



Published exclusively for the members of
AMERICAN LEGION MATTHEW BLOUNT POST 555
PELHAM, ALABAMA

VOLUME IX, ISSUE SEPTEMBER 2021

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IN GOD WE TRUST



Matthew Blount Post 555



Matthew Blount Post 555
Junior Varsity State Champions

Congratulations to the Triple Nickel Junior Varsity team for capturing the 2021 American Legion Junior Varsity Championship last weekend.



COMMANDER'S CORNER



Jeff Monday
Post Commander



Fellow Legionnaires: Wow! What a busy month. First off, I would like to thank the great Post volunteers that worked night and day to take us thru the month, and who always made sure that Post 555 was successful. I have looked back and I want to remind everyone of the great time we, together as a group, had to make Fire on the Water successful; we represented the true meaning of what it is to be a Veteran, Patriot and a pillar in the community, and that we live always for God and Country.

The month saw us as a family, kick off something that the State of Alabama has never witnessed before: The Southeastern Regional Baseball Tournament. Thanks to all Post members that helped with a great banquet to kick everything off. I had just about every state come to me and say thank you for a great start and a great meal to kick off the week of baseball. Thanks to the Department of Alabama for the support, thank you to Post 138 for your support, and thank you to my Brother-in-Arms Alan Philips, we did it. I hope that this is only the beginning for the Post and for the state when it comes to American Legion Baseball.

I made a trip to Sylacauga, AL, for a District meeting at Post 45. Post 45 has a nice Legion Hall donated to them from the State of Alabama. I want to thank them for hosting this meeting, and a good jelly donut. Main take as always from the meeting, working together

within the district, to work on membership, Legionnaires first, Post members second. Growing and grooming leadership within the Post. Having a good attitude and stepping up to continue the American Legion's work, and always following the four Pillars; Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, National Security, Americanism, and Children & Youth.

As we close out the month of August, we say goodbye or as I like to always say, until we meet again.

To the soldier, husband, father, Legionnaire, Juan Gomez: Juan was one of Post 555 Charter Members; he carried the title SGT-of-Arms. Juan had come back to the Post in May; he was ready to work the American Legion life. Juan was always full of joy when he would ride -up to say hello on his bike. We always joked about his bike's puny horn that someday he could join the riders with a loud horn. Juan never really needed a loud horn; he always got your attention with a smile. Juan passed away with complications from Covid-19. Rest in peace my bother-in-arms, until we meet again.

HEROES TAKE ON MANY FORMS, BUT ANYONE WHO SERVED THEIR COUNTRY WITH SUCH PRIDE AND DISTINTION IS WITHOUT A DOUBT A HERO. MAY THEY "NEVER BE FORGOTTEN".

1ST VICE'S COMMENTS



Bill Blank

1st Vice Commander



Greetings to all Post members and families of Post 555. I would just like to thank you and your families for the effort that was put into the events in which our Post has been engaged. Supporting our community and our youth, is what we are all about and I pray that we can continue our strong efforts. It takes volunteers such as yourselves to make it happen. With that being said I would ask that if any of you are asked in the future to volunteer for an event, please give it a positive consideration. We need all the help we can get.

Baseball is one of my favorite events in which to be involved. We had a wonderful baseball season this year that included the State Championship, and the biggest of all was we hosted the Regional Championship at Pelham High School. The Regional Championship was a huge undertaking and a great honor for Post 555, Shelby County, Pelham High school and the great State of Alabama. This was Alabama's first ever opportunity to host the Regional Championship, in the history of American Legion baseball. The Regional Championship is comprised of the state champions of eight states. The winner of each region went to Shelby, South Carolina, to compete in the American Legion World Series. Tupelo, Mississippi is the team that won the Regional Championship from our region.

As I have said earlier, this was a huge under

taking and we were lucky in that we had Allen Phillips and Kyle Phillips to put this event together. A great job by these two men who kept everything going to plan.

By far, not the least and very important to this effort, were those who volunteered to work the games selling tickets. To these folks I would like to extend my gratitude to each of you who served their community in this capacity.

First Vice Commander;
Billy Blank



Spirit of 45 ceremony marks 76th anniversary of WWII ending

By **Staff Reports** Shelby County Reporter
<https://shelbycountyreporter.com/2021/08/20/spirit-of-45-ceremony-marks-76th-anniversary-of-wwii-ending/>

Published 12:54 pm Friday, August 20, 2021

MONTEVALLO – The Support Committee for the Alabama National Cemetery (SCALNC) continued its tradition of remembering and honoring “the greatest generation” with its Keep the Spirit of 45 Alive Ceremony at the Alabama National Cemetery on Saturday, Aug. 14.

The group did not let the 76th anniversary of the end



of World War II on Aug. 14, 1945 go unnoticed. “This past Saturday, Aug. 14, 2021, passed by without mention in the media, or at least, I heard no mention of one of the most important days in the history of the world,” said Pam Nichols, chairwoman of the SCALNC.

Aug. 14, 1945 lives forever in the minds of the few remaining members of the greatest generation who lived it; the day that WWII ended and the United States of America played the pivotal role in saving the world from tyranny.

At 6:30 p.m., an audience made up mostly of dependents of WWII veterans looked on as ceremony emcee Nathan Waller, (Post 555) attired in a WWII era soldier’s uniform, welcomed those who had come to share memories of heroes and honor both those who made the ultimate sacrifice and those who served so long ago.

As a part of the program, Waller, who is also a SCALNC member and grandson of WWII veterans, shared details of his uniform and equipment as a symbolic salute to those who served.

His uniform was that of a WWII U.S. Army soldier in 1945.

The program also included a special prayer of remembrance by SCALNC Chaplain and Navy veteran Duke Martin; presentation of the colors by Bessemer Squadron Civil Air Patrol cadets; the National Anthem sung by Rob Robinson, grandson of LP Robinson, WWII civilian support staff for the U.S. Army; and the pledge of allegiance, led by Pelham Troop 404 Boy Scouts Lucas and Cruz Kalba.

Guests of honor included two WWII veterans, George Hamilton, U.S. Navy, 99 years old; and William B. Jones, U.S. Navy, who will be 95 in December.

Phylis Wojciechowski, a Gold Star family member whose father was killed in WWII, was also present to stand in honor of her father.

Other children and grandchildren of WWII veterans shared period photos and enjoyed the display tables of hundreds of such photos.

An important component of the ceremony is a wreath laying in honor of those who lost their lives during the war, as well as the many WWII veterans who have since passed away since the end of the war.

This year’s wreath, which was donated by the Lily of the Cahaba Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, was laid by Tom Long, an SCALNC member, U.S. Air Force Vietnam veteran and son of WWII veteran SMSgt. Jack Allyn Long.

With his parents’ permission, at 17, Jack Long enlisted in the U.S. Army. After completing basic training, he was deployed to Tunisia, French Morocco. Only three weeks after arriving in theater, he was wounded and captured by Field Marshal Rommel’s forces and sent to Stalag 3B near Furstenberg, Germany, where he spent the remainder of WWII as a POW. Repatriated in 1945, after 27 months in captivity, Long was honorably discharged and later joined the U.S. Air Force. He died in 1976 at 53 and was interred in the Veterans Section of Jefferson Memorial Gardens in Hoover. Long was reinterred at the Alabama National Cemetery in November 2019.

At 7 p.m. Eastern War Time on Aug. 14, 1945, President Harry Truman revealed Japan’s unconditional surrender, marking the end of the deadliest war in history. To mark that moment in time, the Spirit of 45 ceremony concluded at 7 p.m. with the playing of Taps by Matthew Horn from Bugles Across America and grandson of a WWII veteran, followed by a moment of silence.

Both WWII veterans in attendance vowed to be back for next year’s ceremony.

“Given the perseverance of the greatest generation, I fully expect to share this time with them again next year,” Nichols said.

ADJUTANT'S AREA



Nancy Waller
Adjutant



YOUR ANNUAL DUES ARE DUE FOR 2022
AS OF JULY 1, 2021!!!

I just checked our current membership and so far, a total of 107 members are paid through 2022—HOOAH!!! We went from 47 members as of my August newsletter article to 107 which is an increase of 60. Let's keep the ball rolling and beat 60 renewals before I send my October article!!!

Everyone should have received their notification from the American Legion asking for your dues for 2022, so please make sure you take care of that as soon as you can. One reason for doing it now will prevent you from continuing to receive more notifications and mistakenly paying again. Make the check payable to **Matthew Blount Post 555** and put it along with the "Dues Notice" in an envelope and mail to the Post address which is 50 Racquet Club Parkway, Pelham, AL 35124. Ron Koonce will get them out of the mailbox at the Pelham Senior Center, deposit your check, and send me a copy of the "Dues Notice" for me to update your membership in MyLegion.org as a 2022 paid member! I will then send your 2022 membership card via USPS along with a nice letter thanking you for your Service and continued support of Post 555.

Do not get behind on your membership since that would affect the loss of your benefits. Everyone is important to the Post even if you cannot participate in meetings or events. We still want you to stay on our rolls as an honored member of Post 555.

If you are a current R.S.V.P. (Retired Senior Volunteer Program) member, don't forget to report your volunteer hours for the month of August

when you come to the September 2, 2021 Post 555 General Membership Meeting. If you have hours to report and cannot make the meeting, I can still report them for you. Call me @ 251-554-6986 and I will add your hours to my Monthly Station Form. If you are not yet an R.S.V.P. member, the only criteria is that you are age 55+ years young. I will give you an application to complete and will take a photo of the front of your drivers' license (for proof of age) so I can make a copy to accompany your application. Every month I will record your volunteer hours anywhere you serve, including Post 555 meetings and events. Just let me know if you would like an application!!

For God and Country
Nancy Waller
Adjutant

4 ways to be a member of our Legion family

- ☐ American Legion Matthew Blount Post 555
- ☐ American Legion Auxiliary
- ☐ Sons of the American Legion
- ☐ American Legion Riders (must be members of one of the 3 above)

Contact Information (Please Print)

NAME: _____
CITY: _____
CELL PHONE: _____ HM: _____
EMAIL: _____
MILITARY BRANCH: _____
REFERRED BY: _____

Triple Nickel Riders



WOW! This has been an incredibly busy month for the Riders. I was asked to lead a group of Riders to make a special presentation of an Honorable Lifetime Membership to The American Legion Matthew Blount Post 555 to a Korean War Veteran. I was even more ecstatic when I discovered it was to Billy Blount Sr., brother of past commander Barry Blount. It was an emotional event, to say the least.

We did not stop there. Oh no! At the Riders meeting, we patched-in two new members to our Triple Nickel Riders. Ray Patel and Tom McMahon received their back patch as members of Legion Riders.

Just getting started with our month, and it was baseball time!! The Riders were asked to take part in several parts of the Southeast Regional American Legion Baseball Tournament, hosted by Post 555. At the banquet, we displayed our motorcycles to show off one of the many aspects of The American Legion. Since Tuesday night was the opening ceremony for the tournament, we reached out to all Legion Riders in the state to join. We and our motorcycles came rumbling in to get the party started. We could not stop there, because Sunday was the closing ceremony for the tournament. The bikes came back onto the field to excite the fans for the championship title game.

On a sad note, Post 555 recently lost a member of our Post and also a member of the Pelham Police Department, Officer Juan Gomez. The Riders stepped-up, along with other Post members and the Patriot Guard, to form a flag line and also escorted Officer Gomez to the Alabama National Cemetery in Montevallo.

There are a couple of our area Posts that do not have a Riders group, so when Commander Jeff Monday and I went to The American Legion District 23 quarterly meeting, we invited those who want to ride to join us until they have enough members to start their own Riders group. I am proud to say the other Post Commanders of the

23rd District were happy to pass it along to the members of their respective Posts. Joining our Riders, under our Triple Nickel Patch, are Charles Knight, Commander of Post 96 in Montevallo; and Paul Gonthier from Post 138 and our 23rd District Commander.

The Riders have an upcoming event that is near and dear to our hearts. It is our Matthew Blount Post Annual Charity Ride. It is scheduled for September 18th at 10:30 a.m. for registration. All proceeds will go to the 2021 Wreaths Across America Campaign. Even if you don't ride, come out and see us off. The ride will end at the Margarita Grill in Pelham. Come socialize with us and enjoy some great food.

Stay safe and God Bless America.

Doug McDaniel, Riders Director



SERVICE OFFICER NOTES



Jerry McClain
Service Officer

DISABILITY FROM EXPOSURE TO BURN PITS

Stars and Stripes | By [Nikki Wentling](#) 2 Aug 2021

WASHINGTON -- The Department of Veterans Affairs on Monday created a fast-track to [disability compensation](#) for certain veterans who developed asthma, rhinitis or sinusitis because of their exposure to burn pits during overseas deployments.

The VA announced it will now process disability claims for those conditions on a presumptive basis, which lowers the amount of evidence that veterans must provide in order to receive benefits.

The change applies to veterans who served from Aug. 2, 1990, to now in the Southwest Asia theater of operations, which includes Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the neutral zone between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea and the airspace above these locations.

It also applies to veterans who served in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Syria or Djibouti from Sept. 19, 2001, to now. To qualify, the conditions must have manifested within 10 years of a veteran's deployment.

The change comes after VA Secretary Denis McDonough initiated a federal rulemaking process May 27 to consider creating a fast-track to health care and disability compensation for some veterans suffering from respiratory illnesses. During the review process, the VA concluded there was sufficient evidence linking the three conditions to airborne toxins that service members breathed during the deployments.

"Through this process, I determined that the evidence provided was sufficient to establish presumptions of service connection for these three respiratory conditions," McDonough said in a statement Monday. "This is the right decision, and VA will continue to use a holistic approach in determining toxic exposure 'presumptives' moving forward."

The VA plans to reach out to veterans who now qualify for benefits and tell them how to apply or reapply.

This change marks the first instance that the VA is allowing easier access to benefits for veterans who were exposed to burn pits, despite years of pleading from veterans and advocates.

Throughout the 1990s and the post-9/11 wars, the military used open-air pits to burn garbage, jet fuel, paint, medical waste, plastics and more. Veterans diagnosed with cancer, respiratory issues and lung disease at young ages have blamed exposure to the toxic fumes. They have sought [VA benefits](#) and health care, but the department contended for years that there wasn't sufficient evidence to support their claims.

The VA will continue with its rulemaking process, during which it will look at more conditions that have possible links to military toxic exposures.

The rulemaking process, which can be lengthy, includes a public comment period and multiple reviews by the White House's Office of Management and Budget. The VA will provide public updates about the process every three months, McDonough said.

Earlier this year, House and Senate lawmakers introduced two sweeping bills aimed at helping veterans who suffer from illnesses because of toxic exposure. The bills would grant VA health care and benefits to millions of veterans who served in overseas conflicts in the past 31 years.

The bills, which are similar but not identical, would automatically grant health care to about 3.5 million Iraq and Afghanistan veterans and reform the VA's handling of toxic exposure claims. The House bill adds 23 respiratory illnesses and cancers to the VA's presumptive list, while the Senate bill adds 11.

The VA has refused to take a public position on either bill.

"We're down here, really vigorously working to try to get in a position to get assistance to, and care for, our veterans who have been exposed, and I think the quickest way to get that care and those benefits is through the process I've talked about," McDonough said during a news conference in May. "We are attacking this issue with urgency."

va.alabama.gov



ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF
**VETERANS
AFFAIRS**

CHAPLAIN'S UPLIFT



Joe Dunn
Post Chaplain



As I'm sure you know by now, one of our own fell to the Covid-19 virus, and was ushered into the presence of his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Juan Gomez was 39, and had just joined Post 555 for the second time three months ago. Juan leaves behind a wife Katie, and two children, Abby 11, and Eli 7. In June, I was with Juan as he watched his son catch his first fish. Eli will cherish the picture of himself, his dad, and his fish for the rest of his life.

Juan's funeral was held at Shades Mountain Community Church and was packed with family, friends, and I think the whole Pelham Police Force! The procession to the National Cemetery was incredible, with dozens of Police cars, lights flashing, all in honor of their fallen comrade.

It left me thinking many things, but two really stand out:

1) The Pelham Police Force is a tight group of men and women, and they look out for their own. I think Post 555 could learn a lot from their example. They loved their brother-in-arms and were not afraid to show it or talk about it.

2) These fits perfectly into what I had planned to share this month as a "Life Principle" that you can rest assured is true of every one of us.

"Things we are not even aware of, are being noticed and remembered."

Testimony after testimony was all about what they saw in Juan's life, mostly his servant's heart. They knew that he really cared for his

friends and family, and that his life was real. Juan was just being himself as he got involved in other people's lives, but it didn't escape the notice of others.

I don't believe that the Pelham Police Force did what they did to honor Juan because they were ordered to. They did it because of what they saw in Juan's life—they noticed, they remembered, and last week they honored the legacy that he left.

Let's remember that we ARE being noticed, and we WILL be remembered, and we choose NOW the legacy that we want to leave.

Chaplain Joe



POST 555 WORK AREAS

*Triple Nickel
Riders*



Matthew Blount Post 555

Annual Matthew Blount Memorial Ride
For Wreaths Across America

All proceeds from the ride will go to Wreaths Across America to provide wreaths for Fallen Heroes at the National Cemetery

Saturday September 18th, 2021

Starts: Heart of Dixie Harley Davidson

Registration Starts – 10:30am KSU – 11:00am

RIDE TO the Alabama National Cemetery , and a nice South Shelby Ride

ENDS: Margarita Grill (Pelham, AL)

Single Riders \$20

2up Riders \$30



Prize Drawing , 50/50 Drawing, Door Prizes

Message from Post 555 Flag Team Coordinator, Ron McGriff

It is time for us to get back to flag ceremonies!! Please keep your eyes open for tattered and/or torn flags at local businesses and organizations.

If you find one that needs to be replaced, please contact me (Ron McGriff) @ 205-663-1448 and I will follow-up with the business/organization to try to arrange a replacement.

Thank you all!!!
Ron

See the complete flag code at <https://www.legion.org> › documents › legion › pdf



*Sons of The American
Legion*



Squadron 555 roster continues to grow with 1 new member during the month of early August setting the Squadron's roster total at forty-nine to date that includes both active and inactive members. The Squadron has gained eleven new members during the months of July and August.

Total 2022 paid members is now at twenty-one of our goal of thirty-five. This translates to 60% of our 2022 goal and 72% of 2021 paid membership.

The annual dues remain at \$20. We encourage all members and all sponsors to submit your 2022 renewals now. Also, everyone one is a recruiter. One new member will earn you a Post 555 Commander's Membership Award pin. Five new members will earn you a National Commander Excellence pin.

Applications for new members are found on the "Home" page of www.alpost555.com. Just select the "Join the Sons of American Legion" button and print the application.

Checks are to be payable to "Matthew Blount Post 555"

Mail renewals and applications to: American Legion

Sons of The American Legion
50 Racquet Club Parkway
Pelham, AL 35124

The Sons will continue to meet with the Post on September 2, 2021, at the Pelham Senior Center at 6:00 pm for meal and 7:00 pm for meeting. Guests are welcome.

Separate future Son's meetings are being are still being planned. Now that the baseball season has concluded, there will be additional date to consider. Members will be notified once location/date/time has been confirmed.

For God and Country

Ron Koonce

MATTHEW BLOUNT POST 555



Meets first Thursday of the month.

Post 555 Membership will meet on Thursday September 2 at the Pelham Senior Center at 7PM. Dinner and fellowship at 6PM.

"National Veterans Day Awards Dinner"

With the help of Past Post Commander Barry Blount, I was able to acquire tickets for 16 seats (two tables) at the National Veterans Day Awards Dinner scheduled for Wed., 10 Nov 21.

The tickets are \$45.00 each so please place your order with me ASAP so you do not miss out. The deadline for purchase of your tickets is 30 Sep 21, but if you miss the deadline, check with me, Nancy Waller, to see if I still have some left. My cell is 251-554-6986.

The location and time are yet to be determined, so as soon as I have confirmation, I will let you know.

Post Leadership 2021/2022

Post Commander Jeff Monday	Chris Combs
1st Vice Commander Bill Blank	Auxiliary President Caroline Culpepper
2nd Vice Commander TBD	Sons of Legionnaires Bill Blank, Comm.
Adjutant Nancy Waller	Ron Koonce, Advisor
Asst Adjutant Ron Koonce	Legion Riders Director Doug McDaniel
Judge Advocate Tom Long	Flag Team Coordinator Ron McGriff
Financial Officer Barry Blount	Boy Scouts Coordinator David Coram
Chaplain Joe Dunn	Jr. Shooting Director Darrell Lawley
Sergeant-At-Arms Derek Winters	Baseball Director Jon Freeman
Anita Bennett	School Awards Program Frank Lakotich, Chr.
Post Service Officer Jerry McClain	Awards Program Barry Blount, Chr.
Historian Shauna Hadley	Webmaster Ron Koonce
Public Relations Officer Vacant	Triple Nickel Editor Frank Chacon
Post Trustees Frank Lakotich	Photography Chic Cecchini
Robert Horsley	

The Triple Nickel

is published monthly for members of Matthew Blount Post 555.

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Pelham, AL 35124
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commander@ALpost555.com

Items for publication are accepted on Executive Committee approval and available space.

Submit articles prior to the 10th of the month for publication the following month. We reserve the right to edit any submissions for the purpose of publication.

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

Send email to: Editor@alpost555.com

Photos by Chic Cechini, Post 555

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American Legion Post 555

Thirteenth Annual Wreaths Across America Campaign

Alabama National Cemetery

Montevallo, Alabama

18 December 2021



The cost to sponsor each wreath is \$15.00. This year we are hoping for at least 10,000 wreaths which is an increase of over 2,000+ wreaths from 2020. All wreath sponsors and family members of those interred at the Alabama National Cemetery are invited and strongly encouraged to attend and participate in the wreath-laying ceremony.

To sponsor wreaths, please complete the information below and return it, along with your check made payable to "Matthew Blount Post 555", to 50 Racquet Club Parkway, Pelham, AL 35124. The deadline for checks to be received is ***04 November 2021***, so please act on this request as soon as you are financially able. Each sponsorship is tax deductible. For more information and/or questions, please contact Barry Blount at 205-531-4131. Thank you in advance for your show of support to our Fallen Heroes and their family members during the 2021 Christmas Season.

-----CUT HERE-----

PRINT NAME OF INDIVIDUAL / ORGANIZATION: _____

MAILING ADDRESS: _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____ SPONSORSHIP AMOUNT: \$ _____

IN HONOR OF (LIVING): _____

IN MEMORY OF (DECEASED): _____

SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

“UNTIMELY PASSING OF POST 555 CHARTER MEMBER JUAN GOMEZ”

On Saturday, August 14, 2021, Post 555 Charter Member and Pelham Police Department Officer Juan Gomez passed at the young age of 39. He leaves behind his wife and two children who currently reside in Alabaster. He was honored by many on August 17, 2021 at Shades Mountain Community Church, and laid to rest at the Alabama National Cemetery on August 18, 2021 with hundreds of friends, co-workers, and family members present. The extremely large funeral procession from Shades Mountain Community Church to the Alabama National Cemetery was a demonstration of how he lived his life and was loved and honored by so many from all over the state.

Prior to his law enforcement career, Officer Gomez was in the U.S. Army for eight years. During his service to our great country, he was awarded several commendations including the Army Commendation Medal (ARCOM), Global War on Terrorism Service Medal (GWOT-S), and the National Defense Service Medal (NDSM). After his time in the military, he joined the Albertville Police Department in 2006 before joining the Pelham Police Department in December 2010 where he served the last 11 years of his life.



District 23 Commander Paul Gonthier shared a heartfelt thank you to Post 555 Commander Jeff Monday, Past Post Commander Barry Blount, and the Post 555 Legion Riders for standing a flag line at the funeral home and riding in an incredibly touching procession from the funeral home through Hoover, Pelham, and Alabaster the next day. Post 555 Legion Riders then stood another flag line with the Patriot Guard Riders at the Alabama National Cemetery in Montevallo. Commander Gonthier stated that this was “quite an emotional event” and that he was “extremely proud to serve alongside Commander Monday and the Post 555 Legion Riders for this event.”

Please keep Juan's family in your thoughts and prayers as they work through an unimaginably hard time in their lives at the loss of a wonderful husband and father. He will be missed by everyone in Post 555 as he becomes a member of our “Post Everlasting” way too early.

