

“Pig Pig”

self out in this pasture with a rope headed for a pig—a real one! I like bacon, and pork chops and chili stew with pork meat in it, but this “pork” was looking back at me and knew just what I was up to. I found myself feeling guilty in the presence of those eyes. The books didn’t tell me that there’s someone “in there” that looks back at you with very humanlike eyes!

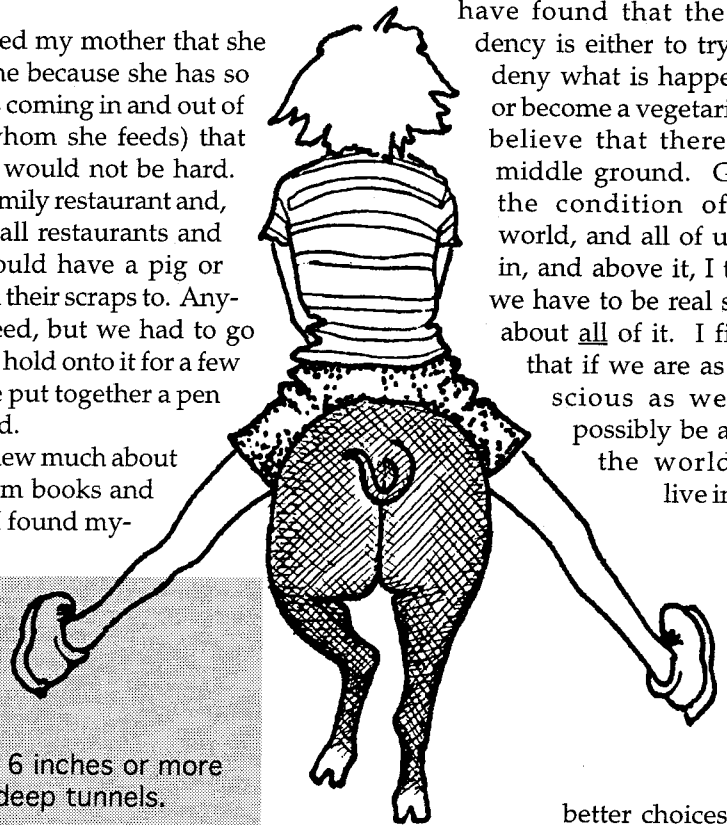
After many years of dealing with all kinds of “farm” animals, I have never, never failed to find myself in this difficult situation. Should I stay open and caring or should I get “cold” in order to “get the job done?” I

Well. . . Joel read that pigs are useful for plowing up an area and tearing up plants that you don’t want. He consulted for this woman up in Taos about her pasture that had been taken over by bindweed. He suggested to her helper, Derek, that he try out some pigs to get rid of the bindweed. Derek took his advice and got four little pigs. He moved them around the pasture in sections using electrical fencing. It was working somewhat when the relationship between Derek and this woman went sour, and Derek was told to “get rid of the pigs.”

I convinced my mother that she should get one because she has so many visitors coming in and out of her house (whom she feeds) that having a pig would not be hard. She is like a family restaurant and, in my mind, all restaurants and cafeterias should have a pig or two to feed all their scraps to. Anyway, she agreed, but we had to go pick it up and hold onto it for a few days until she put together a pen for it. I agreed.

I never knew much about pigs—just from books and pictures, but I found my-

have found that the tendency is either to try and deny what is happening or become a vegetarian. I believe that there is a middle ground. Given the condition of the world, and all of us on, in, and above it, I think we have to be real sober about all of it. I figure that if we are as conscious as we can possibly be about the world we live in, the



Pig-Raising Recommendations

A very strong cage. Bury heavy gauge wire 6 inches or more into the ground. Pigs I’ve known can dig some deep tunnels.

Logs or boulders. Pigs like to push things around, like heavy objects.

Mud hole or water trough. Pigs are related to ducks, but are actually cleaner than ducks, and love to keep their skin nice with mud baths.

Straw bales. Our pigs have liked to make nests of straw to sleep in. In the winter they cover themselves with straw to keep warm. A bale a month (don’t open it for them—it’s half the fun for them to open it themselves) is a good idea. They will soon turn it into compost and their cage won’t even smell.

Pigweed. Our pigs ate almost anything including left over pork chops. But a cheap way to help feed a pig is to grow some pigweed. This “weed” grows just about anywhere and pigs really do like it. So do sheep, but that’s another story.

better choices and moves we will make. So with this logic in mind, I went forward trying not to deny anything.

“Yes, Pig Pig, I’m gonna tie you up with this rope and put you in the back of my truck, take you far away from your brothers and sisters and give you to my mother who will fatten you up and then eat you.” Then I felt terrible but I told it, “I am sorry but this is still what I’m gonna do.”

Pig Pig got her name naturally.

After Pig Pig whispered to her brothers and sister, they figured out how to pull the rope off of her before we got her to the truck. After a few of these escapes, we had her. She threw

up and shit all over the back of the truck all the way home with the kids sitting next to her, making disgusted faces. We got home and put her in with the sheep, for now. Well! Those sheep were fit to be tied! How dare we insult their pristine world with a PIG! And that pig went straight for their water tub and climbed in!

I fell in love.

"Maybe I'll keep her for a week before I take her to my mother's," I thought.

I had never had so much fun watching an animal in all my life. Pig Pig was incredible in every sense of the word. Everything she did was done with the utmost pleasure and full-heartedness. She was All there, All the time. She taught me how to "be here now." I watched her for hours.

My mother saw the sparkle in my eyes when Pig Pig was mentioned, so she stopped building the pig pen, realizing that the pig wasn't leaving my yard real soon. Pig Pig never did go to my mom's. The furthest she went was down to the creek when we would all take walks together. Pig Pig would lead.

No book can ever tell you what you can expect when you take on an animal—any animal, really. Raising Pig Pig was a unique experience unlike any I've ever had or ever will have. I think that we as people forget that every animal is different, even of the same species, just as every person is different. So take what you read and hear from others with a grain of salt and instead check it out for yourself.

So back to my story. . . Joel wasn't too thrilled with having this very intelligent, uncontrollable, unpredictable beast to deal with suddenly, especially when he got thrown into a ditch by her and got some nasty scratches on his head when Pig Pig decided to use him as a bridge to cross the ditch.

It was surprising how that pig never failed to figure out how to escape whenever it decided. And Pig Pig could really lay on the "charm" as soon as we (in our moments of frustration) decided that she was "big enough," like after she dug up all the potatoes.

We tried to get her to dig up an area of bindweeds by staking her to a post with a harness on a five foot long rope.

Well, we learned that the ground has to be wet before a pig can do a good rooting job, but when the ground is wet, so is the pig, and when a pig is wet it gets very slippery. At this stage, Pig Pig would wind her rope tight against the post, then, being shaped like a pointy-ended potato, she would slide herself right out of the harness and go see what the other animals were having for lunch.

Well, after Pig Pig reached six months old and 400 pounds, we did decide that she was "big enough." Joel told me I had to do the dirty work of killing her because it was my big idea to keep her. To go from loving, caring for, protecting and feeding this "friend" of mine to figuring out how I was going to kill her was quite a change. I knew I needed to do it. I knew from the beginning that I was gonna have to kill her one day, but now the day was here. Because I considered her my friend, I knew out of respect for her that I would do it myself and stay "open" to her all the way through.

We borrowed a pistol from a friend. I made Pig Pig her favorite thing to eat—pumpkin pie.

Early in the morning we all went out to her pen (she was actually there) and I gave her the pumpkin pie. She ate it with her usual pleasure enjoying every last crumb. I enjoyed watching her for the last time. Then I shot her in the head. I shot her twice because I wanted it to happen as fast as possible. Then we watched her die.

People ask me how I could eat something I knew so well. I ask them, "How can you eat something you don't know so well?" We ate Pig Pig for about one and a half years and savored every last piece. We knew she would've, too. If I hadn't known her, her meat wouldn't have meant very much to me, it would just be some pork meat. But when we would have a meal with Pig Pig in it, our respect and gratitude to her would put a blessing on the meal and we would remember her in all her moods, and smile. And sometimes we would cry.

***Pig Pig, your Spirit is with us
Your Will is stronger than all this
Thank you for your appetite
that gave me such joy.
I thank you for the meat
I took from your bones.***

***You are a reminder to
me of myself
To remember the Spirit
in all things
and our Will to exist
and our turn one day to
be just flesh and bones.***

