

A Review of

Nick's New Heart

The True Story of Love, Strength and Courage

Author: Susan May

Reviewed by Jim Gleason, heart recipient

Ok, this is another of those "***I can't put it down***" books that grabs one's heart and ends up with tears and a single day of dedicated reading, and that combination makes for a top rating in my book. In **Nick's New Heart**, Nick's mother, Susan May, shares her compelling story of family life when her child is born with a three chambered heart (instead of the normal four), a heart that will not support his life for long. From the moment of birth the reader is taken along in a very close and personal way on doctor visits and hospital stays, sharing in the home dynamics of facing the impact such a focus has on the rest of the now six member family, feeling the desperation and hope roller coaster ride as it develops over those first few months and years. Baby Nick struggles and inspires both his family and medical teams as they fight together for his life, described in detail for the first two years of life medical issues and too many complex cardiac operations that include a life saving heart transplant just weeks before his second birthday. For the next developing years, as he moves through becoming a teenager eventually facing college and career decisions, a dream come true for a mother who prayed to see this day, there is less detail as Nick grows in less dramatic and often normal ways, under the ever watchful eyes of a loving family.

Back in 1991, facing Nick's failing heart news, Susan couldn't find information on others who had gone through similar challenges. A determined woman of action and skilled writer, she took it upon herself to create a support resource with this book. In the telling, Susan and Nick give hope to those many other families who have been given equally poor prognosis yet fight against the odds every day, praying that they too may someday be able to celebrate their own child's young adult successes. This success is summarized in a 2008 graduation photo of 19 year old Nick, dressed in tux, looking so healthy and ready to take on the adult world, a triumph of human spirit, family prayer, faith and dedication supported by evolving medical science.

Nick's New Heart is excellent reading for medical professionals seeking to understand what goes on in the family outside the doctor and hospital offices, giving insight into the hearts, minds, hopes and fears of parents. Be forewarned that if you are like me, there will be tears of joy, for example, as Dr. Kanter announces to an anxious family the heart transplant operation success, and that's just one of many tear-filled reading moments. The author's writing skills come through in connecting to the reader's heart like that, supported by family photos showing Nick's growing years, making it even more personal.

An important implied advice for patients comes through as we see Susan playing a very strong proactive role with their medical team. The very special bond with his primary doctor can be seen in the often humorous banter, adding spice to their mutual challenge insuring Nick's attention and care from one crisis to the next. Nick's story also gives testimony to the anonymous gift of a donor family who gave Nick his heart when they couldn't save their own child, thus recognizing both sides to such life experiences. Finally, don't miss Susan's closing **Reflections**, in which she shares her own heart even further, addressing thoughts on his dating, career, and future life. There is also an Appendix, offering beneficial information and advice to help families with chronically ill or transplanted children. With this writing, Susan May has fulfilled her mission of providing that support resource she found sorely lacking in facing their own challenge almost 20 years ago, hopefully making it easier for those who follow with their own successes today. Susan, thank you for sharing

your life and dreams with us in this wonderful heart-filled story of motherly love and dedication.

Note: **Nick's New Heart** is available in hard cover directly from the author or Amazon.com. You can learn more from her website at <http://nicksnewheart.com/>

Brief bio:

Jim Gleason, receiving his own heart transplant Oct. '94, retired after 37 years with Unisys Corporation in 2005, is a volunteer with The Gift of Life Donor Program, NKF and UNOS as well as a nationally recognized speaker and author. His own book, **A Gift from the Heart**, is offered free in thanks to his donor family and can be obtained by contacting him at GLEASONJIM@AOL.COM.