

Dear [Friends],

On the 10th anniversary of my cardiac arrest, I want to thank those who saved my life and those who have made my life worth living.

On October 11, 2009, I was running in my neighborhood as I had nearly every morning for about five years. I thought I was healthy. But on this day, a couple minutes into my run I staggered a couple of steps and dropped to the ground unconscious...

Across the street lived Jodie and Dan Hare and their young son, Mason. It was both Mason's and Jodie's birthday and Jodie's parents Christine and Alan Shafer were visiting from the east coast to celebrate this dual birthday. Christine was outside with Mason and saw me drop to the ground. She called to Alan who ran across the street to find that I had no pulse. **My heart was stopped.** Alan had received life-saving training years before as a lifeguard and knew to immediately start chest compressions. Jodie called 911 and then joined her father, silently willing this stranger not to die on her son's birthday.

When the firemen arrived, they saw the stopwatch on my wrist read 6 minutes. The spot that I went down was about 2 minutes into my daily run, so the firemen arrived in about four minutes. Given the distance to the fire station, they must have been moving very fast on this Sunday morning. I am grateful for that speed.

The survival rate for cardiac arrest outside of a hospital is about 3%. As the fire captain, Joe Grayston told me later, most firemen go their entire careers and never have a cardiac arrest save. But despite the long odds, Joe and his crew of Emergency Medical Technicians, David Stephens and Adam Thorpe went to work continuing chest compressions and administering an Automatic External Defibrillator, which shocked me and got a weak heartbeat going.

A few minutes later, paramedics Mark Rotundo and Brian Davy arrived with a heart monitor from which they could determine I was having a heart attack due to a blocked left anterior descending coronary artery. They called Huntington Hospital to activate the cardiac team who were on call that morning.

Soon the ambulance crew arrived manned by Tadeh Danielian, Jordan Rojas, and Eric Anderson. They got me to the hospital quickly and safely. This ride was the only time I've been in an ambulance with the sirens and lights going. But I regret I didn't get to experience the excitement of the ride :-) because I was unconscious the whole time :-(.

At the hospital, in the emergency room Dr. Steve Zielinski quickly confirmed the field diagnosis and routed me to the interventional cardiology lab on the second floor. There the team of Stacey Pereira, Michael Fraijo, and Norma Kachigian worked on me led by Dr. Terry Baruch. Within an hour of me going down on the street, the doctor had opened my blocked artery by installing a stent through a catheter inserted through the femoral artery in my leg.

Of the small percentage of people who survive cardiac arrest, most have residual heart damage, brain damage, or both due to the period the heart and brain were deprived of oxygen and nutrients. I was lucky enough to avoid both of those complications, in large part due to the group of people mentioned above who acted to save me. Thank-you.

Another group of people have taught me what I needed to know to understand what happened to me and to take the actions needed to never suffer from heart disease again. The head of this list is Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn, author of the book [Prevent and Reverse Heart Disease](#). From Essy, I also connected with Dr. Colin Campbell, author of [The China Study](#), Dr. John McDougall, author of [The Starch Solution](#), and many other pioneers in the field of disease reversal and prevention through nutrition. I thank all of you for my good health after my heart attack made possible by your teachings.

To my life savers, I would like to share some of the consequences of your selfless actions in saving my life, both to my personal benefit and my efforts to help others. I started a non-profit organization, NuSci, The Nutrition Science Foundation, through which I have delivered more than 100 workshops focused on disease reversal and prevention of disease through nutrition. I have given dozens of other talks locally and throughout the U.S. and given away more than 10,000 books, many of them the three mentioned above.

At our workshops, we provide a free dinner so that attendees can see that very healthy food can taste great too. In order to prepare this food and to sell to others in the Los Angeles area, we started a food preparation company, [Little Green Forks](#). At this point, we have served more than 50,000 super healthy meals. Some customers have told us they are only alive because of the availability of these meals.

We found that some people need more help changing their diet and lifestyle than can be provided in a free 3-hour workshop, so recently we started [Tanner Care Health and Wellness Center](#) to provide yearlong programs of education and coaching to help people overcome their obstacles to lifestyle change and health. So far, dozens of people have completed our program with many more underway. In addition to the expected drop in high cholesterol, high blood pressure and high blood sugar, our patients have reported some surprises. One lady reported that after decades of poor

sleep, three days into our program she was sleeping like a baby. Another gentleman reported a reversal in his diabetic retinopathy in four weeks and had the before and after pictures of his retina to prove it.

I have been trying to emulate the selflessness of the wonderful people that have saved my life and to pay my debt forward by helping others as best I can. But there is another side to my life which is important at least to me.

Linda, my wife and life partner in so many ways, were married for 26 years before my cardiac arrest. I almost left her a widow on that day 10 years ago, but because I survived, we celebrated our 36th anniversary a few months ago. And I have had the pleasure of watching our kids grow and blossom. My oldest, Melissa, was a student at MIT at the time of my cardiac arrest. I got to see her graduate from MIT in aeronautics and then more recently successfully defend her PhD thesis at Caltech in robotics. My middle child, Michelle, was in high school when I had cardiac arrest. I got to see her graduate from high school and then from U.C. Berkeley with a degree in Cognitive Science. Michelle then ran Little Green Forks for a year before spending a year in Japan teaching English to Japanese high school kids and then taking a job in Silicon Valley with a database software company. My youngest, Michael, was in high school when I suffered cardiac arrest and recently received his degree in mechanical engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. I almost missed all these important times in the lives of my children.

My day job is running [Tanner Research](#), a technology company I founded over 30 years ago. I try to help others learn about nutrition because I feel it is so important that it needs to be done. But what I really love to do is technology. And I have a great team at Tanner Research. I am personally trying to guide our efforts to create autonomous wheeled [robots](#) to transport boxes of strawberries from the middle of the field, allowing pickers to be 50% more efficient. Other scientists and technologists at Tanner Research are developing long flying unmanned aerial vehicles, scuba rebreathers that will allow divers to stay down longer in cold water, anti-fog goggles, and a variety of other projects that utilize our expertise in electronics, software, mechanics, optics, micromachines, 3D printers, and our own cleanroom fabrication facility. While the work is complex and difficult, it is also fulfilling and fun.

A small project I am currently working to bring to market is a small plastic shoe closure that contains embedded magnets to allow you to secure your shoes with a click and never have to tie them again. Once the patent is filed, I hope to have them on the market soon after.

Outside of work, I enjoy life fully. I run 3 miles almost every day in about 30 minutes. I also do pushups and pullups. While I can't say I truly love these exercises, I do love the fact that at age 62 I can do them without pain and that I recover quickly after serious exertion.

My kids play softball in a local JPL recreational league. When they were short a player last year, they invited me to play and soon I was a regular on the team. When the kids were small, I would throw the ball with them and coached some of their teams when they were older, watching their skills improve. What a joy it is to be playing on a team with them as adults. To see my daughter catch a sizzling grounder to shortstop and throw to me at first base for the out. Awesome. To have my son hit me in after I just hit my daughter in. Fantastic. And at my age, being able to end the year with a batting average about as good as my kids – does life get any better than that?

Before my cardiac arrest, I had a pretty great life. I had to work hard but had my share of good fortune as well. It almost ended suddenly. Thanks to my life savers, I get to continue my life. I still work hard and am so grateful that I am healthy enough that I can work hard. It is so satisfying. And to everyone else in my life, I am so fortunate to have this time with you.

Thanks,

John Tanner
10-11-19

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