

The 2011 Oflag 64 Reunion in St Petersburg, Florida, was joyous and educational. Great Florida weather greeted us upon our arrival on Thursday, October 13th. After checking in with our hosts, George and Arlene Rosenthal, at the Hilton Bayfront Hotel, we made plans to take the hotel shuttle to the Columbia Restaurant on the Pier. With Spanish/Cuban cuisine, this restaurant offers a spectacular panoramic waterfront view. We had a large, boisterous table of over 25 people and an enthusiastic and very patient waitress. The food was pretty good, too. After dinner, we met in the hospitality suite where we toasted Brad Bradford with Crown Royal whisky as requested by his daughter, Gail Brown, who was unable to attend.

On Friday, October 14th, after a quick breakfast and a short business meeting, we boarded a bus for the Florida Holocaust Museum where we had a very special tour by its premiere docent, none other than Arlene Rosenthal. We were briefly joined by the museum director and two interns who welcomed us to the museum.

The Florida Holocaust museum was influential in mandating Holocaust education in the Florida schools. As we entered the building, we spotted trunks labeled with different grade levels. These trunks are filled with educational materials and loaned to schools all over the state for a period of one month.

The first floor of the Holocaust Museum is dedicated to History, Heritage and Hope. Among its holdings are photographs of Holocaust survivors and victims, artifacts, histories, biographies, and videos detailing the history of Semitism from ancient times until the present. On one wall were patches of the different military divisions that helped to liberate the concentration camps.

One of the museum's more chilling exhibits is Boxcar #113 069-5, and its original rails used by the Nazis to transport Jewish victims to Treblinka. Currently, the second floor of the museum has a special exhibit, A Legacy of Courage, Vision and Hope - African Americans in the Legal Community of Pinellas County.

After lunch, we set out for the Salvador Dalí Museum. This beautiful museum overlooks Tampa Bay and has over 15,000 original works collected by A. Reynolds and Eleanor R. Morse. A wonderful docent-led tour focused on specific works by the surrealist and explained the many complex symbols and themes in his works.

On Friday night, we split into smaller dinner groups. Some reunion attendees went to a Greek restaurant, Acropolis, where they were entertained by belly dancers; others went to Olive Garden or Cassis where they sat at a large table and dined on good old American cuisine.

On Saturday, October 15th, we enjoyed a breakfast buffet at the hotel, and then caught the bus for a tour of MacDill Air Force Base arranged for by reunion co-host Annette Secor Nelson. Airmen Shelby and Ellis gave us a bus tour around the 7000 acre base, pointing out its 2 golf courses, elementary school, movie

theater, pool, commissary, marina, library, medical clinic, chapel, airplane runways, workspaces, and living quarters for over 5000 people. MacDill also houses a NOAA Aircraft Operations Center and supports our coalition partners in the war against terror. MacDill's Base Commander, Col. Lenny Richoux, along with two coalition officers, Brigadier General Jens Praestegaard from Denmark, and Col. Dylong from Poland, spoke to our group during lunch. Tech. Sgt. Nathan Hackney briefly outlined his duties with the 6th Air Mobility Wing.

There was some time to rest up between the base visit and Happy Hour. At six o'clock, we met in the hotel's Demens room for cocktails where we were entertained by the Hudson Middle School Jazz Band conducted by Mr John Keon. This band, also arranged for by Annette Nelson, had only been together since August, but they played popular tunes like *In the Mood* and *Rock Around the Clock* like pros.

At seven o'clock, we went into the banquet room for dinner and a talk by Mr John Loftus, a Board Member of the Florida Holocaust Museum, and the author of several books about espionage, the Nazis, and terrorism. Mr. Loftus is the author of *America's Nazi Secret: an Insider's History* (2010) and *The Secret War Against the Jews: How Western Espionage Betrayed the Jewish People* (1994) as well as other books on similar topics. He spoke about the Arab-Nazi connection and the Muslim Brotherhood founded in 1928 by Hasam al-Banna, a religious fanatic and admirer of Adolf Hitler. Mr. Loftus painted a grim picture of possible terror attacks that could shut down our country's power systems and return the United States to the Stone Age.

At Sunday's Memorial Service on October 16th, the colors were presented by members of a local chapter of Rolling Thunder, the motorcycle veterans' group dedicated to raising consciousness about POWs and MIAs. The service was conducted by the spiritual leader of the Rosenthals' Temple, Zel Savitz, who opened the service with military marches, anthems, and a recording of God Bless America by Kate Smith. After George Rosenthal sang a blessing in Hebrew, his wife, Arlene, read the names of those Kriegies who have passed on since our last reunion. We then enjoyed a sumptuous breakfast before saying our goodbyes and departing for our various homes.

Only six Kriegies attended this year's reunion: George Rosenthal, Jimmie Kanaya, Sid Thal, Herm Littman, Doc DiFrancesco, and Ray Klinkenborg. With family members, the attendee count was just under 50. We do not have a site or a volunteer for next year's reunion.

We would like to thank the Rosenthals, and especially Arlene, as well as Annette Nelson, for one of the best reunions ever. We enjoyed ourselves immensely.

Patricia DiFrancesco Bender