



PROGRAM

"A Lifetime of Service"

*Hilary J. Waukau, Sr.
Recognition and Dedication Ceremony*

October 28, 1994

"A Life Time of Service"

Hilary John "Sparky" Waukau, Sr. was born on October 13, 1922 in Neopit, Wisconsin. He is the son of Mitchell Waukau and Susan Wilber. Life was hard on the reservation and like many Menominee people in those days, Sparky was delivered by a mid-wife because there were no doctors available. In this case the mid-wife happen to be his grandmother.

He acquired the nickname, "Sparky" at an early age from his mother who said he was like a character in an old newspaper comic strip that featured a stubborn old horse by the name of "Sparkplug". The name was later shortened to "Sparky".

Except for the years spent in military service, Sparky lived his entire life on the Menominee Reservation. He grew up during the depression era and says "those years prepared me for life, it made those of us who grew up at that time, strong and prepared us to face hardships".

In 1936, Sparky graduated from St. Anthony's Grade School in Neopit and in 1940 he was one of eight graduates from St. Joseph's High School in Keshena.

During High School he was captain of the football team; he also played baseball, basketball and was on the school boxing team. Of his sports involvement and of his teammates he says, "all we did was change suits each season with the changing sport because all the same guys participated".

He proved himself to be a fighter in those early school days. Boxing turned out to be the sport they were the best in says Sparky. "We were one of the best in the state".

While he was in high school playing football, Sparky received an eye injury that damaged his peripheral vision. Such an injury could have prevented him from performing military service. However, the stubborn and resourceful Sparky, got his hands on the vision test chart used by the Marines optometrist and he memorized the chart. As a result of memorizing that chart, Sparky

passed the required vision test and in 1942 he was one of eight Menominee men who was accepted into the United States Marine Corps.

As a U.S. Marine, he served in World War II from 1942 to 1945. His recounts of his military days and experiences are many. He landed with his comrades on the shores of Okinawa, Saipan, Tinian and Terawa. Because of a miscalculation by the ships crew, upon landing, he had to walk 600 yards to shore under hostile fire at Terawa. Men who had been killed by gun fire, floated in the water as he walked by or they hung from the barbed wire and barricades. It was only by "the luck of the draw" he says, that he was not one of the wartime casualties.

He was among the first American troops to witness the devastation of the atomic bomb near Nagasauki, Japan. It is with great remorse that Sparky describes his experience. "I saw people dying from radiation sickness and I realized the frailty of human life", he said. The memories would be with him for the rest of his life.

Sparky survived the war and returned home in 1945 with a rank of Marine Sergeant. In June of 1946, he married his wife Edith. She and Sparky had seven daughters and five sons.

Aside from a short 90 day recall during the Korean Conflict, his military life came to an end with an honorable discharge in 1950.

During the 50's, Sparky was a member of the Menominee Advisory Council and was often appointed as one of the Washington D.C. delegates.

At the same time, he was also employed with the Menominee Indian Mills. He monitored and maintained the telephone lines that connected the four Look-Out towers on the Menominee Reservation to the Fire Department. In those days, the Look-Out tower telephones had a crank that had to be turned for power and the telephone wires were strung through the forest and hung to any tree that was convenient. It was Sparky's job to follow the wire for miles through the forest to each tower and make certain each telephone was working. Sparky never fails to remember and mention the many devoted

Menominee men who taught him respect and love for the Menominee Forest. "Alex Waupoose, Leo Warrington, Allen Heath, Hank Martin, Ned Lawe, Sanford Fowler and James Martin were among the people whose hearts were broken if any amount of forest was lost to fire", said Sparky.

It was during this time that he realized the value of his beloved Menominee Reservation and would devote even more of his life to the continued existence of the Menominee land, water and forests. "I recognized the sanctity and greatness of our forests and I was conscious of how fragile the environment was", says Sparky.

When he was 39 years old he acquired an AA Degree in Electronics from Northcentral Technical Institute. "I never enjoyed school as a young person", said Sparky. He claims never to have gotten good grades back then. However, when Sparky graduated from Northcentral Technical Institute in 1961, he was voted outstanding student of the year.

During the Menominee Tribes years of termination he was a member of the

Menominee Enterprises, Inc. Voting Trust Board from 1961 to 1971. At the same time, he was also a member of the Menominee County Board of supervisors, from 1965 to 1972.

He worked as an Electrician and telephone supervisor at Menominee Tribal Enterprises for eleven years.

He was a Menominee Tribal Judge from 1979 to 1981 and he was the County/Town Administrator for Menominee County from 1973 until he retired on January 1, 1986.

Retirement meant nothing to Sparky, who was dedicated to his Menominee Reservation and the Menominee People; in 1987 he Chaired, the Menominee Tribal Legislature's, Environmental Impacts Committee and for the next seven years would serve the Menominees as an officer and member of the Menominee Tribal Legislature.

During those years as a Menominee Tribal Legislator, Sparky was member

and Vice Chair of the Policy Advisory Council for the State of Wisconsin's Radio Active Waste Review Board in 1987. (2nd Term)

In 1988 he was the Area Vice President of the National Congress of American Indians, serving his second term.

Hilary "Sparky" Waukau, Sr. has been a teacher to many young Menominees, including young Menominee leaders. "I believe that as we pass the torch to our young leaders, we must share with them our wisdom, we must guide them and encourage them, that's how we groom strong tribal leadership", says Sparky. "He has been a great influence in my life as a leader", says Menominee Tribal Chairman, Glen Miller. "He has been my mentor and my role model".

In all of his years of service to Native American Citizens on the Menominee Reservation, throughout Wisconsin and across the nation, Hilary "Sparky" Waukau, Sr. never lost site of his goal to protect the environment. He is an outspoken advocate of the sovereign rights of Native Americans..."When I

truly believe in my heart, I will speak, I feel such gratitude to my elders for their wisdom, guidance and encouragement". "One of my greatest accomplishments in my life was being a part of the team that stopped the proposed nuclear dump-site in Wisconsin." "My new goal is to stop the Exxon Mine", says Sparky. "We must never stop fighting for a clean environment." "We must never stop fighting to protect and preserve nature."

Sparky is proud to be the present Keeper of the Eleven Tribes of Wisconsin - Environmental Feather Flag.

Today, October 28, 1994, we honor Hilary J. "Sparky" Waukau, Sr. for his lifetime of service.