

MY FATHER-IN-LAW, ALEX VERISHINE: HIS PERSONAL SUCCESS WITH ORGAN TRANSPLANTS

Alex was the father of my wife and life-long partner, Marilyn. The truth is he was very much a “straight-shooter” and very opinionated. He would call “a spade a spade.”

In this photo, he rides his favourite horse, Queen. He also was Pasture Manager for a local government pasture under PFRA.

My Readers need to “bear with me” as will attempt to equate his personal experience with the ongoing research at the University of Saskatchewan in this article:



“....USask researchers exploring pig possibilities for organ transplantation, an article by Matt Olson, Research Profile and Impact dated June 03, 2024....” Posted in LinkedIn

These are these separate events that took place that I will try and consolidate into my posting.

1. It was common for Mixed Farmers, living in a rural environment back in Saskatchewan, to visit one another on a regular basis to share their experiences with livestock, crops and everyday living, during a time when power was an infrastructure of the future, and radios were only used to hear special events and the Evening News. Talking about each other and sometimes gossiping was a common practice. There was also an element of jealousy if one Farmer appeared to be having more success than another. Since there was no proof of this as it may be a supposition, the story may become “stretched” with the Teller and of course, when it was repeated many times without that Farmer’s knowledge who might have been able to dispute some of the “claims”. So it came to pass that this family received a bit more attention from Alex, than perhaps it should. I am convinced that if that family, ever had reason to ask Alex for any assistance, he would automatically provide that as was his routine with all the neighboring Farmers at that time. So, I will leave this event at this time with the fact that Alex did not frequent visitations to this family as often as he did with others.



2. Part of being a mixed farmer, the importance of pigs as livestock was paramount to most Farmers because they were easy to feed with most food waste and so very economic to raise for stockyard sales to raise revenue to purchase gas, repairs and many of the expenses of the day. They were also a source of food as Pork. It was inexpensive to house pigs as well and usually their feeding troughs were outside of a roof that covered their pigsty. Alex did not really like pigs as he did the rest of his livestock but recognized their importance to his farming income.
3. As Alex aged, he was subjected to hypertension, and this became a concern for his medical professional. He had always preferred a continuing family doctor but his daughter-in-law at that time, suggested that he see a younger Doctor. The recommendation was the son of the family who he had “talked about”. It was about this time that Alex used to suffer from “blackouts”

which came without any notice. One winter evening as he was taking “slops” out to the pig barn and as he was emptying the pails, he had a “blackout” and fell into the trough, seriously bruising his ear which started to bleed. The pigs were attracted to this blood and ended up chewing the ear and disembodimenting it from his head while Alex lay unconscious. Many of us who have had dogs, will understand that the dogs on the farm started barking and attracted the attention of his son Allan and his wife who lived in a house nearby the pigsty. Allan interpreted the barking as a need to investigate and so found his father and was able to make a rescue and call an ambulance.

4. In the follow-up Doctor visits, the young medical professional diagnosed a heart valve malfunction and referred him to a Specialist who in turn, recommended a heart transplant valve. The valve was transplanted from a pig. Alex’s life was extended about ten (10) years as a result.

This story has can be repeated in many instances where perhaps we may need to be less judgemental of people as we never know when the “tables will turn” and those people will become part of our lives. So it was with Alex and the family he talked about.

The pigs that chewed his ear, in turn, became his salvation to a longer life.

For those of us that may require transplants due to failing organs, this insert from the referenced USask article can provide an insight to the current research work that is taking place and hope for the future:



“.....

Genetically modified pigs

Transgenic pigs are genetically modified pigs that can be used as organ donors to prevent the recipient’s immune system from immediately rejecting the xenograft¹²³⁴⁵. The pigs are modified to produce cells that are coated in the same proteins and sugars as those of a human, which reduces the risk of rejection or allergic reactions³. The transplantation of hearts and kidneys from these transgenic pigs has already greatly improved the survival of xenografts in non-human primates.....”

So, there is my true story for all of you.

Written June 03, 2024 by EWW