Acknowledgements

This article would not have been possible without the kind assistance of Mr. Michael Riley, Chief Cataloger and Historian, Heritage Auction Galleries, Dallas, Texas. Mr. Riley allowed me to use unique pictures for this article. Two of the pictures obtained from Heritage are unpublished. Mr. Riley kindly allowed me to use their research regarding Lieutenant Colonel White. A special acknowledgement goes to Mrs. Anita Duquette of the Abram Belskie Museum in Closter, New Jersey. Mrs. Duquette, a volunteer at the Belskie Museum, took time from her busy schedule as a full-time museum director in New York City to locate Mr. Belskie’s sketches for the medal.

Additionally, a special thank you goes to Ms. Jennifer McDonald of the Veterans of Foreign Wars for taking the time to answer my numerous emails regarding the background of the VFW Aviation and Space Award, and establishing a history of this prestigious medal. Lastly, a thank you goes to Mr. Ryan Pettigrew of the Richard Nixon Library and Museum, for his accurate transcription of the Apollo 11 state dinner audiotape, regarding the NASA Distinguished Service Medal presented posthumously to White during the Presidential State Dinner held at the Century Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles, California.

References

Astronaut/Cosmonaut Memorial Website, Lt. Col Edward Higgins White II, (USAF), www.astronautmemorial.net
Belskie Museum, emails between author and Anita Duquette, staff member.
Northwest Territorial Mint, for Medallic Art Company; email between author and Rob Wm. Vugtewe, Project Manager.
Veterans of Foreign Wars, National Headquarters, emails between author and Jennifer McDonald, staff member.

IN THE NEWS

Medal of Honor to Marine Sergeant

On September 15, 2011, United States Marine Corps Sergeant Dakota Meyer, 23, from Greensburg, Kentucky received the Medal of Honor from President Obama in the East Room of the White House. Sergeant Meyer received his medal for his actions in Kunar Province, Afghanistan on September 8, 2009 when he saved the life of 13 United States and 23 Afghan troops, while killing at least eight of the Taliban.

Meyer who was serving with Marine Embedded Training Team 2-18 heard on the radio that four team members were cut off. Meyer four times took his gun truck into a Taliban ambush to rescue the American and Afghan troops trapped by enemy gunfire. Even though wounded he dismounted from his vehicle and moved on foot to locate the bodies of his team members.

Meyer joined the Marines in 2006 and was trained as a sniper. In 2007 he deployed to Iraq for Operation Iraqi Freedom and during 2009 to 2010 he served in Afghanistan with Operation Enduring Freedom. Besides the Medal of Honor, he has received the Purple Heart, the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with “V” device; the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal; and the Combat Action Ribbon. Currently a civilian, Meyer works in the construction industry in Kentucky.

From the St. Petersburg Times Submitted by Peter Hlinka
Harry McNeven Alexander was born in Chicago, Illinois on March 9, 1890. He identified himself on his papers as an unmarried insurance agent when he went to Montreal and enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force on October 22, 1914, pre-dating America’s later entry into the so-called Great War, in 1917. While I have no concrete proof of his motivation, it seems likely that his Anglo-Irish surname points to a sympathetic view of Britain’s commitment to a war that was sweeping Europe, coupled with, and perhaps reinforced by, his youthful anxiety to get into the war against a resurgent German militarism and a wave of sympathy for the Allied cause in the United States. He was ultimately to be decorated with the Military Cross (Figure 1) and finally received a second-award bar to the Military Cross for action during the Battle of Arras and possibly bloody Passchendaele, when German General Erich Ludendorff began his spring offensive.

Another native American enlistee in the Canadian Forces, also born in Chicago, just two years before Alexander, and much better known subsequently to the American public, was Raymond Chandler, author of well-known detective novels, like *The Big Sleep* and *Farewell My Lovely*, resulting in popular movies starring Humphrey Bogart and Robert Mitchum.

Chandler’s experience was to mirror Alexander’s in many respects. And, while Chandler’s biographer, Frank MacShane, refers to Chandler as having been decorated, his text reveals that Chandler was the recipient only of the standard British War and Victory Medals.

It should also be noted that, on the Internet, I bought the out-of-print *The Life of Raymond Chandler* for the staggering sum of one cent, plus postage! In the case of Chandler, his biography reveals that his family took him as a youth to the United Kingdom to attend school, and he is listed as a prominent alumnus of Dulwich College, again suggesting a reason why the writer was prompted to get into the fray before his country officially committed. But, it should be noted that Fred Gaffen’s *Cross-Border Warriors* asserts that 35,612 Americans joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force, before their mother country officially declared war against The Kaiser’s Germany and the other Central Powers.

Alexander was, from the evidence, a brave and committed soldier. His *London Gazette* entries certainly attest to a career as a fighting leader of a high order in the 24th Canadian Infantry, Victoria Rifles, Canadian Expeditionary Force. The February 4, 1918 entry reads,

*For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty when his company was heavily bombarded while in reserve and all the other officers and a large number of men became casualties. He showed great courage and coolness in rallying his men, digging out several who had been buried and getting the wounded away. He set a splendid example of courage and contempt of danger to his men.*

![Figure 1: The reverse of Alexander’s Military Cross.](image)

His citation for the second award bar to a Military Cross reads:

*For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. This officer was wounded in the hand a few minutes after zero hour, but insisted on going on. After his company commander was wounded, he took command, and by initiative and resource overcame many obstacles, and pushed to the objective.*

Alexander is credited with service at Ypres, Amiens Canal du Nord and Cambrai, in addition to the campaigns and

Continued on page 40:
ESTATE PLANNING FOR MEDAL COLLECTORS

JAMES K. HITCH

No doubt about it: your medal collection is valuable, and may well be very valuable. What do you want to happen to your collection when you die? Here is where estate planning comes in; you can make decisions now to protect and guide your heirs as they deal with your collection. Your heirs probably love you dearly, but remember, this is your hobby, not theirs. They may want, or need, to access the monetary value of your collection. All too often in this hobby, we have seen heirs disposing of collections without guidance. Make some decisions! You, your heirs, and your fellow collectors, will be pleased you did.

I am not a lawyer. I am simply a fellow medal collector posing some ideas for your consideration. You need to discuss this matter with your own professional advisors. How do you go about estate planning for your medal collection? First, you need to review your situation: what do you have and where is it? There are your medals, of course, but do not overlook the associated parts of your collecting effort: reference books, research papers, ephemera. You know inherently what you have and where it is, but that might not be so obvious to others. Write down some notes so your heirs can find everything. You wouldn’t want something thrown out by mistake.

Second, think about what you want done with your collection. Here you have several options: sale or gifting. For selling, your options are private treaty or public auction. Which would your heirs handle the most effectively, achieving the best result? A sale by private treaty could be accomplished in the least time, but establishing an accurate value could be critical. A private treaty sale could be to a trusted fellow collector or friend, or to a dealer. The public auction route might take longer, given the necessity to inventory, transport and publicize the sale. Evaluation, however, becomes less critical. If sale or auction is your choice, a conversation now with the buyer or auctioneer would be wise. They can offer valuable suggestions.

You might consider gifting your collection, to a worthy individual, to a museum, or to a charitable organization. Gifting could be accomplished by your heirs with minimum time and effort. Might you want the recipient to do, or not do, something specific with your collection? For example, you could gift your collection to a charitable organization with instructions to sell the collection and use the proceeds to fund a particular mission of the organization. Or you might use a combination of sale and gifting.

The choice is yours but you need to make it, and you need to write it down for your heirs. All of these disposal options carry potential tax implications and should be discussed with a professional advisor. In the meantime, you could consider placing your collection in a revocable living trust to avoid having your collection pass through probate and to empower someone else to act should you become incapacitated. Again, this is something you must discuss with your own professional advisors.

Here is the commercial message. Please consider giving your collection to your own hobby group, the Orders and Medals Society of America. The Orders and Medals Society of America is a bona fide 501-c-3 charity with all the tax advantages that designation offers. Since the Orders and Medals Society of America has no headquarters or museum, it will likely sell the collection by auction and/or give certain items, like reference books, to other charities. Your gift would help fund continuing operations of the Orders and Medals Society of America: publishing the Journal and reference books, funding research grants, sponsoring seminars, and encouraging the collecting of medals.

For myself, I’m not waiting until it’s too late. Over the past few years, I have been selling off my collection to collector friends, dealers and by auction. Yes, I am still buying (can we ever stop?) but the total is going down every year. But I still have much to do with disposal of books and art work. Most of whatever is left will be gifted to the Orders and Medals Society with instructions to sell by public auction. I want other collectors to have an opportunity to enjoy these medals as much I have. My heirs can use the tax benefits more than whatever cash might be generated by what remains. All of this I have written down for my heirs and discussed with them. And I’ll tell you not a tear was shed!

Continued from page 39:

battles mentioned previously. He returned safely to the United States after the War.

References:
