



January 28, 2021
Stephen Hicks, Class of 2009

This month's alumni spotlight features Mr. Stephen Hicks from the Class of 2009. It's not uncommon for kids growing up to identify a dream job early in life. But as they engage in new experiences and discover new interests, very few of the early dream-job scenarios manifest. For Stephen, interest and dream job aligned at an early age and would eventually play into a career inside the broadcast studio.

Stephen started his Catholic schooling at Most Holy Trinity grade school before attending Bourgade. As a Golden Eagle, Stephen was a student council member and one of the school's most successful golfers. He made the state golf tournament each of his four years and shared in a lot of success throughout various tournaments and matches. While Stephen always regarded golf as a fun hobby, his interest in news and information would be the pathway to spark his eventual success.

Stephen remembers going out of his way in 4th grade to watch the 2000 presidential debate and using Microsoft Word to create a newspaper front page that reflected the playground events from the most recent recess. His love for sports also surfaced at a young age as he remembers falling asleep to Suns' radio broadcasts and waking up to Arionza Sports morning shows. A career in sports quickly became Stephen's dream job, but he knew that the competitive nature of the industry would be tough to crack. The uncertainty led him to engage in general studies at Glendale Community College. After earning his associate's degree, Stephen took to Google for advice on pursuing a career in journalism. When a quick web search for the "best journalism schools in USA" revealed ASU's Walter Cronkite School, Stephen couldn't believe one of his best options was right in his backyard.

From early on, Stephen always envisioned his career to be in sports radio but after completing an internship as a producer/technical director for a local Arizona Sports radio show, he quickly learned that television would be a much more rewarding path for his personality. During his last year at ASU, Stephen realized that he was going to need more experience on camera if he had any shot at landing a reporter job, so he pursued another internship opportunity as a reporter in Washington DC. The position included a four-day workweek of reporting from the Senate, House of Representatives and White House with a 1.5-hour commute to and from Manassas, VA where Stephen was living with family rent-free. Claiming it was the hardest he had ever worked, it also proved to be a catapult for his TV role.

Stephen landed a reporter job in Bakersfield, California immediately after graduation. Within three months, Stephen became the nightside reporter covering breaking news and the occasional feature. When a sports director position opened up, Stephen approached his news director to inquire about the job which earned him a 3-week trial which, eventually, turned into three months before he signed a new contract as the station's full-time sports director. Three months became three years in the position and suddenly Stephen was heading up I-99 on his way to work for the #1 television station in California's Central Valley, ABC30 in Fresno. After a year as the weekend sports anchor/reporter, ABC30's sports director position opened up leaving another opportunity for Stephen to capitalize on. At 28 years old, Stephen would become the youngest sports director in the station's history.

Among his accomplishments, Stephen crowned some of his reporting opportunities as the most fulfilling of his young career. Interviews with elite coaches and athletes, traveling and covering teams through

tournament play and starting his own sports show, *Bulldog Breakdown*, for ABC30's partnership with Fresno State University were at the top of the list of Stephen's greatest accomplishments.

For those wondering what a day in the life of a sports reporter looks like, Stephen documented some of his coverage of the Cal State University Bakersfield's National Invitation Tournament run in 2017. During the tournament, Stephen followed the team across four states covering as many games while the team became the first-ever #8 seed to make the NIT Final Four. During the coverage, Stephen was a one-man show handling the photography, editing reporting and web writing all by himself. Check out some of Stephen's journey...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=eF299P5MCsg&t=1s>

Congratulations to Stephen on all his success.