



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

Minutes of the Meeting of July 13, 2011

Pledge of Allegiance: Eddie J. Felix, WT3/c, USNR

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

Guests Present: (14)

Mecheal Abdelsayed, Charles Bergin, Guy V. Coulombe, Ray Deveau, Stan Jones, Louis Kreidelbaugh, Bob LaFramboise, Vita Mattox, Helen Nielsen, Barbara Schneider, Henry Thedingha, Al Yarrington, Gene Verge and Rob Wood.

Military Members Present: (49)

Jim Baker, Rally Bates, Howard Beach, Frank Callahan, Jack Cole, Bus Cornelius, Jeff Davis, Eddie Felix, Kirk Ferguson, Dan Gillespie, Archie Gregory, Ray Grissom, George Grupe, Herb Guinness, Ronnie Guyer, Sid Hallburn, Jack Hammett, Arnold Hanson, Dale Hanson, Dick Higgins, William Holiday, Jack Hubbard, Art Lambert, Jess Lawson, David Lester, Ted Marinos, Vern Martin, Robert Meyer, Charles Mitchell, Dick O'Brien, Don Oldis, Frank Orzio, Fred Pellicciotti, Lou Possemato, Tim Richards, Larry Schnitzer, Harry Selling, John Skara, Martha Somers, Bob Sternfels, Bob Stoddard, Ted Tanner, Alan Thompson, Jim Thurn, Michael Trerotola, Fred Whitaker, Paul Wilder, Scott Williams and Sid Yahn.

Associate Members Present: (16)

Betty Bell, Robby Conn, Elizabeth Delpizzo, Kay Felix, David Ferguson, Marty Flacks, Ramona Hill, Carmen Holiday, Cornell Iliescu, Pat O'Brien, Helen Possemato, Gladys Refakes, Terry Schnitzer, Judy Selling, Denise Weiland and Ray Wong

Special Presentation

Ploesti- Bombing Hitler's Black Gold

Major Bob Sternfels treated the Freedom Committee Members to very well organized and



illustrated presentation by a firsthand participant of the “*Second most notable aerial combat mission of WWII aviation history.*” (Second to the Doolittle raid of Tokyo) The Ploesti oil refinery raid took place on Black Sunday, August 1st, 1943, when 178 B-24 “Liberator” heavy bombers began a flight of 1300 miles from Libya, North Africa to southern Europe near the city of Bucharest, Rumania. With a 1300 miles return flight for the remaining flyable bombers and all without navigational aids except maps. Operation Tidal Wave consisted of the five Bomber

Major Robert Sternfels, USAAF, pilot of “Sandman” B-24 Bomber that was featured on the cover of the December 1944 National Geographic Magazine.

Groups striking seven of the oil refineries in one massive wave of bombers. This wave would overwhelm the German defenses and score a major victory by limiting German oil.



Unfortunately the mission didn't go as planned. Eleven bombers turned back because of mechanical problems and two crashed in route. The lead two bomber groups made an erroneous turn and struck the wrong targets while the succeeding three groups flew the mission as planned hitting their designated targets. However the leading two groups' bombs caused heavy smoke over the target forcing the next three groups to fly thru the smoke and delayed time bombs. And the German defenses were manned and ready for the bombers that were flying very low; 50ft to 200 ft above the refineries. The objective of flying so low was (1) keep below the German radar, (2) more accurate bomb drop, and (3) not striking the Rumanian town of Ploesti.

54 out of the 178 bombers in the raid were lost (crashed) and another 58 were damaged. 310 airmen lost their lives. **Bob Sternfels**, pilot of "*Sandman*", was one of the last bombers through. He brought his plane back and was decorated with a Silver Star Medal and Distinguished Flying Cross by **General Jimmy Doolittle**. "*Glory is not available to all who seek it, but glory comes to many who do not.*"

A *Must-Read* book of this mission is "*Burning Hitler's Black Gold*" written by **Frank Way** with **Major Robert W. Sternfels**. Facts of the mission over Ploesti can be verified by Freedom Committee Member **Cornell Iliescu** who was an eight year old Romanian boy in 1943 and waved to the bombers as they flew over.

Announcements

Scott Williams announced that FCOC is now incorporated as a 501(c) 3 organization and Officers have been approved as follows: **Jack R. Hammett**, Chairman; **Timothy Richards**, Secretary and **Bette Bell**, Treasure. The first year Directors are: **James E. Baker**, **Jack Hammett**, **Richard Higgins**, **David Lester**, **Norman Loats**, **Richard O'Brien**, **Frank Orzio**, **Robert E. Thomas**, **Fred Whitaker**, and **J. Scott Williams**.

Our congratulations to **Pastor Frank Orzio** on his appointment as State Chaplain for the California Purple Heart Society.

Thanks to **Jim Baker** and **Scott Williams**, the new sound system worked exceptionally fine.

Certificates of Membership are being prepared for all FCOC members which may be suitable for framing.

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

Handwritten signature of Jack Hammett in black ink.

*Jack Hammett,
Chairman*