Walk This Way

One small step for baby, one giant step for grandpa

July 1, 2003 By Josh Sparber

Who: Allen Looft
What: His granddaughter's Katy's first birthday
Where: Akron, Ohio

After his AIDS diagnosis in 1994, Allen Looft didn't think he'd live to see his daughter, Annie, graduate from high school. Now 61, he's seen her graduate from college, get married and have a baby. Looft invited POZ over to the in-laws' house near Akron, Ohio, for his granddaughter Katy's first birthday party.

1) "Katy took her first steps the day before her birthday. At the party, if she tried to walk four times, she'd make it once and fall down on her bottom the other three times. But then she'd get back up and try again."

2) "We had an Easter egg hunt, birthday cake and presents. Arturo, Katy's proud papa and a Mexican national, made two authentic piñatas. Katy was a trooper. It was almost like, 'Gimme a millisecond before the flash and I'll pose.'"

3) "Katy was enjoying the attention. In fact, she didn't go to sleep until about midnight that night. We had just jazzed her up all day long between presents, food and flashing cameras."

4) "Katy would look at the presents and when people would ooh and ahh, she'd smile or clap. She received everything from A to Z—clothes, books and toys that she'll probably enjoy for five minutes and then go find some pots and pans. There were a couple of moments at the party when I just had to get away because I was getting a little emotional—I had tears of gratitude that I could be there for Katy's party. Every once in a while at family gatherings or special events, I think what a blessing it is to be alive."

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