One Hog-Wild Ride

After I started working and saving a few dollars in 1940 in Niles, Michigan, I somehow got the notion that there was money to be made in buying and selling livestock.

My friend Russell Poehlman became my partner in this dubious adventure. We fancied ourselves livestock dealers like the old geezers we saw at the weekly auction.

At those sales, we carried canes in imitation of the veteran dealers. They also chewed tobacco, spitting the juice—splat!—against anything there was to spit against.

Neither Russ nor I could stand that awful stuff, but so badly did we want to look authentic that we chewed raisins. Our jaws protruded, just like the old-timers', and we learned to spit with the best of them.

Our juvenile attempts to look grown-up must have provided those seasoned old men with more than a few chuckles.

One time, we bought a 300-pound Hampshire boar, near Berrien Springs, Michigan. After we paid for the animal, Russ turned to me and asked how in tarnation we were going to get the critter home.

"That's simple," I said. "We'll just put him in the backseat of the car."

And with the assistance of the farmer and two of his hired men, we did just that.

That hog did not take kindly to sitting and riding cross-country in our 1937 Dodge sedan. In fact, he did not really sit at all. He flopped and fumed, snorted and squealed, attempting every once in a while to clamber into the front seat with us.

He was a virile male. That's why we bought him in the first place—for some sows that needed attending. He probably regarded Russ and me as objects of his amorous impulses.

We must surely have smelled like a couple of hogs by then, anyhow. At those moments, Russ would smack the boar's nose.

In that manner, we made our way back to Niles, the town where I had attended high school and where my younger sister Virginia waited.

She was a junior in high school and had remained after school to play tennis with the town girls—she desperately wanted to become a part of that crowd and be chosen for the tennis team.

I knew she needed a ride home to our farm, 7 miles away. In fact, I had agreed to meet her in front of the Paris Sweet Shop, where that bunch of girls stopped for colas.

By the time we arrived there, the rear car windows were so steamed up with the hog's breath that he wasn't very visible to anyone on the street.

So there stood all those lovely young ladies in their immaculately

starched white tennis outfits, so clean and proper, with my sister among them.

When our car stopped, she hurried to the curb, and before we could warn her, she pulled open the rear door.

When that hog spied an opening, he had visions of escape right there on Main Street. He lunged for daylight.

“Crack his nose, Russell!” I screamed.

The hog emitted a squeal that you could hear all over town. The whole car rocked with the ruckus. Russell managed to slam the car door, thus confining our wild quarry once again.

I doubted if those girls had ever seen a pig that big, let alone up close and riding in the back of a Dodge sedan—and giving off that awful odor as well.

They all squealed as loud as the hog. Their faces contorted into grimaces as though they were going to throw up, and they held their noses as if they smelled something awful, which they surely had.

My poor sister was mortified. So embarrassed was she that she turned and ran up Main Street. She literally streaked, trying to disassociate herself from those crude farm boys attempting to pick her up.

Never Live It Down

She was crying from the humiliation when we finally pulled to the

curb about a block up the hill.

"Aw, come on, Virginia," Russ pleaded. "Get in the front seat with us. You can't walk the whole 7 miles home."

"How could you do such a thing, and in front of all my friends?" she screamed. "No, no! I will not get in that car. You've ruined me. I'll never be able to face those people again."

She strode away, still sobbing. All the way up Main Street, she hiked to the edge of town, where the farms began.

All the while, I drove slowly, keeping up behind her pace while Russ, in back, endeavored to tame the beast with his cordwood.

Finally, after about 2 miles of this maneuvering, and when Virginia was sure that no one would see her, she relented and allowed us to take her home.

It took my sister a long time to get over that troubling experience. Really, she never did forget it entirely. I'm sure she never forgave me.

Shucks. I was just trying to give her a ride home.

—Warren S., Rochester, New York