



4-15-1995

Chasing Chickens

Keith Long

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview>

Recommended Citation

Long, Keith (1995) "Chasing Chickens," *Westview*: Vol. 14 : Iss. 3 , Article 4.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol14/iss3/4>

This Fiction is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at SWOSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Westview by an authorized administrator of SWOSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu.



Chasing Chickens

by Keith Long

The one place on Earth that I should never have been bored as a child was Papa and Granny Pollard's 10-acre farm northeast of Bowie, Texas.

The place was a country-filled Disneyland for a kid like me. It came equipped with a border collie named Skeeter who would play fetch as long as I could throw his little red, rubber ball. Then he would wrestle with me, chase armadillos with me, and dig for gophers with me.

Then there was the rock-sealed spring, where I could go and shoot yellow jackets off the water with my BB gun. There were crawdads to catch from the creek, pigeons to scare in the big barn, mice to shoot in the feed barn, quail to whistle up in the back pasture, the old junk yard wherein I could look for long-lost, buried Indian artifacts, peaches, apples, and pears to pick and eat from the orchard, a vine of blackberries, locust shells to collect from the oak trees in the yard, squirrels in the pecan orchard to argue with, the gun club across the highway to sneak into and round up unshot clay pigeons, cokes to drink, biscuits to eat, candy to smuggle off, and comic books in the back bedroom to browse through.

Everything a kid could hope for could be found on those ten acres. But when you start out at the crack of dawn, you can run through all that stuff and still have two hours before lunch.

So, even on the farm, I would get bored.

And once bored there was really nothing else to do but chase chickens. I really had no choice. I had done everything else, including standing out by the highway trying to imitate a runaway child from California and hitch a ride into town.

What I would've done in town, other than hitch a

ride back to the farm, is beyond me, but every trip down I would get bored and wind up on the highway, thumbs held high.

Bored even with that, I finally turned to chasing chickens.

Granny Pollard kept thirty to forty chickens on the farm, and every day about four o'clock, she and I would go to the chicken coop and rob the nests of the day's egg productivity.

That was one of the highlights of the chicken pen, but it paled in comparison to chasing chickens.

Let me point out right away that there is a big difference between chasing chickens and catching chickens. Granny's chickens were big and fat and slow and pretty much earth-bound, but that didn't make catching them any easier.

I began every chicken-chasing session in the same fashion, running pell-mell after some white target, only to wind up attached to the barbed-wire and watching the chicken saunter off a few feet and turn around to look at me as though I was some crazy city kid with no sense.

Chickens, on average, are a lot smarter than they look.

Finally, after picking myself off the fence a half-dozen times and realizing there were no stupid chickens in the yard, I decided to slow my pace.

After all, the chicken in question only traveled exactly as fast as I did, so if I went at a casual walk, I could keep within a half-arm's reaching distance of the chicken and avoid the barbed wire.

That method proved unproductive as well, however, since I lacked the momentum to make an appropriate

lunge at the bird. I would lunge, but quite frankly, it's hard to lunge at a casual walking speed. One doesn't lunge, one falls.

By now, I had taken up the challenge with every fiber of my being. I had succeeded in getting rid of my boredom. Now all I had to deal with was frustration.

Usually at this point, partially because of exhaustion but mostly because of said frustration, I sat down on one of the tree stumps in the chicken yard and ranted at various chickens for a while.

As a chicken came within a few feet of my stump, apparently intent on scratching the ground and totally oblivious to my presence, I ranted on him. Or her. Then, just to make sure, I'd make a quick hand movement, and just as I thought, I would see the chicken cast a furtive glance with one eye in my direction. The chicken might have furtively cast both eyes, but one of them was on the other side of its head, so I didn't know what was going on there.

About this time, one of the adults on the farm would stick their head out the back door of the house and yell at me. "Hey, you aren't chasing chickens, are you?"

"Nope," I'd reply. "I'm just sitting here talking to them."

"Well, make sure you don't."

"I won't." Much.

One day I finally wised up. The obvious manner of chasing chickens was to corner them up against one of the chicken-wire fences, where they couldn't get through the fence, or around me, and where I would have a chance to catch it before it found whatever wings it might possess and stumble up over the six-foot high fence.

So I began to stalk one of the chickens, a muscled-up avian with long claws and a sharp beak. I moved to the right, to the left, to the right, more to the right, to the

left, and suddenly I had it pinned up against the corner of the pen.

I lunged and. . . caught it!

In a split-second, my life's ambition went from catching a chicken to disengaging from one that was about to put me in my grave. Feathers were flying every direction, and the chicken was kicking at my face with its eagle-like talons, and pecking the hair right out of my head.

To worsen matters, the rest of the chicken yard got caught up in some kind of mass chicken hysteria, and they all gathered in the corner of the chickenyard and started flailing me.

In short, I was being flapped to death.

I don't know how I got out, but I managed to close the gate behind me and stagger away from the chickens, all of whom were ranting at me and hurling curses my way. I couldn't go into the house, where the adults would guess that I had either fallen off the barn or caught a chicken.

So I wandered out near the highway where no one could see me and sat down to tend to my wounds. First on the agenda was to get the blood out of my eyes, and second was to count up how many stitches I would need to save my life.

I was up to ninety-three stitches when a big semi-truck came roaring to a stop alongside the highway. The driver jumped out and ran back towards me.

"Good grief," he said. "Have you been hit? Are you a runaway child from California needing a hitch into town?"

"Naw," I said. "I've just been catching chickens."