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Rhythms of the Steel city

INTERNSHIP

BY SCHNEIDER DOWNS PROFESSIONAL

Squinting through the windshield, I watched the jagged tops of skyscrapers break the horizon line as the car approached Liberty Bridge. My Uber driver spun his head toward the back seat: "Pittsburgh has the most bridges out of any city in the entire country. Did you know that?" No, I didn't, and also, which river is this? "It's the Monongahela." Mahogany. Got it.

Yellow arches raced past me and soon I had an unobstructed view of the impossible-to-miss glass castle, PPG Place. With no one else to share my excitement, I told my Uber driver that I would be spending most of my summer inside this historic and stunning building. I think he started chattering about Pittsburgh Plate Glass, but my mind had already skipped ahead to my first day of work, envisioning how my summer in a new city would play out.

I visited Pittsburgh once when I was nine years old and several feet of snow blanketed the city. Pittsburgh in the summer shattered these preconceived wintry images, and I found myself immediately inspired by the colors of the city. In bright sunshine, Pittsburgh was golden. Under stormy clouds, the city was a pale yellow. This was the rhythm of the city – one that my summer experience followed.

The rhythm rose and fell. The charm and warmth of the city spilled through the transparent glass walls of PPG Place into Schneider Downs naturally. From orientation to day-to-day work in the office, the approachability of my team and everyone throughout the office provided me countless opportunities to ask questions and take initiative. I worked directly on several projects that helped me learn the fundamentals of corporate finance, and the welcoming workplace environment gave me the space to explore new concepts and ideas. Exciting events peppered most weekends: the Three Rivers Arts Festival, Fourth of July fireworks, International Jazz Festival. Still, adjusting to a city of strangers had its predictable challenges, especially when navigating a new job. But ultimately the desire for familiarity pushed me to travel across the city every weekend and understand Pittsburgh in more depth than what I could see from the seventeenth floor of PPG Place. Soon, I found foodie alcoves and art havens, running trails and walking paths. History is steeped within almost every institution. After catching a concert at the Pittsburgh Symphony, I spent an hour marveling at the early twentieth century grandeur of Heinz Hall (the Benedum Center boasted a similarly opulent interior). From the Andy Warhol Museum to Randyland to Frick Park to the Cathedral of Learning, I saw Gilded Age Pittsburgh meet technology age Pittsburgh.

One Saturday morning, I ran along Fifth Avenue from Downtown to Oakland, passing through Uptown, which I later learned was the central hub of Pittsburgh life in the 1920s. Now, this area feels vacant, but as soon as I turned the curve, Oakland, a

neighborhood dominated by medical facilities and university buildings, appeared in front of me. After peeking into the Nationality Rooms in the Cathedral of Learning, I crossed the street to Schenley Park, where Uber was performing a demonstration of self-driving cars that the company is testing throughout the city. Only in Pittsburgh could there be such a stark but natural juxtaposition of history and modernity, a symbol of how technology is poised to transform the city in the near future.

This summer has certainly helped me clarify my near future. I enjoyed the projects I worked on for my internship at Schneider Downs, and I know I want to continue working in this field. While Schneider Downs advised me on career plans, Pittsburgh taught me how to take ownership of my time in a new place (and how to finally pronounce “Monongahela”). When I inevitably travel away from the skyline to the airport, I won’t forget to continue riding along the rhythms of the city.

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