



*The Freedom Committee of Orange County*  
*Neighborhood Community Center*  
*1845 Park Ave., Costa Mesa, CA. 92627*

**Minutes of the Meeting of March 9, 2011**

**Pledge of Allegiance:** Commander Lawrence Schnitzer, USN (Ret.)

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

**Guests Present: (16)** Kelly Alcala, Gene Bakke, Dave Ferguson, Jack Hubbard, Ed Keene, Louis Kridelbaugh, Ed Malan, Peggy Malan, Ray Stoddard, Noah Thomas, Jim Thurn, Frank Visca, Howard Wills (includes 3 unsigned.)

**Members Present: (64)**

Bob Bangston, Betty Bell, Howard Bender, Frank Callahan, George Ciamba, Jack Cole, Robby Conn, Bus Cornelius, Vi Cowden, Bob Cowley, Roberta Cowley, Bob Dugan, Kirk Ferguson, Archie Gregory, Ray Grissom, George Grupe, Herb Guinness, Frank Haigler, Jack Hammett, Arnold Hanson, Dale Hanson, Shirley Hanson, Dick Higgins, Ramona Hill, William Holiday, Dan Huston, Tony Iantorno, Jess Lawson, David Lester, Norm Loats, Frank Mannino, Ted Marinos, Vern Martin, Robert Meyer, Charles Mitchell, Dick O'Brien, Pat O'Brien, Don Oldis, Frank Orzio, Bob Perry, Doc Pinnex, Lou Possemato, Harry Rawlins, Gladys Refakes, Tim Richards, Larry Schnitzer, Terry Schnitzer, John Skara, Martha Somers, Bob Sternfels, Bob Stoddard, Ted Tanner, Bob Thomas, Mike Trerotola, Phillip Vinci, Gene Wallace, Linda Wallace, Denise Weiland, Fred Whitaker, Paul Wilder, Scott Williams, Sid Yahn, Greg Young and Elizabeth Yee.

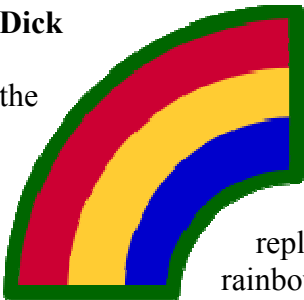
**Special Presentation**

**Dan Gillespie**, S/SGT, U.S. Army, WWII

***"The Combat Infantry Machine Gunner & Concentration Camp Rescues"***

Dick

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O'Brien introduced S/SGT Dan Gillespie, a WWII Veteran who served in the European Theater with 42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division. The Division was nicknamed the Rainbow Division because it was organized with the best Regiments from 26 different states. **Major Douglas MacArthur**, later 5-stars, standing nearby, replied, "Fine, that will stretch over the whole country like rainbow." The 42<sup>nd</sup> Division with 3 Regiments, landed in southern France at Marseille on Dec 8-9, 1944. The Division

entered combat near Strasbourg, France along the Rhine River on December 24, 1944. The Regiment that Dan was assigned to, the 222<sup>nd</sup> Regiment, was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation during this action. He remembers being assigned as gunner with a 30 caliber water cooled machinegun. His gun crew defended a school house when the Germans attacked. The next morning, there were 151 dead German soldiers in front of his position and **Dan was awarded the Silver Star** for this action.



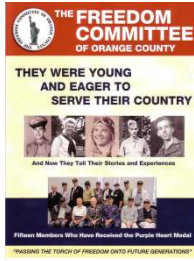
Dachau Memorial

The 42<sup>nd</sup> Division fought eastward for over 240 miles between February to April 1945 to the Austrian border. Dan displayed many photos of US soldiers fighting in the cold and snow. Anti-freeze was used in place of water in the cold weather. He saw many beautiful towns reduced to rubble during the fighting. On April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1945, in the Bavarian town of Dachau, they liberated a German Concentration Camp. The 222<sup>nd</sup> Regiment was the first unit to

liberate the camp and see the atrocities that had happened there. Dan had enough photos that even the present-day Iranian President would be convinced of the Holocaust. The American troops were cautioned against feeding the freed prisoners. The prisoners had been starved almost to death and any GI high calorie food could have killed them. There was a medical staff there to administer to them.

The 42<sup>nd</sup> Division spent 106 days in combat and suffered 5,949 killed. Dan was asked if he had difficulty when he returned home after the war? He said he was just so glad to be home, nothing else mattered. A very informative cartographic map was passed out for the part of Europe where the 42<sup>nd</sup> Division served and fought. An interesting side note; there are 20 cemeteries in Europe that fly the American Flag. 104,366 Brave American servicemen never came home.

## TABLE TOPICS



- **Jack Hammett** displayed a 4-page brochure highlighting what the Freedom Committee does and how they spread the mission of “**Freedom Isn’t Free**”. The brochure has been printed and is ready for the “**Veterans Walk of Honor**” program this March. Also each Freedom Committee member received one and is encouraged to show it around as publicity for FCOC.

- **Jack Hammett** introduced our new **Vice Chairman Scott Williams**. Scott is a Vietnam Veteran and a lawyer. Scott reported on the FCOC changing to a 501 (c) (3) non-profit Corporation soon. This will allow any donations made to FCOC to be tax deductible. **Fred Whitaker** and **Dick O’Brien** are working with Scott to make this

happen.

- Mrs. **Betty Bell**, our new Treasurer, has done an outstanding job of making corrections indicated in the audit report and updating the financial records needed for the change to a Corporation. She read the financial report for January 1st to March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011. She is working with the Executive Committee to prepare a budget for 2011.
- **Fred Whitaker** announced that the “**Veterans Walk of Honor**” event will involve many Orange County fifth graders as they tour the Santa Ana City Hall, March 21-24<sup>th</sup>. If you can volunteer, call Fred and come tell your military story.
- **Denise Wieland, Education Advisor**, announced a March 17<sup>th</sup> luncheon honoring 73 Veterans who have been interviewed by the Sophomore class of Corona del Mar High School. The students learned history and applied English skills in writing the interview reports.
- **Jack Hammett** announced the **Martin Luther King High School** interviews on March 18<sup>th</sup>. The **Rancho Cucamonga High School** Interviews will be April 21<sup>st</sup>. Jack will be the Master of Ceremonies at the **Santa Ana Army Air Base (SAAAB) Reunion** on April 30<sup>th</sup>, and mark your calendars for **Memorial Day** at Harbor Lawn Memorial Cemetery.
- **Fred Whitaker** announced that **Gene Wallace** has donated 72 videos and 8 DVD tapes to the FCOC Lending library. **Mona Hill** is cataloging them and will be ready for members to check-out next meeting.
- **George Ciampa** of [www.letfreedomring.org](http://www.letfreedomring.org) is nearing his dream of producing his third documentary video “Remembering Heroes from the Mighty 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force.” He and a production crew will be in Europe filming soon.



Vote for our own **Jess Lawson** for President of the American Legion Post 291.

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

*Jack Hammett*

**Jack Hammett**  
Chairman