

# ARNOLD HAWKINS

1902 - 1986

Good afternoon and welcome to the Historical Speakers' Presentations at the Second Annual Damascus Heritage Day Celebration. I am Renee Hawkins-Jackson and I am proud to present the history of my Grandfather and a Damascus pioneer, Arnold Hawkins.

I lived at 25510 Oak Drive with my grandfather, Arnold and my grandmother, Mildred, on a dairy farm my grandfather managed for the Atwood Young family for more than 40 years. The farm sat where the John T. Baker Middle School and the Damascus Community Recreation Center now sits - where there were corn and wheat fields, milking cows, beef cattle, pigs and chickens - where we baled hay and straw, planted potatoes, butchered hogs, made soap, baked bread and raised all our vegetables and meats - and where our grandfather gave us rides around the farm on the two work horses, Dan and Maude, and rides on his orange Case tractor. In 1969, the Young family sold the farm and land to the Montgomery County Public Schools.



My grandparents were the parents of one child, Hamilton - my father. They helped my Mother, Madeline, their daughter-in-law raise and take care of me and my brothers and sisters when my parents separated when we were very young and also helped to raise several great grandchildren.

My grandmother, Mildred worked side-by-side with my grandfather on the farm, in the house and in the church. She cooked baked, cleaned, canned and preserved fruits, vegetables and meats, made her own jellies, bread, soap, and quilts and blankets. She also worked diligently in the church and in the various organizations she was a member of. In 1962, she suffered a stroke when her car slid off the road in Middlebrook while driving a relative to a doctor's appointment during a snow storm. Her health continued to decline following the accident. We took care of her at home for 14 years until her death in 1976.

My grandfather, Henry Arnold Hawkins was born in Purdum, Maryland on February 6, 1902. He was the son of a farmer and a mid-wife. His father came to the Damascus area from Baltimore - he had run away from home and never returned so my grandfather never met or knew his grandparents. Working with his father on the farm, he was given a great deal of responsibility at a young age - some of those responsibilities included helping to feed and milk the cows, feeding the pigs and cleaning out the pig pen, feeding the chickens and gathering eggs, as well as cutting wood to carry inside to heat the house.

My grandfather liked to be called by his middle name "Arnold" - we called him "Pop Pop". As a young boy, he had to walk 3 miles every day with his brothers and sisters to an all black school, which also served as a church, which opened in 1869. The church/school sat on an acre of land

that had been sold to the black people in the community of Burnt Hill for \$20 in 1868 by Mr. George T. White and his wife of Damascus for use as a public school and church. In their effort to raise funds to construct the school and church, the community sponsored picnics. They were also provided a financial contribution from the Bureau of Engraving. After sufficient funds were raised, Mr. John Burdette of Damascus volunteered the use of his team of horses to pick up the lumber and haul it from Frederick, Maryland back to Purdum free of charge. Although the school only went up to the 8th grade, my Grandfather, with limited education, could add and subtract in his head faster than you could calculate on paper.

Both religion and family played an important role in his life. He attended church every Sunday - sometimes all day - with his family. He had become a member of the church at a very young age. In 1967, he was instrumental in co-founding the current Pleasant Grove Christian Community Church in Purdum, formerly the Pleasant Grove Methodist Church, which was the same church/school he walked to each day as a young boy. In 1966 Pleasant Grove Methodist Church was closed to combine the two black congregations of Pleasant Gove and Friendship United Methodist Church in Damascus. My grandfather, along with other members of the Pleasant Grove congregation was distressed at the closing and so he sought to find a pastor that was willing to serve at the church outside the Methodist Conference. My sister, Sheila remembers driving Pop Pop to Beallsville, Maryland in convince Rev. Alonzo Graham to serve as pastor. He was successful. The church reopened in 1967 as the Pleasant Grove Christian Community Church. Rev. Lawrence Bryant is currently the Pastor. My grandfather was a devoted and lifelong member of the Church, having served as a member of the Board of Trustees, Treasurer, Church Historian and was instrumental in establishing the annual "Friends and Relatives Day" celebration at the church and developing and maintaining the church building fund. He also took care of the maintenance of the church building and grounds, with the help of his grandchildren.

He was a charter member of the Evening Star Masonic Lodge #84, Ridgeville; a member of the Western Maryland Consistory #270, and a charter member and Past Worthy Patron of the Leah Chapter #62, Order of the Eastern Star, Ridgeville.

He had a very close relationship with his family, his brothers and sisters and their families - always gathering together on Memorial Day at a picnic at his brother Joe's house in Burnt Hill, celebrating "Friends and Relatives Day" at the church - and in the summer, enjoying the family reunion picnics which were held at Druid Hill Park in Baltimore - and later moving the picnics to his house on Burnt Hill Road, where he moved in 1971 after the farm was sold. The new home was next to the house where he was born and raised.

Each year on the first Saturday in December, we held our annual hog butchering. We would spend all year getting the pigs fat enough to slaughter and when butchering day arrived, family, friends and neighbors would all come to help. The women would prepare a big Thanksgiving day type meal - turkey, ham, chicken, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, baked tomatoes, string beans, lima beans, corn, macaroni and cheese, homemade rolls and pies. Most of the meal was "home grown" on the farm and not "store bought". I remember my brothers helping

to build the fire under the big black kettles and stirring the pudding, grinding up the meat for sausage made with my Grandfather's own special recipe. I also remember cutting up the meat - wrapping pork chops, pig feet, tongue to put in the freezer and hanging the hams in the smokehouse to "cure". I remember coming down to breakfast on a school day and my grandfather and grandmother were sitting at the table eating. My grandfather, as he always did, had cooked breakfast for the 3 of us and left a portion for me on the stove. When I lifted the lids to the skillet, I saw eggs in one and something in the other skillet that I was unfamiliar with. My Grandfather told me that it was pig brains - that they are a "delicacy". I politely declined.

My grandfather also helped others with their butchering - like Mr. Joe Zeigler of Holsey Road in Damascus, who routinely butchered on Thanksgiving Day. Mr. Joe would then turned around and come over and help us on Saturday. Pop Pop butchered hogs every year that we can remember until his death in May 1986 at age 84 of congested heart failure. December of that year, we held our last butchering – ending a life-long tradition. In addition to farming, my grandfather worked for the Souder Construction Company and the Montgomery County Public Schools. He retired in 1976 but continued his own cleaning business, with the help of his grandchildren up until his death. He had contracts with the Bank of Damascus in Clarksburg and St. Anne's Episcopal Church in Damascus. In addition, over the years he did gardening for Miss Sallie Souder and Miss Edwina and Miss Connie Mullinix, assisted at times by his brother Joe, also a Damascus resident, who drove the school bus for Montgomery County Public Schools for many years.

My grandfather was always helping others. He was very proud of the right to vote and promoted and prompted other older blacks in the community to register to vote; often picking them up to take them to register and then taking them to the polling stations on election day to cast their vote. I also remember him co-signing a home mortgage loan for a relative in order to help him enjoy the benefits of home ownership.

He had a strong, calm presence about him and a big warm smile – rarely getting upset - always taking things in stride, even though we knew he didn't like something or didn't agree. Things like sitting in separate waiting rooms at the doctor's office - the colored room – and having to wait until all the white patients had been seen first regardless of the time of your appointment. My brothers and sisters and I all remember the blue plague which hung on the living room wall containing the Bible quote that he practiced, "Do unto Others as You Would Have Them Do unto You. He always told us to treat people the way you want to be treated.

He instilled in us his strong sense of family - although he is gone, along with our grandmother, mother and father - my brothers and sisters and I and our children, continue to support and be there for each other. We continue to gather on Memorial Day, plan and participate in the "Friends and Relatives Day" celebration at the church, picnic in the summer and have dinner together on Christmas - all annual family traditions. We continue his love of the church - serving as Historian and on the Board of Trustees and on various committees in the church.

He taught us to do the very best you can at any task you undertake. As children, young adults and now grown adults, we have tried to do just that - we, the grandchildren and great grandchildren, were all educated in the Montgomery Public School system, some attended college and have or are working career long positions in the Montgomery County Government, the **U.S.** Federal Government, the private sector and the health care field.

Our grandfather left behind a wonderful legacy.