



**Introduction
Pen Pals
Farm to Football
Ag in the Classroom**

Dear Arizona Farm to Football Students:

Do you ever help get groceries for your homes and notice the eggs, usually in the back of the store? Do you go through a drive through early in the morning or go to breakfast on the weekends for a special event? Don't worry if the answer was no to any of the above, like a test where you choose "E" for none of the above. You will now be INTRODUCED to the "E" for EGG FAMILY in Arizona!

Over 73 years ago, Guy and Nell Hickman moved from Kansas to Arizona. It was common during this era for people to have chickens in their backyards. Some of you might have hens or know someone that does. Guy's and Nell's 25-50 chickens (laying hens) were so happy, they laid too many eggs for their own family to eat.



Bill Hickman noticed that his mom would often trade eggs to other neighbors in exchange (barter) for something they needed. Or, she would kindly gift the eggs to neighbors with large families that needed more food. (A tradition that will be "heroic" at the end of our Introduction and something students can do!) Guy and Nell decided to move the family to the west to work on the dam construction, so farmers would get to water their crops and the houses that were being built would have water in California and Arizona.

Do you remember we mentioned Bill Hickman? He grew up in Glendale, Arizona. When he was in high school, he got a job working at a gas station. Gas stations used to have workers that pumped the gas into your car, cleaned the windshield, and checked the oil, to make sure that everything was working safely. He

graduated high school, served in the Army, then came back to Glendale. He got his job back at the gas station.

One day an ASU student was home for the summer and noticed this man. She visited the gas station often, making sure her parents' and everyone's car had plenty of gas, just so she could see this man. Bill and Gertie started talking in May and by August, they were married!!!!!!



Gertie's family owned a clothing store in downtown Glendale. She sold many items, especially clothing and shoes. Bill decided they should start a family business. He knew his mom and dad knew how to care for hens and decided to build on their backyard flock of laying hens. Do any of you have pets that you are responsible to keep safe and healthy?

By the late 1960s, Gertie and Nell had sold so many eggs that Bill and Guy had to quit their day jobs and work full time, helping all of the ladies, including the hens, daily. They didn't have all the technology and efficient machines we have now, which you will see later, but they did have a growing demand for eggs, since more homes were being constructed, and more restaurants and grocery stores were being built.



As Gertie and Bill were busy adding new laying hens, in under eight years of being married, they had five kids -- Matt, Glenn, Billy, Clint, and Sharman. They all of first started working when they could walk the rows to gather the eggs. So, imagine before you started kindergarten that you had to walk the length of a FOOTBALL FIELD x 5 rows x 7 chicken barns.

The five Hickmans worked in all areas of the business, from the chicken houses, to the processing plant, to the front office, selling eggs, loading trucks, cleaning the chicken houses, putting in the new birds.

Could you imagine going to school where all the teachers were related or your parents worked with your aunts and uncles? Today, four of Gertie's and Bill's kids, and now three of their grandsons, work on the 1,000 member team at Hickman's! When they were your age, they worked only a half mile from where the CARDINALS STADIUM is today.

**Location, Location,
Location -- Three Farms
In Arizona!
Today, Hickman's has
two farms in Arlington,
Arizona.**



**I know our Palo Verde
Elementary and
Arlington Elementary
students just gave a
cheer in class! On those**

two farms, there is also the Hickman's Feed Mill. We know how important nutrition is, so we make our own feed, and a nutritionist tells us how to



formulate feed rations. Precise nutrition just like an Olympian or professional athlete is vital. Our hens' nutritionist does not allow any coffee or sodas. The laying hens all drink purified water from sterile nipple systems. The hens will never get any French fries, Takis, or potato chips, either. We

need our hens to have strong bones and stay healthy, and the feed mill

makes sure of that (just like eating healthy makes your body stronger to fight off getting colds or flu or other illnesses). This feed mill also feeds our laying hens at our farms in Maricopa at Ak Chin, and Tonopah. Hello to the Saddleback Elementary School in Tonopah!

We purchase day old chicks, take care of them until they are 20 weeks, or older teenagers, then they move to their adult home, where their food, water, shelter, and cage neighbors all lay the most amount of eggs, with the goal of maintaining the natural production curve.

“T-egg-nology” -- Robotic Integration, sound measurements, and lightning fast cameras have increased our efficiency in our egg processing plants. Nature’s production curve for our breed, White Leghorn, is one egg laid every 26-32+ hours. Our hens lay a percentage of that, all kept track of by computerized counters, so our barn manager likes to make sure the hens “PASS THE TESTS” at 85% or higher. We know that is almost an A!



Speaking of A, the highest quality an egg achieves is called Grade AA. Grade A is on the package of Jumbos; because they are so big, the shell is thinner, thus, the quality drops quicker.

As the eggs exit the laying houses on large conveyors, they enter the processing plant. All of the eggs are washed and then sanitized, so when you see them in the grocery store, they are shiny and white, with no cracks. A laying hen lays five sizes of eggs (Jumbo, Extra Large, Large, Medium, and Small), depending on her age. The younger she is (21-35 weeks) she lays Small and Mediums. As she ages, she lays size Large. We try to have the majority of the hens be the age of a hen that lays Large. Large size is the most “popular” size in the grocery store and used in recipes and restaurants. We “market” (sell/exchange) what consumers (you) want to buy. We just gave you the college term definition of MARKETING!! Wow, you pen pals are learning college terms! That’s good news for the high school students with the college game plans!

Remember, the eggs are washed and then sanitized? There are employees that make sure all safety procedures are monitored. It's much like when you see your principal on campus, checking all of the teachers and students. They are called Compliance. Just like you get "graded" on how well you learn the subjects, we have Compliance officers giving us grades. If we get less than perfect, the eggs can't go to the grocery stores or restaurants. That is why every employee makes sure they follow the rules. We can't keep our family business open, if we don't sell the eggs.

Since we made it through the production and processing of the eggs, you may ask how do we get the eggs to YOU? Have you seen any Hickman's semi and trailers on the freeways?



Do you have a favorite? Even though they all have different graphics and designs, they all make sure the eggs stay at 35-48 degrees, like your home refrigerators. This makes sure the eggs stay the perfect Grade AA. Consumers in Arizona will buy only the Grade AA and Grade A, so we have to make sure they stay refrigerated.

Responsible Purchasing....



Our newest container we hope you see is the Cardinals carton!



What kind of package will you see the next time you are at a grocery store, or Sam's Club or Costco? Our fourth generation, Branden Hickman, keeps every package and restaurant flat inventoried and ready for all of the processing plants when they need them. The computers assist him in making sure we have the right amount of inventory of every label for every customer. Branden would like all of you to help recycle plastics into the correct containers. We are using recycled plastic to make our packaging. Let's all save our environment and purchase products in PET containers.

Remember, we explained that we market our eggs? We supply what consumers want. Not since the mid-1960s, or when some of your grandparents were born, have the hens been out of their cages. Since consumers prefer hens not be kept in cages, our entire 10 million laying hens are being let out of their cages. Brett Hickman, Branden's brother, is the fourth generation of the Hickman family to make sure that as we are transitioning to cage-free in our existing hen houses, and building new ones, that the hens receive the same high quality of care, nutrition, purified water, and safety, and that all of the eggs get to the conveyor for processing so you can see them. These two brothers are literally passing the eggs to each other for the TOUCHDOWN at a grocery store near YOU!

Remember the brother named Matt? He went to be a scientist, while Glenn Hickman's son, Grant, takes all of the old chickens that lay too many Jumbos and pass away to recycle them into dog and cat food. He is the Manager of the Protein Plant. Strong muscles and protein are needed for your pets, too!

Farmers have to be very good stewards of their resources. Remember our new packaging for eggs? The processing plants and the hen houses are also designed to make sure we do not waste anything. Since we have more than 10 million hens, they provide fertilizer for farmers, playgrounds, golf courses, and orchards. In fact, from the avocados grown in San Diego to the world's largest pecan orchards south of Tucson, farmers that use our chicken fertilizer are reusing a natural, non-chemical fertilizer. That's also what consumers prefer. We are happy to solve the need for organic, by making our fertilizer help grow food to feed the United States.

We are learning new things every year, just like students going to classes. You know we are a little afraid of what the future holds, but we are arming ourselves with knowledge to remove the fear. Just like when you go to the

next grade each year, you might be afraid, but when you study and get the facts, it makes the change more fun and you are glad you did it.

We especially want you to meet Glenn, Billy, and Clint Hickman. These brothers are designing the future for our egg family legacy. Glenn makes sure the future needs of consumers are met, while Billy runs the day to day plays, making sure from the chickens to the eggs on your table are safe. Clint is not only our egg salesperson like his mom, but serves our southwest community as a County Supervisor. Their sister, Sharman, volunteers to help but prefers to make sure their efficiency for producing eggs gets donated to those in need. In fact, if you have some pennies you don't need, please donate to the Harvest for All Penny Drive. Markus Golden would like to visit the school that donates the most pennies!

Now, I am "passing the oval" back to you. Intercepting your questions, the experts at Hickman's Family Farms with the Grade AA answers -- Brett, Grant, and Branden and the other Hickman team members -- are waiting to "field" some, as they were just students like you less than 10 years ago! My friend Funky, can't wait to meet you. Out of 10 million hens, FUNKY is the most popular on our "campus/farms"!

Thank you for letting me share our story. I hope when you were reading, you "cracked" a smile!

Sharman Hickman
3rd Generation
Arizona Egg Farmer
Hickman's Family Farms