

In the spirit of generational equality, Edible Austin sends a nine-year-old reporter to interview a younger man.

A BOY AND HIS FLOCK OF SEVEN

Sam, an unusual child, takes care of chickens, and he's only seven.

BY AUGUSTA DEXHEIMER

If you want to find a nice, small, cottage-like house with a chicken farmer who is seven years old inside it, then go to East 53rd Street, Austin, Texas, zip code 78751. There is that boy in his backyard, swinging from a tree or holding chickens. His name is Sam.

Why, you ask me, does this boy have chickens? Well, I'll tell you.

Sam says he just wanted them. They got the chickens about one year ago.

His dad says, "we thought it would be nice to have a little farm and see where food comes from."

And food does come from the chickens, and Sam and his family are always eating scrambled eggs.

If you want to know about Sam, he has a cat and a dog who are both good with the chickens. But the chickens are afraid of some animals, which are possums, raccoons, chicken snakes and rat snakes. These are all things that would eat a chicken.

Speaking of eating, the chickens eat twice a day, in the morning and the afternoon. They eat a lot of chicken feed. Sam rocks a bucket, and the chickens come on the run. The smallest is always last.

The chickens produce food, too. When I was there, Sam came out of the chicken coop with three beautiful eggs—a green one, a brown one and a white one.

The chickens eat where they also live, which is a chicken-wire coop with a nest on a shelf that they all want to sit on at the same time. "They fight each other to get to the nest," "They really start flapping."

This may be because they're not all that smart.

I keep talking about all these chick-



ens, but you don't know the names Sam gave them. Here they are: Black-foot, Cinnamon, Cheep-chirp Vinegar, Lemonball Whitefeather, Leopard Spots, Speckles and Butterscotch. And every one of these seven chickens has a different personality.

Speckles is the loudest. Butterscotch is the one you hold, and I held her! She was soft and fluffy, except for in the wings, sort of plain, but very sweet. The other chickens may have been jealous. They kept pecking at my lime-green Crocs! They thought they were grass, I guess.

"They like to eat very tiny grass," Sam said. "We don't have to mow the lawn anymore now that we have the chickens." Sam's family can't have a garden "because the chickens eat all the stuff."

Maybe when you think of chickens, you think of eggs, so I'll tell you a little about them. "When you try to get them out of the nest, the chickens start pecking and scratching you." Sam said.

Sometimes the chickens try to run away. "They stick around in our front yard, or go in the neighbors' backyard, but they're not allowed in the neighbors' front yard," Sam explains. "But chickens don't really listen to rules."

The chickens don't always act the same, because in the winter they're lying down a lot and don't lay eggs. "In the hot months they don't lay much either," Sam says. "I would say they like summer and spring best."

Sam says, "we eat chickens, but not *these* chickens." Sam farms these chickens now, and he might even want to be a farmer when he grows up. After meeting him, I think he would be a good farmer. And Sam's opinion of his chickens?

"They're fun, and you can get lots of food out of them."

