

Prejudice Story to Ponder

By John Gilbert

Growing up on a farm I watched my mother raise baby chickens to fulfill their destiny. When early spring arrived, we would go to the village and pick up boxes of cute fluffy yellow baby chickens at the local USPO. They had arrived from a distant hatchery.

Each cardboard box held 50 chirping chicks. Mom usually ordered two boxes (100 chicks). After driving 25 miles with these babies to our home in the country, the chicks were transferred to their new maturing pen. An 8' X 10' section of a vacant room in our house where the floor underneath was somewhat protected with old newspapers.

Now the work began. We had no electricity so our light at night was from kerosene lanterns and lamps. We had to keep a light in the pen all night and the food and water feeders filled. By keeping the light on at night the chicks would think it was daytime and would take short naps and continue eating thus speeding up their growth and shorten the time we had to live with them in the house. I would occasionally have the responsibility of caring for the brood.

Once, when I was about 10 years old, doing this chore, I noticed that one of the chicks had brown fuzz instead of the normal yellow. Otherwise he was identical to the others. A few days later I noticed he was losing fuzz on his neck and the skin was starting to show through. Becoming interested, I watched carefully and saw that every time one of the yellow chicks got near him they reached over and pecked him on the neck.

Later when I checked the brood the brown chick was lying dead in the pen. Everyone else in the pen was acting in a normal manner.

I have never forgotten the incident.