

# Kid's KOrner

## The Grasshopper War



**MIRIAM TAYLOR WERT**  
 Juniata Co. Correspondent

*(Author's note: The story of "The Grasshopper War" has been handed down from generation to generation in the area of Port Royal, Juniata County, Pennsylvania. It is of special interest to me because the battle took place either on ground that my family owns or on ground nearby. Although some folks outside our part of the country refer to the story as an Indian legend, natives of our area feel that it actually took place.*

*The friendly Tuscarora Indians who remained in the Licking Creek-Tuscarora Creek area when white people settled here told the story as fact, though they used no names and had no written record. As I read the various sketchy accounts and heard them from older local residents, the characters of Wani and Tuksit seemed to come alive for me, and I wanted to write their story.)*

Many moons ago two Indian tribes lived in peace near the mouth of the Licking Creek. A village of the Delawares was on one side of the creek, and a village of the Tuscaroras was on the other side.

These tribes had been friends

for years. They hunted on the same grounds, sat together around council fires, shared the pipe of peace, and danced the green corn dance together beneath the light of the big, yellow harvest moon. The children of the tribes played together.

Wani was an eight-year-old Delaware boy. He liked to play games with the Tuscaroras and he especially liked to challenge his friend Tuksit in contests of skill and strength. Many times these boys had crossed back and forth over the Licking Creek to spend the day fishing or playing together.

A certain summer day in the early 1700s began as any other peaceful, lazy day. But one small incident took place that would change the lives of the Indians of both tribes. Friends would become enemies, and the peace pipe would no longer be shared.

It began when Wani found the biggest grasshopper he had ever seen. He watched it jump so far that his big black eyes nearly popped from his head! He wanted to keep it as his own, but how? Wani said to himself, "I know, I'll make a leather pouch out of deerskin and punch holes in it so the grasshopper can breathe. Then I'll

close it at the top with a drawstring so it can't jump out."

Wani made the pouch and caught the grasshopper. He cared for it and watched it grow bigger and stronger each day.

Finally one day he got in the canoe and went to visit Tuksit to show him the grasshopper and pouch. He bragged about how far the grasshopper could jump.

This was too much for the Tuscarora boy. "Your grasshopper isn't so great," he said. "I'll find one that'll beat it."

Wani replied, "No, you'll never find a better one. You can try, but it won't beat mine."

"I'll have a better one by sundown today," bragged Tuksit. "You come over again tomorrow and you'll see."

Wani and Tuksit agreed to meet on the Tuscarora side of the Licking Creek the next day to have a jumping contest between the grasshoppers. They decided that the one with the winning jumper would be the "biggest brave."

On the day of the contest, Wani went across the rippling creek in his canoe, his grasshopper tucked carefully in its little pouch. Before the contest began, the boys marked a starting line by scraping a sharp stick along the soft ground. When a grasshopper jumped, they would mark the place where it landed. Then the other would jump, and that landing spot would be marked also. The distance was to be measured with a leather thong — a strip of leather made from deer hide.

Wani's grasshopper jumped first. Oh, it was a long jump, and Wani was proud! Nothing could beat that jump, he was sure. But then Tuksit's grasshopper jumped, and the measurement showed that it had made a longer jump. Now Tuksit was the proud one!

In their excitement the boys forgot to place the grasshoppers back in their pouches. Now there were two grasshoppers jumping all over the place with two excited Indian boys trying to catch them. Wani caught one and started to place it in his pouch, but Tuksit shouted

that it was the wrong one. He accused Wani of trying to steal his grasshopper because it had won the jump. Suddenly a fist-fight broke out between the boys, with much shouting and accusing. They got so loud that the women came from the village to see what was happening.

When Tuksit shouted that the other boy had tried to steal his grasshopper, the women started in on Wani, who then called across the creek to his mother for help. Soon women came over in canoes, and the battle increased. By this time, some of the young Indian braves had returned from hunting, and they joined the fracas.

By evening, the older men had joined the battle, and for days the fierce struggle continued. Hun-

dreds of warriors, women and children fell beneath the tomahawks and arrows. No one knows what happened to Wani and Tuksit since there is no written history from the Indians. We must assume that these two friends also fell in the battle.

When white settlers came to the Licking Creek area in about 1762, friendly Indians pointed out the battleground site to them. Over time, the settlers found many relics, such as arrowheads and tomahawks, in the spot where the Grasshopper War was said to have occurred. The sachems (wise leaders) of the local Indian tribe held up this battle as a warning to any tribe about to engage in a useless war.

## Teach Farm Kids About Dangers Around Them

The following entreaty, reprinted from *Farm Safety 4 Just Kids*, was written by Laura Klevner, age 10 of Independence, Iowa, and won the 1993 Grades 4-6 Division of the Iowa FmHA Essay Contest.

Kids, share it with your parents as a way to talk about safety on your farm. What chores do you think you're old enough to do that Mom or Dad don't? Talk about it.

Laura asks her family. "Please remember to give me a hazard free '93." Her essay can help remind your family to talk about safety issues for a hazard free '94.

### Please Remember

Please remember that although I love to ride in the tractor with you, my little fingers can't hang onto the fenders very well as the tractor bounces here and there, and that I could very easily fall, and be crushed under those big tires.

Please remember that I find it fascinating to watch the PTO spin around, and around as you grind feed, but that my chore clothes quickly get caught as I lean for-

ward to watch and I'd never be strong enough to pull myself back in time.

Please remember that I love to pet all our cute and cuddly farm animals, but I forget that on hot summer days the animals don't like to be bothered. The mommy and daddy animals could get angry with me and my little legs aren't fast enough for me to get away from them.

Please remember that even though I'm tall and strong enough to mow the lawn, I'm not used to that big sharp blade, and that I don't understand that in the blink of an eye it could seriously cut my foot. I need to be reminded to wear shoes, keep my feet away from the cutting parts and never mow grass that is wet and slippery.

Please remember that even though I beg you to ride on top of the grain wagons or climb up on the grain bins, I could easily be sucked down into an open pocket, and be unable to breathe, maybe never again. Please remember to give me a "Hazard Free '94."

