

This Little Piggy Went to Camp

by Nancy Shepherd



At Pig O' My Heart, I like to cultivate a genuine rapport with those people adopting a pet pig. After all, I've already established a very special relationship with their prospective porcine pal. Take the case of Jane.

She had been considering a new pet after a long-time feline friend passed on to kitty heaven. A potbellied pig was in the running. I suggested Jane use my "preview-a-pig" service -- that she take a piggy into her home with my guidance on care, feeding and accommodations. After such a trial session, Jane determined a pig was definitely up their alley.

When my next litter of pigs was born, Jane made a visit and within moments selected her sweetie pig. He was only five days old, but stole her heart with his playful, outgoing personality and cute nose. Jane named him Rutledge and at seven weeks of age, he took up residence with his anxious adoptive parent in the quaint little river town of Rocheport.

I kept in close contact with Jane to answer questions and hear wonderful pig stories. We traded visits, and Jane supplied me with many baby pictures. A successful adoption, indeed.

Some two months later, Rutledge returned to Camp Pig O' My Heart while Jane ventured off on a vacation. Here is the story of Rutledge's first camping experience as told to his mother, Jane.

"I arrived, duffle bag, neckerchief and lanyard, at the farm of my piglet hood where I would spend the week under the watchful eye of not only Aunt Nancy, but also my biological mother, Agnes of Hog, and the matriarch of the family, on my mother's side, Grandma Jitterbug.

"A young pig will have very little chance for adventure with all this maternal supervision," I thought. Oh, so very au contraire.

There was one particular half-sister of my mother's there who had obviously just discovered boars. She came swishing over to where I was intently practicing my motorboat imitation in the wading pool and tried out her newfound charms. I explained to her that, as a

barrow about town, I had many other varied interests. Would she, for example, like to hear about the time I wept when I listened to the third act of La Bohme on public radio. But no, the shallow trollop.

I was trying to earn my plant identification merit badge during my stay at camp and did quite well finding plantain and chamomile to eat and recognized that Lily of the Valley was for smelling only. I did not, however, garner any nominations for the “plays well with others” award as I had little patience with the overly friendly, countrified ways of my mother’s family. I had become a sophisticated pig-child, you see, so curtly rebuffed their offers to join in team sports. The other pigs my age clustered together across the pen from me, forming the silliest and most out-of-season “naivete” scene you could imagine.

I had been nosing about the playing field most of the day, humming an old, familiar tune, tra la, tra la, neglecting my increasingly pink complexion. (I have very fair, white skin that is used to long afternoons pondering chess moves in the library while my people are at work.) By evening, I had a most excruciating sunburn and, brave though I am, couldn’t help giving an “eek” of pain at each step. Aunt Nancy, the head nurse, dietician, and matchmaker, took me inside and put soothing emollients on my back and ears. Oh, ah, eee! I was ever so miserable the next day, but it soon turned into a lovely tan. (Unfortunately, it later peeled off after I got back home.) The gilts began asking if I was a surf hog visiting from California and had I ever met George Hamilton.

Around home now, my people-mom ties a damp dishtowel on my harness to keep me cool and fair when I am going to be out in the sun for a time, which is perfect for playing “Rutledge of Arabia joins the French Foreign Legion” (Oui, oui-eee!).

Although by week’s end I had settled into a rather pleasant routine of SPF 15 by day and Aloe vera vitamin E-Oil of Olay by night, I was eager to get home and do some thinning in my vegetable patch, sleep in my own bed, and snoodle my own people. But the folks hardly recognized me as a little

brown jug-eared pig, but took me home, scratched my belly, and fed me strawberries and Cheerios just the same. (Hello Mudder, Hello Fadder!)

Now my spinach patch has waned but the mulberries are falling. There is always adventure and snacks in the garden, or at camp, for an imaginative pig who is keen of snout. I bid you a purple-stained adieu.” The End

If your pig can’t return to his birthplace for summer camp and you need to board him, check to make sure it matches the rigors and amenities of Camp Pig O’ My Heart.

Send along the food your pig has been eating if the camp dietician doesn’t stock your brand in the chuck wagon.

Pack any special toys and sleeping gear your pig prefers.

Arrange for playmates for your pig. Time hangs heavy for an unhappy camper.

Don’t forget to include a sunscreen and a good bug repellent. Many pigs prefer Avon Skin So Soft.

If your pig isn’t using the camp outhouse, don’t forget his litter box. The same goes for other personal items such as his brush, harness, and shampoo.