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This dates me, of course - but let's just say for simplicity I received the Portland ACS scholarship "sometime in the mid-late 90s".

Looking back over the past twenty plus years since I received it, I can honestly say I never could (would?) have guessed the twists and turns; ebb and flow of my life that followed. I've been very fortunate. Strange how if you leap - the net will appear.

Only earlier this week my 16 year old son approached me with, "Dad, I don't know what I'm going to do with my life...". This as he has SATs college applications and interviews soon. I smile at this and recount my own experiences, highlights, predicaments, let downs, "big days", worries and inadequacies over the past 30 years - has it really been that long? What advice can one give short of cliches?

Most importantly, I am hopeful he finds a mentor or two to guide him. That has made all the difference for me.

My junior year of college at Portland State, I was lucky to find a mentor professor, Carl Wamser PhD who inspired me towards research as a career option. I worked in his lab, and ultimately presented a senior thesis to the chemistry department. My area of research centered around using polyaniline as a conductive polymer as part of a new porphyrin based solar cell his lab was working on. Dr. Wamser believed in me & gave me confidence in myself.

I was also fortunate to meet my future wife, Sherrod while at PSU - she was my organic chemistry lab partner - thank you Dr. Lutz for introducing us!

I applied to and joined the UCSF Medicinal Chemistry Ph D program in 1996. I had such high hopes.

Moving to San Francisco, I quickly realized how much I missed and valued the support of my parents and friends in Portland. I had lived at home during college which allowed me to work hard, maintain straight A's, and succeed. However living alone in San Francisco, gone were all those things I took for granted.

I had succeeded at pretty much everything in my academic life up until joining the Ph D. program at UCSF. A month after joining the program my head was spinning and I was lost. My girlfriend (still Sherrod) then was accepted into medical school at OHSU and was BUSY. I was not doing well academically, I was failing towards finding a research lab I had even a spark of interest in and frankly needed a friend or two. I decided to try to make it work for a while.

Living alone at age 22 in San Francisco could have been a lot of things - but to me it represented a lot of alone time to contemplate my life and future career. I hadn't announced I was leaving UCSF, so at the suggestion of my girlfriend (still Sherrod) I tried volunteering at the local VA Med Center. It was three blocks from my crummy

apartment. I was randomly placed as a volunteer in the office of the infectious diseases (ID) department - filing charts and transcribing meeting minutes. The department chairman - Peter Jensen MD took me under his wing and took me on rounds several times. As a physician looking back, I cannot begin to tell you how outside the norm this was. Thank you, Dr. Jensen.

I decided medicine was my calling. I spent more time volunteering and studying for the MCAT than I did at the various labs at UCSF - which caused some real friction - doesn't bother me the least now - but back THEN it was the equivalent of Defcon 2....

I announced I was leaving UCSF in the spring of 1997 - less than a year from starting there. This was not well received - both from my parents and the department's standpoint. Dr. Jensen graciously set up an interview for work in an ID lab at the Portland VAMC. I left a career as a Ph D chemist and a whole lot of pride in the rear view of the U Haul leaving San Francisco.

I got the job and worked at the Portland VAMC in an ID lab under the direction of Sunwen Chou MD, PhD while I was applying to medical school and interviewing. The lab was performing DNA sequencing for various drug resistant HIV and CMV patient isolates. I applied to several medical schools, both West Coast and East Coast with a focus of becoming an ID physician. I was hoping to join my (now) fiancée (still Sherrod) at OHSU - where she was two years ahead. I was accepted at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, however no West Coast schools. Despite long conversations and arguments against moving away, I decided to accept UVA - and moved cross country from my fiancée (still Sherrod).

Medical school was a busy and fulfilling time. Charlottesville is a smaller college town (our class size was over 150), so many of the clerkships were "away" - either in the DC area or scattered rural / small towns. I lived with a wonderful family for six weeks while on my family practice clerkship in Lexington.

My fiancée (still Sherrod) and I would alternate flying cross country once a month for visits. We couldn't afford flying out of Charlottesville or Richmond, so I'd end up driving up to Baltimore or Dulles on a Friday night - get to Portland Saturday morning - fly home Sunday afternoon. Oh - the things you do for love. In retrospect, the fact we were both in medical school probably made the distance issue work out a tad better for us - we both knew the time involved & the sacrifices/stresses. The nightly phone conversations between us essentially devolved to patient presentations.

We were married in Portland (Troutdale!) the summer of my 2nd year of med school - for a week we honeymooned in London - at Chicago O'Hare on the way home her

plane went back to Portland; mine went back to Virginia. We managed to get some elective clerkships our respective 4th years at Virginia / OHSU to spend more time together. However despite extensive petitioning to transfer med schools by each of us, we both finished at our respective schools.

As part of 3rd year surgery clerkships, I was randomly assigned to an anesthesiology rotation. My wife (still Sherrod) said I'd hate it because "I'd just be opening IV bags". I'm still unsure what she was doing there for six weeks - but I digress. Once again I was fortunate to find a mentor, Lee White MD who was a superb teacher and was instrumental towards introducing me to regional anesthesia. This remains a huge interest of mine to this day. Within a week on the clerkship I knew anesthesia would be my future career. Interestingly enough, my anesthesia rotation was immediately followed by an infectious disease clerkship. The ID clerkship paled in comparison.

There is a rather convoluted "match" process to post medical school / residency selection. My wife had matched in internal medicine at Providence Portland (another four years of training after medical school). She was two years ahead of me. Luckily we managed to train in the same city and live together under the same roof throughout our postgraduate training. I matched at Providence St. Vincent Portland for my intern year and then Virginia Mason Med Center in Seattle for my anesthesiology training. The 100 hour work week limit for residents came into practice my 4th year of residency by the way... My wife never had it.

My wife (still Sherrod) joined a hospitalist group in Tacoma as I was finishing training - we had two boys while we were in residency - so definitely not a lot of down time. My first job out of residency was at a hospital in Olympia, WA. We moved to Olympia in 2006 and have lived here since. I now work at a orthopedic ambulatory surgery center with oodles of daily regional anesthesia. We do several knee replacements, hip replacements and spine surgeries daily - all as outpatient; many contingent on a successful regional anesthetic.

I've had a wonderful, action packed twenty-plus years since I received the Portland ACS award. Honestly, not what geeky 21 year old me would have predicted standing in front of a Reed College auditorium in 1995 - no - not in my wildest dreams.

I like that Jimmy Buffett lyric, "Some of it's magic, some of it's tragic. But I had a good life all of the way."

Cheers.

-Matt Shiveley, MD