OMSA 2012: THE 53RD ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION OF THE ORDERS AND MEDALS SOCIETY OF AMERICA

JOHN ALLGOOD

Figure 1: The Hyatt Regency DFW.

The 53rd Annual International Convention of the Orders and Medals Society of America was held from Thursday, August 16 through Sunday, August 19, 2012 at the DFW Hyatt Regency (Figure 1). Centrally located at the DFW International Airport, this year's convention provided a modern hotel and a large, comfortable bourse. All the seminar rooms and banquet facilities were easily located within the hotel. This guaranteed no one had to wander in the Texas heat in August!

The host committee worked very hard to make ensure the convention was a success. In addition to the co-chairmen, Nathan Weiss and John Allgood, a number of people helped make this convention. Most notably was the hard work of Evette Weiss who manned the registration desk with good cheer, assisted by Ruth Bison, Mary Allgood and Ruth Allgood. Jim Hitch provided much needed financial advice and assistance both before and after the convention. Natasha Gupta provided many of the photographs for this article and, eventually, the website.

Although the first “real” day of the convention is traditionally on a Thursday, many members chose to arrive on Wednesday to pick up their registration packets. This year’s registration packet included Doug Boyce’s revised edition of State Medals For War Service. Doug generously donated these books to the members and deserves our appreciation for his continued support of OMSA. Thankfully, many members also helped with last minute preparations, especially in the bourse. A special thanks goes out to Chris Cawthorne, Geoff Reeves and Matthew Broadbridge for assisting John Allgood in unloading and distributing the display cases in the bourse. It is a thankless but necessary task that is essential for a good convention.

Although the bourse didn’t open until 8:00 am on Thursday, that didn’t stop many from anxiously gathering 30 minutes before the doors opened. Dealer tables revealed a large variety of medals and orders and exhibitors fusses over last minute details to make everything perfect. In addition to the usual sales and exhibits, one table was set to showcase next year’s convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, August 8-11 2013. Make your plans now!

Thursday evening, following the cocktail party complete with a fajita buffet, was the first OMSA benefit auction (Figure 2). Members donated a variety of material

Figure 2: Bill Brown and Adam Rohlof conduct the OMSA Auction.
including United States state medals, numerous world medals and a variety of books. Many bidders participated, most notably Charles Potter, and over $3,000 was raised for OMSA. The auction will no doubt be a part of the convention for years to come. The United States Seminar followed the auction. The speakers were Ron Fischer, with his talk provocatively titled “Wham Bam, Thank you Uncle Sam,” Bill Emerson who spoke on “US Air Corps Badges,” and finally Larry Watson who discussed “The Presidential Medal of Freedom.” All speakers received a well deserved OMSA appreciation medal.

Friday began with our traditional breakfast talk and business meeting. This year’s breakfast speaker was John K. Robertson from the Company of Military Historians. Mr. Robertson gave an interesting talk on the first class of women at West Point. Mr. Robertson taught at West Point during this period and discussed both the difficulties of the administration as well as the women during the period. Following the talk, he received a plaque thanking him for his talk. A special word of thanks should go to Mel Mueller for designing and producing this plaque. OMSA President Fred Borch then presided over the society business meeting. Although most awards are usually presented at the Saturday banquet, President Borch used the Friday meeting to present Distinguished Service Medals to Bill Emerson for his hard work on the OMSA board and to Steve Watts for his tireless work selling OMSA publications (Figure 3). Our new treasurer, Tim Bartholow gave a brief report on the financial status of OMSA; happily the Society continues to be financially sound. OMSA Secretary Clyde Tinklepaugh also gave a brief report on the membership of OMSA which remains steady.

After the re-opening of the bourse, Friday afternoon marked a slight change from the usual convention routine. The International Seminars met that afternoon at 2 pm instead of the traditional late Friday evening event. Hosted by E. J. Fischer, the International seminar included a wide range of talks. Russell Furtado talked about “Lisbon Museum Medal Collections,” followed by Vicken Koundakjian on “Venezuelan Order of Simon Bolivar Documents” and the seminars concluded with Tim Brown on “The Austrian Tyrolean Eagle Order.” As always each speaker gave new insights on their subject and were presented with an OMSA appreciation medal.

Friday evening concluded with the British Seminars hosted by Chris Cawthorne. Graeme McLeod started the evening with his exhaustive examination of “Modern Commonwealth Medals and Orders A to Z.” Peter Lomdahl followed with his talk on “The Battle of Copenhagen 1801 – The Men and the Medals.” Lastly, Mike Shaw presented “The Last of the European Subadars.” Each speaker left with an OMSA appreciation medal.

Saturday brought the public admission day to the convention and the morning brought at least 40 members of the public in spite of its location at the airport. A number of “public” admissions were in fact OMSA members; if you were part of that group you have missed out on the best part of the convention! The Saturday banquet and reception were well attended as the membership donned their best attire, a fitting contrast to the relaxed atmosphere of the other days. The evening started with a cocktail hour with the dinner banquet starting at 7 pm. Members enjoyed either beef tenderloin, salmon fillet or mushroom fritters, all served with wine graciously provided by the auction house of DNW. Our banquet speaker was Paul Oelkrug of the University of Texas at Dallas (Figure 4). Mr. Oelkrug gave a brief talk about the various holdings at the University, including: the papers of Jimmy Doolittle (including his Medal of Honor), the papers of Air America, the Lighter than Air Collection (focusing on America’s dirigible program between the two world wars) and the numerous holdings

Figure 3: Bill Emerson and Steve Watts after receiving the OMSA Distinguished Service Medal from OMSA President Fred Borch.
on the First World War. Mr. Oelkrug provided the membership with new avenues for research. He was presented with a presentation plaque (again artfully designed by Mel Mueller).

Following the dinner began the award presentations, led by Fred Borch and assisted by our outgoing Vice-President, Harry Bendorf.

Four Members were recognized for 50 years of membership in OMSA.

Neal F. Carlson
Dr. Bruce L. Fink
Karl B. Johnson
Lief Pahlsson

Two members were granted OMSA's highest honor as Distinguished Members: Harry Bendorf for his many years as Vice President providing excellent counsel to OMSA, and Jim Hitch for his equally important efforts as Treasurer (Figure 5). Both men have given OMSA many years of solid service and will continue to do so in the future.

Fred Borch, Steven Carr and Alan Mencke were awarded the Literary Medal for their contributions to JOMSA.

The Exhibit awards were presented by the Chief Judge of the convention, Tim Bartholow. This year 20 exhibits were displayed, one of which was a non-competitive entry on the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Every exhibitor clearly put much time and effort into their display and each one deserves recognition for their effort. The winners of the competitive displays were:

**Best of Show** (Figure 6)

Chris Cawthorne, “Quatre Bras – A Prelude to Waterloo.”

**Figure 4:** Mr. Paul Oelkrug as the guest speaker at the OMSA banquet.

**Figure 5:** Jim Hitch (left) and Harry Bendorf (center) are honored as OMSA Distinguished Members.

**Figure 6:** Chris Cawthorne (right) receives the Best of Show award from John Allgood.
Silver Medals (Figure 7)

Russell Furtado, “Janice Eve: The Woman Behind the Medals.”
Graeme McLeod, “Out of Africa.”
Tom Malhosky, “The Awards and Decorations of the United States Public Health Service.”
Raymond Regnerus, “Michael Chinigo, Civilian War Correspondent.”

Bronze Medals (Figure 8)

Lawrence Watson, “Giving the Finger to the North Koreans.”
Lawrence Watson, “The Vietnam War DFC and Air Medal of M/Sgt Joseph G. Horvat, USAF.”
Greg Harper, “Der Schokoladen-Flieger.”
Charles McDowell, “The Medals of NASA.”
Ron Fischer, “Recent Changes in American Campaign Medals.”
Russell Furtado, “The Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal.”
Alfred Kroulik, “Some Aspects of the Order of the National Flag of the DPRK.”
Among the other exhibit awards presented at the convention were the Vice President's Award for medals with a value of less than $200; the Al Gleim Award for best exhibit of American Medals; the S.G. “Yash” Yasinitsky Founder's Award for the best exhibit on subjects other than the United States, British or Commonwealth; and, this year, a theme award for the best exhibit on Aviation. The winners of the special awards were:

**Al Gleim Award** (Figure 9)

Russell Furtado, “Janice Eve: The Women Behind the Medals”

**Vice President’s Award** (Figure 10)

Lawrence Watson, “Giving the Finger to the North Koreans”

**Yasinitsky Founder’s Award** (Figure 11)

Graeme McLeod, “Out of Africa”

**Figure 9: Russell Furtado receives the Al Gleim Award from Bill Brown.**

**Figure 10: Lawrence Watson receives the Vice President’s Award from Harry Bendorf.**

**Figure 11: Graeme McLeod receives the Yasinitsky Founder’s Award from John Allgood.**

**Theme Award in Aviation**

Lawrence Watson, “The Vietnam War DFC and Air Medal of M/Sgt Joseph G. Horvat, USAF”

After the awards presentation, the membership moved to the bourse for one last look at all the exhibits. There much more revealed about the various displays. Poignantly, Russell Furtado disclosed that his Gleim Award winning display was on his daughter who died recently of unknown causes. I am sure you will join me in offering heartfelt condolences to Russell; his display was a special one honoring both a loved one and a dedicated servicewoman. The displays always are fascinating and I would urge everyone to consider a display in the future.

The convention this year was well attended although many members did not decide until the last minute to attend. 138 OMSA members registered for the convention from all over the world. In addition, 41 family members also participated in the convention bring the total number of people to 179. International attendees came from Canada (the largest contingent with 8 OMSA members),
Mexico, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Finland and the Ukraine. Not surprisingly, there was a large turnout of members from Texas but the remainder of the United States was well represented. We still would love to see members from Alaska or any other state! At least two members joined or re-newed to attend the convention. And 3 members registered at the door. 101 bourse tables were purchased by dealers or members and 94 display cases were pre-paid for use at the bourse. Many members tried to buy additional cases after the convention began but, unfortunately, some were left unhappy. Each year the convention orders more cases than reserved but more members realized their need too late.

Finally, I would like to thank my co-chair Nathan Weiss and especially his wife, Evette, for their hard work in planning the convention. Without their work, the convention chair would have to start from scratch each time. Much effort has been saved by Nathan’s experience. Those of you who attended also saw the help and moral support provided by my wife, Maureen McGeehan, and my daughters, Mary and Ruthie Allgood. The last two helped lower the age of the convention; hopefully we have two more members in the making. Numerous other individuals also helped and, if neglected in my previous thanks, please accept them now. Make your plans for the 2013 convention in Milwaukee. Greg Harper has a running start on the planning and deserves our support in making another successful convention. See you next year!

COLLECTING 101: CONDITION

JEFFREY B. FLOYD

What role does condition play in your collecting? Are you extremely strict on this subject, or willing to consider condition as only one criterion for choosing a medal to join your collection? Either way, the issue of condition will arise in most of your acquisitions.

If you collect United States awards, you’ll actually face two aspects of condition when considering a medal. The condition of the ribbon and pendant may vary significantly, so you should be ready to define your willingness to consider a lower level of condition to get a rarer or more interesting medal. Medals that were actually worn regularly will show the effects of age and wear. The pendant will show bumps and nicks from striking other medals or uniform buttons. The ribbon will show the effects of gravity, as the weight of the pendant can exert a strong force on the ribbon, especially were it is folded or crosses over the brooch. A ribbon that is not attached to a bar evenly will even more quickly succumb to the ravages of time and uneven pressure. Many collectors stress high condition, while others do not. Since it’s your collection, you’ll have to make those decisions yourself.

Another aspect of condition is whether or not the ribbon is present. A missing ribbon and brooch will greatly reduce interest in a common medal. A Mexican Border Service Medal may get no interest at all if it is missing its ribbon and brooch, where a traceable Indian Wars Medal will still be very attractive in the same condition. All things being equal, a medal with a complete ribbon and brooch will bring more interest than one without its brooch, and that one will bring more interest than a medal with no ribbon or brooch.

In other fields of collecting, condition is looked at very differently. Nineteenth Century British medals, for example, were commonly worn and showed the effects of being in close proximity to other medals. Consider what a cavalryman wearing a group of three of four medals puts those medals through. He may be wearing a steel breastplate under the medals and every movement of his horse will hammer the medals edges together, causing serious damage. Should that preclude you from considering medals to cavalrmen? No, it can often be a positive factor, in that you at least know the recipient was active in his profession. A “salty” group often has an attraction of its own. In collecting British medals, replacing ribbons and polishing of medals was a regular practice by the recipients. No soldier would appear on parade with a tarnished medal on a tatty ribbon. The sergeant major would quickly teach that man the error of his ways. I once had a pair of medals to an officer who served in the Indian Army in Afghanistan in the 1870s. Clearly his Indian servant had been tasked to keep Sahib’s medals in parade-ready condition and had done so to his utmost. With a bit of sand and ash, he had polished the obverse of the two medals to the point that you could discern an outline of Queen Victoria, but nothing else. The reverse was essentially untouched. After all, they never showed. In the strictest sense, the condition of the medals was terrible, but they actually were consistent with the time and place of their wearing.

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