A New Wish?

March 25, 2015 By Shawn Decker

25 years ago I met Depeche Mode. I was 14. Diagnosed with HIV for three years- but living with it for at least five years at that point- I was already past my expiration date according to my initial prognosis.

When Ryan White passed in 1990, my mom was confronted with her own fears of losing me. She contacted the Make-A-Wish Foundation, and I was an eligible candidate. For about a year, Depeche Mode had provided the soundtrack to my life, so the decision on what to do was easy. Along with my best friend, I was granted backstage access before a show on the World Violation Tour (in support of Violator, the album that birthed Personal Jesus AND Enjoy the Silence).

It was awesome.

25 years later, and my life with HIV bears little resemblance to then. Today I speak openly about living with HIV with my partner, Gwenn. I take my HIV meds, eat well and drink lots of water. Back in 1990, there weren't any effective treatments, and I'd never brought up HIV with my friends, not even the one whom I invited to meet Depeche Mode with me...

So, my question is: in outlasting HIV and my prognosis, should I be eligible for another wish? Even though I am pushing 40?

If so, my wish is that a cure for HIV is found. Larry Kramer recently spoke out, calling for the push for a cure and railing against the status quo of what is the living-with-HIV experience for those with access to treatment. I agree with Larry, and it seems like hardly a month goes by without a promising article on new research that- if properly funded and executed- could lead to an end to this viral reign of terror.

But it can only happen if we speak out for its need. Treating HIV is great- I'm all for better treatments with fewer side effects and access to HIV drugs for everyone living with HIV. But the endgame should be complete eradication.

Positively Yours,
Shawn

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