



Brummett Echohawk: Pawnee Thunderbird and Artist

Dr. Kristin M. Youngbull Ph.D.

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A true American hero who earned a Purple Heart, a Bronze Star, and a Congressional Gold Medal, Brummett Echohawk was also a Pawnee on the European battlefields of World War II. He used the Pawnee language and counted coup as his grandfather had done during the Indian wars of the previous century. This first book-length biography depicts Echohawk as a soldier, painter, writer, humorist, and actor profoundly shaped by his Pawnee heritage and a man who refused to be pigeonholed as an “Indian artist.”

Through his formative war service in the 45th Infantry Division (known as the Thunderbirds), Echohawk strove to prove himself both a patriot and a true Pawnee warrior. Pawnee history, culture, and spiritual belief inspired his courageous conduct and bolstered his confidence that he would return home. Echohawk’s career as an artist began with combat sketches published under such titles as “Death Shares a Ditch at Bloody Anzio.” His portraits of Allied and enemy soldiers, some of which appeared in the *Detroit Free Press* in 1944, included drawings of men from all over the world, among them British infantrymen, Gurkhas, and a Japanese American soldier.

After the war, without relying on the GI Bill, Echohawk studied at the Art Institute of Chicago for three years. His persistence paid off, leading to work as a staff artist for several Chicago newspapers. Echohawk was also a humorist whose prodigious output includes published cartoons and several parodies of famous paintings, such as a Mona Lisa wearing a headband, turquoise ring, and beaded necklace.

Featuring eight of Echohawk’s paintings in full color, this thoroughly researched biography shows how one unusual man succeeded in American Indian and mainstream cultures. World War II aficionados will marvel at Echohawk’s military feats, and American art enthusiasts will appreciate a body of work characterized by deep historical research, an eye for beauty, and a unique ability to capture tribal humor.

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