

## “OMSA 2010”: ON THE COLUMBIA

Coburn L. Grabenhorst Jr.

“OMSA 2010”, the 51st Annual Convention of the Orders and Medals Society of America, was held at the Red Lion Hotel on the River (that is the beautiful Columbia River) in Portland, Oregon, from August 12-15, 2010, virtually in the shadows of Oregon’s majestic Mt. Hood and its Washington neighbor Mt. St. Helens. The handsome downtown Portland cityscape, some three miles south was pleasantly over-powered by the natural beauty of the Columbia, the activity on the water, and on nearby mountains. The clear, bright weather certainly made this one of the most dynamic and beautiful settings of any OMSA convention (Figure 1).

Chris Dixon was the first of many in line Thursday for the 8:00 am bourse opening (Figure 3), which went smoothly. Conference registrants continued to arrive and check-in continued throughout the day. In their conference packets there were two nice publications, Chuck Bell and Arthur Weiss’s *Officers and Men at the Battle of Manila Bay* and The State of Oregon’s *The Medal of Honor: Oregon* (unfortunately the State only gave me about 75-80 to distribute). Later in the day, at the suggestion of Mary Rose Cassa, the drapes which covered the glass walls of the north and west sides of the room were opened and natural light brightened the room, offering a stunning



*Figure 1: The view from the restaurant patio of the Red Lion Hotel on the River.*

Although there were no Wednesday evening activities, pre-registration from 3:00 to 5:00 pm was brisk. Two young ladies who work for me, Nancy Rourke and Samantha Miller greeted the “early birds” under the capable guidance of Evette Weiss, and these ladies would daily greet our conventioners.

The bourse room was turned over to your convention committee by the hotel at 5:00 pm, so the heavy work began on-site after pre-registration. Peter Mulder’s quick grasp of the case-to-table layout, along with Alan Fry and Gil Ward made easy work of this time consuming task. I heartily thank them for their participation.

view of the Columbia and the I-5 bridge to downtown Vancouver, Washington. Visible also in the distance was historic Fort Vancouver, Pearson Airfield where the first Soviet over-the-Pole flight landed in 1938, and Mt. St. Helens!

“I think this is the best bourse table I have ever had with a lovely view of the Columbia river and Mt. St. Helens and a river-steam boat and Mt. Hood” - Frank Draskovic

A “welcome reception” for members and guests was held on the lower level with seating inside as well as outside, the mighty Columbia before us. A comfortable August setting for attendees to relax and renew friendships, make

new friends, or just plain get caught up on the past year.

“I enjoy the conventions because I see people I know year after year after year and it’s a delight to meet people again.” –Dr. Jean Gooding

Following the reception, the American Seminars, arranged by Ron Fischer, were hosted by Nick McDowell, with the following speakers and topics: **William Emerson: *Some U.S. Army Groups that Include Gold***; **Adam Rohloff: *Medal Photography in the Digital Age*** (Figure 2); and **Frank Smith: *Update on USMC Records from WWI and WWII***.



**Figure 2: Seminar speaker Frank Smith.**

Friday, a buffet breakfast and OMSA business meeting was held at 8:30 am. President Veremakis, Secretary Peck and Treasurer Hitch welcomed us and gave their annual reports, which reflected the stability of our society and our collective interests. The society is financially strong, but the need for new members is always necessary to ensure a strong future. Both President Veremakis and Secretary Peck announced their retirement from their respective positions, thanking the Board and members for the support and encouragement they received during their nine and ten years of society service. There being no proposed by-law amendments, and few concerns from the floor, the meeting was adjourned early, the members heading to the bourse.

By noon, the 14 exhibitors had their 17 displays up and ready for judging. Having had the pleasure of being your chief judge for the past six years, I felt the displays excellent, and a real challenge for the new Chief Judge Tim Bartholow and his team. I thank the exhibitors, for their endeavors and for sharing their passion with us.

Good luck, always!

“I think the convention’s worth coming to for the displays and for the information you can gather from other collectors.” –Steven Watts

Friday evening, Chris Cawthorne hosted the British and Commonwealth Seminars with the following speakers and topics: **Philip Mussell: *God on Our Side: A Look at Medals to Men of the Cloth***; **Dick Flory: *Pip, Squeak and Wilfred: A Synopsis***; and **Chris Cawthorne: *The Road to Kamakura: The Baldwin Family Tragedies***. This was followed by E.J. Fisher hosting the Foreign Seminars with the following speakers and topics: **Ed Muller: *Consideration of Geo-Political Targets of Opportunity in International Medal Collecting***; **Ed Naylor: *The Bamberger Horseman-The Career and Decorations of Stuka Pilot Dr. Ernst Kupfer***; and **Tim Brown: *The Royal Hungarian Order of Saint Stephen, King and Apostle***.

“Generally speaking I found all the members to be very affable and knowledgeable and very enthusiastic.” –John Williams

Saturday morning the bourse opened to society members at 8:00 am, and the public was welcomed at 9:00 am. At least 68 militaria enthusiasts visited the bourse and of this group we gained five new members and two renewals. The bourse closed at 5:00 pm, members trailing off to ready themselves for our evening activities.

The ladies looked so fine and elegant in their evening dresses and the men complementing them in uniform or suit, set a grandness to the lively cocktail party and following dinner. The four course meal that began with Northwest Bounty Salad; grilled asparagus and artichoke, roasted mushrooms, roasted peppers, grilled onions, and balsamic vinaigrette; followed by Dungeness crab cakes, frizzled onions and shoe string potatoes, lemon oil or roasted red pepper vinaigrette with a main course selection of Flank Steak Filet filled with spinach, peppers, with basil mashed potatoes and baby carrots or Grilled Salmon with a wild mushroom sauce, wild rice pilaf, broccoli and yellow squash; followed by a dessert of Toffee Luscious Torte was enjoyed by all. Quite Northwestern! The Northwest red and white wines, selected by Nathan and Evette Weiss for our enjoyment were sponsored by Dix, Noonan & Webb, Auctioneers & Valuers, and I want to personally thank our British friends Nimrod Dix, Pierce Noonan and Chris Webb for their generosity and friendship. “Cheers”, gentlemen! Taking President Veremakis’ cue, I welcomed the

members and guests to the Convention banquet and to my home state, and thanked them for coming. Then with great pleasure, I introduced the evening's guest speaker, my friend Pat Gariépy (Figure 4), who since viewing the 1980 Mel Gibson movie *Gallipoli* has been driven to research the men who lost their lives on that hellish peninsula in WWI. The Gallipoli Association considers him to be the expert on the service related deaths there, and passes numerous inquiries to him for a response. His research centers on the unpublished letters written from the field and his presentation was titled "Gardens of Hell". In a nutshell, it is a story of many servicemen, often without much training and little experience being shunted off to a faraway place to fight without adequate support and the many necessities required for a operation of that size, and how many of the deaths were not necessarily caused from engagement with the enemy. Quite powerful! Before our speaker could leave the podium, I was able to quickly reach him and present him a token of our appreciation, a personalized and nicely cased OMSA non-portable medal. Our thanks Pat for your presentation.



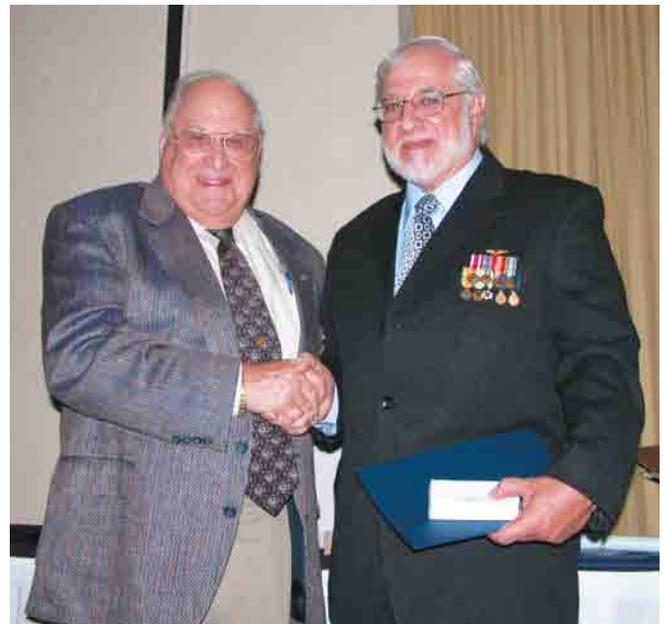
**Figure 4: Pat Gariépy, the OMSA banquet speaker.**

It was now "Awards and Recognition" time, and the President to present the personalized non-portable medals to the Convention Committee members:

- Nathan Weiss: Co-Chairman
- Evette Weiss: the power behind the Chairmen
- Nancy Rourke: paper pusher extraordinaire
- Samantha Miller: Convention Coordinator
- Steven Crain: exhibits
- Thomas Glass: bourse trouble-shooter
- Alan Fry: cases pick-up/delivery/set-up

- Gil Ward: cases pick-up/delivery/set-up
- Paul Knight: cases pick-up/delivery/set-up
- John Oberdorf: cases pick-up/delivery/set-up
- C. Peter Mulder: bourse
- Mary Rose Cassa: Official Photographer

To be honored next by the President were the nine seminar speakers mentioned earlier, each receiving a similarly personalized non-portable medal. Then Vice President Bendorf stepped forward and honored President Veremakis as our newest Distinguished Member (Figure 5), and together they honored Doug Peck with the same distinction, the two receiving the Society's highest honor for their combined 19 years of extraordinary service and productive innovation to and for the betterment of OMSA. Their efforts have brought greater visibility and more dynamic yet streamlined business practices to the Society. Thank you, gentlemen!



**Figure 5: Vice President Bendorf honoring outgoing President Dean Veremakis as an OMSA Distinguished Member.**

John Royston, for his many years of managing and improving the Society's Ribbon Bank, the procuring of original ribbon as well as the reproduction of older ribbon, was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal by the President, who also presented the Meritorious Service Medal to Richard A. Glass for his years of service to the Society. Commendation Medals were presented to Francois Dutil and Coburn L. Grabenhorst, Jr. Incoming President Fred L. Borch and Eric Tripnaux were honored with Literary Medals for excellence in research and presentation of articles for the 2009 issues of JOMSA.

The results of the election, the votes having been tallied



by the Teller Committee headed by Doug Peck, were announced by President Veremakis. The new president is Fred L. Borch and the new treasurer is Secretary is Clyde L. Tinklepaugh, Jr. James K. Hitch has been re-elected Treasurer, and Jeffery B. Floyd and Adam G. Rohloff were elected as new directors. Congratulations all!

The final awards to be given at any OMSA convention, and fittingly so, are those to the exhibitors for their extraordinary commitments, passion and willingness to share with us part of their collection, crafting a narrative from research and designing a complimentary display to please the eye and entice the viewer to read and enjoy. What a task! And, all for our enjoyment. Chief Judge Tim Bartholow, President Dean Veremakis and Vice President Harry Bendorf presented this year's exhibit awards.

**Best of Show:** Tom Malhosky for *The Department of the Navy Science Medals* (Figure 6).



**Figure 6:** A portion of Tom Malhosky's Best of Show exhibit.

**Gold Medals:**

John McEwen for *The Search for John Hecht* (Figure 7).  
 George Wilhelmsen for *WWII U.S. Merchant Marine Mariner's Medal*.  
 Graeme McLeod for *Two Home Runs*.  
 John Mull for *The Second Oregon Volunteer Regiment Spanish-American War Badge*.  
 Peter Coulton for *Commander-in-Chief of the GAR*.



**Figure 7:** Part of John McEwen's Gold Medal exhibit.

**Silver Medals:**

Russell Furtado for *The French Croix De Guerre, 1914-1918*.  
 Tim Culbert for *The U.S. Victory Medal-The Rarities*.  
 John McEwen for *Harald K.: A Professional Soldier/Fireman*.  
 Allen Menke for *Will the Real Sculptor of the First Type Navy DSM Please Step Up?*  
 John Allgood for *Lafayette Washington Lovell: Citizen-Soldier of the First World War*.  
 Allen Menke for *Display of the Types of the Certificate of Merit Documents and Medals*.

**Bronze Medals:**

Eric Bush for *Everything (Almost) but the Medal*.  
 Steven Watts for *Duncan Nathaniel Ingraham Medal and it's Relation to the Koszta Affair*.  
 Peter Coulton for *We Drank from the Canteen*.  
 Edwin Naylor for *Unique Medal Bar of a Gebiresjäger*.

**Member's Choice Award:** Tie between John McEwen's *The Search for John Hecht* and John Mull's *The Second Oregon Volunteer Regiment Spanish-American War Badge* (Figure 8).

**Special Exhibition Theme Award - Spanish-American War and Philippine Insurrection:** John Mull's *The Second Oregon Volunteer Regiment Spanish-American War Badge*.

**Vice President's Award:** Russell Furtado for *The French*



**Figure 8: John Mull's exhibit that received the Special Exhibition Theme Award.**

*Croix De Guerre, 1914-1918.*

**Al Gleim Award:** Tom Malhosky for *The Department of the Navy Science Medals.*

This concluded the OMSA banquet, and now it was time to adjourn to the bourse to unite exhibitor to exhibit, to enjoy their efforts and the camaraderie of a convention drawing to a close. By noon Sunday, the bourse and last minute deals concluded, "OMSA 2010" came to an end. Let us all look forward to "OMSA 2011" in Jacksonville, Florida.

"The organization here was very good. The ladies here were charming. And we did some good business."—Chris Dixon

In closing, I want to thank all of you who made the trek to Portland, I'm sure you are glad you did. Although "OMSA 2010" was down in registrations, we did have 115 registered members with around 50 employees/guests, and some 150 attending the banquet dinner. Our 14 exhibitors and 17 displays did meet the average exhibition figures for the past eight years. I know many of you came early or stayed longer to enjoy the Portland vicinity, the Columbia Gorge and Mt. Hood, the Oregon Coast and Oregon's wine country. The Moiseyev family, the Pfeiffer's, Gooding's, and that triumvirate of conventioners Draskovic, Angurov and Salisch all made mention of their touring. Many thanks to all of you for enjoying the convention and Oregon.

Throughout our stay Robin Jennerjohn, Red Lion Convention Services Manager, and her staff worked

closely with your Convention Committee, jury-rigging extra air and overhead lighting to the Bourse and coordinating security amongst smaller requests, always graciously and with a smile. A very special "thank you" to you, Mary Rose Cassa, for your continuing and gracious courtesies to OMSA. You work magic with your camera and eye, your photographic composition is always excellent, and I appreciate greatly your efforts to make the Conventions a better show.

I sincerely thank your Convention Committee for their gracious and always upbeat attitude, their friendship and willingness to accede to my demands. I only hope I reciprocated by accepting their attempts to keep me "on focus". You did a great job, and I am so very pleased! And whatever success we have had, I owe much of that to my Co-Chairman, Nathan Weiss, who is definitely the marvelous partner behind-the-scenes without whose help the Convention would not have run as smoothly. My personal and hearty "Thank You" to my friends Nathan and Evette Weiss, for your friendship and encouragement in making this always a most fun endeavor.

The photographs for this article were provided by Mary Rose Casa.

## IDENTIFICATIONS & INQUIRIES

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**Response to Identification 10-01 (Mel Mueller) on page 23 of the September-October 2010 JOMSA:**

**OMSA member Paul Anderson writes:**

These tags/badges were given to every OMSA member attending the 1961 OMSA convention that was held at the LaGrange YMCA, LaGrange, Illinois. The number 290 is the OMSA membership number. They were made by Frank Racine. I found out this information from Irv Abraham, an early OMSA member who attended the convention and still has his tag/badge numbered 471.

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