February 3, 2002

Dear Family,

Living fairly close to Dad has given me a unique opportunity to capture the events and details of his recent Aortic Valve Replacement Operation. What you are about to read is true. I know some of you will question the research and the facts shared in this account. Sure they sound bizarre, but, they are nevertheless true. Sometimes things inexplicably fall into place for those that are genuinely good people. So it is with this simple and tender story of a man who was kind to pigs and ultimately reaped the benefit of his kindness and generosity. Enjoy!

Chris

Be Kind to Pigs

Shelly, Idaho – Circa 1921

Little Stanley grabbed the pail of garbage from off the back porch. The toe-headed transplant from Salt Lake had the dubious honor of slopping the pigs two times a day. To some this was torturous duty, but for young Stanley it was a delightful diversion from some of the more strenuous chores of the day. If he wasn't careful some of the slop would spill out of the bucket and on to his leg. Even though Stanley had grown accustomed to the smell and even enjoyed the unusual fragrance of the pin, the stench on his pants would follow him around all day and socially alienate him from what would otherwise be his friends.

As he approached the pin, the pigs came a squealin' and a gruntin'. There was Martha the old sow, plowing over anything and anyone to be first. Then there was Tubby, Blackfoot and Caesar. When it came to food, nothing got in their way – biting, pushing and kicking were the order of the day. At least another dozen pigs were in on the scramble. Over the rail went the slop and the pigs went into their routine feeding frenzy. He actually loved the pigs and learned to actually bask in the smell of the pungent pigpen.

Stan pulled a feeding bottle out of his back pocket. At the tail end of the crowd was little Franklin, the runt of the liter. He carefully lifted the undernourished and neglected piglet into the cradle of his arms. In went the bottle and Franklin was in hog heaven. Stan held him close as he sucked the life-giving liquid like a half-crazed alcoholic downs a bottle of whiskey. Franklin drained the last drop from the bottle and seemed to radiate a look of appreciation. Looking into the round, brown eyes of his little friend, Stanley said, "There you go little fella. It's rough out here. You'd be dead by now if it wasn't for me."

October 26th, 2001 – Near 10th East and 50th South

It was 10:30 A.M. – time to walk the dogs. Stanley hooked leashes to Charlie and JoJo. Away they went on their favorite jaunt down 10th East. It was a regular day. Sixteen minutes and forty three seconds into the walk the dogs were crossing over 10th East to scope out the other side of the block in hopes of catching a glimpse of FeFe, the fabulous French Poodle from Farmington.

Eleven miles to the west, an Eastwardly wind was pushing some of the foulest and strongest odors from the West Valley Oscar Meyer Pig Farm. It carried them in what scientists have called an exceptionally rare "natural wind funnel" to the precise location where Stanley and the dogs were crossing the street. The wind funnel concentrates the total collection of odors into one area of 3X3 feet. The odds of these odors hitting that exact spot have been calculated to be one in 14.6 billion. The smells brought back vivid memories of his Idaho farm and the pigs that became such an important part of his life. In recreating the scene, experts now say that Dad went into "Catatonic Oblivion". This is

a rare psycho/biological condition where the body loses complete control of its motor skills and the mind takes the victim back to some previous point of paradisical pleasure in their life. This being the case, Dad's body went limp and hit the asphalt deck like a wrinkled shirt falling into dirty laundry.

Dad had visions of himself laying amongst his beloved pig pals with their exquisite expressions of exponential happiness. Oh, the joy of being with loved ones! Oh, the fragrance of the pin. Oh, to hear the pigs grunt and snort their squeals of delight! Moments later Dad came out of his swine-induced stupor with the vigorous licking of Charlie and JoJo about his face and neck.

Memorial Medical Clinic, Sugar House, Utah – October 25th, 2001

Stanley sat down in the cold and sterile examination room of Dr. Christopher Romney. "Stan, you were just here a week ago. I gave you a clean bill of health and now you are here again." Stanley told the good doctor of his spill and his resultant exhaustion and shortness of breath. Doctor Romney reviewed the findings from Dad's x-ray and lab work. On the examination table he listened intently to Dad's heart and lungs. "Stanley, when you fell, you bent your Aortic Valve. I am sending you to a specialist to see what he says."

Cottonwood Hospital, Murray, Utah – October 30th, 2001

Dr. Rokeach listened to the heart of Stanley Stevenson for quite sometime. Then he ordered an echocardiogram. Subsequent to that he ordered an electrocardiogram. When all the testing and reviewing was complete, Dr. Rokeach explained to Dad what was ailing him, "Stanley, you have 'Defectus Flapius en Tikerus'. Dad had no idea what the heck he was talking about. The congenial cardiologist continued, "Translated Stanley, it means you have a defective flapper in your ticker." That was more like it. Now Dad knew exactly what he was saying.

The heart specialist summarized the options for the Salt Lake senior citizen, "one, you can do nothing and continue with problems such as fatigue, lightheadedness, fainting, and heart muscle deterioration, or, two, you can have a valve replacement operation which can greatly improve the quality of your life." Dad had two simple questions. The first was about cost. Dr. Rokeach put him at ease by explaining that Medicare and his insurance would virtually cover all the costs. Dad's second question was concerning what would be used to replace his natural valve. "There are two types of valves", explained the doctor, "a mechanical valve or what we refer to as a 'pig valve'". Before the doctor could continue, Dad's ears perked up and his eyes opened wide as softballs, "a pig valve you say? When can we begin the operation?"

Institute for Genetic Engineering of Pig Valves for the Advancement of Aortic Valve Replacement Surgery by Competent and Licensed Coronary Physicians (IGEPVAOAVRSCLCP), Hope, Arkansas – October 2nd, 2001

Dr. I. Seymour Svine, tinkered with the valve donation of one of the finest pigs in the entire nation, Amadeus, a purebred porker from Pocatello, Idaho. Tears fell freely from his bloodshot eyes and rolled down his fat cheeks. "I have done it", he exclaimed, "I am the first scientist to create the only pig valve in the world that can induce 'pig euphoria' in humans through electrical migration of swine endorphins from molecular fission through capillary transportive amino acids." This was truly a major breakthrough.

The institute is the primary supplier for IHC hospitals in Utah. Not only were the pig valves perfect in dimension, but the institute prided itself on using only the very best pigs in the country. There is always a complete background check on each pig. The institute knows where it has been, what it has eaten, each pig's genealogy, height and weight statistics from birth, etc. Pigs donated for heart valve replacement operations had to be the "crème de le crème". The institute's standards are the highest in the industry.

Genealogical Center for the Preservation of Pig History, Twin Falls, Idaho – October 14th, 2001

Mr. Zuckerman sipped his tall glass of milk as he looked over the various trophies and blue ribbons his pigs had garnered over the years. Now that pig farming was behind him, he felt a deep impression to do genealogy – specifically, pig genealogy. Each ribbon had a special story, but one in particular stood out in his mind.

He picked up the first place blue ribbon he won from the 2001 Idaho State Fair. He read the certificate attached to the ribbon, " 'Best Pig' awarded to Amadeus of Pocatello, Idaho, who was the son of Tyrone of Twin Falls, Idaho, who was the son of Claudius of Shelly, Idaho, who was the son of Porky of Shelly, Idaho"...on and on it went until it read, "who was the son of Franklin of Shelly, Idaho." Mr. Zuckerman smiled and thought to himself, "wow, over eighty years of blue-blood genealogy. This is no doubt the purest line of pork in the whole country."

He lamented the day he sold his prize hog at the state auction. He needed the money and a pig like that brought some badly needed cash. Fortunately, the institute paid top dollar for him.

IHC LDS Hospital, Coronary Valve Stock Room, Salt Lake City, Utah – November 12th, 2001

Dr. Clayson stood in the middle of the coronary valve stock room as he reviewed the information on his 89 year old patient – good health, no major diseases, good kidney function, lead an active life, 20 years as a policeman, as a ham radio operator he saved the City of Long Beach during a major earthquake, hiked Mt. Whitney, traveled the Amazon River...the list went on and on. This was the perfect specimen for a mechanical valve. Dr. Clayson had performed over 2,000 heart operations and had developed a very strict and objective template for determining which patients should get the mechanical valve and which should have a pig valve. Stanley was squarely situated for the XJ1100,

Kreptinite, double-gated, dyno-flow mechanical valve – there was no question in his mind about it.

As he reached to retrieve the appropriate mechanical valve, he froze mid way. He retracted his arm and did an about face. Inexplicably he marched to the other side of the room and opened the freezer door. Pushing aside the burnt almond fudge ice cream and Mrs. Paul's fish sticks, Dr. Clayson extracted a small Styrofoam box. On the lid were printed the letters, "IGEPVAOAVRSCLCP". Inside was a simple pig valve. Never had anything like this happened before. He was baffled by his behavior. Here was the consummate technician being directed by intuition. There was only one answer with which he could justify his unexplainable action - something deep down inside said; this man deserves a pig.

Pre-operative Visit by Dr. Clayson to the Patient Stanley Stevenson at LDS Hospital – November 15th, 2001

"Mr. Stevenson, let me be frank and to the point. You are eighty-nine years old. This operation would be difficult for someone in their sixties. Your medical records are truly unique. It is as if you have some kind of superman-like qualities that have kept you young and active. An operation like this is typically out of the question for most men your age.

Now, as your doctor, I am required to explain some of the risks associated with a pig valve replacement operation. You can have a stroke. You also run the risk of a heart attack. There may even be kidney failure. Some patients develop pneumonia. However, there is one complication I want to make sure you understand. Recent studies have shown that of late, some of our patients have begun to take on the traits of the pig that donated the valve. Although this is only temporary, I must advise you that your behavior after the operation may be a little strange and out of the ordinary. Now, do you have any questions for me?"

With obvious excitement in his eyes, Dad looked at the superstar surgeon, "a pig valve, are you really going to give me a pig valve? When can we get started?"

LDS Hospital, 6.23 Hours After Surgery – November 16th, 2001.

Dad started to wake up from his anesthesia. Fran and Doctor Clayson were there to greet him. As Fran gave Dad a gentle squeeze, she was surprised to hear him let out a little snort. "Don't worry about that", noted Dr. Clayson, "For some reason that's typical the last little while of pig valve replacement patients. We're trying to determine why it's happening". Fran barely heard the doctor. She was just elated to see Dad opened his eyes.

LDS Hospital, November 17, 2002

The next day Dad was moved to a regular hospital room. It had a television, bathroom, adjustable bed and all the other amenities of a typical hospital room. Dad was still somewhat sedated and disoriented. But the fact was, in Dad's mind he wanted a pin, a pig pin. And he was not going to be happy about things until he got his way. In his mind, the hospital staff were evil people trying to keep him away his natural environment. The tubes and wires connected to his body were simply restraining devices. "Who knows what these people are going to do to me? For all I know I might be pork sausage on someone's breakfast table tomorrow morning", he whispered under his breath. "Somehow I have to get away! Somehow I have to escape!"

LDS Hospital, December 15 approximately 11:37 PM.

It was almost midnight after four weeks in the hospital. Stanley had been planning his escape for days. He knew every move and every schedule of each hospital worker. He knew when the shift changes were. He knew which nurses were mean and which were easy to trick. He knew which ones would be less physical should a confrontation occur. His mind was like a steel trap. Not only was there Plan A and Plan B, but there were also Plans C through L. Every conceivable option was taken into consideration. Underneath his hospital blanket Stanley was fully dressed in his civilian clothing.

Tamara, the nurse assistant had just left the room after taking Stanley's blood pressure reading and temperature. As soon as she walked from the room Stanley counted to fourteen. Then he quickly peeled back the blanket and stood up next to his bed. He removed three extra pillows from the closet and situated them under the covers in the shape of a human being sleeping. He removed his oxygen tube and ran it to the head of the bed and under the covers. Cleverly he attached his catheter line to a slow dribble from the bathroom sink to make the enemy believe he was passing the amount of liquid they wanted. Pinned to the bed cover was a handwritten note, "Please do not disturb, I'm sleeping".

At 11:47 PM Dad walked from his hospital room to the janitor's closet 20 feet down the hallway. He walked inside. He waited until he heard the nightshift nurse walk past the closet. He counted to 23 and then quietly opened the door. He scooted down the hallway wing until he came to the main corridor. There, just as he had planned, were three large laundry containers. He rolled over into the third one and covered himself with the laundry in the basket. He knew this cart would go down the north wing and park next to the patient elevators until the attendant removed the sheets from room N716. When the cart came to a halt, Dad counted to 8 and quickly pushed the laundry from on top of him. He pushed the "down" elevator button. When the first elevator came he leaned in and pushed the tenth floor. He did not go with the elevator. His plan was to tie up the only other elevator should there be an alarm and someone tries to come up from security. He then took the other elevator down to the lobby. Almost there! Dad could almost inhale the fresh, crisp air just outside the hospital doors.

Suddenly the elevator stopped at the second floor. As the door opened, Hildagard, one of the night nurses from the seventh floor step onto the elevator. As quick as a computer, Stanley's binary brain swung into Plan H. Dad pulled out his LAPD badge and flashed it to the nefarious nurse. "All this time you thought I was a patient didn't you", Dad asked with a smile. "I have been working undercover these last weeks trying to capture a ring of ivory smugglers. We think they use the hospital as a secret hiding place." The skeptical hospital servant stared at Dad. It was not working. Hildagard was on to his scheme. She moved toward him in an effort to take his arm. "I'm sorry Mr. Stevenson, you need to go right back upstairs and get into your room."

As quick as a King Cobra striking at a menacing mongoose, Dad slipped behind her and put a Brazilian Sleeper hold on her. 2.5 seconds later and she was out for the count. As she slide to the floor of the elevator like a limp rag Dad whispered, "Bet they didn't teach you that one in nursing school." The elevator doors opened and Dad stepped smartly out into the lobby floor of the hospital.

Dad did not know that the previous day hidden remote cameras were installed in each elevator. Every move Dad had made during the last 15 minutes was being reviewed by security. As Dad turned to the left he saw a hospital security guard waiting for him with his hands resting on his hips. He quickly made an about face only to find another security guard peering at him with his arms folded. As Dad went into a Kung Fu martial arts stance he knew it was more show than threat. They knew it too. Discouraged and frustrated, Stanley submitted to the two security titans. Three minutes later he was back in his room.

December 22, 2002, LDS Hospital with Dr. Horton

"Mr. Stevenson," Dr. Horton said looking over the rim of his glasses, "There have been numerous reports of you trying to escape the hospital and several incidents of a combative nature. I am sorry to say this, but I am going to release you from the hospital." The look in Dad's eyes said everything! Dr. Horton then followed up, "Stan, the real reason you're going home is because you are ready. The new valve is working perfectly. Your pacemaker is functioning properly. Your oxygen is good and your blood pressure normal. You are as ready as anyone." Dad was as happy as a little boy on Christmas Day in the Donald Trump home.

As Dad was wheeled down the hallway he requested that we stop at the nurses station. There Dad delivered a two pound box of See's Candy. He thanked them for all their good work and even apologized for being a little difficult once in a while. Then down to the car and straight to 7th East and then to Three Fountains. Home Sweet Home!

The Christmas lights were on and Dad easily walked from the car to his favorite reading chair. A moment later his good friend Charlie hopped up on his lap and just stayed there for about twenty minutes. Things had just not been the same without the master of the house.

So ends the saga of Defectus Flapius en Tickerus. Dad was safely at home and Fran by his side to help. Gently rubbing his hands together, Dad said with excitement, "Ahaa, now it's time to get back to all the projects – Walker Video, Mayflower Society, Friends of Scouting, etc., etc."

To pigs Stan has always been nice
He won rolling the heart surgery dice
So let's always remember to pigs be nice
We never know if we'll need a pig valve on ice