The Secret Origin of Positoid

How our superhemo decided to use his powers for good

June 1, 1998 By Shawn Decker

The two-year anniversary of my willingness to share my positoid lifestyle with the general public has arrived.

The whole journey began one night with an earnest, respectable 20-year old positoid (that would be me) at the bowling alley. It was a dismal outing, but I knew the self-disgust I felt was not solely the result of barely breaking the score of 100…there was something deeper going on. This was indeed my midlife crisis.

Then and there I realized that I had no idea what I wanted to do with the rest of my life, however long or short it would be.

In my pea-size brain, I was always a few years away from getting caught by the virus inside of me, so I had never really worried about achieving lifelong goals and ambitions. When I realized that I would be around longer than I had thought, I strated to freak out a little. I had shunned the negatoid lifestyle (sleep, eat, work, repeat) because I never thought I could become an active part of it.

So that night after bowling I was in my bedroom, and the negativity was lingering like an uncle's fart on Thanksgiving Day. And that's when it hit me and everything changed.

The discontent was lifted frommy shoulders, seemingly all at once. I looked down to see if my feet were on the floor, that's how intense the floating sensation was.

This was all brought on by one passing thought: *I had to talk about living with HIV*. My mother had mentioned this to me when I was younger, but at that time, telling people I was infected was the absolute last thing on earth I wanted to do.

But this was different. I understood suddenly that I could tell people about my life without compromising myself in doing so. Before that night, when I imagined "talking about life with HIV," I saw myself telling a roomful of strangers about how I have AIDS and watching them cry tears of pity. The one thing I can't stand is for someone to cry over what they think my life is and what they think it represents. It's a good life, and I wouldn't trade it for anyone else's (not even Mr. Sly

Stallone's). I'm nobody's victim.

It's possible that the new outlook was a maturity thing. Or maybe it was just a deperate attempt to escape a debilitating streak of boredom. Whatever it was, I realized that I wanted to speak first about myself—and only secondly about the virus—because that's how I've always prioritized my life.

Stretched out before me was this huge, empty field. And I was ready to play some ball.

I decided to put up my own Web page. To get started, I searched the net for "People With HIV." To my surprise, not much turned up. It was a letdown—I'd figured that by 1996 many people would finally be ready, willing and able to let others know what life with HIV is and isn't like. When I finally found a personal site, it cautioned at the end to "not put your life stories up on the net," because of all the dangerous and demented people out there. After I read that, I knew I had to make the Web page. Bring on the lunatics.

What I found was the exact opposite. I met some great people online and the goffy things I wrote were well received. Nobody was offended by the joking manner in which I live my life. And despite my best efforts, nobody has stalked me…yet.

Just as I was getting comfortable in cyberland, I got word from the outside world. *POZ*'s very own Sean Strub called and invited my to New York City for an interview. Before my revelation, I'd always figured that I was meant to be some sort of John Cougar Mellencamp type of guy. Just stick around the small town I was born in with a hay straw dangling nonchalantly from my bottom lip.

But instead I became the first-ever "positoid." This term just happened to flow out from my fingers onto my Web page one night. For so long I was defined by a virus ("HIV positive"), a disease ("hemophiliac") and a disposition ("idiot"). Now I had a way to package and market it.

So next time somebody calls you a "victim" or refers to you as "the afflicted," threaten to spit on them. Then stand up and proudly say, "I am a positoid."

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