



The Triple Nickel

Published Exclusively for the Members of American Legion & Matthew Blount Post 555

Volume 7 Issue 6
June 2020

Matthew Blount Post 555

Names 2019-2020 Legionnaire of the Year

*"In God We
Trust"*

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Comrade Jerry McClain received the Legionnaire of the Year Award from The American Legion on behalf of Matthew Blount Post 555, in recognition of his hard work and dedication during the 2019-2020 Legion Year.

During The American Legion Matthew Blount Post 555 Annual meeting (May 7, 2020) the outgoing Commander Kenneth Paschal announced Comrade Jerry McClain as the Post's Legionnaire of the Year for 2020.

Comrade McClain served as Post 555 First Vice Commander, Membership Chairperson, Post Service Officer, Fundraising Committee Chairperson, Volunteer Instructor at the Veterans Administration Medical Center; Pelham Drug Prevention Impact Team member; and also a Paid Up For Life (PUFL) Legion member with dual membership as an American Legion Rider.

McClain's achievements, significant accomplishments and service have benefited the American Legion, the Post and many Veterans in a way that went over and above what was required.



Commander's Corner

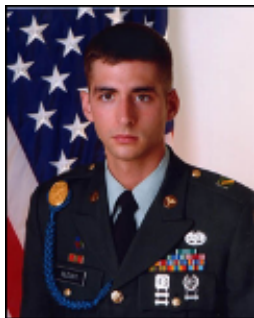


Memorial Day Remembrance

Matthew A. Blount

September 18, 1981 - March 10, 2012

Matthew Alexander Blount, second son of Barry and Terrie Blount of Pelham, Alabama, was born on September 18, 1981. He was a member of the First Baptist Church Pelham and was a 1999 graduate of Pelham High School. Matt joined the U.S. Army in the same year, serving until 2006.



During his military career, he advanced in rank to Staff Sergeant serving tours in Iraq as a Senior Field Medic. Matthew's duty assignments included 4th Infantry Division, Fort Hood Texas; 1st Infantry Division, Vilseck, Germany; 173rd Airborne Brigade, Supporting Iraqi Freedom; and the 2nd Cavalry Regiment, Vilseck, Germany as Senior Instructor, Medical/Treatment.

Members of his team thought well of him as described by Army Chief Warrant Officer 4, Troy Ta Ra Zon. "Blount always stayed calm during firefights and was quick to accept military responsibility. He was all about self-sacrifice. In the many firefights, he was always up front. He treated many casualties and definitely contributed to saving many lives. Blount was the "definition of leadership" and knew how to rise to any challenge. Matt served as a role model for many."

Blount received the Army Commendation Medal and the Combat Medic Badge for his service in Iraq.

After receiving an Honorable Discharge from Active Duty in 2006, Matthew transferred to the United States Army Reserve and enrolled in Jacksonville State University ROTC. In November of 2009, Matt was diagnosed with a rare cancer, Ewing's Sarcoma, in advanced stage. He remained active in school

and ROTC while undergoing treatment. He went on to finish in the top 4% of the National Order of Merit list of the ROTC. He served as the ROTC Executive Officer and was a member of many National Honor Societies that included Phi Kappa Phi Pinnacle, Alpha Phi Sigma, Scabbard and Blade, and Lambda Alpha Epsilon. Matthew graduated with honors in April 2011 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice.

Just days prior to his death in 2012, Matthew received his commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Reserve. Matthew Blount grew from a boy to a man early in his life and was driven to achieve goals and ambitions. He became an Eagle Scout and member of the Order of the Arrow where he was awarded the Vigil honor and continued to grow into a Soldier that took his

responsibilities seriously in saving the lives of others and excelling in all his objectives.

Matthew Alexander Blount went to be with his Lord on March 10, 2012 and is interred at the Alabama National Cemetery, Montevallo, Alabama, Section 8.



Matthew Blount Post 555 was founded by this father, CSM (retired) Barry K. Blount, in September 2014 in Matt's honor and dedicated to carry on his legacy of selflessness, commitment, loyalty, concern for others, and leadership.



First Vice Commander

I would like to start with a big shout-out to all of my peers and fellow Legionnaires thanking you for having the trust and confidence in me. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve you in this new roll in one of the best American Legion Posts in the country. Thank you to Jerry McClain for giving me the tools and guidance to continue the post Membership and Retention goals. I truly have big shoes to fill and Jerry, I know you have a big foot, so thank you very much sir. GO ARMY! HOOAH!!!



Most of you know my family and I, so just short a background about myself. I spent sixteen and half years in the Active Army. When I departed the Active duty life, I moved into the National Guard. A very short time after joining the National Guard the opportunity opened to work full time for the Georgia National Guard. This was the open door for me to make it to retirement, and that is exactly what I did. In 2013, I retired with 20 years of service, three tours to Iraq, and a family that understands what it means to be an American. I would never trade one day of my service. With that being said, I am ready to continue my service, and I hope to work with each one of you. Let us keep rolling and work on retention and new members.

Finally, yet importantly, I know many are trying to get back to the new normal; let me say that we will make it past COVID-19. In fact, I think we will come out of this as stronger Legionnaires. We are back to the small things in life, communicating, making bonds, and networking. Even with the Post being closed, we as a group have communicated and continued to work issues within the Post. This is my proposal, fellow Legionnaires. Pick-up the phone weekly and call someone in the Post; make it a new Legionnaire weekly. I am very excited to serve you!!

For God and Country,

*Jeff (Fuzzy) Monday
First Vice Commander*

Second Vice Commander's

Summer will be here on June 20, 2020 which means most of us will "hopefully" be participating in some fun events with family and friends. The reason I emphasize the word "hopefully" is because this COVID-19 situation is still with us and who knows how long it will continue to try to dictate how we conduct our personal lives. If you are concerned about the illness, stay at home. I spoke to a fellow Post member a few days ago and he and his wife have been self-quarantined since the very first announcement to do so and are doing quite well. They order their food for home delivery, and go out only when absolutely necessary, which for them has not been very often at all. On the other end of the spectrum, we have some folks who are totally disregarding the precautions and going out and about to do whatever they choose. That is indeed their prerogative, which is why others need to heed the precautions if they feel it necessary. All of the Wallers (myself, my husband and fellow Post 555 member Sparkie, and my son and fellow Post 555 member Nathan) are kind of in the middle of the road with the COVID-19 situation. Nathan is considered an "essential worker" so he has been blessed to continue working and bringing in a weekly pay check as a security guard at the Wells Fargo Data Center and is very grateful to be working. They are following precautions to be best of their ability and so far, so good with Nathan. Sparkie and I had the privilege the weekend of May 16-17, 2020 of visiting two National Guard units in Auburn and Jasper to offer insurance and ESGR briefings to a total of 74 Soldiers. Social distancing and sanitizing were emphasized and followed by all, and we were able to take care of all 74 Soldiers. It was a GREAT two days for Sparkie and I to be back with our brothers and sisters who are still serving in the Alabama Army National Guard, and we look forward to future unit visit.



My point is that if you have to go out for whatever reason, go out and do what you have to do but be sure to follow the COVID-19 guidelines as they apply to the location to which you are going (i.e., grocery stores, banks, medical appointments, etc.). Do the best you can to stay home, but to keep some sense of normalcy in your lives, traveling out of your home could be a big help, even if it is just for a ride around in the car! It was a breath of fresh air, so to speak, for Sparkie and I to travel to Auburn and Jasper and we were both actually exhilarated to have done so. It did us both a lot of good.

So, hang in there and take care of yourselves and your family members in whatever way you feel is best, and let's all hope that this pandemic comes to an end soon so that we can all meet face-to-face and share hugs and handshakes to welcome each other back into the fold of The American Legion Post 555 Family in-person for years to come. Love to all of you!!!

*Nancy Waller
Second Vice Commander*

Adjutant's Area

Businesses are beginning to open up and people are beginning to venture out. Please continue to be safe and do not go out unless it is necessary. I encourage everyone to be smart and take all precautions if you have to leave your home. COVID-19 has not gone away. People are still getting sick.



I am pleased to report that we exceeded our 2020 membership goal of 100% with 105%. Thank you, the members and the Membership Committee, for going over and above in the year's membership campaign which was a big success for the seventh year in a row. All we have to do is carry this momentum into 2020-2021 beginning July 1, 2020.

The 2020-2021 membership campaign begins July 1, 2020. During the month of July, you should receive a statement for your 2021 renewal. As in the past, our goal is to have 100% membership by December 31, 2020. Your 2020 membership will expire on January 1, 2021. Be an "early bird" and get your renewal done and out of the way.

If your 2020 membership still has not been renewed, now is the time to get it done so as not to lose your continued years of membership. Your membership is very important to The American Legion and Post 555 even though you may not be able to participate in ongoing events and activities. You are still a part of the Post 555 Family. The Post is here for you.

Check your American Legion Membership Card to confirm if you have renewed for 2020. If not, you can renew for 2020 either online at www.legion.org or mail your renewal fee of \$45 payable to "Matthew Blount Post 555" to *American Legion, Matthew Blount Post 555, 50 Racquet Club Parkway, Pelham, AL 35124*.

Even though the Post's face-to-face monthly meetings have been suspended, Post operations and support activities have not ceased with the use of teleconferencing and group video conferences.

The Post Executive Committee will continue to manage Post business via video conference calls. The May Post meeting was a success with 32 members and guests participating.

In the best interest of our members, the June meeting will be available to everyone via "Zoom" video or telephone conference. Detailed information has been distributed to the Post membership.

You can always contact me at ron.koonce@alpost555.com if you have questions about any of the above.

*For God and Country
Ron Koonce,
Adjutant*



Good Day Post 555!

We have not appreciated the recent encroachment on our lives by both illnesses and government entities. Yet as Loyal Veterans, Citizens and Families, we carry on. We will not falter; we will not fail in caring for and keeping each other solid and safe.

Our Buddy Checks continue. We appreciate Yolanda Rancher, Melvin Grissett, Jerry McClain, Ronnie McGriff and Butch Bornt for their great effort in making 194 calls, 78 completed conversations or left messages. There were call-backs, follow-up and all 'round positive results. From this exercise we found about five desiring your prayers and care. If you want their names and numbers, you may call me personally anytime.

When you receive this, Memorial Day will have passed. But, may we never forget the ultimate price so many have made for our Homeland.

In our nation's capital, the sun shines first and last everyday on its tallest building; the 555 foot Washington Monument. On the very top of the four-sided aluminum capstone are two Latin words *Laus Deo*, which mean "Praise be to God, thus, declaring that we believe America is favored and blessed by Almighty God. That makes it all the more appropriate that around Post 555 we hear most often this phrase, "For God and Country."

Sincerely,
Thomas McMahon, Chaplain
Chaplain

Auxiliary Unit 555



Hi to All,
Thank you so much for allowing me to be part of a great group of Veterans.

Just like other organizations, the Auxiliary unit 555 has slowed down during this unprecedented time.

The Auxiliary is still alive and continues to get stronger. We continue to seek new members so we can do a better job supporting the Post and our Veterans. Female members of the Legion, spouses, and daughters of Legion members are eligible to join the Auxiliary."

Please contact me at carolinejculpepper@gmail.com to join the Auxiliary 2020. Thank you in advance for your support.

Caroline J. Culpepper
President Unit 555

See details at:
<https://www.alpost555.com/american-legion-auxiliary>

Post Service Office Report



Everyday, Veterans from all military service branches and eras connect with proven resources and effective support for family and personal relationship issues. Here's how to take the next step: the one that's right for you.

Read VA's latest coronavirus information. If you have flu-like symptoms such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath, please call before you visit your local medical center or clinic. If you have an appointment, consider making it a tele-health appointment.

New to VA? Apply for health care benefits.

Getting started is simple. Create a free account online to help ease your enrollment process. To prepare to apply for VA health care in person, by telephone, or by mail, explore VA's "How to Apply" page.

Not sure whether you are eligible for VA health care benefits? Read about eligibility for VA health care. Unsure of what kind of help you need? Call 1-877-222-VETS (1-877-222-8387) to find the right resources to meet your needs, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET. If you have hearing loss, call TTY: 1-800-877-8339.

Veterans' family members and caregivers can see whether they qualify for VA medical benefits as a spouse, surviving spouse, dependent child, or caregiver. Explore family and caregiver health benefits.

Already enrolled in VA and interested in mental health support? Schedule a mental health appointment.

If you're already enrolled and using VA health care, the fastest way to schedule VA appointments is to call the VA facility where you want to receive care.

With VA Appointments tools, you can schedule some VA health care appointments online, view details about upcoming appointments, and organize your health care calendar.

If you're not using VA medical services, contact your nearest VA medical center or Vet Center to talk about your needs.

What about other options at VA? VA offers a variety of tools and resources.

The Veteran Training online self-help portal for overcoming everyday challenges includes modules on managing anger, developing parenting and problem-solving skills, and more. Mental health apps for Veterans cover a variety of topics, ranging from PTSD to anger management to quitting smoking.

VA TeleMental Health connects you with a VA mental health provider through a computer or mobile device in your home or at your nearest VA health facility. You can learn more about this option from your local VA medical center.

Vet Centers provide support, counseling, and readjustment services for Veterans and active duty service members (including members of the National Guard and Reserve) who have served on active military duty in any combat theater or area of hostility or have experienced a military sexual trauma. Find a Vet Center near you or call 1-877-WAR-VETS (1-877-927-8387) to talk with a fellow combat Veteran about your experiences, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

What about support beyond VA?

There's a whole community of support ready to help with whatever you're going through. Use this tool to find resources near you.



Matthew Blount Post 555
50 Racquet Club Parkway
Pelham, AL



Meets first Thursday of the month.

June 4, 2020 Meeting will
be held via Video/
Teleconference

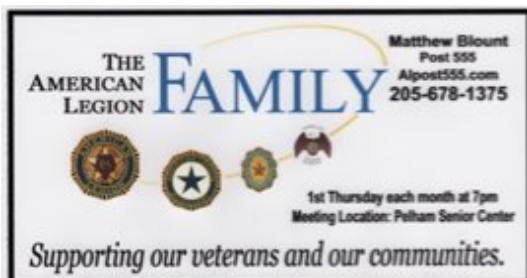
Welcome to Post 555
New Family Members

Clint Bowden
Sylvester Evans
Lynda Morris
James Posey
Charles Williams

General Membership Meetings

June 4th: Video/Telephone Conference. Link will be emailed to each member.

July 2nd: Ms. Erin Garzelli, Case Manager with Volunteers of America: Veteran Homelessness



Post Leadership

Post

Commander
 Barry Blount
1st Vice Commander
 Jeff Monday
2nd Vice Commander
 Nancy Waller
Adjutant
 Ron Koonce
Asst Adjutant
 Shauna Hadley
Judge Advocate
 Larry Strayer
Financial Officer
 Joe Starnes
Chaplain
 Tom McMahon
Sergeant-At-Arms
 Derek Winters
 Anita Bennett
Post Service Officer
 Jerry McClain
Historian
 Shauna Hadley

Public Relations Officer

Vacant
Post Trustees
 Bill Blank
 Frank Lakotich
 Robert Horsley
Auxiliary President
 Caroline Culpepper
Sons Commander
 Robert Horsley
Legion Riders Director
 Doug McDaniel
Flag Team Coordinator
 Ron McGriff
Webmaster
 Ron Koonce
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Photography
 Frank Chacon
 Ron Koonce

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 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

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Post 555

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2020 Boys State Update



Unfortunately, the 2020 Boys State program which was to be held at the University of Alabama has been canceled due to safety concerns with the COVID-19 Coronavirus. Boys State is one of the premier programs sponsored by The American Legion which teaches democracy and citizenship and consists of Junior Class students who have distinguished themselves as evidenced by their scholastic and citizenship achievements.

The students selected as delegates to the Alabama 2020 Boys State will receive scholarships to The University of Alabama, at Tuscaloosa, The University of West Alabama and Marion Military Institute. In addition, they will receive a Certificate of Selection to the 2020 Alabama Boys State that may be used in their college applications, their application for scholarships, and their resume. The 2020 Alabama Boys State Delegates are also invited to attend Boys State in the summer of 2021.

Congratulations to those delegates who were selected by their respective High Schools. Congratulations also to the school Principals and Counselors for their cooperation with The American Legion in selecting our future Citizens and Leaders.

This year's delegates selected were Hill Allen of Pelham High School, Gary Lacey and Logan Eiler of Oak Mountain High School, and Jacob Plott of Hope Christian School.



Hill Allen



Gary Lacey



Logan Eiler



Jacob Plott

UPCOMING EVENTS

Guest Speakers / Programs at Upcoming General Membership Meetings

June 4th : "Zoom" Virtual Post Meeting.

July 2nd : Erin Garzelli with Volunteers of America talking about Veteran Homelessness

Alabama Girls State Update



Due to the COVID19 Pandemic, **The American Legion 2020 Auxiliary Alabama Girls State** has been canceled. 2020 registered delegates will be able to attend the 2021 session.

Annual Flag Day Celebration Canceled

Because of the pandemic, the 2020 June 14, 2020 Flag Day Celebration to be held at the Pelham Civic Complex hosted by the Cahaba Elks Lodge has been canceled. It has been rescheduled for June 13, 2021 at the Pelham Civic Center .



American Legion Baseball Update



Due to COVID-19 The American Legion Baseball season has been cancelled. For more information contact Alan Phillips at albaseball@charter.net

Introducing Triple Nickel Riders 2020-2021 Director.

Douglas "Dink" W. McDaniel, previous assistant Director of the Triple Nickel Riders was elected by the riders to be Director, filling a vacancy by the previous Director, Jeff Monday being elected 1st Vice Commander of Post 555.



Born in Mississippi and joined the military in July 1985. First duty station Torrejon AB, Spain, in January 1986 until January 1988. He then returned to stateside duty at England LA, until he was transferred to Seymour Johnson AFB due to closure of England AFB in 1992. He remained at Seymour Johnson AFB until he retired from the military in August 2005. He and his family now lives in Helena, AL.

Doug has been a member of Post 555 since early 2017. He accepted the position of Assistant Riders Director in 2019. He officially assumed his new position as Director at the May 14, 2020 Triple Nickel Riders meeting.



Triple Nickel Riders Update



May 2nd the Triple Nickel Riders and A few supporters rode to the Mt. Cheaha area promoting patriotism and Fellowship.



Memorial Day, May 25, 2020

The Triple Nickel Riders made a ride to the Pelham Cemetery, Montevallo National Cemetery, Elmwood Cemetery to pay



their respects to our fallen comrades. The ride was open to all riders, bikes and automobiles. Great turnout with 26 motorcycle riders from Post 555, the HOG Chapter in Birmingham, and as Jeff put it, a bunch of guys who like to ride with us.



They departed Dunkin Donuts in Pelham at 9:00 a.m.. The ride to the Pelham Cemetery crossed over Highway 31 near Highway 52 and were greeted by Roy Brooks with his flag. What a great American! Commander Blount presented a Post 555 Challenge Coin to Roy Brook.



Upon leaving the Pelham Cemetery, the group headed for the Alabama National Cemetery in Montevallo. Upon arrival they visited Section 8 to pay tribute to Matthew Blount, our Post's namesake. A wreath and flag were placed by his headstone.



The Riders then moved on to their next destination, Elmwood Cemetery where they visited Eric Fort's father's grave marker (his body was never recovered after a plane crash). Another wreath was laid in USNR Lieutenant Eric Parker Brice's honor. Eric offered an emotional story about his father who was killed at age 25.



Various members of the group paid their respects to other Veterans in the cemetery.

The Memorial Day Ride was officially at an end.

Let Us Honor the Fallen and Never Forget.



For God and Country
Riding for those that can not
Doug McDaniel



Flag Day

Flag Day is celebrated annually in the U.S. on June 14. Here are some key things to know about the holiday.

Flag Day has a long history and began on the local level. Its origin dates back to 1885, when a school teacher in Wisconsin had her class honor "Flag Birthday" on June 14 to mark the anniversary of the Flag Resolution of 1777. From there, communities across the country began to mark the day.

In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson made a presidential proclamation, which officially established Flag Day. For it was not until 1949, however, that President Harry Truman signed an act of Congress designating June 14 as Flag Day.

Flag Day marks the official adoption of the American flag that flies all over the country today. The Flag Resolution of 1777 declared, in part: "Resolved, That the flag of the thirteen United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation."

People are encouraged to display the American flag at homes and businesses on June 14. Some communities hold parades and other celebrations honoring the flag.

The United States Code devotes an entire section to the Flag Code, which covers how citizens should respectfully display and treat the American flag.

More on The US Flag Code go to <https://www.chamberofcommerce.org/usflag/uscode36.html>

Post 555 May Meeting Update



Due to the COVID-19 health risks, Post 555 have been holding their Executive Committee meetings via video conferencing for March and April with much success having all officers in attendance.

The first Post meeting was held via video conferencing on May 7, 2020 with also much success. There were thirty members in attendance with two guests, Tina Bush, Department Sr. Vice Commander; and Vann Daughtry, Division 2 Commander.

The Post will hold its June 4, 2020 meeting again via video conferencing. Members and invited guests will be sent an invitation with links to the meeting.

The Legion Act

With President Trump's signature on the LEGION Act, the ongoing declared period of war was extended back to Dec. 7, 1941. The congressionally approved act is a way to honor thousands of veterans who were killed or wounded on duty during periods not previously considered a time of war.

The eligibility now spans from Dec. 7, 1941, until a time when the U.S. is no longer at war, as determined by Congress. If you served honorably, you are eligible to join The American Legion.

Dedication

SUPPORT
OUR
VETERANS

JOIN
THE
AMERICAN
LEGION

THE
AMERICAN
LEGION

FAMILY

Matthew Blount
Post 555
Alpost555.com
205-678-1375

1st Thursday each month at 7pm
Meeting Location: Pelham Senior Center

Supporting our veterans and our communities.

Visit Mathew Blount Post 555's website for information about joining.
www.alpost555



WW II Member

Coxswain Richard F. Paxton
U.S. Navy



Richard F.(Dick)Paxton, originally from Greenwood, Indiana, enlisted in the U.S. Navy, January 15, 1945 after finishing High School. He completed Boot Camp at Sampson Naval Training Base, New York in April of 1945. After Boot Camp and a two week leave, he began four weeks of Seabee training on April 16, 1945 at the Naval Construction Training Center, known as Endicott, in Davisville, Rhode Island. From Endicott he boarded a troupe train on June 23, 1945 taking 5 days to reach Camp Parks Naval Base, California, known as the "home to the Naval Construction Battalions".

Training at Camp Parks lasted about four weeks then he received orders to ship out July 22, 1945 to Pearl Harbor on the USS Westmoreland, (APA-104) a Bayfield-class attack transport arriving in Pearl harbor on August 1, 1945.

August 21, 1945, Dick was assigned as a crew member of the USS *Samar* (ARG-3), a Luzon class repair ship that was underway to Okinawa via Eniwetok and Saipan. Arriving on Saipan September 7, 1945, he joined the 121st Naval Construction Battalion operating on Saipan under the auspices of the Base Public Works Department. The battalion was primarily engaged in maintenance and renovation work, including such things as rehabilitating a seaplane ramp, constructing a coral dam, operating and maintaining public utility systems.

A fresh water supply was an important utility of the island infrastructure. The seabees installed miles of water pipes, wells and pumping stations. The wells were manned 24/7 requiring the men to live on site. Richard was responsible for the supply logistics for the water units that supported seven wells.

Richard remained with the 121st until May, 1946 when he was repatriated as part of Operation *Magic Carpet* which was post-World War II effort by the War

Shipping Administration to repatriate over eight million American military personnel from the European, Pacific, and Asian theaters.

He shipped out May 11, 1945 on the USS *Hermitage* (AP-54), a troop transport that served with the US Navy during World War II. Prior to her Navy service, she was the Italian luxury liner SS *Conte Biancamano*.

The trip took about two weeks with stops at Guam and Rota, arriving at Treasure Island Naval Base, San Francisco, California on May 25, 1946. Treasure Island was a major Navy departure and receiving point for sailors in the Pacific aboard surface ships and submarines. He remained with the ship's company there until August 8, 1946.

He was discharged on August 10, 1946 at the Naval Receiving Station of the U. S. Naval Training and Distribution Center (TADCEN), Shoemaker, California,

All the units on Saipan were brought up to full force for the invasion of Tokyo, which did not happen. The 121st Naval Construction Battalion remained on Saipan performing these duties until December 1947. By that time the Seabees assigned to the battalion had dwindled to just a few over 100. On December 13, 1947, by order of the Chief of Naval Operations, United States Naval Construction Battalion 121 was reassigned as Construction Battalion Detachment 1504. Thus ended more than four and a half years of glorious fighting and building achievements.

*We thank Dick for his
service to his country!*

