

The Freedom Committee of Orange County

*Neighborhood Community Center
1845 Park Ave., Costa Mesa, CA. 92627*

Minutes of the Meeting of December 8, 2010

Pledge of Allegiance: Bus Cornelius

Invocation: Frank Orzio

Guests Present: (9) Gene Brakke, Dan Gillespie, Don Louis, Malou Mariano, Justin Muschisa, Dan Reider, Ray Stoddard, Jim Thurn, Paul Turgeon

Members Present: (48) Jim Baker, Bob Bankston, Betty Bell, Jack Cole, Bus Cornelius, Vi Cowden, Bob Cowley, Jeff Davis, Bob Dugan, Eddie Felix, Kay Felix, George Grupe, Ronnie Guyer, Frank Haigles, Sid Hallburn, Arnold Hanson, Dale Hanson, Ramona Hill, William Holiday, Carmen Holiday, Cornell Ilescu, Jess Lawson, David Lester, Norm Loats, Bill Mall, Frank Mannino, Ted Marinos, Vern Martin, Charles Mitchell, Don Oldis, Frank Orzio, Lou Possemato, Gladys Refakes, Tim Richards, Harry Selling, Judy Selling, John Skara, Martha Somers, Bob Sternfels, Bob Stoddard, Ted Tanner, Allan Thompson, Mike Treritola, Phillip Vinci, Gene Wallace, Linda Wallace, Fred Whitaker, Scott Williams.

Special Presentation

“Operation Iraqi Freedom”

Lieutenant Colonel Victor Bakkila was a Captain in the 341st Military Police Company, Army Reserves, stationed in California in 2003. His unit received a call-up alert in August for Operation Iraqi Freedom. He was employed by the Costa Mesa Police Department who had to release him. After placing all of the unit’s equipment in containers, the Reservist boarded planes for the 17 hour flight to Kuwait. Their introduction to South West Asia was

a heat blast of 111 degrees. They picked up their equipment at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait which is a very large logistic camp and traveled in the “Green convoys” (all Military) to the Tallil Air Base in southern Iraq near the biblical city of Ur. Part of their mission was to set up radio relay stations and patrol the roads. At Tallil Air Base they saw the results of Allied Air strikes on Sadam’s “harden” bunkers.

Military life in Iraq was demanding. Vic said he has never seen so much unexploded ordinance. They’d clear all they could see and then it rains and exposes more. He said to cope with the heat; he was drinking eight 1½ liter bottles of water a day.

His unit had to be on the lookout for IED’s. (Improvised Explosive Devices) At first the IED were command detonated by hooking up an electrical source to the explosives but that meant the insurgents had to be close by. Helicopter sweeps of the roads found the ambushes and killed the insurgents. Then they changed to radio detonators similar to door bells. The Allies countered by blasting high frequencies which would set off the explosives before the convoys arrived.

LTC Bakkila did a lot of work with the Iraqi police in training them. He was responsible for building a police station that could with stand an attack by insurgents.

Vic had an opportunity to visit one of Sadam’s palaces. It was bigger than our White House and marble and gold inlays everywhere including the bathrooms. It was on a lake with fish and many mini mansions that belonged to the Ba’ath Party members. All this existed while most Iraqis lived dirt poor.

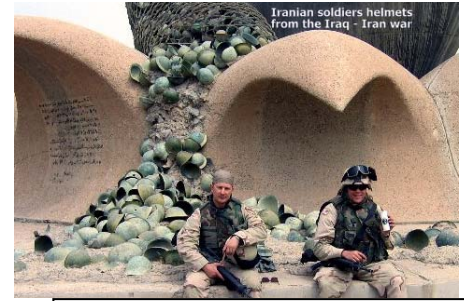


Sadam’s harden bunker at Tallil Air Base after an air strike.



Sadam's Crossed Swords in Baghdad

Sadam also build many monuments. In downtown Baghdad, The Victory Arch, a monument to the war against Iran, is a huge sculpture of two hands, said to be Saddam's, holding two swords crossed. At the base of the swords are captured Iranian helmets. **LTC Bakkila's** unit was involved in fire fight that can be seen on



Captured Iranian army helmets

www.facebook.com/pages/military-police/141605944423

During the question and answer period, LTC Bakkila commented that he believes the Iraqi army and police will be able to handle the peace after the US leaves. Also the prejudice against women will take a long time to overcome. The Abu Grave prison embarrassment was caused by a failure in leadership by the officers in charge. The Commanding General and her staff were demoted and discharged.

An interesting side note. **Victor Bakkila** is a Sergeant with the Costa Mesa Police and he was the Artist and Designer for the Veterans Memorial at Harbor Lawn Cemetery. The Freedom Committee was involved in the dedication last Veterans Day. The Costa Mesa Community Foundation gave him a special thanks. "Without your time, effort, and dedication this project would remain a dream rather than a reality."



Veterans Memorial

Table Topics

Bill Mall commented that the Edwards AFB tours was outstanding. **Bus Cornelius** was very impressed with the ability of the 40 Freedom Committee members to view up close the modern B-1B bomber courtesy of **LtCol "Lucky" Miller**, a recent speaker at the Wednesday meetings.

Fred Whitaker has been involved in the main mission of the Freedom Committee which is visiting local school and spreading "**Freedom is not Free**". He visited a schools in Dana Point and Fullerton. Great job Fred!

Bob Meyer visited 5 local schools and lead the Pledge of Allegiance. He also got the student involved in "**Operation A Bit of Home**" where the students could donate DVD to overseas troops and write letters. They donated 3400 DVD and Bob is continuing to visits schools.

Charles Mitchel stated the Garden Grove Police Department recognized four members who served in Iraq.

George Grupe has visited the Veterans Memorial at Newport Harbor High School. That one school had 12 Graduates killed in WWII and 37 killed in the wars since.

A special treat for the Freedom Committee was a Christmas Present from **Carmen and Bill Holiday**. They gave *each* member of FC-OC a CD of Christmas music. They did this as a part of "The prize for Humanity" The Immortal Four Chaplins Foundation. If FC-OC members wish, they can send a contribution to the Foundation in Long Beach.

Marlou Mariano shared enlarged photos of WWII in the Philippines. The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

*(Minutes of the meeting prepared by **Tim Richards**)*



Philippine guerilla army marching with an American flag.