



LIVING HISTORY

PASSING THE TORCH OF LIBERTY ON TO FUTURE GENERATIONS

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER - VOL. 1 NO. 3
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Voices of veterans who have served their country in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Cold War, 1st Gulf War, Iraq and Afghanistan

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Volunteers – Thank You!

From the first time that I met with Jack Hammett, Chairman, I was impressed with his work ethic, enthusiasm, and energy for his Freedom Committee of Orange County. He was a young man of 87 years. He firmly believed that his veterans had a duty to pass on the message of duty and sacrifice to the younger generation. We could not expect this generation to, "take care of our country" if the veterans shirked their duty.

I am blessed to be surrounded by a platoon of volunteers: veteran and civilian, who believe in our program. The Board of Directors, all volunteers, veterans, meet three times a year, and guides the actions and affairs of the corporation.

Our Executive Committee, all volunteers, meets monthly and implements our programs: financial, schools, speaker program, civic & business, veteran qualification, schools-South County, applications, recruitment, transportation, audio, video and website, and the monthly public meeting. At our public meetings, you are welcomed by our volunteer associate members.

We have a monthly public meeting for special presentations by our veterans. In the first quarter of 2016 we have had three presentations: Specialist James Pinnix, "A Corpsman in Vietnam," USMC, Corpsman, Vietnam War, lead the year off with his tour of duty in Vietnam in the mid-sixties.

Capt. Robert Olds, USN, Aviator & Ships Captain, and the Cold War, presented his personal story, "Anti-Submarine (Chasing Russian Subs)" took us on a journey from the Great Depression to the Arctic chasing Russian submarines. Robert Davis, WWII, AAC, B-24 gunner, "Flak, Fighters, and Boiled Potatoes," took us on a journey from his hometown in Springfield, Illinois, to Stalag Luft VI and a forced 800 mile march.

The Freedom Committee of Orange County's monthly meeting averages 125 in attendance. As the 2016 Memorial Day approaches we are mindful of the sacrifices made by our men and women of the United States of America Armed Forces who died serving their country.

On Monday, May 30, 2016, The Freedom Committee of Orange County will coordinate the 62nd Memorial Day Services at Harbor Lawn–Mt. Olive Memorial Park and Mortuary, 1625 Gisler Ave., Costa Mesa, CA. The services begin at 11:00 A.M. I hope to see you, your family and your guests there!

Scott Williams

SCOTT'S PHOTO HERE

What's new with the Freedom Committee? Lots of Things!

Veterans' presentations at the schools. Since we reported in our February newsletter, our veterans made PowerPoint presentations or gave interviews at 10 schools in the Newport-Mesa Unified School District, and at Marina High School in Huntington Beach Union High School District, all coordinated by Denise Weiland. See the reception that Ronnie Guyer got from the students at Ensign Middle School on February 1st.



Ronnie Guyer at Ensign Middle School – Feb. 1

We have received letters from both students and teachers, expressing their appreciation. Here is a portion of one from a teacher at Corona del Mar High School:

“My greatest challenge is how to make history interesting and relevant, a difficult task when all I have to work with is a book, and pencil and paper. Yes, I do have computers but still it is only the written word, and even on the Internet it seems really far away and distant to the students. The Living History Project is where my students can actually talk to someone who has lived through history, and even ‘made’ history; it is where learning comes alive.”

Expansion of the Living History program.

Through the efforts of Keith Regan, as South County liaison, the Freedom Committee made a presentation on January 14 to the students at University High School in the Irvine Unified School District. In that district there are 40 more schools that Keith will be working with in the future. He is currently making arrangements with Mater Dei

High School in Santa Ana, for their request for speakers. Last November, Keith brought Freedom Committee speakers to Shoreline Middle School in San Clemente as well as Aliso Viejo Middle School.

Bill Moynihan and Kaaron Carver, in the Casta del Sol area of Mission Viejo, have been working with veterans who meet at the Snooty Fox in Laguna Hills, as well as Casta Veterans, with a focus on making presentations to the students in Mission Viejo high schools.

Howard Bender will make his “Pearl Harbor” presentation to the American Legion in Laguna Woods on April 28 and will explain the work of the Freedom Committee, with the hope of establishing close ties with those veterans.

Plans are under way, as well, to expand Living History to Fountain Valley High School in the Huntington Beach Unified High School District, with Jim Grimm as coordinator.

To provide for these plans and commitments, Frank Pangborn is encouraging Freedom Committee veterans who have not done so already, to offer their time and talents to a training program to enable them to participate in this important program.

Ground Breaking for Heroes Hall. On March 16, four veterans of the Freedom Committee met at the Orange County Fair Grounds for a ground breaking ceremony. Freedom Committee veterans present were, left to right, Robert Dugan and Frank Orzio in Marine uniforms, Robert Friend in the red jacket, and David Hayward who is not shown. The



remaining barrack from the Santa Ana Army Air Base in World War II will be installed and converted to a permanent museum dedicated to war veterans, scheduled for completion by Veterans Day, November 11, 2016.

Bill Moynihan has been carrying the message of the Freedom Committee to the Camp Pendleton Marines on Marine Appreciation Day, next on May 14, as a member of the Mission Viejo Marine Adoption Committee.

Jim Baker won an Oscar at the recent Academy Awards ceremony in Hollywood. He won it for his short documentary film "America." Jim showed his film of majestic American landscapes at the Freedom Committee meeting on February 10.



Frank Pangborn accepted a check for \$500 to the Freedom Committee from the Newport Beach Lions Club on February 17. Shown in the photo to the right of Frank is Cindy Kleczko, President of the Chapter. Cindy's mother is Sally Nockold, an Associate of the Freedom Committee.



Frank Pangborn and Cindy Kleczko, Lions Club President

Jeffrey Schmehr of HDL Companies donated \$1,000 to the Freedom Committee. He wrote, "My wife took a picture of my son Scott speaking with Howard Bender. I thought Howard might like to see it."



Howard Bender talks with Scott Schmehr during the presentation at HDL Companies.

Corona del Mar High School, March 24. Over 400 high school students, under the leadership of Principal Kathy Scott, honored 91 veterans of the Freedom Committee at a luncheon meeting in the school gymnasium. Students introduced the veterans they had interviewed in previous days, and presented them with letters and records of the interviews, showing their appreciation for the Living History program the Freedom Committee brought to the school. You can see the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldd9Tm9ilzo>



Corona del Mar High School students hosting the event.

Shown below, some of those attending from the Freedom Committee are, left to right, Tom Gorla, Tim Richards, Peter Katz, Dave Lester, Frank Pangborn, Jim Grimm, President Scott Williams, and Stanley Kieliszek.



David Lester, Staff Sergeant, WWII

Sent by Tom Gorla

If you go to our website homepage, you'll see the "Five Wise Old Men" who founded the Freedom Committee, Dave Lester being among them. Look them over. Hammett and Nockold were Pearl Harbor Survivors; Nockold commanded 5 subs in the war; Gene Robens was an aide for Ike in Europe; Bud Anderson flew night fighters and was a double ace.

Dave Lester was born in 1919 in Oklahoma City, and those were hardscrabble times with food scarce for his family of 7 and got worse with the depression. A flood ravaged the farm and just about everything was lost. Dave found his first great love, aviation, at Curtiss-Wright, the local airport later named Wiley Post Field following Wiley's flight in his plane, "Winnie Mae," the first solo around the world. Dave had been investing all his free time at the airport learning about airplanes and flying, helping for years as a go-fer for Post and others & going to air shows & county fairs during barnstorming days. He got to know Paul and Tom Braniff and Braniff's chief mechanic, Dom Powers, who took on Dave in the go-fer role, giving him valuable instruction in engines, airframes, and instrumentation.

Dave left OK City in 1935, moving to San Diego with his sister & her husband, and worked as a delivery driver until 1937, when he learned of openings at Consolidated, building B-24s and PB-5A's. He applied in person and asked for an interview, reassuring the skeptics that he had learned a lot about the mechanics and intricacies of aircraft and, at age 19, was hired on the spot! After Pearl Harbor, Dave attempted to join the army but was sent back to work on a "permanent" Defense Department hold. Building planes was more important than one more infantryman, at least right then.

Following the Normandy landing, 1944, Dave found a way to join the Army by taking a vacation to see his family in OK City. He volunteered and was sworn in immediately. He was turned down for flight training when he was discovered to be color blind. "Old Hickory" was the nick-name of the

30th Infantry Division in which David Lester served in the 105th Combat Engineer Battalion in three



major campaigns: Central Europe, Battle of the Bulge, and the Rhineland. He did RECON behind enemy lines, defused mines, and built infantry support bridges. He was twice wounded and nearly drowned bridging the Rohr River.

He was first in his battalion to cross the Rhine near Wessel to clear the far shore of mines and barricades. His squad liberated 2 Allied POWs and 1 Holocaust compound and captured 20 Luftwaffe pilots in a Brunswick, Germany, air-raid bunker. The squad celebrated with the Russians at the Elbe!

Old Hickory Division paid a dear price for Victory, losing 26,038 KIA and over 31,000 WIA/MIA. Dave's decorations include two Bronze Stars, a Purple Heart, and the French Legion of Honor. That's just the beginning of the story of a very fine life. By the way, later he bought an old Army sailplane, rebuilt it and flew it for many years, color blind or not!

SEND YOUR STORIES, LETTERS, PHOTOS AND COMMENTS TO DAVE HAYWARD AT

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VISIT THE FREEDOM COMMITTEE WEBSITE AT

www.fc-oc.org

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Dave Hayward, Coordinator; Tim Richards, Bill Moynihan, Kaaron Carver, and Beth Refakes