



GRANDON GILL

THREE LITTLE PIGS (C)¹

"So many choices", murmured Charlene the pig as the closing agent handed her a check for \$100,000—her share of the inheritance left by her parents. Now that her money was in hand, the time had come to decide how it could best be applied. Her two brothers, Alan and Brian, had not even bothered to wait. As soon as the contract had been signed on their old house, they had gone out, borrowed the money from a bank, and spent it. "To each his own", she thought. "But I'd like to spend my nest egg on something a bit more permanent".

"So Many Choices"

\$100,000 was a lot of money for a pig. In order to spend it wisely, Charlene felt she had to weigh a variety of factors. As a given, there was her job—like her two brothers, she worked at a factory in Pigston. Second, there was housing. A number of issues were involved here. There was considerable variation in land prices throughout the greater Pigston metropolitan area. Charlene had verified this by making a rough sketch (shown as Exhibit 1) that plotted all land sales that had been recorded in the past month. Another issue relating to location was being close to family—something she desired, but did not require. Finally, although it was possible to buy an existing home in Pigston, she felt that doing so was unlikely to be an attractive option—since, prior to the opening of the factory during the previous year, nearly all homes had utilized straw construction. Would you want to live in a straw house that had recently been occupied by a family of pigs?

Closely related to lot location was the issue of acquiring transportation (e.g., walking, biking, automobile, etc.)—since walking to the factory from the Pigston exburbs was not an option. Unfortunately, the freak barbecue grill explosion that had claimed her parents' lives had also destroyed both their cars. Although her two brothers, Alan and Brian, had both purchased expensive vehicles—Brian referred to his as a "sow magnet"—Charlene had never really been that into cars (except as a means of reliable transportation). Typical transportation option prices are summarized in Exhibit 2.

One of the biggest elements of the decision facing Charlene was how her new house should be built. There were three different styles of construction commonly used in Pigston: straw, wood and brick. The costs of these varied substantially. Straw was the clear winner in terms of cost—with costs roughly 10% of an equivalent brick house. Weighing against it was the fact that it was not at all durable. It was rare that a straw house lasted more than 3 years and the resale value of a straw dwelling dropped precipitously after it was first occupied.

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Wood occupied an intermediate position. Pig dwellings relied on stick construction and typically lasted 20-25 years. The price of these dwellings tended to be about 5 times higher than for straw—and about half that of brick. Wood was substantially more durable than straw and wood dwelling resales were not uncommon. Typically, wood dwellings depreciated at a rate of 10% of their original cost for the first 3-4 years, then more slowly (around 2-3% per year). Unlike straw, wooden homes offered substantial protection against violent weather (e.g., gales, which occurred quite infrequently in Pigston owing to its inland location sheltered by rolling hills on all four sides). Nonetheless, they could not withstand extremely high winds or the fetid breath of a bellows wolf.

The final class of construction, brick, was—by far—the most durable and expensive. Having herself grown up in one of the few brick homes in the greater Pigston area, the material held a sentimental attraction for Charlene. Furthermore, unlike the other forms of construction, pig-occupied brick homes had no natural lifespan limits and did not depreciate in value over time. On the negative side, they were much more expensive and they were not guaranteed to withstand the breath of a large bellows wolf—although, with the purchase of expensive options such as roof tie downs, they were probably up to the task. Construction costs and specifications are presented in Exhibit 3.

In considering her various options, Charlene also needed to consider what she could do with any money she did not spend. Saving it, of course, was an option. But another option was travel. Recently, her brothers had returned from a trip to Europe, where they had toured the continent (except for the sausage-obsessed countries of Germany and Poland). She had envied them as they raved about the trip. But the price tag had been steep—\$10,000 each. Was she willing to spend that much for memories?

Time to Decide

Whatever she planned to do, the time had now come to make the decision. The nice family of hogs that had purchased her family home wasn't going to occupy it for a month, and offered to let her stay until they arrived. After that, however, she'd be paying \$50/night for a bed-and-slop near the factory if she hadn't made up her mind. And there was the problem of timing. While a straw house could be thrown up in a day or two, brick took 6 weeks—and more, if additional options were to be installed.

One source of guidance could be found in the choices made by her brothers—who had borrowed money before the closing to finance their own choices. Their choices are summarized in Exhibit 4. She was not altogether comfortable with their priorities, however. Alan, for example, had built the largest and flashiest straw house you ever saw. After just a few weeks, the parties he threw there practically every night had already started to become the stuff of legends, as had the escapades in his mud jacuzzi. But would he remain so popular once his house had decayed into a haystack and he had no money to rebuild it? And anyway, Charlene was more of a home body.

Recently, Charlene had developed another concern. About two weeks before, an article in the Pigston Pigayune (Exhibit 5) had mentioned how environmentalists were reintroducing bellows wolves to the north. Fortunately, this species was extremely rare—none had been seen in Pigston for over a decade—and members of a wolf pack were generally well behaved. Less fortunately, the occasional rogue male was sometimes cast out of a colony and, if not apprehended, could pose a serious problem owing to its taste for pork flesh combined with its ability to generate Category 5 (Saffir-Simpson scale) winds by blowing. Charlene's brothers had laughed and taunted her—singing excerpts from the popular hit "Who's Afraid...?"—when she mentioned her apprehensions to them. But she felt uncomfortable ignoring the situation completely.

What made her *really* uncomfortable, however, was the thought of paying a price of \$50/night for her indecisiveness. So she gave herself a deadline. By midnight tonight, she would make her decision.

Exhibit 1: Charlene's sketch of building lot prices in and near Pigston

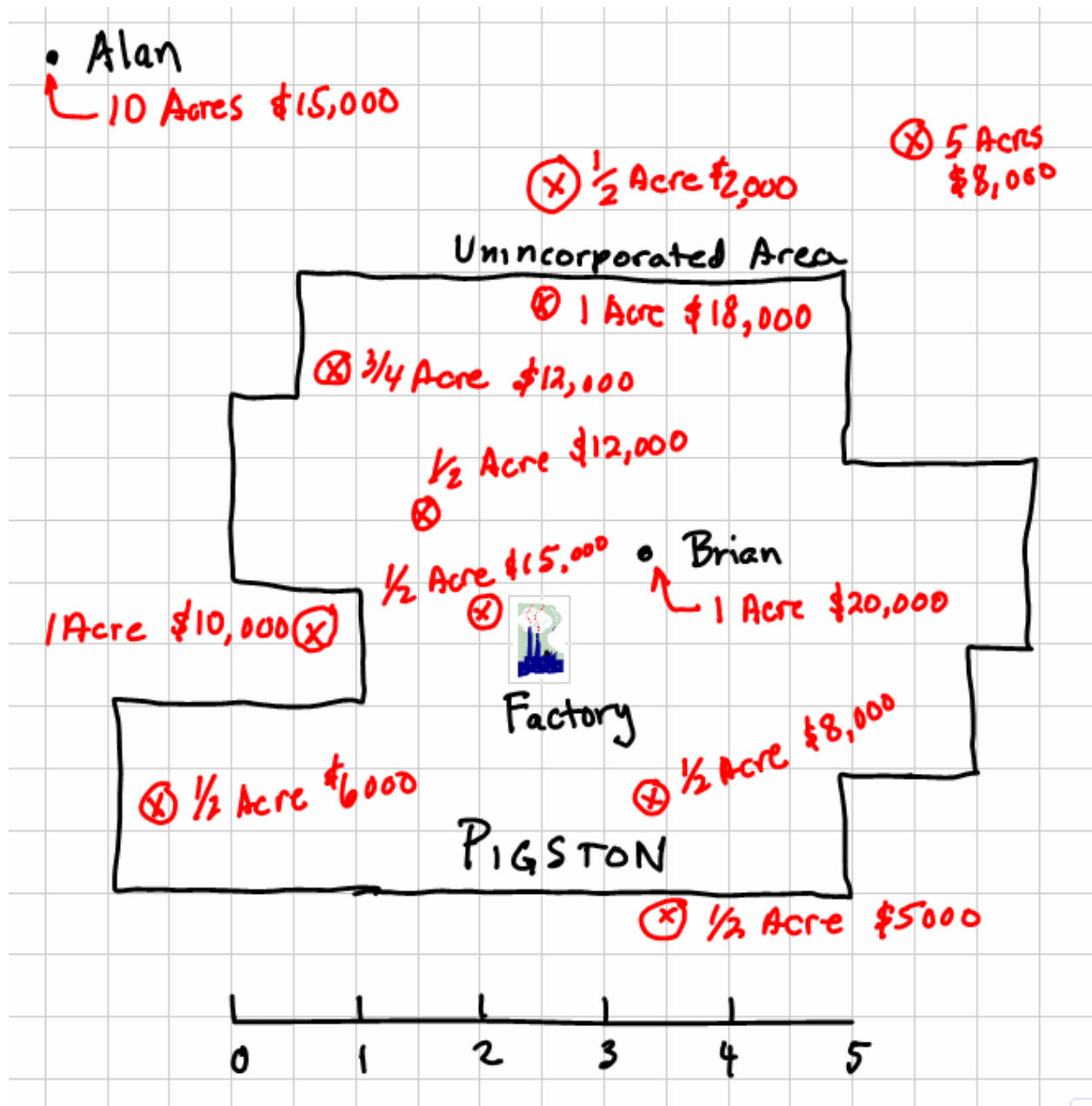


Exhibit 2: Transportation modes and costs

Mode	Description	Cost range	Comments
Luxury sedan	4-6 pig vehicle	\$30,000-\$60,000	Foreign models, such as the Porkhe, tend to run \$5,000-\$10,000 higher than domestic models
Pigup truck	2-3 pig vehicle	\$20,000-\$40,000	State laws prohibit pigs from riding in the bed area
Economy sedan	4-6 pig vehicle	\$15,000-\$25,000	Version of the sedan for pigs who don't want their pockets picked in order to broadcast their economic status.
Motorcycle	1-2 pig vehicle	\$3,000-\$5,000	Can provide an uncomfortable ride during cold and inclement weather
Moped	1 pig vehicle	\$1,000-\$1,200	Motorized bicycle best suited for distances under 10 miles. Can provide an uncomfortable ride during cold and inclement weather
Bicycle	1 pig vehicle	\$200-\$500	Pig-powered conveyance best suited for distances under 10 miles. Can provide an uncomfortable ride during cold and inclement weather.
Walking	Nature's way	\$0	Based on typical pig physiology, best suited for distances under 1 mile. Can be uncomfortable during cold and inclement weather.

Exhibit 3: Building specifications and costs

Item	Description	Key Specs	Costs	Comments
Straw Construction	Straw-built residential single family unit	Life span: 2-5 years Depreciation: 50%(30%)[1] Wind rating: Cat 0 (55 mph)	~\$5/sq. ft.	
Wood Construction	Wood/stick-built residential single family unit	Life span: 20-25 years Depreciation: 10%(2%)[2] Wind rating: Cat 2 (100 mph)	~\$25/sq. ft.	
Brick Construction	Brick-built residential single family unit	Life span: 100+ years Depreciation: 0% [3] Wind rating: Cat 4+ (160 mph)	~\$50/sq. ft.	Wind rating may be affected by options
Popular Options				
Jacuzzi	Mud-filled tank agitated by air jets	Capacity: 6 pigs or 8 piglets	\$5000	
Exterior trough	Water and slop trough for parties	Capacity: 16 pigs or 24 piglets	\$3000	
Smoke house	Stone-built exterior structure for smoking parties. May also be used as a shelter.	Capacity: 6 pigs/100 sq. ft. Wind rating: Cat 5+ (175 mph)	\$100/sq. ft	State law prohibits piglets from attending smokers
Barbeque pit	Circular pit with firewall designed for roasting sides of beef	Capacity: 1 side of beef Fuel: wood or charcoal	\$2000 \$1000 (propane option)	
Automatic door	Door incorporating voice recognition to provide easy entry	Min DB: 75 Max DB: 150 Freq Range: 400-25,000 Hz	\$2000	Owners should not use "wee, wee, wee" as entry phrase
Stucco coating [4]	Cement-based mixture with appearance of mud	Color: brown Sound reduction: 5-10 DB	\$1/sq. ft	Primarily for aesthetics and noise reduction
Hurricane roof [4]	Tile roof attached by tie-down straps	Life span: 40-50 years Warrantee: 20 years [5]	\$10/sq. ft.	Adds 10-20 mph to wind rating
Hurricane Panels	Hand installed steel panels	Life span: 25+ years	\$50/window [6]	Adds 10-20 mph to wind rating
Hurricane shutters	Motor-operated aluminum roll ups	Life span: 25+ years Warrantee: 20 years [7]	\$1200/window [6]	Adds 10-20 mph to wind rating
<p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [1] Straw Depreciation: First Year (Later Years) [2] Wood Depreciation: First 3 Years (Later years) [3] Brick construction does not appear to depreciate, owing to its long expected life span [4] Available only for brick construction [5] Warrantee applies only to replacement of roof, not to any structural damage caused by roof failure [6] Assume roughly 1 window for every 10 feet of perimeter space [7] Warrantee includes \$20,000 insurance for content damage in the event of panel failure 				

Exhibit 4: Spending by Alan and Brian

Item	Alan	Brian
Housing	\$25,000: 5000 sq. ft. straw house \$5,000: Mud jacuzzi	\$40,000: 1600 sq. ft stick-frame house
Lot	\$15,000: 10 acre mini-estate in unincorporated Pigston exburbs	\$40,000: 1 acre double golf course lot in Pigston proper
Furnishings	\$25,000: "Party Hearty" complete set from William Sownoma.	\$10,000: 5 rooms of exotic furnishings from Pig 1.
Transportation	\$35,000: P150 pickup truck with chrome detailing	\$40,000: Porkhe sports car
Travel	\$10,000: 3-week vacation in Europe	\$10,000: 3-week vacation in Europe
Mortgage	(\$15,000)	(\$40,000)

Exhibit 5: Article from Pigston Pigayune

Bellows Wolf Colony Thriving

Associated Pig News Service— 8/9/2005

For over a decade, naturalists affiliated with the Porcine Conservation Society have been struggling to reintroduce the bellows wolf (*canis gasbagus*) into northern Hogvale county. Today, it was announced that five breeding pairs, transplanted from other areas of the country—particularly the southwest—had joined together to form a viable wolf pack. With such a pack in place, scientists believe the colony has, at long last, become self-sustaining.

The establishment of a wolf colony has been marked by controversy. Exterminated near the middle of the last century as part of a federally funded eradication program, the bellows wolf has been widely misunderstood within the pig community. "Our view of wolves tends to be formed by the fairy stories we were told as pigets", states noted psychologist Linda Sower. "Wolves do not like to dress up as grandmothers. They do not sound like a bassoon when they walk. And they most definitely do not want to engage in carnal relationships with our young sows. Indeed, they find the very thought as unnatural as we do."

Jim Hammond, the naturalist who has spent his last 5 years living with the breeding pairs, was even more emphatic on the subject. "The wolf pack is one of the most stable communities in the animal kingdom. Wolves mate for life—something we could learn from—and exhibit great respect for authority." Hammond also commented on the benefits of having a thriving wolf population. "Contrary to popular belief, wolves do not crave pig flesh. In fact, the members of a healthy wolf pack focus their hunting on mice, rodents, rabbits and squirrels. In case you didn't notice, those are the very same pests that try to steal our truffles."

Others do not share the scientific community's enthusiasm for wolves. "Sure, a wolf pack is benign enough," shouted Chuck Slopworth at a
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local community protest meeting in Pigston, "But what about the rogues?"

Pigston's mayor, Mary Carnita, described the city's position on rogue wolves: "First, you've got to understand that the rogue phenomenon is very rare—for a colony to produce a rogue more than once a decade is very unusual. Second, the wolf community has made a commitment to notify us if one of their members develops rogue tendencies. Third, this is not the 20th century and we need to recognize that all sentient beings need to be given the right to live their lives. Naturally, should a rogue problem arise, we will be prepared to deal with it."

Hammond, acknowledging that a rogue wolf could indeed present a problem, made the following observations. "The best thing to do in the extremely unlikely event that a rogue wolf is sighted is to hide. Once a rogue wolf sees you, it will follow you to the ends of the earth, using its highly tuned sense of smell—the most sensitive in the sentient animal community. Also, forget about hiding in your house. Straw, wood, even many brick dwellings, can't stand up to the 175 mile an hour wind that a bellows wolf can produce. Remember, as well, that while a rogue wolf will eat pork—unlike its pack-member counterparts—its preference is still for other foods. In particular, if a rogue wolf is in the area, be sure you don't have any roast beef in the house. This is one circumstance where it's best to be the little piggy who had none!"