

# Brentsville Neighbors



Information About Brentsville  
Shared Among Neighbors



May 2006

Welcome Neighbor,

Hooray, Hooray, the first of May,  
Outdoor activities begin today!

So started each May as we listened to Harden and Weaver on WMAL Radio until Jackson's death in 1992. It was something to look forward to back then. But May represents two other events that are even more important – Mother's Day and Memorial Day or Decoration Day as it was previously called.

Recognizing our mothers is something most of us wish we did more often. So that aspect will be easy. Memorial Day, honoring the men and women who were lost serving our country has, over time, changed to remember all of our friends and family who have died and more recently as simply a holiday to celebrate the beginning of summer. This issue will reflect on these two events by remembering a few of Brentsville's mothers and by recognizing the service of individuals who served a critical military-type function but without arms or uniform. These are the men and women volunteers of the U.S. Army Air Force Aircraft Warning Service.

Best wishes,

Nelson and Morgan

*Have fun listening to*  
**HARDEN**  
&  
**WEAVER**  
*every morning*  
**6 to 10 A.M.**  
*Monday thru Saturday*  
**WMAL RADIO 63**  
"The Service of 64 Year"

A black and white illustration of two men riding a tandem bicycle. The man in the front is wearing a suit and glasses, and the man in the back is wearing a suit and a hat.

Advertisement from the 1963 AFTRA Directory.  
(Donated by Skip McCloskey)

## This month:

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# The History of Mother's Day

The earliest Mother's Day celebrations can be traced back to the spring celebrations of ancient Greece in honor of Rhea, the Mother of the Gods. During the 1600's, England celebrated a day called "Mothering Sunday". Celebrated on the 4th Sunday of Lent, "Mothering Sunday" honored the mothers of England.

During this time many of England's poor worked as servants for the wealthy. As most jobs were located far from their homes, the servants would live at the houses of their employers. On Mothering Sunday the servants would have the day off and were encouraged to return home and spend the day with their mothers. A special cake, called the mothering cake, was often brought along to provide a festive touch.

As Christianity spread throughout Europe the celebration changed to honor the "Mother Church" - the spiritual power that gave them life and protected them from harm. Over time the church festival blended with the Mothering Sunday celebration. People began honoring their mothers as well as the church.

In the United States Mother's Day was first suggested in 1872 by Julia Ward Howe (who wrote the words to the Battle hymn of the Republic) as a day dedicated to peace. Ms. Howe would hold organized Mother's Day meetings in Boston, Mass. every year.

In 1907 Ana Jarvis, from Philadelphia, began a campaign to establish a national Mother's Day. Ms. Jarvis persuaded her mother's church in Grafton, West Virginia to celebrate Mother's

Day on the second anniversary of her mother's death, the 2nd Sunday of May. By the next year Mother's Day was also celebrated in Philadelphia.

Ms. Jarvis and her supporters began to write to ministers, businessmen, and politicians in their quest to establish a national Mother's Day. It was successful as by 1911 Mother's Day was celebrated in almost every state. President Woodrow Wilson, in 1914, made the official announcement proclaiming Mother's Day as a national holiday that was to be held each year on the 2nd Sunday of May.

While many countries of the world celebrate their own Mother's Day at different times throughout the year, there are some countries such as Denmark, Finland, Italy, Turkey, Australia, and Belgium which also celebrate Mother's Day on the second Sunday of May.

Source: <http://www.holidays.net/mother/story.htm>

## M - O - T - H - E - R

*"M" is for the million things she gave me,  
"O" means only that she's growing old,  
"T" is for the tears she shed to save me,  
"H" is for her heart of purest gold;  
"E" is for her eyes, with love-light shining,  
"R" means right, and right she'll always be,*

*Put them all together, they spell*

**"MOTHER,"**

*A word that means the world to me.*

**Howard Johnson** (c. 1915)

Source: <http://www.holidays.net/mother/poem.htm>

# A Few of Brentsville's Mothers



Back row - L-R: Mrs. Mamie (Counts) Keys, Mrs. Annie Spitzer, Mrs. Tracy (Spitzer) Whetzel, Mrs. Minnie (Keys) Counts, Mrs. Helen (Cookson) Keys, Mrs. Ora (Heflin) Keys, Mrs. Esta (Rush) Golladay, Mrs. Emma (Smith) Wolfe, Mrs. Ethel (Burke) Breedon, Mrs. James, Mrs. Hazel Stephens, Mrs. Hattie Petty, Mrs. Ethel Lefebvre, Mrs. Peterson and Mrs. Seymour

Front row - L-R: Helen Peterson, Edith Lefebvre, Virginia Bradshaw, Anna Cornwell, & Louise Keys



Mrs. Verona Craig (Brentsville's oldest living mother) and family



Mrs. John Donovan



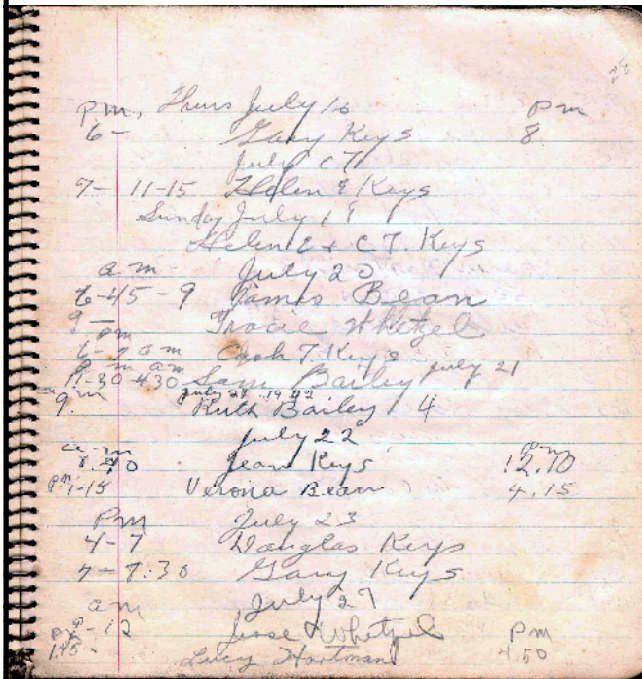
## Brentsville's Aircraft Warning Service Observation Station and Volunteers



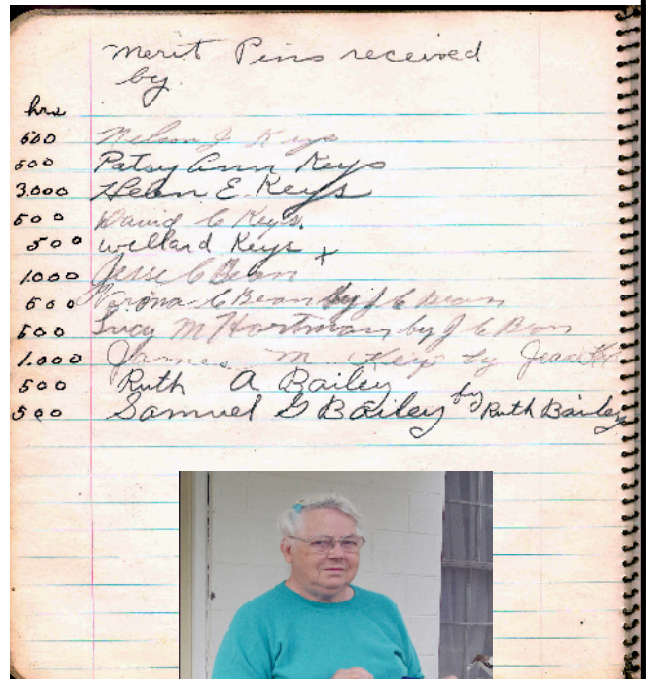
Brentsville's observer tower located near the home of Jim Shoemaker.

Below: A page from the Observer Time Log

Below: A list of those who received a Merit Pin in recognition for their volunteer service



(Log book courtesy of Frank Golladay)



Lucy Hartman served over 500 hours as an Observer Volunteer



Badge worn by Observer Volunteers

# Edith A. Melvin Turner

## Memories of Growing Up in Brentsville in her own words

Hi,

My name is Edith A. Melvin Turner. I was born Jan. 27<sup>th</sup> 1933 in Washington, D.C. My biological parents were Foley Samuel Melvin and Audrey Virginia Donovan Melvin. My mother was the daughter and only child of John Franklin Donovan and Florida Virginia Alison Donovan, grandparent of whom raised my two brothers, John Foley Melvin and George Arthur Melvin and me. We came to live with my grandparents at a very young age. Of course my oldest brother Johnnie was born on the farm and never left until he joined the army at the age of seventeen. My other brother, George, youngest of the two, soon after also joined the army.

Our farm home was located about a mile from the main road in Brentsville, and seems the winters back then were so severe and the snows so heavy and deep that when I started to school, my grandparents moved into the Cooksey house the first two years so I could go to school. With in this time period, I met Mr. Paul Cooksey's daughter, Carolyn. They invited me to spend the night with them and go to the movies of which I had never been to a theater. I remember it was a silent Shirley Temple film and you had to read what was going on. It was a real treat and very memorable. Mr. Cooksey's family lived in Manassas, Virginia. There was another little friend that I had when we lived in the Cooksey house. Her name was Elizabeth Keys. She was the daughter of Dewey and Rosa Keys and my grandmother would let me visit her and play with dolls and paper dolls. My grandfather had to go back and forth to the farm every day and feed and water the livestock. This lasted two years and then we moved back to the farm.

Life on the farm was wonderful and rewarding in some ways and not so good in other ways. The snow would come early in the winter and stayed on the ground until spring. We had to shovel paths for the cattle to get food and water. It seemed every few days it came more snow to be shoveled out. Sometimes the snow would come while we were at school and the drifts would be so deep that my brothers would cross arms and carry me. This lasted until we got to Morgan and Marye Breeden's house and I would spend the night with



them. They were very special folks in my life. I can remember this happening a few times and how sweet it was of them to take me into their home for the night. They were beautiful people who loved to sing hymns. Mr. Breeden raised the most beautiful dahlia garden I have ever remembered seeing. Every color and size and they all stood so straight and tall. There will always be a special place in my heart for these folks and their families.

I remember the county starting busing us to Nokesville to attend school there. My favorite friend was Jackie Pope Golladay, granddaughter of Grady and Violet Shoemaker. I remember my brothers and I walking the mile to Brentsville to catch the school bus. There was a very special lady, Mrs. Annie Spitzer, who used to bring me in from the cold and pick the beggars lice and needles that had attached themselves to my stockings and the bottom of my coat before the bus would come. She had a daughter named Shirley whom she would fix very neatly in her hair every morning, a bow or a ribbon. There was a whole box of ribbons and bows and I had never seen that many in my life. She was a very kind and loving lady.

One of my most favorite memories was visiting the Brentsville grocery on a Saturday night to visit with other friends and to take our eggs that we sold to Mrs. Violet for groceries. We children, Jackie, George, Barbara and Billy Wade, would all go into the annie room between the store and Mrs. Myrtle Keys house to tell ghost stories. How better to spend a Saturday night?

My brothers and I had chores to do daily on the farm. Gathering eggs, feeding the chickens, carrying in wood for the two stoves, milking the cows before and after school, feeding the livestock and many more chores were all a part of growing up on the farm. In the summer there were always fields of corn to be thinned, green beans to be picked and canned, tomatoes to be gathered and canned and best of all blackberries to be picked and canned for the winter. My grandfather raised watermelons and cantaloupes which were the best in the whole world and shared these with the

neighbors and friends to enjoy. We always made our summer and fall trip to the apple and peach orchard to have peaches to can and apples to store in the cellar for winter along with our potatoes we had to harvest for winter.

Some other special times were the butchering of hogs and the thrashing of wheat days. Mr. Clyde Bean was the only farmer around with a thrashing machine so he went from farm to farm doing the thrashing for the farmers. Hog butchering day was exciting when we were young but really hard work when we became old enough to help. We made our own sausage, scrapple, pudding, lard, bacon and cured hams. This was all in the life of farming families.

Some of my memories of the courthouse were the voting place where my grandfather voted. I remember the air raid exercises we had to do, fall to the floor and keep your head under your desk. This was during WWII. I also remember one time we were allowed to attend a country music show featuring Grand Paw Jones and Ramona plus other Celebrities I can't remember their names but it was fun.

My grandmother and my brothers and I attended the Presbyterian Church. There were a few times we went to Hatcher's Memorial Baptist Church. I was baptized at the age of thirteen by our minister then, the Reverend Albert C. Winn. We attended Sunday school and church every weekend unless we couldn't get there because of the weather. I remember especially as I grew older, of helping with the Christmas Pageant, which was really neat. All of the children got a bag with an orange and a few chocolate drops and hard candy in it. I think Mrs. Tracy Whetzel arranged this for the children. Mattie Catherine Whetzel and Gladys Wolfe were friends of mine then and continued to be for several years. We all sang in the church choir together. Thomas and Frederick Whetzel were buddies with my brother George and have remained in touch with them even though we have not lived in the area for forty years.

In summarizing my life, I will have to say on behalf of my brother George, we had a special childhood. We learned respect, honesty and that hard work never hurt us. We were blessed with wonderful grandparents, a warm house to live in, and plenty to eat. I thank God each day of my life for being raised down on the farm and for my friends of Brentsville. In closing I would like to say, may God bless you all.

**We wish to express our  
sincere appreciation to  
Frank Golladay  
for his most generous  
contributions**

## Aprons

I don't think our kids know what an apron is.

The principal use of Grandma's apron was to protect the dress underneath, but along with that, it served as a potholder for removing hot pans from the oven.

It was wonderful for drying children's tears, and on occasion was even used for cleaning out dirty ears.

From the chicken coop, the apron was used for carrying eggs, fussy chicks, and sometimes half-hatched eggs to be finished in the warming oven.

When company came, those aprons were ideal hiding places for shy kids.

And when the weather was cold, grandma wrapped it around her arms.

Those big old aprons wiped many a perspiring brow, bent over the hot wood stove.

Chips and kindling wood were brought into the kitchen in that apron.

From the garden, it carried all sorts of vegetables. After the peas had been shelled, it carried out the hulls.

In the fall, the apron was used to bring in apples that had fallen from the trees.

When unexpected company drove up the road, it was surprising how much furniture that old apron could dust in a matter of seconds.

When dinner was ready, Grandma walked out onto the porch, waved her apron, and the men knew it was time to come in from the fields to dinner.

It will be a long time before someone invents something that will replace that "old-time apron" that served so many purposes.

Oh, yes, and by the way....Grandma used to set her hot baked apple pies on the window sill to cool.

Her granddaughters set theirs on the window sill to thaw!

Source: Author unknown - from the InterNet



## U.S. Army Air Force Aircraft Warning Service

### WAR DEPARTMENT

Secretary of War.

WASHINGTON

May 16, 1944

TO ALL VOLUNTEERS OF THE AIRCRAFT  
WARNING SERVICE:

You have had a unique opportunity to see and to take part in the gradual transition from the defensive position into which your country was forced at the start of the war to the offensive that is today forcing our enemies back towards Berlin and Tokyo. Many of you have served loyally and well in the Aircraft Warning Service ever since December 1941. All of you have contributed your share to making this transition from retreat to advance possible. The most crucial battles of our Nation's history are now in prospect overseas. They demand the full resources of our country, both in manpower and materiel. For that reason, the War Department has directed the further reduction of air defense measures within the continental United States and the release to the offensive of trained soldiers and equipment that could not otherwise be brought to bear upon the enemy.

The aircraft warning centers, at which so many of you have served and to which so many others have reported as ground observers, are to be closed. The Aircraft Warning Service, on a reduced scale, will be absorbed into in stallations used for the training of fighter pilots. The resulting savings in military personnel and equipment will be substantial. This does not mean that the War Department is of the opinion that all danger of enemy bombing has passed. On the contrary, a small—scale sneak raid is still within the capabilities of our enemies. We must win this war in Europe and Asia, however, and the calculated risk we are assuming in reducing our air defense measures is justified by the offensive power we will thereby release.

During your period of duty with the Aircraft Warning Service, you have learned many facts which, if made public, might be of service to the enemy. The War Department looks to you to maintain silence with respect to these matters of national security. The obligation you assumed to safeguard military information remains in full effect.

This war has a long way to go. We are only just entering upon its crucial phase and victory lies far ahead beyond many bloody battles. The War Department sincerely hopes that you will not relax your war effort, and urges that you transfer to one of the many remaining vitally important jobs the loyalty and self-sacrifice you have shown in your work for the Aircraft Warning Service.

The War Department is deeply grateful for the important service you have rendered your country.

- Sincerely,

HEADQUARTERS I FIGHTER COMMAND  
OFFICE OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL  
MITCHEL FIELD. N.Y.

May 27, 1944

TO: All Volunteers of the Aircraft Warning Service  
With the announcement by the War Department of the discontinuance of the Ground Observer Corps and the Aircraft Warning Corps, I want to express my personal appreciation and that of all the officers and men of this command to the volunteers who have served so loyally and efficiently with us in the defense of the eastern seaboard.

It has been almost two and one—half years since that Sunday in 1941 when thousands of patriotic Americans sprang to the defense of their country by manning round—the—clock watches at Observation Posts, Filter Centers, and Information Centers. It is my conviction that there never existed a more sincere and loyal group of Americans than those who volunteered for this work.

You have done a splendid job and have successfully accomplished your particular mission which must now be terminated because of the developments of our strategic situation. Now with the war almost entirely in its offensive phase, I hope and believe that you will turn your patriotic efforts into other forms of work which will help to support the attack and bring the day of victory nearer.

As an indication of the appreciation of this command, and in recognition of your faithful performance of duty as a member of the Aircraft Warning Service, you will receive in the near future the I Fighter Command Certificate of Honorable Service.

I want to thank each of you for all you have done. Your country, the Army Air Forces, and your fellow Americans owe a debt of gratitude to the members of the Aircraft Warning Service.

STEWART W. TOWLE, JR.,  
Colonel, Air Corps,  
Commanding.

Source: <http://www.hempsteadplains.com/mfaws.htm>

# *Brentsville Neighbors*

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Contact us via e-mail on:  
[MorganBreedden@aol.com](mailto:MorganBreedden@aol.com)

**Late Information:** The Prince William County Historic Preservation Division presentation “Prelude to War” that was held on the courthouse grounds April 29-30 was very well attended and fascinating to witness. Many thanks go out to the re-enactors who so generously volunteered their time and resources to make this wonderful event such a success!

**Brentsville Neighbors  
c/o Morgan Breedden  
9721 Windy Hill Drive  
Nokesville, VA 20181**

