

4. A love story

Jan de Groot

Who I am

I was born in Holland, raised in Indonesia and am 84 years old. My life journey brought me to South Africa in 1950, a 26-year marriage that ended in 1983, the achievement of climbing Alpa Mayo in Peru at 62, and working in Botswana. I tested HIV positive at the age of 68 while donating blood and have been living with HIV for 16 years. I have managed to get through prostate cancer, pulmonary TB, heart problems and a very difficult adjustment to taking ARVs, thanks to my drive to survive, the love of my friend Lee, and the support of my family in South Africa and New Zealand and of my work colleagues. Today I work for the AIDS Foundation of South Africa in Durban.

Why I am telling my story

Our experiences of living with HIV and AIDS are as varied and unique as the human fingerprint. I am sharing the joy and pain of my travels as a senior citizen with HIV, which I often refer to as 'my virus'. I discovered I was living with HIV at the age of 68. I'm hoping that my story of love and survival will convince you that HIV crosses all boundaries in this world and doesn't stop us from living life to the fullest.

