



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT  
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## **Navajo President Ben Shelly orders flags to be flown at half-staff in honor of the late Navajo Code Talker Joe Antonio Silversmith**

**Window Rock, AZ**—For the second time this year, President Ben Shelly has ordered Navajo Nation flags to be flown at half-staff from March 2 to March 5 in honor of the late Navajo Code Talker Joe Antonio Silversmith, he was 86. Silversmith, a Marine Corporal, passed away at his home in Coolidge, New Mexico on Monday, February 28, 2011.

“Our Nation is deeply saddened to hear of Marine Corporal Silversmith’s passing, another brave warrior lost in such a short time apart from Johnny Alfred back in February,” said President Shelly. “I urge all Navajo citizens to embrace all our Code Talkers wherever they might be and tell them how much we value their distinguished service and for establishing our Navajo language in world history.”

Cpl. Silversmith is survived by his wife Ramona B. Silversmith and their two daughters, Raedean Silversmith-Yazzie and her husband Navajo Council Delegate Edmund Yazzie, Candace F. Silversmith and six grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents Antonia and Yahatah Silversmith; brothers Andy Newman and John Antonio; sisters Ada Henio, Agnus Henio and Dorothy Percy; and a third daughter Karen Silversmith.



According to his daughter Raedean, Cpl. Silversmith was born on September 21, 1924, at Rehoboth Mission Hospital and later attended Rehoboth Christian School up to the eighth grade. He was about 18, when he joined the 297 Marine Platoon and served in the South Pacific Islands of Guam, Bougainville, Okinawa, Northern Solomon Islands, Marianas Islands and Ryukyu Islands from March 1943 to 1946.

In 2001, Cpl. Silversmith received the Silver Congressional Medal of Honor for serving in World War II, in the second group of Marines to be trained as a Navajo Code Talker. He was also an active member of the Navajo Nation Code Talkers Association.

Mrs. Silversmith remembers her husband as a committed minister and loved animals, “After he returned from the war, he worked at Gallup Sand and Gravel then moved on to become a full-time minister at Whitewater Bible Church and the Thoreau Community Bible Church. He loved working with the community, horses, herding sheep and playing the harmonica.”

Council Delegate Yazzie and wife Raedean both stated he will be greatly missed, “Joe was a man with strong courage, a role model of what a Navajo man should be like and he’s one of our heroes. He was always telling us to believe in our goals and in ourselves, and be proud of who we are, where we come from and to take great care of our Navajo land.”

Funeral services are scheduled for Saturday at Thoreau Baptist Church in Thoreau, NM.