



The Navajo Nation Council - Office of the Speaker

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bikers rolling through northern Arizona making way to Window Rock ceremony Thursday evening

Honoring veterans and Gold Star Moms with stops in Kayenta, Shiprock and Lukachukai

KAYENTA, Ariz. — The Navajo-Hopi Honor Riders are rolling through northern Arizona and will be making their way to a welcoming ceremony at 5 p.m. today at the Navajo Nation Veterans' Park in Window Rock, Ariz.

Bikers honoring fallen soldiers from the Navajo and Hopi nations were joined by cross-country bound Operation Carry the Flame and Rolling Thunder Inc. Wednesday and will be making stops in Kayenta, Shiprock, N.M., Lukachukai, Ariz. and Window Rock today.

Council Delegate Roy Laughter (Chilchinbeto/Kayenta) said, "It's an honor for us to do this for our fallen veterans. Lots of families are joyous, especially the ones who had loved ones who came home."

The group arrived at Council Delegate Dave Shondee's ranch late Wednesday afternoon for several hours of eating, relaxation, camaraderie, and song and dance.

"I'm very proud of the veterans showing up," Shondee said. "It's very important. It's a healing process for us. This is something that we all share, especially with the Vietnam Veterans. We share it with the Iraq War veterans — we have a lot in common. For us to get together like this is a way to see tomorrow and beyond as we try to restructure our lives."

King Cavalier led a pack of motorcyclists from Barstow, Calif. earlier in the week and joined the Sixth Annual Navajo-Hopi Honor Riders at the Piestewa family home in Flagstaff, Ariz. Tuesday evening. Percy Piestewa, a Gold Star Mother, lost her daughter, Lori, in March 2003. She was the first female soldier to be killed in action in the Iraq War.

"On Memorial Day, we remember the fallen soldiers. It is important, especially if it hits you at home — meaning in your heart — if it was because one of your loved ones had passed on, it's a very special honor," Cavalier explained.

Cavalier also said that, "the hospitality here on Navajoland surprises me every year, I'm just so glad to come back to see old friends and to make new ones."

"We learn how to honor the warriors in a way that most of America needs to learn over again. It's a recharge of the spirit for us every year we come down here," Cavalier added. "What the Gold Star Mothers had to endure is significant — it's beyond the sacrifice that an American family should have to make."

Cavalier and his group have joined the Navajo-Hopi Honor Riders and the motorcade of bikes will arrive in Shiprock, N.M. at 12:30 p.m. today for a ceremony, they will then move on to Lukachukai.

The group will then roll out to Window Rock for a 5 p.m. ceremony at the Navajo Nation Veteran's Memorial Park. The ceremony is sponsored by the Navajo Nation Speaker's Office and will honor Gold Star Mothers and veterans. The group will then proceed to the Navajo Nation Fairgrounds for the KTNN Drums of Summer and Social Pow Wow.

Several members of the Navajo-Hopi Honor Riders will then move on to stops in Crownpoint and Cuba, N.M., over the next couple of days. Then other bikers will continue with the Operation Carry the Flame and Rolling Thunder Inc. on a trek across the Heartland to Washington D.C. for a Memorial Day demonstration next Sunday.



Navajo-Hopi Honor Riders are rolling through northern Arizona and will stop in Window Rock, Ariz. for a welcoming ceremony today, May 15. In bottom photo, a symbol of Lori Piestewa adorns a motorcycle. (Photos by Bronson Peshlakai)