



World War II 'code talker' dies

Tuesday, August 24, 2004 Posted: 7:34 AM EDT (1134 GMT)

(Source: <http://www.cnn.com/2004/US/Midwest/08/24/obit.sanache.ap/index.html>)

TAMA, Iowa (AP) -- Frank Sanache, one of the last of the "code talkers" from the Meskwaki Indian tribe, died Saturday. He was 86.

Sanache was among the "elite eight," a group of Meskwakis trained to use their language as a secret code during World War II.

The Meskwaki, based in Tama County, were among 18 tribes that contributed code talkers during the war. But their achievements went largely unnoticed because the code was classified until 1968.

Twenty-nine original Navajo code talkers were presented with the Congressional Gold Medal by President Bush in 2001.

The Meskwakis never received that recognition, although Sens. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, and Tom Harkin, D-Iowa, both pushed for it. Harkin awarded Sanache, the last surviving member, medals in 2002.

Twenty-seven Meskwakis enlisted in the Iowa National Guard in 1941 and were activated in the Army's 34th Division.

This spring, the Iowa Legislature passed a resolution urging Congress to recognize the Meskwaki code talkers for their heroism.

Sanache had little opportunity to use his language skills after being shipped to North Africa because of the limited numbers of the Meskwakis and the short range of walkie-talkies. Sanache was captured just five months after he arrived in North Africa and spent 28 months as a prisoner of war.

In an earlier interview, Sanache recalled that walkie-talkie training lasted two months, followed by a year of jungle training in Louisiana. After his return to Iowa, Sanache worked for 38 years at a paper mill.

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