

# Brentsville Neighbors



Information About Brentsville  
Shared Among Neighbors

July 2010



Welcome Neighbors,

It must have been a black cat. Or maybe a mirror was broken. Could it have been that we swept dirt out of the door after dark? No matter the cause, it seems there has been a rash of bad luck in our production process this past month. Although we have three printers, only one is working—but barely. And then the monster struck. Our computer started losing the primary hard drive which allowed a virus to creep in and wipe out all of the programs. Fortunately they were able to save the data but if things look a bit different now, it's because we have had to start over from scratch with the layout and could not get it to look quite the same.

Despite all the bad luck we have been very fortunate to have neighbors like Mr. & Mrs. Don Shaw, Ms. Mary Cox and Ms. Michele Hylton. Your wonderful support is very much appreciated. Thank you!

There are two events going on at the courthouse site that may be of interest. First, there is an Eagle Scout project on the nature trail where Zak Pryor of Troop 1360 is working on an observation deck along the bank of Broad Run. This should be completed soon and will be a wonderful place to just sit and enjoy the solitude of the river on these hot days. And naturalist and reptile expert Tony Bulmer (who now lives on Old Church Road) will be giving a free lecture on the native reptiles and amphibians that call Virginia home. This will be on Thursday, July 8<sup>th</sup> in the one-room school at 7:00pm. We understand there will be some guest appearances by some of our local reptile residents. This will be followed on Saturday, July 10<sup>th</sup> at 8:00am where Tony will lead a walking tour of Bristoe Station Battlefield and discover the habitat that these guys call home. Wear comfortable walking shoes, dress for the weather, and bring water. Please no pets. Both lectures are free but reservations are recommended. Please call 703-792-5546 for information.

Very best wishes,  
Nelson & Morgan

## Reader Feedback

I always love receiving the Brentsville Newsletter. I especially like your column, "Where Wild Things Live."

I'm glad to read how you so carefully document each wild creature that you feature and that you accept each one as a natural part of Brentsville's environment. Helping people understand these beautiful and interesting creatures enables them to appreciate and accept these insects, snakes, mammals and plants instead of fearing and killing them. And, your photos are wonderful! Keep up your great work. Of course, I enjoy the history writing too...

Heather A. Hembrey  
Preservationist

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Great reading as always. Tell Kay I really enjoyed her article and hope she goes on with a bit more next month. Picked her out immediately in the photo before I looked to see who it was! She hasn't changed a bit!

Paul Spencer  
Adelaide, South Australia



## This month:

- Where Wild Things Live - pages 2 & 8
- Flashback ----- page 2
- I Inherited My Mother Pt-4---- pages 5 & 9

**Circulation: 187 - 66 Electronic**

- A Letter from Brentsville ---- pages 6
- When War Came ----- page 7

# Flashback

## BRENTSVILLE

Mr. William Ramkey held services Sunday morning at the Presbyterian Church.

Mr. and Mrs. Hubert Michael, of Buckhall, visited her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Irvin Spitzer, on Sunday.

Mrs. Emma Wolfe is spending this week at Massanetta, representing the Woman's Auxiliary.

Thomas Whetzel spent Sunday in Washington with Mr. and Mrs. Geo. Whetzel.

Mr. and Mrs. Ray Slusher visited Mr. and Mrs. Willard Fogle on Sunday.

Master C. W. Breeden is visiting his uncle, Mr. Herbert Breeden, in Boyd, Md.

The Young People's business meeting and social was held Friday nite at the home of Walter Carter. The next social will be at the home of Elizabeth Keys on August 8.

Mr. George Wolfe and Shack Huddle spent the weekend at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Wolfe.

Vacation Bible School is being held this week and next. All the young folks are invited to attend.

Miss Doris Stephens visited her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Wister Stephens, over the week-end.

Source: The Manassas Journal, July 24, 1947.

## Where W I L D Things L i v e

### *Elaphe guttata*

#### Corn Snake

The corn snake (*Elaphe guttata*), or red rat snake, is a North American species of rat snake that subdue their small prey with constriction. The name "corn snake" comes from the fact that they have a maize-like pattern on their bellies and because they were found in corn fields. The Oxford English Dictionary cites this usage as far back as 1676. Corn snakes are found throughout the southeastern and central United States. Their docile nature, reluctance to bite, moderate adult size 3.9–5.9 ft., attractive pattern, and comparatively simple care make them popular pet snakes. In the wild, they usually live around 15–20 years, but may live as long as 23 years in captivity. Corn Snakes are rat snakes and they are non-venomous.

**Natural habitat:** Wild Corn Snakes prefer habitats such as overgrown fields, forest openings, trees, palmetto flatwoods and abandoned or seldom-used buildings and farms, from sea level to as high as 6,000 feet. Typically, these snakes remain on the ground, but can ascend trees, cliffs and other elevated surfaces. They can be found in the southeastern United States ranging from New Jersey to the Florida keys and as far west as Texas.

In colder regions, snakes hibernate during winter. However, in the more temperate climate along the coast they shelter in rock crevices and logs during cold weather, and come out on warm days to soak up the heat of the sun, a process known as brumation. During cold weather, snakes are less active and therefore hunt less.

**Diet:** Corn Snakes have a diet primarily consisting of rodents, mostly mice and rats. Prey is killed by constriction. They are proficient climbers and may scale trees in search of birds and bats. As litters of infant mice are difficult to find in nature, many neonate Corn Snakes are known to eat small lizards as their first meals, and anoles are the preferred choice. Some individuals retain these dietary tendencies well into adulthood.

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Where WILD things live...



*Elaphe guttata*  
**Corn Snake**

(See page 2)



Zak Pryor with Troop 1360 working on his Eagle Project along Broad Run.





Above: William Wallace Cookson, Cash,  
Patsy, and Gary Keys

Below: Helen Keys

Below right: Cassius T. Keys

Photos courtesy of Patsy (Keys) Blake

**BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS  
STATE BOARD OF HEALTH**  
This is to Certify that there has been filed in the  
Archive of this Bureau the  
**LEGAL RECORD OF THE BIRTH OF**  
*Eugene Delane Wolfe*  
A White Male (born at *Brentsville*  
in *Prince William County* Virginia  
on the *9* day of *Apr* 1921, the child of  
*Delays W. Wolfe* and  
*Emma L. Smith*  
said record being volume *1050* number *26264*  
*W. H. P. L. S. R.* *Emmeline G. Williams*  
REGISTRAR OF VITAL STATISTICS STATE HEALTH COMMISSIONER

Above: Birth Certificate for Eugene Wolfe

Below: Loan note dated 1908 signed by Ben Smith  
and his wife, Lucinda. Both courtesy of Fred Wolfe.

*\$25* *Manassas, Va.* *July 21* 1908  
*Days after date* *100* *premise* in  
Pay to *The Nat. Bank of Manassas* or order,  
*New York* Dollars,  
for value received, negotiable and payable at THE NATIONAL BANK OF MANASSAS, MANASSAS, VA., and to the makers  
and endorser, each hereby and severally waive the benefit of any homestead exemption as to this debt; and we also each  
and severally waive demand, protest, notice of protest, and notice of non-payment and dishonor  
thereof.  
CREDIT THE DRAWER  
*Ben Smith*  
*Lucinda Smith*  
*ES53* *844-79*



# *I Inherited my Mother*

by Dorothy Furrow

## Part 4

When I was in the fourth grade we would get to school early riding the first bus. On nice days all the students would go the playground until the bell rang for school to begin. Our playgrounds had a larger selection of equipment than what is available today. One piece was the swings. It was a tall pole in the middle with double chains for each swing; probably ten to twelve sets of chains per swing. On each was a double bar for one to hold onto; one bar for each hand. Each rider would grab a set of bars and we'd run and with the gravity I suppose would be lifted and around we'd swing. It would work with any number of swingers. I don't recall how many, if any besides me, were on the swing this particular morning but I was swinging. Apparently my swing broke and when I awoke no one was on the playground but me. There was a log or some sort of piece of wood near the swing and I was laying right at it. I always imagined I'd hit my head on the wood and was knocked out. Of course I just got up and went into my class room; no one was overly concerned that I'd had an accident. Then when I got home and told Mother about my fall, I was walking and seemed okay so no big deal was made of it.

While at that same school within a year or two we were sent home early because we had a big snow. Janie Clayburn, a girlfriend, and I decided we'd miss the bus on purpose and walk home in the snow. Home was about five miles. My sister, Ruthie, missed the bus also but not on purpose. Janie and I were about half way home when along came a taxi; in it was Ruthie. She said to the driver, "Oh, there's my sister." He was going to stop and pick us up but instead she said she'd get out and walk with us. We were nearly frozen by the time we got home. Sometimes none of us are very smart. One more time that Mother wasn't very happy with me! That time Janie's mom wasn't very happy with me either.

James had gotten Ruthie and me a used bicycle. Actually he had taken one of Mother's pigs and traded for this bicycle. Mother couldn't ride a bike nor could Ruthie; but I learned. I learned in Grandma's field because Mother wouldn't let me

ride on the road; too many cars going by, she said. We would go up through the field to Grandma's, Mother and Ruthie walking and me learning to ride that bike. One day, after a number of trips, when we went up through the field to Grandma's I begged Mother to let me ride it home on the road. Finally she relented. I could ride to the bottom of the hill and then wait for her and Ruthie to come down before we headed on my great adventure of riding on the road for the very first time. Grandma lived up on a big hill and was I ever the big shot riding my bike down! I got all the way to the bottom and then I hit a rock and over I went. I stood straight up, put my hands on my hips and looked right up that hill. There stood Mother, Grandma and Ruthie all looking to see if I was okay. I was, except a badly skinned knee. But my poor bike's basket was bent all to pieces. I didn't care; I rode it forever just like that. As time passed Horace was able to buy himself a new bike, a Western Flyer. It was a lime green and had a horn. It took me a very long time for him to allow me to ride his bike. It was a boy's bike and of course I had to wait until my legs were long enough to straddle the bar.

I thought I'd never get old enough to get to high school. When I did Mother was already working in the school cafeteria. She had gone to work supposedly for a few weeks and ended up being there for twenty years. Mother has told of one day, shortly after she started working there, when her supervisor, Mrs. Hawkins, asked her to peel potatoes with a peeler. Mother had always peeled potatoes with a knife so she asked if she could peel them her way. Mrs. Hawkins let Mother show how thinly she peeled them and said to go ahead and use the knife. Eventually the school got a machine that would peel many at a time. At that time students could work in the cafeteria during their lunch period for free lunches. Since we didn't have a whole lot of money I did just that and later so did Ruthie. During the time Mother worked at the school, employees of the cafeteria were allowed to divide any left-over foods and take it home with them. Many nights we would have for dinner the same thing we'd

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## A Letter from Brentsville

Oct. 22 – 1930  
Bristow, Va.

My Dear Ermine [Wade],

Your letter came. It was quite a surprise and a pleasure to hear from you, we had looked for a letter so long, no we did not think you had forgotten that would be impossible. Just simply did not write. We wondered if you got the check we sent you at Graduation time. What are you doing with yourself this winter? Are you going to school anywhere or “Just resting your mind at home” I hope you have not entirely given up your education.

We have thought of you so many times this summer. There has been so much doing thru here and so many people around, so many things happening, I thought you would be interested.

The school teacher is staying with us this winter. She is from Norfolk. We also have Captain Chatkoff here since the first of September. He got wrecked with his plane during the war in France. He is out in the Country recuperating. He has gone thru all the Horrors of War. Won numerous medals and etc., he is a fine fellow about 32 or 33 years old lots of life about him. Hearing us speak of you he became interested and asked me to have you write to him, he thinks he can be a help to you, and perhaps interest you in Aviation. I wish you would write to him if it is only a few words and tell him you would like to know something about flying, I am sure he would be glad as he is always wanting to do something for some one.

We have had no rain this summer. I suppose when it does get started it will never know when to quit. We have not had much

harvesting to do, and the Contractor had about a hundred or more men cutting and burning trees up and down the run this summer, so they hauled us a quality of wood up on the bank out of reach of high water. John is having Varners boys come over Saturday to saw it up for him.

We also have a new road from Brentsville to Limstrong, cuts thru back of Cookseys house.

The 16<sup>th</sup> of Nov our mail will change to Manassas. The route will pass here over the State Bridge to Beavers and back to Manassas.

The “Dam People” are having to put in a \$9,000 swimming pool at Ferres Rock on account of the damage. The water has not filled up yet on account of no rain.

We have not sold any stock yet don't know how we will get it thru the winter but there is no price on anything people are selling \$150.00 cows for \$25.00 on account of no feed.

I wish you could write and tell us all about yourself and what you are expecting to do. In regard to the gun John said to tell you what Chatkoff yells up to the teacher of a morning for breakfast, “Come and get it.”

Well there are so many things to tell of but I must close as it is now the wee hours of the morning, every one in bed

With lots of love from both  
Auntie & Uncle

XXX

[Mrs. Laura Seymore]



# When WAR Came to Brentsville

## HISTORY OF THE NINTH REGIMENT, NEW YORK VOLUNTEER CAVALRY.

WAR OF 1861 TO 1865.

### IN FRONT OF WASHINGTON—NEW RECRUITS ARRIVE.

The companies of the 9th N. Y. cavalry had been reduced by the hardships of the service to an average of eighteen men and horses present for duty. Sept. 3, the regiment marched to Hall's Farm three miles above Chain Bridge where men and horses took much needed rest. While here a large number of recruits joined the regiment and fresh horses and equipments were received. Lee's army advanced into Maryland where it was defeated at the battle of Antietam Sept. 16 and 17, by the reorganized army of the Potomac under McClellan. Lee fell back to Winchester, McClellan not following till the last days of October. During this time the 9th N. Y. Cavalry remained with Sigel's corps in front of Washington and did picket and patrol duty. During September the cavalry pickets were gradually advanced from Falls Church to Vienna, Hunter's Mill, Thornton and Herndon Stations on the railroad toward Leesburg, to Fairfax station, Union Mills and Manassas Junction on the Orange and Alexandria railroad, and to Chantilly, Centerville, Gum Springs and Bull Run on intermediate wagon roads. For three or four weeks some of the companies were under command of sergeants, the commissioned officers being absent on sick leave or detached service.

Several stragglers from Lee's army were picked up. One taken at Falls Church, claimed to belong to the Louisiana Tigers. As he was a weak

looking soldier he created much amusement by being exhibited as a specimen of that famous organization with the terrific name. The last of September, the mounted men of the regiment, with other troops of Sigel's corps, moved to Centerville, leaving about two hundred men, including most of the recruits, at Hall's Farm where they spent some days drilling in the school of the trooper dismounted. About this time all the companies of the regiment were equipped with Sharp's carbines. Within the next year most of the men were armed with Sharpe and Hankin carbines using a metallic cartridge. These were much more efficient and reliable than the Burnside or Sharp. On Sept. 24 about fifty men of the regiment, with two regiments of infantry and a section of artillery, advanced to Bristoe Station, where a rebel train had been, for several days, carrying away ordnance and commissary stores left by Pope's army on its retreat. Eight rebels with muskets, who had been guarding the stores, were captured. Late in the afternoon of the same day, the cavalry troop rode to Brentsville, where it had been advertised that "all capable of bearing arms were to meet that day and enroll themselves in the Confederate army." About twenty men were found, some of whom claimed they had enlisted and some claimed they had not. They were all made prisoners and the troop marched back to Bristoe Station where it staid over night.

## **MURDERED AS THEY SLEPT**

### **Story of the Assassination of Runnels and Davis in Dumfries by Two Negro Prisoners.**

The visit, during the past week, of Mrs. Alice V. Jordan, of Bridgeport, N. J., to Manassas, revives an incident of the civil war which has long been remembered by the older citizens of Dumfries and vicinity and which will be read with much interest by the survivors of the Prince William Cavalry.

During the early part of the war a squad of the Prince William Cavalry consisting of Jack Runnels, Sam Davis, Frank Merchant, and Frank Wheat captured in Fairfax county, near Occoquan, two negroes whom they believed to be spies. The prisoners were brought to Dumfries about nightfall and placed in a room in the old Dowell building on Main street, near the arch, and the captors arranged to guard them two, each, in turn.

The first watch of six hours was arranged for Davis and Runnels, Merchant and Wheat to take the next vigil until daylight when the prisoners were to be taken to Fredericksburg.

It happened that there was a dance to be given that night in the old brick tavern formerly kept by Henry Love and as both the Franks were fond of ladies and of dancing it was arranged that they should take the first watch in guarding the prisoners.

Shortly after daylight, the following morning, someone in passing the Dowell house heard a groan and went into the building to investigate. Stretched upon the bare floor, wrapped in their gray blankets; their heads resting on their saddles, which was the Cavalryman's pillow, and their gray uniforms besmeared with blood, lay Runnels and Davis, with their skulls crushed by and axe and the bloody instrument of death lying in sight.

Both victims of the tragedy were alive but unconscious, and lingered unconscious and in agony until death relieved them of their sufferings the next morning.

When the prisoners were placed in the guardhouse they were bound hand and foot and although it will never be known just how the assassination of the two Confederates was executed, it is supposed that in taking their turn in the watch both fell asleep and the prisoners, in some way, freeing themselves sent their captors to death with the tell-tale axe.

The victims were taken to the home of Mrs. Long, and Mrs. Jordan, then Miss Alice Brawner, assisted Mrs. Long in ministering to the dying soldiers and these two ladies were the last to review the remains.

Jack Runnels was a son of Chas. Runnels, who kept a way-side-inn on the Alexandria and Warrenton turnpike between Centreville and Fairfax Courthouse, and Sam Davis was a son of Richard Davis, who was a brother of Thos. K. Davis, and was the first cousin of R. H. Davis, of Bristow.

Source: The Manassas Journal, April 25, 1913

Corn Snakes are usually fed by their owners on a diet of commercially available rodents, predominantly mice, while younger and smaller specimens may eat live or dead rat or mouse pups of various sizes. Frozen mice that have been thawed to room temperature are usually preferred, as live prey can possibly carry disease or injure the snake if it has not been raised on live prey.

The practice of feeding live prey may also be illegal in some countries where it is classified as animal cruelty.

**Reproduction:** Corn snakes usually breed shortly after the winter cooling. The male courts the female primarily with tactile and chemical cues. Egg-laying occurs slightly more than a month after mating, with 12–24 eggs deposited into a warm, moist, hidden location. Once laid the adult snake abandons the eggs and does not return to them. The eggs are oblong with a leathery, flexible shell. Approximately 10 weeks after laying, the young snakes use a specialized scale called an egg tooth to slice slits in the egg shell, from which they emerge at about 5 inches in length.

After many generations of selective breeding, domesticated Corn Snakes are found in a wide variety of different colors and patterns. These result from recombining the dominant and recessive genes that code for proteins involved in chromatophore development, maintenance, or function. New variations, or morphs, become available every year as breeders gain a better understanding of the genetics involved.

**Color morphs:** Normal or wildtype Corn Snakes are orange with black lines around red colored saddle markings going down their back with black and white checkered bellies. Regional diversity is found in wild caught Corn Snakes with over 20 color phases named. Pattern morphs include motley, stripe, diffusion and sunkissed. As if this were not enough, there are tens of thousands of possible compound morphs. There may also be intergrades between different types of corn/rat snakes and even hybrids between corn / king snakes.

Source: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia



had for lunch. The meals then, of course, were made from scratch and one of my favorites was the cornbread. So much of the time either Charles and his family or James and his were living with us so the extra food really came in handy. Mother didn't drive so my dad or someone else would take her to work as they went in. Pop was working at Southern States as he did for many years in addition to working the farms. The school board rules were not as strict as they are now therefore Mother was able to ride the bus home from work. On the nicer days she would frequently walk home. Many times we would be getting off the school bus as Mother was walking in the door. We had one bus driver, Mrs. Wood, who was really strict. She did not want the least little noise on the bus and if it got too loud she would pull over to the side of the road and there we'd sit until it got quiet. Sometimes she'd do this several times in one evening. Finally, one late fall or winter afternoon Mother told her we had to get home in order to get our chores done before dark. After that we would often see the bus pulled over just before the hill after letting us off.

As I grew older and braver the one thing I learned that I adored was horses. I loved the way they smelled and the beauty of them I've yet to outgrow. Janie had a horse, Colleen, and she rode so beautifully. All I had was a bicycle. I would go to see Janie. We would ride in the field, she on her horse, me on my bike. Colleen never seemed to mind that I wasn't on a horse. Janie would often ride Colleen to my house and another friend from Brentsville would ride a horse over and I'd be ever so envious because I didn't have anything except a bicycle, even though it would take me anywhere I wanted to go. I wanted to ride a horse although I eventually found I didn't even know how, an art I never mastered.

This is also about the time we, as young teenage girls, decided we needed to start shaving our legs. Except for Charles and James sometimes at the house I'd never seen a razor but Janie had her dad who had razor blades. Yes, razor blades. We finally figured that she'd shave my legs and I'd shave hers. We had soap and water and a razor blade, a single edge razor blade. We were very deeply concentrating on our achievements when her dad walked in. He had a fit stating we were going to cut our legs off. So he fixed a razor and told us if we were going to shave our legs to at least do it with the right thing. Fortunately, we never even got a

knick before he supplied us with the proper tool.

I became friends with another girl, Arlene, when we were in about the eighth grade. She lived in Manassas and very conveniently next door to Freddie, a boy I'd met. Freddie would take Arlene and me to the movies; it was close enough to walk. We three would go to the school dances; the jitterbug was the big dance then and could he ever dance! One night Freddie, Arlene and I went to the homecoming football game. I had worn my dress for the dance afterwards and I somehow tumbled off the top bleacher with dress over my head. Once again I didn't hurt anything except my dignity. Mother became friends with Freddie's parents, Fred and Ethel. They would come out to the house to visit Mother. Ethel taught Mother a technique in crocheting a stole over the several years of our acquaintance before the family moved back to New York. I regret never learning many of Mother's arts in crocheting. I still have the crochet hooks and the box used for storing the thread Ethel gave to her.

I spent quite a bit of time with Arlene or she with me. Always for Friday night dinner her family had homemade cheeseburgers with lettuce and tomatoes, a rarity for me. The apartment she lived in was upstairs with little gas heaters on the walls; I recall how cold those winter nights were. Later she moved very near the school and as usual we spent most weekends together. Her mother, Katherine, knew I lived on the river and since neither she nor Arlene could swim she would always caution Arlene to never go to the river without my mother along, not knowing that Mother couldn't swim either. One Friday evening Arlene came home with me for the weekend and it was terribly hot. We asked Mother if we could go to the river. Mother of course didn't know of Katherine's rule and we didn't tell. We went to the 'log' and had a wonderful time swinging from the rope and lying to dry on the grass. We went back to school Monday and Tuesday Arlene didn't come to school. Nor did she come Wednesday or Thursday. Since she now lived close to the school and neither of us had telephones I walked over to see what was wrong. Arlene had poison ivy all over her, even in her mouth and eyes. Needless to say Katherine had found that we went to the river. After a couple of years Arlene and her family moved to Nokesville although for a while she would get a ride into Manassas in order to continue to go to school at Osbourn.

(More later...)

# *Brentsville Neighbors*

Information About Brentsville  
Shared Among Neighbors

Contact us on:  
[morganbreeden@aol.com](mailto:morganbreeden@aol.com)

IN GOD WE TRUST

**Brentsville Neighbors  
c/o Morgan Breeden  
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