



# THE TRIPLE NICKEL



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

VOLUME VI, ISSUE II

IN GOD WE TRUST

FEBRUARY 2019

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## Mil. Appreciation Night set for Feb. 9

Alabama Hockey and American Legion Matthew Blount Post 555 will team-up with the David Lindsay Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, American Village - Veterans Register of Honor, Pelham Youth Hockey Association, and other youth groups to

honor our military through several military-themed events as part of "Military Appreciation Night" on Feb. 9 when Alabama hosts the Missouri State hockey team at the Pelham Civic Complex and Ice Arena at 7 p.m. Come and join us as we honor

*(continued on page 9)*

# COMMANDER'S COMMENTS



**Tom McDaniel**

*Post Commander*

I am writing on something a little different today. It is political in a way but not intended to sway an opinion or drive home any belief of my own.

In corresponding on Facebook with an old school pal, an article that I copied and reposted seemed to offend him. I knew he was a member on another political party but I have other friends that we jokingly pass articles back and forth to each other and do this in a tasteful way. If offended by any of these articles being passed on to each other we just laugh and shake it off. FRIENDSHIP is far too valuable than to argue over a Facebook posting. The article consisted of a comment of keeping America a Constitutional Republic or lose it to a socialist nightmare. My friend suggested that

I had gone off the deep end and said for well over a century our national economy had been a mixture of capitalism and socialism and did I really want to get rid of our socialist programs like Medicare, the socialist military academies like West Point and Annapolis and especially (get this) the Veteran's health care system and yes he also included the socialist police and fire departments. This person is a professor at a small college in Texas. I'm glad he didn't try to include Social Security or maybe he forgot that one. I am taking a chance not to insult or go against any belief you may have, as I replied to him, so sorry we differ in our opinions but we are allowed to have our own opinions, at least for now.

I was just shocked this person included the Veterans Administration as a socialist program. When I enlisted, as when most of you did, I took an oath to defend and to protect our country, which in my opinion continues on past my active duty and in return our country would protect us as in health care and programs to rehabilitate those that needed special care. Maybe I am wrong, and I am sorry if my idea of socialism is astray, but I feel the promise and dedication between a soldier and his or her country cannot be considered a socialist program, not to mention the others he cited.

I guess what I am getting at is: You see a lot on Facebook — some good, some bad. But you are still in charge of your own opinions. In doing so, don't let stupid articles or stupid people sway your opinions. Your opinions are truly your own, not that they can't be changed through a logical thought process but as I found out there are others that are shockingly different. **JUST BE TRUE TO YOURSELF.**

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**“FRIENDSHIP is far too valuable than to argue over a Facebook posting.”**

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# 1ST VICE'S COMMENTS



**Richard Kaster**

*1st Vice Commander*

Well, here we are in the New Year and January has come and gone.

Now we are getting ready to get into February and into the ongoing activities.

One of my additional duties is Oratorical Chairman for our Post. The actual Oratorical Scholarship Contests start in January and end in March every year for the State competition.

We begin with Pelham City High School hosting the High School Oratorical Scholarship Contest on Jan. 16. Post 555 members conducted the contest. This Event Purpose is for Pelham City High School students discuss how the amendments and U.S. Constitution apply today in competition. This is the Detail Description of this Event: The American Legion Post 555, sponsor of the 2019 High School Oratorical Scholarship Program; A Constitutional Speech Competition at Pelham City High School was held on Jan. 16.

Post 555 has approved for the 1st place winner **Isabella Bass** and 2<sup>nd</sup> Place winner **Tramaine Moore** are both to be eligible to represent Pelham City High School and Pelham Post 555 at the District level Contest, Feb. 9. There were three contestants and all three were presented a medallion for all their participation. The medallions will be engraved with their names and placement. The Post 555 Commander will present scholarship compensation to the 1st place winner Isabella Bass, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Place winner, Tramaine Moore, to be scheduled at a later date at the Pelham City High School Awards night. The third place winner was **Chidinma Eke**. We appreciate the High School staff support to include Michelle LeSueur who was instrumental in making this program successful. The judges were Melissa Stano, Admissions counselor, University of Montevallo; Paul Howell, PCS Board of Education; Jeff Adams, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama and PCS Foundation Board member; Jim Sumpter, President, PCS Foundation; Dr. Regan, Retired educator and board member.

The following American Legion Post 555 members provided assistance during this program: 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Commander **Richard Kaster**, Escorts **Larry Strayer**, **Kenneth Paschal**, **Bill Blank**, Timekeeper **Joe Starnes** and Moderator **Frank Lakotich**.

Post 555 has the responsibility to host and conduct the next two levels of the Oratorical Scholarship Speech Contests. That is the 23<sup>rd</sup> District and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division levels of the contest. The 1<sup>st</sup> place winner and 2<sup>nd</sup> place winner of the Pelham High School Oratorical contest will be eligible to participate in the 23<sup>rd</sup> District Oratorical Contest level on Feb. 9. The winner of this contest will be eligible to proceed to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division level on Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup> to be held at the First Baptist Church Pelham, at 10 a.m.



## 2ND VICE'S CORNER



**Nancy Waller**  
*2nd Vice Commander*

As of the writing of my article, the weather is forecasting snow for Tuesday, Jan. 29, so hopefully by the time you are reading this newsletter, you got through the storm safely (and maybe even had fun if there was enough snow to "play" in)!!

Since the last newsletter, we had a group of Post 555 Volunteers help with removal of 5,700+ Christmas wreaths at the Alabama National Cemetery. Luckily, the weather was on our side and it was a great show of support from our Post as well as several other volunteer organizations.

I am sure that **Richard Kaster** will address the first of three Oratorical Scholarship Contests on Jan. 16. It sounded like a great event with three winners from Pelham High School. The other two contests are scheduled for Feb. 9 at the Pelham Senior Center and Feb. 23 at the Pelham First Baptist Church. If you would like to be a part of these events, please contact Richard Kaster and I am positive he will put you to work.

A very big event for our Post is the University of Alabama Hockey Team Military Appreciation Night at the Pelham Civic Center for all Veterans and Service Members to attend at no cost to enjoy an ice hockey game between the University of Alabama and Missouri State at 7 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 9. **Kenneth Paschal** is the Event Chairman if you would like to help him out, or just plan on attending to take advantage of the free admission and perhaps even some of the gift baskets, etc. that Kenneth will be giving away that evening. Should be a HUGE event for all to enjoy.

I am working on some of the suggestions you provided to me regarding guest speakers. For the March meeting, I have **Sam Richardson** and some of his Triple Nickel Shooters coming to tell you about what they do, and hopefully will bring some of their equipment as a "show and tell" for all of us. I am personally looking forward to their presentation to actually see and get to know the Triple Nickel Shooters since we always have positive reports from Chaplain **Chris Vonderau** on how well they are doing with their competitions.

I hope everyone had a great New Year and is looking forward to a good 2019, and I hope that you are staying healthy with that "flu bug" out there. I have been lucky so far, but several friends of mine have not been as fortunate and had a tough time getting through it. Not fun at all. Take care, stay healthy, and thank you for your service!!!



## ADJUTANT'S AREA



**Ron Koonce**

*Post Adjutant*

Do not miss the Post's next major event, the annual Military Appreciation Night with the University of Alabama Hockey Organization on Feb. 9 at the Pelham Civic Complex and Ice Arena. Opening Ceremony begins at 7 p.m. Details can be found in this issue of the Triple Nickel. **Kenneth Paschal**, Event Chair, and his committee promises another great event.

Again, be reminded that your 2018 membership expired on Jan. 1. Check your American Legion Membership Card to confirm you have renewed for 2019. If not, you can renew either online at [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org) or mail your renewal fee of \$45 payable to

"Matthew Blount Post 555". Mail to *American Legion, Matthew Blount Post 555, 50 Racquet Club Parkway, Pelham, AL 35124*.

The 2018-2019 year is passing rapidly with the 2019-2020 Officers elections coming up in April. If you are interested in being involved in a leadership or committee position, contact a member of the nominating committee: **Larry Strayer, John Zeiss and Wayne Curtis**. Contact information can be found in the Post Directory distributed with monthly newsletter. Elected positions are: Commander, First Vice Commander, Second Vice Commander, and one Trustee position. Other officer and committee positions are appointed. The more individuals involved, the more the Post can do for veterans, community and youth.

You can always contact me at [ron.koonce@alpost555.com](mailto:ron.koonce@alpost555.com) if you have questions about any of the above.

*For God and Country*

*Ron Koonce*

## 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](mailto:Editor@alpost555.com)

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## FEBRUARY 2019

**Saturday, Feb. 9**

**10 a.m.:** 23<sup>rd</sup> District American Legion Oratorical Scholarship Contest

**Where:** Pelham Senior Center

Post 555 will host and moderate this event; Volunteers needed as follows:

- Three Escorts
- One Timekeeper
- One Usher
- One Moderator
- One Photographer

*(Event Chairman Richard Kaster)*

**7 p.m.:** University of Alabama Hockey Team Military Appreciation Night

**Where:** Pelham Civic Complex

UA versus Missouri State

Post 555 Volunteers needed for set-up, etc.

*(Event Chairman Kenneth Paschal)*

**Saturday, Feb. 23**

**10 a.m.:** 2nd Division American Legion High School Oratorical Scholarship Contest



## JUDGE ADVOCATE'S CORNER



**Chuck Kiser**

*Judge Advocate*

As reported last month, it is time for the Nominations Committee to begin their work to identify candidates for elective office in the Post. Volunteer members serving on the Committee this year are: **Larry Strayer, John Zeiss and Wayne Curtis**. I thank each of them for volunteering to undertake this important duty in the life of the Post. Officers to be elected this cycle include: Commander, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Commander, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Commander and three Trustees. All other officer and committee positions are appointed by the incoming Commander annually.

**Nominating Committee and Officer Candidates** – The committee was selected in January and will meet to make their nominations in February with nominations announced in March. In 2019, we will be electing individuals for the positions of Commander, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Commander, 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Commander and Trustee.

If you have an interest in being considered for nomination for an Officer position in 2019 or are interested in serving on a committee in 2019, please contact me. We will be looking for volunteers to serve as Committee Chairpersons and Committee members, to be appointed by the incoming Commander, for all Committees. We need your involvement to continue the vibrant tradition of accomplishment that Post 555 has developed in its first years.

**Get involved in the life of your Post!**

## Blue Water Navy veterans win fight for VA benefits

### *From The American Legion*

“Mr. Procopio is entitled to a presumption of service connection for his prostate cancer and diabetes mellitus. Accordingly, we reverse.”

- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit Court

And with that statement, Blue Water Navy veterans won a major victory in their fight for VA benefits to treat illnesses linked to exposure to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit ruled

Jan. 29 in favor of Alfred Procopio Jr., who served aboard the USS Intrepid during the war. Procopio, 73, suffers from diabetes and prostate cancer, both of which are linked to Agent Orange exposure.

American Legion National Commander Brett P. Reistad applauded the court's decision that found no reason to deny VA disability benefits for Procopio, who did not meet the “boots on the ground” criteria for Agent Orange-related VA

disability benefits.

“The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit echoes what The American Legion, multiple other veterans service organizations and Vietnam War veterans have been arguing since an administrative decision in 2002 cut off benefits to those who were exposed at sea,” Reistad said. “It doesn't matter where you were exposed to Agent Orange when you served. It only matters that you were exposed when you served.”

## Meet your shooting team: Maggie Vonderau

Maggie Vonderau began her shooting career when she was 14 years old, in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade with Shelby County Shooting Sports Association in Helena. She quickly moved from Sporter Class to Precision Class shooting and qualified for the 2018 Junior Olympics held in Colorado Springs, Colo.



She quickly moved from Sporter Class to Precision Class shooting and qualified for the 2018 Junior Olympics held in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Maggie trains 8 hours a week and has won several competitions. In 2018, Maggie earned her Distinguished Badge which is the highest individual award authorized



by the U.S. Government for excellence in marksmanship competitions.

Maggie is currently a senior at Helena High School and has just accepted a scholarship to the University

of Alabama at Birmingham where she will be joining her older sister, Lilly as a Division 1 Athlete on their rifle team next fall. Go Blazers!!!

## Mint hosts first strike of American Legion commemorative coin

### *From The American Legion*

The first American Legion commemorative coins came off the press Jan. 31 during a ceremonial striking at the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia.

"As we reflect on our legacy of support to our nation's veterans, servicemembers and their families in patriotic communities everywhere, these coins are lasting and timeless expressions of the service and values The American Legion holds dear," National Commander Brett Reistad said.

"I am proud that all sur-



charges received from sales of American Legion commemorative coins will help us continue to fulfill our mission. Whether it is delivering hope in a time of need, advocating for veterans benefits, giving college scholarships to our nation's youth or provid-

ing much-needed assistance to veterans, servicemembers and their families, The American Legion will be there."

Set to go on sale March 14, coinciding with The American Legion's 100th birthday, the silver dollar pays tribute to the organization's Paris founding. The coin's heads side, or obverse, is designed by Paul Balan and features the American Legion emblem surrounded by oak leaves and a lily. The reverse side is designed by Patricia Lucas-Morris and has crossed U.S. and American Legion flags.



## *Alabama Hockey, Post 555 to honor military, veterans*

*(continued from page 1)*

the men and women who serve and have served this great nation in military service.

### ***Pre-game and Opening Ceremony Events Start Around 6:45 p.m.***

Veterans, Active military personnel, and all who have honorably served will receive COMPLIMENTARY admission. Must present proof of service to include but not limited to Military ID, driver's license with military ID, ID tags, DD Form 214, VA medical card, or Veterans' organization membership card.

General admission is \$10 for adults, \$5 for children 12 and under, as well as University of Alabama students with Act Cards.

Pelham Fire Department will display a large American flag at the rink's entrance.

American Legion will have an event display tent with the flags of each military branch and a "Fallen Heroes' Table" in the rink's main lobby available for photos from 6-8 p.m.

Photos will be available for download on the Post 555 website at [Al-post555.smugmug.com](http://Al-post555.smugmug.com).

Post 555, known as the Triple Nickel, will also coordinate a display of variety of

information tables displayed throughout the lobby and arena hallway as a small token of appreciation for our military members and Veterans such as a Veteran Service Officer information table regarding VA Compensations and Pension Benefits as well as American Village Veterans' Register of



Honor table.

Donated gift baskets for giveaways for Veterans and military members will also be available during the night.

Full Moon BBQ, Golden Rule BBQ, McAlister's Deli, and Texas Roadhouse in Pelham, Chubbfather's in Alabaster, DAR, and American Legion will donate gift bag items for Veterans and military members.

The Exchange Club of Shelby County will donate travel/miniature flags to the first 100 Active military and Veterans (with ID).

### ***Opening/Pre-Game Ceremo-***

***ny:***

Members from the Vincent High School JROTC will present the colors while members of the Pelham High School choir sing the National Anthem.

Also during the pre-game ceremonies, Pelham Mayor **Gary Waters** (an Army Veteran and member of the American Legion Post 555); and representing both military and Veterans, **Harry Christian**, Commander, Department of Alabama American Legion, a Panama Veteran, will join the team captains during the drop of the puck.

### ***Special Recognition and Ceremony at the End of the 1st Period:***

At the end of the first period, the team and more than a dozen different local youth organizations will recognize all Service Members in attendance and present 100 gift bags provided by the Daughters of the American Revolutionary, along with a gift card for a meal provided by Texas Roadhouse in Pelham.

During the distribution of the appreciation gift bags, Robert Robinson, Jr. will sing a musical tribute (Proud to be an American - God Bless America) to the men and women who serve and have served this great nation in military service.

## CHAPLAIN'S THOUGHTS



**Chris Vonderau**

*Post Chaplain*

Has anyone ever accused you of being a joyful person? If not, maybe it's the year to work on your joy.

Philippians 4:4 says, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" It's almost like Paul is telling those crazy Philippians to "Joice" and then do it again - Rejoice! And here's the kicker - Paul wrote that from a jail cell!!!

Joy is the settled assurance that God is in complete control over the details of your life. God has made some promises in His Word about His Children and one of them is that He is going to work it all out for those who love Him.

So, the question is: Do you love Him? You've got to know Him to love Him and that's one of my purposes. Call me if you want to talk about what He has done - 205 966-1364.

The second question is: Do you trust Him? If so, get out there do some "Joice" and RE-Joice. If not, see above and give me a call.

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

## New Sons PSAs highlight the Legion's centennial

### *From The American Legion*

Two new public service announcements (PSAs) from Sons of The American Legion National Commander Greg "Doc" Gibbs reflect this year's theme of "Honoring the Past ... Continuing the Legacy" while encouraging membership for those eligible for the Sons.

In one video, Gibbs touts the accomplishments of The American Legion, among them the GI Bill and relief efforts for disaster victims and children. "Help us pay



tribute to a century of service to the community, state, and nation, by joining the Sons of The American Legion today,"

Gibbs said.

Gibbs also references the importance of family in another new video, reflecting on his father's service in the U.S. Marine Corps in World War II.

"He came home to raise our family according to the values that he learned in the U.S. Marine Corps—semper fidelis, always faithful, always loyal. ... Together we stand for veterans, like my dad, and the values they fought for," Gibbs said.

## NATIONAL CEMETERY HAPPENINGS

### **Bonnie Woodie**

#### *Alabama National Cemetery*

Biggest Wreaths Across America ceremony ever at the Alabama National Cemetery (ALNC). All gravesites received wreaths. The crowd for this year's ceremony was over 3,000. Normally, people are told to arrive by 10:30 a.m. to be parked and in place for the short ceremony that precedes placing the wreaths. With such a large crowd arriving at the same time, Highway 119 was overwhelmed. Next year, we will advertise for folks planning to attend to arrive at 10 a.m. to help alleviate the congestion getting into the cemetery.

The ceremony itself was inspirational, the guest speaker, Medal of Honor recipient, U.S. Army Capt. Gary M. Rose, spoke movingly of the contributions of our Veterans and their families. The outpouring of support meant a lot to the families of those interred at ALNC. One mother said, "Wreaths Across America allows me to feel that I am still able to celebrate the holidays with my son buried at this shrine to our Veterans." In addition to the great support of Post 555 volunteers, this year the parking was conducted by about 50 people from various churches in the area and the Thompson High School Air Force JROTC; the CAP cadets raised funds and placed wreaths, Pelham High School athletic teams along with the University of Montevallo Lacrosse Team and Shelby County Sheriff's Department helped with setting up a thousand chairs for the ceremony. Under the leadership of Chairman Pam Nichols, the 150-member Support Committee for the Alabama National Cemetery planned, organized, produced a media plan and showed up to lead all the volunteers in picking up the wreaths three weeks later. A local photographer, Jeremy Rains, captured the event very well with his YouTube video: <https://youtu.be/-G2FEsPvyTg>

Upcoming events include:

- **May 23, 9 a.m.:** Volunteers needed to raise the Avenue of Flags
- **May 23, 10:15 a.m.:** TAPS Ceremony at ALNC to provide military honors to Veterans buried without military honors. Military Honors, TAPS, very short presentation and placing of a wreath.
- **May 25, 9 a.m.:** Volunteers needed to place gravesite flags on all gravesites in preparation for Memorial Day Ceremony. Excellent opportunity for kids to practice citizenship.
- **May 27, 7 a.m.:** Volunteers needed to set up chairs for Memorial Day Ceremony.
- **May 27, 9 a.m.:** Memorial Day Ceremony, speaker, patriotic music, TAPS, fly-by, and cannons.

\*\*\*For information on attending any event, volunteering or joining the support committee, please contact Pam Nichols through the Support Committee for the Alabama National Cemetery Facebook site or their webpage, [www.scalnc.org](http://www.scalnc.org).

Thank You!

*Bonnie Woodie*



**ARMY | MARINES | NAVY | AIR FORCE | COAST GUARD**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ **MILITARY** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

# **APPRECIATION**

## **NIGHT**



**SATURDAY @ 7:00 PM**

Opening ceremony @ 6:45 PM



**ALABAMA HOCKEY**

**FEBRUARY 9TH**

**Alabama Hockey**

**VS**

**Missouri State**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**HOSTED BY**

**The University of Alabama Hockey Program**

**and**

**American Legion Matthew Blount Post 555**

*Veterans and Active military personnel and all who have honorably served free admission. Must present valid Military ID or proof of service.*

**500 Amphitheater Rd, Pelham, AL 35124**



# Post Store Price List

(Proceeds Benefits Post 555 and Department Programs)



**Post 555 T-Shirt**  
S-XL - \$20  
XXI-XXXL - \$22



**Post 555 Coffee Mug \$ 10**



**Car Fund-raiser Benefiting Oratorical Scholarships**  
\$7 value for \$5



**Defender's Bracelet \$5**

**American Legion Centennial Pin - \$5**

