



In My Life

Aging warps time for us all, but living with HIV as we get older adds even more wrinkles to the process.

August 11, 2025 By [Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.](#)

I turned 50 just five years ago, but it feels like a lifetime since then. For me, the combination of the COVID-19 pandemic and the political upheavals of recent years has made this time feel like a long stretch indeed.

Aging warps time for us all, but living with HIV as we get older adds even more wrinkles to the process. That's why aging is the theme of this issue. It's estimated that half of us who have the virus in the United States are 50 and over—by 2030, it's thought that 70% of us will be in that age group. Understanding aging is vital for our well-being.

Shawn Decker, our cover subject, has some thoughts on aging as he celebrates joining the 50-and-over club. [Go here](#) to read his reflections on his journey with HIV and other health challenges.

Over the years, the pages of POZ have been witness to Shawn's many twists and turns living with the virus. His sense of humor, which imbues his writing, is a wonderful gift. We're thankful that he continues to share his insights with us, warts and all.

An unavoidable aspect of aging is loss, which leads to grief. Denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance are widely known as the five stages of grief. People experience those emotions as part of the healing process. However, many folks often try to skip anger. Victoria Noe believes that we must acknowledge anger to face the challenges ahead. [Go here](#) for more.

As a longtime HIV advocate, Victoria has seen and experienced anger. So has long-term survivor Mark S. King. [Go here](#) for his counterintuitive take on processing loss—to stay positive, embrace the negative.

Shawn, Victoria and Mark have all witnessed AIDS history up close as it has unfolded. Such

experiences are not forgotten easily. For those who didn't have a front row seat to those struggles, it can be difficult to understand just how much folks had to overcome. Too many didn't make it. A new podcast explores a slice of that history.

From 1987 to 2003, the Metropolitan Community Church of San Francisco made cassette recordings of Sunday services so that homebound parishioners living with HIV could listen to them. Over 11 episodes, *When We All Get to Heaven* uses the tapes alongside interviews and archival audio to tell the story of how the church sustained itself through those tough times. [Go here](#) to learn more.

As the saying goes, the more things change, the more they stay the same. That's certainly true when it comes to HIV stigma. Long-term survivor and former New York State Senator Tom Duane is struck by the misconception that HIV stigma is vastly diminished. I completely agree with him that it is not. [Go here](#) to read more.

Another challenge facing those living with HIV these days is discrimination. Arguably, LGBTQ people in general are under pressure, but transgender people in particular are really feeling the heat. In that context, the 2025 National Trans Visibility March was especially meaningful and included trans folks living with HIV. [Go here](#) for details and photos.