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Sanctuary One at Double Oak Farm

by Robert Casserly

There is something almost magical about the power of pigs to open a person's mind to a new way of looking at the world. Granted, dogs and cats are Man's best friends. Horses are more majestic, llamas are lovelier, and simple creatures like cows, chickens, and goats may be easier to comprehend. But pigs take the prize when it comes to challenging our notions of human superiority.

It probably has a lot to do with how intelligent pigs are. In George Orwell's seminal book *Animal Farm*, when the animals oust the awful drunkard Farmer Jones, guess who takes over? It's the pigs who rise up and turn into the barnyard's dictators.

Orwell had it right. Whenever we put a fresh bale of hay in the Sanctuary's pasture, the fleet-footed animals like horses and goats make an eager dash for it. Meanwhile the pigs amble over at a much more dignified pace. Once the pigs arrive on the scene, the other animals inevitably yield to them with nary a fuss or fight. There seems to be a mutual understanding that pigs rule. We didn't get that memo, but apparently everyone else did, even the Sanctuary's two cows who outweigh a pig by a thousand pounds.

Recent research into pig cognition has revealed just how complicated and smart they are. Pigs, whose closest animal cousins are whales and hippos, are in an exclusive club with humans, apes, dolphins, and other species that have passed the famed "mirror self-recognition test" thought to be a marker of self-awareness and advanced intelligence.

The ancestors of humans and pigs went our separate evolutionary ways 100-million-plus years ago, and yet we share many similarities in our respective genomes. Pig hearts and teeth are a lot like ours; they metabolize drugs in

a similar fashion; and they use their voice to communicate human-like emotions such as happiness, excitement, curiosity, and apprehension.

At Sanctuary One, we've been learning pig-talk ever since Lisa, a formerly abused pig originally from the Seattle area, moved in with us a little over a year ago. For example, once a week a Sanctuary volunteer heads toward the barn with a five-gallon bucket full of pig slops donated by MacLevin's Whole Foods Deli. When Lisa's massive snout first catches scent of the approaching slop bucket, she makes a drawn-out, sonorous rumble that you can feel in your bones, something akin to the loudest, deepest snore imaginable mixed with the lowest note on a grand piano. This is Lisa's way of saying "Hey you! I'm over here!" Then, as the volunteer comes closer and Lisa is sure snack-time is imminent, she switches to an excited, rapid grunting. "I smell MacLevin's! Gimme! Gimme!" After the glorious slops are dumped into her pig pen, Lisa makes a contented little whistling noise whenever she pauses long enough from



gobbling down lettuce leaves, cabbage cores, and fruit rinds to take a breath.

As author Sy Montgomery put it in her book entitled *The Good Good Pig*, "Watching a pig eat is the ultimate vicarious thrill. Seldom can you take such pleasure in another's joy. Here is someone following his bliss."

If you would like to meet rescued animals like Lisa and follow their bliss, contact us and we'll schedule a tour of our care farm. Group tours and service-learning field trips for schools, churches, retirement homes, scout troops, and the like are welcome, too. If you are interested in volunteering, ask and your tour guide will give you an application.

For more information, visit us on the Web at www.SanctuaryOne.org or call 541.899.8627.

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Annie's Antics
by Annie Parker

Don't you just love summertime in Jacksonville? It's so beautiful!

So – let's talk sociability.

I am not a very social dog. Let me clarify that – if you walk upright on two legs, I am your BFF (that's Best Friend Forever for you non-texters). If you are four-legged and furry, chances are I won't like you. I judge quickly if a newcomer is friend or foe.

If a dog acts uninterested in me, I'll probably be okay and like that dog. There's a new, big, black lab-mix in the "hood," and I like him. I hate the big, friendly yellow lab that lives around the corner. Some little white dogs I love – and some I hate (we have quite a few little white ones around here). I even actually roll over on my back and am totally submissive around one. There are two little furry canines across the street that sometimes get out and come into my yard...when this happens I go berserk and try to



attack them through the window (yes – the windowsills are sustaining some damage). I'm not sure why I get so nutty around some dogs – or why I growl and pull if I see dogs walking on our trails. It may be a territorial thing – the trails are MINE after all! Friends came to visit last year with a really mellow Airedale. I put her in her place as soon as she showed up, and then we played for hours. Being the alpha female that I am, I need to make sure that the hierarchy is established right from the get-go.

SO – once again, I guess I'm not your typical Golden Retriever. Here's a quote I found about us: "Friendly with everyone, including other dogs, the Golden Retriever has very little, if any, guarding instincts." Ha – I am the queen of guarding my home – if you walk by on the road (especially walking a dog), you will hear my warning!

I hope to see you around town this summer in our wonderful "Small Town with Big Atmosphere!" If you're of the furry variety, I'll do my best to greet you as a friend.




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at Double Oak Farm

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