

The Lesson

by Michael J. Solender

I am a member of a dying breed. I am a child of the soil. I am a farmer's daughter.

My grandfather's father was a sharecropper and took the 180 acres given to him by the state of New Jersey after the First World War on the promise of farming the land and operating under a 100 year lease for \$1.00 per year.

He died with red clay in his veins after scrubbing the earth under his feet for 40 years, my grandfather at his side the last 20. My father joined him as a young man and I soon followed as was the custom for the first born, of either sex, to follow in the farming tradition established in our family.

We were egg ranchers. Chicken farmers. Poultry purveyors. Great granddad had grown corn and soybeans but Papa converted the farm to eggs after watching corn prices go to nothing and Uncle Sam drop all subsidies for grain production.

My father was a gentle giant. Wouldn't even kill a spider. Then one day he buried a rooster alive. I've never forgotten that lesson.

That particular rooster had raided the prize hen-house, gotten into the mornings production and generally made a mess of things. Now, there is not much more useless and even dangerous on an egg farm than a rooster. The last thing you want is to slow or stop the production of eggs.

So, when Daddy grabbed that cock by the neck and threw him into the hole that he quick covered with dirt, I knew right then that men would play a subservient role in my life going forward.

I am a farmer after all. I don't have time for useless cocks.

