



My Fellow Thinbloods

October 20, 2006 By [Shawn Decker](#)

In writing MY PET VIRUS, the one group that I was most worried about in terms of how the book would be received was my fellow thinbloods. Wasn't quite sure how they'd handle the whole "thinblood" title, even though I knew it was a huge step up from "bleeder".

As a mild thinblood I make a lot of jokes about hemophilia, even though my childhood was in part shaped by my many visits to the hospital as a result. A somewhat experimental surgery at a young age made nosebleeds- my main dilemma- almost obsolete, which meant that my identity as someone with hemophilia shifted as the medical realities of life with the condition faded.

In junior high school, I remember how a couple of the lighter skinned African Americans were treated by their peers. Like they were a lesser member of their race. As my book release date approached, I was worried that my own community would treat me the same way, "Oh, you're a *mild hemophiliac*?"

So when I was invited to be a part of the 58th Annual National Hemophilia Foundation conference, I was a little nervous. Mark, a friend of mine, works for American Home Federation, Inc, a company his uncle founded which provides prescription medications for the thinblooded community. Mark thought it would be a good idea if they bought a bunch of books, and have me at their booth for signings. I half expected the deal to go south when I sent Mark a copy of MY PET VIRUS, and AHF had a chance to sink their teeth into the text.

Email from Shawn: "... well?"

Mark from AHF: "The book is great!"

Maybe part of me was hoping they'd bail, and spare me the arrows and daggers of my thinblooded brethren?

About a month before the 58th Annual National Hemophilia Conference in Philadelphia, my editor shot me an email and I couldn't give him too many details, as I'd never been before. So I wrote,

“I’m up for Best Nosebleed Award,” since having 58th Annual attached made me think of the Oscars.

Well, my editor included that in some of his emails to the press, and one reporter called the National Hemophilia Foundation, asking about the young author’s chances of snagging the award. I got an email from the NHF, which jokingly said, “The conference is a week away, and you’re already causing quite the stir!”

NHF laughed it off, and so did I... but I could just see my fellow thinbloods sharpening their blades, checking off their calendars and counting the days until they could carve themselves off a little bit of pre-Thanksgiving mild thinblood.

When I arrived at the conference, there was a line at the booth. The community was actually excited to see me, as there had been some mention in the conference materials about my visit. I signed books, I shook hands, I heard peoples’ personal stories and watched as kids ran around, enjoying a lot of the freebies that all the companies had to offer. The vibe was like a huge indoor picnic/circus, with lights blinking and even a big guy in an orange suit, who looked like Sesame Street’s Ernie on steroids.

I was supposed to be at the booth for an hour or so. But I stuck around until the conference closed. It was nice to be proven wrong, and of all the book events and all of the friends I got to see on the book tour, the most meaningful experience for me was going to this conference and getting in touch with my inner Thinblood.

And no, I didn’t win Best Nosebleed. But there’s always next year.

Positively Yours,
Shawn

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