



## ***The Freedom Committee of Orange County***

*(A California nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation)*

***Neighborhood Community Center***

***1845 Park Ave., Costa Mesa, CA. 92627***

### **Minutes of the Meeting of August 8, 2012**

**Pledge of Allegiance:** Sgt. Dick O'Brien, USA, WWII, 35<sup>th</sup> Inf. Div, ETO.

**Invocation:** Chaplain Frank Orzio, Sgt., USMC (Ret.) Vietnam War

**Special Guests:** Mr. Walter Davenport, Board Member, NMUSD, and Dr. Fred Navarro, Superintendent, NMUSD.

**Guests Present: (18)** Gene Bakke, Robert Cermak, Gary Colletti, Jose Cuevas, Andrew Cullinane, Anthony Hodge, Barbara Hallett, George Hill, Anthony Hodge, Louis Kridelbaugh, Christopher Kupitz, Fred Navarro, Tom O'Brien, Frank Pangborn, Don Ray, Quintin Ruiz, Walter Stoermer and Paul Wilson,

**Members Present: (61)** Kelly Alcalá, Jim Baker, Vic Bakkila, Rally Bates, Howard Beach, Jesse Bequette, Jess Carranza, Jack Cole, Gabriel Corona, Bus Cornelius, Bob Cowley, Roberta Cowley, Bob Dugan, Tom Evans, Eddie Felix, Archie Gregory, Ray Grissom, George Grupe, Herb Guinness, Ronnie Guyer, Sid Hallburn, Jack Hammett, Arnold Hanson, Dwight Hanson, Dick Higgins, Jack Hubbard, Michael Knybel, Tom Knybel, Jess Lawson, Bob Leahy, Dave Lester, Bill Mall, Frank Mannino, Ted Marinos, Vern Martin, Robert Meyer, Edison Miller, Charles Mitchell, Richard O'Brien, Don Oldis, Frank Orzio, Jim Powers, Ken Pruitt, Keith Regan, Tim Richards, Maureen Robles, Larry Schnitzer, John Skara, Bob Sternfels, Bob Stoddard, Ted Tanner, Jim Thurn, Mike Trerotola, Dick Tyhurst, Gene Verge, Philip Vinci, Fred Whitaker, Paul Wilder, David Willard, Scott Williams and Sid Yahn.

**Associate Members Present: (20)** Bette Bell, Valerie Boston, Arlen Cole, Robby Conn, Walt Davenport, Kay Felix, David Ferguson, Gari Hanson, Shirley Hanson, Mona Hill, Jamie Howren, Adrian Michael, Audrey Miller, Pat O'Brien, Jeff Sebek, Terry Schnitzer, Henry Thedinga, Denise Weiland, Rob Wood and Elizabeth Yee.

### **Special Presentation**

#### **Specialist 4 Robert John Leahy, U. S. Army "Point Man in Jungle Combat"**

Probable anyone can remember something about WWII; Pearl Harbor, Iwo Jima, Normandy. But what do you remember about Korea? Or Vietnam? Ask **Bob Leahy**, US Army Infantry, Vietnam. The Infantry is the point of the Army Spear along with the Armor and Artillery. The shaft of the spear is the Combat Support troops.

Americal Division



**Specialist 4<sup>th</sup> Class Robert John Leahy** was assigned to the Americal Division (23<sup>rd</sup> Division) which was the most northern Army Division in South Vietnam. It fought a determined North Vietnam Army in hostile areas from the coastal plains of the South China Sea to the Jungle Mountains along the Laotian border. He was assigned to an Infantry Company and served as point man for his squad. The job of the point man means to assume the first and most exposed position in a combat military formation and is responsible find the trail, booby traps, mines and of course, enemy ambushes. **SP4 Leahy** said he relied on his training, experience and instincts to survive. Moving in the thick jungle is like moving in a room full of jello. Staying on the trail is like a tunnel in the jello. Deploying off the trail is extremely difficult. He remembers a Chinook helicopter accidently dropping a load of ammunition in thick jungle. They sent out a combat troop to destroy the ammo. It was never found and is probably still where it dropped.

Operating in the tropical jungle is like a rain forest. In the monsoon season it can rain 24 hours a day. He couldn't wear underwear when on patrol. Sweat and rainwater causes green algae to grow on your body and soon you are on the way to the medic.

**SP4 Leahy** attacked two machine gun positions during one firefight. His lieutenant directed him to go with a machine gun team as an assistant gunner. He decided he would rather die than let them know that he was afraid. After taking out one, they turned to the other one. It hadn't been firing for a while so they attacked. The machine gun didn't open fire but six AK-47 automatic riflemen opened fire. It was a fight and they took casualties but they overcame the Viet Cong soldiers. Note: Viet Cong is short for Vietnamese Communist.

When he returned from Vietnam, he returned to school and earned a Bachelors and Masters Degree. He found a web site, "*Son and Daughters in Touch*", and located one of the men from his unit that was killed when Bob was there. He wrote a long letter to the man's sister explaining where his unit was and a map show in the location in Vietnam.

Bob explained that in Infantry combat, you have two seconds to evaluate a chaotic situation, make a decision that they are the ENEMY and open fire. The Supreme Court sometimes ponders a case for six months, and decides 5/4 that they aren't guilty.

Being in Vietnam Veteran is like being like being in prison. If you had any manners, you didn't mention it in polite company. So I hid what I did and tried to move on with my life."

### **Announcements:**

- **Jim Thurn** made a special presentation to a Pearl Harbor Survivor, **Henry Thedinga**. This Hawaiian shirt is the symbol of a person that served at Pearl Harbor when the Japanese attacked December 7, 1941.



- **Scott Williams**, Vice Chairman, announced there will be a FCOC Board of Directors meeting this month to elect directors.
- **Bette Bell**, FCOC Treasurer, reported a balance of \$3933.46. Deposits of 354.00 and debts of \$347.46 including \$36.68 for

Public Relation boards and banners. Closing balance of \$ 3940.00. Copies of the report were available.

- **Denise Weiland** and **Scott Williams** have been preparing request for grants and should hear soon on results.
- **Jamie Howred**, the FCOC photographer, is working on the FCOC logo in cooperation with **Ray Wong**. Log onto [www.fc-oc.org](http://www.fc-oc.org) for the photographs she took during this meeting.
- FCOC will have a Facebook page soon! Thanks to Vanguard University's **Adrian Mitchel**, a Facebook page will expand FCOC's publicity. **Jack Hammett** added "without any cost".
- **On September 11, 2012 at 7PM, Vanguard University** will show a video "*Walking the Hill*" which should be of interest to all veterans.
- A CD of FCOC was passed out to all members.
- **Tim Richards** reported last month that the US Supreme Court overturned the *Stolen Valor Law* on the grounds it violated *free speech rights* of those making false claims about "winning" the Medal of Honor and serving in the military. **President Obama** has directed the Defense Department to prepare an easily accessed listing of those who were "awarded" the nation's highest medals.

*Minutes prepared by **Tim Richards***

*Photos by **Jamie Howren-***

Photos taken during the meeting may be viewed on our web site at [www.fc-oc.org](http://www.fc-oc.org) .

**Click on "Photos"**

Chairman,

