is much safer than it would seem from the news. As long as you have some common sense and are aware of local scams and have a general sense for when you might be in a dicey situation, you will be fine. Violent crime against tourists is exceedingly rare. Usually it's just a matter of petty theft, and, though it might be a pain, nothing is irreplaceable. Personally, I've never had anything stolen traveling in Europe, South America, Central America, or Asia, and the worst that has happened is that I was bribed like \$5 at a bus stop.

Do you still have ties to the area?

Just my parents, who still live in Ortonville. I'll come back to visit them for holidays once or twice a year.

Can you ever see the wanderlust coming to a stop, or is it in your DNA?

No, it really isn't something that just goes away. It's always there. As I get older I probably won't be willing to tolerate some of the conditions I put up with before, but I'll never want to not travel. You also learn about specific ways that you like to travel, and cater things based on that. For example, I find that I have a better time if I get to know someone from a certain area and can really dig into a locale, as opposed to just constantly hopping from place to place and barely getting to know the area. I plan to travel more like that from now on.