A HepCat Halloween at POZ

October 31, 2006 By Mark de Solla Price

Book cover for “My Pet Virus” by Shawn Decker.

Back on September 25, Shawn Decker and Gwenn Barringer stopped off on Shawn’s My Pet Virus book tour at my local Barnes & Noble. Being long-time fans, Vinny and I were in the front row. Shawn coined the term Positoid for HIV-positive folks and thin blood for hemophiliacs. I asked him "What’s more of an issue day-to-day for him, being a Positoid, thin blood, or (I was thinking on my feet...) being a hep cat?" He said being a Positoid was more difficult because of all the meds and side-effects.

I’ve always enjoyed any excuse for a good party. My parents were the same way. I’ve been HIV-positive for most of my life and lived and played at what was to become ground zero of the early AIDS epidemic in America. I stopped counting, but I’ve deleted about 200 friends from my address book who are now dead from this disease.

I think this gives me even more of a reason to celebrate life anyway I can. I also think this is the same reason that the folks at the POZ office makes such a fuss over every birthday and holiday. A few weeks after seeing Shawn and Gwen again, we started to plan for the POZ office Halloween festivities. Every year most of the staff dress up in costume and decorate their desks and those that care to “reverse trick or treat” going desk-to-desk delivering candy, baked goods, fruit, health food, whatever. Last year, I dressed up in a lumber jack outfit with pink fairy wings and a large button saying “Yes, I am a fairy. Got a problem with that?”

Having been dealing with the whole hep C thing the two ideas just clicked together and came up with being a Hep C Hep Cat. Seemed like a great way to jump ahead to the funny side of the whole thing. I snagged Alison Zack, my friend who almost single handedly makes all the web graphics for POZ.com to work her PhotoShop magic and make a sexy Hep Cat graphic and had a t-shirt made up (often one of my first steps for a new project) and went shopping for cat ears and a tail.

For those that don’t know, in the early 1940s the term Hep Cat was used to describe folks on the musical creative cutting edge, especially jazz enthusiasts and more generally members of the Beat Generation. In the 1950s, as the music changed, the musical mavericks were called hipsters and by the 1960s they became hippies.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.hepmag.com/blog/a-hepcat-halloween-a