

The Freedom Committee of Orange County
Neighborhood Community Center
1845 Park Ave., Costa Mesa, CA. 92627
Web Site <http://www.fc-oc.org>
Minutes of the Meeting of August 12, 2009

Pledge of Allegiance: Kirk Ferguson
Invocation: Jack Hammett
Binnacle List: Don Oldis recovering from back surgery.

Guests Present: Celeste Ames, Robbie Conn, Marty Flacks, Larry Harris, Ramona S. Hill, Bonnie Honeywell, Joan Le, Christopher Meyers, Judy Selling, Martha Somers, Michael Trerotola, John Vasquez, and Elizabeth Yee

Members Present: Bruce Bauer, Jack Campbell, Jesse Carranza, Jack Cole, Bus Cornelius, Vi Cowden, Bob Dugan, Tom Egan, “Eddie” Felix, Kirk Ferguson, Francis Flacks, George Grupe, Ronnie Guyer, Sid Hallburn, Jack Hammett, Arnold Hanson, Dale Hanson, Bill Hardy, Dick Higgins, Art Lambert, David Lester, Syd Lucas, Ted Marinos, Vern Martin, Bob Meyer, Dick O’Brien, Don Oldis, Bob Perry, Lou Possemato, Joseph Pultorak, Gladys Refakes, Tim Richards, Larry Schnitzer, Terry Schnitzer, Harry Selling, Bob Stoddard, Ted Tanner, Bob Thomas, Phil Vinci and Paul Wilder.

Special Presentation



Francis L. Flacks S/Sgt USAAC, WWII
“Flying General Eisenhower”

I enlisted on October 10, 1941... Pearl Harbor was still two months away!
Basic training, upon enlistment was at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, then to Lowry Field, Denver Colorado. I was stationed at Lowry until April 1942, when I was assigned to the 92nd Bomb Group, stationed at McDill field, Tampa, Florida. I received my training as a tail-gunner in a B-17.

Several days of briefing, plane checking, and refueling and it was across the Atlantic. In 11hrs, 35 min we were over Scotland, refueled and headed for our new home in England: Bovington, Buckhems, and Bucks. (About 28 miles from London)

We had about 19 days to become acclimated, then the briefing room. My squadron was on stand-down, but I was assigned as tail-gunner for a mission over Lille, France; next day over France again. There was heavy flak, and the Me 109s were in full force.

The next couple of months were missions daily. Our losses were heavy, as were the Germans. By God's grace, I returned from each mission. (Saying that there are no atheists in foxholes, also applies to 15,000 ft. above the enemy). I continued in combat, but in November, I was told that I was being reassigned for a special duty [one for which I had volunteered and had forgotten]. We were not told where or when...it was still secret.

A new B-17E came on base (isolated from all others). This was not a typical aircraft: It was outfitted like a passenger liner: desks, comfortable chairs, an office interior, and No bomb racks! The General was to be commander of all operations of the African campaigns, with his headquarters in Algiers. This was our new station for the next year or so.

We were apart from other military personnel in Algiers. We lived in a hotel in downtown Algiers (until the Germans blew the roof during a raid). We were then given quarters in private residences: three crew members in each of three homes. We became quite familiar with the city. An example was a restaurant, L'Champonfin. Their menu consisted of vegetable, fruit and a main course of baked sparrows.

We left England with a few of his staff and the needs for the new command post. The flight took us to Gibraltar [this would be our regular route]. We stayed overnight for refueling. Then it was on to Oran, and to Algiers. Every few days there was a flight to England and back, to obtain necessary equipment for the new headquarters.

We did carry the General to various points in Africa, and to the front lines three or four times. There were several times when there were longer trips, to Malta, Naples, and Tripoli. Even when he was not on board the plane seemed to be in the air. We logged many hours.

December 25, '42, The Germans must have forgotten. Their greetings lasted all night: bombs, strafing, etc. we had bomb shelters, *but His birth was celebrated even if it was not a "silent night."* For the next several months, there were a few short hops, and the usual back and forth to London. When the African campaign ended, the General returned to take on other considerations (D-Day), and our plane crew followed. Africa became a Memory!

Our crew was disbanded. I received assignment with an A-20 Group, 9th Air Force. On May 6, 1944 I joined the 416 Group, 668 Squadron.

My first mission was rough. The next day was a milk-run. On my eleventh mission, not, so. We had two missions across the Channel, the second, Abbeville, France. Flak was very heavy; we took a burst of flak directly under us, and one over us, above my turret. My turret stopped! I remember saying to the other gunner: "I think I've been hit" ... my blood confirmed this. We made it back to base 'and to the hospital.

I was confined from May 28 through June 9. My pilot visited me; he described the damage to the plane: 148 holes of various sizes. We landed without flaps and a blown nose wheel. My pilot should have received a medal; I received the Purple Heart, on July 23, 1944.

Report of Executive Committee

Tim Richards gave a detailed report on the actions of the Executive Meeting of August 5th. An in-depth discussion was held by all 11 members of the Committee. It was the unanimous decision that we will not pursue the attainment of a 501C3 corporation as the initial and continuing expense of the project is beyond our needs, as well as our capabilities to function with our present personnel.

It was further determined to broaden the leadership of the Committee by assigning the following positions. This would help to relieve the Chairman of his many duties and he is asking for volunteers to assume these duties. They are as follows:

Chairman/Vice Chairman of FCOC.

and

1. Marketing Chairman "Living History" to schools.
2. Speaker Chairman to arrange speakers appropriate to school requirements
3. Publications Chairman to prepare members' Biographies, update rosters, final edit and publish documents (snail mail, email)
4. Monthly Program Chairman to attract speaker, prepare agenda, and provide assistance to speakers. (Rehearse)
5. Secretary to prepare meeting minutes in standard format.
6. Speaker Trainer (job description to be developed)
7. Treasurer

Other Announcements

Bob Myers requested DVDs for the troops as part of "*Bit of Home.*" He is planning to ship DVDs in November 2009. Details WWW.bitofhome.com.

Terry Schnitzer is a volunteer for "*Operation Home Front*" which assists E-6 and below families with their needs while their serviceman is overseas. Donations welcome.

Many attendees contributed to the informal **Table Topics** segment.

The meeting then adjourned at 1330 hours.

To view the pictures of the meeting on our web site go to <http://fc-oc.org/photo-collection> (Photo Collection, 2009, August 12).

(Minutes of the meeting prepared by Tim Richards)

Respectfully submitted,



Chairman