INTRODUCTION TO A DESIRED PET

Visiting cousins and friends found great pleasure at our farm home when we moved there from the city. It was a new adventure for them, never a dull moment as they looked for fossils or animal dens in the ground and explored the quarry, always investigating, experimenting as the days went swiftly by.

One beautiful summer day several cousins, my ten-year-old son, Bernie, and I climbed up the steep road to the top of the hill, buckets in our hands to gather berries. We were enjoying our berry picking when all of a sudden Bernie yelled, "Mom, can I have it for a pet? Can I have it, Mom?"

All the while thinking of the nice deoderized skunk that his friend John had in a cage on his grandfather's farm, I looked up. To my bewilderment, I saw him sling his bucket in the air and take off
after a half-grown skunk. As I yelled "NO! NO!", he was taking off like a young deer and was gaining ground on the skunk. As he was about to pounce on him, his near captive let go and let Bernie have it.

That day, Bernie got the most raspberries, though not in his bucket. Another race started immediately for home. As we approached, who should drive in our driveway but our neighbor boy, then about 15 years old, and the tease of the neighborhood. Yes, more raspberries, and more raspberries, a secret that could not be hidden. Now the whole world knew. At least his whole known world.

That evening as my husband came home from his work at the railroad, he said, "What an odor! There must be a skunk under the porch." With all the disinfectants, his skin scrubbed white as snow except for the freckles that abounded, his buried clothing, the happenings of the day still lingered on his body and in his memory.

To this day, this story is often retold, though this event happened over forty years ago. Raspberries, yes raspberries without their sweetness, but a valuable lesson learned. Obedience is better than sacrifice, as the old adage goes.
Much of his boldness disappeared, also, as we soon learned in another episode the next time a skunk invaded our barn. He let his father have the honor of dealing with his strong scented friend. The idea of keeping a skunk as a pet vanished from his mind.