

DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY WEEK OF MAY 18



Photo submitted by Catherine Beauharnais, MD

My first international trip (other than visits to my native Haiti) was to Senegal, West Africa. I had just finished my freshman year of college and it was my first time traveling without my family. Though I went on this trip in search of adventure, I gained a whole lot more than that, unbeknownst to me. It was the first time that I attempted to see the world through a different lens, and to understand the norms surrounding me, no matter how different they were from mine. I've drawn upon that experience several times as a medical student, and later a resident, to navigate the intricacies of human interaction in a population as diverse as ours.



Thankfully, my trip to Senegal only further unleashed my desire to see more. Since then I have been fortunate to either visit or work in India, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Zambia, Tanzania, Peru, and Dubai, to name a few. I mentioned how traveling can highlight our differences. But I'd also like to share a few things that I found common to many of these places: a) the majesty of nature, whether it is the Amazon jungle of South America or the Victoria Falls of Southern Africa; b) the grins on children's faces when they see a camera--especially those with missing

front teeth!; c) the laughter and squeals that stepping into water (lake, ocean, river) always brings on; and d) the power of music, which brings us to a special place in our minds, unlike any other.

So yes, people and environments are different in various parts of the world. But one cannot deny that there are threads that link us to one another, that remind us that there is commonality in humanity. Traveling has highlighted these threads for me in more ways than I am able to describe. I rely on them very heavily during these trying times, and even during normal ones. For I know that they make me a better person, daughter, sister, and of course, a better doctor. –*Cathy Beauharnais, MD, PGY2*



Best Trip Finally (Followed by Pandemic!)

In mid-February I finally got to take the trip I have been waiting for. After years and years of family-oriented trips, mixed in with a few rare spouse-only trips, I was finally able to do what I wanted to do: An active adventure trip. There would be no amusement rides to go on, no shopping areas, no overly crowded lines to wait to see whatever famous thing, no beach for me to get red and bored on, no lounge chair to fight over. This would be a hike and bike trip to a land that I had waited over 20 years to return to--New Zealand.

Don't think that I didn't enjoy my other (family) vacations. I really did...everything from the Disney Cruises to the Cape beach activities with my three girls. But I always marked each vacation's level of enjoyment by what adventure activity I could do while on it. Particularly important would be something off the beaten track that very few would or could do. This might involve leaving the beach day and climbing up and into a volcano on a barely marked trail on a Caribbean island, or taking a 45 min cab ride to dirt roads away from the Cancun resort so I could learn to kite surf (Icarus Kite School on Isla Blanca, I highly recommend a trip there while it is still somewhat untouched).

About 22 years ago, when I was a fellow, I had the opportunity to go to the University of Otago on the southern island of New Zealand to study a novel device for Smith and Nephew. Yes, believe it or not, it was cheaper for the company to ship myself and the equipment (including lap towers, etc.) to a sheep animal lab in Dunedin to perform a survival study. I was there for two weeks. The company was also generous enough to send my wife (different times) for the second week. I finished up my duties in one week, so we had a week to explore this beautiful country with a vow to return some day.



That opportunity took many years to develop, but it came to reality this past February. I planned a hike and bike tour to the west coast of the southern island of New Zealand. Well, I didn't actually plan it. I purchased the adventure from the company Backroads, who I highly recommend for any world adventure tour (with a glamping theme) once this virus time has passed. It maybe was a little pricey, but when you consider the places you stay, the food you eat and the attention to detail, it was well worth having someone else do the details. There are five levels of difficulty to their tours, so I chose the level 2/3 as my wife and oldest child came along and were a little nervous about the biking part. Individuals can challenge themselves as much as they like, or they could plan an E bike or ride the van.

Admittedly, I was dragging a bit mentally before I went on this trip. Everything was too routine and demanding; it seemed like a long winter. I came back feeling invigorated and with better perspective. O yeah, then Corona hit. Well, I think this trip has helped me get through this tough time. I know at some point I will be able to look forward to the next adventure, and next time, I think I can convince the whole family it's the way to have a vacation (but my wife says we need

a few days at a resort pool afterward to rest). –*John Kelly MD (Senior), Chief of General Surgery*



Top Left: With wife Tricia at NZ vineyard after biking day Top Right: Out on the road with daughter Katherine.
Bottom Left: Top of a hike above Lake Wanaka. Bottom Right: Tasmin Sea.



Focusing on the Here and Now

For so many reasons and like so many others, travel seems like a thing of the past, a vague memory of pre-pandemic, pre-dad's illness, and to some extent pre-kid times. I find myself more and more thinking about the day when my little family and I will venture out again, and I have been reflecting "why have I been thinking about it so much?"

To some extent it is nostalgia: going back to childhood when we looked forward to every summer's adventure or the surprise trips with my dad to learn how to scuba dive or have a

weekend trip to London (which for a Californian was not quite as close it is now). My parents made the decision that in raising us, our focus would be our time as a family and that we would not have a lot of other “things.” We did a lot of local California exploring along with a lot of crazy trips. And by crazy, I mean, “when did you think it was a good idea to allow your kids to scuba dive before the legal age” or “when did you think it was a good idea with four little kids to not change motels (or even rooms) when situated in a room next to poachers with a jaguar and tiger on the floor” type of crazy. But yet those years of staying in hostels (like this one outside our hostel in Zermatt at the base of the Matterhorn) and exploring, were so incredibly valuable to us as a family and to us individually.



More recently, travel is my connection to my family. We live in Massachusetts without family nearby. I moved here from Los Angeles to pursue residency and fast forward now nearly 18 years later, I am married with two little miracle boys we thought we would never have...still states away from our nearest relatives. We have been fortunate as our parents have been so generous with their time and helped us with visits every few months. Over my last 8 years at UMass, our travels have focused less on the exotic or distant, and more on the ways we could be “family”: finding ways to spend time with both sets of grandparents and 9, soon to be 10, cousins. Now crazy is a little different: How crazy were we to think it was a great idea to load 1 and 3-year-old kids onto a 24 hr trip to Alaska? Not such a “stress free” airplane trip, but well worth it then and now knowing we spent my parents’ 40th wedding anniversary in a place they loved and getting to seeing a glimpse of the Aurora, which I have always searched for with my dad. My kids, young as they were, still talk about the trip with Alaska with “California grandma and grandpa” (note: New York grandma and grandpa are to “blame” for our kids’ love of the non-Boston baseball team seen in these Alaska photos).



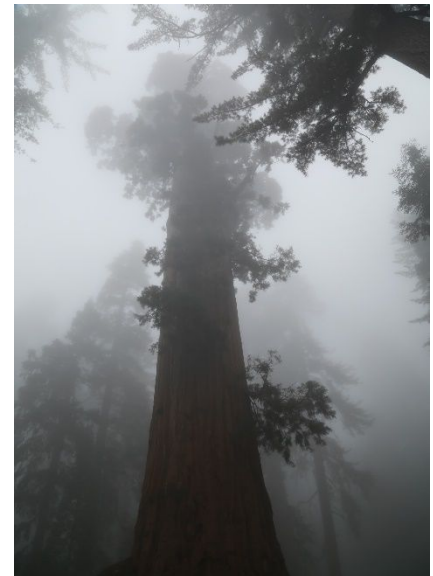
As I think about traveling again after the pandemic improves, I feel the same sentiment I felt this past weekend when I was walking past Father’s Day cards, realizing I was buying one less this

year. Travel this year will be different. This year's trip won't have my dad with us, and it will bring back memories of those trips. This year's trip might not even be this year—once the world wakes up, my siblings and I will move on to the reality of why my dad had lung cancer and proceed with the surgeries to help prevent us from getting cancer.

But yet, why travel, why the pull, why do we (or me) look forward to our next trip when things settle down? Like our nature issue, I learned through writing this piece that there is actually *a lot* of data on the correlation of travel and wellbeing: increased creativity, happiness and satisfaction, improvement in depression and stress, and improved health (less heart attacks!).

All these are true, though personally, travel is my way of broadening my perspective, living an outward mindset, and forcing us/me to be open and *really* understand the differences in people and cultures. Travel puts us into the here and now and allows us to slow down (even when running between museums or Disney rides) in ways that are not at times impossible when we are entrenched in our daily lives...certainly not now, when we cannot disconnect during COVID.

I look back to the last year. There are many nights, like you, I am up working most of the night; I need to learn to do better on this to be more present when I am home. I then think about the night of September 11 when we packed up, drove to Sequoia, and stared at the stars the night we heard Small Cell Lung Cancer. Or Christmas Eve, when my dad was profoundly neutropenic yet rallied to take family photos with all 19 of us (the last we would have). And finally the weekend before he passed, making a short drive to swim outside in the dead of winter, wine taste at the random winery in the hotel, and make homemade decorations for a makeshift party for my parents' anniversary (which would have been the following week). These are the memories of living in the moment and making those last month *really count*.



So yes, travel has a lot of benefits, but the biggest benefit, and the reason I am searching for that next trip, even if it is in a year or so, is that it allows me to center on the important things in my life. Don't wait to travel until your kids are little older or work is less crazy. Travel now—it does not have to be extravagant or in a far-away place. It can be camping in a state park in our neighborhood (or like us, your backyard) or a weekend trip to Boston. Whatever it is, though, use it to live in the minute, slow down, and consider those things that are the most important in your lives. But first, just make the decision to do it.

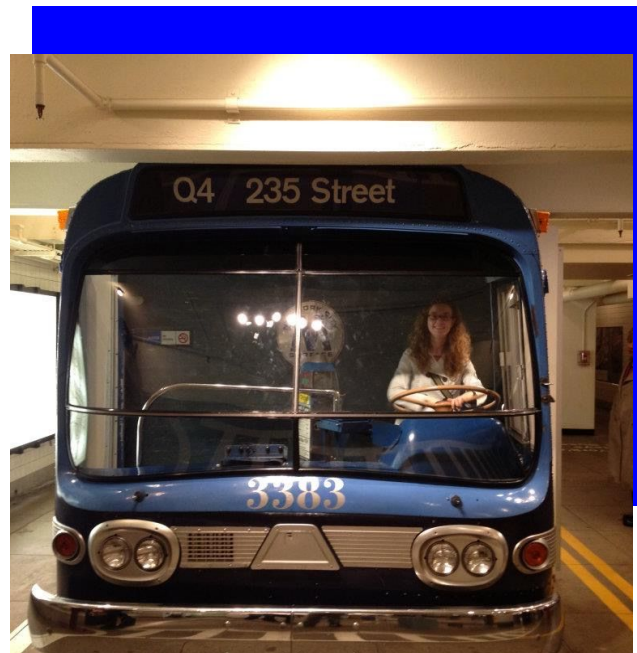
I cannot wait until the newsletters later this year and hope that as you start to venture out after these dark times, you submit your travel photos, so we can all celebrate “we did it.”

Jennifer LaFemina, MD, Division of Surgical Oncology

I have always had a penchant for bus travel. Growing up with three older brothers, I was jealous of the freedom afforded to them by the city bus. They could visit friends, browse bookstores, sip at 24-hour coffee shops, and stay out as late as the last bus allowed. That I was not permitted to ride the bus alone when I entered high school—as my brothers had been—was perhaps the first sting of the double standard between boys and girls that I felt deep in my bones. When my parents finally yielded to my requests to ride the bus, at age 17, I bought my ticket and took my seat, feeling the most wonderful thrill. I was on my own. I was going somewhere. I was free.

I moved 3000 miles across the country to attend college in the Philadelphia suburbs nine months after my first solo bus ride. For my fall break, I decided to visit a cousin who lived in Brooklyn. I had never been to New York City before, and I spent spare moments between studying for midterms eagerly planning my journey. Ever frugal, I decided to forgo the expense of train tickets and buy a \$10 ticket on the Greyhound. I loaded my iPod (because it would be six years before I had an iPhone) with Simon and Garfunkel's “America” and the best of Bruce Springsteen, packed my backpack with the coolest outfits I could imagine, and set forth to the R5 SEPTA train (back when it was still the R5), which would deliver me to Market East Station (back when it was still Market East), where I would catch my bus at the Philadelphia Greyhound station.

The Philadelphia Greyhound station was probably the most real place I had ever been at that point in my life. It is the first place I remember smelling stale piss on the concrete. The station itself was small, poorly marked, and crowded. The overhead speakers crackled, and the paint chipped from hard metal benches. Someone was sleeping, or passed out, on the floor. Everyone from college students like me to business commuters to travelers with bulging plastic bags full of belongings stood in line to go to New York. When I presented my ticket to the driver and asked



tentatively before stepping foot onto the carriage, “The bus to New York?,” he smiled and ripped my ticket, saying emphatically: “New York City, baby!”



I was on my way.

The view of Manhattan from the New Jersey turnpike on that Friday night was unlike anything I had seen before. The city was a glimmering wall of lights, floating in the dark divide of the Hudson River. As the bus navigated a tight curve in Weehawken, I craned my neck to take in every glimpse—trying to make out which points represented the Empire State and the Chrysler Buildings—before plunging into the Lincoln Tunnel and being delivered into the bowels of Port

Authority. My cousin greeted me at the bus station and took me outside to Times Square to see the lights. I had never been anywhere so bright, so hectic, so electrified and kinetic.

That week I spent my time learning how to navigate the subway, the enormous Metropolitan Museum of Art, and my cousin’s Brooklyn neighborhood. I ate soup dumplings and falafel for the first time, and it was also my first time sneaking into a bar underage. I learned that chic New York women really did wear all black, that the city looked as colorful as movies like “Annie Hall” and “Do the Right Thing” had led me to dream. I later lived in that city, at 236 135th Street Apt 3B in Harlem, and I am proud to say that I visited all five boroughs during my time there. Yes, I even spent a day on Staten Island.

I have taken the bus innumerable times since, traveling up and down the East Coast to visit friends, crash on couches, attend rallies and weddings, and interview for jobs. I made sure to take the city bus at least once during each of my residency interviews—including LA (which literally rendered speechless one surgeon who interviewed me). I have found that the bus provides a window into a place’s character, its people and landscape. I once read that taking public transit increases one’s capacity for empathy, and I believe it, for I know it to be true. I love taking the bus for the opportunity it provides to observe life in all its varied forms. And just as I did at 17, I savor the freedom the bus affords: The anticipation of going somewhere and the accomplishment of getting there, navigating transfers and deciphering maps, is a small but real journey that carries with it the thrill of an adventure, each and every time. --*Katherine Bakke, MD PGY3*

PRIDE IN OURSELVES

Message from a Thoracic Surgeon to the Division that (It) Just Works

Stress brings out the best and the worst in people. This crisis has certainly brought out the worst in me – but it has also brought out the best in the staff of the Division of Thoracic Surgery. As we slogged on from day to day over the past two months, I constantly wondered what I should do to

provide ‘leadership’, the kind which I’ve witnessed and admired throughout my life. Perhaps belatedly, I’ve concluded that I do not need to worry about that because this Division runs itself. It just works.

Most decisions are made, and details arranged before I even realize there was an issue to ponder, and who knows how much had been decided on and arranged regarding issues which had never entered my consciousness. Every single person on the staff is a superlatively self-motivated overachiever, all of whom are united in their true north of patient care and care of each other, and because of that I’ve discovered that my former concept of leadership had to be replaced with the idea of the leader as the servant of all.

In short, I should get out of the way and let them unleash their forces and save this little corner of the world. You truly are the heart and soul and mind of the patient care we provide, so my unending gratitude to Samantha, Eledny, Angela, Poliana, Angela, Heather, Mark, Francesca, Maggie, Lucille, Cheryl, Feiran, Jessica and Heather. –*Karl Uy, MD, Chief of Division of Thoracic Surgery*

SHOUT OUTS

- Congratulations to Dr. Katherine Bakke, who was elected yesterday into the UMMS Gold Humanism Honor Society. Dr. Bakke was **one of six residents** across the institution inducted this year. She was selected by the UMMS students due to her “commitment to teaching and her kind and compassionate care of patients, families, students and colleagues.” Katherine: You are so incredibly deserving of this honor. It is the culmination of what you have brought to the Department, organization, residency, other trainees, and to our patients, every single day. Thank you!
- Congratulations to Paulo Martins, MD, PhD who was chosen by the ASTS Foundation to receive the two year, 2020 ASTS-CSL Behring Mid-Level Grant for his work in RNA Interference During Liver Machine Preservation to Improve Liver Graft Quality. Amazing work!

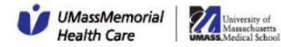
UPCOMING EVENTS

- **General Surgery Residency and Fellowship Graduation:** Will take place virtually on Saturday, June 20, from 4-7 pm. Details to follow.
- Details on the Vascular and Plastic Surgery Residency Graduations will be included when details are finalized.

COMMUNITY

- Many companies are offering discounts for healthcare workers. These range from help with childcare, wellbeing resources, travel, and clothing, among other offers.
<https://www.cnn.com/2020/04/24/cnn-underscored/coronavirus-healthcare-workers-deals-discounts/index.html>

Caregiver Wellness Resources



Center for Mindfulness
774-442-4681 | mindfulness@umassmemorial.org
www.umassmemorialhealthcare.org/umass-memorial-center-mindfulness

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
800-322-5327 | eap@umassmed.edu
Marlboro Hospital EAP: 800-311-4327
HA-Clinton EAP: 800-445-1195 (www.coastlineeap.com)

Employee Health
508-793-6400 (M-F, 7-5)
employee.healthservices@umassmemorial.org

Employee Wellness Program (myHealthMatters)
Thomas Ward, Wellness Program Manager
508-334-6414 | myhealthmatters@umassmemorial.org

GME Wellness (Resident & Fellow Wellness)
Steve Bird, MD | steven.bird@umassmemorial.org | 508-421-1422
<https://umassmed.edu/well-being/gme-residents-and-fellows/>

House Office Counseling Services
Alan Brown, MD | alan.brown.umassmemorial.org
Tina Runyan, PhD | christine.runyan@umassmemorial.org
508-856-4672 (confidential voicemail)

Medical Student Wellness
Michael Hirsh, MD | michael.hirsh@umassmemorial.org
Mark Miceli, EdD | mark.miceli@umassmed.edu

National Suicide Hotline
800-273-TALK (800-273-8255)
Crisis Text Line: text HOME to 741741

Office of Faculty Affairs
508-856-3244 | faculty_affairs@umassmed.edu
<https://umassmed.edu/lofa/>

Peer Support Network
well@umassmemorial.org | 774-441-7907

Physician Health Services (PHS)
Steven Adelman, MD | 781-434-7404
<http://www.massmed.org/phs/home/>

Student Counseling Services
Ruthann Rizzi, MD
SCS@umassmed.edu | 508-856-3220 (M-F, 8-4:30)
Emergency Mental Health (EMH): 508-856-3562

UMMHC Self Insurance Program Support Services
Timothy Slowick | timothyslowick@umassmemorial.org
(508) 334-5402 (confidential voice mail)

Wellness Coaching
well@umassmemorial.org | 774-441-7907

Clinician Experience Office (CXO)
well@umassmemorial.org
Steve Bird, MD
508-421-1422
steven.bird@umassmemorial.org
Jeff Abbott
774-441-7907
jeffrey.abbott@umassmemorial.org

OTHER RESOURCES
COVID-19 Information for Employees
<https://www.umassmemorialhub.org/coronavirus-information-for-employees?covid-19-alerts-&covid-19-page=true>
UMassMed Well-Being
<https://umassmed.edu/well-being/>

SUBMISSIONS

Our next issue during the week of May 25 will be centered around **BOOKS** and how books can help us explore meaning and find purpose. Please send your thoughts and reflections about how you use books to center yourself. Personal book lists for any topic—wellbeing, leadership, negotiation, etc.—are welcome!

In June, we will be phasing back into the quarterly Department Newsletter. The Week of June 1 issue will be the annual **GRADUATION ISSUE**. Please also send your messages and memories to our graduates as we start to prepare this issue. Please submit these any time before May 28.

Contributions welcome from all of the members of our Department of Surgery. Please send your contributions to Jennifer LaFemina or Katherine Bakke.

CROSSWORD SOLUTION

Eponymous (Google encouraged)

