Outliving the Reagans

March 11, 2016 By Shawn Decker

Today I went to the dentist for a routine teeth cleaning. I wasn't psyched about it, mainly because of the bleeding that can occur afterwards. Minor stuff, it's just that I prefer the taste of my daily iced mocha without a splash of plasma.

I filled out my medical resume- checking the usual boxes of HIV, hemophilia, hepatitis B/C (they shared a box)- then turned the information over to the receptionist. The plan from there was to sit on the couch and dick around on my iPhone until I heard my name called, which would signal the inevitable bloodletting in a backroom. But before I could get my phone on, I was greeted by the Reagans, smiling at my from the cover of a People Magazine on the coffee table. Today, Nancy's funeral is being held... and I got to thinking about how stupid my feelings of aprehension were in regard to my dentist appointment (it went great, btw, no real bleeding!)... how few of my 80s HIV bretheren had the opportunity to sit on a comfortable couch on a 70-degree day in March in the year 2016... and check those virus boxes...

I didn't open the magazine- I took a picture with it. Then wrote the following and posted it on social media quickly, not wanting the feelings to pass without sharing:

I outlived both Nancy and Ronald Reagan. Many others who were diagnosed with HIV during Reagan's presidency were not so lucky. Their silence on AIDS - as it was emerging and killing the citizens they'd sworn to protect - is a dark chapter in United States history and a harsh lesson on moralism in politics.

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