

THE MOUNTAINEER



Newsletter of the Georgia Mountaineers Chapter of FMCA

**11 December 2019
Christmas Luncheon
Blue Willow Inn Restaurant
Social Circle, GA
Hosts: Birts and Masons**



This year's Christmas Luncheon was held at the Blue Willow Inn Restaurant in Social Circle. The last time we were there was in 2006, and the food is just as good now. The restaurant was founded in 1991 by Louis & Billie Van Dyke. The Van Dykes were dishing it out Paula Deen style before Paula Deen was cool. The folks there do take pride in their restaurant, as this is their statement from their website, *"It is not an understatement to say that the Blue Willow Inn Restaurant is truly one of the South's top restaurants and possible the best restaurant in the South featuring traditional southern cooking."* The Blue Willow opened the same year Hollywood released the sweetly nostalgic *"Fried Green Tomatoes"* movie. And, they have had Fried Green Tomatoes on the menu every day. However, its popularity jumped in March 1992, when Atlanta Constitution columnist Lewis Grizzard rhapsodized about its home cooking in a nationally syndicated article.

Members Attending: Ken & Margie Alexander & their daughter Tammy, Paul & Leann Appel, Jim & Barbara Armstrong, Miriam Armstrong, Ted & Martha Barrett, Raymond & Donna Birt, Hubert & Marsha Brown, Dorris & Ethel Carpenter, Ed & Patricia Durrence, Frank & Deneal Emerson, Terry Gibbs & guest Gayle Porter, Virginia Jackson, Nick & Darlene Knowlton, Fred & Shirley Lee, Bill Lyles, Jim & Joanne Mason, Jim & Karen Mathis, Jerry & Irene McKellar, Mike & Kathie Newton, Sam & Dottie Reese, Jack White, Frank & Cathy Williams, Doug & Sherry Wright, and Greg & Rose Zaic.



Also attending were some of our Friends of the Chapter; Ron & Belinda Agnew, Connie Gallagher, Lois Hardison, and Sue Swanson.

Guests and Visitors: Guests were Marvin & Patricia Voyna. Patricia is the SEA Regional Vice President for Georgia. This is Patricia's fourth time attending our Christmas Luncheon and we are glad to have her and Marvin celebrate Christmas with us. Second time Visitors were Bill & Linda Davis from Sopchoppy and Terry & Wanda Stephens from Dawsonville. Both of these couples joined our chapter while there – Welcome to the Georgia Mountaineers. Also attending was Natalie Holle from Putnam County Schools and President of the Eatonton Service League. Natalie was there representing Putnam County for our charity efforts in supporting Christmas gifts for children. Unable to attend was Judy Fain of the Putnam Christian Outreach, which provides community support in the categories of food, utilities, clothing, prescriptions, rent/mortgage payments, and more.



Our luncheon was scheduled to begin at 11:30 AM. However, with it being a long drive for most, many started arriving before eleven. In no time the parking lot was busy with the activity of everyone greeting each other and unloading “Santa” packages for the needy



children of Putnam County. The number and quality of gifts were amazing. In total there were 57 people in attendance to close out our 2019 camping year and celebrate the Christmas season. And most of them brought bags and boxes of gifts. As lunch time grew nearer, the group made its way into the dining room and the Christmas greetings continued. It had been a while since some of the members had been to a rally, and quite a long time since seeing some of our Friends of the Chapter. So, it was very good to catch up on old times and the latest news.

Raymond Birt, the chapter president, opened the event with a blessing and welcomed everyone. He then recognized our visitors and guests. And without further ado, it was a mad dash to the buffet. In addition to a salad bar, there was soup and a large pot of chicken and dumplings. On the main buffet there were many vegetables, which included collard greens, green beans, peas, mashed potatoes, and fried green tomatoes to name a few. The meats included ham, fried chicken, turkey, roast beef, and fried cat fish. For desserts there were



pies and cakes, and some very, very good peach cobbler. Except for the course of folks going back and forth to the buffet for more food, it was pretty much quite in the dining room for a while. Their Fried Green Tomatoes and Peach Cobbler were absolutely the very best.



As the trips to the dessert bar subsided, Raymond took the floor and announced that our Second Time Visitors were now Georgia Mountaineers. Welcome again to Bill & Linda and Terry & Wanda. He then recognized Jack White who went over the 2020 Rally Schedule and passed around the sign up sheet for Rally Hosts. Raymond then introduced Natalie again and she came up front and told us a little about their charity efforts in Putnam County. She then thanked us for all the gifts we had brought. In Natalie's own words: **"There will be many, many happy kids in Putnam County this Christmas thanks to all of you."**



After that Raymond then conducted the officer installation of Greg Zaic, our new Alternate National Director. Next he introduced Patricia Voyna, SEA Regional Vice President for Georgia. Patricia came up and talked a little about FMCA and the member benefits, the SEA Rally at Lakeland in February, and she also passed out some benefit cards for those who wanted them. Jack then announced that we now had Rally Hosts for every rally but one, and that was Coastal Georgia in November. He also led a big Thank You to our Rally Hosts, the Birts and Masons. Raymond then wished everyone a Merry Christmas and that pretty much concluded the formal part of the luncheon. At that point, everyone began to gather up their belongings and made their way outside to have a group photo in front of the inn. At least that was the goal. But as with all most all group photos, it was like trying to herd a bunch of cats. Eventually, we all got lined up, and if I must say so myself, it is a good looking group.



Gosh, how the time flew! After the group photo, some immediately began their trip back home, while others lingered in the parking lot still



catching up on things. The gifts were loaded into pickup trucks for their trip to Putnam County and the distribution point. And at that point, our 2019 Rally Season came to a close. We wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. But once the holidays are over, get out the new Rally Schedule and organize your calendar to attend as many rallies as possible. It will be good to see everyone next year.



Travels:

Editors Note: I received only one travel article this time, and while I would not consider it to be about an extended trip, I still thought it was compelling enough to include.

The Barretts: As most of you know, Martha and I use to do an extended three to three and one half month trip out West each year beginning back in 2003. While on our trip in January 2017, we were about to leave New Orleans headed to western Louisiana and Texas when health symptoms made me decide to return home. It was the last day of January when I was diagnosed with colon cancer, which was later determined to be Stage 4 that had metastasized to my liver. Well, that ended our trips for a while, even short ones. Near the end of 2017, we were able to attend a few rallies, and again in 2018 and 2019. But for basically three years, our trips were shortened to one week rally trips, until last month when we attended the Brunswick Rally. We left home early Sunday morning, 10 November, for about a 400 mile trip from the northeast corner of Georgia all the way down to the southeast corner. It was a seven and one half hour trip without stopping, even to eat. When we arrived at Coastal Georgia RV Resort, it was near 4PM and we were tired and hungry. We decided to eat at the Ole Times Country Buffet and found out the Cannons wanted to join us. The restaurant was new, the food selection large and very good, but

having Bobbie and Eldridge meet us there and welcome us to Brunswick was the main treat. It was great to see good friends again that we had not seen in quite awhile. I was very tired when we arrived to eat, but after a very enjoyable and relaxing meal with friends and reflecting back on our trip over, I left the restaurant with tears in my eyes. It was the beginning of a great shorter trip that let us know we were back on the road again. We enjoyed a great rally, one that we missed last year due to not being able to travel.

We left Brunswick the following Sunday, and went north to Bluffton, SC to visit with Martha's oldest son and his family for a few days. We left Bluffton on 22 November for Sugar Mill RV Park near Thomasville, GA and visited with my family and friends for almost a week. It was then on to Albany on 27 November where we spent Thanksgiving with Martha's youngest son and his family. From there it was to Gray, GA on 29 November to visit with Martha's sister. She has for the past several years hosted an after Thanksgiving Day lunch on Saturday for the brothers and sisters and their families. Finally, we returned home on 1 December -- the end of a wonderful three week trip for us. While the total trip was only around 1075 miles, to us it was a long trip and a vision of things to come. The rally in Brunswick and the visits with family and friends was truly a joyous time, but the main thing was -- we were back on the road again. I went from 15 October to 3 December between visits with my oncologist and now visits this month are in preparation for a three month trip out West beginning in January. This is truly the answer to many, many prayers.

***Ted Barrett,
Newsletter Editor***

Rally Reminders:

February: 5th thru 8th FMCA SEA Rally, Lakeland FL. At the SUN 'N FUN Expo Campus.

March: 18th thru 21st Scenic Mountain RV Park Campground. Milledgeville GA.
Address: 2686 Irwinton Road, Milledgeville GA. See <https://www.scenicmountainrv.com>

April: 15th thru 18th Riverbend Campground. Hiawassee GA. Reser Req: 706-896-1415.
Address: 2626 Streak Hill Road, Hiawassee GA. See <http://www.riverbendcamping.com>

May: 20th thru 23rd Sugar Mill RV Park. Ochlocknee GA. Reser Req: 229-227-1451.
Address: 4857 McMillan Road, Ochlocknee, GA. See <http://www.sugarmillrvpark.com>