

Andriote Biography—long version

Like other young people who aspire to become writers, John-Manuel Andriote followed the sage advice to "write about what you know." But in the summer of 1981, as he dreamt of becoming a writer, he had no idea what being gay actually meant for himself. His writing career was launched by reviewing books for the *Advocate*, where he shared with other gay men what he learned from the books he reviewed for the nation's leading LGBT magazine.

Andriote had no idea back then how his decision finally to accept that he is a gay man, just before he turned twenty-three, would shape his career. No one knew how the first cases of AIDS, reported the very summer he came out, would shape the gay community, advance its movement for equality, and traumatize gay men as close friends and tens of thousands of gay men become gravely ill and die, mostly at a young age.

Andriote realized while he was working on a master's degree in journalism at Northwestern University in 1985 that he needed to do his part by reporting and documenting the terrible suffering, and stunning heroism, he saw all around him. He chronicled the impact of HIV-AIDS on individuals, the LGBT political movement, the medical research establishment, and popular American culture in his 1999 book *Victory Deferred: How AIDS Changed Gay Life in America*. The book won critical acclaim as well as the 2000 Lambda Literary Awards "Editors' Choice" award, and was an American Library Association "honored book" and a finalist for the New York Publishing Triangle's Randy Shilts Award.

The deaths of friends and colleagues became a routine experience in Andriote's thirties. Added to the traumas of his growing-up years, the accumulating losses fueled his anger at the injustice his brothers experienced and stoked his budding activist spirit. They also undermined his ability to consistently feel good about himself and make healthy choices about his own sexual behavior.

Andriote's HIV-positive test result in October 2005, at 47 years old, was in some ways a predictable outcome of his risk-taking after having remained HIV-negative since the more perilous 1980s. What wasn't predictable, though, is how he would handle his new, highly stigmatized identity as a "person living with HIV."

He quickly decided his medical diagnosis would not define me or determine how I think of his own value and lovability. The choices he had made in his sexual behavior that led to his diagnosis were not the only choices he had ever made, and in fact far more of his choices were excellent. If the unhealthy choices that harmed him came from his trauma, where did his will not only to survive, but to thrive, come from?

Andriote's journey to answer that question eventually led him to write *Stonewall Strong*. With the seal of legitimacy that a book contract provides, he set out to learn about resilience, to understand where his own came from, and to share with his readers what he learned so they could benefit from it, too. He interviewed behavioral scientists at leading universities, discovering amazing things about gay men's resilience revealed in research. He spoke with doctors, lawyers, activists, comedians, therapists, drag queens, religious leaders, political leaders, corporate diversity trainers, and so many others. Their stories of discovering their own resilience, courage, and heroism inspired him. He hopes they will likewise inspire his readers.