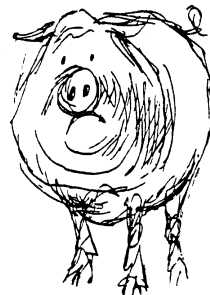
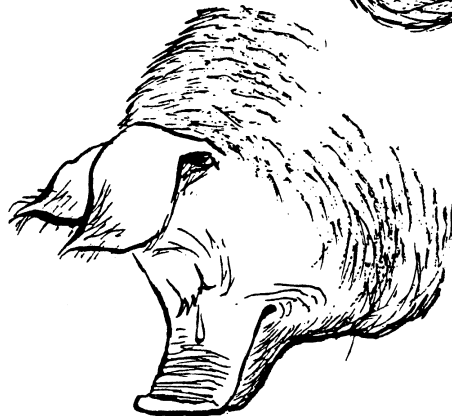
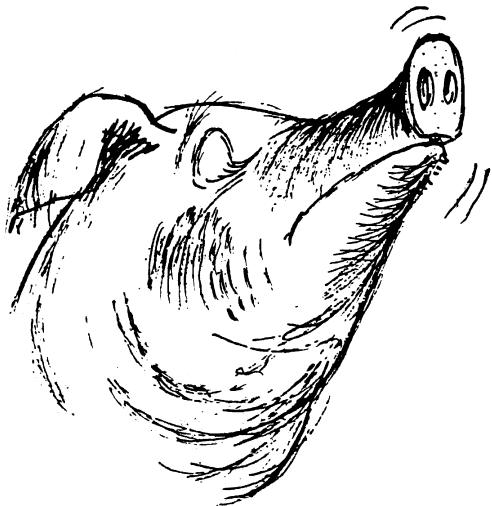
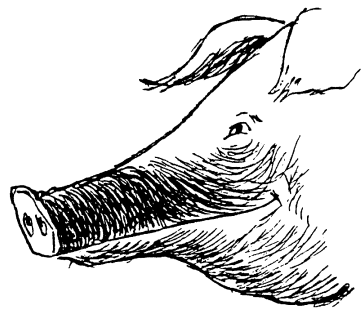
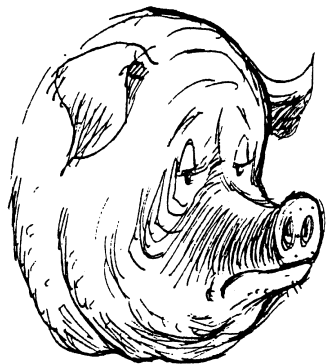
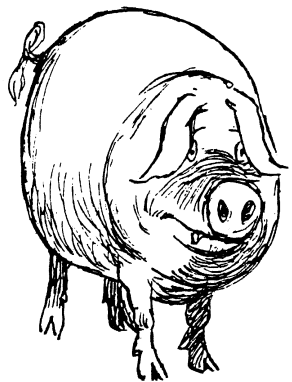


Living with
PIGS

HAVE YOU EVER REALLY KNOWN A PIG?



Living with PIGS

Written and illustrated by

BOBARTLEY

Foreword by Dave Flint



PELICAN PUBLISHING COMPANY

Gretna 2003

*For Dean, Reggie, David, Dan, Rob,
and all those family farmers who have known the smell of pigs*

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FOREWORD

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, nearly every family farm raised some hogs. They were usually farrowed in the warm spring months, finished on homegrown corn, and sold eight or nine months later. These pigs were raised in dirt lots, where they enjoyed the opportunity to wallow in rainwater or water from a tipped trough. I began a career as a vocational agriculture instructor in 1953 and taught for thirty-five years. During this time I encouraged FFA (Future Farmers of America) members to consider raising pigs, as most farms could provide space for a one- or two-litter project.

Living with pigs provided many young men and women the opportunity to develop the responsibility of caring, keeping financial records, and exercising their decision-making skills and allowed them the chance to compete on judging teams. Many of these students continued their educations and went on to become hog buyers, feed-company reps, country bankers, and lawyers, and many did return to the farms to raise more pigs.

The 1950s saw a concentrated movement toward developing the “meat-type hog.” The short, fat, early maturing hogs that were blue-ribbon winners of the 1940s became the white-ribbon winners of the 1950s: they were just too fat for a calorie/cholesterol-watching consumer.

Progress in changing the fat pig to the leaner, well-muscled pig was quite rapid, thanks to the leadership of many Iowans.

Later in the 1980s and 1990s, with larger farm machinery and the capacity it provided a single farm to grow more acres of corn and soybeans, the emphasis moved away from pasture-raised hogs to confinement-raised hogs. Scientists proposed that, with proper rations, ventilation, farrowing crates, and nurseries, pigs could be produced in large numbers with less labor. Thus, there was a movement to large confinement buildings containing hundreds of pigs.

Now, a potbellied semi can haul more pigs in one load than were raised in an entire year on the family farms of the '40s and '50s. As you drive the country roads in Iowa today, you see vast fields of corn/soybeans growing where farmsteads once stood—the buildings are gone, the pigs and other livestock are gone, and the people are gone. These buried farmsteads are memory graveyards for a time that is past and shall never return. This new generation of consumers are interested in “pork, the other white meat,” but they don't want the aroma of pig farms infiltrating their cars as they travel—yet they also like Canadian bacon and pepperoni on their pizzas and the pork burger on the grill, not to mention Iowa chops!

Living with pigs in the past was a time-consuming, dirty, smelly job, but for those of us who remember those days, we do so with mixed fondness.

DAVID FLINT

Retired Vocational Agriculture Instructor and FFA Advisor

PREFACE

Pigs have never been my favorite farm animal. But a good portion of my life has been involved with those fascinating, maddening creatures. This was especially true of my young years on the farm.

Pigs were necessary in our farm economy, as they were a fairly fast-maturing animal (from farrowing to market). A sow could produce eight to ten or more piglets each season, and we marketed the corn we grew through them.

I don't pretend to know all there is to know about the hog industry. Maybe that is why I'm so negative toward these factory-farm hog confinements that seem to be taking over today.

But my life with pigs, as limited as it was, allowed me to view them as fellow creatures on this earth, and I want to see them treated well in their short life with its tragic end. Even as a kid on the farm I enjoyed eating pork, but I avoided being present when the unlucky pig was put to death so that we might feast.

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I also want to thank my brother, Dean; my son Rob; my cousins Bob and John for their interest and input; and Dave Flint for his foreword.

Last but not least, I am indebted to my wife, Margaret, for her encouragement and help; Jim Davies, who translated the handwritten script into typed text onto disk; and the staff at Pelican for their patience, understanding, and help.

Living with
PIGS



FRAGMENTS OF DRAWINGS FROM MY SKETCHBOOK - 1930s