30 years, 9 months, 17 days

July 24, 2014 By Joseph Burke

Hard to believe when looking back, but 30 years, 9 months, and 17 days ago I was diagnosed as having HIV. It wasn't until years later in 1988 that I found out I had Hepatitis Non-A, Non-B, which at the time there were no conclusive tests or discovery of Hepatitis C. In roughly 1992, tests were invented for patients to confirm Hepatitis C. It all goes back to November, 14th 1983, when my mother got a letter in the mail no parent should be expected to receive [**click the letter to the right to read**]. According to my mother's account, she was instructed to check the LOT numbers on my Factor VIII concentrates to the numbers they provided to be contaminated batches riddled with HIV and various forms of Hepatitis. Sure enough, the numbers matched, and so began my 30 year journey into co-infection living with HIV and Hepatitis C.

Using www.timeanddate.com, I was able to determine something pretty astonishing; I've been living with co-infection for over 30 years. But, something this past Winter happened on February 11th, 2014 that changed my life forever. I started a new drug treatment on Sovaldi and Ribavirin, and within just 4 short weeks, my Hepatitis C was gone. When I say gone, I'm referring to "Undetected" Status. Clinical protocols require a Sustained Virologic Response [SVR] of 6 months post treatment to be 100% certain; which means if the virus remains undetected 6 months after treatment, it is in fact a cure.

The picture is of me and my father in Winter 1983, and as you can tell from my pajamas, E.T. was a huge hit the summer before. I was roughly 4 years old in this picture, and based on the date of the Hemophilia LOT numbers being contaminated, I was just 3 years old when I become co-infected. It's strange saying I've lived with two deadly viral illnesses for over 30 years of my life. This November I'll 35 years old, and hopefully, by God's grace and will, I'll still be Hepatitis C free

and thrive to see 35 more in 2049. I’m certain within this decade we’ll see huge leaps forward in treatment and cures for HIV/AIDS once and for all. It’s been a long time coming.

Funny feeling it is... seeing family members die, friends pass away, living through the crisis of the 80’s of the AIDS epidemic to this point today. I can only believe and know for certain I’m here for one reason, to be a witness of the miraculous hand of a True and Living God. I don’t have to search the world over 100 times for mysterious signs and wonders of miracles... the fact is, I already am one. I say that with boldness and confidence, not with pride. My family has endured enough trauma and heartache from this wretched disease Hemophilia. But if I’m the one to survive, then I’ll be the one to testify of how awesome my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ truly is. Think about it, how many people do you know that has survived 30 years, 9 months, 17 days with Hemophilia, HIV and Hepatitis C whom are alive to share their story? Not many...

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