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President Shelly Orders Flags at Half-staff in Honor of Fallen Code Talker

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – President Ben Shelly is ordering the Navajo Nation flag to be flown at half-staff starting Tuesday, Dec. 26 through Dec. 30, 2011, in honor of the passing of Navajo Code Talker Billy Crosby, 85, who passed away Wednesday.

“It saddens my heart to see another Code Talker pass away. I think about the Code Talkers everyday and pray for them. The Navajo Nation has lost another hero and the Navajo Nation mourns the loss of Billy Crosby. Our prayers, condolences, and support go out to the Crosby family,” said President Shelly.

According to the Code Talkers Foundation, less than 70 Code Talkers are still living out of 420 who completed the Special Navajo Program, the course that taught the Navajo code. In addition, Crosby is the sixth Code Talker to pass away this year.

Crosby was born near Many Farms on July 15, 1926. He went to school at Saint Michael Indian School in St. Michaels, Ariz. He completed a five-year course of study by the time he was 16 years old.

Though he told the U.S. Marines he was 17 years old, Billy was 16 years old when he was drafted. He served in World War II in the Pacific Theater as a Code Talker Message Center Man from July 9, 1945 to Aug. 10, 1946. He was part of battles and expeditions in Japan during his enlistment.

He was honorably discharged as a Corporal from the 1st Separation Company, MCB, in San Diego, Calif. On Jan. 14, 1946.

On April 27, 1946, he was awarded the Good Conduct Medal and in 2002 he received a Silver Medallion from President George W. Bush.

After his left the military, he met Christine Thompson and married her on Nov. 18, 1948. Together, the couple would have 10 children with the first being born in 1951.

Throughout his post military life, he worked in Nevada as a railroad worker, in Colorado as a ranch hand. His working career also included being a custodian at Chinle Boarding School and Lukachukai Boarding School.

All the while, he stood close to his Navajo traditional teachings by attending ceremonies. He also liked to herd sheep and play Navajo 10.

After he retired from Chinle Boarding School, he volunteered at Many Farms Head Start where he helped teach the children Navajo and Navajo culture. In addition, he volunteered with the Foster Grandparent program.

“Mr. Crosby never stopped giving back to his community. He was a model for his people well beyond his service to his country and people,” President Shelly said.

Crosby is preceded in death by his parents Billy Sam and Nellie Crosby; his brother, Edward Crosby; son, Marshall Crosby.

He is survived by his wife, Christine Crosby; children, Helen Tsinnajinnie, Evelyn Crosby, Charlene Iyua, Michael Crosby, Jerry Crosby, Geraldine Crosby, Evalina Crosby, Earlene Begay, and Lisa Iyua.

He is also survived by 33 grandchildren, 43 great-grandchildren, and one great-great-grandchild.

Funeral services are scheduled for Tuesday, Dec. 27 at the Lady of Fatima Church in Chinle, Ariz. The viewing of the body starts at 9 a.m. and funeral services are set to start at 10 a.m. Mr. Crosby will be buried at the Chinle Community Cemetery.

For donations, please contact Jeri Crosby at (480) 319-4776 or by email at jeri.crosby@msn.com.

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