Remembering Jesse Helms

July 6, 2008 By Shawn Decker

Jesse Helms died on July 4th, and I only know of him through his anti-gay statements pertaining to people with AIDS.

His solution to the epidemic in the 1990's? It was simple: gay people should stop having sex. The AIDS crisis wasn't the first-time that Americans got to see the machinations of the forwarding-thinking mind protected within Mr. Helm's skullcap.

In 1950, while working on a political campaign, he helped to create an ad attacking a rival, which read: "White people, wake up before it is too late. Do you want Negroes working beside you, your wife and your daughters, in your mills and factories?"

Helms was rewarded with five terms in the U.S. Senate. Deemed to sharp a mind to keep to ourselves, he was also selected to chair the Foreign Relations Committee. Most importantly, however, was his 2002 visit from Bono, which occurred a year before Helms retired. On his political deathbed he admitted he had not done enough in the battle against AIDS.

It's always touching when an 80 year-old man admits the follies and youthful indescretions of his 60's.

The latter really irks me, because Jesse Helms probably got his copy of *Achtung, Baby*, signed before he died. I doubt I'll ever get the same.

One of my dearly departed positoid pals, Stephen Gendin, wrote an article voicing his own frustrations back in 1996, the year I posted my first blog entry and began my journey living with HIV publicly. Gendin was among the vast number of incredible positoids who took me under their wing. In fact, his Poz column, "Jesse Helms Must Die", was the first time I'd heard about Helms.

I know everyone who dies is angelic, but I'm saddened that Stephen wasn't around to point out that one of the gay community's most vocal opponents died on *the 4th of July.*

What a drama queen.

Positively Yours,

Shawn

This blog is dedicated to the memory of Stephen Gendin.

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