

NAVY HONORS PIONEER FAMILY

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Construction of USNS Cesar Chavez (General Dynamics NASSCO)

With the sharp "crack" of the champagne bottle bursting against the hull of the massive ship and these noble words, "I christen thee USNS Cesar Chavez. May God bless this ship and all who sail her," Helen F. Chavez, widow of the namesake, launched the USNS (United States Naval Ship) Cesar Chavez on May 5, 2012. Built by General Dynamics NASSCO shipyard in San Diego, California, the 689 foot long ship made its ceremonial maiden voyage.

The USNS Cesar Chavez is the latest of the Lewis and Clark-class of cargo and ammunition ships that are continuously deployed to strategic locations worldwide carrying U.S. Marine Corps cargo and delivering more than 10,000 tons of food, fuel, ammunition and other dry cargo to U.S. and allied ships at sea.



Launching of USNS Cesar Chavez (General Dynamics NASSCO)

Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus announced that the naming of the USNS Cesar Chavez continues the tradition of the 14 Lewis and Clark-class ships honoring legendary pioneers and explorers which include the USNS Sacagawea, the USNS Alan Shepard and USNS Amelia Earhart. "Cesar Chavez inspired young Americans to do what is right and what is necessary to protect our freedoms and our country," said Mabus.



A U.S. Navy Sikorsky MH-60S *Sea Hawk* helicopter assigned to Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron (HSC) 21 maneuvers toward the U.S. Military Sealift Command dry cargo and ammunition ship USNS *Cesar Chavez* (T-AKE-14) during a vertical replenishment with the amphibious assault ship USS *Peleliu* (LHA-5), not pictured, in the Pacific Ocean. 19 December 2014. (US Navy Photo)

Not only did Cesar Chavez serve in the U.S. Navy during World War II, his family helped settle the West.

In 1888, Cesario Chavez, Cesar's grandfather, moved his family from Mexico to the Arizona Territory. He ran a business cutting wood, hauling it in wagons pulled by mule teams to the mines and railroads of southern Arizona.

In the early 1900s he homesteaded 118.58 acres in the North Gila River Valley outside of Yuma, Arizona. In 1863 Congress passed and President Lincoln signed the Homestead Act which promised that any "U.S. citizen or intended citizen" could claim up to 160 acres and take title by living and farming on the land for five years. Thousands of Swedes, Norwegians and other European citizens jumped at the opportunity and homesteaded our Midwestern states. Cesar Chavez was born in 1927 on the homestead officially designated by the Bureau of Land Management as Serial #: AZPHX 0036083.



Photo 1905 of Cesario and Dorotea Chavez, their son, Felipe (Cesar's uncle) and their 3 year old granddaughter Rita Chavez Arvizu (Cesar's first cousin) North Gila Valley, Arizona. Photo courtesy of Linda Martinez Aguirre

In 1881, Andres Arias, Cesar's uncle, witnessed the legendary gunfight between the Earp brothers and the Clanton clan at the OK Corral in Tombstone, Arizona.

In the early 1900's Librado Chavez, Cesar's father, drove a Wells Fargo stagecoach on a rural Arizona route, was the local postmaster, ran a country store in the little valley and farmed the homestead until the family lost the homestead during the Depression.

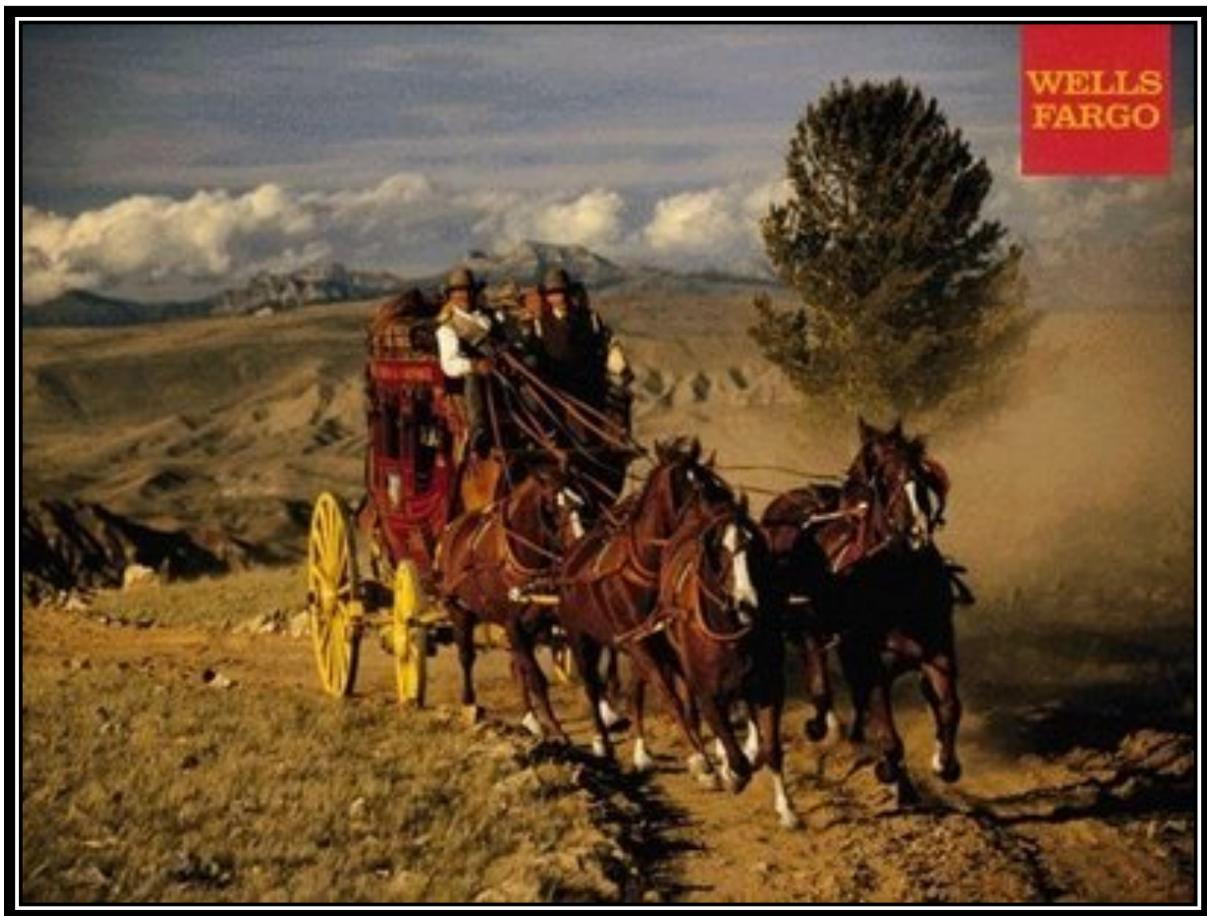


Photo Courtesy of Wells Fargo

In 1903, Francisco Arvizu, Cesar's uncle, mined for gold in the Colorado River town of Picacho, California. Over \$14 million of gold was mined out of Picacho. His daughter, Dorothy Chavez Arvizu Castro, grandmother of Linda Martinez Aguirre, was born in 1903 in Picacho and recalled the times that she and the Chavez family traveled up and down the Colorado River on the steam-powered paddle wheel river boat before Arizona became a state in 1912. Indeed, the pioneer Chavez family helped settle and build the Old West.



Photo circa 1905 of the paddle wheel river boat (Yuma Arizona Historical Museum)

Paul F. Chavez, Cesar's son and President of the Cesar Chavez Foundation stated that the naming of the ship also honors Latinos who displayed their "fervent patriotism" for our nation. During World War II over 500,000 Latinos fought in every major battle in the Pacific and European Theaters. For example, on December 7, 1941, among those U.S. Navy Latinos who gave their full measure of devotion for our nation were Ensign Manuel Gonzales, the heroic pilot from the USS Enterprise aircraft carrier who was shot down while trying to land at Ford Island and S2 Reyner Aguirre who was and still is "on duty" on the USS Arizona. Also, of the 8 Nevarez brothers who served in the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps in World War II, S1c Encarnacion Nevarez was killed in action on November 7, 1944 in the USS Albacore submarine.

Cesar Chavez' cousins, PFC Rudolph G. Rico, 10th Infantry Regiment, 5th Infantry Division, was killed in action on January 19, 1945 and buried at Luxembourg American Cemetery and Lawrence Horta, U.S. Army, also died in Europe fighting for our nation against the Nazis.



Seaman First Class Cesar E. Chavez (U.S. Navy photo)

Fittingly, the USNS Cesar Chavez pays tribute to a man who was a World War II sailor, a civil rights champion and who hailed from a pioneer family and also honors our valiant American patriots of Latino heritage. Therefore, it is appropriate that on this date, April 23, 2015 which is the 22nd anniversary of the death of this patriot, that the U.S. Navy renders formal military honors for Seaman First Class Cesar E. Chavez.