

MY STIGMAS, MY PAST, MY PRESENT

By, Mick Worthen

I, for one get very tired of answering the question, *"how did you get Hep C?"*. I understand human curiosity however the question is, *"how am I dealing with my Hep C?"* 99% who ask are convinced that you were an IV drug user or some ungodly pagan.

Why do they ask? Because I am open about being infected, I feel nothing to be ashamed of and I am hoping to create awareness about the virus. In my case their assumption that I contracted Hep C from IV drug use is most likely correct. When attending Film School in the early 1980's I injected cocaine in a drunken stupor ended up in rehab for cocaine and was successful in quitting. However I continued on my merry way as a well seasoned alcoholic, directing award winning films and specializing in helicopter cinematography. For over a decade I earned the stigma of an alcoholic, talented filmmaker, semi-reliable cinematographer and crazy enough to do dangerous shooting from choppers quite well.

Then cometh the wake up call, in 1997 while hospitalized on an unrelated matter I requested an AIDS test due to my past behavior, I was AIDS free but was informed that I had Hepatitis C, "what's that?" I queried. My GI Doc. was very knowable about the virus and gave me a liver biopsy; thank God only fatty mostly from being a hard drinker. Decision time came, I was well enough to monitor it for a few years and hope for the wonder cure other than Interferon. That never happened, in 2005 my viral load went through the roof, I was Genotype 2 and the new biopsy was stage 0. Time to get er' done or wait to get worse and do 48 weeks of treatment than 24.

How am I dealing with it? I found the S.L.C Support Group, who directed me to the resources I needed to get treatment. (FYI: You should not drink hooch of any kind or amount when on treatment, give it up for six or so months before treatment!) I am on treatment at present. Got Hep C educated. Saw a need and started The Hepatitis C Awareness and Action Foundation, helping Amber Jarrett with the Group. I am using my filmmaking skills shooting an educational documentary and obtaining press coverage for Hep C awareness. Devoting my time when the virus and treatment allows me to open a flood gate of Hep C awareness and help my fellow humans be they infected or not.

I am more than happy to openly be honest about my past and my present.

I can say that I am not ashamed to carry the stigma of a former IV user and alcoholic who is a very active Hepatitis C advocate helping people one person at a time!

AND NOW FOR MY DEFENSE MECHANISM WHEN I AM SICK OF SCRUTINY.

HOW I THINK I GOT HEP C

By Mick Worthen

Shared leaches at medieval free health clinic.

Pin prick from Bush/Cheney 2004 button.

Ate home cooked dinner at Jeffery Dahlmer's home.

Picked door #2 on Price is Right.

Alien abduction anal probe.

Bad purchase on E-Bay.

Trial virus protection program on my new PC expired.

Came free with new phone service bundle from the phone company.

Could not afford Hepatitis D.

Burning desire to join an exclusive club.

Body cavity search at security check point at the airport.

Guest appearance on "Jackass 2" dumpster-diving.

By Immaculate Infection.

Woke up rummy and put in my roommates dentures.

Sucking snake venom out of a Boy Scout.

Tough love at the Jesuit Boarding School.

Shared bed of nails at cheap boarding house.

Shooting up steroids to buff-up in case I got Hep C and had to do treatment.

Very creepy Communion at Easter Mass.

(The scary part is that some people people will believe the above!)