I almost made it over the hill, but with my next step I slid right back down the pile of mud and was submerged in the freezing, cold, dirty, muddy water. My team was counting on me. I rose out of the mud feeling heavy and frozen. I had a burning, brown hue in my eyes and crusts of mud on my eyelids. The current mission was to maneuver a 3-ton tree log across a lake of mud with hills and dips, and finish by going underneath the mud as a team. Our muscles were aching, we were drained, and the chilly water mixed with the icy breeze made our entire bodies uncomfortable, but we made it through. Many missions and 4.5 hours later I was a proud finisher of my first hurricane heat, Spartan race.

I realized that the principles that got me through that race are the same that will get me through life: never quitting, being a team player, not leaving other people behind, and one of the most over looked principles- enjoying the process. With the right mindset, our bodies are capable of being pushed to the limit and accomplishing great feats, but sometimes we push our bodies past the point of failure as we lose the balance between musculoskeletal strength and weakness. I have chosen to pursue a career in the field of orthopedic surgery because I want to help people restore their strength and function as well as gain control over their bodies which they once lost or never had.

The foundation and building blocks for my decision to pursue a career in Orthopaedic Surgery was made a long time ago without my full realization. As a child, I moved locations frequently, living in different cities, states and countries. As soon as I developed relationships with people, I felt as if they were ripped away from me and that I had no control over it. I found comfort and joy as a child in fixing things and taking apart different objects such as DVD players, bicycles, gaming systems, etc., and being able to put them back together because it gave me a sense of control. I have always found myself being a hands-on person, developing coordination, dexterity, and attention to detail. Around the house, I helped build tables and stands, and helped build the deck for our house from scratch.

My first exposure to orthopedic surgery was when I tore my meniscus in high school. The second was when I tore my ACL in college. I remember watching hours of footage on ACL reconstructions and I was interested in how the surgeon would help me gain control of not only my motion and strength, but help restore my lifestyle. I also remember the first time I was assisting the orthopedic residents in the ER at Grady Hospital during a night shift and we were reducing a posterior dislocation of a hip on a 35 year old man who was in a motor vehicle accident by performing an Allis maneuver. I thought to myself, this is what I was meant to do. Hours can go by and it seems like minutes for me. The gratification and sense of satisfaction is a feeling that is hard to explain, and I don’t see myself doing any other specialty.

When I recently attended the AAOS conference in San Diego I inquired and learned more about the advancing technology. The biotechnology, joint replacement and arthroscopic products are exciting and I will also work diligently to combine my technical skills with a humanistic approach to my patients. I want my patients to see me not just as a skilled surgeon but also as a surgeon who cares deeply about the welfare of those I serve. I would like to train at a program where the residents work cooperatively, faculty are happy and excited about teaching, and I can learn the adequate surgical techniques needed to be a proficient surgeon and help serve the community.

As I prepare for the next chapter of my life, I am humbled and extremely grateful to be in the position to be an Orthopedic surgery resident. I understand the challenges ahead and that residency will not be easy, but this is where my last and most important principle comes into play - enjoying the process. Smiling and enjoying the years to come in which I am taking another step towards my internal fulfillment, as well as having a positive impact on society, is what makes everything worth it.