# Jeff

November 14, 2014

San Diego, California
Positive since 1985

I recently saw the movie Dallas Buyers Club, and it brought me back to that time in the ’80s when being diagnosed with HIV/AIDS was a terminal illness and in too many cases a death sentence. I’ve been HIV positive since 1985. It is only by the grace of God that I lived, and I am so grateful.

That was a time of such turmoil. Ignorance was so dominant then in society, especially with the Jerry Falwells of the world outright condemning those of us with HIV/AIDS, actually claiming it was God’s wrath and condemnation upon us. The media was not much help either, spreading confusion. I lost a great many friends.

I had a lot of survivor’s guilt until I realized that I’m here for a reason. I’m still learning what that reason is. Perhaps just writing this is helping. I hope so. I did share with many people affected by this illness that God loves them and does not condemn.

Church and politics aren’t supposed to mingle, yet one party—the Republicans—did just that, starting with Ronald Reagan. I think it’s noteworthy that Reagan never even mentioned the word “AIDS” in his tenure as president.

The “haters” are still at it, mainly those calling themselves right-wing conservatives. They’re so wrong, and after all these years I believe their end is near. Not one bill that actually helps anyone but the very rich has come out of this Tea Party Congress. I am so grateful that we have Obama as our president. I realize ignorance in its many forms will always be with us, but I’m not going to hide the fact that I am so looking forward to this particular ignorance crawling back under the rock it came out from. For society’s sake and the sake of returning sanity to our government, I am hopeful that with these oddball ideologists gone, government can actually govern again.

On a separate note, I am so grateful for the HIV meds we have, and I believe that HIV/AIDS is finally nearing its end. Stem cell research—something else Republicans are against—may be the conduit to the cure.

As far as a cure itself, I don’t even know how to feel about it. I’ve been HIV positive for so long. I lived through AIDS (zero CD4s) and now am actually thriving with no physical signs I ever had it.

I don’t know how many long-term AIDS survivors like me are still around. I do hope people who are newly diagnosed have some understanding of the thousands, myself included, who offered themselves as guinea pigs to the big pharma companies in AZT trials during the ’80s so that these meds could even be discovered! Let’s not forget all those who died so that people diagnosed today can live.

What three adjectives best describe you?
Positive, hopeful and grateful

What is your greatest achievement?
Becoming a better man and pressing on to become even better

What is your greatest regret?
The years I lived not realizing my potential to myself or giving to others

What keeps you up at night?
Not much these days; I usually sleep like a rock.

If you could change one thing about living with HIV, what would it be?
Not being annoyed by the people who are still ignorant and hateful to those of us with HIV

What is the best advice you ever received?
Not to let HIV define who I am

What person in the HIV/AIDS community do you most admire?
Ryan White for his courage while he was alive, and his mother for her courage after that. And Magic Johnson.

What drives you to do what you do?
The desire to help others realize their potential

What is your motto?
“It’s not what we know that gets us into trouble. It’s what we know for sure that just ain’t so.”

If you had to evacuate your house immediately, what is the one thing you would grab on the way out?
One of my paintings. It has within it an expression of who I am as a person.

If you could be any animal, what would you be? And why?
Probably a dolphin. They’re so amazing, agile and free-spirited.

---

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.