

# Seabees Ball...from Page 1A

but he moved back to Florida.

“Long story short, the first meeting we had around 12 or 14 people. That same year, we decided to start a Seabee Ball, and that was how it kicked off. We knew we did not have enough Seabees, so we opened it up to all military.”

And Crenshaw couldn't have been happier with the turnout in 2021, the group's best attendance in the five years since the first ball in 2016, especially considering all that's happened since early 2020.

“We were down last year because of COVID and all of that,” Crenshaw said. “This year, I have got around 144 signed up. These guys always come out to celebrate with us, and we enjoy having the ball.”

The ceremony opened with music from the Appalachian Saint Andrew's Pipes & Drums, which played a patriotic selection of tunes as students with Mountain Area Christian Academy's CJROTC, or Reserve Officers' Training Corps for Christian Schools, posted the colors.

Island Chaplain Richard Hoibraten explained the purpose of the Missing Man Table and the importance of each item on the table and the reason behind toasting those who did not return from battle.

“This is a sacred table that is done in different ways but has the same ultimate purpose for those that could not be home to be with their loved ones,” Hoibraten said. “Whether it is

missing in action, killed in war or whatever.”

The keynote speaker for the event was retired U.S. Navy Civil Engineer Corps Cmdr. Mike Streckert, who reviewed the history of the Seabees and how the group has worked with other military branches over the last 79 years.

“In 2010, the Seabees and Coast Guard worked hand in hand to open the port in Haiti after a major earthquake,” Streckert said.

Continuing, “Sailors and Marines have always had a true love/hate relationship with one another, but the Marine Corps is the biggest customer of our Seabees. They are our clients. Where they go, we go. So, it only stands to reason we speak their language.”

While Streckert told stories highlighting the past, he also addressed the current state of the country and the importance of leadership and working toward a better future.

“I've seen this throughout both my Navy and civilian careers,” Streckert said. “Great leaders are frequently replaced by poor leaders, weak leaders. Regardless of where you stand, I personally believe that our nation is going through that same cycle.”

“I survived those periods of weak leadership in my past, but I decided to do a little research on how to survive during weak leadership. I found a few things we need to maintain focus on



More than 144 people attended the 2021 All Military Ball at the Ridges Resort, marking a major success for the Navy Seabee venture.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

during these turbulent times. One, do not despair. Despair is focused inward as opposed to outward.”

Streckert told the group that strong institutions continue long after leaders depart, though he feels the nation is at a crossroads and may not be as strong as it once was.

“You and I are what made our nation great,” Streckert said to the gathered patriots. “When you hear talk of the grassroots of our nation, our institution, that is us. Honor your credibility and reputation at all costs. This point, I feel, is the key to our sanity and survival.”

“Each of us swore an oath. Each of us stands for the freedoms of our nation. Despite anything

this nation may suffer, we have each other. As the saying went in the '60s, 'keep the faith.' I truly believe that each person has been put in the place they are in because of God's plan – not just the plan for the individual, but His sovereign plan.”

After the speech, the group cut the anniversary cake and celebrated a night of dancing, silent auctions and companionship. The Seabees are thankful to everyone who helped make the event such a success.

# William Dyer receives Quilt of Valor



U.S. Army Veteran William Dyer

On February 23rd Homestead Hospice of Blairsville presented William Dyer of Blairsville with a Quilt of Valor for his service in the Army. The Quilt and Pillowcase were donated by the Quilt of Valor Foundation and locally made by the Misty Mountain Quilters Guild. The ceremony was held at his home in Blairsville surrounded by his family. Shannon Larsen of Homestead Hospice, read about the Quilts of Valor; sharing their meaning and their history and quilted and pinned Mr. Dyer.

Congratulations to Mr. Dyer and we thank him deeply for his service! NT(Mar10:27)CA



The Appalachian Saint Andrew's Pipes & Drums provided the musical entertainment for the evening, performing the Armed Forces Medley and other songs that evening, including the bagpipe go-to “Amazing Grace.”

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

# Coach Perry...from Page 1A

Hall quarterback Cleve Cooper ranking among the state passing leaders in 2019 and 2020.

In four years as a head coach, Perry has compiled a 21-20 overall record, going 6-12 at East Hall and 15-8 at Centennial, guiding the latter

program in 2017 to its first Sweet 16 appearance in 15 years while leading the state in total offense at 517 yards a game for the 2017 season.

Centennial has not won a game in the two seasons since Perry's departure.

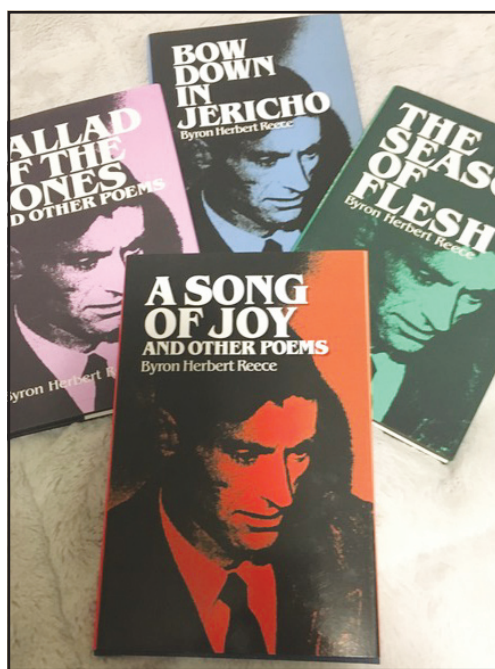
Perry is a graduate of Gainesville High School and the University of Georgia (2006), with a master's degree from North Georgia (2008) and a specialist's degree from Piedmont (2012).

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# Remembering Reece: War claims the poet-novelist's friend

Byron Herbert Reece's college years helped him forge meaningful friendships, including with Steve Hall, a close friend and roommate. Byron considered Steve a genius for having transcribed the First Symphony of Beethoven and being able play Mozart's Coronation Concerto from memory after hearing it only once. Although Reece didn't graduate, he left the college in 1940 as a “mature poet of uncommon skills,” in the words of Dr. Raymond Cook in his biography of Reece, “Mountain Singer.” Upon graduation, Hall had joined the military in World War II and would be sent to France. To his great disappointment, Byron would not be able to serve his country alongside his friends; he was deferred due to his family history of tuberculosis.

In March 1943, as Reece ran in from the field, he knew that his friend had been killed. He had a vision of Steve's spirit saying that he was dead. Reece had been right in previous similar visions. Steve's family confirmed that night that he had been killed in France while playing an electric organ for the battalion chaplain. He had great admiration for his friend whose talent had been cut short. Reece composed several poems in memory of Steve Hall, one of which is almost an exact description of his vision.



\*\*\*It is fitting that Reece's writings should be published in his hometown newspaper that his legacy may live on.

The Byron Herbert Reece Society  
Jerrri Duncan Gill, Chair

## “The Farewell”

The friend I had  
When we were young,  
His voice sad  
And low as song.

Hushed half to silence,  
Came and stood  
By the orchard fence  
In the white dogwood

And said: “Farewell,  
For I today  
Am gone to dwell  
A world away.”

“Bloody and broken  
Beneath far skies,  
War's wasted token  
My body lies,”

Each day you prayed  
The missile meant  
For my heart be stayed  
Or strayed or spent.

The fatal missile  
Ignored your will.  
An empty vessel  
Lies under the hill;

“The stuff that filled it,  
My living blood  
When the bullet spilled it  
Flowed into the mud.”

Your care was tender  
But given in vain,  
I have come to render  
It back again.

“That you may spend it  
Still to thrive  
Because you send it  
To man alive.”

His spirit wavered  
From out my trance  
His dust has favored  
The soil of France.

From the orchard's edge  
His spirit fled,  
And the maple hedge  
Leafed all in red.

Apple and peach  
Put forth their bud  
And the globes of each  
Were stained with blood.

With mad March straining  
At bough and eave,  
I woke to a morning  
Of taking leave.

By such a dress  
As day had on,  
I knew the press  
Of sleep had gone.

And yet, enchanted  
Or yet a-dream  
Where my father's planted,  
I followed the team.

By sorrow fore-tortured,  
I know not how,  
In the upland orchard  
I followed the plow.

Where wide and narrow  
The wind in glee  
And the falling furrow  
Followed me.

When noon was nighing  
To the upland high,  
A youth came crying,  
“Good-by, good-by!”