

# OMSA 2008 CONVENTION REPORT

Dean S. Veremakis

On August 14th The Jacksonville Hyatt Regency was home to members of the Orders and Medals Society for our annual convention. The Convention Manager was Nathan Weiss, and the Convention Co-Chair was Dean S. Veremakis; Skip Pfeiffer designed and laid out the bourse plan, while Tim Bartholow handled exhibits as the Chairman of that venue. Lisa Bartholow handled the registration desk on Saturday. Chris Cawthorne, Geoff Reeves, Skip Pfeiffer, and Jim Hitch all pitched in to distribute cases during the Wednesday evening set-up.

From 3 pm - 5pm on Wednesday members were already gathering for their convention packets, eagerly anticipating the opening of the bourse that was to take place the following morning at 8:00 a.m. sharp. By this time there were 173 members registered for the convention with last minute arrivals adding another 11, giving us a total of 184 registered convention attendees. The hotel and its staff were exceptional in all respects, and many of our members were impressed with the professionalism, courtesy and service offered by the Hyatt Regency, Waterfront in Jacksonville, Florida.

On Thursday evening we held a “Meet & Greet Reception” with a most unusual macroni/cheese buffet-bar. Sounds uninteresting, however, many commented on its uniqueness and the spectacular nature of the food.



*Figure 1: Jaclyn Ostrowski, Friday breakfast speaker.*

For the Friday morning breakfast our guest speaker was Jaclyn Ostrowski from the National Archives in St. Louis (Figure 1). Her presentation cleared up many misunderstandings and myths surrounding the National

Personnel Records Center and National Archives at St. Louis. Ms. Ostrowski’s table in the bourse was duly crowded throughout the convention with many of our members seeking answers to their research questions and getting the information they wanted.



*Figure 2: Chris Cawthorne speaks at the Friday seminar.*

The seminars were held on Friday evening with Chris Cawthorne hosting the British section with the following topics and speakers: *The Army of the Indus & the Story of the Ghuznee Medal* presented by Geoff Reeves, *British Animal Life Saving Medals* presented by James Hitch, and *Seringapatam – Eye of the Tiger* presented by Chris Cawthorne (Figure 2).



*Figure 3: American seminar speaker, Frank Smith.*



Ron Fischer hosted the American section with the following topics and speakers: *New Developments in Federal Civilian Medals* presented by Charles V. Mugno, Director of the Institute of Heraldry, *U.S. Officer Service Files 1900-1939* presented by Adam Rohloff (Figure 3), *Personnel Files of WW II Casualties* presented by Frank Smith, and *Researching U.S. Medals at Archives II (College Park, MD)* presented by Tim Frank.

Saturday began with the bourse opening to the members at 8:00 a.m. followed by general public admission at 9:00a.m. The bourse closed at 5:15p.m. to give members an opportunity to freshen up prior to the reception, banquet and awards presentation. Our banquet speaker was Major Gregory Parsons, Florida National Guard and Curator of the Camp Blanding Museum and Memorial Park. Major Parson, a veteran of Desert Storm and Afghanistan, gave a presentation on the history of Camp Blanding (Figure 4).



*Figure 4: Major Parsons, the banquet speaker.*

John Royston was presented with a Meritorious Service Medal for his continued management of the Ribbon Bank and for the production his DVD on medal ribbons (Figure 6). 2008 OMSA Literary awards were presented to Fred Borch for "*V*" for *Valor* (January-February 2007 issue), Dave Schwind for *Soviet Military Decorations to Americans* (September-October issue), and George Wilhelmsen for *World War II Bronze Stars* (July-August issue).

The election votes were tallied and Teller Committee Chairman, Robert Gantner, presented the results to the President. It was announced at the Saturday evening banquet that Nathan Weiss and Chris Cawthone were re-elected to the Board of Directors.

Chief Judge, Coburn Grabenhorst, President Dean S. Veremakis and Vice President Harry Bendorf presented this year's exhibit awards:



*Figure 5: John Royston is presented the OMSA Meritorious Service Medal by OMSA President Dean Veremakis.*

Best of Show (Figure 6): Russell Furtado, *The Portuguese War Cross*



*Figure 6: Russell Furtado with his Best of Show award.*

Silver medals (Figure 7): George Wilhelmsen, *The U.S. Airman's Medal*, and Charles Pfeiffer, *WW I Victory Medals*.

Bronze medals (Figure 8): Two to Greg Harper, *American Legion School Awards* and *A Man, A Squadron, A Ship*; three to Tim Bartholow, *Crossover Collecting: Medals on Card Board*, *Medals for the Liberation of Kuwait to U.S. Armed Forces Issued by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait*, and *Medals for the Marine Corps League*;



Edward Muller, *On Ludwig Karl Jacobsen*; Lawrence Watson, *Sir Harwood's Order of St. Maurice and Legion of Honor*; and Beau Newman, *Wartime Non-combat Awards, German States and Empire*.



**Figure 7: Silver Medal recipients Charles Pfeiffer (left) and George Wilhelmsen (right).**

Vice President's Award - George Wilhelmsen, *The U.S. Airman's Medal*. George also was the recipient of the 2008 Al Gleim Award for the same exhibit.

The Peoples' Choice Award went to Charles Pfeiffer, *WW I Victory Medals*.

The Naval Aviation Theme Award went to Greg Harper, *A Man, A Squadron, A Ship* exhibit.

My personal congratulations to all the exhibitors who spent a lot of time and energy creating unique displays. I know that we all learn quite a bit from these exhibits and each one shows the knowledge and expertise of each individual.

After the presentation of the awards all adjourned back to the Bourse Room for another hour of examining the exhibits, talking to the exhibitors, and congratulating them on their work.

Sunday opened with packing, last-minute deals and negotiations, trades and good-byes. By 12:00 noon all that was left were a few members finishing up their packing and shortly thereafter OMSA 2008 was history.



**Figure 8: Bronze Medal recipients (from left to right): Beau Neman, Larry Watson, Greg Harper, Tim Bartholow, and Ed Muller.**