



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

VOLUME VIII, ISSUE I JANUARY 2021

INSIDE ...

Commander's Desk	2
2nd Vice's Comments	3
Adjutant's Area	4
Chaplain's Uplift	5
Post's Work Areas	6
Post Leadership	7
Post Member Spotlight	8

Matthew Blount Post 555

ALL YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA MADE IT POSSIBLE!

Over 7000 wreaths were unloaded and placed on the graves at the Alabama National Cemetery (Montevallo)



IN GOD WE TRUST



Read more about it in the 2nd Vice Commander's report

Thanks to all who contributed time, effort and money!

Fram

COMMANDER'S CORNER

Barry Blount



Please read and heed Larry Strayer's (Post 555 Judge Advocate) letter below, which is very important to our Post. He is asking for volunteers to form a Nomination Committee to propose members to the Post's board at the upcoming March elections, a requirement of our by-laws.

Greetings!

That was a salutation in a letter many of our older members dreaded receiving, for that was the opening word in a draft letter notice, telling when to report to the induction center.

I have nothing so life changing as that. However, I am looking for a few good members to step up and help identify members to run for office for the 2021 term.

First, I hope and pray that each and every one of you have had a good Christmas and that 2021 is better than 2020.

Second, we are near that time in the Post calendar that we have to elect new officers.

Post 555 Bylaws, Article V - Officers; Section 6 - Nominations and Elections - Nominations; require nominations for elected offices be presented to the membership by a Nominating Committee comprised of three, non-officer Post members at the regularly scheduled Post meeting in March.

Candidates will be needed for the elected office of Post Commander, First Vice-Commander, Second Vice-Commander, and the Three-Year Trustee.

Earlier interpretations of that Section limited nominations to one name per office. That is not the interpretation by this Judge Advocate. Nor is the Post to believe that the names presented have the endorsement of the current Executive Board or the Judge Advocate.

The names presented will only have two things in common: 1) they are in good standing with Post 555; and 2) They agreed to have their name presented to the general membership.

Those members who did not have their name presented by the Nominating Committee may have their name presented as Floor Nominations at the March meeting. For floor nominations, there are two additional requirements: 3) they must be present and; 4) agree to serve if elected.

Simple.

The hard part is getting three members to serve on the Nominating Committee.

My first step is to get volunteers. However, I know how hard that will be, as everyone has served in the military and the first thing one learns is to never volunteer. So, if anyone has forgotten that lesson, please contact me for further instructions at 205-427-3560.

If step one fails, my last step will be to revert back to the top of this letter and draft members.

Everyone's choice.

Thank you in advance for considering being on the Nominating Committee this year.

Larry Strayer

Judge Advocate



Nancy Waller

2nd Vice's Report

Happy New Year to all and good riddance to 2020!!!! I think we all agree that 2020 was HORRIBLE with the pandemic pretty much eliminating 99.9% of what we do for our community and Veterans. I am so thankful that so many of our Post 555 members stepped-up to do "buddy check" calls because I was the recipient of several from Derek Winters and just recently from Frank Chacon and it was wonderful to hear their voices and their concerns for all three Wallers. For anyone who continues to do this in the future, try to get the page with the Wallers on it because you can just call my number and that will count for three "buddy checks" for the price of one; a hot deal!!!

Even though things at the Alabama National Cemetery have been quite different these last few months, Post 555 was still able to help with the Wreaths Across America event. The first truck with wreaths arrived on December 10, 2020 and I was joined by Bill Blank, Chic Cecchini, Frank Chacon, Dick Hartsock, Bobby Horsley, Jerry McClain, and a friend of Jerry's who is a fellow Pastor, Jason Hallcox. We are all very surprised to see only 2,320 wreaths on the truck... We unloaded the boxes and staged them on trailers for the next load. It was a short morning.



The next truck arrived on December 15, 2020 and once again, Post 555 members Chic Cecchini, Frank Chacon, and Jerry McClain showed-up to help for the early shift. They were tasked with unloading a TON of boxes at each section (instead of at the Storage Facility) which saved everyone from unloading the boxes a second time, so thank you to everyone who helped on the 15th.

The later shift was tasked with laying the wreaths, and my group was to cover Sections 5, 8, 9, Columbarium, and Memorial Wall. We had a good number of Volunteers including Caroline Culpepper and her mom (mom was a hard worker; made the rest of us look bad), Chuck

Kiser, and Eldon Woodie, along with many others from the ALNC Support Committee and family members.



When we were finished, it was a beautiful sight to behold, and we were all proud to have played a part in the remembrance of all of the Fallen Heroes.

As was mentioned in the last two General Membership Meetings, Richard Kaster is still looking for a few more Volunteers to help with the Pelham High School Oratorical Contest scheduled for Friday, January 22, 2021, 8:30 a.m. As of right now, we need two timekeepers and a few more escorts (the number of contestants has not yet been finalized, but anyone interested in being an escort can let me know). This will be my first year to be a part of this event as the moderator, and I am very excited to see how the whole thing goes. I have heard nothing but great things from Post 555 members who helped in the past, and remember having two winners address the

Post in past years; very impressive to say the least. Call me @ 251-554-6986 if interested in being a Volunteer. Everyone is invited to attend the event, so put the 22nd on your calendar if interested.

No other events in the radar due to our "friend" COVID-19 still hanging around, but please consider joining us at our "in-person" meetings on the second Thursday of the month (January 14, 2021 is our next meeting with the fellowship meal at 6:00 p.m. followed by the meeting at 7:00 p.m. in the HOG Meeting Room behind the Heart of Dixie Harley Davidson dealership). We are wearing masks and maintaining social distancing and spending some much needed quality time with our fellow Veterans; please come if able.

Take care and please stay safe and healthy so that we all start 2021 on a positive note. Love to all and thank you for your service!!

ADJUTANT'S AREA



Ron Koonce

The Year 2020 is in the past. January 1, 2021 marks the end of the 2020 active membership. If you have not renewed your membership as of December 31, 2020, you need to renew your membership as soon as possible to continue your membership continuous years and your American Legion benefits.

Out of 263 members on the roster, only 166 have renewed for 2021.

I have confidence that the Post will reach its 100% target as in previous years.

Let us keep up the momentum in meeting our 100% goal however, this goal cannot be reached without your support and not delay in submitting your 2021 membership renewal

As a reminder, if you have any benefit programs through the American Legion, such as various types of insurance, it is only valid as long you are in good standing with your membership.

The annual renewal remains \$45 payable to **Matthew Blount Post 555**, mailed to **American Legion, 50 Racquet Club Parkway, Pelham, AL 35124**. You can also renew online at www.legion.org.

The January Post meeting will be a face-to-face meeting at the Heart of Dixie Harley

Davidson HOG Club House located at 333 Cahaba Valley Parkway North on January 14, 2021. The meal will be served at 6:00 pm, with meeting beginning at 7:00 pm. Masks are required and Social Distancing will be observed.

Continue to stay safe!

Hope to see you on January 14th.

For God and Country

Ron Koonce

Adjutant

Welcome New member to Post 555 in December:

Bernard Pata – US Army

REASONS TO RENEW TODAY

Because together, we make differences.

- Because your dues help more than 700,000 veterans and their families who need accredited assistance get the benefits they have earned
- Comfort items for hospitalized military personnel
- Honor guard services and memorial tributes for our fallen comrades
- Youth mentorship through programs including Boys State, Oratoricals, Shooting Sports, Baseball and more
- Millions of volunteer hours and services at VA medical facilities at an estimated annual value of \$20 million
- The nation's strongest voice for veterans in Washington, D.C.
- Grants for military families in need

And so much more.
Visit www.legion.org/renew to renew your membership today.



CHAPLAIN'S UPLIFT



Tom McMahon
Post Chaplain



A new year has come and not a minute too soon. Charles Spurgeon once said, "*Patience is better than wisdom: an ounce of patience is worth a pound of brains. All men praise patience, but few practices it.*" Grin and bear it is an old saying but don't you think '**sing and bear it is much better?**' If you feel that the past year required about all the patience you could muster, then let us exercise another characteristic for the incoming year – and all year long. We can take what we learned in patience and transform that into a much better prospect and that is HOPE.

There are no promises for tomorrow, but there is hope. Hope is **desire with an expectation of fulfillment**. Read that again. No doubt we all have some goals that we did not reach and prayers that were not answered in the last year. Personally, I want to forget that and reach forward with new desires and expectations for tomorrow. Be encouraged for the next page of your life is not written. You are the one to lift up your head, believe and act accordingly that things will be better for you and your loved ones. Hope is an attitude and a decision we can make for ourselves. Have courage to write on the blank page of the year 2021 the things you seek and desire.

Perhaps we could sit down with spouse, family or friend and make a written list of important (or even not so important...) things that you hope to realize in the new year. Share your faith and ideas with others. Invite someone else to share in your dreams for tomorrow. Be brave and turn your thoughts and hopes into words. This will be uplifting for you and others with whom you share.

It is imperative that we forget the past and give up our loses. It is never good to hold onto bad times.

Come on; let 'em go! Hold hope and trust close to your heart. Light is ahead; not behind us. We will be successful in our choice to have hope and encouragement for the future. Look up for the blue skies ahead. You might want to hum this old song, "*Nothing but blue skies do I see...*"

Special appreciation toward the volunteers for making over a thousand Veteran Buddy check calls last year! I am careful to be as accurate as possible in these reports and we realize more calls and contacts were made than given here each month. I encourage all to inform me whenever you make supporting contacts with other Post 555 members. Your volunteers attempted 154 calls, completed or left messages 132 and this month 1 need was followed-up.

Let me share an excerpt from King David's 18th Psalm (vv. 16-19): "*He reached down from on high and took hold of me; He pulled me out of deep water. He rescued me from my powerful enemy and from those who hated me, for they were too strong for me. They confronted me in the day of my calamity, but the Lord was my support. He brought me out to a spacious place; He rescued me because He delighted in me.*"

"For God and Country – in 2021"

Chaplain Thomas McMahon



POST 555 WORK AREAS

*Triple Nickel
Riders*



Auxiliary Unit 555

My fellow riders. We have a new year which is right around the corner. Let's kick it off with a short ride thru the countryside. Saturday January 9th at 10:30. KSU AT 11:00. Meet at Dunkin Donuts in Alabaster.

For those that are not riders come out and join us for coffee and Donuts.

Doug McDaniel

Happy New Year Legion Family,

I pray that your new year is starting well. Hopefully, we will get back to some sort of normal, soon. We at the Auxiliary are always looking for more hands to help, so if you know of anyone interested, please let us know. I miss all of you and I hope we can get together soon.

For God and County

Caroline



Sons of The American Legion



MATTHEW BLOUNT POST 555



Meets first Thursday of the month.

January 2021 Meeting
 will be held on 1/14 at the
Harley Davidson HOG hall at 7PM,
dinner at 6PM (Masks required)

*Welcome to Post 555
 New Family Members*

Bernard Pata (US Army)

Post Leadership

- | | |
|--|--|
| Post Commander
Barry Blount | Post Trustees
Bill Blank |
| 1st Vice Commander
Jeff Monday | Frank Lakotich |
| 2nd Vice Commander
Nancy Waller | Robert Horsley |
| Adjutant
Ron Koonce | Auxiliary President
Caroline Culpepper |
| Asst Adjutant
Shauna Hadley | Sons Commander
Robert Horsley |
| Judge Advocate
Larry Strayer | Legion Riders Director
Doug McDaniel |
| Financial Officer
Chuck Kiser | Flag Team Coordinator
Ron McGriff |
| Chaplain
Tom McMahon | Webmaster
Ron Koonce |
| Sergeant-At-Arms
Derek Winters | Triple Nickel Editor
Frank Chacon |
| Post Service Officer
Jerry McClain | Photography
Frank Chacon |
| Historian
Shauna Hadley | Ron Koonce |
| Public Relations Officer
Vacant | |

The Triple Nickel

is published monthly for members of Matthew Blount Post 555.
 50 Racquet Club Parkway
 Pelham, AL 35124
 205-678-1375
commander@ALpost555.com

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

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

Send email to: Editor@alpost555.com

*Photos by Frank Chacon /Ron Koonce
 Post 555*

POST 555 MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Derek Winters, Sr.



I've had some amazing adventures up to this point in my life," said fifty-six-year-old Derek Winters, Sr. Some of his adventures include swimming alongside sea turtles while on a vacation in Hawaii and skydiving in an event sponsored through a church in Oceanside, CA. The second of five children, he was born in Montgomery Alabama. As a young boy he lived with his grandparents for a short period and at the age of eleven he joined his mother in Birmingham.

He recalls with fondness his adventures in the Boy Scouts Explorer Program. "We built batteries, radios, transmitters, and volunteered in the community," he explained. The Explorer Program teaches young people important life and career skills through mentorship and positive experiences provided by business leaders.

Other childhood memories include flying helicopters and Cessna airplanes, traveling, and even a part in a movie called Benny's Place. Derek was a contestant on The Price is Right and won a new car. He graduated from West End High School in 1982 and "shortly after that I was in a silver jet on my way to new adventures in San Diego, California," he continued.

The jet delivered Winters to the Marine Corps Recruitment Depot for three months of training. While on the base he became very ill after drinking contaminated water and endured two weeks of hospitalization. He was eventually able to proceed to Camp Pendleton for training for his Motor Vehicle Operator position. He was responsible for off road vehicle maintenance and oversaw the tire room and fourteen marines. "I loved everything about the Marine Corps, especially driving. I enjoyed spending time with my fellow Marines," Winters said. A sports enthusiast, he was able to indulge in his favorite past time, football, playing running back on the Marine Corps football team. After just four short years his tenure in the Marine Corps was cut short. Winters received a medical discharge in 1986 after sustaining a back injury to his lower spine during football game which broke eight bones in his back. He was an E4 Corporal

After leaving the Marine Corps, Winters worked in the field of electrical and mechanical-design drafting. He had taken an elective drafting course while in high school. Derek spent thirty-seven years in California. During which time he married and started a family. He and his wife, Darcel, are proud parents of fraternal twins and one grandchild.

Derek worked as a Certified Nursing Assistant and Home Health Aide to put himself through drafting school. Five years into nursing, he enrolled at Mira Costa College and graduated in 2010. In 2019 Derek returned to his home state of Alabama to be with his eighty-year-old mother, Mary Ellen. Derek loves "hanging out" with his mother, who lovingly refers to him as her "prodigal son". Derek became a member of the American Legion Matthew Blount Post 555 in Pelham in October of 2019. He was invited to attend a meeting by a member he met while riding an elevator. Commander Kenneth Paschal persuaded Derek to serve as the Sergeant at Arms. "I like the fact that we do so much to give back to the community," commented Winters. He helps organizations any way he way he can. He is a financial supporter of Kingdom Radio Network's schools' supplies program. Derek's Hobbies include making jewelry, crocheting, and collecting coins.

"I love being outdoors and spend time biking, hiking, and fishing. I also like to travel. I would like to go on a hot-air- balloon ride someday."

Derek is a member of the Shelby County Retired Senior Volunteer Program where he continues his service to others.

Source: S Shelby County RSVP

