



LIVING HISTORY

PASSING THE TORCH OF LIBERTY ON TO FUTURE GENERATIONS

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER VOL. 1 NO. 1 NOVEMBER 2015

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to our initial newsletter of The Freedom Committee of Orange County (FCOC). We are a nonprofit organization of veterans; not an organization for veterans, and are reaching out to veterans and their families to join us in growing our organization. There is no fee for membership. We need your participation and esprit de corps to meet our goals.

Today, veterans represent about one percent of our population, but one hundred percent of those who served their country fought to preserve our Liberty against foreign enemies. Our purpose is to pass the torch of liberty on to future generations through veterans making personal history presentations in our schools. Our goal is to have a veteran make a personal history presentation in every high school's American History/Social Science class in Orange County. Won't you join us to make this happen?

FCOC Veterans are there to support the teachers and their lesson plans. Students learn what they read in their textbooks, but it is through this "Living History" that the sacrifices of wars come to life. The WWII veterans are a dying breed and we need to acknowledge their history to inspire future generations. The oldest member of the FCOC is 98 years old. The Committee is bringing in new and younger veterans to share in their experiences as well (i.e., Korean, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans).

Around 1995, Jack Hammett, WWII veteran, encouraged a few other veterans to organize for the purpose of telling their personal military

history stories to the local high school students. Prior to his passing in 2014, FCOC partnered with the Newport Mesa Unified School District (N-MUSD) to bring its "Living History Program" into all six district high schools.

Today, WWII veterans account for 45 of the 142 military veterans in the organization. Every second Wednesday of each month, The Freedom Committee of Orange County meets at the Costa Mesa Neighborhood Community Center, 1845 Park Ave./19th St., Costa Mesa, CA. We gather at 11:30 a.m. and enjoy a "brown bag" (byob) lunch, and promptly start the program at 12:00 noon. The meeting ends promptly at 1:30 p.m. Please join me to "Pass the Torch of Liberty on to Future Generations".

Scott Williams, President, The Freedom Committee of Orange County



Left to right: Fred Whitaker, WWII, FCOC Chief Financial Officer; Martha Fluor, President, N-MUSD Board of Trustees; and Maj. Gen. William "Bill" Mall, Jr., FCOC Director. At the N-MUSD's State of the Schools breakfast. Photo by Tim Richards.

A SURFING LESSON

On Saturday, July 18th, the Freedom Committee of Orange County had the opportunity to participate in a program to instruct veterans how to surf. It was headed up by Chris Merkle, OC Chapter Captain of Team RWB of the Waves of Valor. They met at 7 am on the beach at 9th Street, Huntington Beach. Dave Hayward led them in the Pledge of Allegiance and Chaplain Frank Orzio offered them prayer.

Then the fun began. Chris commented: "This is an opportunity for veterans to learn how to surf, build confidence, and get involved with the community. No previous experience is necessary. Breakfast and lunch will be provided for all volunteers." Who were some of the volunteers? How about our own Scott Williams, Tom Gorla and David Willard? Needless to say, a good time was had by all.



Top: The happy group gathered on the sand as the U.S. flag waved proudly in the background. Bottom: Left to right – Dave Hayward, Frank Orzio and Chris Merkle. Photos are courtesy of Chris Merkle.

FRED WHITAKER'S LIVING HISTORY



Scott Williams wrote: "I want to share with you the letter I received from William 'Mike' Wilson, history teacher at Gilbert High School. William contacted me after meeting FCOC member Andy Cullinane at the Laguna Niguel DMV.

"Observing Andy's FCOC hat, William inquired about the purpose of FCOC and, as a result, contacted me to set up a presentation. I asked Fred Whitaker to do it and he responded that he would." First, here is Fred's report on his presentation:

"When I arrived at Gilbert High School on Ball Road in Anaheim, I was escorted to the assembly room where three history classes were already seated.

"They stood in mass and gave me a prolonged round of applause. Mike Wilson, their teacher, said he had never seen such a reception in 25 years at that school.

"Those young students were intensely interested in the stories of my four campaigns in Europe in 1944 and 1945. It was a joy to speak to them."

Scott Williams continued, quoting the letter he received from the school:

"I just wanted you to know that Fred left a BIG and positive impression on our students. I have been a teacher here for 25 years and have never seen someone get a standing ovation from our students. Everything went great and I know from the positive responses from students that this kind of thing will be a good match for us going forward. Thank you again for helping to make this possible."

- Compiled by Scott Williams, Fred Whitaker and Mike Wilson

- Photo by courtesy of Fred Whitaker

HOW FOUR U.S. PILOTS SAVED CHINA IN WORLD WAR II

Summarized by Dave Hayward with permission of
the author

On May 7, 1942 at the Salween River gorge, the Japanese army threatened to roll on to capture Kunming and continue on to Chungking, the war-time capital of free China, thus ending China's participation in World War II. Capt. Daniel Jackson described the operation in his book Famine, Sword and Fire: The Liberation of Southwest China in World War II.

In May 1942, while the AVG (American Volunteer Group, the Flying Tigers) and the JAAF (Japanese Army Air Force) fought for the skies, Major General Sakaguchi Shizuo led three regiments of the Japanese 56th Division to the west bank of the Salween River. Claire Chennault (Commander of the AVG) feared that if the Japanese crossed the Salween and did not encounter any resistance, they would continue to Kunming, and it would be "the end of the war for China."

The Chinese fought brief delaying actions on the China-Burma border and had fallen back to prepared positions on the east bank of the Salween River. According to Chennault, the decision to attack the Japanese column advancing up the Burma Road was a difficult one, as the road was packed with refugees. He sent a telegram to Madam Chiang:

LATEST REPORTS SAY JAPS ON WEST
BANK SALWEEN RIVER 1500 HOURS 5 MAY
STOP BRIDGE DESTROYED STOP JAPS MEETING
NO OPPOSITION ANYWHERE AS SOLDIERS AND
CIVILIANS PANIC STRICKEN FLEEING EAST
ALONG ROAD STOP CONSIDER SITUATION
DESPERATE AND JAPS MAY DRIVE KUNMING
STOP DUE TO FACT MANY CHINESE TRUCKS
WEST OF SALWEEN PRESUMABLY IN HANDS
OF ENEMY REQUEST AUTHORITY HIS
EXCELLENCY THE GENERALISSIMO TO ATTACK
TARGETS BETWEEN SALWEEN AND LONGLING
CITY

Madam Chiang replied, "Generalissimo

instructs you send all available AVG to attack trucks, boats, etc., between Salween and Longling City."

To hamper the Japanese advance, Chennault formulated a plan to bomb the Burma Road where it descended into the Salween gorge. With the road blocked, the motorized Japanese regiments would find it difficult to move their forces down to the river. Chennault called "Tex" Hill into his office. "Remember when you gave me a lesson on dive-bombing?" he asked. Prior to joining the AVG, Hill had been a dive-bomber pilot on the USS Ranger. "It's time for the real thing," Chennault told him. "I want you to pick three other pilots." Hill picked Ed Rector, Frank Lawlor, and Tom Jones, all former U.S. Navy dive-bomber pilots. "I haven't done any dive-bombing since I left the fleet!" complained Jones, after Hill briefed them on the mission.

"It's a cliff wall a mile high," Hill reassured him. "You can't possibly miss." The flight of dive-bombers flew the AVG's new P-40E's, which were equipped with under-wing bomb racks and which armorers Roy Hoffman and Chuck Baisden had outfitted to carry 570-pound Russian high-explosive bombs on an improved centerline rack. Arvis Olson from the 3rd Squadron led a flight of four Hawk 81s, which could not carry bombs, as top cover.

The weather was miserable when the eight AVG fighters left Kunming on the morning of May 7th. It was pouring rain when they refueled at Yunnanyi. The hundred miles from Yunnanyi to the Salween gorge was difficult flying. The formation struggled to dodge thunderheads as they tried to remain beneath the weather. Hill spotted a gap in the clouds and all eight fighters broke through to clear, sunlit skies, the deep chasm of the Salween before them. Trucks and troops of the Japanese 56th Division were strung out along the road from the bottom of the gorge to the horizon. Hill noted a group of Japanese engineers readying a pontoon bridge across the river. He put his P-40 into a sixty-degree dive, lining up where the road met the top of the gorge.

According to the 3rd Squadron pilot R. T. Smith, the P-40 has a tendency to pick up excessive speed in a dive, as it was “far from being satisfactory” as a dive-bomber. Hill and his flight restricted their dive angle to between 50 and 60 degrees and kept their throttles back. Each of the P-40Es was armed with clusters of 35 pound fragmentation bombs under the wings and a 570-pound demolition bomb on the centerline rack. Hill’s demolition bomb hit the side of the gorge and sent an avalanche of rocks crashing onto the road below. One after another, the other Warhawks in his flight followed him, making the road impassable. Coming back around, Hill fired a burst from his machine guns to keep heads down and dropped his frag bombs over the Japanese column. Rector, Jones, and Lawler did likewise and the four of them peeled off in different directions.

Tom Jones returned to the gorge the next day with another flight of P-40Es. R. T. Smith flew with the eight Hawk 81s in the top cover element. He reported, “Jones and his gang did the dirty work while we stayed on top. They blasted about 50 trucks.” The 36th and 87th divisions of the Chinese 71st Army crossed the Salween and attacked Longling. The Japanese pushed them back, but it signified a definite shift. The Japanese had lost their momentum. Chennault kept up the aerial pressure while Chinese troops worked to disrupt the Japanese. Together, they managed to stop the Japanese at the Salween River.

At the November 4th meeting of the Freedom Committee of Orange County, I plan to report on my trip to China in September, which was in celebration of the 70th anniversary of VJ-Day. This story is important to me, Dave Hayward, for two reasons. First, on September 7th of this year I stood at that very bridge on the Salween River where the Chinese army, with the help of American pilots, stopped the Imperial Japanese army from advancing further into China. Secondly, in 1944 my own squadron, the 22nd Bomb Squadron of B-25 Mitchell medium bombers of the 14th Air Force took an active part in helping the Chinese army drive the invaders completely out of southwest China. Thank you, Dan Jackson. □

FREEDOM COMMITTEE STORE

Navy blue polo shirts with Freedom Committee logo:\$32.00
 Hooded Zip-front sweat jackets: .\$35.00
 2015 FCOC Memorial Day ceremony DVD:\$15.00
 Hats:\$15.00
 Patches:\$5.00
 T-Shirts:\$10.00
 Flag pins:\$1.00
 Car flags:\$2.00
 Stop by Linda’s table on your way in to the next meeting. You’ll like what you see. Your cash or check will work.

SEND YOUR STORIES, LETTERS AND COMMENTS TO DAVE HAYWARD AT

JeanneDave@aol.com

This is our first newsletter and we need your participation to make it grow. You have great stories to tell and we want to make them available to all. We will have a “Letters to the Editor” column. Send us your thoughts.

VISIT THE FREEDOM COMMITTEE WEBSITE AT

www.fc-oc.org

FREEDOM COMMITTEE OF ORANGE COUNTY

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PLUS we’ll be calling on YOU for photos, stories and comments of FCOC events. We’re sending this electronically. It is not only much cheaper but also easier to forward on to family and friends. Help us get the word out and also let us know of email changes.