



KEITH'S JOURNAL.

9.20.11

Jet lagged — great London trip. Saw “Wicked” w/ friends. Saw the 25 anniversary gala of Phantom of the Opera @ Royal Albert Hall. Saw “The wizard of Oz.” Took an open bus tour of the city Road the London eye & had lunch & strolled Carnaby St.

For my 51st Birthday we went to NYC (Aug 28) to see a new production of “Rent”. Pretty amazing. Unfortunately, the hurricane hit the eastern seaboard & everything else was canceled. Had fun in the hotel though.

9.29.11

Back to work. The office is in the process of moving, lots of physical exertion, which is good after 9 hours on a plane.

Having new floors put in the living, dining, office & foyer. Very excited to have that process started! Thurs. evening worked out. Felt great. When I got home all the old tile & carpet had been pulled up. Dust clouds everywhere, but it feels so good to have these old floors out.

9.30.11

Still moving the office between floors, not much time to do my real work. Rob (partner of 18 years) keep sending me pics of the progress of the new tile – I love it.

It is so grown up. I'm not really a furniture or interior design guy —I didn't get that gene—my decorating style has been described as “romper room”, which suited me fine.

Now that I've crossed the half-century mark (who would have thought) I guess I'm ready to have adult surroundings.

I was infected in 1981 when I met the hottest man on the planet & he regaled me with stories of his sexual conquests in NY & Fire Island. I remember that summer, laying around the pool @ the house in the French Quarter, of New Orleans, reading the New York Native with the cover story about Kaposi Sarcoma. It was linked to people who went to the baths and/or did poppers, neither of which I did @ the time.

I did come down with a short version of the flu about a month after we started seeing each other. That “flu” was diagnosed as Hepatitis B.

Never gave the AIDS idea another thought until 1989. I offered to go w/ a friend to get tested & found out I was. It didn't make sense to me B/C I had been in long-term relationships and used condoms since the Surgeon General announced it as spread through sex. After a few months I figured out I'd been infected eight years earlier. Back when we were free.

So here I am, thirty years of being infected and life is good.

Yes, I take meds. Yes, I had some scares, before the Protease Inhibitors, but since then, nothing major.

10.10.11

I get very frustrated w/ clients who are “stuck” on disability and those who continue to want special or separate benefits and access to services. This only perpetuates the stigma of us and them.

Why shouldn't HIV be treated the same way Diabetes or any other chronic, but manageable illness?

10.11.11

Despite the fact that I work on grants or maybe because I work on grants to help people w/ HIV, I see the abuse of the system. HIV & persons who are perfectly healthy receive medical, dental, housing services free when they should be working like everyone else with manageable diseases, even cancer.

The economic meltdown & this new “Occupy Wall St.” is very interesting. I do feel like change is in the air. Maybe we will have a government where corporations will be held responsible for their actions.

Similar to people w/ HIV: You did something & you got infected. Take responsibility, tell everyone/ help educate.

Don't depend on the government to take care of you. Yes health care should be a “right” but you have to put some effort into the solution.

10.12.11

Scratchy throat. Hope it's not strep. Co-worker had it 2 weeks ago, really don't want to have to deal with that. Talking with a friend whose ex died unexpectedly. She hadn't been in touch w/ him in years but knew he was HIV+. We discussed the fact that, like any illness/ or life itself, you can just die, not necessarily from HIV, although that seems to increase the likelihood.

Funny, I don't think of myself dying from HIV. I see myself very old, maybe even 100 & when I'm ready, dying in my sleep.

In the mid 90's (before Protease Inhibitors) I became comfortable with the fact that AIDS would kill me. Then it didn't happen. Something in this random selection of events is keeping me alive. So, who am I to fight it? Relax and sparkle.

10.13.11

I wish the term AIDS was dropped from our vocabulary. AIDS is an archaic term that has no relevance today. You are either HIV+ w/symptoms or HIV+ without symptoms. No AIDS! AIDS is a scary term to most people and it seems that people who refuse to get tested, then end up in the hospital w/ an “HIV+ with symptoms” diagnosis are terrified to death when the doctor tells them they have AIDS. Then they see a case manager that tells them to apply for disability – giving them false hope and destroying their future quality of life. I can't tell you the number of persons I have had to reverse that information. I can say, I live with it, work with it, and play with it. But the real stigma is the gay thing. We live in a misogynistic society where it's ok to be a boy but not a girl or even slight traces of a girl. Its ok for women to come to work in pants & a shirt, but all hell would break loose if a man wore a dress. Talk about hypocritical. So the gay thing is associated w/ feminine and in some cultures that is the worst thing you can be. And HIV has been associated w/ gay since the beginning —drilled through the media even though the majority worldwide cases are hetero.

This “culture” makes it difficult to get people tested B/C they think, If I get tested people will think I’m gay? So they don’t get tested, hetero or gay, and the end up in the hospital w/ advanced HIV.

10.14.11

This “Occupy Wall St” is heavy on my mind. They were right, the banks were given bail out money, corporations received huge tax break because they were supposed to create jobs. Well they didn’t & should be held responsible.

Also just read an article on the detrimental effect of salt. Made me think about how screwed up my triglycerides, cholesterol, etc. are. I eat pretty healthy, work out regularly. I am not overweight, so the culprit: HIV and or HIV meds. I guess the good news is a heart attack is quicker than pneumonia or Kaposi Sarcoma. I’m doing my best but the rules keep changing.

10.16.11

Worked in the yard today that’s good quality time for me. It literally grounds me and gives me a sense of accomplishment to see the natural beauty. Maybe it’s the new life/constant planting idea that works for me. Every day a new day to grow (live).

10.17.11

I love my job, but would rather not have to work. It seems time is so precious, I hate to waste it on work. Good thing my job is fulfilling. But it still drives me crazy the number of people who are on disability B/C of HIV but are not disabled- and continue to enable this myth that HIV has to be disabling. Liars, they are vile and contemptible. And those who take advantage of assistance programs by lying and “acting” sicker then they really are—those who arrive w/ alcohol on their breath, in a party mood and relay stories of all-nighters and all the people they’ve slept with and now they need rent assistance because they are “disabled” ?!?! They give us all a bad name and make me sick to my stomach.

10.18.11

Was invited to speak @ Florida Hosp. College of Health Services Occupational Therapy Class about living and working w/ HIV. I’ve done this many times and always leave the class with a sense of accomplishment. But then I get home and think of all the things I forgot to say. Truth is, it is therapeutic for me and educational for them to see someone who lived through it: continued working and living a pretty normal life. Well, better then normal, really. I have a great life! I have a wonderful husband of almost 20 years, good health, great job and the ability to travel and see the world. Yes, as an HIV dinosaur, I take 20 pills a day but so what? It keeps me healthy and happy and at the end of the day, that’s all I want.

10.19.11

Wishing that the storm predicted for last night would have happened. I love a good storm. Funny, but my dreams always have a god storm going on in the background. I guess that’s my subconscious visualization of the virus—always lurking in the background. The horror that was 1986 to 1996 and the fear that it might rear its ugly head @ any moment. Bring it on! I’m ready to take it on and kick its ass again.

10.20.11

I forget too much...then remember too much.

10.22.11

Home renovations and date night with my husband.

10.24.11

People need to be out about their HIV status.

- People need to get tested
- People need to take their medications

If everyone did this, the spread of HIV would stop!



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