



Brummett Echohawk: Pawnee Thunderbird and Artist by Kristin M. Youngbull.

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The service of Native Americans in the US military dates back to the Revolutionary War. Fighting for diverse reasons that reflect their complex tribal cultures and traditions as well as personal motives, Native American soldiers and sailors have compiled a formidable record of service both on and off the battlefield. In *Brummett Echohawk*, Kristin Youngbull (Utah Valley Univ.) recounts a Pawnee veteran's service in the Army during World War II. Her goal is to discover his reasons for risking his life defending a nation that for nearly two centuries sought to destroy tribal communities and cultures like his own.

Born in Pawnee, Oklahoma, in 1922, Brummett T. Echohawk grew up in a family with a long tradition of military service. His paternal grandfather had been a Pawnee Scout in the 1870s and his father was a World War I veteran. As a boy, Echohawk attended the Pawnee Agency government boarding school. Like the more famous Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania (which his father had attended), the school in Pawnee combined a vocational curriculum with military-style regimentation. Graduates of such schools made ideal recruits for the US military. In 1939, Echohawk enlisted in the Oklahoma National Guard for the social and economic opportunities it offered as well as a chance to emulate his father and grandfather. A year later, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8530, mobilizing National Guard units in the southwest into the Army's Forty-Fifth "Thunderbird" Infantry Division.

Like many Native American servicemen, Echohawk was eager to prove his patriotism and his worth as a soldier, one of the *Chaticks-Si-Chaticks* (men of men). This dual, Indian-American, allegiance allowed him to "contextualize military service as a means to defend both traditional values and tribal lands, and particular American ideals and security" (42). Years after the war, Echohawk commented that his father, grandfather, and all the past Pawnee warriors had inspired him to join the military. His two brothers also fought in the Second World War—one in the Army Air Corps, the other in the Navy. Pawnee elders encouraged their young men to become warriors and defend their families, tribe, and homeland. The youth grew up with stories of the martial prowess of their ancestors; some were inspired to prove their own courage and willingness to sacrifice. Among the Pawnees, warriors enjoyed a high social status. Decorated veterans might even be admitted to elite warrior societies and have songs written about them.

Military service enabled young Indian men to travel and broaden their outlook on life. For many enlistees, the trip to boot camp was the first time they had left their home state. With the highest proportion of Indian soldiers of any division in the army, the Forty-Fifth provided a unique chance for Indian troops to serve alongside men from other tribes. Echohawk, for instance, served with Cheyennes, Comanches, and Navajos and learned about their lives in other parts of the country. Military service in World War II, consequently, fostered a nascent Pan-Indianism that flourished in the post-war era.

In July 1943, the Forty-Fifth took part in Operation Husky—a daring amphibious assault on Sicily. Echohawk landed with the first wave of troops. By now a sergeant, he spent a good deal of time on pa-

trol and leading excursions behind enemy lines. Officers often gave Native Americans such dangerous assignments because of their perceived courage and skills as combatants. Popular stereotypes of Indians as naturally warlike, fearless, stealthy, and gifted with keen hearing, eyesight, and sense of direction gave them high standing in the eyes of their comrades, but also led to markedly elevated casualty rates in their ranks.

During his time in the army, Echohawk suffered several wounds as well as concussions that permanently impaired his hearing. But he never refused to conduct perilous missions, for fear of dishonoring himself and his people and undermining superior officers' good opinion of Indian troops. Echohawk believed Native Americans could accomplish more than non-Indian soldiers. Their cultural traditions helped them work together successfully and maintain high morale, while their tribal languages provided a means to keep vital information from the enemy. "We took pride in being asked to be first," Echohawk recalled after the war. "It was like being the best ball carrier on a football team. We always got the call" (87).

Shortly after the Sicily campaign, the Forty-Fifth took part in Operation Avalanche—the allied invasion of Italy. In fighting against German soldiers defending Salerno, the Allies' casualties mounted as the enemy attacked, retreated, then counterattacked. The German people had a longstanding affinity and admiration for Native Americans and their fighting abilities. Upon learning that they were facing the famed Thunderbird Division, some German soldiers reportedly panicked, fearing they would be scalped and tortured.

Echohawk was discharged from the Army in August 1945 after participating in countless battles and skirmishes for two years. His meritorious service earned him a Bronze Star, Combat Infantry Badge, Army Commendation Medal, four battle stars, two Invasion Arrowheads, and a Purple Heart with oak-leaf clusters. In accordance with Pawnee tradition, Echohawk and two other Thunderbirds were honored as warriors, while the Ah-roos-pakoo-tah Pawnee Warrior Society ceremonially bestowed new names upon them. By all measures, Echohawk had achieved his goal of joining the *Chaticks-Si-Chaticks*. Thereafter, Pawnee veterans of World War II, the Korean War, the war in Vietnam, and other conflicts attended annual homecoming Powwows and parades each Fourth of July to commemorate Pawnees who had fought and died for their tribe and their nation.

His service with the US Army in Italy allowed Brummett Echohawk to realize his childhood dreams of becoming a warrior admired by his fellow Pawnees. He returned home with a new sense of accomplishment and direction. In his postwar life, he became a successful artist, cartoonist, author, and speaker. He painted, sketched, and spoke about what it meant to be Pawnee and to preserve traditional values in a modern world.

The first half of the book, on Pawnee military history and Echohawk's service in World War II, provides a particularly good introduction to the subject of Native Americans in the US military. The second half concentrates on Echohawk's postwar careers. I commend the author for her meticulous research, including extensive interviews with Echohawk's family, fellow soldiers, and commanding officers. She also consulted Echohawk's personal papers, relevant government documents, and secondary sources. Eight color plates of Echohawk paintings and a few examples of his cartoons enrich the narrative in the book's second half. Kristin Youngbull has written an exemplary biography highlighting one man's reliance on his Pawnee identity in the bloody battlefields of World War II and during his distinguished peacetime career after the war.