OMSA 2011: THE 52ND ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE ORDERS AND MEDALS SOCIETY OF AMERICA

TIM BARTHOLOW

The 52nd Annual International Convention of the Orders and Medals Society of America was held from Thursday, August 11 through Sunday, August 14, 2011, at Jacksonville’s Hyatt Regency - Riverfront Hotel (Figure 1). The hotel, site of the 2008 Convention, again proved to be a popular venue as the large, comfortable bourse, convenient seminar rooms, and the banquet facilities served well the needs of members and guests alike.

Figure 1: The Jacksonville Hyatt Regency - Riverfront Hotel.

The host committee worked hard to make the convention a success. Members who have not yet had the opportunity to serve on a convention committee should make it a point to volunteer when one is held in your area. It is always rewarding and an experience to remember. The committee members this year were: Nathan Weiss and Tim Bartholow, co-chairmen; Skip Pfeiffer, overall assistant without portfolio and photographer; Lisa Bartholow, photographer, chief financial officer, and registration; Evette Weiss, tireless planner and registration; and Doug Peck, exhibits manager. Andi Fay and Ying Sombatmak, OMSA’s two newest student members who served capably as photographers, deserve special thanks for their efforts. You may see some of their work accompanying this article as well as on the OMSA web site.

Wednesday’s early arrivals were greeted by Tim and Lisa

Figure 2: Lisa Bartholow (left) and Evette Weiss at the registration desk.

Figure 3: A view of the bourse on Thursday morning.
Bartholow and Evette Weiss (Figure 2). A welcoming gift was included in the registration packages: the newest OMSA publication, *The Medal for Merit of WWII: Civilians Dedicated to Victory*, OMSA Monograph Number 25, by David Edkins. While we were chatting away in the foyer, a crew of volunteers was busy unloading cases at the dock and placing them on tables. A heartfelt thank you from me and from all of the attendees goes to Paul Anderson, Joe Hardman, Tom Malhosky, Ray Regnerus, George Reynolds, and Steve Watts for pitching in. Your volunteer help made it possible for everyone there to enjoy the convention’s opening the next morning. If I have inadvertently forgotten anybody’s name, please forgive me. A lot was happening in a short time!

Thursday’s activities began promptly at 8:00am when the bourse opened (Figure 3). The usual mad rush to get in and get started ensued, as those with dealer tables hurried to set up while simultaneously greeting friends and making sales. The hotel set up cocktail tables and loose chairs near the front of the room, so that members could sit and enjoy an exchange of ideas (or medals) and an occasional glass of water. Two special tables were set up at the front of the bourse. One was dedicated to introducing the revised OMSA web site to the membership. The team responsible for the update, John Allgood, Peter Lomdahl, and Chris Cawthorne, showed many of us the new features and answered questions. Nearby was a table announcing the auction to be held at the 2012 Convention to benefit OMSA. Your donations for the auction are fully tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law, and are actively being solicited for this fund raising event. Please contact Bill Brown for additional information.

At the end of the business day Thursday, we enjoyed a marvelous welcome reception (Figure 4) with free-drink coupons and heavy hors d’oeuvres selected by Nathan and Evette Weiss. Dinner was probably not necessary after that feast. The United States Seminar followed, moderated by Ron Fischer. The speakers were Fred Borch, who spoke on “The Air Force Medal of Honor,” Lonny Borts (Figure 5), with an informative presentation entitled “The American Ribbon Scene - Turmoil in Paradise;” and Phil Schlegel, whose topic was “Exploring the Medal for Merit.” At the end of these presentations, each speaker received an OMSA appreciation medal engraved with his name.

Friday began with the now-traditional buffet breakfast followed by our annual business meeting. Before our guest speaker was introduced, Nathan Weiss presented an OMSA appreciation medal to our hotel contact, Janice Petrelli, who helped Nathan and me with countless details and never failed to be cheery! We thank Janice for her invaluable assistance. At the end of the breakfast service we were treated to a talk by guest speaker Professor Allen Crowell (MAJ, USA retired) entitled “A Unique Military Life” (Figure 6). Allen spent his military career first as an enlisted vocalist and for the remainder of his service as Commander and Conductor of the United States Army Chorus based at Ft. Meyer, Virginia. His perspective on ceremonial music in the nation’s capitol is an aspect of military life that most of us have never considered, and his talk generated many positive comments. Allen received an engraved OMSA appreciation medal and certificate for honoring us with his talk. President Fred Borch then presided over the annual business meeting, at which one significant order of business was unanimously approved. That change to the constitution now allows
Saturday’s public admission day began bright and early with bourse doors opening at 8:00am. The first paid admission arrived shortly thereafter, and visitors continued to arrive throughout the day. Over 25 percent of the paid admissions received a $1 discount by presenting the promotional advertisement that we placed in the local newspaper and in two of the military base newspapers in the Jacksonville area, supported by a grant received from the Duval County Tourism Development Council. The show had also been promoted on the Internet through the OMSA web site and others as well as at military collectors’ shows around the country. The bourse closed Saturday at 5:00pm so members could don dress uniforms and other finery for the evening banquet. A no-host cocktail hour with light hors d’oeuvres preceded the banquet, and we were seated at 7:00pm for dinner. It was my pleasure to emcee the evening and to introduce our banquet speaker, Christopher B. Hill (Figure 7), who, as promised, delivered “A Talk With A Difference!” Sometimes we are so busy chasing or researching medals that we overlook the stories of the chase itself, the discovery, or those happy accidents that bring medals together and into our collections. Chris’s delightful and entertaining talk reminded us of just those moments. I was pleased to present him with a certificate and OMSA appreciation medal as a token of our thanks.

After the meeting, we once again retired to the bourse for another busy day. Friday evenings’ seminars opened with the British and Commonwealth Seminar, moderated by Chris Cawthorne. We were fortunate to enjoy a wealth of speakers this year, so we expanded the evening by one topic. Speakers and topics that evening were: Graham Wilson, from Canberra, attending his first OMSA convention, spoke on “An Introduction to the Australian Honours and Awards System;” Paul Wood followed with “General Dyer, Nadir Khan, and the Siege of Thal, 1919;” Glenn Stein with a talk entitled “Out of the Frozen Zone: The Origins and Design of the British Arctic Medal, 1818-1855;” and wrapping up the evening, Jack Boddington told us about “The One on the End.” As was the case at Thursday’s seminar, each of the speakers was presented with an engraved OMSA appreciation medal.

The International Seminar followed on the heels of the British, moderated by E.J. Fischer. Jani Tiainen opened the seminar with a talk on “The World War II Campaign Crosses of Finland.” That presentation was followed by Tim Brown, who gave a talk entitled “The Imperial Austrian Order of the Red Cross,” and the evening concluded with Ed Muller’s look at “The Order of Lenin: A Survey of Recent Developments.” Of course, each speaker at this seminar also received his own engraved OMSA appreciation medal.

*Figure 6: Professor Allen Crowell speaking at the Friday morning breakfast.*

*Figure 7: Christopher Hill delivering the banquet address.*
After a dinner of sea bass or prime rib complemented by select red and white wines, courtesy of James Morton, and followed by a dessert of key lime pie, President Fred Borch first entertained us all with the wit and wisdom exhibited during his comments. Fred was then joined by Vice President Harry Bendorf, and assisted by Mel Mueller, in the presentation of the special OMSA society awards.

Four members were recognized as being eligible for their 50-year membership pins:

Edward A. Wolf, #630
John T. McNulty, #647
Robert J. Sadlek, #653
George L. Podlusk, #677

Nathan Weiss and Tim Bartholow received OMSA appreciation medals for their work as co-chairmen of the 2011 Convention.

A special award was presented to James Morton of Morton & Eden for his continuing support of OMSA by once again generously underwriting the table wines at our banquet (Figure 8). James was presented, appropriately, with a sommelier’s cup on a neck chain, with our thanks.

The following Society awards were then presented by the President:

**Literary Medal**
T. Owain Raw-Rees (sixth award) “The Orders, Decorations, and Medals of the United Arab Emirates” (Parts 2, 3, and 4).

**Commendation Medal**
Irv Mortenson, Nick McDowell, and Jeff Floyd: For their outstanding contributions as content advisors and proof-readers between 2007 and 2011.

**Meritorious Service Medal**
John Allgood, Chris Cawthorne, and Peter Lomdahl: For drafting and submitting a project proposal to design and implement an improved OMSA web site. They then completed the project and drafted a strategy for its future management.
Distinguished Service Medal
Dick Flory (second award): For distinguished service as editor of the Journal from 2001 through 2011. He has taken the Journal to new heights of excellence.

Mel Mueller (Figure 11): For his contributions to the JOMSA advertising initiative by taking over an ailing program in FY2006, turning it around, and securing revenue for the society on the average of $20,000 in each of these years.

Nathan Weiss (Figure 12): For his contributions to the annual conventions to include rewriting the Convention Chairman’s Handbook, continuing to hone the procedures to ensure a successful convention. Additionally, he sought out convention sites and negotiated contracts.

Figure 11: OMSA President Fred Borch presents the OMSA Distinguished Service Medal to Mel Mueller.

Figure 12: Nathan Weiss receives the OMSA Distinguished Service Medal from Vice President Bendorf.

Your author then returned to the podium in his role as Chief Judge to present the awards for competitive exhibits; 18 exhibits were displayed, 13 competitive and
four non-competitive, in addition to the OMSA awards exhibit always set up by Mel Mueller. All of the exhibitors put in many hours and much excellent work and research for our benefit, and perhaps also for the benefit of others outside these Conventions, and are to be commended for their efforts. The competitive award winners were:

**Bronze Medal (Figure 13)**
- Gregory Harper: *The American Legion Gallantry Awards*
- Edwin Naylor: *Decorations of General Karl Eglseer*
- Harry Waterson: *Where Have All These Medals Gone?*

**Silver Medal (Figure 14)**
- Russell Furtado: *Order of Public Instruction - Portugal*
- Gregory Harper: *Carnage at Ulithi - Heroism on 20 Nov 1944*
- Graeme McLeod: *Bomber Pilot, Test Pilot*
- Roger Salisch: *A Local Hero*

**Gold Medal (Figure 15)**
- Raymond Regnerus: *Early Membership Insignia of the United Daughters of the Confederacy*
- Lawrence Watson: *The VFW Space Medal to Lieutenant*
Colonel Edward White
Barry Weaver: *The Battle of Maiwand*
George Wilhelmsen: *The Norwegian War Cross*
Graham Wilson: *Platypus Passant - Internal Awards of the Australian Federal Police*

**Best of Show (Figure 16)**
Doug Peck: *Pennsylvania’s Civil War First Defenders and Their Medal*

The non-competitive exhibits were presented by Bill Emerson, Andi Fay, Ying Sombatmak, and Hugh Brock. OMSA’s other exhibit awards include the Vice President’s award, presented for the best exhibit of medals with a value of less than $200; the Al Gleim Award for the best exhibit of American medals; the Virginia S. Medlen Memorial Award, presented for the best exhibit emphasizing material of the Napoleonic era, either French or British; the S.G. “Yash” Yasinitsky Founder’s Award for the best exhibit on subjects other than United States, British, or the Commonwealth; and the Members’ Choice Award, selected by popular vote of the members at the convention. There was no Medlen Award this year, nor was there any special theme award. The winners of these other special awards were:

**Al Gleim Award**
Doug Peck: *Pennsylvania’s Civil War First Defenders and Their Medal*

**Vice President’s Award**
Russell Furtado: *Order of Public Instruction - Portugal*

**Yasinitsky Founder’s Award**
George Wilhelmsen: *The Norwegian War Cross*

**Members’ Choice Award**
Barry Weaver: *The Battle of Maiwand*
Two awards were made that are worthy of additional mention. In winning the Vice President’s Award, Russell Furtado did so for the third consecutive year, presenting orders, decorations and medals successively from Denmark, France, and Portugal. The only similar previous occurrence was a series of wins that ended exactly ten years ago, when George Wilhelmsen won his sixth consecutive award in 2001. All of George’s wins during that period were earned by exhibiting United States medals. By coincidence, George is also part of the second notable occurrence. In 2004, George won the first Al Gleim Award. This year, he also won the first Yasinitsky Founder’s Award. Congratulations to Russ and George for their accomplishments in competitive exhibits.

After the awards presentation, the members retired to the bourse to view the exhibits a final time, and to honor the exhibitors. We would like to thank all of the exhibitors for sharing their knowledge with us, and also urge each of you to consider what you might have in your collection that would be of interest to your fellow members at some future Convention.

No Convention article would be complete without a recital of dry statistics, so let me state before closing that we had 147 registrations this year, plus 26 family members registered for bourse admission. We enjoyed four walk-in registrations, three new memberships, and three membership renewals purchased at the Convention. Thanks to Secretary Clyde Tinklepaugh and Treasurer Jim Hitch for their help in processing those new memberships. Bourse tables utilized numbered 105, plus 27 exhibit tables. We used 131 rented display cases in addition to the personally-owned cases members brought in themselves. The Hyatt profited from 455 room nights used by our 173 registered Convention attendees, who managed to consume 161 banquet meals. Where were you other 12 on Saturday night?

From a geographical viewpoint, we had registrants from 11 different countries in Europe, Australia, and North America, 29 states of the United States, and three Canadian provinces. Internationally, the United Kingdom led the way with 11 registrants and two guests. California again led the United States contingent with 18 registrants, followed by host state Florida with 15, and Virginia with 9. When I last wrote an article like this in 2005, I requested that we look forward to registrants from Japan, Prince Edward Island, or Montana. We had no Japanese residents register this year, but we did have attendees from New Brunswick, Wyoming, and the Australian Capital Territory, so maybe my message did get through in some small way.

In closing, I would like to thank the host committee members, co-chairman Nathan Weiss, our wives Evette and Lisa, and the officers, directors, seminar hosts and speakers for their hard work. They volunteered countless hours to make this convention happen. Thanks also to those of you who made the trip to Jacksonville. Attending a convention is always a commitment, but also a very fulfilling experience. Let’s make plans to join John Allgood and his crew in Dallas, Texas next year and see if we can increase those numbers!

SEE YOU IN DALLAS!

IN THE NEWS

Victoria Cross Obtains Record Price

The Victoria Cross group of ten medals awarded to Private Edward (Ted) Kenna, 2/4th Australian Infantry Battalion, Australian Military Forces was sold at auction in Melbourne, Australia on July 28, 2011 for a record price of $1,002,000 Australian. It was purchased by an unknown telephone bidder.

Kenna received the Victoria Cross for single-handedly taking out a Japanese machine gun post on Papua New Guinea. Before he died, Kenna requested that his Victoria Cross be sold and the proceeds shared among his four children.

From The Daily Telegraph
Submitted by Murray Louis