An Unforgettable World AIDS Day

December 14, 2009 By Shawn Decker

December 1, 2009: Waking up at home on World AIDS Day was strange- it's the first time that's happened since Gwenn and I started speaking as a couple... last time was in 1999, if I'm not mistaken. I wasn't quite sure if I was out of the bleeding woods, so I stayed in all day and recharged the batteries.

A friend on Twitter, Kathy, had posted about watching old *21 Jump Street* episodes on Hulu, which reminded me of the AIDS episode that first aired in 1988. The only time I saw it happened to be less than a year after my diagnosis; which was disturbing. The scene that stuck was Johnny Depp having lunch with the student he was there to protect, a hemophiliac who was HIV positive. When Johnny (Officer Hanson if you're nasty) went to excuse himself from the lunch table for milk, Harley the positoid kindly offered his.

"I don't drink chocolate," Johnny said, much to Harley's chagrin.

Click to watch episode.

The episode is an interesting time capsule. There's a Reagan-bashing line, the whole Ryan White angle with people protesting Harley's presence at school... when I watched it this time, however, I wasn't bummed about the milk. Instead I was bummed that what I thought was the toughest depiction of someone living with hemophilia on TV - Harley- turned out to be a farce when the character admits to Depp that the family concocted that story to gain sympathy in the community.

It was never acknowledged how Harley had contracted HIV- not that it matters but I was curious after getting bummed out that the punch-throwing, motorbike riding badass wasn't thin in blood. Regardless, It was oddly therapeutic to watch this episode again- 21 years later. Way more enjoyable with some nostalgia and two decades of living with HIV under my belt.

Aside from the iced mocha Gwenn brought home (made by Jaike!) and the hit of 80's cool that was *Jump Street*, another thing that softened the blow of having to wave the white flag instead of the red ribbon on World AIDS Day was the CNN.com article. It was published to commemorate World

AIDS Day, and appeared right there on the front page of CNN.com. Without leaving the house, I'd managed to get a message to more than just a few people. I was so happy about it, I took this screenshot. Can you find Waldo with AIDS? Click to read the article.

On the phone, I'd referred to Gwenn as my "wife partner", because I try not to really throw around the phrase "my wife" because I think it rubs the whole straights-can-marry thing into the face of the gay community. To me, saying "wife partner" is a nod to the term "life partner", but that's something I probably needed to explain... this started when I was adamant abotu not having "wife" on the back of My Pet Virus for the reasons explained in this paragraph. ("Wife partner" ended up on the back of the book right beside a picture of me and Gwenn.)

So, it was quite an eventful World AIDS Day even though I never got out of the house. I had my iced mocha, wistfully watched one of my favorite shows when I was a teenager who did not want to be associated with AIDS and made the frontpage of CNN.com. Not bad for a day off. So, having had a full day, I was ready to get some sleep again for the rest of the week. And then, just before midnight, my nose reminded that, unlike Harley, I am not a fake hemo.

Gwenn and I texted Christina, and another friend, Kristi, who is a trained nurse that lives closer to us. But this time, I wanted to try factoring up myself. The reason being that I didn't want to miss anymore talks, and that meant I'd be traveling with all of my hemo ammo this time, and if anything happened I'd have to infuse on the road. If I was going to mess something up in breaking my hemo hymen, I'd rather be at home for the mishap.

In the strangest turn of events all week, it happened: I I hit the vein on the first try. It was *uneventful*- no need for repeated sticks or a phone-a-friend... well, I did call Christina, who assured me I was in the vein, mainly because it seemed to damn good to be true. As the last ounce of factor was injected, the clock struck midnight and World AIDS Day was over.

It was a World AIDS Day I will not soon forget. The day I became a legitimate thinblood.

Shawn on: Shawn's book Decker's Daily Coffee

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