Obi Sean Kenobi and the Heroes Among Us

May 5, 2020 By Shawn Decker

May the 4th has become a holiday of sorts for fans of Star Wars, as it's the original release date for the movie. I think. I'm a casual fan at best, so take any references to the franchise here with a grain of droid grease.

Does the franchise hold a special place in the heart of my youth? Sure it does. The first VHS tape that I ever watched at friend's house was Star Wars. If we found our own imaginations lagging, all we needed to do was see our heroes in action in a galaxy far, far away. Once when I was in the hospital due to an issue with hemophilia, it must have been an extended stay. But I don't remember what the problem was. What I do remember? My grandmother bringing me the Luke Skywalker action figure from Return of the Jedi, dressed in his all-black Elvis comeback outfit.

But the joy of Star Wars, for me, was extinguished in 1999 when George Lucas returned without a vision. Just a high powered computer and a twitchy copy/paste hand. You'd have to have 18 eyeballs in your head to see all of the computer animation that was happening in one shot. Actors, who'd once performed their craft on immaculately set up scenes, were now delivering stiff dialogue in front of green screens. I can't imagine the anguish of signing up to be in the new Star Wars movies, and then showing up to shoot your first scenes, surrounded by computers and green screens...

Around the time of the Phantom Menace's release, I was at my sickest. Hindered by rapidly dropping weight and t-cells and just two months shy of turning things around by going on HIV drugs for the first time. I'd also fallen in love with Gwenn. The true magic of 1999 was happening offscreen for me, beginning a new relationship and turning a corner with my health.

I'll admit, the anticipation of each new release was where the magic was. But the experience of Menace, Clone Wars and Sith didn't live up to the hype. I did have fun with the new characters, modding out my Stars Wars Monopoly to include battles, more negotiations and just losing myself in that world and my nerdom like never before. So I can't be too harsh on George Lucas, can I?

So this year, when May the 4th rolled around, I was there to exploit it by doing one of my Shawn's Ongoing Spacejams. A lot of my friends, and heroes, love the Star Wars franchise. Judd Winick posted a picture of him and Pam dressed up as Jedis on Instagram, and I commented that, in my world, people dress up as Judd and Pam. And it just got me thinking about people who I look

up to, or people who did something special at a time when I needed a little extra help.

In my Universe, one of the top Jedis is Sean Strub, current mayor of Milford, PA and co-founder of POZ. And I'm forever grateful for our friendship. It all started when I wrote a letter to POZ, fresh off the decision to open up about HIV for the first time at age 20. He must have had a hundred other things to worry about, but he took the time to read that letter and thought that readers of the magazine might enjoy reading about my journey, which was really just beginning. I love knowing that, today, Obi "Sean" Kenobi is a mayor, and that he is making the right decisions to take care of the citizens of Milford as this new viral threat has descended on mankind. Plus, he's still making sure that justice is prevailing with his work with The Sero Project. In the current issue of POZ, Sean discusses the importance of challenging HIV stigma in today's world.

In these trying times, entertainment is a huge source of relief. It takes us to another place and helps us reset and make better decisions in our real lives. And the true heroes are the ones that are there for us, patiently waiting for us to return from our flights of fantasy, and ready to guide us with a helping hand or a gentle nudge in the right direction.

Positively Yours,
Shawn

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