



DAB'S JOURNAL.

10.1.11

My name is Dab Garner and I was one of the first Americans diagnosed with HIV when it was called GRID (Gay Related Immune Deficiency). I was diagnosed on 2/14/1982 with PCP and GRID, which makes me a long-term survivor of HIV and AIDS. I am now a 30-year survivor/ activist/ speaker/ blogger and creator of Dab the AIDS Bear.

After being diagnosed while in quarantine at San Francisco General Hospital, I was told I would not live to see my 20th birthday, which was only six weeks away. I had already lost my first partner and best friend to complications from GRID. They were the reason I started giving teddy bears to those in quarantine in 1981. It broke my heart to have to watch friends and my partner die without being able to hold them. So I gave them teddy bears to let them know someone actually cared, loved them and was thinking about them. The teddy bears eventually were given the name Dab the AIDS Bears in 1985.

After I was released from quarantine, I became an activist because no one was talking about GRID. Over the years, I helped other people with HIV set up the first AIDS Service Organization, ACT Up and other services for people with HIV/Aids. In the late 80's, I was on the activists to testify at Congress and work with Senator Edward Kennedy to get funding at the national level for people living with HIV/AIDS. The funding ended up being called Ryan White Funding after a courageous young activist who was infected through blood products received to treat his hemophilia.

10.2.11

During the 80's and 90's I participated in clinical trials studies, continued my activism work, started public speaking about HIV/AIDS around the country and was godfather to one the first children born with HIV in San Francisco.

In 1985, her mother had died shortly after childbirth and they did not know the identity of the father. Candace was also deformed because of Alcohol Fetal Syndrome.

As you can imagine, no one wanted a child with HIV in the mid 80's much less a deformed child with HIV. So my second partner Brad (who was also positive) and I took her home to take care of her and let her know she was loved. Unfortunately she died from complications due to AIDS in 1989. My partner was so distraught over her death that he died a few weeks later.

In Candace's memory, I started doing Christmas parties for kids with HIV and AIDS which eventually were named Teddy Bear Touchdowns. This year is the 22nd anniversary of the Teddy Bear Touchdowns with the event now being held in more the 12 countries worldwide.

I started Dab the AIDS Bear Project in 2003 because ADAP (AIDS Drug Assistance Program) waiting lists started in the United States. Someone I knew died on the ADAP waiting list in Kentucky.

Having lost 3 partners and over 10,000 friends before life saving anti-HIV medications became available in 1996, it upset and enraged me that any American died because of not having access to life saving anti-HIV medications.

10.3.11

Today is Monday. Had a very hard time sleeping last night due to side effects from my HIV meds and my new partner was snoring all night. Between the two, it made for the restless night.

Early this morning, Todd and I decided to drive to the beach, which is only a few miles from the house and worth the sunrise.

Todd and I are in a new relationship and he had never gone to watch the sunrise with someone he loves. We are still in our first month together and learning about each other.

We met originally at a pool party about a month ago. Todd and I hit it off from the start. Then he drove across the state to spend the weekend with me when I was in St. Petersburg to speak at their AIDS walk. From the second he arrived it was like spending time with someone I had known forever.

Now I was not faced with having to disclose my HIV status since he already knew because of my work with Dab the AIDS Bear. When the weekend was over it was so hard for us to part. But he had to get back to Ft. Lauderdale and I had a four-city two-week trip to start.

We stayed in constant contact through texting and phone calls while we were apart. It was a very long two weeks for both of us since we both liked each other a lot.

I decided to cut my trip short and meet him at the airport in Ft. Lauderdale when he flew back from visiting his parents in Texas. He had no idea I was going to be there so I really enjoyed surprising him. We have been inseparable since we got back except for when he's working or we have appointments.

He asked me to move into his house. So I have started bringing my things over from the apartment even though I still have 3 months left on my lease.

10.4.11

Started off my day by going to see my doctor concerning a recent heart attack scare. She drew my blood and ordered an echocardiogram. Will get the test results next week after I do a nuclear stress test on Thursday. My doctor also wrote prescriptions for a beta-blocker and statin. So now I will be taking 10 different medications every day.

Then I had to go by my pharmacy to drop my prescriptions and two for my partner, Todd. After that I had to run errands to Target and the post office to change my mailing address.

Todd and I got back to the house about the same time then went to Bally's Gym to workout. Today, we did chest and triceps. I normally work out six days a week doing each muscle group twice. Because I have had chronic HIV wasting since the 90's, I have to workout to keep muscle mass. Otherwise I would drop weight very quickly.

This evening Todd and I went to Rosie's restaurant for "Date Night." We both had the BBQ hamburger and sweet potato fried. We also had great conversation during dinner talking out

some recent happenings. I think every couple should make sure they have a Date Night at least once a week so you never take each other for granted. It makes for a great opportunity to remember why you fell in love with your significant other.

I never thought I would find the kind of love that I am building with Todd. So it is very important to me to keep the passion and intimacy alive while making sure we have an open and honest communication. I never want him to forget I love him. Expressing my emotions is not my strong suit so I am making sure he knows how I feel through concerted effort and gestures.

10.5.11

Today was Todd's day off from work so we had a great leisurely day together. After our morning ritual of spending time watching the sunrise on the screened in patio, we started our day.

We had a few errands to run and then enjoyed our lunch at El Pollo. Todd recently came off a medication, which has caused him to have problems with lightheadedness so I have been worried about him. We talked about scheduling an earlier appointment to discuss the issue.

Still doing my protein shakes to help put some weight back on. I lost 15 pounds a few weeks ago after a nasty bug. Because of chronic HIV wasting, it takes me forever to put weight back on. Too bad I can't put weight on as quickly as I can lose it.

We spent a great evening making dinner together. Since our roommate was out for the night we had the house all to ourselves, which was great. I grilled pork chops while Todd made sweet potatoes. Spent the rest of the night holding each other on the couch talking and watching television until bedtime.

10.6.11

Todd and I woke up and enjoyed our patio time until he had to leave for work. Then I had to shower and head to the hospital for a nuclear stress test.

The small hospital gown was bad enough. Then I had to run/jog on the treadmill for 45 minutes after they injected the radioactive dye. I felt like another heart attack was starting to happen at the end of the test so they gave me nitroglycerin. They then did another echocardiogram to check for damage to my heart.

Then it was time to meet Todd back at the house after he finished work. After a protein shake, we headed to Bally's gym to workout biceps and back. Afterward we stopped by Publix grocery store to pick up dinner.

After we arrived home, Todd let me know he had another spell at work today, which worries me. So scared something will happen to him when I'm not there to help him.

After dinner of fried chicken and potato salad, we enjoyed some television before turning to bed early.

10.7.11

We had our early morning starting at 4:30 am since Todd was having a hard time sleeping due to medication side effects. Enjoyed our morning ritual of sitting on the patio together and drinking our protein shakes before Todd had to get ready for work. After giving him a kiss, saying I love you to each other and seeing him off to work I got ready to run my errands for the day.

I had to run by the credit union, pick up my contacts from Chiq Optique and pick up some groceries from Publix. Had a great time talking with the ladies who own Chiq Optique. They will be taking pics with their Dab the AIDS Bear of the Southern AIDS Ride from Ft. Lauderdale to Key West.

Todd and I always text each other a few times while he is at work. I always get a big smile on my face when I hear from him. Never thought I could miss someone so much when they are gone.

We met back at the house around 1pm. Found out Todd had a couple of seizures while at work. Then he had another one after getting home. Luckily I was at home to hold him until it was over. Then I got him to call Dr. Lee and get an appointment next Friday so we can find out what is causing the seizures.

We decided to put off leg/shoulders day at the gym until tomorrow since he wasn't feeling good. So we spent the rest of the spending time together making dinner, talking and watching television.

I love that we have open dialogue as we continue to get to know each other. By talking, we alleviate fears, concerns and the bumps in the road while continuing to strengthening our bond and growing our love for each other.

10.8.11

Started out the day sleeping in until 8:30 am. After a protein shake, it was time for leg/shoulder day at Bally's gym. I also had to get a monthly membership since my free one week guess pass had expired.

After the gym, it was time for another protein shake and a breakfast of bacon, eggs and biscuits. Still trying to put back on the 15 lbs. I lost due to a recent illness. I feel best when I weigh around 185 lbs. and I am currently 175 lbs. But it takes forever for me to gain weight due to chronic HIV wasting for the past 15 years.

After getting back to Todd's house, we found his roommate home because he left work sick. Now the guy is okay but it is kind of a pain dealing with a roommate due to the lack of privacy. It is very hard to be romantic when you know there is someone else in the house.

Made spaghetti for dinner tonight and then worked on the project daily blog and this journal. Now going to get ready for bed soon.

10.9.11

Had a good day today. Todd and I celebrated our 1-month anniversary. Little did I know when I met him a month ago that we would fall in love with each other.

I started off the morning by giving him an anniversary card about how I felt about him. He had tears in his eyes when he came up to me after reading it.

We spent the whole day together to celebrate. We went and did chest/tricep day at Bally's gym. Then we went to see a movie after that. Then ended up ordering Chinese delivery after a great day together. Life is great!

10.11.11

Started my day as usual. Then it was time to get ready for my doctor appointment with Dr. Schumann at AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF). I have been seeing her as my Infectious Disease doctor since moving to South Florida. But we have known each other since the late 80's. Today we covered my latest blood work results. Tcells were in the low 600's. Viral load was still undetectable. My kidneys are showing some damage so we have to keep a close eye on those counts. We also covered the results from the tests after my recent heart attack.

While I am very glad to still be around after living with HIV for over 30 years, getting older sucks. Between the heart problems, back problems and circulatory issues I had to accept my physical limitations I have always been physically very active but now there are things I know I can't do which really gets me down.

We also discussed slowing down travel and personal appearances. For the past decade Dab The AIDS Bear and me have been appearing to 100-200 AIDS walks, rides, conferences, LGBT Pride, health fairs and speaking engagements a year.

But now that I have lucky enough to meet the love of my life I need to concentrate more on this relationship and taking care of my own health.

Speaking of Todd, we hit a small bump in the road with a disagreement this evening. When you reach our age, people have baggage from their previous relationships. Well tonight some baggage caused us to have to discuss some issues. Luckily, we were able to smooth everything out. I know we both love each other so hopefully through communication and having respect for each other we can work through any problems.

Later, Todd had another seizure. Luckily he had an appointment Friday with Dr. Lee so we can figure out what is causing them. Then during the night while we were sleeping he had another one. Feel bad that all I can do is hold him and tell him everything will be okay.

10.12.11

Today was a day of ups and downs. I did not sleep well last night so I started the day off drained. I have been having a ton of sinusitis problems. Being severely claustrophobic when I can't breathe it triggers a panic attack.

Then late in the day, we decided to go to Publix. Todd and I hit a bump in the road because I didn't respond to something the way he hoped. Then I got bent out of shape over the issue and shut down which further complicated the situation and issue.

Luckily, we ended up talking everything out and working through the issue. Guess it is just a part of getting to know each other. Plus we both have some issues from past relationships, which can easily complicate issues.

Spent the evening watching television after we had dinner with Bob and Dave. Then it was time for bed because we both have early day the next morning.

10.13.11

Had to be up early this morning since I had an appointment at the Volkswagen car dealership. So I get up this morning with Todd and spent time together before he had to leave for work.

Then I got ready to drive to Davey, Florida where the dealership is located. Ran into an old friend while there so we caught up on what's going on with each other.

Headed back home around 12:30 with a surprise for Todd. I had purchased a dozen red roses for him. Then to my surprise he had some chocolate from Godiva for me. Just shows how much we think about and love each other.

After working out back and biceps at Bally's Gym, we picked up a few groceries at Publix before heading home.

Made spaghetti for dinner. Unfortunately Todd had a series of seizures again this evening. Glad we are taking him to Dr. Lee tomorrow so we can find out what is going on with him. We decided to skip and event at Matty's on the Drive tonight and stay home. We enjoyed watching television together before bedtime.

10.14.11

After our morning time together Todd has to leave for work. Then I had to work on three blogs on HIV, which are due soon. I also spent the morning catching upon emails and spending time with our two dogs.

Todd stopped to get us sandwiches from Subway on his way home from work. Then it was time to go with him to his doctor appointment with Dr. Lee. After telling the doctor about Todd's seizures he decided to do blood work, order a CAT scan and change one of his medications. So hopefully we will find out what has been causing Todd's seizures soon.

We stopped by Chiq Optique to get Todd's new contact and then the credit union so I could make a deposit. Then we headed to Publix to get some things for dinner.

I ended up making spaghetti for dinner. Since Todd had a couple of seizures today we decided on a quiet night at home. Luckily, he is off from work for the next week.

10.15.11

After a good night's sleep, I woke up on an overcast Saturday. Todd and I enjoyed our morning ritual before deciding we would go to Ft. Lauderdale beach for a couple of hours.

The sun was trying to peek through the clouds and the surf was rough. The beach was practically deserted compared to most weekends. We went for a long walk on the beach and then checked out one of the hotels before heading back to our sheet.

We ended up heading home about 1pm. Then after lunch I surprised Todd by proposing in the garden. Then we decided to go looking at wedding rings. After checking out the rings at four different jewelry stores, we finally decided on one at Zales. They had one in stock, which Todd is wearing and mine will be ready to pick up on Tuesday or Wednesday.

After returning home, we celebrated with wine and dinner. Then we had a long talk about the process of us falling in love with each other. The only downside of the evening was Todd had another series of seizures this evening, which scared him. I will be so glad when the doctor figured out what is causing his seizures.

But all in all it was a fantastic day and I am so glad I have the love of my life.

10.16.11

Today is Sunday and the day started odd pretty good after a decent night's sleep. Everything was going well until we decided to go to a bear pool party at the beach.

Then Todd and I hit a bump in the road because of others at the party. We ended up leaving and having a long talk after we got home. While we ended up making up, we didn't totally agree on the issues that caused the bump in the road. I just hope instances like this don't change our relationship. We both have some baggage and insecurities from past relationships, which doesn't help the situation. In the end, I wish we had not gone to the party since it only caused problems.

Then Todd started having seizures again and any hard feelings melted away with my concern and love for him. Hopefully we will find out what are causing the seizures soon.

We ended up having left over pot roast for dinner before enjoying some television together. Going to make it an early evening since he had a doctor appointment tomorrow with his back doctor. We should hear the results from his MRI.

10.17.11

After a good night sleep and my morning rituals of medicine and spending time with Todd, it was time to take him to his orthopedist. The doctor is still trying to figure out what to do about his back problems.

Because Todd had been having seizures, the doctor did not want to so the epidural that was scheduled. So the doctor reviewed Todd's MRI and also did a bone density test. The doctor ended up increasing the pain medication and scheduling another appointment for Todd in a week.

We decided to grab a late lunch at our local Mexican restaurant called Alucpuca Lindo. We ended up stuffing ourselves on Chimichangas, salsa and chips before heading home.

After working around the house, I made beef tips and rice for dinner. We watched "I am Legend" with Will Smith while eating. Then it was time for lights out since Todd has to work in the mornings.

10.18.11

Woke up about 7am after a fitful night of sleep. Just one of those bad nights that happen occasionally. Had to drive Todd to work Galleria mall. Stayed and helped hi with the plants for an hour before heading to my old apartment.

Ran into my old place and packed up my ab machine and some more clothes. Got as much as I could into the jeep before going back home.

Then it was time to pick up Todd from work and take him to get his CAT scan for his doctor appointment on Thursday. After he was done, we stopped at Taco Bell for a quick lunch.

After we got home, we decided we needed something from Shoppes of Wilton Manors. When I got back after a half hour, Todd was upset I was gone so long. Luckily, we were able to talk and work things out. Then we had pizza for dinner and watched X Factor before bedtime.

10.19.11

Woke up around 6:45 am since today a packed day. Had my morning protein shake before we headed to the post office, Bank of America and drove to Davey, FL to get Todd's paycheck.

After stopping by the house for a quick lunch, we went to Bally's for a chest and triceps workout. Then we got a call that my wedding ring was ready. After they gave us my ring, we each put the ring on each other.

Todd had another small seizure today. Luckily, he has not had several a day, like he was for a few days. Just hope the doctor can give us more answers on Thursday.

Had a quick and easy hot dog dinner. I dropped and broke my cell phone today so I ended up having to order the new iPhone, which will hopefully be here in a week. Pretty bad when a phone costs as much as a computer. At least now, I can use one device for music and phone instead of two. Watched a little television before bedtime. Going to turn in early since tomorrow is a busy day.

10.20.11

Had another rough night because of sinus problems and side effects from neuropathy, back problems and HIV meds. Ended up getting out of bed by 4 am.

Relationship with Todd hit another bump in the road. We're going to have to sit down and talk about our mutual baggage and insecurities before problems start damaging our relationship. I'm so in love with him that I don't want anything to damage our love. But reality is that we both have issues and insecurities because of past bad relationships. We also talk too much about those past

relationships and other guys, which is causing problems in our relationship.

Picked him up from work and we grabbed some lunch. Then it was time to go to his appointment with his HIV specialist, Dr. Lee. Good news if the CAT scan looked fine. Bad news is the doctor still isn't positive what's causing his seizures so now he has to see a neurologist.

Come home and enjoyed a great night with our roommate out for the night. Then turned in for bed around 11pm.

10.21.11

Todd and I have a great morning spending time together before I had to take him to work. Then I had some errands to run. Went by my bank to make a deposit. Then went by my old apartment to pack up my jackets, sweaters and more shoes. Ran into my ex-partner and we spoke for a while. While things are still tense with my ex, it was great seeing the dogs Sugar and Chipper.

After unpacking the stuff at our place, it was time to pick Todd up from work. When we got home we ended up having another bump in the road because of issues. I finally sat Todd down and explained we could not keep letting our past cause problems in our new relationship. So we both promised each other to work harder to not let past issues destroy the great love we have for each other.

We were having a great afternoon and the Todd starting having several bad seizures. They were so bad I thought I was going to have to take him to the hospital. When we went to bed he had a couple more seizures. I am so worried about my baby. I hope we can figure out the cause of his seizures soon.

10.22.11

Today is Todd's day off. He got up a couple of ours before I did. Side effects from his HIV meds cause very vivid dreams. Then we decided to go to Bally's and work out our biceps and back.

On the way home from the gym, Todd had a really bad seizure so we cancelled our plans to go the beach. We took a nap before getting up and running a few errands.

Besides his seizures, we had a really great day together. After I made dinner we watched a movie before bedtime. Then Todd had another seizure as we were falling asleep.

10.23.11

Today, we had errands to run before going to the beach. Met a few of Todd's friends and had our picture taken.

Since Todd had a seizure this morning while we were having breakfast at McDonald's we decided not to go swimming. We didn't want to take the risk of him having a seizure in the rough waves and me not being able to save him.

We also decided to skip the gym this weekend because of the seizures. So hopefully we can start back on Tuesday. Tomorrow is a full day of errands and I need to run by my old apartment.

I made us steak and veggies for dinner. Then got a call that an old friend had been missing for over 24 hours. So I've had that stress on my mind.

I am also dealing with my first case of pink eye so I need to call my doctor in the morning. Talked to my friend Diane and found out her mother is on the hospital with congestive heart failure. She is 94 years old and may not make it out of the hospital. Ended up talking with Diane for over an hour.

10.24.11

Woke up late this morning and had to rush to get ready to drive to Florida Atlantic University. Spoke to the students about living with HIV for over an hour. Then spent about 20 minutes answering their questions. Turned out to be a great presentation.

Called my HIV doctor and got her to call in a prescription for pink eye to Comm Care Pharmacy. So after I left FAU I stopped by Comm Care to pick up the eye drops.

Then had to run Todd by his doctor to get a copy of his CAT scan on disk for when he sees his neurologist.

After getting the cd, we went to Bank of America so he could open his new bank account.

Then we went to CVS to pick up a few items before heading home. Had a message from my ex-partner that our dog Chipper needs to be put down. So have to figure out when we will go to do that which will break my heart. Made Italian for dinner together and enjoyed a French movie before bedtime.

10.25.11

After getting up and talking Todd to work it was time to get some things done around the house. Did some laundry and then some cleaning when I got a message from Todd to come pick him up.

We ran to get tickets for the boat show this coming weekend. Then we grabbed some lunch at Boston Market. Todd has a doctor appointment with his podiatrist and orthopedist. The orthopedist gave him an epidural to try and get him some relief from his back pain.

He wasn't feeling very well afterward so I drove him home. Still dealing with my eye infection so I didn't feel like doing much myself.

Found out my friend Gary is alive but is in trouble after being drugged at a photo shoot for an adult website. Now he is stuck in Orlando with no way to get to Jacksonville. Just shows the dangers to trusting some people.

The night didn't turn out as I hoped so just have to see how things go. Tired so I will be heading to bed soon. Hopefully I will sleep better tonight.

10.26.11

Todd was off from work today so I woke up a little later than usual. He was already up and enjoying his morning java.

He needed to run some errands. So I drove him to Comm Care Pharmacy to get his new prescription for his back.

Then we went to the Party Superstore to shop for Halloween costumes. We are going as horny devils this year. Since we are both protective of the other, we just hope people don't try to get handsy with us, which is what gay men tend to do when drinking.

After we came home, Todd took a nap while I did some laundry and cooked dinner. Dave and Bob came over tonight and watched some TV with us.

I was so tired by 10 pm we took our meds and headed to bed with Todd falling asleep with his head on my chest.



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