

The Freedom Committee of Orange County

(A California nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation)

Neighborhood Community Center

1845 Park Ave., Costa Mesa, CA. 92627



Minutes of the Meeting of July 11, 2012 (Revised)

Pledge of Allegiance: Sgt. Merl “Bus” Cornelius, USA, WWII,
602nd Ordnance Armament, General Patton’s Division

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

Guests Present: (11) Lou Bullis, Bill Keichlien, Louis Kridelbaugh, Christopher Kupitz, Barbara Owen, Dan King, Lou Kreidelbaugh, Kimberly Ruiz, Krystle Santana, Walter Stoermen and Henry Thedinga.

Members Present: (56) Kelly Alcala, Bill Anderson, Jim Baker, Rally Bates, Howard Beach, Howard Bender, Jess Carranza, George Ciampa, Bus Cornelius, Bob Cowley, Roberta Cowley, Bob Dugan, Tom Evans, Eddie Felix, Archie Gregory, Herb Guinness, Ronnie Guyer, Sid Hallburn, Jack Hammett, Dick Higgins, Jack Hubbard, John Hughes, Dag Larsen, Dave Lester, Bob Leahy, Bill Mall, Frank Mannino, Ted Marinos, Vern Martin, Edison Miller, Charles Mitchell, Joseph Mueller, Richard O’Brien, Don Oldis, Frank Orzio, Fred Pellicciotti, Lou Possemato, Jim Powers, Ken Pruitt, Frank Ramirez, Harry Rawlins, Tim Richards, Larry Schnitzer, Harry Selling, John Skara, Ted Tanner, Brent Theobold, Allan Thompson, Jim Thurn, Mike Trerotola, Dick Tyhurst, Philip Vinci, Fred Whitaker, George Widly, Paul Wilder, and Scott Williams.

Associate Members Present: (16) Bette Bell, Arlen Cole, Robby Conn, Elizabeth Delpizzo, Kay Felix, Jamie Howren, Adrian Michael, Audrey Miller, Pat O’Brien, Helen Possemato, Gladys Refakes, Terry Schnitzer, Judy Selling, Linda Williams, Ray Wong, and Rob Wood.

Special Presentation

“Marine Aviation in Combat”

Major John A. Hughes, a 26 year veteran of the Marine Corps Aviation, educated FCOC members on what a career was like in the Marine Corps Aviation during WWII and Korea.

A California boy made good, **Major Hughes** was born in Pico Rivera and raised on a dairy farm. Following graduation in 1937, Major Hughes joined the Marine Corps Reserve. Realizing that United States and Japan were heading for a “fracas”, he joined the Active duty Marines. Completing “boot camp” he was assigned to Marine Aviation in the Service Squadron Engine Overhaul shop. John completed (Navy) Aviation Machinist Mate School as the lone Marine private and was assigned to the Marine Air Group in San Diego, CA.

Aviation Machinist Mate



In January 1941, the Air Group embarked on an aircraft carrier heading for Barber's Point, Hawaii. On Hawaii, they began clearing a hemp field for the Future Marine Air Station, Ewa which was within 17 miles from Pearl Harbor Naval Base.

"Kate" torpedo bomber.



December 7, 1941 began as a normal Sunday for the Marines. Returning from chow, John looked down the company street and saw a plane flying low over the cane fields. It had a big red ball on the side and a long torpedo underneath. He immediately recognized it as a Japanese aircraft. Realizing this was "no drill", he yelled to the Sergeant of the Guard, "*Break out the ammo-the Japs are here!*" A case of 30 caliber ammo was broken open and John grabbed a handful of bandoliers and ran down the row of huts tossing each a bandolier and telling the Marines inside to get their rifles; "*The Japs are here!*"

Burning SBD at Ewa



As John came to his hut, he grabbed his rifle, loaded, and looked North in time to see another plane strafing the airfield. He fired three rounds with his Japanese "Kate" flew over. The parked aircraft were being strafed so he ran over to help the crews separate the burning planes from the others. He later found out that the Jap planes that bombed Pearl Harbor flew over Ewa and expended any unused ammo on them. Of the 49 aircraft at Ewa, 33 were destroyed and 16 damaged.

Nakajima B5N "Kate" Torpedo bomber.

In February 1942 PFC he received orders for Pensacola, FL. and flight school. Upon graduation they were designated "Naval Aviation Pilots" - Flying Sergeants. In flight operations, while airborne, experience dictates the position of enlisted pilots. A Bluejacket pilot of a single pilot aircraft may lead a section and have an officer flying in his section. On the ground, the normal officer and enlisted status resume.

As **Staff Sergeant Hughes'** first flying duty was in Mojave, CA. with a dive bombing squadron. Early 1943 found John a part of a replacement pilot group with the VMSB 132 on Espiritu Santo Island which is 1000 Miles East of Australia and 600 miles South of Guadalcanal Island. VMSB 132 was a Marine Scout Bombing Squadron and they were flying the Douglas SBD-1. The VMSB 132 flew in the New Georgia Campaign and the Bougainville Campaign. Their missions were mostly bombing enemy air fields.



Douglas SBD-1

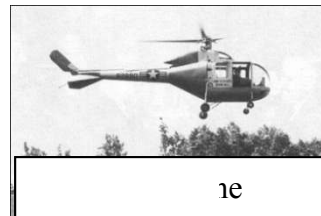
In late November, **Master Sergeant Hughes** was called into the Air Group CO office and "promoted" to 2nd Lieutenant; from the top of the Enlisted Grades to the bottom of the Officer Grades. **Lieutenant Hughes** flew in the New Britain Campaign and Southern Philippines Islands flying support for the Army until the end of the War in 1945. Returning to the US, Lieutenant Hughes remained in the Marines.

In June 1952, John was called to duty in Korea where he flew several types of helicopters on medevac missions from the front lines to medical units.

Bell 47 "Bubble"



Stretcher loaded



1e



Major John Hughes completed 26 years of service and retired from the Marines in 1964 having flown 150 combat missions.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Jack Hammett expressed appreciation for the support of the Associate Members provide at each meeting. It is a thin line of leaders that contributes to the success of the Freedom Committee of Orange County. He also thanked the **Veterans Resource Center of Vanguard University** for their assistance at our meetings.

In addition, he reminded all that we do not receive any support from Orange County and if searching on Google, we are not a veteran's organization. Our mission is education, and to "Pass the Torch of Freedom on to Future Generations" .by bringing "Living History" into the classrooms.

James Thurn introduced **Kimberly Ruiz**, daughter of WWII WASP **Violet Cowden** (deceased), former long time member of FCOC,.

Scott Williams reported on the status of monetary grants. With the assistance of **Howie Beach**, a grant request was made to Ganahl Lumber.

Bette Bell presented the Monthly financial report. Copies were available. She said American flag pins and FCOC caps were also available for sale.

Jack Hammett introduced photographer and resident of Costa Mesa, **Jamie Howren**. She is the co-author and co-creator of the traveling photographic exhibit and book "*Open Doors: Vietnam POWs Thirty Years Later.*" The body of work is a collection of portraits and stories celebrating the lives of thirty former Vietnam POWs and where their lives have landed thirty years after their release from captivity. It is a celebration of hope, second chances and overcoming adversity. Former Vietnam POW, Commander **Paul Galanti**, USN, (Ret.) once stated, "*There's no such thing as a bad day when you have a door knob of the inside of the door.*" This was the premise for the title of Open Doors." Jamie is now an Associate Member.

Audrey Miller notified all FCOC members that there will be a parade in Laguna Niguel, CA. on Saturday, December 8th. All FCOC members are invited to attend and possible wear their uniforms. Contact her by October if you plan to attend.

Ray Wong reported on the **FCOC** web site. He is in the process of placing many videos of past FCOC member presentations on the web.

Tim Richards reported on the June 28th **US Supreme Court** decision OVERTURNING the Stolen Valor Law of 2006. In a ruling on the conviction of a former Santa Ana politician, the Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional, saying it violated the free speech rights of those making *false claims* about winning (sic) the Medal of Honor and other prestigious military recognitions. The Supreme Court decision “Invalidated the law ruling Alvarez’s fabricated story was constitutionally protected speech.”

Charles Mitchell said it is difficult telling who has which medals honestly because of the St. Louis Record Center fire in 1973. Many military records were lost in the fire.

Bob Dugan reported that the **USS Iowa battleship** and Museum in Long Beach is now open. However, only about 15% of the interior of the ship can be seen. Maybe we should wait a while?

Dan King, an author, has published a WWII book, [The Last Zero Fighter](#) and is available on Amazon.com. Dan King lived in Japan and has found that the Japanese are very pro-American now.

Jim Thurn lauded **George Ciampa** who has produced three videos about WWII. He purchased all three, The last one was “The Fallen Heroes of the Mighty Eighth – WWII” He stated that he really enjoyed all of them..

Jack Hammett stated FCOC will allow selling books and videos from [FCOC Members only](#).

Many thanks to **Kay Felix** for the *four* dozen chocolate chip cookies she provided for the membership.

*Minutes prepared by **Tim Richards***

*- Photos by **Jamie Howren** -*

Photos taken during the meeting may be viewed on our web site at www.fc-oc.org .

Click on “**Photos**”

Chairman,

