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President Ben Shelly Commemorates the Life of Code Talker George Smith

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly commemorates the life of Navajo Code Talker George Smith, 90, who passed away Tuesday at Gallup Indian Medical Center.

As a tribute to Code Talker Smith's service, President Shelly has ordered the Navajo Nation Flag to be flown at half-staff from Wednesday, Oct. 31 through sundown Nov. 4.

"This news has saddened me. Our Navajo Code Talkers have been real life heroes to generations of Navajo people. They have brought pride to our Navajo people in so many ways. The Nation's prayers and thoughts are with the family at this time as they mourn the passing of a great family man who served his country and protected his people," President Shelly said.

Code Talker Smith was born on June 15, 1922 in Mariano Lake, New Mex. He attended school at Crownpoint, Fort Wingate and eventually earned his diesel mechanic credentials in Chicago, Ill.

Code Talker Smith enlisted with the U.S. Marines in 1943 and was trained as Navajo Code Talker. He achieved the rank of Corporal while serving in World War II in the Pacific Theater. He fought in battles at Siapan, Tinian, Ryukyu Islands and served in places such as Okinawa, Hawa'ii and Japan.



George Smith
(Navajo Times photo/ Paul Natonabah)

He served as a Code Talker with his brother Albert Smith.

After serving his country, he began work at Fort Wingate Army Depot as destroyer of old ammunition. He then began work as a mechanic at Fort Wingate Trading Post, working for Paul Merrill. His career eventually led him to Fort Defiance where he was a shop foreman. He eventually finished his career in Shiprock working for Navajo Engineering Construction Authority as a heavy equipment mechanic.

“Code Talker Smith led an honorable life. He served his country, then provided for his family,” President Shelly said.

Code Talker Smith is preceded in death by his parents, Redd and Betsy Dawoola Smith, parents, Johanna Smith, stepmother, Sherman Pinto, brother, Mary Christine Begay, sister, and Dorothy Jarmillio, sister.

Code Talker Smith is survived by brothers; Albert Smith of Gallup, Donald Smith of Blue Water, New Mex., Leonard Smith of Sundance, New Mex., Phillip Smith of Kayenta, Ariz., sisters; Yvonne Denetclaw of Fruitland, New Mex., Florence Dick of Iyanbito, New Mex., Phyllis King of Iyanbito, New Mex., Diane Smith of Sundance, New Mex., sons; Raymond Smith of Farmington, New Mex., Gilbert A. Smith Sr. of Sundance, New Mex., Irvin E. Smith of Sundance, New Mex., daughters; Patsy A. Tommy of Sundance, New Mex., Julie A. Livingston of Sundance, New Mex., and Mary Ann Smith of Sundance, New Mex. He also is survived by more than 20 grandchildren and more than 31 great-grandchildren.

Funeral services are scheduled to begin at 10 a.m. on Saturday, Nov. 3 at Rollie Mortuary in Gallup, New Mex. Burial services will follow at Rehobeth Cemetary in Rehobeth, New Mex. Interment will follow the burial.

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