

Navajo Code Talker Dan Akee dies at age 96

Written by Staff Reports

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TUBA CITY, Ariz. — The Navajo Nation lost a great treasure in the passing of Navajo Code Talker Dan Akee Sr. on Oct. 14 at 9:50 am.

"Dan Akee was not just a Navajo Nation treasure. He was an international treasure and icon whose service will stand as a testament to the freedom of all Americans," Navajo Nation President Begaye said.

Sergeant Major Akee was 96 years old when he died. According to Akee's son, Dan Akee Jr., his father was born just north of the Coalmine Chapter house on Nov. 11, 1919.

In 1944, Akee joined the Armed Forces when he heard they were recruiting Navajos. He became a member of the Code Talker team attached to the 4th Marine Division of the 25th Regiment. He took part in conflicts on four Pacific islands, most notably Iwo Jima.

Akee's son said his father was at the Battle of Iwo Jima when six Marines, including Gila River Indian Community member Ira Hayes, raised the U.S. flag atop Mount Suribachi.

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Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez established a close relationship with Dan Akee, Sr., when they assisted in renovating his house this past February. Akee said it was his dream to move back into the house he built.

"We gutted the bathroom, removed the appliances, replaced windows and window frames and tore down walls," Begaye said. "With the help of local volunteer groups, Red Feather Development and the Tuba City Veterans Office, we were able to renovate his home from top to bottom."

Begaye said it was an honor to assist the code talker, adding that Akee rode with OPVP during this year's Navajo Nation and Northern Navajo Nation fair parades.

Akee Jr., who is a board member of Code Talkers Association, said he and his siblings would like to thank their father for his service to the United States.

"My father always told us to be proud of speaking the Navajo language," Akee Jr. said. "Always be careful of the words you speak as they are sacred, he would warn us,"

Nez said he was saddened to learn about the passing of Dan Akee, Sr., but commended his service to the Marines as a Navajo Code Talker.

"Our Navajo Code Talkers including Dan Akee, defended the United States against the interception of critical information and strategies by encoding messages into the Navajo Language," he said. "This code was never broken and is a great part of the proud history of our people."

"He helped to move the nation forward and as such, we grieve the loss of our Navajo Code Talker," Begaye added. "We send our deepest condolences to his family and we will order all flags to be flown at half-staff on the day of his funeral."

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At this time, the Office of the President and Vice President is calling upon the Navajo people to keep the Akee family in their prayers. OPVP also sends condolences to the family.