

A Review of

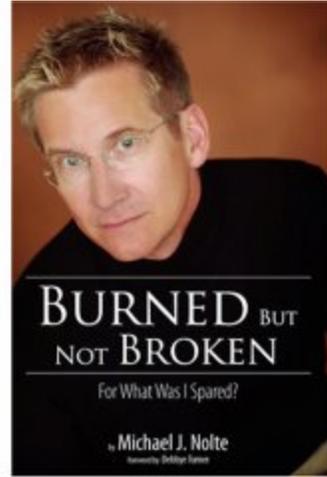
Burned But Not Broken

For What Was I Spared

Author: Michael J. Nolte

Reviewed by Jim Gleason, heart recipient

“Riveting” is not a word I have ever used in reviewing books involving transplantation but in this case, it is the right word to describe Michael Nolte’s gifted writing. In sharing his life experience of being roasted alive in a horrific car fire where he was witness to the State Trooper next to him burn to death before his eyes, only to be himself pulled from the holocaust by two passing “good Samaritans” he takes us to the depths of seemingly endless indescribable pain. Through him we feel something we never want to feel firsthand, an experience that causes many to ask: *“Why me God?”* instead, in this man of positive outlook and surprising humor, he asks: *“For what was I spared?”*



Michael shares the frustration of a recovery process that involves excruciating pain that can only be temporarily relieved by powerful drugs and narcotics that in turn induce hallucinations that are even worse than the pain itself. He describes living through disfigurement and a multi-year long recovery process only to find himself in the depths of a depression that would cause a lesser patient to give up. But that isn’t the Michael that an army of friends and family know and love as they come to his support in the days and months of uphill challenge. While most supporters fade in long term recovery situations, his remain as strong as ever, especially with his amazing caretaker wife, Barbie, and their three children. As a trained nurse, she is not only called upon to use every professional skill as his 24/7 caregiver, but also runs their busy household AND maintains his bridal consulting business spread across two distant locations. Add to that the early months of needing to stay close to Mike in the burn center distant from home and business and you begin to get the bigger picture. Don’t miss the final chapter, Barbie’s own “Afterword” addition, a unique insight into this amazing angel in his life. Yet another unique element in this reading is his sharing the fears that came with rediscovering their intimacy, something that might have been lost forever to the extensive injuries, but with loving understanding and an insightful doctor, is another moment of triumph in this gift of sharing with his readers, a subject seldom shared publicly given the nature of personal privacy.

As both patient and family, they rely on a strong faith in God and a supportive church family to get through years of life and skin reconstruction to where audiences who come to hear his inspiring story find it hard to imagine the initial disfigurement that has undergone amazing transformation under the excellent medical care and tissue transplant he receives. With so much emphasis on “organ donation” it seems only recently the focus on the importance of tissue donation has become an equal part of the awareness

education around the world. Michael's story, intended to be a resource for other burn victims, actually serves that added mission of showing that tissue is not a lesser gift but an equal partner in "Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness" when it comes to saving lives as his story so dramatically and effectively demonstrates.

Michael discovers the answer to his "*For what was I spared...*" question in sharing his story both in this book and in speaking events that inspire those whose lives come in contact with him. Be prepared to cry and celebrate in reading many special moments and dimensions of his life that go far beyond the burn recovery itself. His gentle humor and insights into life come through in those parts of the story that involve other victims of this tragic accident along with heart wrenching moments of hurt and forgiveness. There are dramatic court battles that end up in meaningless victory, horrific detailed accounts of the fiery accident itself, tales of despair and heroic actions as well as tender moments of love and gratitude in this book that reads almost like a novel. But its reality makes for so much more than a novel, and that is why this reviewer found himself emotionally moved to tears many times in its reading, a reading that was so engrossing that I finished it non-stop the very evening I received the book.

This is a story to be read not just by burn victims, but by critical care nurses, physical and occupational therapists, insurance and long-term care providers and those considering organ donation, and especially, as Michael describes: those people just starting on their own lap in the race to regain what I call 'fullness of life' – a first-hand story about a man living a Norman Rockwell life who was horribly "burned... but not broken" and how he got better.

As so many have said already, "*Welcome back, Michael,*" and thanks for taking us along for this amazing emotional ride through your writing.

Note: **Burned But Not Broken** is available in hard cover directly from the author (with inscription and monies going to the scholarship fund) at <http://michaeljnlte.com/pdfs/Orderform.pdf> - or from Amazon.com. Also, see and hear Michael sharing his story at <http://www.michaeljnlte.com/contact.html> using "The Speech" link.

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.