



Escape from Charlotte, Staying Alive @ Dragon*Con

August 30, 2007 By [Shawn Decker](#)

Last weekend I gave a little speech at a conference called Staying Alive, a yearly gathering of disco-enthusiasts who were too young to fully enjoy it the first time around, on the account that we were crapping ourselves.

Many of the 30-somethings, gathered together via a multitude of online communities, meet each summer to exchange retro-fashion advice, dance to the Bee Gees and ABBA and, ironically, do enough drugs that we end up crapping ourselves. Oprah calls this a full-circle moment.

OK, back to reality. No, Staying Alive is not a 70's thing, and no, I don't do drugs outside of my HIV regimen and iced mochas. It's an HIV/AIDS conference put on by NAPWA, the National Association of People With AIDS. You can determine which concept of the Staying Alive conference sounds like a better time.

Oh, before I get into the conference, I gotta talk about some old schoolin'. The Larry Craig sex scandal. He's the politician who votes against gay rights, then tries to procure gay sex in airport bathrooms. He's an easy target, for obvious reasons. Now, I'm not going to bash the guy. He's an old fella, gotta be in his late 60's, so I'm sure navigating the internet is a real bitch, one confusing pop-up ad after another, by the time he gets through those he's probably lost the pop-up ad in his pants.

So who can blame him for seeking thrills in the real world? Remember, this tiger was on the prowl during the actual 70's. So let's cut his hijinks a little generational slack here.

Back to the AIDS conference... I enjoyed Staying Alive, and was honored to speak at a luncheon on Saturday. The positoid before me went double over his time, which of course screwed me, so I had to make it snappy, particularly when the moderator included, "Keep it to 10-minutes," in his introduction of me.

But I'm a pro. I nailed it. Even got to work in one of my favorite lines from My Pet Virus: "Most people were worried about my HIV status, but by the time I got to high school another condition had taken control of my life: R.D.S.," wait for it... wait for it... "Restless Dick Syndrome."

(Please don't blame me if that becomes real. I can see the commercials now, "97% of males ages 12 to 78 are afflicted by this condition.")



Gwenn and I got out of dodge, but our travel back to home wasn't as easy as delivering cheap laughs to my positoid brothers and sisters. Our connection in Charlotte was tight, and our plane landed exactly 3-minutes before our flight home to Charlottesville was scheduled to take off. So take off we did, running from Gate D to Gate E, the funny part of this story is that I impressed Gwenn with my athleticism. "I didn't know you could run so fast!"

My lungs were burning like disco fever, but I didn't let on, soaking in the machismo.

We made it just in time, the flight attendants shouting, "They're here, wow that was fast!" We hustled onto the plane, sat down, and I told Gwenn, "We won't be driving five hours home tonight," as we exchanged respect knuckles.

Then the pilot came out of the cockpit. Pilots should never come out of the cockpits. He had a cryptic message, the lights went out in Charlottesville. I was about to use up my macho points and offer to land the plane in the dark, but I was too out of breath to suggest such a ridiculous thing.

Soon all 18 passengers were corralled back into the airport, where Gwenn and I started a revolt by requesting that our checked bags be returned to us, since we were going to rent a car and drive home instead of taking the hotel voucher (it was 10 PM, no more flights home or anywhere near home were leaving) and flying to a city an hour away (because all flights the next day to home were oversold) before taking a bus home.

We were nice about it, of course, but the idea captured the imagination of others, and soon a mother and daughter were on board, offering to split the cost of the rental car. Then our numbers grew to 8 when 4 others joined up. So we ended up renting an SUV and a car, and hit the road.

The first song that played when we got on the interstate was Foghat's "Slow Ride". Take it easy. I took Foghat's advice, and kept my speed under control so we wouldn't lose our SUV friends who were following close behind. By the time we pulled into Charlottesville, the Gods of Music ended the journey with another curious tune for the occasion, "Fast Car" by Tracy Chapman.

And now I'm off on the road again, going to Dragon*Con, and absolute geekfest in Atlanta. My friends Bella Morte are playing, Gwenn and I are going to watch them do their thing, interview their fans for BMTV (Bella Morte Television, YouTube it) and help out at the merch booth. Oh, there's also a Miss Klingon Pageant.

Should have stories to write about when I return!

Positively Yours,
Shawn



[Amy Butler of CAMPUSPEAK](#) is now booking Shawn and Gwenn for fall college campus appearances, for more info click on "Me & Gwenn", or email info@aboyagirlavirus.com. It's also Amy's birthday today... HAPPY BIRTHDAY, GIRL!

Check out Shawn's new CD featuring the Tori Amos cover, "[Raspberry Swirl](#)", and [original 80's-inspired](#) New Wave/Electronic music... *get with the programs!* **ALSO AVAILABLE on iTUNES!!!**

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