Vet school apps! Prompt: Discuss briefly the development of your interest in veterinary medicine. Discuss those activities and unique experiences that have contributed to your preparation for a professional program. Discuss your understanding of the veterinary medical profession, your career goals and objectives.

Tones I want to imbibe in my essay:

compassion

passion

determination

global/conservation mindedness

**Thesis: What drives my interest in becoming a veterinarian is the human-animal bond and how I can help that bond flourish in the most positive way.**

The opening in the great Bernese Mountain Dog’s abdomen steamed quietly as the surgeon gasped and swore under her breath, finally meeting the cause of “Sam’s” plummeting weight over the past few weeks. My eyes widened in a mixed state of horror and fascination as Dr. Patton proceeded to extract a grossly lumpy, purplish organ larger than a T-bone steak from Sam’s body. She promptly cut out and dropped into my hands the cancerous spleen that had been slowly drawing life from a dog so loved by her family that her “father” had left work early just to make sure to see her before the surgery.

I spent the night with sweet, gentle Sam, monitoring her condition and intravenous fluids. The young but massive dog groaned and whined; I offered as much verbal and tactile comfort as I could, knowing that it was Dr. Patton who had provided the true and lasting relief through the splenectomy earlier that day.

I had met the children who accompanied their mother and dog to the veterinary appointment that day, and had followed the progression of Sam’s declining health in her medical record. I had held Sam steady during the ultrasound that revealed her bleeding spleen, when Dr. Patton announced that surgery as soon as possible would save this dog’s life. The comfort Dr. Patton was able to offer to both Sam and to her human family had a great impact on me. All this and the surgery happening on my very first day at the clinic—baptism by fire to the world of small animal medicine—Sam’s case was a major eye-opener, not only in horror and in fascination, but in discovering and defining my underlying passion for veterinary medicine.

I had for several years envisioned myself solely as a wildlife research veterinarian that would change public policy in favor of conservation and biodiversity. Suddenly, I was flooded with confusion as small animal medicine began producing an equally strong tug. The unexpected appeal of clinical practice nagged at me for weeks until I finally realized that it is not a certain type or group of animals that drives me towards veterinary medicine; in all capacities, it is my fascination and love for the human-animal bond. I recalled what I liked best from my experiences working at the zoo, in wildlife rehabilitation, and in pet clinics, and found a pattern. I realize I always find myself facilitating and participating in human-animal interactions, educating people about animals, or simply trying to understand how the people saw the animals they were involved with. I found I always sought to be the bridge between humans and animals.

I started a Marine Animal Conservation club to raise awareness about marine animals and human threats to their environment and population status. I organized beach cleanups and field trips to tidepools and science museums, and a “Save the Whales” march as part of the 2011 Independence Day parade in my hometown. As a counselor at a summer farm camp, I showed children the joys and responsibilities of caring for farm animals. I was exposed to how other countries see their resident animals when I spent 12 days in the Galapagos Islands. I began painting wildlife on denim jackets and lab coats, intending to spark interest in wildlife in those near to the wearer. Walking shelter dogs at the SF SPCA, passerby would often comment on how cute the dog was—at these times I tried to engage them in conversation about adoptions, the mission of the shelter, and answer the questions they had.

As a zookeeper intern at the Oakland Zoo I always made it a point to interact with guests. I encouraged questions as I fed birds in the aviaries, and always tossed the mealworms in the air for the African Blue-Bellied Rollers to catch mid-flight. Enriching for the Rollers, it also helped people connect the common name to their unique flight pattern involving mid-air rotations. I loved talking to guests about the interesting biology of the pancake tortoises when I brought them out for sunshine and enrichment on the grass. When I was not so confident about answering questions about the zebras, I began observing them and reading up on their natural history. This eventually led to a personal project where I compiled my observations and background research into a zebra body language guidebook for fellow zoo staff and volunteers.

Through wildlife rehabilitation I was able to give injured and orphaned animals direct aid. Taking note of the reasons animals were released to the rehabilitation center, I discovered that were injured or orphaned most often as a result of human activity. This was a major marker in the development of my interest in the human-animal interface and in wildlife veterinary medicine. However, my more recent experiences in the small animal clinic have revealed to me that ultimately what I strive for is to be the conduit for animals to be better understood by humans.

I cherish the bond between the 18-year old girl and the dog she grew up with since childhood; between a father pointing out a squirrel to his son in the park; between a grocery-store shopper and the chicken or fish they might buy for diner; between an impassioned college student and the critically endangered black rhinoceros. I have never ceased to appreciate the breadth and depth of the human-animal bond and will always strive to better understand and reinforce it in the most positive way.

Sam’s moaning and groaning was obviously out of soreness and exhaustion from the surgery, but I long to be able to offer more than just verbal and tactile comfort. I want know intimately the physiological cogs and wheels so that I can pinpoint and right discomfort. At the same time, I want to be able to ease discomfort in people to whom the animal is dear. I want to be able to strengthen people’s connection to their pet, to the squirrel in the park, to farms and fisheries and to the critically endangered black rhinoceros all the way in Africa. Through veterinary medicine I believe will be able to help these connections flourish in the most positive way for both humans and animals.