25 Years Since My Dying Wish

June 2, 2015 By Shawn Decker

June 6. 1990. I sat nervously in a van, borrowed from a family friend for a special journey. My parents, best friend and aunt were aboard. Our destination? A concert about two hours from home, but the ride there felt like it took a day... I was 14, and I was about to meet my favorite band as my final wish.

It's both hard and easy to believe that it's been 25 years since I met Depeche Mode through the Make-A-Wish Foundation. A lot has happened since then... at 14, I was just starting to get interested in playing music. I wasn't deathly ill, but my t-cell count was hovering at a dangerously low level. Back then, I had no interest in talking about HIV. I'd just wait and see what happened... music, to me, was an escape from all of that medical bullshit. My favorite bands spoke to my concerns about my own mortality. Deeply private moments that I cared not to share with friends or family. Through headphones and good tunes, I was able to resolve those feelings.

I'm proud of the man I've become- content in my own skin, happy with my accomplishments and thankful for all of the elements that made my survival possible: a caring family, friends who had/have my back, access to medications when I needed them. And a loving partner in Gwenn.

I'm working on something to commemorate this occasion, a celebration of survival. Something fun for a good cause. But I'll give details later. For now, I just want to reflect on who I was... 25 years ago. Just a teenager with a record in his sweaty hands, waiting impatiently to shake the hands of the folks he'd turned to so many times when it felt like there was no one he could talk to.

Positively Yours,
Shawn

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