

The Great White Mouse Hunter

Growing up in Weiser, Idaho was a wonderful time for young Klave Chandler. There was riding horses, hunting, rodeos and dancing. There were campfires and fishing and playing sports. There was hard work during the lambing season and training horses. Life was good. Yes, life was wonderful. But, there is one thing that very few people in Weiser will publicly discuss – mice.

This is a story of a boy becoming a man. A story of incredible courage and inspiration. This is the story of a legend, a hero in our own time. A story of an undeniable, disturbing and despicable experience that lead to an unending determination to overcome difficulties and discover a new destiny in life. And, as is usually the case, the character-building experiences of youth surfacing in later years to protect and serve humanity.

Growing up in Weiser, Klave heard all the town and family stories about mice. There was the time when Klave's great uncle was attacked by a gang of mice while he was riding into town for some general supplies. One time his grandfather was on a shepherding drive when two 80 pound mice viciously attacked and hauled off six fully grown sheep. The mayor's wife was completely devoured in her own water bed by a school of piranha mice while the mayor slept safe and sound on the living room sofa. A 100 foot silo of oats was completely emptied in the middle of the night by an army of 12,000 mice trying to supply their own underground one year food storage program. The stories go on and on - stories of terror and horror beyond description.

More important than the stories are the personal experiences of young Klave Chandler that have proven to be the real defining moments in his life. There are too many to tell, but one most certainly must be shared. It is an experience that will appear fictional, but rest assured not a word of exaggeration is spoken. (Due to the graphic and violent nature of this true account, this story should not be shared with children under the age of 21)

Klave was thirteen years old and lambing season had just begun. Retrieving the lambs and taking them to the lambing shed was grueling and unrelenting work. About 1:37 AM Klave sat down in the shed totally exhausted from non-stop work all day long. The lambs were bleating for their mothers. Klave had not eaten for over 31.87 hours and he was sapped of any energy. Amid all the commotion he closed his eyes for a brief moment to rest. When Klave opened his eyes he was horrified to see dozens of mice surrounding him. They were in the rafters high above. Some were in the straw laying throughout the shed. Others stood right at his feet and still others approach him from the sides of the walls.

One seemed to be the leader. He had a tiny red bandana around his neck. He defiantly stared right at Klave as he motioned to the mice on the right to move in. Then he made a similar motion to the mice on the left. Ten to fifteen mice slid down orange bailing twine from the rafters like Navy Seals. When the leader rose both of his hands high into the air, approximately 232 mice raised up out of the straw on the ground with camouflage paint all over their face and bodies. All of them uniformly stood there in a frightening martial arts stance. Klave blinked his eyes. Could this really be happening or was this some kind of a nightmare. Klave received his answer as one of the mice lunged for his legs and sunk his teeth through the bottom of his pant leg. As Klave yanked his leg away the mouse went flying through the air. The mouse died instantly as he smashed head first into the wall of the shed.

This seemed to infuriate the leader. Klave instinctively knew he was in for the fight of his life. This was real and it was really important that he did something quick. The mice started to close in from all directions. Klave knew it was either him or the mice. For a fraction of a second Klave envisioned a picture of a woman in his mind. She was holding two tiny little baby girls in her arms. This vision of serenity seemed to inject him with instant strength and energy. Then, all of a sudden his mind went dark. He did not realize that three of the mice were on his neck and biting into his spinal cord.

In an instant Klave sprang to his feet in a blinding-fast Bruce Lee move. He spun in two circles kicking, swatting, punching, chopping and thrusting. In doing so he cleared some distance between him and his oriental-fighting rodents. By now the adrenalin was surging through his slender yet muscularly-defined body. In the bravest voice he could muster, he said, "I am Klave Chandler, son of Kurt Chandler. Do your worst." Taking on his own martial arts stance, he moved into action. He kicked and stomped at the speed of lightening. His fists were a fury of rage. He took out mice on the left and then on the right. He head-butted mice jumping at him from the rafters. For 17 minutes and 34 seconds Klave was a non-stop, gyrating, boot-to-the-head, kung-fu fighting machine. When it was all over, Klave dropped his throbbing fist and looked around him. 383 mice lay in a heap – dead in the line of their dirty, destructive and devious duty.

Klave collapsed to his knees and buried his face in his hands. It was over. He had done the impossible. The odds were against him, but obviously the odds never knew about Klave Chandler. Traumatic as it was, Klave was able to move on with the help of professional counseling. He had no problems with mice from that time on. A mouse here or there was no big deal. However, Dr. I. C. Knuttz, the head of the Psychiatric Department from Weiser Memorial Hospital could not guarantee any level of normalcy in Klave's life if he were to ever be confronted again with a large number of angry, abnormal, aggravated, attack-prone, aberrant mice.

Klave saw mice on his mission in California. He saw plenty of mice while attending BYU Idaho. Mice were ever so common in Jackson Hole at the Bar T Ranch. He managed and functioned just fine. Life was good and mice were the least of Klave's problems.

Years later, Klave married the beautiful Amanda Stevenson and Klave was about to attend his first Stevenson Family Reunion at Camp Kostopulos in Salt lake City. Uncle Kent had been to the camp a couple of times in advance to make sure it was suitable for the family. Everything was clean and neat. He was assured that the lodging areas were free of any varmints.

The first night of the reunion, the Chris and Mavis Stevenson family was moving into their bunkhouse. While making beds and putting up suitcases, Elizabeth spied a mouse. The next few minutes are impossible to explain in words. Suffice it to say that mass hysteria and pandemonium spread like a wild fire throughout the normally serene sleeping quarters. Elizabeth was on top of her bed grabbing her children and screaming for her life. Others were running out of the building while some jumped to the upper bunks for safety.

About this time Klave walked into the room where the first mouse was sited. "What's the big problem", he said in a cool, calm and collected voice, "It's just a lousy old mouse." No sooner had he said that than two more ran out from under Elizabeth's bed. Then, behind him, four mice

ran to the corner of the bedroom. Up above he heard the sound of mice running along the rafters. Two mice ran across his boot and into the closet.

This was obviously an incredible infestation, if not a very calculated attack upon the territory-challenging family. Klave ripped off his shirt and laid it on the flat ground at his feet. Grabbing a felt tip marker he wrote upon it – “In memory of our reunion, our family motto, and freedom, and our peace, our wives, and our children.” And then he fastened it to the top of a broom handle and waved it throughout the bunkhouse.

All of a sudden it was as if he was back ten years ago in the lambing shed at his Weiser home. He broke out in a cold sweat. His hands started to tremble. He automatically assumed his Kung-Fu fighting stance. Once again, just like his Weiser experience of many years ago, the mice positioned themselves, ready to take on the enemy. The mice knew it was either them or the insensitive intruders that so indignantly took over their indigenous dwelling place. They began to inch forward – their claws bared and teeth making a horrific chattering noise. Klave took a giant breath and unleashed his incredible fists of fury and feet of fungi. Mice were dying everywhere. One stood so bravely and bold in front of Klave, flipping him the bird. With one swift boot to the head, the malicious mouse was unmercifully kicked into orbit.

For 17 minutes and 34 seconds Klave was ablaze! It was Kung-fu Kicking Klave. It was the Wan Wang Wizard from Weiser wiping the floor with the wimpy mice of West Immigration Canyon. It was Kempo Karate Klave cracking the skulls of Camp Kostopulos krittlers. He was non-stop. He was a blur of blistering blows and skeletal-crushing kicks never seen before by the human eye. Family members stood there in awe of this super human struggle against the forces of the menacing, evil mice.

When it was all over Klave collapsed to his knees in exhaustion. He buried his face in his hands. Once again Klave overcame the impossible. The odds were no match for Klave Chandler. The family members broke out in exultant cheers and excited expressions of justified jubilation.

Someday, well into the future, someone of the Stevenson posterity will ask who has had the greatest influence on the Stevenson Family Reunions. Undoubtedly, our promising posterity will universally nod their heads in agreement as someone will say, “It’s obvious. Klave Chandler - the great white mouse hunter.”