Hemo2Homo on The End of Geocities

October 23, 2009 By Shawn Decker

On Monday, October 26, 2009, Geocities, one of the first internet communities, closed it's cyberdoors. I didn't even know it was happening until word started to spread around Facebook today. You could call Geocities the original Facebook. If there was something before Geocities, I didn't know about it.

While my first web site wasn't hosted on Geocities, one of the first HIV blogs was- Steve Schalchlin (my Hemo2Homo Connection movie partner) and his Living in the Bonus Round. He started blogging in 1996, mainly to keep family and friends up on his failing health. As he started on HIV medications that began to turn things around, he found himself in the unlikely role of both being alive and becoming an internet star. Strangers were fascinated with his writing and sense of humor and he appeared in The New York Times, People and Poz magazine alike.

Steve gives Geocities a good send-off here on his blog.

For me, Geocities was a place to chat with new net friends, who became real-life friends. In 1996, the world outside of my bedroom and small hometown of Waynesboro opened up: Geocities played a huge role in that being possible. It's where I met my first post-positoid girlfriend. Meaning, the first person I dated after going public with my HIV status at age 20. She lived in Brazil, and were together for just over a year. I learned how to disclose my status online...

In the safe confines of Geocities. In the Broadway chat room on the site, Steve encouraged me to start a blog the same year he did, when he still thought he might die and probably thought I would carry the smartass-with-AIDS torch well. We met lots of other net friends from Geocities in person as well, when people traveled from around the world to see Steve and his partner, Jim, go off-Broadway with their hilarious musical, The Last Session.

Yes, there were internet arguments- me and my girlfriend broke up, in Geocities where we met. There was a weird thing where someone was pretending to be teenage movie stars. But it was cool, we were freakin' communicating with like-minded people from around the world. And Geocities was the first to fulfill something that slipped the minds of the Founding Fathers: the Right to Have Thine Own Webpage.

I'll always have a place in my heart for Geocities, because it is indelibly connected to the biggest decision I made in my life: open up about HIV. It was life-changing, and the internet played and still plays, a huge role in how I educate about my pet virus. When I think back to those early days, and the sound of the dial-up modem loudly ringing out through the house, probably waking my parents up as I was logging on to find out what my West Coast friends were up to before they went to bed, I smile.

And, now that Geocities is going to bed, I can only tuck it in, kiss it on the forehead, and say...

***RRRRHhhhhhh, ARRRRRHHHHHH, IIIIRRRRRRR……. ZZZZZZHHHHHHHHHHHH!* (dial-up modem sound.)** Wait for it… wait for it… still connected? Okay, the kiss on the forehead, and a comforting, “Goodnight, old friend.”

Sleep well.

Positively Yours,
Shawn

Shawn on: Shawn’s book Decker’s Daily Coffee

Share the Blog. Not the Virus.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.