WHATEVER! I’m still prettier...and I’m POZ!

August 13, 2008 By David Capogna

How gay can this be? My first blog for POZ.com (after being diagnosed in 1993, one year before POZ Magazine was published), including a picture of Amanda from Ugly Betty, looking viciously fashionable and fierce, with her signature white head-set. Those of you who have been following my entertaining, but also tragic, website for the last year and a half realize that AIDS had basically put my life on hold for the past four years. I did have tuberculosis in ’94 and had to go on short term leave from Ralph Lauren design for nine weeks, but this was the most life-changing event I had been through in my 37 years: in 2004, after eight and a half years employed by Gap Inc., at age 33, I was diagnosed with liver disease, consequently went on disability, suffered a stroke from the liver disease, which caused a severe mental disorder, and then to top it off my nine and a half year relationship with my ex-boyfriend ended. After a year of living on my own, (10 months were dedicated to decorating my apartment to the nines,) I said to myself, what’s next? Although I was living quite well on disability, I didn?t want to be ?retired!? I?m not even forty years old, yet!

In the past year I’ve interviewed for some design jobs, but I never searched anything out. Of course, I would lose my disability, so I would have to work for a large corporation which could provide the same benefits as Gap Inc. Major corporations equal stress: stockholders breathing down your neck, intense deadlines, world travel, etc. We all know what stress does to the immune system ?it ain?t pretty! Unless you?ve been living under a rock for the last 7 ½ years (Bush?s time in office,) you know where the US of A?s economy is at. As a result, there aren?t a host of companies willing to pay me a large sum of money to design backpacks or dog leashes for them! Rather than fight with this ?psychological recession,? I decided to work with it. I made a list of places I wanted to volunteer. Hopefully, this would put me outside of my comfort zone, break the cycle, get my ass out of the mid-morning yoga classes, stop me from watching The View, distract me from my obsession with facebook, and mindlessly shopping in Bergdorf Goodman on a Tuesday afternoon! The resulting list consisted of galleries, decorators, museums, auction houses, magazines, and AIDS/HIV non-profit organizations. I had recently contacted Conde Nast, because I have a lot of friends that work there as editors and graphic designers, but HR basically replied with a form letter regarding an internship. You would think that in this day and age everyone could use some FREE labor?!

To make a long story short, on a Monday, after watching GMA and Live with Regis & Kelly, I put the TV on mute because Rachel Ray?s voice is like nails-on-a-chalk-board, and called POZ Magazine (a.k.a. Smart + Strong.) I think I got my first issue of POZ in 1995 (when there wasn?t a POZ.com)

while I was recovering from tuberculosis. I?m not sure where I found it, probably at a Chelsea pharmacy, no less. I read that magazine cover to cover, and re-read several of the articles over and over again, obsession wasn't the word; I was addicted to it. (Those were the days before my stroke, I?m not reading that much anymore. It ?hurts? my brain.) Sean Strub is a maverick, a pioneer, and I may have had a little bit of a crush on him at the time. It was a dirty, and disgusted word to be HIV positive, when POZ Magazine was published. Sean and Stephen Gendin, founders of POZ, put the "hi" in HIV for the first time! Sean and Stephen deserved respect especially from the HIV+ community. Let the "comments" pour in, I'm ready! Okay, back to me. On Monday morning I called Strong + Strong, I was connected to Gio, the circulation manager. Gio is molto Italiano, so he immediately knew how to spell my name (which is amazing in itself) and added me instantly to his facebook friends. I was like, OMG no you didn?t?...

My actual job is circulation intern, basically updating the POZ.com and AIDSmeds.com AIDS Services Directory, which I find perfectly delightful. I am a full-fledged Virgo, and you know I just friggin? get on the fact that there's a style sheet for every entry that gets posted on the website. To top it off, there?s a spreadsheet to keep track of all of the entries, I LIVE FOR SPREADSHEETS! In addition, I?ve been a member of POZ personals since January of this year. POZ personals recently started to update the system and use me as their guinea pig for their beta version (why they call it ?beta? I don't know). I spent the better part of the morning uploading photos, and tweaking my profile for online computer dating?!... No sex in the city for me?yet, but the work that I'm doing now will hopefully bring more and more POZ people to find true love or ?it doesn?t matter???? Finally, I?m the new fashion-forward gay blogger? who needs another blogger?

Well, obviously someone at POZ thought it would be a good idea. I was told that they needed someone with a sense of pop culture, enter stage left... Let's get things straight: I'm not an activist, I'm not up on all the latest HIV/AIDS medical breakthroughs, and I'm not really that political either. I'm more into Domino Magazine dedicating an issue to green design, just so I can redo my living room?again. Please don?t think I?m too superficial, here?s a quote from my website intro: ?Hopefully [www.davidcapogna.com] might inspire you when you?re dealing with a friend or family member, or even your own illness. Everyone deals with some form of tragedy, at some point in his or her life, and its how you deal with the tragedy, that makes a difference.? HIV/AIDS sucks, bottom line, but if I could, I wouldn't change anything that happened in my life. And anyway, I?m just getting started!

XOXO...

PS Edited by my BFF, Hampshire Alum, and Lecturer in the Department of French and Italian at Dartmouth College, Dr. Aimee Kilbane

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