Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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Charles Chi bitty of Tulsa Oklahoma, the last surviving member of the Comanche Code Talkers, will receive the Citizen's Award for Exceptional Service from the Department of the Interior in a ceremony that will take place in the Hall of Heroes at the Pentagon on November 30, 1999. The. Ceremony is to honor his role as a Comanche Code Talker during World War II where he and his fellow Comanche Indians were instrumental in saving many lives during the Normandy Invasion. Like the Choctaws in World War I and the Navajos in the Pacific Theater, the Comanche Code Talkers used their native language to prevent the enemy from intercepting radio messages involving troop movements being transmitted by Allied forces.

"Indian Country is proud of men like Charles Chi bitty and the other veterans who served in the armed forces during World War II. Like many before and after them, American Indians have contributed significantly to the effort of defending this country's interests during times of war," said Kevin Gover, Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs. "It is truly a great thing that we honor him and the memory of his fellow Comanche Code Talkers with this distinguished award."

Mr. Chibitty was born near Medicine Park, Oklahoma on November 20, 1921. He attended Haskell Indian School in Lawrence, Kansas. Enlisting in the United States Army in 1941, he joined sixteen other Comanches to make up part of the 4th Infantry Division, 4th Signal Corp, known as the Code Talkers. While in the Army, Mr. Chibitty was a champion boxer and was described by military newspapers as packing dynamite in both hands. For his efforts, Corporal Chibitty earned the World War II Victory Medal, the ETO (5 bronze Star) Victory Medal, the European/African/Middle East Campaign Medal, and the Good Conduct Medal.

On November 3, 1989, the French Government awarded Mr. Chibitty the Chepalier de I-ordure National dusMerit Medal which was presented to him by Premier Messmer, Prime Minister of France under President Charles DeGulle. In 1992, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney presented Mr. Chibitty a Certificate of Appreciation to recognize him for his service to the United States of America stating. "In a very real sense, thousands of service members and this country owe their lives to you and your fellow Code Talkers."

Mr. Chibitty has also been honored in the past by the Governor of Oklahoma with a Special Proclamation recognizing his tremendous contribution to the state of Oklahoma and United States. Mr. Chibitty is also known throughout Indian Country for his championship dancing in the fancy, straight and traditional categories and is a 32nd degree Mason, Shriner and a member of the Elks Lodge in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

The award ceremony will take place at the Pentagon in the Hall of Heroes, located on the second floor "A" Ring between the sixth and seventh corridors on November 30,1999 starting at 10:00 AM. Coverage of the ceremony is open to the media. Reporters interested in attending should contact Susan Hansen, DOD Public Affairs, at 703-693-6858.