

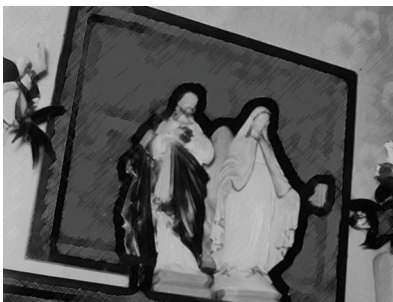
Guyasuta Slept Here

Introduction



I grew up in a little Western Pennsylvania town, Sharpsburg, Pa. - just up the Allegheny River from Pittsburgh. It didn't seem like much then, even less so now. It was only when I wrote this did I realize what a rich community in which I grew up. Sure, I could look in any direction and see a mill of some sort. And the houses were anything but grandiose, but they were genuine **homes**. Fifty years later I now understand that it was a community of families bonded by the strange history of the Irish, Italians, Germans, Polish, Slavs, Hungarians - need I go on? We were the recipients of a strange fathering and mothering. We learned to make the best of things and to work for the things we wanted.

It would seem the most unlikely place to grow up sane. Such is the fickleness of life! Strange places give rise to life. Who would have ever thought Bethlehem or Nazareth would ever produce much beyond a good fig or pomegranate? Who ever realized that Pittsburgh produced much beyond steel, but the list is impressive - H.J.Heinz (from Sharpsburg), Rachel Carson, Bill Mazerowski, Johnny Unitas, Joe Namath, Dan Marino, and Jim Caye.



But this isn't the exciting and captivating story of Jim Caye. It's about the building and working of a community as seen by the young Jim Caye, a youngster seeing this miracle, having been blessed by the age and wisdom(????) and contemplation of late middle age (generous). The stories and scenes herein are true, and the characters real. The names may be whimsical, but they were real characters and genuine.

So, this is more a story of the men and women who formed the glue that held our community together in Post WWII Sharpsburg a glue made of people, not money or belongings.. Sharpsburg really wasn't that much; nothing special. It occupied a long, flat stretch of land between the steep hills and the railroad tracks along the Allegheny River. There were a couple of mills, a lot of churches - mostly Catholic of one ethnicity or another - and a sea of little houses. Most were wooden structures of no architectural value and covered with insulbrick - asbestos covering that looked like fake bricks - they were fake and they looked it. A few brick "estates" were mingled in, and a few stone homes built by the early Germans (not the tardy) long before the rest of us unwashed arrived.

Main Street was a line of inconsequential, locally-owned shops - Italian grocers, an Authenreith's Five and Dime, a couple of funeral homes, the Regina Coeli and the Sons of Italy (the Italian equivalent of the Elks, VFW, etc.). It was a world of adventure for a young boy in the humdrum 50's. There were few restaurants, probably because we were all broke - cash poor as we say now - and because Mamas throughout town would have been offended and crushed if anyone felt the need to eat someone else's food. Shoe stores and shoe repair shops filled in the gaps. There was one movie theater, a couple of bakeries, and a REAL butcher. That's about it, but it was plenty in which 5 or 10 year old could have high adventure. And, oh, what adventures and mischief we had!