



THE TRIPLE NICKEL



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

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IN GOD WE TRUST

SEPTEMBER 2018

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Ceremony honors Hightower

Rodney C. Hightower was honored during a Post Everlasting ceremony Aug. 2 during the regular Post meeting.

Hightower transferred to Post Everlasting on March 19. He served his country as a Marine and was a member of American Legion Matthew Blount Post 555.

Members of the Hightower family, including his wife Martha, joined the meeting for the ceremony.

The Post Everlasting ceremony is a solemn event that commemorates the life and service of comrades who have been members of the American Legion.

COMMANDER'S COMMENTS



Tom McDaniel

Post Commander

I was prepared to begin my comments today with a little pep talk on recruiting however, I can not start without first thanking the Triple Nickel Riders on the fantastic job they did this past Saturday. Jeff Monday and numerous volunteers from the riders and the post hosted "Hanger Fest III" at the Bessemer Airport. I am not going to take away Jeff's thunder by telling you all about it, as Jeff will take care of that in his report to the post. This by far was one of the largest events we have undertaken, with an estimated 1,000 people attending over the entire program of named bands and vocalists. What a superb job along and a lot of hard work. Congratulations to the Riders and to all who helped.

Now back to my original topic I was going to comment on. You have heard at every post meeting all of the officers talk about recruiting and it was not only our job as officers to do but also you as members to look for possible new members. I am not one to make things difficult and that is sort of my approach in highlighting recruiting and how easy it can be. Let me cite an example. My son, who is a member of the Sons of the American Legion, was at his daughter's high school volleyball game. He happened to see a gentleman wearing a t-shirt with the printing on the front, "DD 214 Alumni". My son walked up to the man and said "You know, my dad has a shirt just like the one you are wearing." Then the conversation started and guess what? The individual is interested in



coming to a post meeting and finding out more about the American Legion. Now understand, the farthest thing in my son's mind was going out that evening and recruiting for the American Legion. My point is, recruiting is no more than striking up a conversation with someone you have something in common with. Every day I am sure you see someone wearing a hat or t-shirt that symbolizes their proud recognition of service to their country. What better lead in to starting a conversation by thanking them for their service and asking if they are a member of the American Legion. How many times do we have this opportunity in front of us and just let it slide by. As a young post, as we are, a lot of people still aren't aware there is an American Legion post in Pelham, Alabama. Like I said earlier, it's not hard. If you are proud to be a member of The Matthew Blount American Legion Post 555, let your neighbor, your friends and yes the people you strike up a conversation with, know how proud you are by recruiting those who are equally as proud to have served their country.

We will see all of you at our next meeting Thursday, Sept. 6th at the Pelham Senior Center. Come early at 6:15 for our meal and social time. Meeting starts at 7 o'clock sharp.

1ST VICE'S COMMENTS



Richard Kaster

1st Vice Commander

Our Post 555 will be supporting the Pelham High School Oratorical contest in January 2019.

We have also been asked to host the next two levels of competition:

- Winners of their high school level contests will compete at the 23rd District Contest, on Feb. 9, at the Pelham City Senior Center at 10 a.m.

• The winner of the 23rd District would go on to the Division Level competition, we will host this competition, for the 2nd Division Contest— on Feb. 23, location to be determined.

The 2nd Division winner will on to the Department (State) level competition on March 9. Then the 1st place winner of this competition goes on to Nationals April 5-7 in Indianapolis.

There is a lot of scholarship money available to the winners. The monetary scholarships vary at Post level, District and Division levels. However, at the Department Oratorical Scholarships are: 1st place \$5,000; 2nd place \$3,000; 3rd place \$2,000. National Finals are: 1st place \$18,000; 2nd place \$16,000; 3rd place \$14,000.

Also, I have been asked to be the Oratorical Director for the 2nd Division.

What does that mean? I have contacted about 50 Commanders either by email or Postal mail to provide them with information necessary on how the Oratorical Program works according to the Department (state) Alabama American Legion. I will provide whatever assistance to these 2nd Division Posts as necessary.

I have set the dates for the competition to take place for our high school, county, Districts and Division competition. Now we will see what happens?

Last Oratorical competition, we were fortunate enough to have a young lady from Pelham High School win at all levels prior to competing at the State level where she took 3rd place \$2,000 in scholarship money. However, she collected several hundreds of dollars at all three levels she won.

Additionally, Pelham City High School is having a Pelham Open House night on Sept. 20 from 6-8 p.m. Our Post will be participating by setting up an informational table. To give our support to the youth programs, that is the Oratorical (Speech) program, Boys and Girls State and the American Legion Baseball.

Here are the contest category dates for all of the posts in the 2nd Division, they are as follows:

High School Contests - Not later than 19 January 2019

County/Posts Contests - Not later than 26 January 2019

23rd District Contests- on 9 February 2019

2nd Division Contests - on 23 February 2019

Department (state) Contest - 9 March 2019

National Finals - 5-7 April 2019

Blount honored by Seniors Hall of Fame

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — Past Commander Barry Blount received the Military Honor Award during the 2018 Alabama Senior Citizens Hall of Fame Awards Ceremony on Aug. 5.

Blount, who was the first commander for Post 555, retired as a command sergeant major for the U.S. Army.

From the ceremony for the program:

“Command Sergeant Major Barry K. Blount comes from a family with a long military history. He is the proud father of three sons who have all entered the military. In 2005, Blount retired from mil-



Post Commander Tom McDaniel and Shelby County RSVP Director Marvin Copes join Barry Blount for the 2018 Alabama Senior Citizens Hall of Fame Ceremony on Aug. 5. Copes nominated Blount for the award.



itary life holding the highest non-commissioned rank in the Army and having received numerous awards for his service to the country.

“When his middle son tragically passed away in 2012, he honored his legacy by establishing the American Legion Matthew Blount Post 555. Mr. Blount is dedicated to the fulfillment of the Legion’s mission of service to veterans, youth, and patriotism. The membership has developed over the years from 30 to 200 and has been commended for being one of the fastest growing posts in the country. In 2017, the post received commendation from Governor Kay Ivey for

meeting the American Legion’s mission with over 170 events involving veterans, youth and the community in the first 36 months of operation.

“Mr. Blount has been an RSVP member since January 2014 and has logged over 2374 hours. He has volunteered his additional time and energy to other Veterans organizations as well.”



ADJUTANT'S AREA



Ron Koonce

Post Adjutant

I thank the Post members who have submitted their 2019 renewals that has kept the Post on schedule and exceeding the 50 percent goal with 54 percent before the Sept. 7th target date. I encourage the remainder of our members to follow suit that we will accomplish our goal of 100 percent before Dec. 31. Only 86 more renewals are needed by then. Everyone should have received a 2019 renewal notice from National Headquarters by now. Check and make sure you have not missed seeing it or you can just mail your \$45 renewal to the Post address or pay in person at the September meeting. Checks are to be payable to "Matthew Blount Post 555." Your 2018 membership will expire Jan. 1, 2019. That's

just four months away.

The Hangar Fest III event was great. Thanks to the members of the Triple Nickel Riders, Post, Sons and Auxiliary that volunteered to help park cars and man the Post tent in the vendor area. A bigger thanks to the promoters, Webber & Koonce Media, for providing the opportunity to participate for the third year.

The next major event for the Alabama Posts is the annual Alabama Department Fall Leadership Conference that will take place at the Embassy Suites in Montgomery Sept. 21-22. Please call 334-269-5055 to make your room reservations. Group rate for this event will \$115/night plus tax and parking. This meeting is open to all members and is a great opportunity to learn more about the procedures of the American Legion and how to apply this knowledge to the operations of the local Post. There are no registration fees associated with this conference. The meeting agenda will be available in the near future.

For God and Country
Ron Koonce, Adjutant

THE TRIPLE NICKEL

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Matthew Blount Post 555.*

*50 Racquet Club Parkway, Pelham, AL 35124
(205) 678-1375*



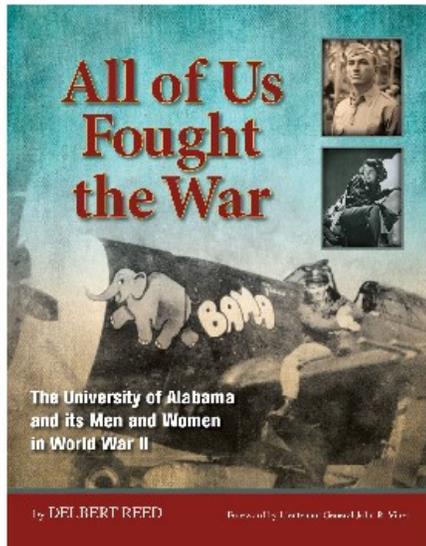
Items for publication are accepted on Executive Committee approval and available space. Submit articles prior to the 10th of the month for publication the following month. We reserve the right to edit any submission for the purpose of publication. Letters to the Editor must include name, address & telephone number. Names will be withheld upon request.

**Send email to:
Editor@alpost555.com**

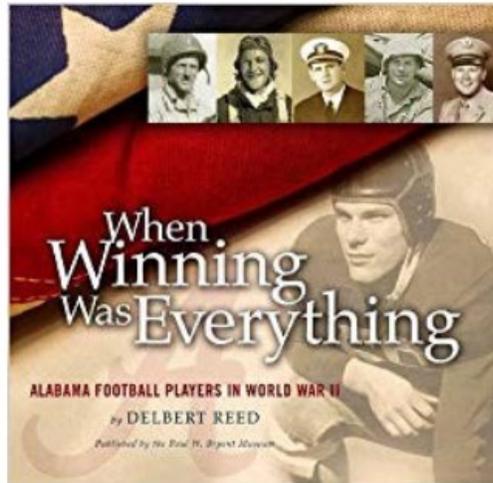
Fundraising Drawing

**Drawing Nov. 1
During the Post
Thanksgiving Dinner**

Two books by Delbert Reed.
Separate drawing for each.



A companion to his *When Winning Was Everything: Alabama Football Players in World War II*, Delbert Reed's *All of Us Fought the War* extends the story of sacrifice and heroism to the university at large.



The personal war stories of many of the Crimson Tide football players who participated in the Good War are told in *When Winning Was Everything*, a tribute to all the players who earned our enduring admiration not only on the football field but also in wartime.

Tickets

\$5 each

or

3 for \$10

NEED NOT BE PRESENT TO WIN



American Legion
Matthew Blount
Post 555
Pelham, Alabama



***Thanksgiving Dinner
with the
American Legion
Matthew Blount Post 555
At***

***Pelham Civic Complex (500 Amphitheater Road, Pelham, AL 35124
November 01, 2018 (Thursday)
6 PM***

(This is the Post's regular monthly meeting)

***You and your immediate family are welcome but,
I need a head count for you and the members of your family to reserve
the meals and table.***

You must RSVP by October 21, 2018

TO: bkblount@gmail.com

I will reply when I have your request.

If you have not received a reply call 531-4131.



Hangar Fest III

FUNDRAISER

SUNDAY, AUG. 25

BESSEMER AIRPORT



TRIPLE NICKEL RIDERS



Jeff Monday
Director, Triple Nickel Riders

POST 555 REMEMBRANCE RIDE HONORING VETERANS AND FIRST RESPONDERS

15 September 2018

**Starts and ends @ The Heart of Dixie
Harley Davidson, followed by Bike Night**

Registration Starts @ 1pm

KSU: 2:30pm

\$20.00 Per Bike

**The Ride Benefits the American Legion
Legacy Scholarship Fund**

Go to www.legion.org



Matthew Blount grew from a boy to a man early in his life and he 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. He is survived by his wife Melinda Copeland Blount and daughter, Audrey, brothers David Blount, Andrew Blount and his parents, Barry and Terrie Blount. Matthew is interred at the Alabama National Cemetery, Montevallo, Alabama. Go to www.alpost555.com to see more about Matthew Blount and your local American Legion



JUDGE ADVOCATE'S CORNER



Chuck Kiser

Judge Advocate

As the new school year begins, and summer wanes, it might be easy to think that the Legion activities slow down as well. This cannot be further from the truth! As you will read elsewhere in this newsletter, many activities are on the schedule from now until the end of the calendar year. We need your help and involvement to make them successful and carry on the tradition of excellence that this Post has come to be known for. Please get involved!

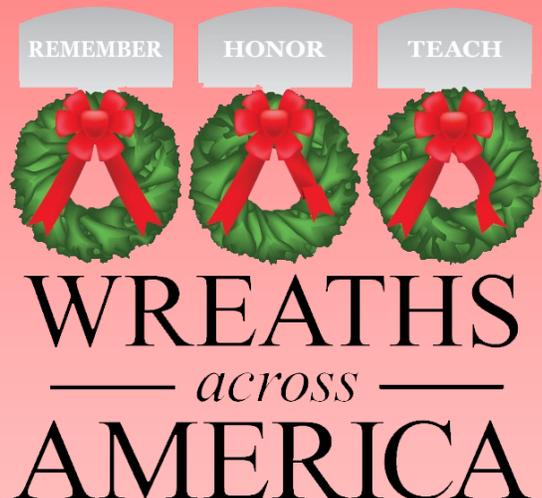
As I announced at the last Post meeting, the annual Wreaths Across America drive for donations by the Blue Star Salute Foundation has begun. As burials continue to climb at the Alabama National Cemetery, it is expected that donations will need to be raised to provide a wreath for approximately 6,100 graves this year.

Wreath donations will again cost \$15 per wreath. The annual Wreaths Across America ceremony will take place on Saturday, Dec. 15 at 11 a.m. at the Alabama National Cemetery.

The Post will once again accept donations for wreaths and consolidate all donations received and forward them to the Blue Star Salute in November. We are prepared to accept these donations currently and have, in fact, already received our first donations. Donation forms will be available at each Post meeting beginning with the August meeting.

If you, a family member or friend wishes to donate for wreaths, please complete a donation form and give it to Chuck Kiser at a Post meeting along with a check for the total of wreaths donated and we will see that it is consolidated with all Post donations and forwarded to the Blue Star Salute prior to the cut-off date of November 5th.

Note that checks to be included with the Post consolidated donation should be made payable to Matthew Blount Post 555 and Wreaths Across America should be written in the memo line. **We cannot accept checks made out to Wreaths Across America.**



WE NEED YOUR ASSISTANCE AND INVOLVEMENT IN POST ACTIVITIES!

Step up and let us know of your interests and we will get you in touch with the proper people

PLEASE, GET OUT AND SUPPORT YOUR POST IN 2018!

CHAPLAIN'S THOUGHTS



Chris Vonderau

Post Chaplain

Several people have asked me where I'm a pastor. I'm not. I'm a Sunday School teacher for the 10th grade boys at First Baptist Church of Pelham. I have three daughters and when the oldest was about to head over to the Youth Department, I thought it would be a good idea to start checking out who may be calling on them in the upcoming years. That was nine years ago. I have two more years with them and then the last of my daughters will be off to college.

I thought I would go over to the youth side of the house and teach them a thing or two. God taught me much more than I ever imparted during my time with them. The young people I encountered were hungry, smart and want to live lives of integrity. This world has so much garbage to distract them and many of them get sucked up in the junk of this world. Sounds a lot like many of the adults I encounter.

The ones I got to spend time with working in someone's yard or taking fishing were open books about their lives and brutally honest about their walk with God. Is there a young person out there you can spend time with and really get to know? They all seem to like milk shakes from Jack's and I've had some really good conversations over a chocolate malt. Invest some time with them. You may even learn a thing or two.

Turn your eyes to the Cross of Jesus Christ comrades, we are one day closer to home! 2 Peter 3:8-15

Your Chaplain,

Chris Vonderau

205 966-1364

Clarkson to speak at September post meeting

Art Clarkson, general partner for the Birmingham Bulls, will be the featured speaker at the Sept. 6 meeting for Post 555. The meeting begins at 7 p.m. at the Pelham Senior Center.

Clarkson, originally from Los Angeles, has had a long and impressive resume as an executive in professional sports, with significant professional achievements in

baseball, hockey, arena, and indoor football.

After a college football career that saw him win four letters at Los Angeles City College and Cal State-Northridge,

Clarkson played one season in the Continental Football



League.

As the principal owner and general manager of the Class AA Birmingham Barons baseball club from 1980-1990, Clarkson was named the Southern League's Executive of the Year four times, as well as being named the Class AA Baseball Executive of the Year by the Sporting News in 1982.

Matthew Blount Post 555 will again offer to consolidate donations and forward them, along with all memorial designations, to The Blue Star Salute Foundation. Checks should be payable to Matthew Blount Post 555 with Wreaths Across America written in the memo line. Donation forms and checks should be sent to: American Legion Post 555, 50 Racquet Club Parkway, Pelham AL 35124.

***Ninth Annual Wreaths Across America – 15 December 2018
Alabama National Cemetery
Montevallo, Alabama***



*Remember - Honor - Teach
Updated 6 Dec 2017*

The Blue Star Salute Foundation, Inc., (BSSFI) needs sponsors for our 10th Annual Wreaths Across America project -- a nationwide fundraising endeavor to provide a live Maine Balsam Wreath for each Veteran's grave each Christmas season. Wreaths sponsored by this BSSFI endeavor are for Veterans graves in the Alabama National Cemetery (ALNC), HWY 119, Montevallo. The 2018 National Remembrance Ceremony will be held at 11AM on the 15th of December 2018. The cost of each wreath is \$15.00. In 2018 we will need approximately 6,000-6,250 wreaths for our Cemetery. All wreath sponsors as well as family members of those buried within ALNC are invited and strongly encouraged to attend and participate in the wreath-laying ceremony.

To help sponsor wreaths for the ALNC, return this completed form with your sponsorship to BSSFI, PO Box 203, Harpersville AL 35078. Your checks or money orders must be payable to BSSFI, for: Wreaths Across America. For names to be included on the BSSFI "In Honor/In Memory display, forms must be received no later than 5 November 2018. Wreath sponsorships are accepted throughout the year. Each sponsorship is tax deductible and a receipt will be provided for sponsorships of \$100 or more if requested. For more information, please visit our website www.bluestarsalute.org or phone Glenn Nivens, (205) 672-2887.

**Wreaths Across America - Sponsorship Form
The American Legion, Matthew Blount Post 555**

Please print clearly

Printed Name of Individual/Organization: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Email address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Sponsorship Amount: _____

In Honor of (living): _____

In Memory of (deceased): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____