



**AMERICAN
LEGION**

Published exclusively for the members of
THE AMERICAN LEGION MATTHEW BLOUNT POST 555

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THE TRIPLE NICKEL

2ND ANNUAL PELHAM “HOMETOWN CHRISTMAS PARADE”

On Saturday, December 10, 2022, Post 555 was very heavily involved in the “Pelham Hometown Christmas Parade”, so a big thanks to **Jerry McClain** who attended the meetings, coordinated the Volunteers, and staged the floats, along with **Bill Blank, Curtis Orse, Vashone Smith, and Nancy Waller**. The weather was MUCH better than last year, so I think we all enjoyed this event. I pulled the float that I worked on for several weeks prior to the parade, and was assisted in the staging area by **A.J. Blount** and **Doug McDaniel**. Participants in the parade were **Barry Blount** and **Nancy Waller** as the “Lead Motorcyclists” on Barry’s trike as well as **Eric Fort** and **Tom and Dee Long**, followed by me pulling the float on which everyone on the float was a member of the Sons of the American Legion which was **A.J. Blount, Jessie Blount, Elias Gomez, Nathan Waller** in his WWII period attire, and of course me as the driver!! Behind the float were more Post 555 Riders **Doug McDaniel, Jimmy Quebodeaux, Clay Smith, and Jeff Ward**. We all had candy to throw to the parade watchers, and we were well received when community members wanted the Riders to “rev” their bikes.

This event was yet another demonstration of how well Post 555 members volunteer their time and efforts to help with yet another of the many, many events in which we participate throughout the year. Thank you for all who helped this year in one or more events, and I encourage some members who might want to become more involved in 2023. I guarantee you will feel better about what we do for the community during and at the conclusion of each and every event. What we do is appreciated by youth and community members and our goal is to continue for years to come as long as our membership continues to grow. Membership is vital to our existence, so be sure to keep your membership current every year, and THANK YOU!!!

I hope that everyone enjoyed a Happy Holiday Season and are looking forward to a Happy and Healthy New Year in 2023. I will be looking for you at our General Membership Meetings and events.

*For God and Country,
Jeffrey H. Monday
Commander*



Post 555 float preparation with A.J. Blount leading the way.



L/R: Doug McDaniel, Jeff Monday, Roy Brook, Barry Blount, and A.J. Blount. Does A.J. Blount really want to wear that "jacket"???



L/R: Nancy Waller, Roy Brook, A.J. Blount (I guess he really wants to wear that jacket...), Barry Blount, and Jeff Monday.



Photo with SANTA!!! How could we not have one of these in the recap of the Christmas Parade???

L/R: Mrs. Claus, Eric Fort, Dee Long, "Unknown Elf", Nancy Waller, Tom Long, SANTA, A.J. Blount, Barry Blount, and Roy Brook.



L/R: "Son" Nathan Waller with "Mom" Nancy Waller. Check out all of the patriotism and Christmas spirit all around in this photo!!!



Not quite sure what Commander Monday is doing/saying, but it must either be entertaining or very, very important since everyone is looking at him very intently.....



Leading the Post 555 entourage is Past Commander Barry Blount on his “trike” with Adjutant Nancy Waller giving the thumbs-up as they depart the staging area. Close behind is Eric Fort on his Harley that will be “revving” a lot later.....



Commander Jeff Monday at the wheel pulling the Post 555 float filled with members of the Sons of the American Legion as well as the 2021 Patriot of the Year, Roy Brook.



Following the float are three more American Legion Riders led by the Riders Director, Doug McDaniel on his “trike”, with Dencil “Clay” Smith to the left behind Doug and Jimmy Quebodeaux on the right. Motorcycles are always a highlight in any parade!!!

“ACTING” 2ND VICE’S COMMENTS

I hope everyone had a wonderful Holiday Season and are looking forward to a Happy and Healthy New Year in 2023. December was a busy month for Post 555, so here are some of the highlights in which our members were involved.

On Thursday, December 1, 2022 during our General Membership Meeting, Santa Claus made a visit to help provide a Christmas to a single mother and her two children. The members who were present contributed \$350, the Sons of the American Legion donated \$200, and the Executive Committee voted to donate \$200 to help the family so the total donated to the family was \$770 (this includes the three totals plus some smaller contributions). Wonderful effort from our Post members to help a family have a memorable Christmas morning. (Photos in the Sons of the American Legion article by Ron Koonce.)

On Saturday, December 3, 2022, **David “Spud” Bishop, Chic Cecchini, Ron Koonce, Frank Lakotich, Marcus Lowe, Ray Pata, and Nancy Waller** filled “goody bags” for Veterans at the Birmingham VA for the Christmas Caravan scheduled for Tuesday, December 13, 2022. We filled 100 ea. bags with personal hygiene items, socks, and Christmas cards from Post 555 as well as hand-made Christmas cards from Boy Scout Troop 404. After the bags were filled and put into containers for transport, we were “rewarded” with coffee and donuts from Dunkin Donuts during which time Marcus and “Spud” made a great connection with a lot of things they had in common.



L/R: Hiding under his hat is the Chairman of the Birmingham VA Christmas Caravan, Frank Lakotich and next to him is Ron Koonce. In the background are Ray Pata and Marcus Lowe getting the personal hygiene ready to put in the bags.



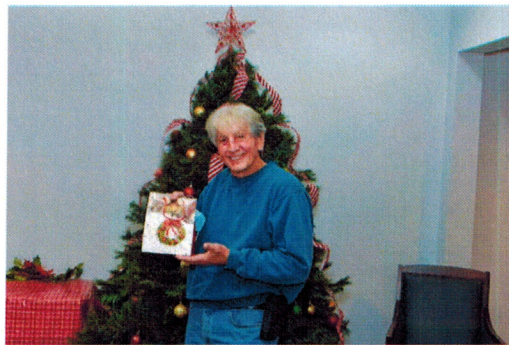
Ray Pata meticulously putting personal hygiene items in each bag. David Coram provided toothbrushes, toothpaste, razors, and shaving cream; Sherri Fuchs donated funds for socks, combs, shampoo, and bars of soap; and Post 555 Christmas cards were prepared by Nancy Waller. Hand-made Christmas cards were lovingly prepared and provided by Boy Scout Troop 404.



L/R: Nancy Waller, David "Spud" Bishop, and Marcus Lowe taking a well-earned reward of coffee and donuts from the local Dunkin Donuts for a job well done.



L/R: Marcus Lowe, Frank Lakotich, David "Spud" Bishop, Ray Pata, Ron Koonce, and Nancy Waller. As always, Chic Cecchini is behind the camera, so here is his photo below this one as evidence that he was indeed there.

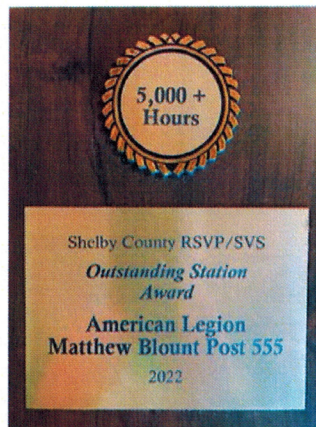


He does exist!!!! Thanks, Chic.

On Tuesday, December 6, 2022, **Bill Blank, Chic Cecchini, Ron Koonce, Frank Lakotich, Tom McDaniel, Harry Sessamen, Nancy Waller, and Eldon Woodie** attended the Shelby County RSVP and Shelby County Volunteers in Service 2022 Awards and Recognition Christmas Brunch at the Pelham Civic Complex. Thanks to the Post 555 RSVP members, we received an **"Achievement Station Award of 5,000 Plus Hours"** with us having **5,474 hours!!! Frank Lakotich** was honored as a **"Lifetime Member with 4,000 Plus Hours"** which was phenomenal!! Several individual members received a **"Gold Presidential Service Award for 500 Plus Hours"** who were **Frank Chacon, Thomas Long, Jerry McClain, Eldon Woodie, and John Zeiss**. A **"Five Year Service Pin"** was also presented to **Nancy Waller**. Great representation of Post 555 at this very nice event.



L/R: Front: Frank Lakotich, Bill Blank, Nancy Waller, Ron Koonce, and Tom McDaniel. Back: Eldon Woodie and Harry Sessamen. Chic Cecchini was behind the camera, of course.



This is the well-deserved plaque for exceeding 5,000 + Volunteer Hours; thanks to all Post 555 RSVP Members who made this award possible!!!

On Tuesday, December 13, 2022, we had the Birmingham VA Christmas Caravan. **Frank Lakotich** has been the Chairman of this event for many years and did an excellent job again this year; thank you, Frank!! Frank was joined by **Chic Cecchini and Nancy Waller** with Chic taking a TON of photos; check out SmugMug (alpost555.smugmug.com) for photos from all of these December events. We were able to visit approximately 75 Veterans in the facility and were well-received by everyone. We let all of them know how much we appreciated their service and sacrifice for this great country.



There were not as many Volunteers from Veteran organizations as in past years, but Nancy Waller, Frank Lakotich, and Chic Cecchini made sure that Post 555 was proudly represented. (No, this is not an Amazon commercial – checkout the box).



L/R: Frank Lakotich behind Santa, a very appreciative Veteran, and Nancy Waller. All patients at the Birmingham VA Hospital were very welcoming and thankful for our visit. Chic was behind the camera again.

On Wednesday and Thursday, December 13-14, 2022, many Post 555 members participated in the unloading of hundreds of boxes of wreaths from the Wreaths Across America semi-trucks to another donated semi-truck to allow the WAA truck to continue his route and to enable an easier way to distribute the boxes of wreaths throughout the Alabama National Cemetery on Saturday, December 17, 2022. Refer to Eldon Woodie's article for the details and several photos.

The purpose of Veterans in The American Legion is to strengthen the United States of America through programs, services, compassion, and actions that have proven vital, timeless, and life-changing for over a century. Keep up the good work and thank you to everyone who played a small or a large part in any of these events; everyone's help is appreciated and necessary to make Post 555 a vital part of our community!!!

*For God and Country,
Nancy J. Waller
Adjutant*

14TH ANNUAL WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA PREPARATION AND CEREMONY

The American Legion Matthew Blount Post 555 provided awesome support for this year's 14th Annual Wreaths Across America (WAA) Ceremony. The WAA ceremony is the largest event held at the Alabama National Cemetery (ALNC) each year. The Support Committee for the Alabama National Cemetery (SCALNC) plans and coordinates the ceremony to lay live balsam wreaths on each and every grave. This year's Post 555 support came in several forms. Financially, the entire Post family of the Legion Riders, Sons of the American Legion Squadron 555, Auxiliary Unit 555, and members donated \$7,622 (a new Post record!). On December 13th and 14th, several members of Post 555 assisted other community Volunteers in unloading 990 cases of wreaths from three different semi-trucks. On the day of the WAA Ceremony (December 17th), Post 555 members stood tall showing up at 7:30 a.m. and performing a myriad of critical tasks which included repositioning cases of wreaths to the different burial sections, removing the wreaths from the boxes and gathering the boxes at collection points; loading, transporting, and setting-up 1,000 folding chairs at the main flag pole area; setting up the new PA system; assisting guests; post-ceremony clean-up gathering, transporting, and storing chairs, PA system, and other items. The following members volunteered: Jeff Monday (Flag Line), Karryl Anderson, Bill Blank, Eldon Woodie, Nancy Waller, Henry Crist, Chic Cecchini, Tom Long (Flag Line), Steve Watson (Flag Line), Frank Lakotich, Conrad Stempel, Ray Pata,

James Darden, Larry Strayer, and Tom McMahon (Invocation). WAA was a huge success. Once again, Chic Cecchini documented the WAA activities for Post 555 and the SCALNC and posted them on-line. Chic's efforts, The American Legion Matthew Blount Post 555's participation and the great work of our Post Volunteers was commended by the SCALNC and the Blue Star Salute Foundation. Most importantly, the thousands in attendance, especially those with loved ones interred at the ALNC, recognized the respect and honor our community and our American Legion Post holds for our Fallen Heroes and their families.



L/R: Eldon Woodie, Ray Pata, Nancy Waller, James Darden, Bill Blank, and Conrad Stempel. Despite cold and rain, Triple Nickel ready to roll.



L/R: Nancy Waller, Ray Pata, and Bill Blank. Testing them out prior to moving a mountain of chairs.



L/R: Eldon Woodie and Ray Pata loading excess wreath boxes on a small trailer. Ray has the "busy side" of the trailer.



L/R: John Nichols (Vietnam Veteran and husband of Pam Nichols, Chairman of the SCALNC), Ray Pata, and Eldon Woodie preparing to raise the Avenue of Flags.



Post 555 Commander, Jeff Monday, standing the Flag Line with the American Legion Riders and Patriot Guard Riders. Lead from the front.



L/R: Eldon Woodie and Chic Cecchini. Rare picture of the photographer. Thanks to Chic for making a big difference for our Veteran community.



L/R: Frank Lakotich, Larry Strayer, and Tom and Dee Long. Four great patriots who make a difference for our Veteran Service Organizations and first responders.



Santa's patriotic helper, Nancy Waller (speaking on behalf of Pam Nichols, Chairman of the SCALNC) gives clear guidance for the large crowd to begin the ceremony. Yes, it was COLD!!!



Larry Strayer keeping everything squared away. Thanks Larry!



Large crowd showed up to support the WAA mission which is “Remember, Honor, and Teach”. Beautiful crowd included many young people and youth organizations.



Post 555 Commander Jeff Monday pays a salute to our Post’s namesake, Army Lieutenant Matthew Blount, a courageous citizen who epitomized the best of our community.



Many of us have loved ones and friends at the ALNC, so words cannot express how we feel seeing this sight. Thank you to our team and all the Volunteers who made this happen. Never Forget!!!

*For God and Country,
Eldon Woodie
2nd Vice Commander*

CHAPLAIN'S UPLIFT

A Fresh Look at Psalm 23

- 1: **The Lord is my Shepherd**
That is Fellowship
I shall not want
That is Provision

- 2: **He makes me lie down in green pastures**
That is Rest
He leads me beside still waters
That is Recovery and Restoration

- 3: **He restores my soul**
That is Inward Healing
He guides me in paths of righteousness for His Name's sake
That is a Purpose that Honors Him

- 4: **Even though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death**
That is the Closeness of Relationship
I will fear no evil
That is Protection
For You are with me
That is Loyalty
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me
That is Discipline

- 5: **You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies**
That is Proof and You With me and For me
You have anointed my head with oil
That is Consecration and Dedication
My cup overflows
That is Abundance

- 6: **Surely goodness and loving kindness will follow me all the days of my life**
That is Blessing
And I will dwell in the House of the Lord forever
That is Safety and Security

To Everyone, My Beloved Vets, Who Have Believed and Accepted the Lord's Offer of Mercy, and Call Jesus Their LORD (Romans 10:9, 10), Can Lay Claim to Psalm 23 as Their OWN Personal Love Letter From Their Heavenly Father. What a GREAT New Year's Resolution for 2023! HAPPY NEW YEAR!

*For God and Country,
Chaplain Joe*



Sons of The American Legion

By Ron Koonce, SAL

Advisor/Adjutant

On December 10, 2022, the City of Pelham, Alabama held their annual "Hometown Christmas Parade." Squadron 555, along with Post 555, participated in the annual event with an American Legion Matthew Blount float. Members of Squadron 555 rode on the float with the Triple Nickel Riders trailing along behind and leading the way. Squadron members riding on the float were A.J. Blount, Jessie Blount, Elias Gomez, and Nathan Waller. Sons member, Jeff Monday, pulled the float.

View Parade Photos at <https://alpost555.smugmug.com/12-10-2022-Pelham-Christmas-Parade/>



Pelham "Hometown Christmas Parade" Squadron Christmas Family Project

The mission of Squadron 555 is to support the American Legion Post 555 programs in support of Veterans, Youth, and Community. The Squadron continues to support American Legion charity programs, the Children Welfare Foundation, and 100 Miles programs. This year, the Squadron expanded its efforts in adopting a needy family in our community for Christmas. With the help of the Pelham First Baptist Church, Reverend Randy Atkinson and Patti Sisk, the Squadron provided a single mother and her 3-year-old daughter and 5-year-old son with gift-wrapped toys and clothing to go under their Christmas tree. The balance of the \$770 raised for this project (\$500 in Walmart gift cards) was given to the mother to help with expenses for food, household, and personal items. We thank all who helped and supported this project.



Photo is of Patti Sisk receiving Christmas gifts from Ron Koonce, SAL Advisor, on behalf of the family.

Adjutant's Area

Effective July 1, 2022, our new membership drive began. The Department of Alabama gave all Adjutants a list of goals to strive to reach or exceed between July 31, 2022 and May 31, 2023. Here is what they are asking us to do as far as membership numbers. You will notice that unfortunately I had to use the red highlighting because we fell short of the October and November goals, but do NOT give up; RENEW!!! December is highlighted in yellow because there is still time to get to the goal of 80% by the 31st.

- Cut-off Dates:

- **July 31st = 40% membership (need 90 members renewed/joined) – WE MET AND EXCEEDED THIS GOAL BY ACHIEVING 42.22% WITH 95 MEMBERS RENEWING FOR 2023—THANKS!!!**
- **August 31st = 50% membership (need 113 members renewed/joined) – WE EXCEEDED THIS GOAL BY ACHIEVING 52.44% WITH 118 MEMBERS RENEWING FOR 2023—THANKS AGAIN!!!**
- **September 30th = 55% membership (need 124 members renewed/joined) – AS OF THE WRITING OF THIS ARTICLE, WE HAVE 55.56% WITH 125 MEMBERS RENEWING FOR 2023—WE DID IT AGAIN!!!**
- **October 31st = 65% membership (need 146 members renewed/joined) – AS OF THE DEADLINE, WE HAD 61.33% WITH 138 MEMBERS RENEWING FOR 2023. WE NEEDED EIGHT MORE, SO WE MISSED THIS ONE. LET'S SEE HOW WE DO WITH THE NOVEMBER 30TH GOAL OF 75%.**
- **November 30th = 75% membership (need 168 members renewed/joined) – AS OF THE DEADLINE, WE HAD 65.77% WITH 148 MEMBERS RENEWING FOR 2023. WE NEEDED 20 MORE, SO WE MISSED THIS ONE, BUT WE ARE MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION!!!**
- **December 31st (Happy New Year) = 80% membership (need 180 members renewed/joined) – AS OF DECEMBER 24, 2022, WE HAVE 72% WITH 162 MEMBERS, SO WE MISSED THIS ONE BY ONLY 8%. WE NEED 18 MORE MEMBERS, WHICH IS A CHALLENGE, BUT I SENT E-MAILS OUT TO EVERY MEMBER WHO IS PAID THROUGH 2022 TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO RENEW ASAP TO RETAIN THEIR CONTINUOUS YEARS AND ALL LEGION BENEFITS. SO FAR, MARCUS LOWE AND ALAN FARMER RENEWED—THANKS TO BOTH—AND THERE IS STILL A WEEK UNTIL THE END OF THE YEAR TO GET CLOSER TO THE DEPARTMENT GOAL; THERE IS HOPE!!!**
- January 31st = 85% membership (need 191 members renewed/joined)
- February 28th = 90% membership (need 202 members renewed/joined)
- March 31st = 95% membership (need 213 members renewed/joined)
- April 30th = 100% membership (225 members renewed/joined)
- May 31st (Happy Memorial Day) = 103% membership (231 members renewed/joined)

If you want to be one of these **VERY IMPORTANT** 18 members to renew, I will be checking on the 31st to see whose names are listed as on-line renewals or if checks and renewal applications are in the Post 555 mailbox at the Pelham Senior Center.

PLEASE renew either by USPS mail or on-line at **mylegion.org**. I check the on-line renewals very frequently and am **THRILLED** to announce the following members who renewed in December: **Harry L. DeArman, Earl L. Austin, Alan Farmer, Daniel M. Kerins, Neil Marcus Lowe, Douglas W. McDaniel, and Christopher R. Watts**. There were three members who renewed via USPS mail who were **David W. Bishop, Howard Brogden, and Gary Waters**—THANKS TO ALL TEN MEMBERS!!!

I look forward to starting the New Year on Thursday, January 5, 2023 at our next General Membership Meeting, so please put that date on your calendar and join us for the fellowship meal at 6:15 p.m. and meeting at 7:00 p.m. We will have a guest speaker, Pelham Detective Adam Schniper, to talk about “Family and Individual Community Resources”. If this peaks your interest and you have not been to a meeting in a long time, please join us. Happy New Year to All!!!

*For God and Country,
Nancy J. Waller
Adjutant*

JANUARY BIRTHDAY WISHES FOR OUR MEMBERS

Troy L. Ta Ra Zon, 01/03
James B. Monson, Jr., 01/07
Samuel Glass, 01/10
Ronnie M. McGriff, 01/10
Jesse E. Jowers, 01/13
Shauna J. Hadley, 01/14
Theodore “Ted” H. Oelschlager, 01/15
Jeffrey H. Monday, 01/17
Andrew “A.J.” Blount, 01/19

James W. Darden, 01/19
Dencil “Clay” Smith, 01/19
Floyd “Butch” Bornt, 01/20
Douglas H. Cooper, 01/20
Earl W. Littlefield, Jr., 01/21
Douglas W. McDaniel, 01/21
Jack Turner, 01/21
Donald G. Broxson, 01/27
Dorian Ross, 01/29



If your birthday is in January and your name is not on this list, it is because it is not listed in MyLegion.org or you did not reply to an e-mail I sent out ages ago asking for updates, so please send it to me so I can wish you a Happy Birthday next year!!!

***Nancy J. Waller
Adjutant***



Post 555 American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Competition

**Matthew Blount Post 555 is currently ramping up for the
2023 High School Oratorical Scholarship Competition
Friday, January 27, 2023
Official Start Time 9:00 a.m.**

(Post 555 Volunteers report to Pelham High School at 8:00 a.m.)

The main purpose of the American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program is for students to develop a deeper knowledge and appreciation of the U.S. Constitution.

A scholarship opportunity:

For students seeking an academic challenge and an opportunity to earn college scholarship money, The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program is a natural fit. For more than 80 years, this constitutional speech contest has educated youth on our nation's founding document, with an emphasis on citizenship.

Learn more about The American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Program at legion.org/oratorical.

Also contact your High School Student Counselor for more information or contact Jerry McClain at rangerjermac@gmail.com or Richard Kaster at rlkaster@bellsouth.net.

Please contact Jerry McClain at 206-412-3548 if you have questions, or if any students who would like to participate.

FIRST GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING IN THE NEW YEAR

We meet the first Thursday of the month, and our first meeting for the New Year is scheduled for January 05, 2023 with our fellowship meal at 6:15 p.m. and our meeting starting promptly at 7:00 p.m. at the Pelham Senior Center at 50 Racquet Club Parkway, Pelham, AL 35124. Please join us as one of your New Year's Resolutions to get back to being involved with Post 555!!!

POST LEADERSHIP FOR 2022/2023

Post Commander

Jeff Monday

1st Vice Commander

Bill Blank

2nd Vice Commander

Eldon Woodie

Adjutant

Nancy Waller

Judge Advocate

Vacant

Financial Officer

Vacant

Chaplain

Joe Dunn

Sergeant-at-Arms

Derek Winters

Service Officer

Curtis Orse

Historian

Shauna Hadley

Public Relations Officer

Dorian Ross

Post Trustees

Frank Lakotich (1 Yr.)

Chris Combs (2 Yr)

Tom McDaniel (3 Yr.)

Unit 555 Auxiliary President

Caroline Culpepper

Sons of the American Legion

Bill Blank, Commander

Ron Koonce, Advisor/Adjutant

American Legion Riders Director

Doug McDaniel

Flag Team Coordinator

Vacant

Boy Scout Troop 404 Coordinator

David Coram

Jr. Shooters

Sam Richardson, Director

Darrell Lawley, Coach

Baseball Director

Vacant

School Awards Program

Barry Blount, Chairman

Frank Lakotich, Co-Chairman

Awards Program

Barry Blount, Chairman

Nancy Waller, Co-Chairman

Webmaster

Ron Koonce

Triple Nickel Editor

Frank Chacon

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Letters to the Editor must include name, address, and telephone number. Names will be withheld upon request.

Send e-mail to: editor@alpost555.com

Photos by Chic Cecchini, Post 555

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