Empowering Heroes in St. Paul, MN

March 31, 2008 By Shawn Decker

On Friday, Gwenn and I spoke at the Empowering Heroes Conference in St. Paul, Minnesota, and had the chance to talk with Jeanne White. I finally got a chance to thank her for speaking at James Madison University in 1998.

Why? Because that's where Gwenn and I met.

In my book, My Pet Virus, I attribute that chance encounter to her son, Ryan, pulling strings from above to help a fellow thinblood out. Even though the AIDS activist community is fairly small, I'd never had the privilege of really speaking with Jeanne White before last Friday

And, let it be known- Jeanne White rocks. She has a really good sense of humor, and is like the Godmother of all the thinblooded positoids from the 1980's. In addition to Jeanne, I got to meet a lot of positoids and negatoids who equally rocked my socks. And what was cool about the conference was that, when Gwenn and I spoke, *she* was in the minority as someone living without HIV: there were newly diagnosed, long-term survivors and other sero-diverse couples... I really enjoyed sharing my experiences with this crowd... my crowd!

Make no mistake: I love what Gwenn and I do, in regard to our public speaking/education work. I understand that- in the eyes of our standardly HIV negative audiences- that I begin our talks as some sort of circus oddity: ***MAN WITH AIDS! SEE HIM SPEAK! HE SLEEPS WITH HIS WIFE... WHO DOESN'T HAVE AIDS!***

Last Friday, that pressure to debunk that initial perception wasn't there. I didn't even notice until we started, it was like an unexpected breath of fresh air. And, I won't lie, I relished that clean feeling that only a roomful of positoids could provide.

Positively Yours,

Shawn

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