



# 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

MAY 2018

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## Lakotich Is Legionnaire of the Year

Trustee Frank Lakotich, a nine-year veteran of the American Legion, is Post 555's Legionnaire of the Year for 2017.

Post Commander Tom McDaniel said Lakotich was selected for his outstanding contribution to Post 555 and the Pelham community during 2017. This honor is

awarded only once a year and is one of the most coveted awards in the American Legion.

Lakotich served in the U.S. Air Force from 1961 to 1969, during which he was in radio and television broadcasting. Frank broadcasted

*(continued on page 2)*

## COMMANDER'S COMMENTS



**Tom McDaniel**

*Post Commander*

Another month has gone by and I just received my monthly Legion Magazine. I do enjoy reading the articles in the magazine. There are not only interesting but informative articles making me aware of what is going on at other Legion posts. This is important that we realize what others are doing to make The American Legion alive.

There is an article about Yvette Weigold, a veteran of the Marine Corps and the U.S. Army. Yvette is a 10-year American Legion Veteran. In 2003, Yvette had the honor of escorting the body of an Army Reserve Soldier who was killed in an accident while on duty in Kuwait. This experience so moved her she attended the funerals of over 100 servicemen and women over the next year. As a result of her dedication to those who have fallen, her Post 51 in North Las Vegas, Nev., named their post after Lance Cpl. Budd Michael Coté, a fallen Marine, and decided to maintain his grave site. It is important as American Legion members we do everything we can to show someone does care and they are not forgotten, she says.

With Memorial Day coming up, we to as a post will be paying tribute to those that are no longer with us. As members of Matthew Blount American Legion Post 555, plan to take part in the service at the National Cemetery in Montevallo, Monday May 28, 2018. If you are not firing the Civil War cannons, plan to be in the audience. Please wear your post hat and shirt if you have them. We want to show to all in attendance that we will not forget.

I will see you all at our next meeting, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018. Social time starts at 6:15 and meeting to follow at 7:00. We will have installation of officers as well as a guest speaker, Retired Air Force Col. Eldon Woodie, director of the National Memorial Cemetery in Montevallo.

## Lakotich serves both country and community

*(continued from page 1)*

all over Korea and Turkey giving support and news to our troops. At one time the North Koreans put a bounty on Frank's head to suppress his broadcasting efforts and pro American commercials.

After a break in service, Frank enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserve and was an Army broadcaster from 1982 to 1996.

On leaving the service af-

ter a total of 21 years of service, he was employed by U.S. Steel for 20 years, Florida Steel for two years and O'Neal Steel for 20 years in which he served as corporate safety manager.

Locally, Frank is a mem-



**Lakotich**

ber of the Pelham Library Guild, Friends of Helena Public Library, Support Committee of the National Veterans Cemetery in Montevallo and also the Blue Star Support Committee.

Frank is the fourth legionnaire to receive this honor at Matthew Blount American Legion Post 555. Other recipients were Ron Koonce, Kenneth Paschal and Anita Bennett.

## 1ST VICE'S COMMENTS



**Richard Kaster**

*1st Vice Commander*

I recently reviewed the sign in rosters for the last almost one year and sadly found out, unfortunately, there are a lot of dues paying members assigned to our post who have not attended our meetings for a long time and this is not a good thing.

We miss them as part of our fellowship and veterans' association. Likewise, these absent members also are missing out on being part of fulfilling the American Legion pledge and mission to participate and give back to their community and veterans' activities.

As a Reachout to these absent members, I have been calling each one to try and find out how they are doing. Also, to see if they need any assistance. In addition, I have invited them back as we miss them. As part of the conversation I have found out that some are incapacitated and therefore, not able to attend. Up to this point in time I have only been able to talk with a few members as some have answering machines. Those that don't answer I have left a message to see how they are doing and also to let them know we have missed them and invite them back to our meetings.

Additionally, some thanked me for personally calling to see how they are doing and inviting them back.

One of the return calls I received was from a woman who told me that her husband has been deployed for months now and he will be absent for many more months, I called her back and let her know that if she is in need of anything we can help her with to please call me.

With this thought in mind, we can do more and we will do more to make a difference not only within the community but to be a better service to our veterans inside or outside of our post.

I am sharing this information with you because as you read this and if you find that you maybe one of the members that haven't attended our General Membership Meetings in the last few months or years and are not incapacitated, than ask yourself why haven't I and maybe it is time to start giving back? We want you to come to our meetings and participate in our activities.

## Department Convention set for June 14-17

— BREAKING NEWS —

Rooms are no longer available at the Embassy Suites, due to high conference attendance.

Booking options are:

- Renaissance Hotel - 201 Tallapoosa Street (Right next door to Embassy Suites) 334-481-5000
- Hampton Inn & Suites - 100 Commerce Street ( Right down from Embassy Suites ) 334-265-1010
- Double Tree - 120 Madison Avenue ( A couple of blocks from Embassy Suites ) 334-245-2320

This year's Annual Convention will be held at the Embassy Suites in Montgomery, 300 Tallapoosa St.

There will be a banquet on Saturday evening, June 16, at a charge of \$15 per person. Menu and order form will be available at a later date.

For more information, contact Department Headquarters.



## ADJUTANT'S AREA



**Ron Koonce**

*Post Adjutant*

We are moving into May and winding down the last two months of the American Legion 2017-2018 fiscal year. It has been another active and productive year with the Post hosting or participating in over 30 events for veterans, youth and community.

The 2019 Officer elections are behind us and we began preparation for the coming new year. Congratulations to the 2018-2019 officers that will be installed at the May 3 meeting. I encourage you to addend this important ceremony in support of their leadership for the coming year.

May will be another busy month with the installation of 2019 officers, The Annual Great American Cookout, Boys State at the University of Alabama, the start of American Legion Baseball season, Post 555's gun crews firing cannons at the Alabama National Cemetery Memorial Day Ceremonies, Squadron 555 of The Sons of The American Legion Veterans Gravesite Flag Placement Ceremony at Pelham Cemetery on the afternoon of Memorial Day. They all offer lot of oppourtunities for post members to experience participation in support of Post activities.

There are still leadership and committee positions to be filled for the coming year. All you need to qualify is to have the willingness to get involved. You will get more in return that you will give.

The 2019 membership renewal campaign begins July 1, 2018. Be on the lookout for your renewal statement in the mail after July 1, 2018. You can renew by mail, online at [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org) or in person at any monthly meeting. You still have time to renew your 2018 membership if have not already done so. Do not cause an interruption in your continuous years of membership by skipping a year.

The Alabama Department of The American Legion will hold its state convention in mid-June in Montgomery. Convention is open to all members and offers a great opportunity to learn more and the organization and the people that are involved in making it successful. A current 2018 membership card is required to access the meeting hall. More information to come.

## THE TRIPLE NICKEL

*is published monthly for members of*

*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**

# Officers, firefighter honored

Post 555 recognized police officers and a firefighter at its April meeting.

Pelham Police Officer James Campbell and Shelby County Sheriff's Office Deputy Rachel Ivey were honored as Officers of the Year. Pelham Fire Department Capt. Everett Hazen was named Firefighter of the Year.

Police Chief Larry Palmer, Sheriff John Samanigo and Fire Chief Tim Honeycutt presented the awards, along with Post Commander Tom McDaniel.

Palmer said Campbell has "a true concern for the citizens he serves." He praises the officer's concern for veterans and his drug prevention efforts.

Samanigo called Ivey "the quintessence of a public servant." He cited her dedication as a traffic homicide investigator and school resource officer.

Honeycutt said Hazen "exhibits everything good in a team member that a fire chief could want." In 2016, he completed the Alabama Smoke Diver School, and is also certified in water rescue. He has been a firefighter for 16 years.



*From left: Post Commander Tom McDaniel, Officer James Campbell, Police Chief Larry Palmer*



*From left: Sheriff John Samanigo, Deputy Rachel Ivey, McDaniel*



*From left: Fire Chief Tim Honeycutt, Capt. Everett Hazen, McDaniel*



## School for Amazing Kids gets new flag

Post 555's Honor Guard replaced an American flag at the School for Amazing Kids on April 17.

The event was used as a way to educate the children about the importance of the U.S. flag. This is the second time Post 555 has replaced a flag at the school.

Post 555 Honor Guard members Jerry McClain, Nancy Waller, Ron McGriff and Robert Horsley performed the ceremony, which takes 10-15 minutes, and Kenneth Paschal explained each step of the process to the audience.

At the end of the ceremony, Post 555 gave miniature American flags to the students to wave as they recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

When a school or business contacts Post 555 to conduct a Flag Replacement Ceremony the post will provide the organization with the appropriate sized Ameri-

can made flag. Post 555 does request that a donation be made to the post to cover the cost of the selected flag provided by the post.



# JUDGE ADVOCATE'S CORNER



**Chuck Kiser**  
*Judge Advocate*

The Installation of Officers will be held at the Post meeting on May 3rd. Elected Officers for the new year are as follows:

- Commander – **Tom McDaniel**
- 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Commander – **Richard Kaster**
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice

- Commander – **Anita Bennett**
- Trustee (3 Year Term) – **Nancy Waller**

Post members who are willing to either serve as officers, chairpersons or committee members in several areas are needed. In the April Triple Nickel newsletter, I listed the committees for which chairpersons and committee members are needed. This month I am attaching a description of the Standing Committees in hopes that this will assist members in understanding what various committees do and therefore encourage involvement.

**Standing Committee Chairs and Committee members:**

- Americanism*
- Membership*
- Post Activities*
- Communications*
- Legal*
- Veteran's Affairs*
- Children & Youth*
- Economic*
- Uniformed Groups (Flag Replacement Detail)*

*National Security*

**AdHoc Committee Chairs and Committee members:**

- Boys State*
- Girls State*
- Fund Raising*
- Events*
- Oratorical*
- Social Media – Facebook*
- Social Media – Website*
- Newsletter*
- Legion Baseball*
- Photography*
- Nominating*
- Veteran's Recognition*
- Emergency Preparedness*

With these many opportunities to become involved in the life of the Post, everyone should be able to find an area of interest to them. Contact any Post Officer with questions, or to express your interest in participating in one or more committees. If the Post is to continue to grow and increase its reach into the community, **WE NEED YOUR ASSISTANCE AND INVOLVEMENT!**

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!**



## Jeff Monday

*Director, Triple Nickel Riders*

In the fall of 1993 in Garden City, Mich., Chuck (Tramp) Dare and the commander of Michigan's American Legion Post 396, (Polka) Bill Kaledas shared an idea to start an association of motorcycle enthusiasts within The American Legion. The two Legionnaires — both long-time riders — wanted to provide an environment where post, Auxiliary and Sons of The American Legion members who shared a common love for motorcycles could come together

Dare and Kaledas prepared a letter to Michigan Department Adjutant Hubert Hess. In his Nov. 19, 1993, reply, Hess agreed with the concept and stated that it "sounds like a great idea—let's work it out." In further correspondence and follow-up phone conversations, Hess gave the two riders instructions on how to manage such a program at the post level. He also provided information on how to get approval for the use of the American Legion Emblem and to get this program recognized and supported by the membership. The members of Post 396, at a regular Legion meeting, adopted a resolution for a new post program to be known as the "American Legion Riders".

Dare and Kaledas, joined by 19 other founding members of the Garden City Post 396, soon found themselves inundated with requests for information about the new organization, and agreed to establish a central source of information about the Riders, to make certain that the new "chapters" around the country formed not as motorcycle clubs or gangs, but as Legionnaires, Auxiliary, and SAL members joining to ride as members of The American Legion family. Pat Babcock, an SAL member from Michigan, soon established a website with sample by-laws and instructions for forming new Chapters. That website, [americanlegionriders.net](http://americanlegionriders.net), continues to be the primary source of information and assistance for new Chapters worldwide.

Each month I plan to pass on the History of the Rider and their part in The American Legion. The month of April has been a busy month, glad to see everyone and hope to see you at future Riders events. The month started out with the Making Strides 4 Multiple Sclerosis Ride, it was a great day of riding, great group of people hoisting. We had 8 Riders from Post 555 make the ride. The Legion, Sons and Auxiliary resented this fine and blessed day.

The Second Thursday of the month we found time to have the Riders monthly meeting. We meet monthly at the Heart of Dixie Harley Davidson Hog Room, 6:30pm meeting time. We complete the business meeting and take a nice dinner ride. This month we made the nice ride out of Pelham thru Helena to Hoover. The Boot hoist dinner for the riders this month. If you're looking for a nice place to have a quick bit to eat, check The Boot out.

The end of the month we found time to take part in Phillip M. Davis Foundation 1<sup>st</sup> Responders Ride, cold and nasty day but we still showed up to support the local law enforcement ride. To end the month the riders took part in supporting Lone Warriors and The CROSS Riders with a benefit ride. Its all about supporting those that support Veterans and the American way of life. Next time you see a group of Bikes just remember they might be out joy riding or they may just be out supporting multiple charities, or maybe even paying respect the fallen. Keep your wheels under you and always **ride for those that cannot.**

## CHAPLAIN'S THOUGHTS



**Chris Vonderau**

*Post Chaplain*

Your Heavenly Father has made it crystal clear in His Word exactly what His purpose for each of us is. Isn't that a great gift?!? I know, some of you are doubting that. Get your Bible out and let me show you.

Open the pages to Genesis 1:26 — Whose image are you made in? (Side note — as a fisherman, I'm grateful He lists fish as something I get to rule over. I'm still working on that one.)

Now keep reading — you'll find that sin entered the world and we began choosing our own way. Isn't that what sin is? We want our way and not God's. At this point, we were doomed. Death, sickness, disease — it all entered the world and seemed to mess up God's plan. Or did it?

Whether you realize it or not, you need a Savior and that's what God gave each of us in the gift of Jesus Christ. All we need to do is receive the gift. Once we receive Jesus Christ as our Savior and only way to restore our relationship with God, He begins to work out all the details in our life to ultimately bring Him glory and bring you into a living and growing relationship with Himself and ultimately, Comrades, into His glory.

Not sure where you are with God? Call me - 205 966-1364. Years ago He saved me from ultimate destruction and He wants to do the same for you. Brothers and Sisters, turn your eyes to the cross, we are one day closer to home.

## *Get ready for American Legion Baseball!*

American Legion Post 555 is forming baseball teams in the 19U, Varsity and Junior Varsity divisions for the 2018 Summer season. The teams plan to play 18-22 league game and tournament schedule. The season begins after Memorial Day and ends in mid-July.

The American Legion was chartered and incorporated by Congress in 1919 as a patriotic veterans' organization devoted to mutual helpfulness. It is the nation's largest war-time service organization, committed to mentoring youth and sponsorship of wholesome

programs in our communities, advocating patriotism and honor, promoting strong national security, and continue devotion to our fellow service members and veterans.

Evaluations will be held May 6 at Pelham High School:

- Junior Varsity players (current 9th grade and below) check-in at 12:30 p.m.
- Varsity players (current 11th grade and below) check-in at 1:30pm
- 19U (college freshman born in 1999 and below) check-in at 2:30pm

Online registration for players can be found at: [www.alabamaamericanlegionbaseball.com](http://www.alabamaamericanlegionbaseball.com).



### **Points of Contact:**

Jon Freeman 205-365-4794 cell, email: [triplenickelbaseball@gmail.com](mailto:triplenickelbaseball@gmail.com)

Kyle Phillips 205-381-3713 cell, email: [kphillips1421@yahoo.com](mailto:kphillips1421@yahoo.com)

## Support Committee provides opportunities to serve in 2018



**Chuck Kiser**

*Veterans Recognition Committee*

Support Committee for the Alabama National Cemetery (SCALNC) and Blue Star Salute Foundation

SCALNC & Blue Star Salute Meetings – Held monthly at Liberty Hall – American Village in Montevallo.



May begins a busy summer season for both organizations. Your participation in any or all, of the following events during May is encouraged.

May 24th	TAPS Ceremony	ALNC	10:15 AM
May 24th	Graveside Hole Punching	ALNC	3:00 PM
May 26th	Graveside Flag Placement	ALNC	9:00 AM
May 28th	Memorial Day Ceremony	ALNC	9:00 AM
May 28th	American Village Memorial Day		11:00 AM – 2:30 PM

Your assistance and participation in Veteran's Recognition events during 2018 would be appreciated.

Date	Time	Event	Location	Notes
<b>May 19</b> (Saturday)	7:30 am	Alabama's 14 <sup>th</sup> Annual Blue Star Salute	USS AL Battleship Memorial Park	
<b>May 24</b> (Thursday)	9:00 am 10:15 am	Put up Avenue of Flags TAPS Program	ALNC (Montevallo)	Volunteers welcome OPEN TO PUBLIC (Free Adm.)
<b>May 24</b> (Thursday)	12:00 pm	<b>SCALNC Membership Meeting</b>	American Village Liberty Hall	OPEN TO PUBLIC
<b>May 24</b> (Thursday)	3:00 pm	Graveside Flags Hole Punching	ALNC	Meet at Committal Shelter 3
<b>May 26</b> (Saturday)	9:00 am	Graveside Flags Placement Ceremony	ALNC (Montevallo) Committal Shelter 3	Families and friends place American Flags on each grave
<b>May 26</b> (Saturday)	10:00 am	Set up chairs and 10'X20' tent for Memorial Day	ALNC (Montevallo) Ceremonial Flagpole	Chairs will be transported from SC Storage Bldg
<b>May 26</b> (Saturday)	11:00 am	Rehearsal for Memorial Day with all program participants	ALNC Ceremonial Flagpole	
<b>May 28</b> (Monday)	7:00 am	Parking team report and Set up SC tent, podium, PA System, etc	ALNC Ceremonial Flagpole	Equipment transported from SC Storage Bldg
<b>May 28</b> (Monday)	9:00 am	ALNC Memorial Day	ALNC (Montevallo) Ceremonial Flagpole	OPEN TO PUBLIC (Free Adm.)
<b>May 28</b> (Monday)	10:30 am	Remove chairs and other SC equipment	ALNC Ceremonial Flagpole	Transport to SC Storage Bldg
<b>May 28</b> (Monday)	10:30 am— 2:30 pm	American Village Memorial Day	American Village	OPEN TO PUBLIC (Free Adm.)

## Vietnam veterans honored at Alabama Nat'l Cemetery

On March 29th, the Alabama National Cemetery in Montevallo was the site of a National Honor Vietnam Veterans Day ceremony. This brief ceremony was held in conjunction with other ceremonies nationwide commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War.

The program included the playing of Taps, presentation of a memorial wreath, folding of a United States flag which had flown over the U.S. Capitol and a keynote address by Vietnam Veteran John Atwell. John is a veteran of the Air Force and proud member of American Legion, Matthew Blount Post 555 in Pelham.

John included the following remarks in his address to the gathered fellow Vietnam Veterans and their families. “..I find resolve in the fact(s) that I helped a lot of people... I know I helped save a lot of lives... that I did my job to the best of my ability and I kept the vow to honor my country... I am proud to be an American – to be an Air Force Veteran, and to be here with you today.

“In closing, Vietnam was not an easy war – no, it wasn’t the war to end all wars or the great war – it was a dirty, ugly, political war – I didn’t talk about the war when I got home in ’67 – I certainly didn’t go around telling people I



you had welcomed me home – I’ll never forget that.

loaded Napalm bombs for a living – it just wasn’t talked about – you pushed it deep down inside – it wasn’t until 2006 some 39 years after I got home – I had just bought my first Harley – I went into the dealer to buy some parts – when the parts manager came out I noticed his arms were covered with tattoos – Army Tattoos – and one said I love the smell of Napalm in the morning – I was in shock – I didn’t know what to say – and I mumbled something about loading Napalm in Vietnam and then he smiled and he reached across the counter and he put his hand out and said welcome home brother – that was the first time an-

And that’s why we’re here – to take care of each other – to comfort each other – to hear our stories and feel our pain and to know what we did wasn’t in vain – God Bless you all.”

John’s address was profound and heartfelt. It was obvious to all that it was difficult for him to share some of his comments publicly. There were many misty eyes from veterans and family members following the address. John truly did himself proud, did the Air Force proud, did all Vietnam veterans proud and did Post 555 proud with his remarks.

Welcome home John, and welcome home all Vietnam Veterans! Job well done!

# Volunteer Opportunity

**“Let Freedom Ring” at the National Cemetery in Montevallo.**

The American Legion, Matthew Blount Post 555 will participate in the Memorial Day Observance by firing TWO Civil War Artillery, Howitzer (cannon) at the Alabama National Cemetery, Montevallo, Alabama 35115, May 28<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 am.

We need two, five crew members to ensure a smooth operation of each howitzer. We need 10 volunteers but need at least two alternate crew members. This is a great presence in the community opportunity, but most importantly to honor our fallen heroes at the Alabama National Cemetery.

Cannon Salute: American Legion Post 555 and Barry Winn, Jimmy White, Ken Sumner



## Cannon Crew Volunteers

David Coram  
 Bobby Averett  
 Don Colvard  
 Ron Gofourth  
 Ron McGriff  
 Justin Hadley  
 Billy Blank  
 Douglas McDaniel Jr.  
 Jerome Steven  
 John Zeiss  
 Tom Hession  
 Tracy Simmons

\*If you have questions about volunteers, please email or call Kenneth Paschal, Memorial Day Event Coordinator at [1SGPaschal@gmail.com](mailto:1SGPaschal@gmail.com) or (205) 626-9458.

**\*No Experience Necessary.** Each crew member performs a specific task that requires approximately 30 seconds to 60 seconds to master.

**Rehearsal 1:** May 12, 2018 @ 12-noon (Helena Park prior to the annual duck race)  
**Rehearsal 2:** May 16-19, 2018 after 5pm (Pelham Senior Center)  
**Final rehearsal:** May 28, 2018 @ 7am (ALNC)

\*Last three years were a great success.

\*Uniform: Post 555 Polo Shirts and ball cap



## THE AMERICAN LEGION EDUCATION INSTITUTE

# Have you taken **BASIC TRAINING** yet?

The American Legion's official training program for officers, members, Legion College applicants and those who simply want to expand their knowledge of the nation's largest veterans service organization is now available online.

The American Legion Extension Institute has been rewritten, updated, streamlined and enhanced with videos, digital photos, clickable links, a historical timeline and additional features. The program should take less than two hours to complete. It is divided into six sections, with a quiz at the end of each one, followed by a final exam.

### Topics

- ◆ History & Organization
- ◆ Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation
- ◆ National Security
- ◆ Americanism
- ◆ Children & Youth
- ◆ Course Conclusion



*Sign up  
TODAY!*

**WWW.LEGION.ORG/TRAINING**

**3RD ANNUAL**

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**\$5**

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**All proceeds go to Veterans  
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