

JOE HILL: A TALENTED MAN WITH AN INTERESTING LIFE

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For years in my travels through White Lake, I have been fascinated by the statue warrior of an Indian warrior with hands and face raised to heaven. I was sure it held a particular significance to its owner Joe Hill, a Native American. Last week I stopped to talk to Joe and found him to be, like his statue, fascinating and interesting.

Born December 18, 1920 I to Joe and Grace Hill, they moved to Raquette Lake when he was three weeks old. They moved to Troy, NY, while he was still very young and he attended Hillside School. He was in the choir and played all of the usual sports of the day.

By the time Joe was 17, he had visited all 48 states; much of the time as a performer with White Shows. Professionally, Joe was known as "Kid Chico - Famous Fire and Glass Walker."

Enlisting in the regular Army in 1940, Joe was stationed at Madison Barracks in Sackets Harbor. One of the oldest military bases, it was the country's first military hospital. Joe is proud to say he still has his 1940 Thanksgiving Day menu.

The Queen Mary transported him to England and he ultimately saw action in Africa, Sicily, France and Germany. Joe served 5th Artillery and as a member of the Ranger Force. At the war's conclusion, he was a guard at the Nuremberg trials. Joe earned 11 campaign ribbons and the Good Conduct Medal and there's a twinkle in his eye when he speaks of the medal.

His commanding officer overlooked an incident that could have precluded the Good Conduct Medal had it been reported. It seems that a group of boys decided to relieve the tedium of the war with an escapade that ended with a swim in a wine vat. The captain was so mad he told them, "I would court martial all of you sons of bitches if we didn't need you for another push."

Joe is a retired ironworker, Local 440. His talents also lend themselves to sculpture and woodcarving, with the statue in his yard a prime example. It cost \$11,500 to have it bronzed in Italy. It depicts a traditional Native American warrior giving thanks for each new day to Mother Earth and the rising sun.

A spiritual leader who is recognized by the League of the Five Nations and the State of New York, Joe declares, "I am an activist." He works whenever he, is needed on behalf of Native American causes.

Joe made it clear that he stands steadfast with the traditionalists in the ongoing controversy between them and the faction so often favored by the State.

Regardless of their respective political views, it's evident that Joe is a tireless advocate of furthering the causes and welfare of all Native Americans.

One request he made to me was that I mention his regard and respect for the late Jake Berkowitz. Joe is not alone in that regard, and it is a pleasure to accommodate him.

I found Joe to be a most hospitable and charitable man, as one would expect from a spiritual leader. All of the members of the League of Five Nations can be proud of him.