Maret Turner

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Maret TurnerCourtesy of Maret Turner

Cherryfield, Maine
Positive since 2003

I was born and raised in New Jersey. I have four grown children and two still live with me: My daughter Donna was a long-haul trucker until she got uncontrollable diabetes, and my precious Bambi is developmentally delayed due to radiation treatments she received when she was just 21 months old. She keeps me young and is a total sweetheart. She's my gift from God.

My husband passed away in the '70s from a motor vehicle accident when he was just 36, leaving me to raise the kids alone. In the early '90s I went to Florida, where my aunt was, and I lived there for five years before going back to Maine.

During that time I became severely anemic and had to have eight blood transfusions. In 2003 I became sick again, and my doctor did all sorts of tests on me to try to find out what the problem was. She asked if I minded taking an HIV test and I said, Sure, why not; I hadn't been with a man in over 11 years, which shows how naive I was about HIV/AIDS. My test came back positive, and the only thing we could think is that I got HIV from the blood transfusions.

I immediately joined a support group because I was lost and scared and knew nothing about HIV. I have learned a lot since then and have helped my counselor with talks to the elderly on how HIV can happen to anyone and why it is important to be tested.

What three adjectives best describe you?
Happy, smart, caring

What is your greatest achievement?
I lost 183 pounds in the '80s.

What is your greatest regret?
Having blood transfusions in Tampa, Florida

What keeps you up at night?
Sleep apnea

If you could change one thing about living with HIV, what would it be?
That I didn't have it

What is the best advice you ever received?
To make a friend you must be a friend.

What person in the HIV/AIDS community do you most admire?
Dr. Pinsky, who takes such good care of all of us. I also admire my couselor, Liz Mercer, for always finding ways to bring us together and help us.

What drives you to do what you do?
Faith. I figure everything happens for a reason and you live with it and keep on truckin'.

What is your motto?
Treat everyone with the same respect whether they are black, white, red or green, and have compassion enough to put yourself in their shoes.

If you had to evacuate your house immediately, what is the one thing you would grab on the way out?
My special daughter, Bambi

If you could be any animal, what would you be? And why?
I think I would be a bird; they are free to fly wherever they want and don’t have a care in the world.

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