

The Ballad of Ira Hayes

Kris Kristofferson

Ira Hayes...
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Call him drunken Ira Hayes,
He won't answer anymore,
Not the whiskey drinking Indian,
Or the marine that went to war. Gather 'round me people,
There's a story I would tell,
'Bout a brave young Indian,
You should remember well.
From the land of the Pima Indian,
A proud and noble band,
Who farmed the Phoenix Valley,
In Arizona land.
Down the ditches a thousand years,
The waters grew Ira's peoples' crops,
'Til the white man stole their water rights,
And the sparkling water stopped.
Now, Ira's folks were 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 drinking Indian,
Or the marine that went to war. There they battled up Iwo Jima hill,
Two hundred and fifty men,
But only twenty-seven lived,
To walk back down again.
And 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 drinking Indian,
Or the marine that went to war. Ira Hayes returned a hero,
Celebrated through the land,
He was wined and speeched 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'd done,
And when did the Indians dance.Call him drunken Ira Hayes,
He won't answer anymore,
Not the whiskey drinking Indian,
Or the marine that went to war.Then Ira started drinking 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 fought to save,
Two inches of water and a lonely ditch,
Was a grave for Ira Hayes.Call him drunken Ira Hayes,
He won't answer anymore,
Not the whiskey drinking Indian,
Or the marine that went to war.Yeah, call him drunken Ira Hayes,
But his land is just as dry,
And his ghost is lying thirsty,
In the ditch where Ira died.

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