WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. - Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez and Vice President Myron Lizer issued a proclamation that calls for 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 Jan. 31 in Haystack, N. M. at the age of 96.

“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 and friends as they lay him to rest this week,” Nez said.

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.

Vandever enlisted with the U.S. Marine Corps in Santa Fe, N.M. March 26, 1943 and was honorably discharged as Corporal 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.

“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. We ask all of our Navajo people to keep his spirit and his family in your prayers,” Lizer said.

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.

The viewing for Navajo Code Talker Joe Vandever, Sr. is scheduled for Tues., Feb. 4 at 3:00 pm at Cope Memorial in Gallup. The funeral service will be held on Wed. Feb. 5 at 10:00 am at Thoreau High School in Thoreau. The burial will be Thurs. Feb. 6 1:30 pm at the Santa Fe

National Cemetery in Santa Fe.

