



## *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 11, 2010

Pledge of Allegiance: Robby Conn

Invocation: Frank Orzio, Sgt. USMC (Ret.)

Guests Present: (19) Vince Arellano, Jack Estridge, Francisco Barragan, Betty Bell, Keith Curry, Frank Haigler, Bill Hoffman, Adam Krikorian, Guy Krikorian, Ron Lane, Jonathan Pelanne, Queenie Phu, Gregory Tyhurst, John Vasquez, Daniel Vigna, J. White, Linda Williams, Ray Wong and Elizabeth Yee.

Members Present: (51) Jesse Carranza, Robby Conn, Bus Cornelius, Vi Cowden, Bob Cowley, Bobbie Cowley, Jeff Davis, Bob Dugan, Tom Egan, Eddie Felix, Kay Felix, Kirk Ferguson, George Grupe, Herb Guinness, Sid Hallburn, Jack Hammett, Arnold Hanson, Dale Hanson, Dick Higgins, William Holliday, Cornell Iliescu, Art Lambert, Dag Larsen, David Lester, Ted Marinos, Vern Martin, Robert Meyer, Charles Mitchell, Pat O'Brien, Richard O'Brien, Frank Orzio, Lou Possemato, Bob Perry, Harry Rawlins, Gladys Refakes, Tim Richards, Larry Schnitzer, Harry Selling, Judy Selling, Martha Somers, John Skara, Bob Sternfels, Ted Tanner, Bob Thomas, Michael Trerotola, Dick Tyhurst, Phillip Vinci, Gene Wallace, Paul Wilder, Scott Williams, and Elizabeth Yee.

### *Special Presentation*

#### **“Flying WWII Bombers in the Pacific and Europe”**

We were treated with first-hand experiences of six WWII bomber pilots and navigators. There were two who flew from Pacific islands, two from Africa, and two from England.



**George Grupe** served as a pilot on a B-24 Bomber with the **13<sup>th</sup> Air Force**, **868<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron** and flew all of his missions from islands in the Pacific against the Japanese. They flew black planes at night and used radar to find targets. His last mission was to be a dangerous low level (1100ft) photo reconnaissance mission of Tokyo Bay, Japan. Just before George's B-24 took off, the Emperor of Japan surrendered on August 14, 1945 and George didn't have

to fly the dangerous mission.



**Major Dag Larsen USAF (Ret.)** entered the Air Force from Brooklyn, New York and served as a Navigator on a B-24 bomber with the **5<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, 13<sup>th</sup> Air Force**, completing 44 missions. He remembers one mission that was Top Secret and included General Douglas Mac Arthur in the preflight briefing. The mission was to bomb the oil refinery on Borneo Island. He remembers many Jap fighters, but they were able to get through and drop their bombs. Dag also flew missions on the B-29 bomber. He stayed in the Air Force serving 20 years before retiring as a Major.



**Robert Sternfels** served as a pilot on a B-24 bomber with the **15<sup>th</sup> Air Force** and flew from the Mediterranean Theater with the **98<sup>th</sup> Bomb group (H)**. He was trained to fly both the B-24 and the B-17 bombers. His Group flew low level to accurately bomb gasoline production at Ploesti, Romania. Bob remembers a cable from a barrage balloon

luckily striking a propeller instead of the wing. The balloon was at 200 ft. Bob completed 50 missions and 300 hours which qualified him to rotate back to the States. He served at the Pentagon until the end of the war.



**Major Herb Guinness, USAF (Ret.)** served as a Navigator on a B-24 bomber with the **15<sup>th</sup> Air Force** and flew with the 451st bomb Group (H). Entering the service from Boston, he picked up a brand new B-24 from the factory and the plane was flown to North Africa to join the 15<sup>th</sup>. He too flew the but at high altitude (24,000 ft) on April 10, 1944. They were using the Top Secret Norden bomb sight. After bombing, one engine on the B-24 quit and they were visited by German ME 109s. Luckily there were clouds they were able to hide in and complete the return trip. Herb completed 42 missions. The 451<sup>st</sup> was the most decorated Group in the 15<sup>th</sup> AF and the most battered, losing 135 B-24s in 216 missions. Herb retired from the Air Force with the rank of Major.

### Ploesti Raid

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**Major Harry Selling, USAF (Ret.)** was a pilot of a B-17 bomber and flew with the **8<sup>th</sup> Air Force**, 457 Bomb Group. The 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force was the largest group of bombers in WWII. Harry flew on the Peenemunde Raid to destroy Hitler's V2 Rockets. After dropping the bombs, the tail



gunner was severely wounded. Harry broke out of the protection of the formation, set the throttles to maximum, and returned to England 40 minutes ahead of the Group. The tail gunner lived, but the B-17 had 50 holes. After dropping the bombs on a mission over Berlin, a German ME 109's bullets smashed the instrument panel causing the plane to spin out of control. The crew bailed out and became prisoners of war (POW). He had flown 7 missions by that time.



Lt Col Dick Tyhurst, USAF (Ret.) also flew with the **8<sup>th</sup> Air Force** but with the 95<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group in B-17s. Dick served as a Navigator and completed 34 missions over Germany. On one raid to Berlin at 20,000 ft., one engine failed but they flew 500 miles trading altitude for miles. He flew a shuttle raid deep into Germany. The target was so far into Germany that the plane couldn't return to base. So they kept on flying to Russia and refueled. The return flight over allied countries took them south to Italy then to France and returning to their base England. Dick also flew 22 missions in a British Mosquito twin engine bomber. Lt Col Tyhurst stayed in the Air Force serving 22 years before retiring.



The Freedom Committee of Orange County was honored by the attendance of the Mayor of Newport Beach, **The Honorable Keith D. Curry**. Mayor Curry expressed the City's appreciation and respect for service of the veterans.

The meeting then at 1:30 p.m. adjourned.

*Thanks to Tom Egan for his great pictures (See Website Photos at [www.FC-OC.org](http://www.FC-OC.org)).*  
*(Minutes of the meeting prepared by Tim Richards)*

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jack Hammond".