



## The Navajo Nation Office of the President and Vice President

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Navajo Nation joins family members in celebrating the life of Navajo Code Talker Joe Vandever Sr.



**PHOTO:** Navajo Nation Vice President Myron Lizer and Second Lady Dottie during the memorial service of Navajo Code Talker Joe Vandever, Sr. on Feb. 5, 2020, at the El Morro Theatre in Gallup, N.M.

**GALLUP, N.M.** – On Wednesday, Navajo Nation Vice President Myron Lizer and Second Lady Dottie Lizer joined hundreds of Navajo citizens, family members, and loved ones at a memorial service to honor the life and memory of Navajo Code Talker Joe Vandever, Sr. at the El Morro Theatre in Gallup, N.M.

On Monday, Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Lizer issued a proclamation that called for all flags on the Navajo Nation to be flown at half-staff from Feb. 3 through Feb. 6,

in honor and memory of Navajo Code Talker Joe Vandever, Sr., who passed away on Jan. 31 at the age of 96 in Haystack, New Mexico.

During the service, Vice President Lizer presented the proclamation and a Navajo Nation flag to the family of Code Talker Vandever, and offered his condolences on behalf of the Navajo people.

“As we mourn the loss of Navajo Code Talker Joe Vandever, Sr., we also honor and remember all his great sacrifices for our Navajo people and the entire country. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family, friends, and community members as they lay him to rest,” said Vice President Lizer.



**PHOTO: Memorial Service of of Navajo Code Talker Joe Vandever, Sr. on Feb. 5, 2020, at the El Morro Theatre in Gallup, N.M.**

Code Talker Vandever was born on Feb. 5, 1923 into the Red Running Into the Water People clan, born for Two Who Came to the Water clan. He was married for 73 years to his wife, Bessie D. Vandever, who passed on Sept. 24, 2019.

Code Talker Vandever enlisted with the U.S. Marine Corps in Santa Fe, N.M. on March 26, 1943 and was honorably discharged as Corporal on Jan. 22, 1946. He served in northern Solomons, Bougainville, Emirau Islands, Guam, Marianas Islands, Okinawa, Ryukyus Islands, Occupation of Japan, and Occupation of China. In 2001, he received the Congressional Silver Medal for his service as a Navajo Code Talker in World War II.

During the service Vandever’s grandchildren, Eric Nez, Shaylee Vandever, Petrina Vandever, Shelby Vandever, and Petulia Vandever, shared precious memories, teachings, and disciplines of their grandfather and grandmother.

“Our Cheii and Shimásání (grandfather and grandmother) encouraged us to be the best we can be and to contribute to the Navajo Nation and the world. He stressed the need for each of their 91 grandchildren to speak and value our Navajo language. He said our language and culture identifies who we are and it will protect us and make us stronger. We will greatly miss our grandparents,” said grandson Eric Nez.

Survivors include his sister Mary Vandever Delgarito; sons Gary, Tracy, Obie, Joe Jr., and Lester Vandever; daughters Beth Nez, Phegie Vandever Slim, Sheila Vandever Nez; 36 grandchildren, 55 great-grandchildren and one great-great grandchild. He was preceded in death by his parents Emma and Walter Vandever; his wife Bessie D. Vandever; son Anthony Vandever; and grandsons Charleston, Antonio, and Travis Vandever.

“We thank God for the life of Navajo Code Talker Joe Vandever, Sr. In every aspect of his life, he was a loving and compassionate person who cared greatly for his people, his children and grandchildren. His service and contribution to the Navajo Nation and country will be greatly missed and forever cherished and honored,” said President Nez.

The burial for Navajo Code Talker Joe Vandever, Sr. is scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 6 at 1:30 p.m. at the Santa Fe National Cemetery in Santa Fe, N.M.

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