

# “Going to the Farm Side”

## The tale of a city girl gone country

### Part 3: The Pig Escape

Farmland and the housing on it in York Region -especially land in Georgina, can show very different lifestyles. Our comfortable bungalow and rustic livestock shelters sit across the road from a magnificent white gated mansion with impeccably maintained grounds and lovely high end outbuildings.

While our neighbor is not a farmer, my husband has high aspirations and is



### Going to the Farm Side

ANGELIQUE FAWNS

attempting to try and make an income on our 50 acres any way he can. One of his agricultural ventures was a foray into pig farming.

On a mission, he took my horse trailer, filled it up with 15 of his Katahdin sheep, and traded them for five enormous Berkshire sows and one really ugly, mean looking

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Faith Fawns and a visitor to our farm pat our little living green bins Petal and Oink. These girls are Tamworth crosses and are as friendly and bright as any domestic dog.

PHOTO/ANGELIQUE FAWNS



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# The Pig Escape

from page 9

boar. Sheep farming is very labor intensive and, when we realized quitting our jobs to work full time at sheep farming wasn't a viable career option, it was time for something new.

When those enormous black creatures rumbled out onto the little electrified paddock he built for them, I felt terror grip my heart. The boar alone must have weighed 900lbs, and he had tusks that curled ferociously up around his face. I promptly named him "Notorious P.I.G." after the rapper, and lived in fear of that beast. We found Notorious P.I.G. a new home after letting him visit with the Berkshire ladies.

I did learn to love the big black mothers whose remarkable nurturing instincts and sheer intelligence won me over. We had little Quonset huts filled with clean straw for them in an outdoor electric paddock. In the summer they had a big mud pond for wallowing in.

It was time for our pregnant ladies to give birth (yup the boar did do his job before he left) many people were telling us that we needed to have farrowing crates to stop the moms from crushing their babies. I just could not believe that was true. After debating with my husband and telling him I was 100% sure that pigs could make babies and have them live without interference from humankind, we let our ladies do it all naturally and there was zero piglet death.

Our sows farrowed out in a round outdoor shelter. It is amazing to watch a sow get ready to nurse... she carefully checks all the straw where she is going to lay down, and then she flips the little piglets she finds out of the way. Then she counts them (I could swear I watched her touch every baby with her nose) and only then does she lie down.

For a time there we must have had 25 pigs running around, and they were quite adorable. But they eat a lot. Tons and tons of grain, and all the table scraps you can throw at them. Eventually they were literally eating us out of house and home so Luke sold most of them to a neighborhood cooperative, but we kept two little girls that grew very quickly.

It was bound to happen. One day the two of them plotted the great escape. Two 600lb Berkshire sows somehow managed to root/dig/bust their way out of their electric page wire paddock.

First the girls crossed the busy highway in front of our farm. Then they circumvented our neighbor's fencing and cast iron gate. And best of all they discovered the large Grecian Fountain in her front yard.

When we came home from work that day, and Luke noticed the girls were missing, he heard the splashing and gleeful snorting from across the road and discovered the two of them having the time of their lives, in the neighbor's fountain.

Good thing escaping and swimming uses up a lot of energy, because the sows were hungry enough to follow a pail of grain back across the road to their pen.

Soon after that, (and a few more containment failures), the two girls were sold and joined their siblings at the cooperative. Though I did not miss the sight of pigs running freely around the farm rooting up every inch of grass and garden that their snouts could reach, I did miss my living green bins.

This summer I noticed that our apple trees were dropping a profuse harvest close to the house and I remembered how much pigs enjoyed munching on the fruit. Though the worms and wasps had made the apples not for human consumption, I convinced Luke to go to Woodville and pick up a couple of little pigs.

With the help of our now 5 year old daughter Faith, Luke brought home Petal and Oink, two little 40lb Tamworth cross girls. I love having pigs. They are far more efficient than a green bin, and once you carry the leftovers out to them, you never have to see them again.

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