



Gracing the Cover

We've literally shared a lifetime since my early POZ days, and it's incredibly meaningful and a full circle moment to grace the cover again.

August 19, 2025 By [Shawn Decker](#)

The September 2025 issue of POZ is out! Check out [my article about what it means to turn 50](#).

In January, I really forced myself to pitch what would become the cover piece. That'll make sense when you read it, because one of the things that makes writing hard these days is how vulnerable sharing feels. It's a pretty huge difference from my first go around as a POZ cover boy, back in 1996 when I was invited to NYC to be interviewed for the magazine.

[Back then](#), you could count the sites on one hand where someone identified as being HIV positive. I like to think of myself as the thumb on that hand.

Within a year I was a columnist for the magazine, where I got a firsthand education in writing thanks to the crack team of editors who took my words to heart, helping me to shape them for

maximum impact. In fact, after Gwenn and I met by chance at a talk given by Jeanne White-Ginder, she made special mention of my first column for POZ, entitled [Sex & The Single Positoid](#), where I declared: “As it turns out, the ladies don’t dig HIV these days. Nevermind that I’m a willing stud capable of fulfilling one’s every fantasy.”

I’m sure my talented, gay buds in the editing room really helped in shaping my desperately hetero pitches.

These days?

It’s Gwenn that helps me sort through print outs, edits, the works. We’ve literally shared a lifetime since my early POZ days, and it’s incredibly meaningful and a full circle moment to grace the cover again.

Oh, on a lighter note, I totally geeked out when I found out that the photographers, [Ari and Louise](#), were a couple that worked together, too. Not just that, they took photos for Betty White’s 100th Birthday! I asked POZ if I could wear my Golden Girls t-shirt, because a hallmark of my 40s has been watching every episode of the Girls multiple times with Gwenn. Rose (Betty’s big-hearted character) even had an HIV scare due to a blood transfusion.

Sometimes, these silly life stories of ours write themselves, don’t they?

I’m glad POZ laughed but turned me down, because I settled on my AIDS Memorial T-Shirt. In recent years, when my anxiety was at its worst, there was only one place where I felt comfortable posting anything HIV and personal, and that was thanks to Stuart and the community he’s fostered on Instagram. It really is the closest thing to an online community I’ve seen since the earliest days of the internet.

Bittersweet, of course, because most of the people there are bonded by the incredible losses incurred by HIV/AIDS over the last five decades. Quite a few members of my original POZ Fam have passed to spirit over the years as well, and one of the reasons why I push forward to share my experiences is because it honors those very large wings that protected me... made me feel like my voice mattered when I was just starting to chirp up.

Part of making it to 50 and becoming a big bird, I guess, is surviving the losses- from the expected, like a grandparent, to the tragic. I just want to try to drop as many breadcrumbs of knowledge, peace and support for others as I can... before my time comes to shed this soul suit and fly off to the next round of adventures...

Wherever they may lead us.

And I truly believe we are all in this together here, there and everywhere. For better or worse, until death maybe do us part. That just seems too easy to be true, right? Til the big reveal, I say we do our best to give back some of the love that has kept us in the game. [This recent piece for POZ](#), with Gwenn’s help today and my hand guided by the ridiculous amount of love I’ve received in my

lifetime, is just about the best I can offer in words.

Positively Yours,

Shawn

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