



Pregnant and Positive

Long-term survivor Evaline Beaird learned she was HIV positive during a pregnancy.

February 10, 2025 By Evaline Beaird

I tested positive in April 1992. I probably acquired it in 1991 because when my husband returned from the Gulf War, I was sick with flu-like symptoms for two weeks. I had a fever of 104°F, a red rash on my face, body aches, chills, loss of appetite and was vomiting.

My husband went to school in Fort Gordon, Georgia, to change his military occupation specialty. I stayed in Columbus, Georgia, working in the accounting department at Aflac and attending Columbus State University at night to finish my bachelor's degree in criminal justice.

I had been off birth control pills for about 10 months before deciding it was time to start up again. I scheduled an appointment to go to a nearby military clinic. After the exam, the doctor came back in and told me I was pregnant. She referred me to the Martin Army Community Hospital.

I left confused, as I was not expecting this news. We were not trying to get pregnant. I scheduled an appointment at the hospital.

On the day of my appointment, they drew several tubes of blood and asked if I would like to have an HIV test. I said, "Fine." Because I was married, I wasn't worried about the results.

I left and went to work and forgot about the blood test. About three or four weeks later while getting ready for work, I received a phone call from a medical case manager who requested I come in as soon as possible and said she could not discuss the matter over the phone. I told her I was on my way to work and very busy and could not come in. She said, "Mrs. Beaird, I have to inform you that if you don't come in I will send the MP [military police] escort to come pick you up."

I started laughing. I thought my boss or friends were playing a cruel joke on me. I told the lady I would have to call her back. I called my boss to see if she was in on the joke and told her what the

lady had said. She said, "That sounds serious—you should go."

I went to the office, which was located at Fort Benning. When I arrived, I checked in at the front desk and sat for a few minutes before a lady came and escorted me back to her office. She asked me to verify my name and other information. Then she looked at me and said my blood had tested positive. I said it had to be a mistake. She said she thought so too and asked me to come in to give another blood sample to retest. It would take about a week or so to get the results. I was sure there had been a mix-up in the lab.

About a week later, she contacted me and asked me to come in. When I arrived, I was taken back to her office. After verifying my personal info, she said the new blood sample tested positive too. I gave another blood sample, and she said she would hand-deliver it to the lab herself to make sure it did not get mixed up with any other blood samples.

I waited to get the results. She called and requested I come back into the office. The results were also positive. I gave another sample, and after the third test, she said "Mrs. Beaird, we have to believe your test results are truly positive. We have to follow protocol and contact your husband's commander and make him aware of what is happening and get the soldier tested." She told me she was sure his test would be positive and asked if I would be OK. I forgot all about being pregnant at this point. I don't remember even telling my husband about the pregnancy. I didn't know what or how to feel. I had to deal with an HIV diagnosis and the pregnancy news.

I went back to work. I wanted to share the news with my supervisor, but the case manager had cautioned me not to tell anyone at work. I was afraid they would fire me so fast I wouldn't see it coming. I lied to my supervisor and told her they had to give me a test to determine if something was wrong with my baby.

My husband tested positive. He had orders to be deployed overseas to Germany, but after the positive HIV test, the orders were canceled, and he was deployed stateside to Fort Carson, Colorado. I ended up quitting my job and moving to Colorado and found an apartment the first week there.

After living in Colorado, my husband, son and I relocated to Tennessee. We had another son. He lived for only a few months. We were told he was HIV negative but found out later he was HIV positive. He was born June 18, 1996, and died of RSV and other complications on January 19, 1997. My husband died of non-Hodgkin lymphoma on Father's Day in 1999.

Today, I am living and thriving in Tennessee. I have a son who is in his 30s. I am

a member of the Nashville Regional HIV Planning Council, and I work part-time at Nashville CARES as a HealthyU peer associate. I had to learn to advocate for myself through attending workshops, conferences, support groups and working at nonprofit agencies. I am sharing my story to help break down the shame, silence and stigma surrounding the virus.

What three adjectives best describe you?

Resourceful, organized, creative.

What are your greatest achievements?

Graduating from college and raising an African-American son without a mate.

Do you have any regrets?

I regret not doing HIV advocacy sooner. I regret not being a better money manager as a teenager and in my 20s.

What keeps you up at night?

Fear about the future of this world; not having enough money to live my best life.

If you could change one thing about living with HIV, what would it be?

The criminalization of it.

What is the best advice you ever received?

Live your life. People are going to talk about you regardless.

What person in the HIV community do you most admire?

Sheryl Lee Ralph.

What drives you to do what you do?

Getting rid of the internal stigma that I allowed to be deposited into my psyche.

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