

THE OMSA 2009 CONVENTION

TOM KULLGREN

On August 15th the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel and DeVos Place (Figure 1) were home to Orders and Medals Society members for our annual convention. Our Convention Manager, Nathan Weiss, and Convention Co-Chair Tom Kullgren designed and laid out the



Figure 1: The Amway Grand Plaza (on the right) and the DeVos Place on the left.

bourse plan and handled exhibits. Local members Bill Grimm, Tom Wolven, Bill Rowe and Chris Georgeson worked diligently during the bourse setup and registration.

From 3pm-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 8:00am sharp. By this time there were 145 members registered for the convention, and last minute arrivals gave us a total of 151 registered convention members. The hotel and its staff were exceptional in all respects, and our members were impressed with their professionalism, courtesy and service. This year was a bit different since we had the bourse in the DeVos Place while other OMSA events were in the hotel. Virtually everyone agreed that the hotel was the best we had been to in many years - a mix of old and new.

On Thursday evening we held a “Meet & Greet Reception” with a most unusual buffet.

All commented on its uniqueness and how spectacular the food was. For the Friday morning breakfast, our guest

speaker was Convention Co-chair, Tom Kullgren, Lieutenant Colonel, United States Air Force (Retired) who presented a “Chopper” pilot’s view of life at Ubon Royal Thai Air Force Base during the Vietnam

conflict (Figure 2).

The seminars were held that Thursday and Friday evenings with E. J. Fisher hosting the International Seminars on Thursday with the following speakers and topics: **Edward J. Emering: Peacekeeping Awards and Medals of the Italian Republic;** **Edward S. Haynes:**

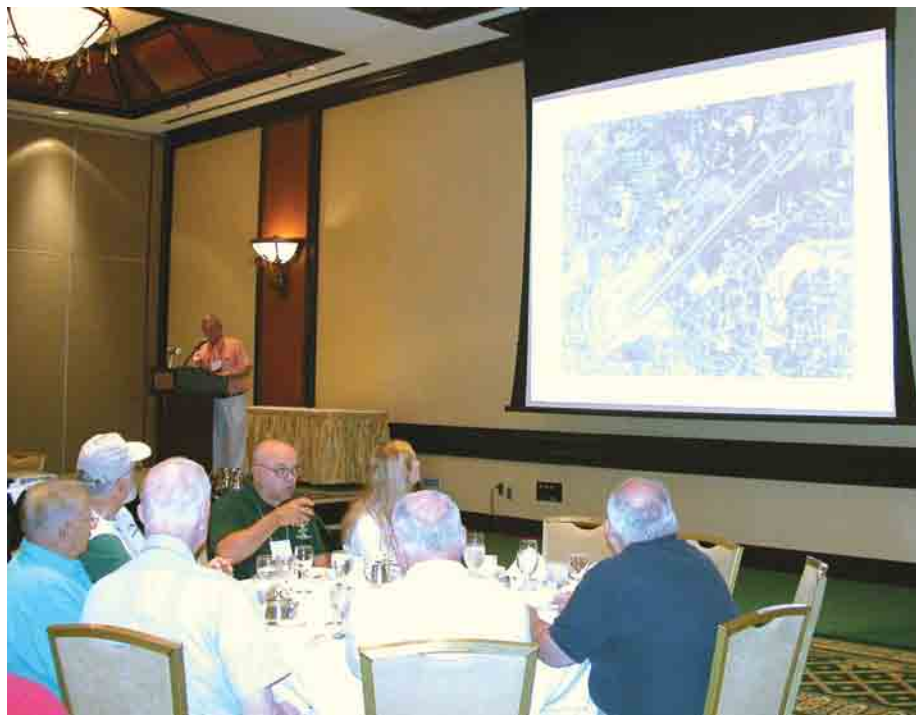


Figure 2: Tom Kullgren, the guest speaker, at the Friday morning breakfast giving a “Chopper” pilot’s view of life at Ubon Royal Thai Air Force Base.



Variations on a Red Theme: Soviet Inspiration for the Awards of Mongolia and Afghanistan. Friday Chris Cawthorne hosted the British Seminars with the following speakers and topics: **John W. Allgood: On the North-East Frontier: The Abor Campaign of 1911;** **Charles C. Freihofer: The Guelph- The Order with a Dual Personality**"; and **Peter Lomdahl: Recipients of the Order of the Bath and the NGS Medal 1793-1840.** This was followed by Ron Fischer hosting the American Seminars with the following speakers and topics: **Charles P. McDowell: The Institute of Heraldry - How a Medal is Developed and Produced;** **S. Lee Graves: The Other Half of the Story –Once Designed and Accepted, How a Medal is Developed and Produced.**

Saturday started with the bourse open to the members at 8:00am, followed by general public admission at 9:00am. The bourse closed at 5:15pm to give members an opportunity to freshen up prior to the reception, banquet and awards presentation. Our Banquet speaker was John R. "Bob" Pardo, Lieutenant Colonel, United States Air Force (Retired), who gave us the full details on his March 10, 1967 flight when he "pushed" his squadron mate's F-4 from North Vietnam to Laos. His inspirational talk earned him a standing ovation from our members.



Figure 3: James Hitch receives the OMSA Distinguished Service Medal from President Veremakis.

James Hitch was presented with OMSA's Distinguished Service Medal for his continued oversight of the society's finances (Figure 3). George Notarpole was presented with a Meritorious Service Medal for his dedicated service on the Board of Directors and establishing the OMSA ad swap program with multiple kindred publications.

Commendation Medals were awarded to Doug Boyce, Coburn Grabenhorst, Jr., Nick McDowell and Tom Kullgren.

2008 OMSA Literary awards for JOMSA Articles were presented to Fred Borch and Nick McDowell for *A History of the Legion of Merit*; Russ Furtado and Humberto Nuno de Oliveira for *The Portuguese War Cross*; Lukasz Gaszewski for *New Military Awards of Poland*; and Kenneth N. Rogers, Jr. for *Medals Awarded by the United States Department of State*.

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 William Brown was re-elected and William Emerson was 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 4: President Veremakis presents Geoff Reeves the Best of Show award.

Best of Show: Geoff Reeves for *Pristinae Virtutis Memor: The Story of a Regiment* (Figure 4).

Silver Medals: George Wilhelmsen for *The U.S. Vietnam Service Medal for Service Between July 4 '65 and March 28 '73*, Russ Furtado for *The Danish War Medal of 1864*, Mel Mueller for *Portrait of a Spookie Gunship Pilot*, Ed Haynes for *The Sukhbaatar Order*, Greg Harper for *Extraordinary Heroism in the Central Highlands of*



Figure 5: Silver Medal recipients (from left to right): George Wilhelmsen, Russ Furtado, Mel Mueller, Ed Haynes, Greg Harper and Ed Mullery.

Vietnam, Ed Muller for the *Order of Lenin* (Figure 5).

Bronze Medals: Steve Watts for *International Association of Bomb Technicians & Investigators Medal* and John Allgood for *Horatio Odell Stone: An American in the Indian Army* (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Bronze Medal recipients: Steve Watts (left) and John Allgood (right).

Vice President's Award: Russ Furtado for *The Danish War Medal of 1864* (Figure 7).

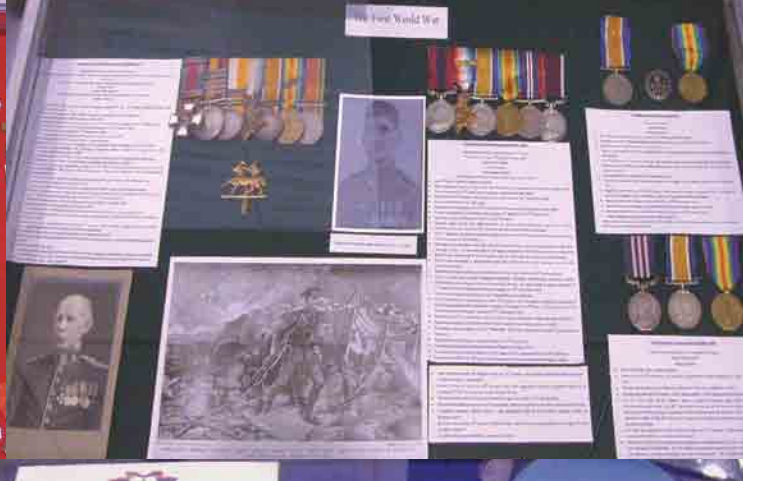
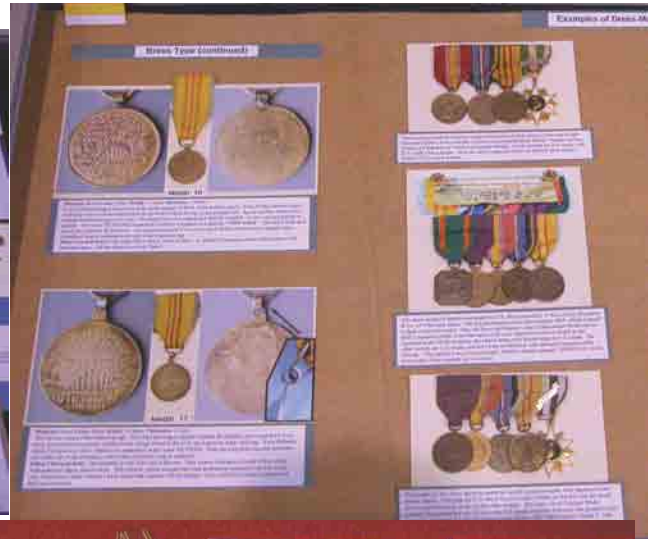


Figure 7: General Bendorf presents the Vice President's Award to Russ Furtado.

The AI Gleim award: George Wilhelmsen for *The U.S. Vietnam Service Medal for Service Between July 4 '65 and Mar 28 '73*.

The Peoples Choice Award: Geoff Reeves for *Pristinae Virtutis Memor: The Story of a Regiment*.

The Unsung Heroes - Vietnam Theme Award: George



Wilhelmsen: *The U.S. Vietnam Service Medal for Service Between July 4 '65 and Mar 28 '73*, exhibit.

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

After the presentation of the awards all then 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 up, 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 2009 was history.

All of the photos used in this article were taken by OMSA member Mary Rose Cassa. We are very appreciative of her outstanding efforts in this respect.

IDENTIFICATIONS AND INQUIRIES

Identification requests and inquiries should be sent to the Editor with as much information as possible and either hardcopies of the illustrations or a digital image at publication size and 300 dpi resolution. Responses containing identifications or answers to inquiries should include the Identification or Inquiry Number and be sent to the Editor.

Identification 09-01:

Submitted by Fred Borch

Can anyone identify the foreign decorations or medals denoted by the ribbons in the last three rows of the ribbon bar depicted below?



Identification 09-02

Submitted by Dean Veremakis

This bronze medal was evidently awarded to R. E. Ribble, possibly for five-years service. Can anyone identify the organization in Reading, Pennsylvania that awarded this



medal and indicate for what the medal was awarded?