



**AMERICAN
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THE TRIPLE NICKEL

2024 ORATORICAL SCHOLARSHIP CONTESTS UPDATE

It has been a very busy two months for Post 555's contestant, Lucas Kalba, a 10th grader at Pelham High School. You may remember Lucas when he did very, very well last year and placed second in the 2023 2nd Division Oratorical Scholarship Contest, and he did very, very well again this year by accomplishing the same goal. On Sat., February 10, 2024, he competed at the Zone Oratorical Scholarship Contest conducted by our very own Jerry McClain. This event was held at the Rotunda building at the American Village, and it was a beautiful venue in which to have the three contestants compete. The other two contestants were Andrew Monson (who placed second) from Hope Christian School and Devin Bridges (who placed third) from the Maranathan Academy. All three contestants did a great job and we were honored to have them and their family members there to enjoy their speeches.



L/R: “Nona” DeLuca, Daniela DeLuca, Bill Blank, Charla McClain, Tim Vincelette, Nancy Waller, Richard Kaster (hiding behind Nancy), Tamala Bridges, Devin Bridges (behind his mom), Simon Kalba (hiding over Lucas’ right shoulder), Lucas Kalba, Andrew Monson, Matthew Monson (hiding behind and to the left of his son Andrew), Daniel Monson, Michelle Monson, Lillian Jones, Leroy Raymond (standing directly behind Lillian), Curtis Orse, Jerry McClain, and Harry “Skip” Mize IV.

After the Area Oratorical Scholarship Contest, Lucas and Andrew competed at the 23rd District Oratorical Scholarship Contest on Sat., February 17, 2024 at the Pelham Senior Center. They both had their family members in attendance to show their support for these two young men. At the conclusion of the speeches, the judges' scores were tabulated and Lucas was the first place winner with Andrew coming in second place. The scores were very close, so the judges really had their hands full with scoring Lucas and Andrew.



L/R: 23rd District Commander Charles Duncan presenting the first place certificate to Lucas Kalba.



L/R: 23rd District Commander Charles Duncan presenting the 2nd place certificate to Andrew Monson.

Lucas was told that he would be competing at the 2nd Division Oratorical Scholarship Contest on Sat., March 2, 2024 at the First Baptist Church Pelham. We are all excited to have Lucas moving on to the next level of competition.

Both contestants were invited to share their speeches with the Post 555 members at the March 7, 2024 General Membership Meeting at the Pelham Senior Center. They were excited about showing our Post members what this program means to them, and they both shared their speeches. They also received their winnings from the Area Oratorical Scholarship Contest which was a check for \$300 each, along with a gift card for \$100 from a very kind and appreciative person who wanted to remain anonymous. Great night for both of them for sure!!!



L/R: Barry Blount, Andrew Monson(2nd place) , Lucas Kalba (1st place), and Jerry McClain.

At the 2nd Division Oratorical Scholarship Contest, Lucas Kalba competed against two other contestants and achieved a well-deserved second place ranking. He received a medal and a second place certificate, and will receive his winnings as soon as the check is processed.



L/R: James Bryant, Paul Gonthier (2nd Division Commander), Lucas Kalba, and Richard Kaster (past 2nd Division Commander)

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

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA HOCKEY REPS PRESENT CHECK TO POST 555

Another HUGE event during the March 7, 2024 General Membership Meeting was that four members of the University of Alabama Hockey from their Military Appreciation Night back in February presented Commander Barry Blount with a check for \$2,300!! Chris Moehlenpan also presented Commander Barry Blount with his jersey on which Commander Blount bid and won. The other three UofA Reps were Austin Fink, Ally Copps, and Lily Barossi. They were all very appreciative of those who participated in the event, and thanked everyone for our service.



L/R: Austin Fink, Barry Blount, and Chris Moehlenpah as Barry receives the \$2,300 check.



L/R: Chris Moehlenpah presents his jersey to Barry Blount since he was the highest bidder.

CHAPLAIN'S UPLIFT

Greetings To All My Veteran Friends,

I'm winding down a five week stint in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, working with these young medical students who will all go back to India to be doctors. It is a real joy to graduate them and send them back to work in their own country of 1.2 BILLION people! Being the last week, I have been inundated with visits, etc., to our apartment, and so I found it best to email everyone.

I trust that you are all doing OK during this time of so much turmoil in our country. I know that all 217 Veterans on the Buddy Call list have any number of things going on in their lives. I certainly have my share of "heavies," and I know that you all do as well, as many of you share things with me that you have going on in your lives.

I watch these Indian young people really stick together because the Kyrgyz people do not understand them, and the Pakistani students do not care to be around them AT ALL, because politically they are enemies. The cohesiveness I see in these kids away from home reminds me of our Post and the camaraderie that is there for those of us who want it and accept it, and become a more intimate part of what we do for the community and abroad AND for each other.

As the Post Chaplain, the Triple Nickel is always on my prayer list, but this month I have been moved to pray for us all even more, as I have worked with these students "up close and personal." Please know that the Post is here for you, and if you have anything in your life that needs prayer, please pass that on to me.

*For God and Country,
Chaplain Joe*

ROVEO LUNCHEON # 14!!!

I was researching how many ROVEO luncheons we have had by looking in SmugMug where Ron Koonce and Chic Cecchini put their photos, and I was able to come up with 14 luncheons! I have made each and every one of them and had a great time with my fellow Post 555 members. The most recent one was held at "Wok On In" in Pelham (in the strip mall with the Dollar General and Café Trentunos Restaurant) and we had another big group. Per the photo below, there was a whole lot of "stories" going on; what happens in a ROVEO luncheon, stays at the ROVEO luncheon!!!!



L/R: Eldon Woodie, Steve Loftin, Mark May, Becky Anderson, Karryl Anderson, Robert Sanders, Nancy Waller, and Bonnie Woodie behind the camera.



L/R: Karryl Anderson, Robert Sanders, Bonnie Woodie, Ron Koonce, and Randy Ferguson just barely in the photo, and Nancy Waller behind the camera.



Top to Bottom: Randy Ferguson, Alan Phillips, Eldon Woodie, Steve Loftin, and Mark May.

At the end of the luncheon, we discussed where to go for the March event and we came to a decision to visit the Margarita Grill again since the owner, Javier Jerez, is a very generous and supportive member of Post 555, and he always enjoys seeing us in his restaurant. So on **Tues., March 12, 2024 at 11:30 a.m.**, we had a small but fun group.



L/R: Rita Cecchini, Frank Chacon, Eldon Woodie, Karryl Anderson, Nancy Waller (for once I am not behind the camera, thanks to the co-owner), and Chic Cecchini (also, for once not behind the camera).

We are working on the next location for **Tues., April 9, 2024, 11:30 a.m.**, so keep your eyes on an e-mail from me indicating the restaurant. Please join the “regulars” for good conversations and camaraderie!!! The more, the merrier.

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



Sons of The American Legion Squadron 555

Spring is in the air and, like the flowers, Squadron 555 activities are starting to blossom! First up is the Triple Nickel Open House Veterans Resource Fair, which was held at the Pelham Senior Center on Saturday, 9 March, 2024 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. This event featured representatives from numerous VA programs and resources, including the Homeless Program, Suicide Prevention, Primary Care, VRT, Peer Support, Women's Health, Outreach, the brand new HPACT Mobile Medical Unit (MMU), and more. Also, in addition to Triple Nickel information tables, our friends from Blue Star Salute Foundation (BSSF), the Support Committee for the Alabama National Cemetery (SCALNC), Lakeshore Veterans Program, CaptionCall, Service Dogs of Alabama, Troop 404, and others were on-hand with some great

informative displays for guests to visit. Texas Roadhouse supplied everyone there with a delicious lunch of sliders and steak fries which I heard many of the exhibitors thanking us for this treat. The LifeSouth bloodmobile was on site for a blood drive during this time of emergency for all blood types. There were six people who donated and were promised a \$20 gift card—YEAH!!! The event also hosted a food donation barrel for Grace Klein Community for those wishing to drop off non-perishable goods. By the end of the day, the barrel was literally overflowing with bags and bags of non-perishable food items; a HUGE thanks to all who donated to this great organization.

The squadron is also working on plans for various other upcoming events, including a family picnic, litter pick-up events, and volunteering at the Children's of Alabama Indy Grand Prix, April 26-28, 2024 at Barber Motorsports in Leeds (contact Adjutant Nancy Waller to get involved).

I recently attended the SAL Midwinter Conference (MWC) in Mobile. The conference is always a great opportunity to catch-up with other members and get briefed on Legion-related topics; we heard from Department Sr. Vice Commander Don Madden, Jr. Vice Commander Willie Rogers, and American Legion Riders Asst. Director Bo Thompson. During the conference, the Detachment Nomination and Search Committee nominated me to be on the ballot for Area 3 Vice Commander, which covers Districts 13, 15, and 23.

I would like to thank those of you who donated to the Child Welfare Foundation via the CWF Piggy Banks at the February meeting. As I mentioned during my report, SAL is the largest single contributor to CWF (raising \$9+ million nationally since 1988), and Squadron 555 is proud to be a part of supporting this program. If you would like to continue helping us support CWF, the piggy banks will be present periodically at Post and Squadron meetings.

Lastly, SAL members – do not forget that Squadron 555 elections are coming up. The nominating committee will deliver its report at our March 12, 2024 regular meeting, where nominations from the floor will also be accepted. Elections will take place at our annual meeting on May 14, 2024 with elected officers taking their position at the June meeting. If you are a SAL member and want to get more involved, now is your chance. If you are eligible to join the Sons but are not a member yet, we would love to have you. If you have any questions, feel free to get in touch with me or come to one of our meetings (2nd Tuesday of each month, 7:00 p.m. either at Pelham Senior Center or on Microsoft Teams). Do not forget to keep spreading the word to sons and grandsons of Veterans so that they can join Squadron 555 in supporting the four pillars of The American Legion!

*For God and Country,
Donald L. Walker
SAL Commander*

PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

One big event that is heading our way in April is the Children's of Alabama Grand Prix at the Barber Motorsports Park in Leeds. Post 555 was asked for at least the third year in a row (perhaps more before then) to be "Tram Safety Volunteers". We sit in the back left side of the last tram, observe guests getting on and off the tram, then when everyone is seated, you signal the driver of the pick-up pulling the tram that it is safe for him to move; TOO EASY!!!!

This event is scheduled for Friday through Sunday, April 26-28, 2024, with two shifts to fill from either 7:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. or 12:00 – 5:00 p.m. There are still plenty of room for more Volunteers to fill these slots, so if interested, contact Adjutant Nancy Waller @ 251-554-6986 or via e-mail to wallerlj@gmail.com for a slot(s). The credentials that you will receive as a Post 555 Volunteer give you access to the entire three day event, so even if you only volunteer for one shift, you have the privilege of being there as many days as you would like. Also, they serve breakfast and lunch all three days of which we are entitled at no cost.

At the end of the event, we are notified by Kourtney Cowart from Event Motorsports how much of a donation will be given to Post 555 which depends on how many shifts we fill for all three days. You will be able to choose which Legion Family you would like to donate your

portion of the donation (i.e., Legion, Riders, and Sons); Adjutant Nancy Waller will help compute the amount of the donation which will be designated to each Legion Family entity.

So, SIGN UP IF YOU HAVE NOT DONE SO ALREADY AND BE A PART OF THIS EVENT WHICH WILL END UP WITH A VERY GENEROUS DONATION TO POST 555!!!

NATIONAL VIETNAM VETERANS DAY CEREMONY

During the March 7, 2024 General Membership Meeting, I neglected to put out a reminder about the National Vietnam Veterans Day Ceremony scheduled for **Fri., March 29, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. at the Alabama National Cemetery**. Whether or not you served during the Vietnam Conflict, I invite you to join our fellow Service members to honor their service in this challenging time for the United States. They never got a “welcome home” ceremony like everyone else who received this honor when they returned home, so let’s thank them all at this ceremony.

If anyone would like to volunteer to help set-up the ceremony area or put up the Avenue of Flags, you can report to the Storage Building of the Support Committee for the Alabama National Cemetery at 9:00 a.m. Help will also be needed after the ceremony, so if you can remain for a little while, all Volunteers will be welcomed to help clean-up. Thanks to all!!

2nd ANNUAL CHARITY RIDE
BLUE STAR SALUTE FOUNDATION, INC.
Joel Adkins Veterans Assistance Fund
501(C)3 not-for-profit Charitable Foundation

**Starting at Heart of Dixie Harley Davidson,
including TAPS at Alabama National Cemetery,
and ending at Rio's Bar & Grill.**

**Registration @ 9:00 AM
KSU @ 10:00 AM**

**Donations also
accepted at the link below**

**\$20.00 Rider - \$5.00 Passenger
50/50 & Prize Drawings at Rio's**

**ALL PROCEEDS GO TO SUPPORT THE
Joel Adkins Veterans Assistance Fund
Providing Assistance to Veterans & Their Families**

**Online Registration available at the QR Code
or at this link www.bluestarsalute.org/charity-ride**

**Questions forward to:
tlongbluestarsalute@gmail.com or (205)451-8880**

www.bluestarsalute.org

At the request of Tom Long, Post 555 Judge Advocate as well as the President of the Blue Star Salute Foundation, Inc., he invites everyone to participate in the 2nd Annual Charity Ride. All details on this flyer, but if you have any questions, refer to Tom Long's e-mail on the flyer.

MARCH BIRTHDAY WISHES

Lee, David C., 03/01
Waller, Nancy J., 03/01
Eagle, Eddie E., 03/05
Schrader, Gerald L., 03/05
Smith, Vashone L., 03/08
Bryan, Jeffrey A., 03/11
Atwell, John S. Sr., 03/12
McMahon, Tom W., 03/13

McClain, Jerry L., 03/19
Combs, Christopher N., 03/20
Koonce, A. Ronald "Ron", 03/20
DeArman, Harry L., 03/22
Munch, A.W., 03/22
McGraw, Aretha M., 03/24
Richard, Andrew, 03/26
Cecchini, Leo "Chic" A., 03/30



If your birthday is in March 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!!

NEXT GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

We meet the first Thursday of the month, so please join us on **Thurs., April 4, 2024** with our fellowship meal (hosted by Texas Roadhouse) at 6:00 p.m. and the meeting starting promptly at 7:00 p.m. at the Pelham Senior Center at 50 Racquet Club Parkway, Pelham, AL 35124. At this meeting, the Nominating Committee will be announcing the members who have put their names in the hat for Commander, First Vice Commander, Second Vice Commander, and 3-Year Trustee. **Please note that nominations MAY be accepted from the floor with only two stipulations: The nominee must be present and he/she must accept the position for which he/she is nominated.** If anyone is interested in any of these positions, please come to the meeting and have someone nominate you from the floor and see what happens!!!

“GO FUND ME” FOR CARLEY SEABROOKE

If you saw my e-mail not too long ago asking for help with funding for Carley Seabrooke who is our “Star Jr. Shooter” heading to the 2024 Junior Olympics among other shooting events, I hope you took a few minutes to help her out. Every one of these shooting events involve expenses that need to come from her family, so if you can share any amount of donation, it will be very, very well received by the Seabrooke Family.

Thank you in advance for sponsoring Carley and her family during these exciting times for Carley! She is an unbelievable and talented young woman who I hope you get to meet some day when she perhaps can make time to come to our Post 555 General Membership Meeting. I will work on that for the near future. Thanks for your help!!!

POST LEADERSHIP FOR 2023-2024

Post Commander
Barry Blount

First Vice Commander
Bill Blank

Second Vice Commander
Dorian Ross

Adjutant
Nancy Waller

Judge Advocate
Tom Long

Finance Officer
Ron Koonce

Chaplain
Joe Dunn

Sergeant-at-Arms
Anita Bennett

Service Officer
Curtis Orse

Historian
Shauna Hadley

Public Relations Officer
Nancy Waller

Post Trustees
Chris Combs (1 Yr.)
Tom McDaniel (2 Yr.)
Vashone Smith (3 Yr.)

Sons of The American Legion
Donald Walker, Commander
Ron Koonce, Advisor/Adjutant

American Legion Rider's Director
Doug McDaniel

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

Awards Program
Barry Blount, Chairman
Nancy Waller, Co-Chairman

Webmaster
Ron Koonce

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Items for publication are accepted upon Executive Committee approval and available space. Submit articles prior to the 10th of the month for publication the following month if approved. We reserve the right to edit any submissions for the purpose of publication. 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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