

*This summer,
Dr. Robert Gordon's
life will change
forever.*

Day By

"I thought you were from a job profiling agency," says Robert Gordon, M.D., '99, who misunderstands me when I say I want to profile him for the alumni magazine.

But Dr. Gordon's mind is a little pre-occupied these days as he wraps up his internal medicine residency at SIU and looks forward to the promising opportunities that lay before him.

Indeed, it's already been a busy summer for Dr. Gordon as his life undergoes some radical — but all good — changes:

June 1: Dr. Gordon attended the graduation banquet from his SIU School of Medicine internal medicine residency

program, where he has spent the last three years.

"Internal medicine is great for me because I like thinking broadly. We treat everything from minor colds to serious diseases," he says.

By finishing his internal medicine residency, Dr. Gordon also bids adieu to his hometown of Springfield, Illinois. Born and raised in the Land of Lincoln, Dr. Gordon — just a year younger than the medical school itself — grew up hearing about the quality of SIU. Though always inclined to medical school, he considered an academic career in physiology. During his last year in graduate school at the Univer-

sity of Illinois, however, he volunteered at Memorial Medical Center and was fascinated by the excitement and passion of the emergency room. "Even though I was just helping out, it was very interesting . . . a lot of action. I liked the patient interaction."

Medical school beckoned, and Bob knew there was only one place for him. "I knew the quality of SIU School of Medicine and that it was the right fit for me. It was the only medical school I applied to, and I found out I was accepted on my birthday, December 24. That was a good present."

That birthday present became four years of hard work, but great rewards.

Even before he started medical school, Bob was reaching out to others. Through friends, he became involved in Camp COCO, a weeklong camp for children with cancer and other blood diseases. For five years, Dr. Gordon says he "had a blast" with the children, including swimming across Lake Bloomington, campfires, crafts and games. "This was their time to have fun, and rules like bedtime took a backseat." Dr. Gordon continued to participate in medical school, and he was the first student to mold the activity into an elective during his fourth year. "It was great helping kids and having fun myself." Volunteering at Camp COCO is now a regular elective offered through the School's Department of Pediatrics.

Participating in the mock trial was another memorable experience for



Dr. Gordon takes a pensive pose playing Ken Darling, Jr., during the School of Medicine's annual mock trial.

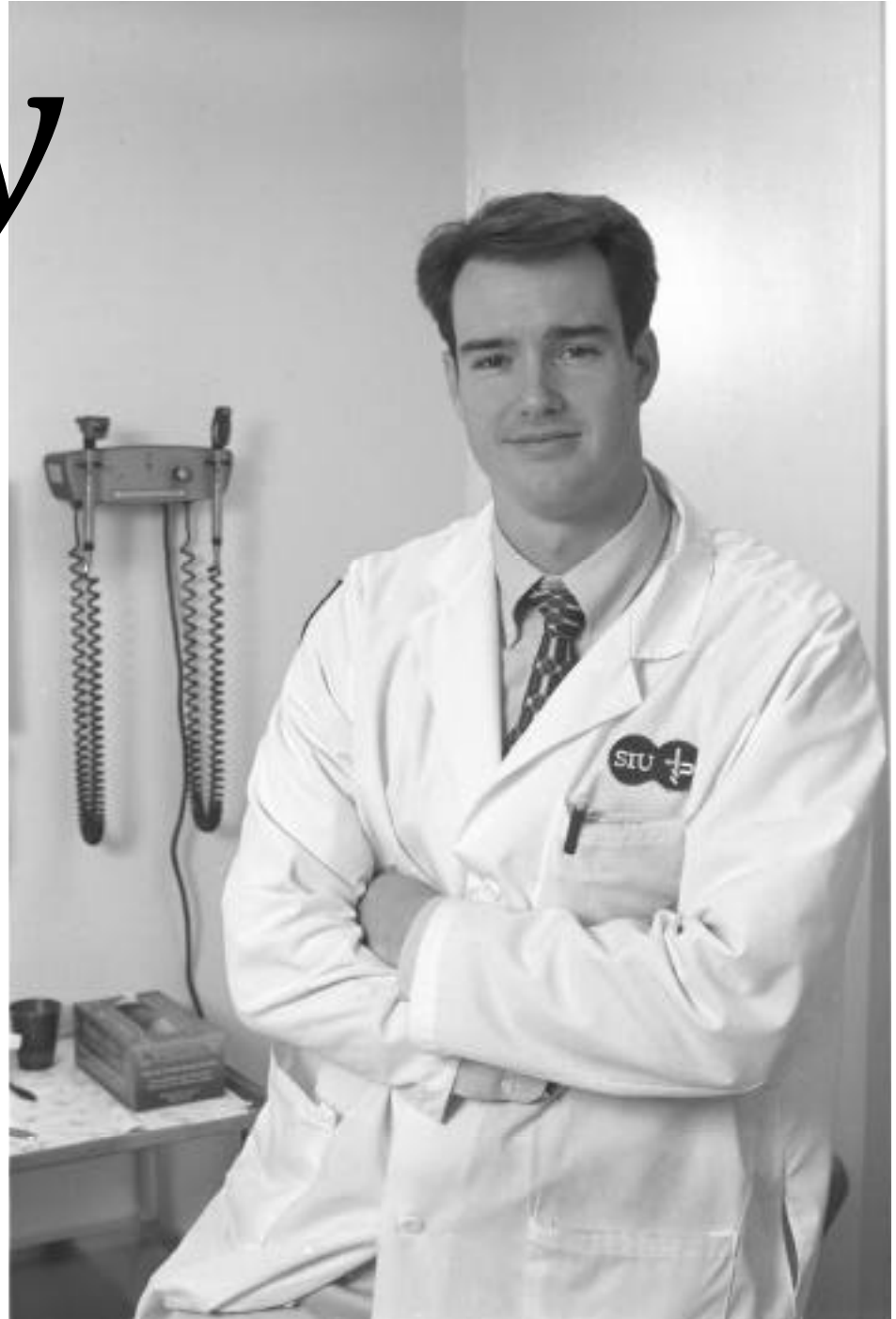
Day

Dr. Gordon. As a first-year medical student in Carbondale, he volunteered for a mock trial at SIU's law school. So when Theodore LeBlang, J.D., professor and chair of medical humanities, asked him during his first year of residency to play in the medical school's mock trial, he was familiar with the task. He had enjoyed watching the interaction as a student, and, though he won't be leaving medicine for Hollywood, Dr. Gordon approached the role — the sympathetic young man suing the hospital for negligence relating to the amputation of his leg — with the same dedication as he does medicine. "I did some research, reread the legal case, viewed the video, wrote notes. I was an expert at the role by the third year," he laughs.

 **June 7: Dr. Gordon married Kim Weiland**

Though they both worked in the same hospital, Bob and Kim Weiland, R.N., B.S.N., a nurse in the cardiac intensive care unit of Memorial Medical Center, met through mutual friends during Dr. Gordon's first year of residency. "We had seen each other before, but at some point, we just clicked," he says. "She's been very supportive of me."

With such a busy summer, Dr. Gordon has left the wedding plans to his fiancée. The honeymoon will be just a short week in Florida, where they will set up their new home. "I'll owe her a vacation."



Dr. Robert Gordon: "Internal medicine is great for me because I like thinking broadly. We treat everything from minor colds to serious diseases."

 **June 25: Dr. Gordon's residency officially ends.**

Three years earlier, Dr. Gordon awoke at 5 a.m. to start his first day as an internal medicine resident. "I was a little nervous — maybe that's how I am," he says shyly. "But I like

doing things right the first time." As it turned out, Dr. Gordon had the added pressure of being on call that day. "The first time I was paged, it was scary, he says. A meticulous student, Dr. Gordon was armed with three reference books and his ever-present clipboard to help him treat the

PROFILE



Dr. Gordon (top row right) loved volunteering at Camp COCO before he was a medical student. Now, volunteering at Camp COCO is a regular elective through the Department of Pediatrics.

patient. But given the chaos of the emergency room, “I lost everything within five minutes,” he remembers. “My senior resident, Dr. Manish Mathur, guided me through the first patient, and the rest of the night went pretty well.”

He remembers grabbing a nap during his shift, sleeping with the lights on and clutching his pager in case he would be called. It was that first day that Bob says he started feeling like “Dr. Gordon.” “As a resident, you are the one making the decisions,” he notes. “For example, you don’t have to have any medical orders co-signed. That’s exciting, but scary too.” Each day, he says, it got a little easier. He is grateful to the entire staff of the internal medicine department for their support.

June 26: Dr. Gordon and Kim move to Florida

Without so much time for his usual jog in Washington Park, Dr. Gordon and his new wife will leave their hometown for Tampa, Florida, where he will begin a fellowship in occupational medicine at the University of South Florida and a master’s degree in public health.

Dr. Gordon is looking forward to his fellowship and tackling new challenges, including playing a role in

health-care policy. “We need to reform the public insurance system so patients and physicians are treated fairly and there is adequate health care for all.”

August: Dr. Gordon will take his exams to become board-certified in internal medicine.

In the final leg of his journey of becoming a physician, Dr. Gordon will take the board exams. “I’m hoping to find time to study for the boards after we move,” he muses.

“But I feel like my training has already made me well-prepared.”

While in Florida, Dr. Gordon plans to pursue some hobbies he’s yearned to try, but that the intensive demands of residency hindered. “I love water sports,” he says. “I’d love to try windsurfing.”

But for now, Dr. Gordon is keeping his mind focused on finishing his residency, getting married, moving to a new state, starting a new position, and earning his board certification. How is he dealing with so much change so quickly? “Day by day,” he quickly replies. “I’m an avid list-maker, and it’s satisfying at the end of the day to see everything checked off.”

SIU School of Medicine has been the center of Dr. Gordon’s life for the past seven years. As one who “grew up with SIU,” Dr. Gordon now leaves the SIU nest well-prepared for the new life before him as he sheds the roles of medical student, resident, volunteer and mock trial actor, and takes on new roles as a confident fellow, devoted husband and board-certified internist. So what are his plans after his two-year fellowship ends? “Well,” he smiles. “Why not let me get through my busy summer first?” ■



Dr. Gordon and his fiancée, Kim Weiland, look over their June 1 wedding invitations.