

A Review of
My Favorite American
Author: Dennis McCloskey

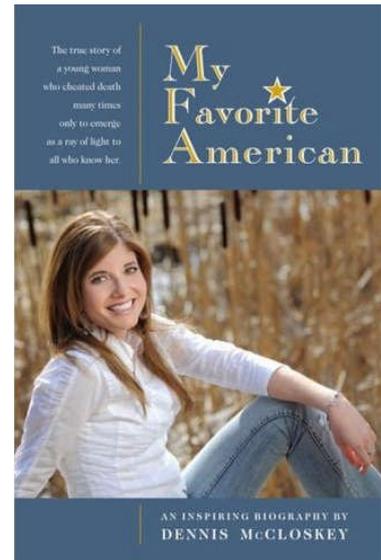
Reviewed by Jim Gleason, heart recipient

From the absolutely stunning cover picture of this amazing young lady to the concluding chapter of various acquaintances and friends sharing their own thoughts about Valen and her impact on their lives, the reader will come away knowing that anything is possible, especially if the attitude and desire is there to support what medical science offers many chronically ill patients these days. In a biography penned by this Canadian author who shares his unashamedly "over the top" admiration with a skilled portrayal of the subject's medically challenged life with PKD (polycystic kidney disease) from birth and even beyond her life saving living donor kidney transplant in August of 2002, we live Valen Cover's life down to extreme detail which gives us a very realistic almost day-by-day appreciation for what her life and survival really means.

Valen was not always looking so beautiful and full of energy, with many days showing the signs of the disease on her ravaged body often described by her loving parents who lived through and stood by her every step of the way. Valen's love and admiration for her family and especially her parents comes through loud and clear in words that any parent would love to hear said of themselves. From early days of childhood and many, many hospital stays and procedures, it was never clear that there would be a tomorrow or if there was, what quality of life that would offer. With faith and an extremely skilled kidney surgeon in Johns Hopkins' doctor Robert Montgomery, she survives the roller coaster ride of kidney disease and kidney transplant to live on a life of inspiration and support for others, along with entering, amazingly, a normal career. Valen reaches out and is the founder of the South Central PA Chapter for PKD, taking it to levels of national prominence as she emerges on that same national scene as a powerful advocate and polished speaker for the cause. Her story of returning to a full life is not without its own perils as we live through a motorcycle accident that threatens her life in a different way. Again, with determination and tenacity, buoyed by her deliberate choice of a positive reaction to just about everything she encounters, we are offered inspiring lessons on how to deal with our own life challenges, something Valen is well known for by any and all who come into contact with her.

One very uniquely interesting and moving chapter of the story involves the author and subject being invited by Dr. Montgomery to "scrub in" on a kidney transplant operation. You can only imagine how that must have felt to this patient who had herself undergone the same procedure. At one point in both the recovery and implant operations, Valen gets to assist the surgeon in a very minor way, one that brought tears to my eyes, but let me not give away more so that you too can enjoy her sharing of that involvement.

For families faced with PKD, for fellow patients dealing with their own chronic illnesses, for medical professionals who need the affirmation that their work is fruitful and meaningful despite some daily setbacks, this life story is certainly an inspiring read. At times it may seem like too much trivial detail, reading like a romantic novel as someone said, but that lends a sense of connection and reality to this true life



story of transplant and life success, a story that comes off the page to touch the reader's heart.

As one of her nurses said "I look forward to her future." I am sure readers will join me in echoing that same phrase for we certainly have not heard nor seen the last of this bright, rising star who is the obvious proof that "transplantation works!" Come to believe that and sign up to be an organ donor yourself, making it possible for many more young and old alike to live their life to its fullest potential, as this wonderful story shows us.

Note: **My Favorite American** is available in paperback at Amazon.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.