

Ballad of Ira Hayes  
By: Peter La Farge

Ira Hayes. Ira Hayes.

Call him drunken Ira Hayes,  
He won't answer anymore:  
Not the whiskey drinkin' Indian,  
Nor the marine that went to war.

Gather 'round me people:  
There's a story I would tell  
About a brave young Indian  
You should remember well  
From the land of the Pima Indians,  
A proud and noble band,  
Who farmed the Phoenix Valley  
In Arizona land.

Down their ditches for a thousand years  
The waters grew Ira's people's crops  
Till the white man stole their water rights  
And the sparklin' water stopped.  
Now Ira's folks grew hungry  
And their land grew crops of weeds.  
When war came, Ira volunteered  
And forgot the white man's greed.

Call him drunken Ira Hayes,  
He won't answer anymore:  
Not the whiskey drinkin' Indian,  
Nor the marine that went to war.

Well, they battled up Iwo Jima Hill,  
Two-hundred-and-fifty men,  
But only twenty-seven lived  
To walk back down again.  
When the fight was over  
And Old Glory raised,  
Among the men who held it high  
Was the Indian Ira Hayes.

Call him drunken Ira Hayes,  
He won't answer anymore:  
Not the whiskey drinkin' Indian,  
Nor the marine that went to war.

Ira Hayes returned a hero,  
Celebrated through the land;  
He was wined and speched and honored;  
Everybody shook his hand.  
But he was just a Pima Indian:  
No water, no home, no chance.  
At home, nobody cared what Ira done,  
And when do the Indians dance?

Call him drunken Ira Hayes,  
He won't answer anymore:  
Not the whiskey drinkin' Indian,  
Nor the marine that went to war.

Then Ira started drinkin' hard;  
Jail was often his home.  
They let him raise the flag and lower it  
Like you'd throw a dog a bone.  
He died drunk early one morning,  
Alone in the land he'd fought to save.

Two inches of water in a lonely ditch  
Was a grave for Ira Hayes.

Call him drunken Ira Hayes,  
He won't answer anymore:  
Not the whiskey drinkin' Indian,  
Nor the marine that went to war.

Yea, call him drunken Ira Hayes,  
But his land is just as dry,  
And his ghost is lying thirsty  
In the ditch where Ira died.