



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 February 10, 2010

Pledge of Allegiance: Daniel Martinez

Invocation: Bob Meyer

Binnacle List: Jack Campbell, Ed Decker, and “Bud” Hohl

Special Guest: Daniel Martinez, Senior Historian, Pearl Harbor Arizona Museum

Guests Present:

Betty Bell, Robby Conn, Jean Cornelius, Bob Cowley, Bobbie Cowley, Madeline Detmers, Dana Dunford, Mimi Glueck, Charles J. King, Betty Louking, Dale Miller, Kari Miller, Jeff Sebek, Martha Somers, Al Thompson, John B. Wilder and Elizabeth Yee. (18)

Members Present:

Jim Baker, Bob Bankston, Kathy Bequette, Jesse Carranza, Jack Cole, Bus Cornelius, Bob Dugan, Tom Egan, Kirk Ferguson, Eddie Felix, Jack Ferris, Francis Flacks, George Grupe, Ronnie Guyer, Sid Hallburn, Jack Hammett, Arnold Hanson, Dale Hanson, Dick Higgins, Ramona Hill, Cornell Ilescu, Dag Larsen, David Lester, Syd Lucas, Ted Marinos, Vern Martin, Robert Meyer, Charles Mitchell, Richard O’Brien, Don Oldis, Bob Perry, Lou Possemato, Joseph Pultorak, Tim Richards, Larry Schnitzer, Harry Selling, Bob Sternfels, Bob Stoddard, Ted Tanner, Michel Trerotola, Dick Tyhurst, Philip Vinci, Gene Wallace, Fred Whitaker, Paul Wilder and Scott Williams.(46)

Special Presentation

Merl “Bus” Cornelius treated us to an outstanding presentation of his experiences in the European-African Theater of WWII while assigned to the 602nd Ordnance Armament Battalion. His presentation was augmented by a very fine and easy to follow PowerPoint show.

He began with the history of armored tanks which were first used in WWI. The main guns on these tanks were pointed to the side so they could fire into the trenches as they rolled over them. As they improved, the main gun was mounted on a turret and point forward.



We have all heard about the point of the spear units that were in combat with the Germans. But a lot of credit is due to units that provided the bayonet, the rifle, the ammo and all the support that it takes to keep the spear supplied. One of these combat support units was the 602nd Ordnance Battalion. This thousand man unit was responsible for supplying **General Patton** with tanks. There were two tank retriever units that hauled the damaged tanks to the rear. There was a processing unit for new tanks being shipped to the war, and a major maintenance unit. The Battalion had acres of vehicles and thousands of boxes of parts, enough for several Armies. The processing unit moved the tanks from the ships and completed the assembly by installing the guns, the sights, the antennas, and the radios ... everything needed for combat. 150 German POWs that were skilled in maintenance and repair augmented **Bus’s** unit.



M32 tank Retriever

Bus tells the story of the 30 Germans assigned to him. A 16-year-old German boy volunteered to be a translator for him. The boy had been recruited out of a university with little training. As he was leaving for war, his mother gave him a white handkerchief. She said, “When you see the Americans, drop your rifle and wave this white handkerchief.” That advice probably saved his life.

As the Allies advanced across Europe, many underground factories were discovered. The 602nd was called on to investigate them to determine if there was anything useful for the Allies. In Mannheim, Germany, a factory consisted of about six large buildings that all had been bombed and nothing left above ground.

Bus said, “we were warned again to watch for booby traps. I went down stairs and found this large room with a shower and tables. I went down a long corridor and found rooms with about twelve inches of straw on the floor where slave laborers would sleep. I returned to the main room where I saw many wooden beer kegs from floor to ceiling along one wall. I thought ‘maybe there is German Beer in them’ so I pulled over the kegs; there was no beer.

“However, I discovered a hidden door behind the beer kegs. I opened this door, not even checking for a booby trap, and there was another hallway leading to several more rooms. These rooms were filled with fine furniture, paintings, dishes, and silverware. I grabbed a box of dishes and returned to daylight. I still have the dishes, but why didn’t I take some of the paintings? At this time we thought the next factory would have buckets of gold so we moved on.

“When we left Chaumont, we joined the 75th Division to come home. They were scheduled to go to Le Havre and come home on the Queen Mary. The dockworkers in England went on strike and the Queen Mary could not get to Le Havre, so they put us on a train to Marseille for shipment home. The railroad cars we journeyed south on had been strafed, the windows were shot out, holes in the roof and it rained on us; what a mess. But through the discomfort and **thirty nine months overseas**, we were very glad to be on the move home.

The ship home was not stocked with enough food for the trip. The last several days before we docked at Newport News, Va. we were only eating crackers and candy bars.”

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Daniel Martinez, Chief Historian at the USS Arizona Memorial and host for the History Channel documentaries, answered questions about Pearl Harbor 1941. He is helping with plans for the area’s new visitor center, scheduled to open for this year’s December 7th Remembrance.

Larry Schnitzer presented the monthly Treasurers Report.

Fred Whitaker and **Tim Richards** volunteered to be the Outreach Coordinators for the top 100 Schools in Orange County to bring FCOC into the classrooms.

The March 10 FCOC Meeting will be a hosted (Free) luncheon. No brown bags needed.

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

Respectfully submitted,



Chairman