



**Times Remembered**  
**Betty A. Young**  
BYoung505@Outlook.Com

# Baby Chicks

preparing a place for the baby chicks. Dad would say, "Be quiet, when you open the door. If you make too much noise the chicks will run around in circles and pile on each other; then they will smother."

I would carefully open the door according to Dad's orders. I remember how quiet it was when the door was opened . . . the baby chicks would stop chirping. They would cluster together near the heat lamp for warmth. When they realized things were ok, they would start chirping again. I loved picking the baby chicks up and holding them close to my face. The yellow fuzzy feathers were so soft and delicate.

Dad always told me that the first six weeks of a chicken's life were the most important. The feed hoppers and water containers have to be kept clean. We usually fed a mix of cracked grains and dry mashes. Quality feed and fresh water is very important for the growth of new baby chicks.

When the day the chicks arrived, the brooder house had to be very clean and the heat lamps ready. Dad placed a retaining ring of cardboard to keep the chicks near the lamps. It

was round with no corners where the chicks would not pile up and smother one another.

Raising chickens was a big undertaking on the farm and required a lot of work from all of us. I became attached to them very quickly. Now the sad part . . . when the chicks became broilers, they were slaughtered, picked, dressed and packed in ice and taken to the Purina Company in Paris to sell.

We also had roosters and hens that we kept for laying eggs. I had the job of gathering eggs. It was a major chore just trying to gather the eggs from a cantankerous old hen that wanted to set. I've been pecked on the hands a many a time gathering eggs. At first I was afraid of the old hens, but Dad told me, "You have to go in the nest with authority, pull her off the nest." I was only five or six years old but I soon learned how to get the bluff on all the old hens.

Along with gathering the eggs came the job of getting them ready to sell. We would work sorting through the eggs, wiping them off, grading them, and putting them in egg crates to sell to the farm store.



Chickens did make work, but it was part of our lifestyle on the farm. Farm kids always helped their parents with chores; it was expected of us, and I never thought of saying I didn't want to help. I also knew better . . . I would get in big trouble for saying anything like that to my parents. The fond memories of raising baby chicks and gathering eggs will always be a part of me.

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