



**AMERICAN
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THE TRIPLE NICKEL

BIRMINGHAM VA CHRISTMAS CARAVAN

Since I neglected to put an article in the previous newsletter about the Birmingham VA Christmas Caravan, here it is FINALLY! One of the Volunteers made a point at the January General Membership Meeting that he did not see his picture in the newsletter, and indeed he was correct; I totally forgot about it (and I was even a part of it.....).

So, on Mon., December 9, 2024, the following Volunteers met at the Pelham Senior Center to fill 100 gift bags for the Veterans at the Birmingham VA Hospital: **Kenneth Fox, Skip Mize IV, Helen Moman, Ray Pata, and Nancy Waller**. The items for the gift bags were donated by Post 555 member David Coram (i.e., combs, toothbrushes, toothpaste, shampoo, shaving cream, and razors) and **Neville Peacock, Chairman of the Veterans Committee in the George Maris Chapter, Colonial Dames XVII Century**, donated enough pairs of new socks to give two to each VA patient. HUGE donations from these two wonderful people!!!

The next day (Tues., December 10, 2024), five members traveled to the Birmingham VA Hospital and got ready to be escorted throughout the hospital to give gift bags to patients. These Volunteers were **Jim Darden, Helen Moman, Alan Phillips, Vashone Smith, and Nancy Waller**. We were able to give "goodies" to everyone whose room we could enter, and it was a very rewarding time for all of us. One thing I want to mention is something that Jim Darden did for two family members of a patient. He made them aware of the PACT Act of which they had never hear, and they were extremely appreciative of his information and said they would pursue getting help for their father. THAT is what being a Veteran is all about; sharing information to help other Veterans and their families. HOOAH!!!



L/R: Nancy Waller and Kenneth Fox organize items prior to putting in gift bags.



L/R: Mrs. Neville Peacock and Nancy Waller showing the wonderful socks donated by Mrs. Peacock!!!



L/R: Helen Moman's granddaughter, Harry "Skip" Mize, Kenneth Fox, and Ray Pata making sure the bags are packed the same. Great job, guys and gal!!



L/R (front): Jim Darden, Nancy Waller, Beth Phillips, Vashone Smith; Helen Moman is hiding in the back with our escort (name unknown, but he was a great help).

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA CEREMONY

The 16th Annual Wreaths Across America Ceremony at the Alabama National Cemetery (ALNC) was a tremendous success with hundreds of attendees. As always, Post 555 had Volunteers present to help with a myriad of projects needing to be set-up at this great event, and for this year's event, I saw **Bill Blank**, **Tom Long (representing the BSSF)**, **Jeff Monday (on the Flag Line)**, **Kenneth Paschal (representing himself as a State Representative)**, **Harry Sessamen (also representing the BSSF)**, **Nancy Waller**, **Jimmy Watson (also on the Flag Line)**, and **Eldon Woodie**. It was a bit nippy (I was usually freezing...), but the crowd continued to grow as the event started and it was standing room only. Great event put on with the leadership of Eldon Woodie (Post 555 member), Chairman of the Support Committee for the Alabama National Cemetery. Great job to all, especially to the man leading the charge, **ELDON!!!**



This is what team-work looks like in action; pulling boxes of wreaths off of the back of the semi-trailer, opening the boxes, taking wreaths out, and disposing of the boxes into a City of Alabaster garbage truck that was donated!!! What more could you ask for?



After all the work pictured in the previous photo is concluded, this is the end result of having enough beautiful Maine balsam wreaths ready to be placed by family members of our Fallen Heroes; what a beautiful sight to behold.



All the flags were flying due to the wind that day, and we almost had some fall over, so we put individuals on each one to ensure they did not take a tumble.



Any event at the ALNC would not be complete without the Legion Riders having a presence coming up to the flagpole, then some of them positioning themselves on the honored Flag Line at the rear of the ceremony. Always a welcome site to see these Veterans show their support of the Fallen Heroes at the ALNC; thank you guys.



Check out this photo taken by our Post 555 Official Photographer, Chic Cecchini. Unbelievable talent to be able to catch this flyover with the plane and beautiful “Old Glory”. Great job, Chic!!!



Bagpiper escorts the family members to the cemetery to find their Fallen Heroes' gravesites so they could place a wreath and spend some time with them. As you can also see, the Riders' Flag Line stepped forward to honor all of the family members, standing proudly with their American flags.

To enjoy all of the photos taken by Chic Cecchini at this event, you can go to alpost555.smugmug.com/12-14-2024-Wreath-Laying-Ceremony.

WREATH REMOVAL AT THE ALNC

The time had finally come to remove thousands of beautiful wreaths on Sat., January 5, 2025, after the Christmas Season. The Volunteers were like bees all over the ALNC and this task was completed in about an hour. As always, Post 555 had Volunteers there to help with Section 8 and probably other sections if they had time/desire. Thanks to **Bill Blank, Chic Cecchini, Jim Darden, Ray Pata, Conrad Stempel, Nancy Waller, Bonnie Woodie, and Eldon Woodie**. I saw members of Boy Scout Troop 404 hard at work and was lucky to meet one of our Girls State Representatives, Millie McCormick. She and I talked about having her come to the next Post 555 General Membership Meeting to share her experiences at Girls State, and she came through at the January 2, 2025 General Membership Meeting.



L/R: Conrad Stempel, Nancy Waller, Nancy Barefield (SCALNC Member), Gary Carroll (another SCALNC Member), and Cherie Kosak (yet another SCALNC Member).



L/R: A very nice gentleman by the name of Dan, Nancy Waller, and Millie McCormick.



L/R: Ray Pata absolutely loves being in the “wreath trampling” business!! The other two gentlemen are Garry Carroll (SCALNC Member) and one of the several wonderful ALNC staff members hard at work helping dispose of the over 10,600 wreaths.

ROVEO LUNCHEONS CONTINUE INTO 2025!!!

The ROVEO “Regulars” continued this tradition by voting to getting together on Tues., January 7, 2025 at the Margarita Grill in Pelham. The owner (who is a Post 555 member), Javier Jerez, came to our table to greet all of us and to wish us a Happy New Year (Prospero Ano Nuevo in Spanish). Great meal with great friends/Veterans, and since Chic Cecchini was there, he actually got a photo as evidence of who was there! You can see **Karryl and Becky Anderson, Chic and Rita Cecchini, Joe Dunn, Randy Ferguson, Ray Pata, Robert Sanders, Tim Vincelette, Nancy Waller, Pete Williams, and Bonnie and Eldon Woodie.**



L/R: Pete Williams, Bonnie Woodie, Eldon Woodie, Ray Pata, Tim Vincelette, Randy Ferguson and Joe Dunn (at the other table), Karryl and Becky Anderson, Nancy Waller, Rita Cecchini, Robert Sanders, and you know where Chic Cecchini is (thanks again, Chic).

On Tues., February 11, 2025, we welcomed a brand new Mexican Restaurant in Pelham, the “La Gran Riviera”, by having seven Post 555 members (as well as Randy Ferguson’s daughter who joined us on her lunch hour); ***Karryl Anderson, Randy Ferguson, Ray Pata, Robert Sanders, Tim Vincelette, Nancy Waller, and Pete Williams.*** We were told that Frank Chacon was on the way, but he ran into a conflict; perhaps next time.

The food was excellent, and the service was very good. We had our food in no time at all and it was hot and delicious. I think we can put this on our list for a future ROVEO Luncheon.

I forgot to take a group photo until most of us were gone.....so you have to trust me that we were actually there since I have no “evidence”.

DEPARTMENT OF ALABAMA MID-WINTER CONFERENCE

Despite the snowy weather in southern Alabama, the Mid-Winter Conference took place, but was one day short. The schedule for Thurs., January 23, 2025 had a lot of training, but not many of the instructors could make it due to the weather.

When I arrived at the front entrance of the hotel, there were piles of snow everywhere, as well as on the beach. I had a room on the 8th floor with a beautiful view of the Gulf of Mexico (not the ocean as several members called it later in the day; don’t ask). For the next day or so, the hotel maintenance staff did a great job in getting rid of the snow so that when the temperatures dipped below freezing at night, it would not be a walking/driving hazard for the guests.

Friday’s schedule started at 9:30 a.m. with numerous guest speakers throughout the day including The Department Judge Advocate Tom Long. He offered training regarding the Post and District Judge Advocate positions as well as speaking at the AYLC (Alabama Yellowhammer Legion College) Alumni Meeting later that day. All good info.

Saturday’s scheduled started at 8:00 a.m. with Alan Phillips sharing an update on American Legion Baseball. Great plans in the works for celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Legion Baseball which will include June 13-15, 2025 for Honoring Flag Day on the 14th and including all entities within the Legion Family. More details to come.

For the final event of the day, we were all surprised to have the past ADVA Commissioner, Admiral (Ret) Kent Davis address the entire group! What a great surprise and

honor to have him there. He enlightened all of us on the current situation in Montgomery, and how things may go in the future, so we will see what continues to go on regarding the VSOs, etc.



The beautiful sunset from my balcony on the 8th floor. I was NOT out on the balcony for more than a few minutes to take this photo—FREEZING!!!



Post 555 Alan Phillips heading the Baseball Commission Meeting.



Past ADVA Commissioner Admiral (Ret) Kent Davis addressing the entire conference and sharing great information with us about the future of the ADVA.

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA HOCKEY MILITARY APPRECIATION NIGHT

In the absence of Commander Bill Blank and Adjutant Nancy Waller (who were both attending The American Legion Department of Alabama Mid-Winter Conference at the Perdido Beach Resort in Orange Beach), 1st Vice Commander Harry “Skip” Mize was “Voluntold” (but thankfully he wholeheartedly accepted the challenge) to facilitate getting the Post 555 “stuff” to the Pelham Civic Complex Lobby to have a presence for this annual event scheduled for Fri., January 24, 2025. He was very successful with the help of the following Volunteers: **Chic Cecchini, Frankie Long, Vashone Smith, and Pete Williams (and of course himself)**. I saw a photo that Chic took showing several more members who attended the game and were included in the honoring of Veterans when they stood up during the game. These additional members were Karryl Anderson, Kenneth Paschal, and Tim Vincelette.



L/R: Harry “Skip” Mize, Frankie Long, Pete Williams, and Vashone Smith. You know State Representative and Post 555 Past Commander Kenneth Paschal had to get into the photo—WAY TO GO KENNETH!!!



Opposing hockey players from the “Frozen Tide” and the “Oklahoma State Cowboys” are ready to get the puck from Post 555 1st Vice Commander Harry “Skip” Mize.

SIX SIGNS FROM AROUND THE WORLD THAT YOU WILL NOT SEE IN THE UNITED STATES

See if you can guess in what country they are seen, and what is their meaning. The answers are after the February birthdays.





JUNIOR SHOOTERS' FUNDRAISER FOR SUPER BOWL FESTIVITIES A HUGE SUCCESS!!

Our Junior Shooters' got back into the "meat smoking business" and offered butts, briskets, and chicken breasts for you and your family to enjoy during the Super Bowl game that was played on Sun., February 9, 2025.

The meat prices were the same as in past fundraisers (\$40 for butts, \$60 for briskets, and \$35 for 5 ea. chicken breasts). I am proud to report that members and two of Bill Blank's neighbors donated a total of \$1,610 to the SCSSA, and to top it all off, Post 555 was the highest donor by 12 meat orders—WAY TO GO, POST 555!!!

I want to thank the following members for being a part of this event: **Karryl Anderson, Rich Argo, Bill Blank, Barry Blount, George Brown, John Clopton III, Joe Dunn, Bill Hanks (one of Bill Blank's neighbors), Tom Long, Harry "Skip" Mize, Helen Moman, Curtis Orse, Mary Lynn Porter (the other neighbor of Bill Blank), Leroy Raymond, Dorian Ross, Harry Sessamen, Nancy Waller, Pete Williams, Eldon Woodie, and John Zeiss.**

I will not mention how many phone calls I needed to make when members "forgot" to pick-up their meat orders.....luckily I did not have anything scheduled later that afternoon, right?

GREAT JOB TO ALL MEMBERS WHO PARTICIPATED TO HELP OUR JUNIOR SHOOTERS!!

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAY WISHES

Williams, James "Pete" B., 02/02
Ervin, Sylvester Jr., 02/07
Fox, Kenneth "Kenn" M., 02/15
Posey, James "Leon" L., 02/16
Carroll, William "Bill", 02/17

Vincelette, Timothy "Tim" J., 02/19
Holloway, Hugh D., 02/20
Boner, Douglas H., 02/21
Clark, Archie H. Jr., 02/26
Loftin, Steven "Steve" B., 02/28



If your birthday is in February and your name is not on this list, it is because it is not listed in your profile in MyLegion.org. Please send me your birthday so you can be included in future Happy Birthday wishes!!

ANSWERS TO THE SIGNS ON PAGES 10 AND 11

First Sign from Greenland: Sled Crossing
Second Sign from Newfoundland: Moose With Car Wreck
Third Sign from Australia: Kangaroo Crossing
Fourth Sign from India: Peep Peep Don't Sleep
Fifth Sign from Germany: Entering Autobahn
Sixth Sign from Iceland: Public Hot Tub Ahead

How many did you guess correctly????? I will continue doing something like this in each newsletter, so keep reading!!!

NEXT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The next Post 555 General Membership Meeting is scheduled for ***Thurs., March 6, 2025*** at the Pelham Senior Center (50 Racquet Club Parkway, Pelham, AL 35124) with our fellowship meal hosted by the Pelham Texas Roadhouse at 6:00 p.m. followed by our meeting at 7:00 p.m. This month we will be honoring three recently deceased members at our Post Everlasting Ceremony. I just heard from Mrs. Marguerite Suzanne Beaudry (Robert “Bruce” McClelland’s widow) that she and her sister will be joining us, and I am hoping that family members of Henry M. Smith Jr. and Ronald Morrison can join us to honor their loved ones.

POST LEADERSHIP FOR 2024 – 2025

Post Commander

Bill Blank

First Vice Commander

Harry “Skip” Mize IV

Second Vice Commander

Dorian Ross

Adjutant

Nancy Waller

Judge Advocate

Helen Moman

Finance Officer

Ron Koonce

Chaplain

Joe Dunn

Sergeant-at-Arms

Jerry McClain

Service Officer

Curtis Orse

Historian

Nancy Waller

Public Relations Officer

Nancy Waller

Post Trustees

Tom McDaniel (1 Yr.)

Sons of The American Legion

Donald Walker, Commander

Ron Koonce, Advisor/Adjutant

American Legion Rider’s Director

Vacant / Needs to be Filled

Flag Team Coordinator

Bill Blank

Boy Scout Troop 404 Coordinator

David Coram

Jr. Shooters

Sam Richardson, Director

Darrell Lawley, Coach

Baseball Director

Kyle Phillips

School Awards Program

Barry Blount, Chairman

Frank Lakotich, Co-Chairman

Post Awards Program

Nancy Waller, Chairman

Webmaster

Ron Koonce

Vashone Smith (2 Yr.)
Frank Lakotich (3 Yr.)

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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: wallernj@gmail.com

Photos by Chic Cecchini, Post 555

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