



President Shelly orders flags at half-staff in honor of Sidney Bedoni



WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.—The Navajo Nation is in mourning.

On June 8, the Navajo Nation lost another American hero when Sidney Bedoni, a former Navajo Code Talker, passed at the age of 91 due to complications from influenza and pneumonia.

Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly ordered flags at half-staff in his honor from sunrise on June 10 through sunset on June 13.

“The Navajo Nation is greatly saddened by the loss of another warrior. Our

Navajo Code Talkers are not only living treasures for our Nation, but for the U.S. as well,” President Shelly said. “We must do more to recognize their sacrifices in the name of freedom.”

He noted that Bedoni was one of many Navajo men that didn’t hesitate to volunteer for service when the U.S. entered into World War II.

At age 16, Bedoni hitchhiked more than 80 miles to enlist in the U.S. Marine Corps to serve as a Navajo Code Talker. During that time, he was

attending boarding school in Tuba City, Ariz. when the recruiters came calling.

Bedoni’s grandson, Eric Mantanona, grew up listening to his grandfather’s stories about defeating the enemy through the Navajo language. He was familiar with the story.

“(The recruiters) handed him a form for his father to sign. He hitchhiked from Tuba City to Navajo Mountain to get permission to serve his country,” Mantanona said.

After enlisting for service, Bedoni served in the 2nd, 4th, and 5th Marine Divisions during World War II.

He fought in the Battles of Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, Bougainville, Tinian, Guam, Hawaiian Islands, Saipan, Japan, Solomon Islands, Vella Lavella Island, New Caledonia, and Okinawa.

His service to the Navajo Nation did not stop there, however.

After receiving an honorable discharge from the U.S. Marine Corps on Jan. 18, 1946, Bedoni enlisted with the U.S. Army on April 21, 1948 and would serve through Oct. 23, 1952.

During his service with the U.S. Army, he again found himself in combat, this time on the icy battlefields of the Korean Conflict.

“While serving in the Marines, my grandfather’s rank was Private First Class. In 1988, he was promoted to Sergeant Major for outstanding service,” Mantanona said. “He also was a civil service employee at the Navajo Army Depot in Belmont, Ariz. for 35 years.”

Bedoni was a recipient of the Silver Congressional Medal of Honor, Korean Service Medal, Army of Occupation Medal, and Good Conduct Medal.

He was also the last surviving Navajo Code Talker paratrooper and served in the 1st Parachute Regiment.

Bedoni leaves behind his wife Lena, four children, seven grandchildren, and 11 great-grandchildren.

Funeral services will take place on June 16 at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in Winslow, Ariz. at 11 a.m. Bedoni will be buried at the Arizona National Cemetery in Cave Creek.