

Avery Street: What Comes First, the Chicken or the Egg?

BY LOYCE MARTINAZZI

Gerald Avery was 18 years old when he came to Tualatin with his family in 1922. The Averys purchased a 15 acre farm on what was then called Nasoma Road. The road ambled east; connecting with Robbins Road until the I-5 freeway was built, severing the connection. According to local lore, the road was originally an Indian trail and was later called the Oregon City Road.

The farm was stocked with 500 Brown Leghorns and young Gerald quickly developed an interest in chickens that would eventually bring him national recognition. He bought incubators which he installed in the potato cellar of the old barn, turning the eggs by hand until the chicks pulled the yolks into themselves for nourishment and pipped their way out of the shell in 19 days. If a hen sits on her eggs, they will hatch in exactly 21 days, but humidity and temperature control can shorten the time if eggs are placed in an incubator.

Spontaneous combustion from green hay ignited the barn but Gerald managed to climb down into the cellar beneath the fire to save two incubators. The barn was rebuilt and he began breeding White Leghorns exclusively, keeping meticulous records on pedigrees and production, and selling breeding stock and eggs.

Gerald married Florence Everett in 1934, and their children, Bill, Nancy and Elizabeth helped in the hatchery business, feeding the chickens, gathering and candling eggs and cleaning the coops. Safeway sent a truck out twice a week to gather 100 cases of eggs, 30 dozen to a case.

The Averys hatched out 6,000 chicks a week, shipping them through the mail in airy cardboard cartons containing 100 chicks. The chicks would not need to eat or drink for four days. Postal workers got used to the peep peep peeps of the little chicks. A Japanese American named John Hada lived in Hillsboro and came

to Tualatin once a week for the highly-specialized task of "sexing" the new chicks to separate males from the females.

Oregon State College learned of Gerald's success and sent specialists to collect data and recommend feed mixes. Students came to the hatchery on field trips, and Gerald gave baby chicks to 4-H club poultry members. Gerald registered for the draft in WWII but was turned down as being a critically needed food producer. Standard Oil even delivered fuel without requiring the usual rationing stamps.

The hatchery was in the spotlight, literally. Old

timers will remember the Tualatin beacon that flashed across the night sky in the '30s and early '40's. It was one of a series of beacons between Portland and San Francisco, spaced ten miles apart which the government installed to guide mail planes in the dark. The first one out of Portland stood on a hill on the Avery farm. Sixty feet high with a light that revolved every ten seconds, the tower was

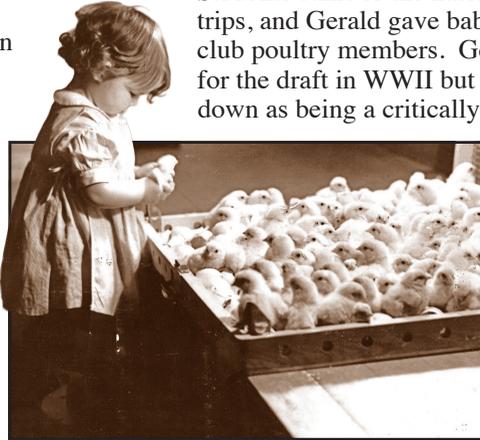
set on a concrete foundation with a large yellow arrow pointing north. The light could be seen as far away as Mt. Hood. Ted Saarinen, who lived next door would climb up the ladder and turn the lens toward the Harkness house on the corner to signal to his friend Glen that he wanted to go downtown.

Gerald was interested in education and served as clerk on the Tualatin School board, guiding the district thru the building of the 1939 brick school. He served the district for over ten years, being honored for his exceptional record keeping. Later, when Tualatin and Tigard districts joined, he served as chair of that school board for many years. The former Tualatin Elementary School on Boones Ferry Road was named Gerald W. Avery, and rumor has it that the new elder care facility being built on the site will be named for the famous chicken farmer too.

So what's in a name? From an Indian trail, the Oregon City Road, Nasoma; Avery Street is here to stay.



Loyce Martinazzi was born and raised in Tualatin and is passionate about Tualatin History. She is currently Lecturer of the Winona Grange, Co-Founder of the Tualatin Historical Society and Co-Author of *Tualatin... From the Beginning*.



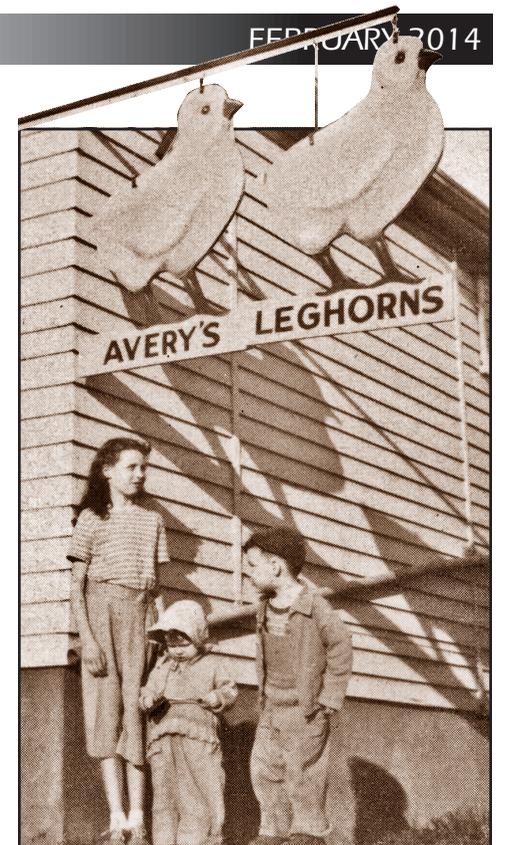
Little Elizabeth Avery inspects some new hatchlings. Her married name is Hatcher.



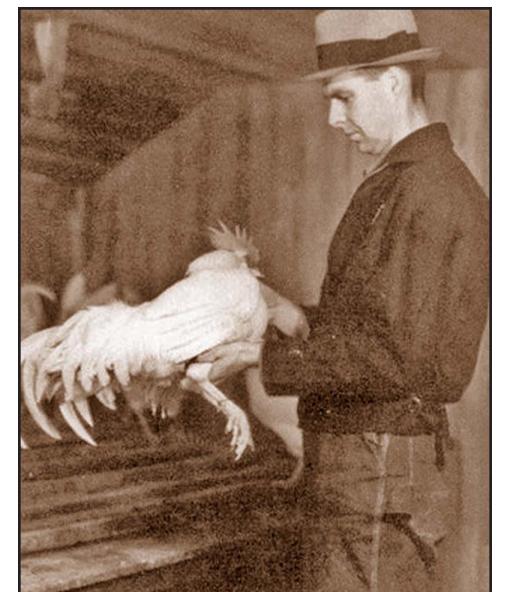
The old Avery Hatchery has been remodeled into a pleasant home on Avery Street.



Gerald Avery built this home along Avery Street in 1934. He and Florence were married in front of the fireplace. It has since been demolished.



Elizabeth, Nancy and Bill Avery under the hatchery sign. Bill reminisced that as a teenager he carried two buckets of wheat, each weighing 43 pounds, to feed the chickens. "Mash was lighter, but wheat was elite and it weighed more."



Gerald with a White Leghorn rooster.



Dad took my older sister Joanne and me to Avery's hatchery to buy some chicks in 1941. Mrs. Avery took this photos of us.



Florence Avery was a skilled photographer and took this shot of Gerald Avery under the sign. She also supplied all the photographs for the business brochures.