

Brentsville Neighbors



Information About Brentsville
Shared Among Neighbors
December 2009



Welcome Neighbors!

Perhaps we think of December as the month spent with family and friends more than any other. Regardless of our individual spiritual belief, there is a time in the month for each of us. A time of giving, sharing, and the warming of hearts be it around a tree or another form of celebration. And so we wish to offer our warmest wishes for this season and hope yours is filled with joy and happiness.

In a recent communication with DeLancy Webster he commented, "Still looking forward to you running Agnes' story of the house that burned down. A superb piece of writing. I cannot read it without tearing up bit. Although it is an article about a tragedy, the last line stresses what is really important!" On the occasion of his mother's death, Lance produced a collection of poems, art, and other memories in a book titled "*Brentsville Bound*." One section is devoted to her period as a newspaper reporter in which he explained, "For six years, Agnes Webster wrote a weekly neighborhood news column for the local Manassas Messenger newspaper. More than 300

columns of tidbits of local gossip, each introduced with commentary on local politics, the raising of children, the planting and care of gardens, and the doings of her own family and friends. A few samples follow, along with – at the end of this section – two extraordinary pieces of writing: a feature called "The Myth of the Green Thumb," and a news story about a neighborhood fire which captures the meaning and emotions of such an event like no story I've read in any newspaper in the past 40 years." The latter was published February 3, 1948, and is included in this issue, for you, Lance. Thank you for your continued support!

On page three is a picture of an apron pattern submitted by Dorothy Furrow. She has made a number of aprons from this pattern (perhaps from feed sacks?) and still has it stashed away for use again when needed. How many of us have worn something made at home from one of those decorated feed sacks? Many of us we are willing to wager!

Merry Christmas

and a

Happy New Year!

Very Best Wishes,
Nelson & Morgan

This month:

- Where Wild Things Live - pages 3, 7 & 9
- Flashback ----- page 2
- I Inherited My Mother ----- pages 5 & 9

Circulation: 184 - 60 Electronic

- A Brentsville Citizen of Note -- pages 6 & 7
- When War Came ----- page 8

flashback

Fire Sweeps Home Of Sergeant Newton

By Agnes Webster

We can think of no sound better calculated to strike a chill of fear into adult hearts than the wail of the fire siren, rising and falling on the cold air of a Winter afternoon.

The two boys had left school a few minutes before in Frederick's car, and were proceeding at a dignified rate out of town, when the engine passed them.

"Hey, They're heading our way!"

"Bet they're going to Lake Jackson," said Bucky, "let's follow 'em."

"Aw, it's probably just somebody burning a field off," said Frederick, "I'm going home."

But as they came around the curve by Golladay's, they could see the black smoke, billowing up, and the boys knew then that it was more than a cornfield. "HEY!—It's Newtons!"

Mrs. Newton came to Brentsville in the late summer of '46, with a job of teaching the seventh grade at the Nokesville school. Working is never easy when you have four kids, —two under school age, —and a husband who is away most of the time, in the Army. A neighbor looked after the little ones during the day, and Sergeant Newton's mother came up from North Carolina during the summer to help out. They took the house that the Bailey's had, on the ridge there, overlooking Broad Run, where the boys made bobsled runs in the winter, and Mrs. Newton was always so cheerful that we just took it for granted that everything was going all right. She took an active interest in the Church, and the last time we talked to her was when she called to ask if we could get one of the big boys to be a Wise Man in the Christmas play. Gill stormed and fussed, but went off at last with his dungarees showing under a satin housecoat, with a red scarf wound around his head for a turban, looking mad as a wet hen, and making pointed remarks about parents who let you in for this sort of thing. But Thomas was there, and

Mrs. Newton gave them each a bag of candy, so they survived the ordeal.

Mrs. Newton got off of the school bus at Keyeses store on the way home Friday, to pick up a few things for supper; and Miss Lily was the one to tell her what had happened. She took it calmly; after all, the children were safe, that was the main thing. Jim Shoemaker had managed to save her stove by chopping a hole in the wall and dragging it out, and the firemen had gotten her ice-box and a chair and a baby-carriage. That was all that was left. Only one smoking chimney stood to show where a house had been, and a house holds so much that you can't go out and replace in a day. Dishes and spoons and tools, curtains, bedroom slippers, cough medicine; lamps and books, and the children's favorite toys, and, worst of all, a letter that came that morning, unopened, from your husband, in Japan.

The neighbors, each thinking soberly, "There, but for the Grace of God, go I," did what they could; there was no fire insurance, expenses would be heavy, there were still payments to meet on the burned house, and at least two months of Winter ahead. Everyone gave from last summer's store of canned goods; there would be pears and beans and tomatoes. Mrs. Peters called for the Red Cross promising every possible aid. Bessie Shoemaker took in two of the children, and set up half of the night making phone calls and arranging to get Walter Keys' little house put into livable shape; some of the boys painted the rooms next day, and people searched their attics for objects of use.

The children were too excited to be unhappy, of course, but it is a dreadful thing for a woman to stand alone, looking at the smoking ruins of her home, wondering perhaps what was in that letter that traveled six-thousand miles, only to be burned, unopened. Thinking, Well, the children are safe After all, that is the main thing.



Where WILD
things live..



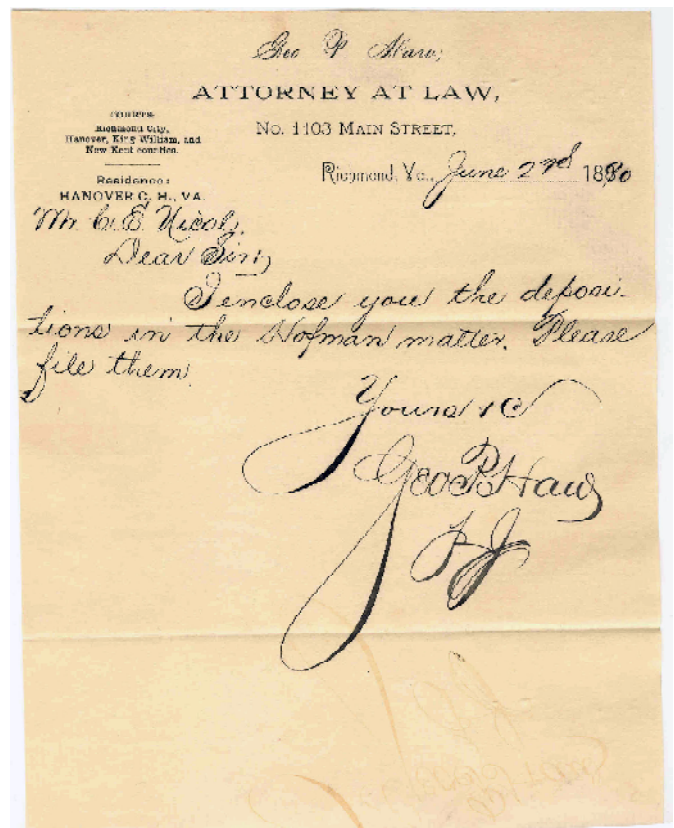
Diptera species
Robber Fly
(See page 7)



Patsy Ann Keys at home in Brentsville by her Christmas Tree



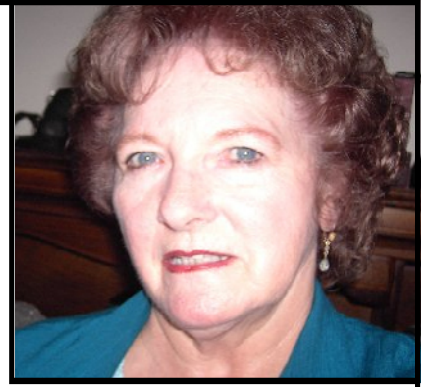
C. E. Nicol





I INHERITED MY MOTHER

By
Dorothy Lee (Bean) Furrow
(Part 3)



Mother would clean the top of the stove and slice some of her homemade bread and toast it on top of the stove. She had an old iron water kettle that had a curved spout on it. When the water started boiling the steam would come out of the spout. One time I walked by when the steam started coming out and I had a big round burn on my arm; I stayed clear of the kettle from then on. Often on cold evenings we'd open the oven door and put our feet on it to warm them before going to bed. When we had goats in the winter Mother would get her a glass of goat milk and an onion biscuit before retiring for the night. She'd fix us each a quart jar of hot water to take to bed so our feet would stay warm. That jar would be like ice in the mornings!

We had a radio that didn't have very good reception. Mother had it sitting on the sideboard. I remember getting up on the sideboard, sitting beside it putting my head down to hear. She and Mrs. Woodyard would listen to a program at night called the "Screeching Door". There was the eerie sound of a screeching door and it would make me so scared. Mother listened to a program that I think was called the "Gloria Swanson Show". Somehow Mother entered a contest and won a mink coat. But when she got it she wouldn't wear it because she said she couldn't wear something that nice and Ruthie and I had old things to wear. My cousin Catherine and I think Sis worked at a dry cleaner and Mother had the coat put in cold storage there. She never did get it out, not realizing probably that she could have sold the coat and bought new ones for all of us.

Mother would buy chicken and cow feed in pretty cloth sacks. She would let us go with her to Southern States and pick out the sacks we liked so we could have dresses made from them. I don't know who made the dresses in the beginning but later my cousin Delores made a lot of our dresses. The first dress I remember being made out of store-bought material was for Easter. Delores made one for each of us; Ruthie's was pink and mine was yellow. They were both alike with square necks, were sleeveless and had a short sleeve jacket to go with it and a ribbon sash. We were fancy stuff that Easter Sunday! We most always would have special clothing for Easter.

My brother Charles was good about making sure Ruthie and I had a good Christmas. One year I remember he asked us what we wanted. I wanted a bathrobe and Ruthie wanted a coloring book and crayons and that is what we each got. There was a year Ruthie and I got doll babies. Mother told us to go to the tree and pick whichever one we wanted. I was faster so I got the prettiest and nicest doll. Another year after James was married we wanted a record player, a high fi it was called then. Ruthie and I were positive Mother had gotten one for us so we searched the house over for it. Betty, James's wife pretended to help us look. We didn't know that she knew about it. When we looked in the closet under the stairs she was sure we would find it but Mother had tucked it in much farther than we ventured to search. We were so surprised Christmas morning. She had also gotten us a couple of records, Elvis's Jailhouse Rock and another song about Cotton, I can't recall the name of it. At that time there was only one song to each side of the record.

It was time for me to start to school and there was a day in the winter before the new school year when new first graders would go to meet their teacher. I don't know how we got there, perhaps a taxi. I had a beautiful blue brand new winter coat and leggings to match. My teacher was going to be Mrs. Carter who was Horace's teacher at the time. Mrs. Carter would teach first grade and then take that class and be their second grade teacher. As Horace was finishing second grade she then went back to teach first grade the year I started school. There was a little reception with cookies and cocoa for the new ones. Even back then I was a klutz and spilled cocoa all over my new outfit!

When I started first grade I had to walk up the road to where Mother had lived when she married Pop to catch the school bus. This was the house her father had built and he had planted a Holly tree there which still stands today. Her brother, my Uncle Troy now lived there and did for a number of years. I don't remember how long I had to make that walk, perhaps only that first year. I went to school at Baldwin Elementary in Manassas. Mrs. Carter had the same room each year. I remember how dark those

Brentsville

A Citizen of Note

Judge Charles Edgar Nicol

The Nicol pioneer in Virginia, an officer of Frederick the Great, of Prussia, founded an estate in the Old Dominion that has been held well toward two centuries by his descendants, the original grant yet being held in the family. On maternal lines Judge Nicol descends from English forbears, his grandfather, John Williams, holding the office of clerk of courts, an office held in the family for over one hundred years.

Charles Edgar Nicol is a son of Judge Aylett Nicol and a grandson of Michael and Sarah (Miller) Nicol, the last-named a daughter of a wealthy farmer of Rappahannock county, Virginia. Judge Aylett Nicol was born in Rappahannock county, Virginia, in 1822, died in 1878. He was a man of good education and strong character, a lawyer by profession, one time judge of Prince William county, a colonel of militia, and a land-owner. He married Mary Jane Williams, who died in 1862, a lady of culture and intellectual powers.

Charles Edgar Nicol was born at Brentsville, Prince William county, Virginia, February 22, 1854, and spent his early life on the home farm, where he engaged in every form of farm labor. He developed a strong body during those early years of out-door life, an asset that has never failed him. He obtained his education through his own efforts, earning the necessary funds as he advanced in his college life. He attended private schools, Rappahannock Academy, and Richmond College, graduating in Latin, Greek and French, also being awarded the Magazine Medal of the Mu Sigma Rho fraternity, a prize

given the best magazine writer of the college. In 1875 he attended the law school of the University of Virginia, obtaining a certificate of proficiency in international and constitutional law, and winning in open contest the "debater's medal," offered by the Washington Literary Society to the best speaker and debater.

During the year preceding his entrance to the university he taught school and studied law. After leaving the university he was admitted to the Virginia bar and has since been continuously engaged in professional work, either as practitioner or jurist. His work as an attorney has been largely devoted to general practice, but considerable time has been given to the law of corporations and the settlement of estates. His greatest case in the latter line was the settlement of the large estate (six million dollars) left by Dr. Thomas W. Evans, the American dentist of Paris, France, further noted as the rescuer of the Empress Eugenie, consort of Napoleon III., his efforts enabling her to escape from Paris and France when her husband lost his throne. The Evans estate consisted of property in Philadelphia, New York and Paris, Judge Nicol visiting the last-named city during the settlement.

He served in the Virginia house of delegates for three terms, 1879-1880, 1881-1882, and 1893-94. During the last year he made his residence in Manassas, Virginia, that being his home until 1907, when he moved to Alexandria, but still retains his Manassas home. In 1893 he was elected judge of the eleventh judicial district of Virginia, a position he worthily filled

(Continued on page 7)

for over twelve years. In 1903 he became judge of the sixteenth judicial district, but on March 4, 1907, he resigned to resume private practice.

During his professional career Judge Nicol has been in the state and federal courts of Virginia, and in Washington, District of Columbia. He has been connected with many famous cases and ranks among the foremost men of his profession. As a jurist he was noted for the clearness and justice of his decisions and his fair treatment of all litigants and their attorneys. He was held in high esteem by the members of the bar of the districts over which he presided, and was highly regarded for his judicial qualifications by his fellow-jurists. He has contributed many valuable papers to the law journals, and his decisions, many of them, are quoted authorities.

Judge Nicol is a member of Manassas Lodge, Free and Accepted Masons, and is a thirty-second degree Mason of the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite. He is a member of the National Geographical Society, the Society for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, trustee of Richmond College, trustee of Eastern College, member of the State and National law

associations, and other organizations social, fraternal and scientific. In political faith he is a Democrat, and in religious preference a Baptist. His own life has been such that his advice to young men is of value: "Persist in some chosen occupation, lead a simple life, eschew bad habits and associates, form regular habits of work and exercise, cultivate faith in God and an earnest purpose to perform every duty, however simple and humble." He is a devotee of out-door recreation, horse-back riding, driving, walking and swimming, while his favorite indoor amusement is chess-playing.

Judge Nicol married (first) November 17, 1880, Marie Louise, daughter of Professor Ezra Bauder, a descendant of the Garnett family of Tidewater, Virginia. She died in 1900, leaving children: Aylett Bauder, born in Prince William county in 1883; Pauline, born in Brentsville, Virginia, in 1885, married in 1912, Dr. Benjamin F. Iden, of Minneapolis, Minnesota; Julia Carr, born in Brentsville, in 1891; Mary Louise, born in 1894; Fanny B., born in 1896. Judge Nicol married (second) August 3, 1908, Mrs. Florence (De Cusac) Nash, a descendant of the De Cusac family of Charleston, South Carolina.

Source: *Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography, Volume V, 1915*

Where W I L D Things Live

Diptera species -- Robber Fly

There are over 7,000 species of robber flies world wide; nearly 1,000 in North America. All robber flies have stout, spiny legs, a dense moustache of bristles on the face (mystax), and 3 simple eyes (ocelli) in a characteristic depression between their two large compound eyes. The mystax helps protect the head and face when the fly encounters prey bent on defense. The antennae are short, 3-segmented,

sometimes with a bristle-like structure called an arista.

The short, strong proboscis is used to stab and inject victims with saliva containing neurotoxic and proteolytic enzymes which paralyze and digest the insides; the fly then sucks the liquefied meal much like we vacuum up an ice cream soda through a straw. Many species

(Continued on page 9)

When WAR Came to Brentsville

DECEMBER 21-23, 1862. Scout to Catlett's Station and Brentsville, VA.

Report of Brigadier General William W. Averel, U. S. Volunteers.

HDQRS. FIRST CAV. Brigadier, CENTER GRAND DIVISION,
December 23, 1862-11.30 a.m.

COLONEL: I have the honor to report that Privates Blaisdell and McGua, Fourth Pennsylvania Cavalry, have just returned from a scout to Catlett's Station, Greenwich, Bristoe, and Brentsville, and report as follows, viz:

Left our picket line 4 a.m. Sunday; arrived at Bristersburg Stone Church 1 p.m. same day, where we saw some stragglers from Hampton's Legion, who were going toward Warrenton Junction; followed them to within a mile of the Junction; then went across the fields and woods to Catlett's. Found there that the railroad had not been used recently; had been no cavalry there since last Monday a week ago. Went to Greenwich about dark; roads did not seem to have been much used: staid in the woods until 3 a.m. yesterday; could see no camp fires; went through the town, which is small, perhaps a dozen houses; one large house of a dirty red color; saw no rebel soldiers. Went by the road to Bristoe, 5 or 6 miles distant. Crossed the Manassas Gap Railroad, which had not been used recently. Arrived at Bristoe about 11 a.m. yesterday. A boy told us that 11 of our soldiers had been there the day before. We left Bristoe about noon for Brentsville, which is 3 or 4 miles off. Went by the road. There appeared to have been no more than small country travel upon it. A man near Brentsville, named Allen Housens, told us that Hampton's Legion camped near there on Saturday night, and that he had 30 wagons and about 50 prisoners, which they had captured from Sigel's forces at Dumfries. We then went toward Dumfries to within 12 miles, struck the Telegraph road 5 miles north of Stafford Court-House, and General Sigel's pickets at Aquia Creek, about 10 o'clock last night. Hampton probably crossed the Rappahannock or went to Warrenton early on Sunday.

I have sent two men to Warrenton to see what it there.

Respectfully, your obedient servant,

WM. W. AVERELL,
Brigadier-General of Volunteers, Commanding.

Lieutenant Colonel JOS. DICKINSON,
Assistant Adjutant-General.

have long, tapering abdomens, sometimes with a sword-like ovipositor. Others are fat-bodied bumble bee mimics; the effect is quite convincing. Take a close look at any insect that looks like a bumble bee if it's sitting on a leaf - chances are, it's a robber fly. (Bumble bees as a rule do not sit in one spot for more than a few seconds).

Much has been made of the speed and agility of these flies. Many books and sites cite them as fast and agile flyers, taking insects on the wing. Others attribute to them "still-hunting", that is, perching and attacking in mid-air; My National Audubon Society Field Guide to Insects asserts they "pounce on resting insects from above." Well, from my experience, I can say not all robber flies are fast, and not all robber flies are agile. The big robbers (*Promachus*) lumber and buzz in flight - it is very easy to follow them, and I've often seen them pounce on honeybees busy at flowers. Adult robber flies attack other flies, beetles, butterflies and moths, various bees, dragon and damselflies, ichneumon wasps, grasshoppers, and some spiders. Courtship behavior consists of the male glomming onto the female as if she were prey. Copulation is accomplished tail-to-tail, with the genitalia interlocked. The duo has no trouble flying around in this condition; the male generally towing the female backwards.

Adults lay eggs into soil or plants. The larvae are often found in decaying organic matter, such as dung heaps and rotting logs, but are also found in ordinary soil. In most species the larvae are omnivorous and are known to eat the eggs and larvae of other insects. Their life cycle ranges from 1 to 3 years.

Source: http://www.cirrusimage.com/Flies_robber.htm

halls seemed. Mother had Delores give me a Toni before school started. I thought I was going to have all these pretty curls and all I had was a big head of wind-blown mess. It did grow out and by the time school pictures were taken it was almost straight again. Mrs. Carter was a really good teacher and ever so patient. There was one day a new student came to class and Mrs. Cater was telling us where this child came from. I raised my hand and finally she called on me. I asked her if wherever this student came from was a Manassas. Grandma had always said she was going to Manassas, therefore I thought every place away from home was a Manassas. My geography never got much better much as I love to travel!

Ruthie had to wear glasses because her eyes were crossed. She also for a time had to wear a patch over one eye. Mother would put the patch on Ruthie's eye and she'd cry. About the time we'd get down to the bus stop, which by now was at the bottom of our drive, Ruthie would have cried enough that the patch had come loose. When I was in about the fifth grade I decided I couldn't see, all because Ruthie had glasses and I didn't. We didn't have an eye doctor in Manassas and had to go to Washington, D.C. Sometimes we'd take the Trailway or Greyhound bus and sometimes Pop would take us. The day I was taken to get my eyes examined Pop took us. After I got the drops in my eyes I really couldn't see! We stopped somewhere on the way home to eat lunch and I couldn't even tell what I was eating. Anyhow I got my glasses yet since my sight was good I couldn't wear them. Still I would always take them to school with me. One day I forgot them and Mother called the taxi to go get them and bring them to school for me. I never gave any consideration to the fact that Mother really couldn't afford them. How selfish of me.

When I was in the fifth grade I went to a picnic one Saturday with James's mother-in-law, Mrs. Herring. Mrs. Herring was a really large lady and I was amazed that she had stood on her head. When we got home I was going to show Mother how Mrs. Herring had stood on her head. I got a big coat and folded it to go under my head. Up I went and about the time my feet were in the air I flipped right on over and landed on my hip. I was in excruciating pain and couldn't get up. Finally I was gotten in bed and had to lay with pillows under my leg. Monday morning came and I was going to school even though I had to lift and push my left foot with my right one. I finally got down to the bus stop but when it came time to get on the bus I couldn't lift my foot up nor could I put my weight on it to get the other one up on the step. Mother had Pop come and they took me to the doctor who sent me to Children's Hospital. I had a fractured pelvis. So much for my standing on my head any more!

Brentsville Neighbors

Information About Brentsville
Shared Among Neighbors

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IN GOD WE TRUST

