

Twice in my life. That's how often I've moved. When I was six, our family moved from a country house on one side of our school district to another place in the country on the other side of our school district. I remember riding in the back of an enclosed small, rented, moving truck with a mesh rear door that you could see through. Such fun! It was Easter weekend. Before bed that night in the strange, new (scary) place, mother gave me a soft, stuffed-bunny doll. That's the extent of my memory of that whole moving event.

Next move was to the farmhouse where I've been ever since, relocated by marriage only a few more miles from my birth home—to yet another corner of the same school district within York County. You can't be much more "native" than that.

So I'm somewhat at a loss to answer a question from a reader posed in a note that arrived in the mail a few weeks ago. Maybe you,

wise friends and readers, can help me.

My correspondent is looking ahead to retirement a few years down the road, and considering moving to a rural part of the state. The farm on which the family now lives is being enveloped with urban sprawl, so one of our very rural areas of Pennsylvania is where they feel would be most attractive as a retirement location. However, an acquaintance of

our writer moved some time ago into a very rural area of our state and reportedly found the community to be very unwelcoming to newcomers. In fact, "...the local residents were very inhospitable to newcomers, to the point where he had to sell his place and move."

"If we were to buy a farm in rural Pennsylvania, do you think we'd meet with hostility from the local residents?" is the dilemma posed by the writer of this note.

Gosh, I would hope not. I like to think of us rural types as reasonably friendly. Maybe a little reticent and conservative and wary of strangers until we get acquainted. But basically friendly.

That was my immediate reaction, with a followup question in my mind as to what sort of "newcomers" they had been. Had they tried to fit into the rural atmosphere? Or had they tried to change the rural neighborhood?

For a more expert opinion, I talked with a wonderful former next-door farm neighbor and friend who moved a few years ago

to a very rural area of Pennsylvania.

"How did they ever find this place?" I vividly recall her mother asking me on the day we helped move them. That mountain community and its people is now "home" to our friends. Their kids are involved in sports and 4-H and the whole family is active in school, community, and church activities. They've made a bunch of new friends and acquaintances.

"You have to get involved," she says, "but you can't be real critical or try to change everything." That approach has worked for them.

But it didn't happen the first week or the first month. Not even the first year. It evolved as they became involved.

What about you, friends? Have you moved to a rural area? What did you find? Were you accepted? Rejected? Ignored? How did you handle it?

Drop me a note, in care of this newspaper; mark it to my attention and indicate it's for "Moving Experiences."

Perhaps we can help our perplexed writer in coming to a decision.

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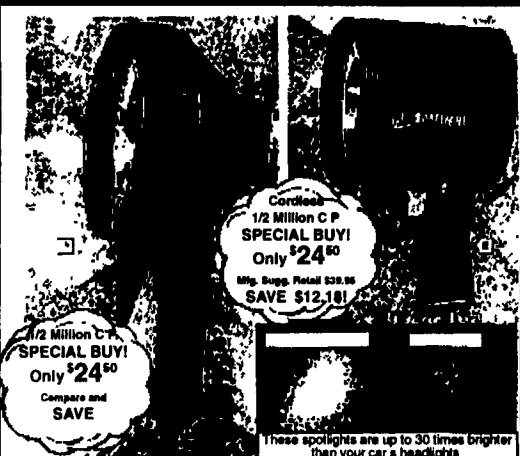


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