



Chapter One-

Guyasuta Days

This little cosmos of ours celebrated "Guyasuta Days" every summer. Guyasuta was a chieftain from the time of Fort Pitt. His importance was lost on all of us. We knew only that his statue was in front of the bank on 10th St. (we used to joke that he had robbed it.)

Whatever his relative importance in colonial days, we relished these days. The entire town would turn out for a parade, with all of us *ethno-urchins* dressed as Indians.

Mothers would work on our costumes for days. I can remember my mother and aunt working on my sister's and my cousin's outfit - little dresses with the fringes and elaborate designs. They would be sewing hems, pressing. (I guess that told me a lot of where I stood on the pecking order!)

They didn't call their friends on the phone, they would just yell back and forth across the alley or a backyard. There was always much ado, which befuddled me. I just threw on my pants, painted my face, and I was good to go. Perhaps the part came naturally, and perhaps I just was oblivious to the women around me, or both. My sister, my cousin, and their friend took much more care.

So we would finally get it all together and troop down to Main Street (an half block). There we would take our positions. As I sat on the curb, the crowd would swell, then the

parade would begin. Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, the High School Band, fire engines, police cars passed by. My favorite was the military from WWII, and WWI. These were men I knew as the police guard, fathers of the town, grocers, mill workers, shoe repairmen, barbers. I was in awe, thinking of them as defenders of the Western World rather than as ho-hum, work-a-day-world, men of the town.

Why it holds such a warm spot in the recesses of my mind is lost on me. I don't remember fantastic fireworks, elaborate parties or picnics, or the like. Just dressing up, playing Indian, shooting some girls with my toy bow and arrow, and watching the entire town pass by.

Perhaps it was just my penchant for collective mayhem and legal mischief and confusion. Perhaps it was seeing that this motley crew of mill workers and the like were capable of doing great things. Or maybe it was the way all the mothers fussed over the costumes and all the other details, thereby assuring all of us that these women cared about us and could make things happen in our little world. No charges out to a store to buy an outfit. Our mothers and their friend made it all appear. It would happen out of thin air for US! Maybe it was security and protection provided by our fathers and uncles.

Whatever we felt, Guyasuta was a very comfortable day!!

I doubt in my little mind (which didn't grow much!) I ever grasped the pageant played out before me. This mish-mash of people was capable of doing wonderful things, great and small.

The more I think about it, it was an uplifting of a community of disparate peoples celebrating the brief history of their time together, celebrating their community, town, and country. Uplifted into one ridiculous whole.

I don't remember a single friend whose grandfather spoke good English or was born in this country. (Everyone from Pittsburgh is linguistically challenged anyway!) They all talked in a strange gibberish of mixed languages, that we all understood - sort of.

We were a tribe of little Italians, Irish, Polish.....cowboys and Indians whose fathers would protect and feed us, whose mothers would look over us in the little but so important things of the day without complaining how they were sooo busy, blah, blah. They merely MADE things happen.

In retrospect, it was a quiet, soothing feeling for a little wildcat who tormented his sisters and cousins with arrows and guns. What a great feeling to run wild in a place where the great Guyasuta once built his lodge and in a place where these migrants from all over the world came and built their lodges and fostered a pleasant, nurturing environment that could run off a fuel other than money. Sharpsburg ran on people, a determined if motley crew.

