

Wespe: big gun built for the blitzkrieg

By Jim Lewis

In early 1942, Germany withdrew the Panzer II from front-line service. In its day, this Panzer had been one of Germany's premiere fighting vehicles. Though obsolete, the Wehrmacht seized the opportunity to use its proven chassis and components for conversions to new fighting vehicles. Of these efforts, the Wespe is perhaps best known.

The Wespe was developed to address the one weakness German forces exhibited during the blitzkrieg—the inability to move heavy artillery at the same pace as its mechanized units. In practice, limbering, de-limbering, and training towed artillery guns on targets proved too time-consuming. Many of Germany's artillery pieces were still horse-drawn, although through modernization increasing numbers got suitable half-tracked prime movers. This still didn't afford the artillery enough battlefield mobility. These artillery weapons quickly became incapable of rapid formation movement or deployment supporting the "blitz" doctrines of tank warfare. It wasn't possible to reposition the artillery guns quickly in response to changing battlefield conditions, and this invited counter-battery fire. The solution would be to mount artillery guns on tracked vehicles.

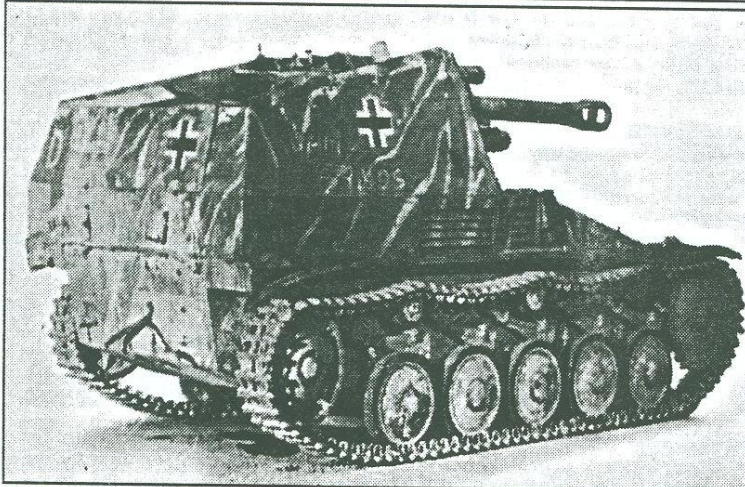
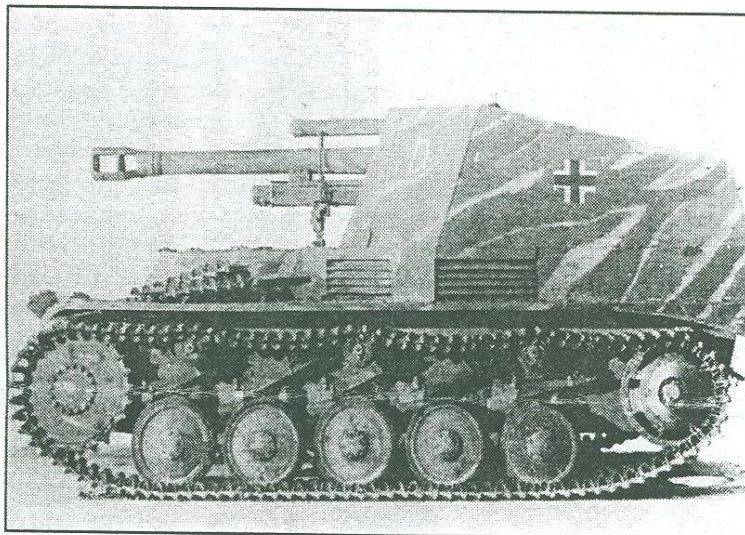
Such a vehicle would afford the artillery crew the agility, speed and mobility on the battlefield already afforded the tank crews they were supporting. The mount would provide vastly improved armored protection to the

crews during fire and transport operations. The vehicle mount eliminated the need to limber or de-limber the gun from a prime mover and the guns could be set up more quickly for firing or stowed for transport. With a successful design, the artillery would move as fast as the tank forces on the battlefield.

Designated special vehicle Sd.Kfz.124, and christened Wespe (German for "wasp"), this weapon "accidentally" became the prime self-propelled artillery piece for Germany's Panzerartillerie during World War II. (Note: German forces named their self-propelled artillery after insects like Grille meaning "cricket." The Sd.Kfz.124 officially bore the name "Wespe" from 1942 to January 1944—when Hitler banned its use). Originally developed as a stopgap solution until fully armored artillery guns came into service, the Wespe became the solution for adding mobility to Germany's fast-moving Panzer forces.

Germany's ultimate desire was to develop artillery guns under full armor protection. The Wespe, and vehicles in her class, were interim designs meant to rapidly introduce mobility to Panzerartillerie formations until efforts towards designing and perfecting fully-armored self-propelled guns could bear fruit. However, the fully-armored concepts did not prove successful, leaving

the interim Wespe as front-line equipment. Time ran out on Germany, and their engineers were unable to successfully



Two views of the Wespe. Originally intended as an interim vehicle, the Wespe fought long after the development of its replacements had been cancelled.

Continued on page 7

The Styrene Sheet is a monthly publication of the Silicon Valley Chapter of the International Plastic Model Society (IPMS). Articles and comments should be submitted to Chris Bucholtz, Editor, P.O. Box 361644, Milpitas, CA 95036, or by E-mail at bucholtzc@aol.com. Excerpts may be published only with the written permission of the editor.

EDITOR'S BRIEF

December's the month of our annual gift exchange (see the article in this issue about how it works), and it's also the culmination of our Veterans Administration Hospital Model Drive. When you're looking for gifts to give at the meeting, don't forget to do your part for the veterans, too, with a snap-together or a simple kit. These kits mean a lot to the veterans who use them to improve their health and their lives.

December's also when the IPMS/Silver Wings Holiday Classic takes place. This go-around, the show was held not at the familiar bowling alley but at a local Ramada Inn. We modelers shared the space with a (choke!) Beanie Baby convention. The next time someone says you're a geek because of your hobby, tell them that people like these exist and that at least your hobby involves reading books and working with your hands, and not just hugging some bean bag with eyes and making "kootchie kootchie!" noises.

The contest room itself was a friendly, lively place, with lots of modelers from around the region, especially the Bay Area. The attitude of the hosts was, for the most part, congenial, and the vendor room was, as usual, one of the best in the region.

The group from SVSM in attendance—Bob Miller, Brad Chun, Jim Lewis, Milt Polous, Mike Burton, Marc Wilson, Bill Ferrante and your editor—did well at the awards ceremony. Lots of our brethren from Fremont, Golden Gate and Stockton were in evidence, and it was a very pleasant day spent with friends. Mike bought enough 1:72 *Hasegawa* planes to build a small raft; Marc, who insisted he was in for "a plastic whipping," won second and third in his category; your editor FINALLY got copies of Squadron's *Air War Over Korea* and *F9F Panther In Action* (only 18 months after finishing the project he needed them for!), and Brad got a chance to meet several of the participants in the rec.models.scale Internet newsgroup he'd never met before.

The problems that Brad and your editor wrote about after the Silver Wings' summer contest were somewhat resolved, though more progress could be made. Again, judges handled some of the models, a direct result of the categories being based on the last contest's attendance. Some adherence to standard categories would help alleviate a lot of confusion, and would help build participation in categories that are usually under-represented. The flip side of this is that standard categories allow you to cope with large turnouts better. At the Sacramento contest, the category "multi-engine aircraft, all types" was an invitation to controversy; eight 1:72 multi-engine prop planes were there, along with three 1:48 A-10s—not exactly like subjects. Sacramento handled this well, putting the A-10s in with the 1:48 jets and splitting the 1:72 entries into axis and allied, but all this day-of-event scrambling wouldn't have been necessary had more thought been put into the categories in advance.

Also, as was the case last summer, there were a number of display tables left empty while the tables in use became crowded. I can understand "crowding" models to give the impression of a large turnout, but this approach makes it seem as if the organizers are expecting a small turnout. If those are the expectations—that no one will come—why hold the event? Also, if those tables are needed, we're back to the handling of models once again.

While these issues still need to be addressed, the Sacramento club went a long way toward improving its event this winter. Scott Bell and his crew should know that they're on the right road, and pat themselves on the back accordingly. Despite the negative stuff we discussed last summer, we all STILL went back, because we have faith in the Sacramento chapter and the dedication of their core group of guys.

Nationals Update: Our decal offerings are being finalized and, let me tell you, they're very interesting! Your editor never appreciated how much fun tracking down 53-year-old information could be—I've talked to pilots, intelligence officers, ground crewmen, aviation artists and a host of other people, all of whom have been enthusiastic about the project. Without fail, each started our conversations with, "I don't think I have anything that will help you"—followed by an important detail. One pilot sent me a picture of an aircraft taxiing, for instance, and while it was hard to see all the marking of the plane in the foreground, the tail of a second plane was in the background. I knew from the side codes whose plane it was, and we had the nose art already—this photo gave us the tail number. That's how it's gone—just like assembling a jigsaw puzzle, piece by piece. Only two of the markings of the six on this particular sheet were from single photos. The rest have been pieced together from sketches, memories, fragments of photos and logbooks. Hopefully, after the decals are done and gone, this research will live on, maybe in the hands of the fighter group's association or in the files of a research company, or maybe in the "to-do" list of a decal company looking at some of the schemes we couldn't do for our nationals sheets.

If you're planning on staying at the Westin, get your reservations soon. Rooms are being reserved at a very brisk pace, so don't wait if at all possible.

If you'd like to volunteer, give the editor a holler at the number on the back of the Styrene Sheet. We'll get you on a list and assign you a job; the plan is to work volunteers no more than two hours a day, so you can help AND enjoy yourself at the nationals.

And a bit of housekeeping... Special thanks to Jeff Hargis, Bob Miller, and especially Brad Chun and Jim Lewis. These guys came through at the very last minute with articles for this issue. It was truly becoming a desperate situation—there's only so much I can write myself! Had they not provided me with their stories when they did, this might have been a four-page Styrene Sheet!

I will say it officially now—I'll return as editor and secretary next year, if you'll have me. It'll be my sixth year in the position. But in order to do this job, I need your help—especially from you armor, auto, sci-fi and ship modelers. The Styrene Sheet should showcase the diversity of our club, and we need you to take the time to share with us the how you built what you built. The talent level in this club's awfully high, and the modelers are very diverse. I need your help in conveying this to the readers of the Styrene Sheet

That's all for now... I'm going back to the mailbox to wait for my resin engine to arrive.

—The Editor

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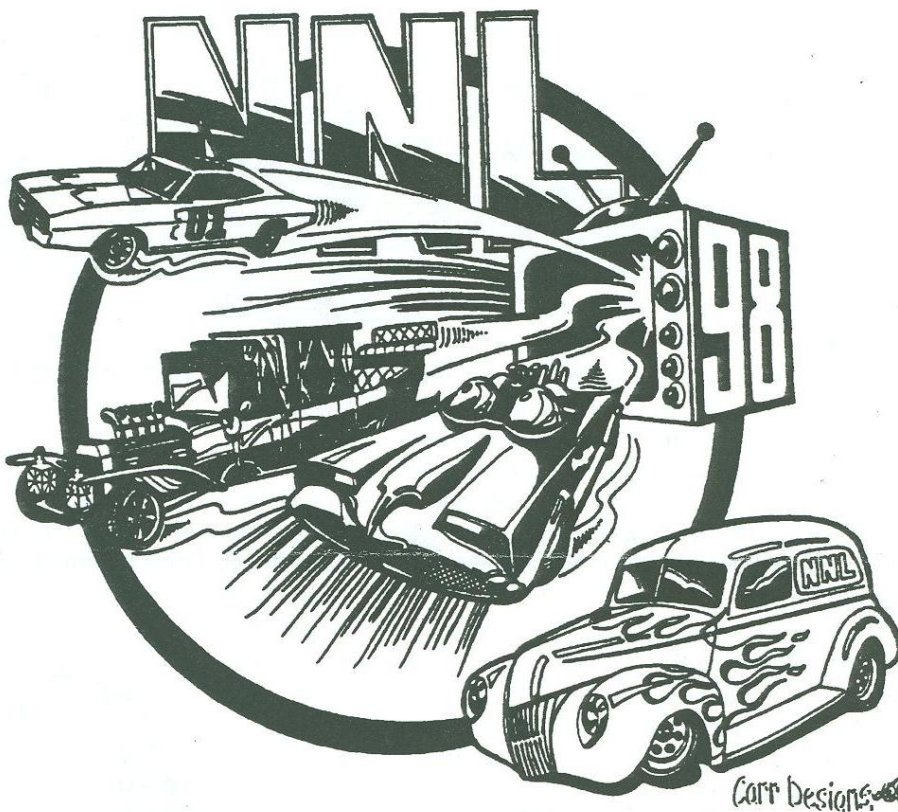
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Bordelon, Folmar and their Korean Corsairs

By Jeff Hargis

Mention Vought's F4U Corsair and most people think of hot, dusty airstrips in the South Pacific, or scores of burning kamikaze planes plunging into the sea after falling victim to the guns of the plane the Japanese nicknamed "Whistling Death." However, the Corsair should also be remembered as a rugged workhorse during Korean War, performing everything from reconnaissance and close air support to night interdiction missions. The famous bent-wing bird was also the mount of the U.S. Navy's only ace of the conflict, LT Guy P. "Lucky Pierre" Bordelon.

With the end of World War II, most aircraft contracts were canceled, but the Corsair continued in production

until December 1952. New models of the plane boosted the speed to over 460 mph, four wing-mounted 20mm cannons replaced the six .50 caliber machine guns, and the ordnance payload was increased to 5,000 pounds, making the Corsair a good choice for the Navy and Marines in the ground attack role.

On June 25, 1950 North Korea launched an attack across the 38th parallel and President Truman ordered the Navy to give immediate support to South Korea. A few days later, Task Force 77, made up of the aircraft carriers U.S.S. *Valley Forge* and H.M.S. *Triumph*, launched strikes against the North Korean capital of Pyongyang.

The strikes did extensive damage to parked planes, runways and the city's main rail yard, but this did nothing to slow the offensive in the South. Soon, the planes from the carriers, including two squadrons of Corsairs, were involved in close air support of ground troops to not only slow the attack, but to keep allied forces in the south from being pushed into the sea.

In a war where allied ground forces were outnumbered most of the time, the role of close air support became the bread and butter mission for the Corsair. Pilots became so proficient in this role that they often would attack targets within 50 yards of the front lines, and 20mm cannon shells would scatter among friendly troops. In the first ten

months of the war, 82 percent of all close air support missions were flown by Corsairs.

Despite the fact that the Corsair was mainly used in close air support/ground attack role, it was not unheard of for Corsair pilots to tangle with MiGs. Most of the time, the MiGs would dash in and take some quick shots, a brief exchange of gun fire would ensue, and the MiGs would head for high altitude and the Corsairs would dive for the deck.

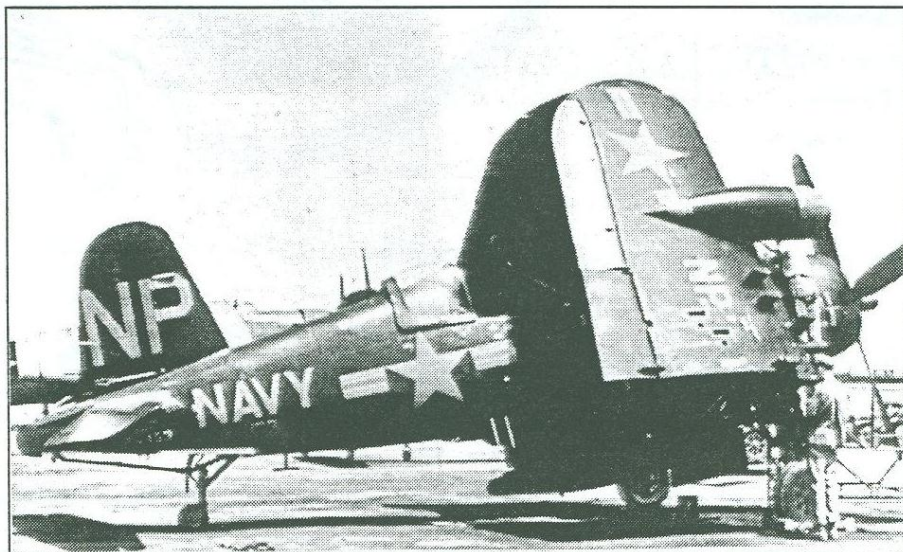
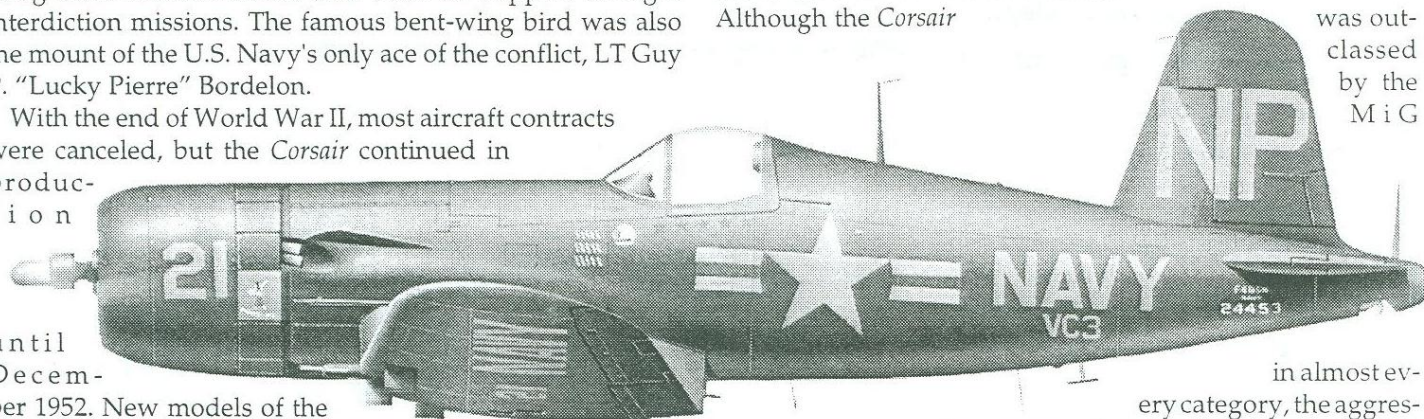
Although the Corsair

was out-classed by the MiG

in almost every category, the aggressive nature of U.S. pilots and the poor training of the MiG pilots evened things up a bit.

On September 10, 1952, Marine CAPT Jesse Folmar and his wingman, LT Willie Daniels, were flying a ground attack mission against troop concentrations in F4U-4s when they ran into a couple MiG-15s. After several passes at each other, a few more MiGs joined in the fray. At one point seven MiGs were tangling with the two tighter-turning Corsairs, but not

all the MiG pilots were aggressive or even careful. Finally, a MiG overshot Folmar, who lined up a shot and gave the MiG a five-second burst of 20mm cannon fire and sent it into the sea. Moments later, another MiG struck Folmar's Corsair with its heavy-calibre cannon, and Folmar was forced to bail out. As Daniels orbited his downed wingman, the MiGs broke off the attack, and Folmar was rescued



Bordelon's F4U-5N Corsair "Annie Mo" at K-6, the field to which it was dispatched from the U.S.S. Princeton. Bordelon scored five kills in this airplane, but another pilot wrecked it in a landing accident before it could return to the U.S.

from the sea within minutes.

As the summer of 1953 arrived, the war for Corsair pilots was the same as it had been, day in day out: close air support and ground attack. But the Corsair would have one more note of fame before hostilities ended.

One tactic of the North Koreans was to fly nighttime harassment raids in old, slow moving Po-2 biplanes. Being made of wood and fabric, these night raiders were difficult to locate

and track on radar. The idea was to fly low over South Korean cities and airfields, waking people from their sleep, and then to drop a few small bombs in the hopes of causing some damage. Most of the time these raids didn't accomplish anything other than disturbing people's sleep, but every so often a pilot would get lucky. One such raid early in the war led to an F-86 *Saber* being completely destroyed and eight others being seriously damaged. That was more destruction than the MiGs had inflicted on the F-86 up to that time.

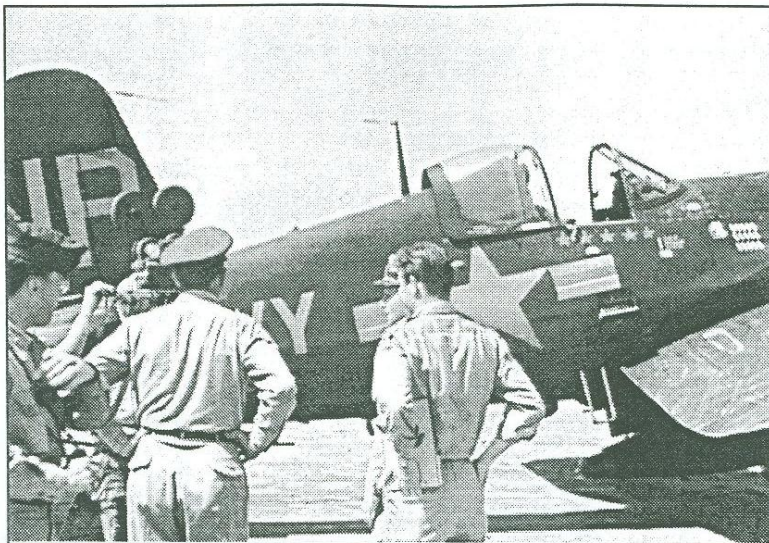
In June and July of 1953, these raids went on nightly, and the Air Force had been unable to shoot down these pesky raiders with its state of the art nightfighters. One attempt to destroy a "Bedcheck Charlie" with an F-94 *Starfire* resulted in the loss of the nightfighter, which had to slow down dramatically to line up the slower plane. When the *Starfire* opened up on the intruder, the recoil of the cannons caused the F-94 to stall and crash.

A call was sent out to the U.S.S. *Princeton*, which had just arrived in the area, for a detachment of night flying F4U-5N *Corsairs*. Four planes all from VC-3 "Detachment Dog" landed at an airfield 35 miles South of Seoul, and after a week a familiarization with Air Force controllers they went to work.

On June 29, 1953 LT Guy Bordelon, who had become an expert at night flying and radar tracking, quickly shot down two "Bedcheck Charlies," identified as two YAK-type fighters. A few nights later, Bordelon shot down two more, this time described as YAK-18s, and he quickly became a hero in and around the city of Seoul. The "Bedcheck Charlie" attacks diminished, but on July 17, a Lavochkin-type aircraft tried a night attack and LT Bordelon bagged his fifth plane, hence the nickname "Lucky Pierre." Bordelon became the U.S. Navy's only ace of the war, and the only non-*Saber* ace of any military service. For his efforts, Bordelon was awarded a gold and silver star and the Navy Cross.

With the end of the war, the number of *Corsair* squadrons quickly diminished, but it had more than earned the admiration of many a soldier. At the time, the *Corsair* held a record of 13 years of service, an amazing feat considering that it was accomplished during the transition to jet powered aircraft.

While the *Corsair* has long been a popular modeling sub-



Bordelon, at right behind a squadron-mate, meets the press shortly after his fifth kill. Bordelon was the Navy's only ace in Korea.

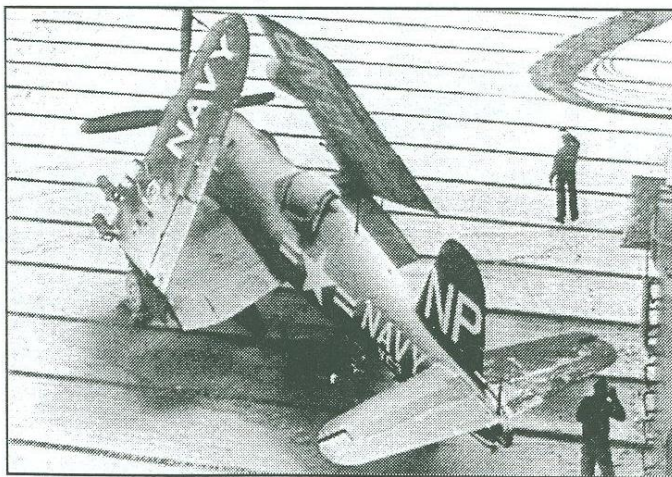
ject, kits of the Korean *Corsairs* in 1:72 have been rare and limited to the inferior Fujimi kit of the F4U-5N and *High Planes'* lovely but hard-to-find "Dash 5." *Italeri* has corrected this by producing an F4U-5N version in 1:72 scale. The May 1995 *Fine Scale Modeler* review was favorable, but in a general sense the kit doesn't quite match up with the quality of many other 1:72 kits of single engine fighters. While many of the changes from the F4U-1 to the F4U-5 were captured, the detail seems heavy for this scale.

The recessed panel lines are good, but the lines for the cowl flaps, ailerons, and flaps are heavy. The ribbing in the landing gear bays is so exaggerated that the wheels couldn't possibly fit into them. Also, the hinges for the flaps on the underside of the wing seem huge, especially when compared with kits of similar vintage like the *Hasegawa* TBF.

The kit's worst flaw is that it is about eight scale inches short in the nose. This omission misses one of the key identification points of the F4U-5, and for *Italeri* to miss it is a significant error. *Italeri's* follow-on F4U-7 has a completely revised fuselage, and a comparison of the two shows how noticeable the mistake is.

Still, the kit does capture that aggressive, unique shape of a late model *Corsair*, and construction so far has only required minimal clean up.

The decals are for a Marine version, or Bordelon's "Annie-Mo," which was named after his wife. Some sources have the national markings of "Annie-Mo" as white, while the kit has them in powder blue. Either way is correct, because the originally-white national markings were painted over to tone them down for the night flights against the "Bedcheck Charlies." From the color photographs of "Annie-Mo" I have seen, the decals capture the color and should look good on the model. A final plus is the \$8.95 price tag, well below some the \$20 dollar price tag on many 1:72 scale kits.



A VC-3 F4U-5N negotiates the icy deck of *Princeton*.

Italeri at least has taken a stab at an important *Corsair* variant, and its "Dash 7" kit also includes a provision for building an AU-1, although this would also require some modification to the basic kit. Hopefully, some manufacturer will produce a model of the most active of all Korean *Corsair* models, the F4U-4, to complete the *Corsair* family in 1:72 scale.

Koster conversion helps 1:48 B-24 join the navy

By Bradley D. Chun

While the B-17 was identified with the air war over Europe, her sturdy stablemate the *Liberator* could easily be viewed as a star of the Pacific war. With its greater range and slightly larger payload, the *Liberator* was an ideal weapon to strike at remote Japanese island outposts and hunt for marauding submarines.

The Army Air Force was not the only customer for Consolidated's twin-tailed bomber. A large number of *Liberators* were used by the Navy under the designation PB4Y-1 *Privateer*, with modifications for anti-submarine and anti-shipping patrol duties. Eventually, the PB4Y-1 was complemented by the tall-tailed PB4Y-2, and these bombers in blue helped keep the sea lanes clear throughout the latter part of the Pacific war.

While researching material for *Koster Aero Enterprises'* PB4Y-2 *Privateer* conversion (kit no. 19),

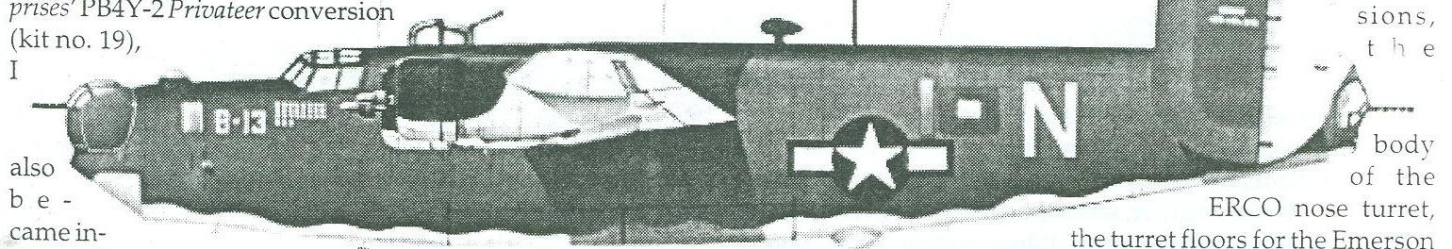
I also became interested in also building a PB4Y-1 *Privateer*. Luckily for me, *Koster Aero Enterprises* also produces a PB4Y-1 *Privateer* and B-24H, J, and L conversion, kit no. 14.

I ordered the conversion from *Koster*, and it arrived in a very sturdy, corrugated cardboard box that withstood the rigors of being handled by the U.S. Postal Service. Upon opening the box, I found an instruction sheet, white vacuform sheet, clear vacuform sheet, and a white metal part.

The instruction sheet is printed on an 11" x 14" sheet. It details each step required for both conversions. The instruction sheet includes the steps that are required for each of the 7 different turrets that may be placed on the *Liberator* airframe. For the B-24H, J, or L con-

version (Army Air Force *Liberators*), the instructions include the fuselage side armor plate templates, and the modeler has the choice of either the Martin A-3A/B or A-30 "High Hat" upper turrets, Emerson A-15 nose turret, an accurate Briggs/Sperry Ball Turret, CAC A-6A Tail Turret, MPC A-6B Tail Turret, or, open rear gun position (for Pacific Theatre aircraft). For the PB4Y-1 conversion (Navy *Liberators*), an ERCO nose turret, Martin A-30 "High Hat" top turret, MPC A-6B tail turret, and Briggs/Sperry ball turret are to be used, along with the Leigh Light used for Anti-Sub duties. The instructions are highly detailed, including part numbers and exploded view drawings. A list of reference sources is also included.

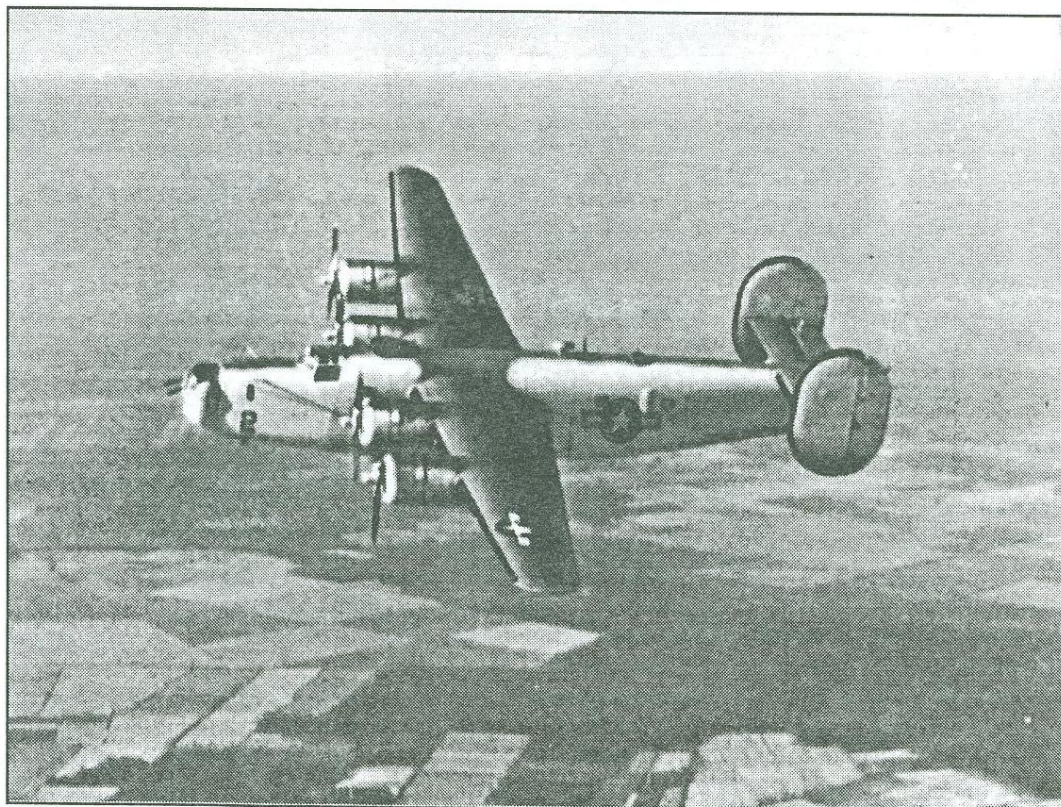
The white styrene vacuform sheet contains the different nose halves



for both conversions, the ERCO nose turret, the turret floors for the Emerson A-15 nose turret and CAC A-6A or MPC A-6B tail turrets, and a replacement fuselage cutout for the Briggs/Sperry ball turret. There are raised panel lines on the different nose halves which match the panel lines found on the *Revell-Monogram B-24 Liberator* kit. All of the parts are crisply molded

with no flaws or thin areas to be found.

The clear vacuform sheet contains all of the above listed gun turrets, side waist windows, four different shaped navigation windows, two different chin nose windows, Leigh Light components, fuselage ball turret floor, and celestial dome. All of the clear



A Navy PB4Y-1 *Privateer* photographed above Virginia in 1944. In addition to helping keep remote islands free of enemy subs, the PB4Y-1 also protected the shores of the U.S. itself.

parts are very crisply molded. The clear vacuform parts are so sharp and clear the modeler will have no trouble removing them, nor will the modeler have the need to polish them. I haven't seen any clear vacuform parts this crystal clear in a very long time.

Also included is a white metal yoke for the Briggs/Sperry ball turret. The only cleanup required is the removal of the mold part line on the yoke.

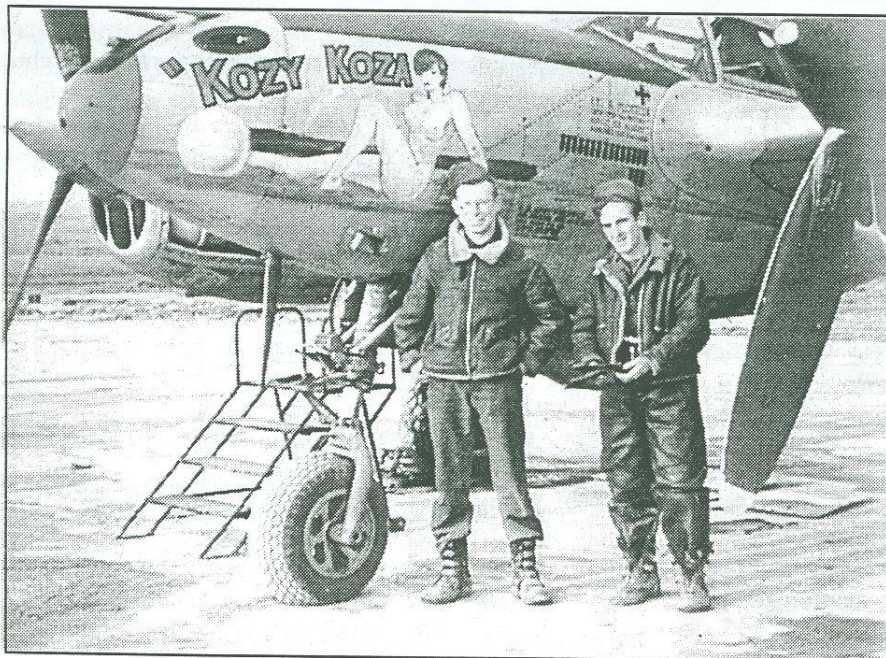
Overall, there are a total of 42 parts, nine white styrene

vacuform parts, 32 clear vacuform parts and the white metal ball turret yoke. I highly recommend this vacuform conversion for any modeler, beginner, intermediate, or expert, who is a fan of the B-24 *Liberator* and its multiple incarnations. *Koster Aero Enterprises* has produced conversion of the level of detail and quality we have come to expect from Bill Koster himself.

Now where are my *Revell-Monogram* 1:48 B-24 *Liberator* kits?



'Rovin' Redhead,' flown by LCDR Harvey Paige with VD-1 in the Marianas. Note the ERCO ball turret in the plane's nose.



**December's
club contest...**

TWINS

**Anything having to do
with the number two!
Like the twin-engine
P-38 in the photo, or the
brothers pictured, or the
nose art's... well, you
get it!**

Upcoming contests:

January: Fight of the Old Dog —anything goes! Bring in model which has defied completion, and explain why it's stumped you!

February: '60s Muscle ('60-'69). Bad cars, SPADS, Super Sabres and Sukhois!

March: Beware the Ides of March! Models with Roman numerals in their designations! Like a Spitfire XIV, Panzer IV, Mach II, King George V, etc.

April: Squadron Hacks—any kind, including captured birds!

May: NATIONALS SNEAK PEEK

SVSM BOOKSHELF

Duels in the Sky

By Eric Brown

Naval Institute Press, 1988

Wings of the Navy: Flying Allied Carrier Aircraft of World War Two

Edited by William Green,
Janes, 1980.

On reading Jeff Hargis' article on the Curtiss SB2C in the October issue of the Styrene Sheet, I reached immediately for two of my favorite books to see what CAPT Eric Brown, Royal Navy, had to say on the subject. It occurred to me then that, while I've referred to these books in articles, it might be worthwhile to review them in detail.

First, about the author. Eric Brown writes with considerable authority. As of 1988, he held the Guinness record for the number of aircraft types logged, at 487, as well as for carrier landings at 2,400. His first deck landing was in a *Martlet*, and his last in a *Phantom II*, so his service spanned an entire era for the RN. He was also apparently an amazingly prolific note taker, since he refers frequently to his log books in his writing. He is quite outspoken in his opinions, and doesn't hesitate to use adjectives from "outstanding" to "terrible", his italics included for emphasis.

Finally, his writing is vivid and enjoyable. Of his first glimpse of the Fairey *Barracuda*, he wrote "Then it turned on to the approach and disgorged a mass of ironmongery from wings and fuselage that transformed the pedestrian and unappealing into what could only be described as an 'airborne disaster'! The adage 'If it looks right...' sprang to mind and I concluded that there were events I could await with rather more pleasure than taking this quaint contraption into the air."

Wings of the Navy is a collection of articles that appeared in *Air International* magazine over the years, including pieces on 16 carrier types the Fleet Air Arm operated or were developing during World War two. I believe they all appeared in *AI*, but my collection isn't extensive enough to verify that. Each includes an average of about 15 photos, well-chosen but typically not including close-ups of wheel wells, engines, or interiors. Each does include a pilot's cockpit drawing and an overall cutaway, but the cutaway may be drawn from an angle that obscures the details you need; I was left to guess how the observer's station in an *Albacore* was arranged.

Not all the Fleet Air Arm's types are included. The *Sea*

Gladiator is missing, for example, and none of the land-based types like the *Kingfisher* and *Maryland* appear. But it's fun reading, and I find the John Weal cutaways exceptionally useful, especially when getting into oddities like the *Skua* and *Barracuda*. My copy was \$20 new, but it would most likely be found in a used book store by now.

Duels in the Sky is not so much for the modeler as for the person wondering "What was it like?" It covers the entire history of World War II from the pilot's viewpoint, treating



With 487 different planes in his logbook, Eric Brown is well-qualified to his opinions on the planes of the '40s, '50s, '60s and '70s.

essentially all the aircraft that bore importantly on the war at sea. Here are not only carrier types but the Ju 87 and 88, as well as the Reggiane 2000 and SM.79. There are handling and performance notes on each, and estimates of how they would fare in battle in various combinations. Could a *Fulmar* beat a Me 109F? ("little or no chance," except by a surprise jump, says Brown.) How about an F6F-3 vs. an Fw190 A-4? ("A contest so finely balanced that the skill of the pilot would be the deciding factor.")

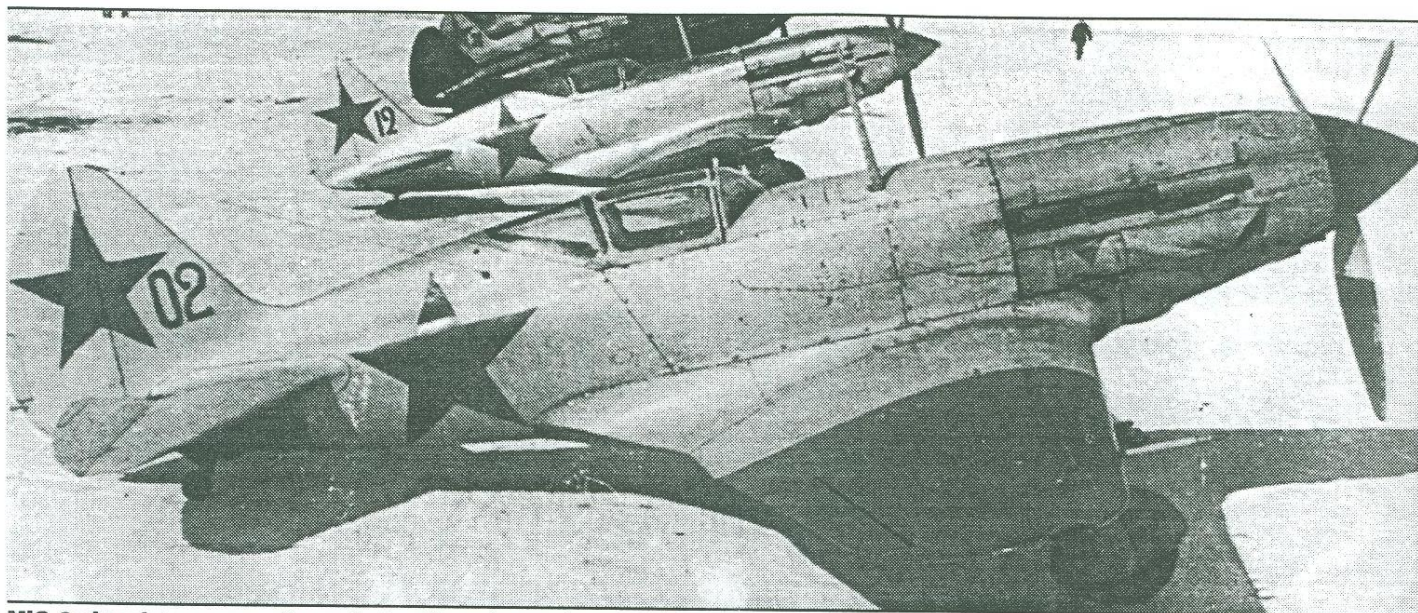
In the last chapter, Brown ranks the carrier types, to choose the greatest in each role. Quite a tricky exercise, since he has to compare *Swordfish* with *Avenger* and "Jill," but he sets his criteria and chooses. (Surprisingly, the greatest was the *Swordfish*.) He also ventures to choose the greatest fighter, maritime or not. (A toss-up between Fw190 and *Spitfire*.) Not much here to help

you model, but what a trip for the imagination!

Brown wrote five other books, including *Wings of the Luftwaffe* (which is very similar to *Wings of the Navy*), *Wings of the Weird and Wonderful*, and three others I have never found.

What did he think of the SB2C? He was not nearly as charitable as Jeff and his sources. He seems to view the aircraft as a gigantic bureaucratic blunder. ("Well, we ordered it and you accepted, so *build it*, dang it! And no, you can't stop the line to try to get it right!") A typical comment (from *Wings...*): "Quite frankly, with the terrible aileron control at approach speed and the excessive longitudinal trim change with engine power, the *Helldiver* would *never* have been acceptable for deck landing by British standards... One could only sympathize with the U.S. Navy pilots flying this unpleasant aircraft from carriers in the Pacific, wonder that their accident attrition was tolerable, and understand their choice of nickname." This from an officer of the navy that put *Seafires* on escort carriers and operated them on calm, hot days off Salerno? Wow!

—Bob Miller



MiG-3s in winter camouflage during the winter of 1941. The plane was a major improvement over the MiG-1.

Building the fighter that put MiG on the map

By Bradley D. Chun

The MiG-1 was a quantum leap forward in Soviet fighter design, but against the technically advanced German planes it was pitted against, the plane had serious shortcomings. It suffered from a lack of maneuverability, its overly heavy wing section affected performance, and it was under-armed and under-armored, putting its pilots at a disadvantage.

Only 100 MiG-1s were built, superseded in 1941 by the MiG-3. The MiG-3 featured larger fuel tanks for greater range, a modified canopy and pilot's seat, and a better propeller to translate the Mikulin AM-35A 12-cylinder 1,350 hp engine's output into improved performance.

At altitudes above 16,000 feet, the MiG-3 could compete on equal terms with the Bf 109E and Bf 109F. However, at altitudes below that, there was a noticeable drop-off in performance and maneuverability, and since that is where much of the air war over the eastern front took place, the MiG-3 was destined to be an interim design only. The plane's armament of two 7.62mm machine guns and a single 12.7mm machine gun also left the MiG-3 without a heavy punch, and efforts to add more armament degraded performance even further.

Eventually, newer designs from Yakovlev and Lavochkin supplanted the MiG-3 and wrested air superiority from the Germans, but the MiG-3 helped establish the Mikoyan-Guerevich bureau as a preeminent design house for fighter aircraft.

R&D Replicas 1:48 scale kit of the MiG-3 is a straightforward multi-media kit with plenty of extras. Inside the box you'll find an instruction sheet, a clear vacuform sheet, two white styrene vacuform sheets, a bag containing white metal parts, six bags containing the resin parts, a photo-etch fret and photo negative instrument detail, and a decal sheet.

The instruction sheet is separated into two sheets. The 8 1/2" x 11" sheet contains the history of the MiG-3, parts layout, and detail drawings of the cockpit, while the 11" x 14" sheet contains the exploded assembly drawing, 5-view drawing of the MiG-3, and a color and markings section.

As is the standard with all *R&D Replicas* kits, you get two

clear vacuform canopies, in case you slip and cut through one. They are crisply molded, with nice raised detail on the canopy frames. The canopies are nice and clear and should pose no problem when its time to remove them from the carrier sheet and paint them.

As you might expect, the styrene vacuform sheets contain the fuselage halves, upper and lower wing, and the elevators. These are also nicely molded, with subtle detail on the moving surfaces to replicate the fabric material. The few panel lines that are represented are nicely done, and not over-scale. The wings are molded with the proper dihedral and should pose no problems during removal.

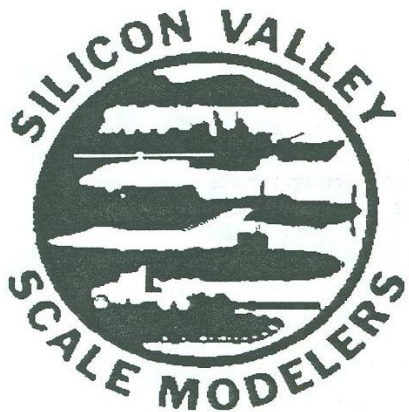
The white-metal landing gear only requires the removal of the casting plug and mold part line, and they'll be ready to install. The landing gear boot that covers the oleo is also represented, nicely detailed, and does not look over-scale.

All of the major detailing parts are included in resin. These are the cockpit components, landing gear bays and detail, landing gear scissor links, main wheels, air intakes, exhausts, tail wheel and bay, propeller and spinner, radiator detail, rockets, and landing gear doors. I couldn't find any pinholes in the resin parts, and the only clean up required is the removal of the flash.

The photo-etch fret contains the RS-82 rocket launch rails, rocket fins, and the instrument panels. The instruments are the photo negative-type that are sandwiched in between the instrument panels. There's no need for after-market parts here.

The decal sheet contains markings for five different MiG-3s. I found a slight registration problem with the white markings on the sheet, but this should pose no problems if you plan on building the white over blue MiG-3 offered in the sheet.

Until recently, this was the only model of the MiG-3 in 1:48, and despite a bit of competition now on the market, this kit will build into a really nice model of one of the fastest wooden airplanes to fly the skies of the Eastern Front. Still, I'm planning to keep it away from any 1:48 Bf 109s!



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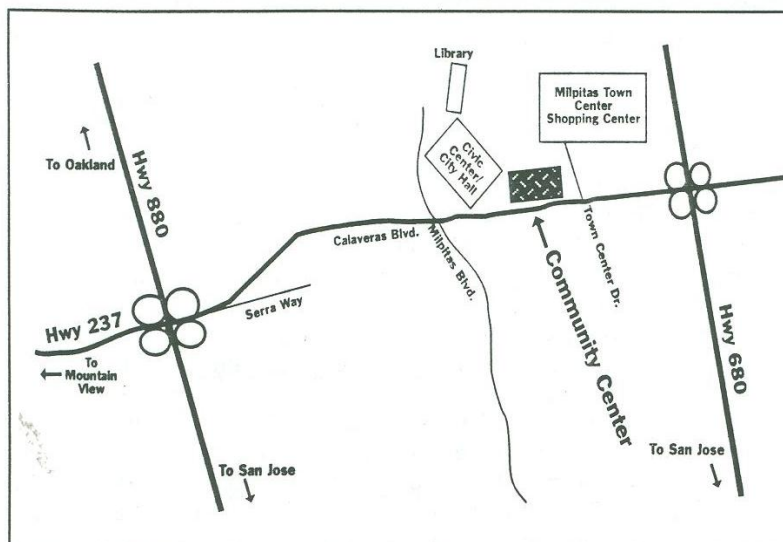
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9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.: Registration

11:45 a.m.: Judges Meeting

12:45 p.m. to 2 p.m.: Judging

3 p.m.: Awards

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- S5 - Single Engine Jet or Rocket Aircraft, 1:48
- S6 - Multi-Engine Jet Aircraft, 1:48
- S7 - Single Engine Prop or Turboprop Aircraft, 1:48 Allied
- S8 - Single Engine Prop or Turboprop Aircraft, 1:48 Axis and Neutrals
- S9 - Multi-Engine Prop or Turboprop Aircraft, 1:48
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- SA3 - Arlie Charter Memorial Award—Best USAAF Pacific Theater Aircraft
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- SA6 - Mike Williams Memorial Award- Best Science Fiction, Space or Fantasy Subject
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General Rules:

1. IPMS/USA rules and criteria will be used for this contest. No model may be handled by the judges. Model placement will be handles by the builder. SVSM invites members of other chapters in our region to participate by joining our judging teams.
2. The contest director will make the final ruling on all disputes during the contest and may split or combine categories based on thenature and number of entries.
3. No model that has won an award at an IPMS National Contest is eligible, nor are any models that first were entered in any Region IX competition prior to March 8,

1997. SVSM appreciates the honor system, and hopes participants will as well.
4. SVSM asks that all contestants keep away from judging teams during the course of the contest to ensure impartiality. Interference with judging teams by the contestants will be handled per IPMS/USA rules, and could render the offenders' models ineligible for award consideration.
5. All work on model entries must be done by the entrant.
6. All contestants must have fun—otherwise, they aren't doing this right!

**This event is free to all non-competitors!
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Putting Tamiya's Wespe through its paces

Continued from page 1

produce a vehicle to meet this concept and all of its requirements.

Germany produced two armed variants of the Wespe, the L26 and L28, primarily differing in the type 105mm howitzer fitted, though not vastly different visually except for the arrangement of the driver's compartment. Alkett designed the Wespe, and FAMO in Breslau and Vereinigte Maschinenwerke of Warsaw rebuilt 682 Panzer IIs into Wespe through July 1944. Though the Wespe is criticized as being a rebuild of an obsolete platform too heavy for its running gear, all battlefield accounts indicate the Wespe was an effective fighting vehicle.

A third variant of this vehicle (Ammunition Tank II) served as an ammunition carrier to resupply Wespe batteries. Produced alongside the Wespen, 158 vehicles came out of the Polish factories during this period.

The major visual difference between armed and unarmed Wespe vehicles is the shield plating. In the ammunition carrier, it extended all the way around the crew compartment. The Ammunition Tank II had extra racks in place of the gun, enabling it to hold 90 rounds of ammo. It was crewed by three, as opposed to the five carried by armed Wespen.

The ammo racks and forward plating is field-removable, enabling this vehicle to be quickly fitted with the 105mm howitzer and pressed into service. The Ammunition Tank II carried its own equipment to convert to the armed profile, including the 105mm howitzer, most often in towed configuration. Two Ammunition Tank IIs accompanied each Wespe battery.

The Wespe first saw major action at Kursk in July of 1943. Here it proved very effective, and subsequently saw deployment on all fronts until the end of the war, except perhaps North Africa. There is a photo in the Schiffer reference showing a crewman riding a Wespe, and wearing a tropical pith helmet that would indicate an African deployment upon first glance. However, Schiffer cites no reference supporting African deployment. Don't be dismayed, as such widespread use elsewhere affords the modeler many opportunities for rendering their model in mid-to-late-war campaigns.

Commonly, modelers pronounce Wespe as "wesp" or

"wes-pee," and "ves-pe" ("ves-pen" in the plural sense). Admitting limited experience with my German speaking sibling, I lean towards "ves-pe" in the way of pronunciation.

Of the available model kits on the market, I chose *Tamiya's* because of the manufacturer's track record. I was not disappointed. *Alan* produces the other kit, and though it's no clone of the *Tamiya* model, it's not its equal, either. Though this article is about the *Tamiya* kit, suffice to say that the *Alan* model is a different animal. It builds into a credible miniature of the



A battery of the armored artillery regiment Grossdeutschland moves into a position south of Obojan during Operation Citadel, July 5, 1943.

Wespe with substantial work on the modeler's part. Of the two, the *Tamiya* kit is a bit (understatement) more expensive but, with this expense comes quality.

"A model tank that fits in the palm of your hand"-sitting the Wespe next to my model Kubelwagen and Goliath really illustrated this fact. I never realized how compact the Wespe was. *Tamiya's* Wespe offers excellent-to-outstanding detail all around, and in a small package.

The chassis of the actual Wespe was a slightly lengthened Panzer II hull (Geschutzwagen II or GW II). The suspension was reinforced to absorb recoil stress from firing the 105mm howitzer. Other major changes incorporated moving the engine forward to change the center of gravity for mounting the gun, hinted at by the accurate placement of radiator and associated grilles on the *Tamiya* kit. The rear was left open to accommodate the

artillery crew. The plated floor covered the fuel tank. *Tamiya* didn't give you the fuel tank, but offers all the detail around it, and you can't see it anyway. The Wespe measured 15.78 feet long, 7.48 feet wide and 7.55 feet in height. *Tamiya's* model fits within these parameters nicely.

When you open this kit and first see the instruction sheet, you'll notice *Tamiya* gives you back plates for the bogie wheels, effectively eliminating that "hollow look." For those modelers who catch this flaw, they'll appreciate that no "mud-packing" exercises or tedious cutting of discs to fill these voids is needed. The underside is well-detailed and devoid of the manufacturer's marks. There are no motorization holes; this feature is rapidly becoming a nuisance of the past. If *Tamiya* had included sponson cover pieces, my description might approach "stunning or dazzling." As it is, covering the open sponsons in tank kits is such an easy task that it hardly factors much into armor model reviews.

However, quickly eliminating that warm afterglow, you'll notice prominent seams on all of the suspension arms. It actually took as much time to clean these up as it took to complete the rest of the superstructure. I was left wondering how much trouble it could be to engineer and detail a kit to this degree and still manage to leave clean-up like this. Probably, it's pretty easy, since it happens frequently. It does furrow the brow, however.

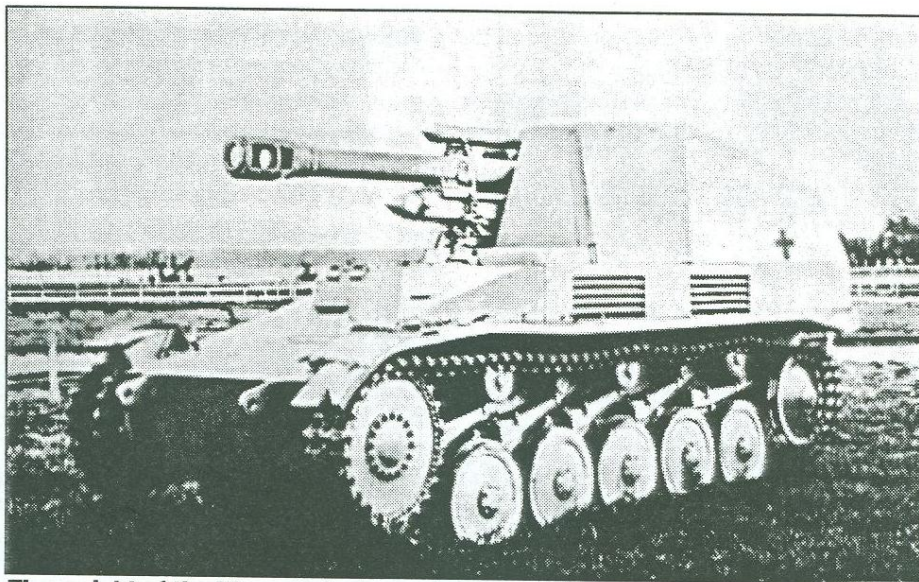
Tamiya's sprocket and idler wheels are nice, but they do not provide you with an option to cap the idler. Some Wespen had capped rear idler wheels, like the vehicle White 43, Grossdeutschland division, Operation Zitadelle, Russia 1943. As a decal option in the *Tamiya* kit, it would have been nice for *Tamiya* to have given the modeler capped rear idlers. This feature is present in photos of this particular Wespe.

In completing the superstructure and upper hull assemblies, there are no real pitfalls to warn the modeler about. You do have to carefully

plan out your construction sequence, though. Principally, the model's gun sub-assembly is designed to be trapped by a pin you insert from the underside of the upper hull. However, the detail and amount of work called for in finishing the gun prompts one to add it to the hull late in the finishing stages—after you've joined the lower and upper hull halves. How you address completing and finishing the howitzer dictates deviation from the suggested construction sequence. I ditched the

construction sequence here and added the gun in the late finishing stages.

The main superstructure parts feature beveled edges to mimic scale thickness at the most visible portions. Though this might not satisfy the purist, *Tamiya's* effort is quite



The weight of the Wespe is indicated by the vehicle's effect on the turf beneath its tracks.

bugs you, sand them down further like aircraft modelers do on wing trailing edges. (Note: the superstructure plates in the *Alan* kit measure out to be .045"—a scale measurement of 40mm—twice as thick as *Tamiya's* in comparison.)

The fighting compartment superstructure provides protection for the crew from shrapnel and small-arms fire, though not from the weather. The top is covered by canvas when shipped by rail or in inclement weather. It seems *Tamiya* has forgotten to provide some of the equipment boxes to fit locations marked on the superstructure interior walls by

molded location aids. These are simple and easy to scratch-build or scavenge from the spare part box. Also, *Eduard* provides brass boxes for adding to this area, and I went this route. The rear of the superstructure has a positionable door. On the actual vehicle, this door was open during fire operations, and was common to see the crews place ready rounds there, or use the door for loading and unloading the vehicle.

One other minor issue is the tie-downs. Yes, I know these things can be a bit of



A Wespe, poised to fire. This shot illustrates how vulnerable the crew was to small arms fire and shrapnel.

a pain to go back and add, but the little bumps molded on the kit hardly look acceptable after one adds missing bolt detail. The ones I added to my kit might be a hair overstated, in retrospect, but better than adding none at all and they satisfied me.

Yes, there are ejector pin marks on the interior faces of the superstructure walls, but none too difficult to remove. Of the *Tamiya* parts given in this subassembly, I chose to replace only the holders for the MP40 machine guns and fire extinguisher with *Eduard* brass parts.

Scrutinizing photos of the *Wespe*, you'll note more bolt heads adorning the vehicle than are present in the *Tamiya* model kit. Even the box art highlights some of these. These are simple conical head bolts, easily made with a punch and die set, or by using the "salami method." (Note: This is done by taking the proper diameter styrene rod and slicing off the ends to make bolts.) If you really want to get fancy, make the rounded heads out of a drop of gap-filling super glue, or white glue. There is no need to rush about and buy bolt heads. There are four bolts on either side of the lips of the armored superstructure. Also in some photos, there are four bolts visible at the junction of the first and second main plates on the superstructure. Additionally, on some vehicles, there is evidence of a weld seam joining these two plates adjacent to the bolts and a horizontal weld seam joining the

bottom plate and the second main plate. Since these features didn't appear consistently in all the photos I had, I chose not to replicate all of them.

To be fair to both the *Tamiya* and *Alan* kits, keep in mind that *Wespen* are rebuilt vehicles. It is likely that there were changes in fittings and equipment during their production run. As

information on these vehicles isn't as abundant as on *Shermans* or *Tigers*, it's easy to miss these fine points. Take criticism of questionable model details being present or missing with a grain of salt.

Eduard provides bolt head strips for portions of the upper hull, fenders inside the fighting compartment, and bulkhead. These detail features are missing from the *Tamiya* model, and I added them.

(Note: The *Alan*

Wespe model has these detail features present.) The superstructure houses four compartments to hold 32 rounds of ammunition. The ammo compartment bins on the floor have positionable doors. However, *Tamiya* only provides four 105mm projectiles to put in bins molded to hold 14. The *Wespe* could fire six different types of shells, but you get only one type. In light of this, I chose to open only one bin. The side



A *Wespe* travels through Beauvais, France toward Paris in 1944. All five crewmen ride exposed to the winter weather.



A *Wespe* battery prepares to fire on advancing Soviet forces in East Prussia in the early months of 1945.

bins come with positionable doors, but the ammo rounds are molded into the containers. *Eduard* provides replacement doors and holders for separate rounds, but I didn't use them. Curiously, references list the Wespe as carrying 32 rounds of ammunition, but *Tamiya* packs in storage for 46 rounds in total.

The floor of the fighting compartment drops into the lower hull. Again, it is nicely rendered and detailed. One could model the fuel tank that sits under the floor, but you can't see it when the floor plates are in place. There is a shorter plate on the left side of the floor, in front of the round vent in the bulkhead, leaving a pocket down to the hull floor. In the *Alan* kit, the floor plates extend all the way to the bulkhead. I can't accurately vouch for either feature being correct as rendered in the *Tamiya* or *Alan* kits, or what they might represent. In other build-ups of this model, I've seen modelers toss spent ammo rounds down there for effect. Knowing that the fuel tank sits down there, I didn't mimic this practice. But, you know what they say about assuming...

The Wespe normally came equipped with a MG34 machine gun for local defense. Some vehicles carried this gun mounted on the gusset on the right side of the superstructure. I used the common swing-arm mount seen on Sd.Kfz.250 and 251 half-tracks. This detail addition is simple, and requires little more than drilling the appropriate sized hole in the gusset bracing the superstructure panels opposite the antenna mount, on the right side of the vehicle.

References cite all German self-propelled guns as equipped with camouflage nets for concealment during fire operations. Some Wespe photos feature large containers on each front shield face that ostensibly hold the camo netting and perhaps the canvas cover for the fighting compartment and cover for the muzzle brake. Neither the *Tamiya* or *Alan* kit provides these containers, and *Eduard* gives you an odd, really oversized (and thus useless) bracket probably intended for mounting one of these containers for mounting on the front left shield.

I refrained from modeling these features for a couple of reasons. The camo netting commonly was draped over the gun barrel when not in use. Camo netting is not easy to model realistically or convincingly, though it can be done. When done realistically, you lose some detail under all that tangle. *Tamiya's* Wespe is so nicely detailed that I didn't want to obscure any of the detail present. Secondly, since I didn't model the camo netting draped over the vehicle, I lost interest in modeling the containers. These containers do not appear consistently on all vehicles in photos, nor is their use clear. Adding them is your option, based on the Wespe you choose to model.

The driver sits in his own compartment on the forward left side of the chassis, accessible through hatches on the top of the hull. This compartment is characterized by the raised wedge on the sloped glacis plate. This is a major feature differentiating the *Tamiya* and *Alan* kits. In the *Alan* kit, this area seems much too small when compared to photos of the vehicle. Conversely, *Tamiya's* appears correct by all photographic evidence. *Tamiya's* model offers positionable hatches, but there is nothing to display inside that void. I recommend blocking off the driver's vision slit in this step when closing the hatches. If you've got a hankering to open these hatches,

Aries offers the modeler with money to burn a detail set to completely render the driver's compartment. *Aries* also offers a basic detail set that replaces virtually the entire fighting compartment with brass. I thought this quite unnecessary and didn't go this route. *Tamiya's* parts are fine.

Eduard offers brass tool clamps for the external fittings on the model. Though fiddly, I recommend using them, or the new *Model Kasten* plastic clamps if you can get them. I added a length of wire from the base of the headlight with soldier. Some Wespen had two headlights, and *Tamiya* gives you two in the kit, but only one base. You can obtain one from the excellent *Tamiya* On-Vehicle Equipment Set for the StuG IV. I used the convoy light from this set to replace the one offered in the kit.

The Wespe mounts a powerful Rheinmetall-Borsig leFH18M 105mm howitzer. The highlight of *Tamiya's* model is this beautifully-reproduced subassembly. The model kit parts are crisp, clean, and exquisitely detailed. It is almost exhausting. The breechblock of the gun even has tiny machining numbers engraved in the plastic! The only beef I could find with this molding is the missing gun traverse mechanism-which, oddly, is provided in the *Alan* kit. Though not highly visible in the completed model, you can bet someone will look inside the fighting compartment and wonder to what the traverse wheel connects in order to make the gun move. *Tamiya* gives you everything just short of connecting the traverse wheel to the



Another shot of a Wespe, under cover and ready to fire.

upper hull. However, this is a simple feature to add while building your model, and I made mine from a scrap brass tube and a disc of sheet plastic.

I modeled my gun in the forward position. If you model yours in a different position, pay particular attention to adding a length of plastic rod to connect the breechblock to the recuperator (that big, long tube on top of the carriage assembly). This is missing from both model kits, but not a major concern if the gun is displayed in the forward position.

Though *Tamiya's* barrel is nice and usable as is, it's just as trying to sand and eliminate seams on *Tamiya's* barrels as on other contemporary plastic barrels. *Jordi Rubio* offers an aluminum replacement barrel, which is probably the only thing that significantly improves this kit subassembly. I, however, went with the kit parts this time. I will go with *Jordi Rubio* in the future. Caution to modelers: the *Tamiya* muzzle brake is

sag, vinyl tracks are fine; however, the Wespe does display some sag along the top of the track run. You could use the old "pin" or "tie" tricks to force some sag into the vinyl tracks, but I found that idea unattractive.

There are replacement tracks available in the *Model Kasten* or *Fruilimodelismo* castings. Not desiring the extensive cleanup of ejector pin marks so often complained about in their offerings, I avoided *Model Kasten*. I obtained the *Fruilimodelismo* metal tracks instead for this—my first time using either company's workable links. This was an experience in itself. This is not a swift operation, to be sure, but there is no substitute for posable track links on an armored fighting vehicle model. Wespe references list 108 links per side, but I modeled 104. I backed off from modeling too much sag, and I couldn't see trying to fit 108 links per run. Interestingly, *Tamiya* gives you 92 links per track run, and these puppies are tight!

(Note: Tank crews adjust the number of links per track run, according to wear and tear in the field. A vehicle with less than the specified number of links per track run indicates a well-worn set of tracks. Since I modeled 104 links per run in this case, I also indicate a well-worn set, which I weathered accordingly. Though possible, perhaps, 92 links seems a bit too low—I couldn't connect a run of 92 *Fruilimodelismo* links. It is nice that not EVERYONE goes out there and counts the number of links on a given track run, but you'd be surprised! I got into all of this because the *Fruilimodelismo* package doesn't tell you how many links to add per track run. Now you get to feel some



Two Wespen take up positions at a crossroads during winter fighting in 1944.

nicely molded too, and it's prominent. Take care to fill the seams inside the muzzle brake.

The howitzer benefits from separate finishing, and can be added to the upper hull without using the "pin method" as suggested in the instructions. It is intricate and difficult to impossible to adequately paint otherwise. In mounting, the fit is so tight, your howitzer will not move around. I fixed mine in place with a dab of white glue in the final assemblies.

By way of figures, you get two crewmembers modeled in cold weather dress. These are simple to construct, but very well sculpted and detailed. You don't get all five crewmembers, but where would you put them anyway? Just try test fitting two crewmen inside the fighting compartment to see how tight the conditions were.

Lastly, you'll play with the tracks. *Tamiya's* tracks are glueable. Aside from a couple of seams to trim away, they are well detailed and attractive on the finished model. However, the vinyl tracks still suffer from the damnable "lack-of-sag." In replicating tanks where the track run is tight and there is no

of my pain too....)

To finish my Wespe model, I chose an overall Dark Yellow (Dunkelgelb) scheme. I would mark and weather my model for Northern Italy in the late autumn-early winter of 1943. One terrain feature in this theater is red clay, like found in Vietnam. I wanted an exercise in modeling the contrast in colors between the dark yellow and the red clay, and this was a good chance to do so.

I chose to render a vehicle in the reformed 24 Panzer Division. Characteristic of the vehicles in the reformed division was the use of a new symbol replacing the leaping rider with a simple rhomboid, though some vehicles reverted back to the older (1st Calvary and more attractive) symbol. (Note: in the *Alan* model kit you get markings for a 24 PzDiv Wespe with the traditional leaping rider symbol.) I scavenged my markings from the spare decal box. The symbols changed in 1943, so I had the liberty of using either marking. Taking a chance, I tried to simulate this re-marking practice on my model Wespe by cleaning a circular area around the decal

during the wash stage. I'm not sure most judges would instantly understand why the area around the symbol is a bit cleaner than others, but I like it for historical representation.

In the way of tactical markings, my Wespe represents the second gun in the first artillery battery—hence the “12” marking. A battery was usually six guns. In Panzerartillerie regiments, light howitzers (*Wespe*) usually made up the first two batteries in the first unit, with the third being a heavy howitzer battery (*Hummel*) battery.

For flavor, I opted to add two kill rings to the barrel of my model. Commonly, kill rings appeared in white, yellow, or red. I opted for red for the color contrast. Kill rings also varied in thickness, denoting multiples of kills, if the crew accumulated so many to make this necessary. As these were proficient crews and effective weapons, I went with two rings.

I used *Tamiya* acrylics to paint this model, though I now wish I had given Gunze another try. Cutting down the heavy pigment of *Tamiya* acrylic paint is tough. I also used *Tamiya* decaling, which is really thick,

requiring a good deal of careful gloss-coating to eliminate the register from standing excessively proud of the surface of the model. Oh, for want of dry-transfers...

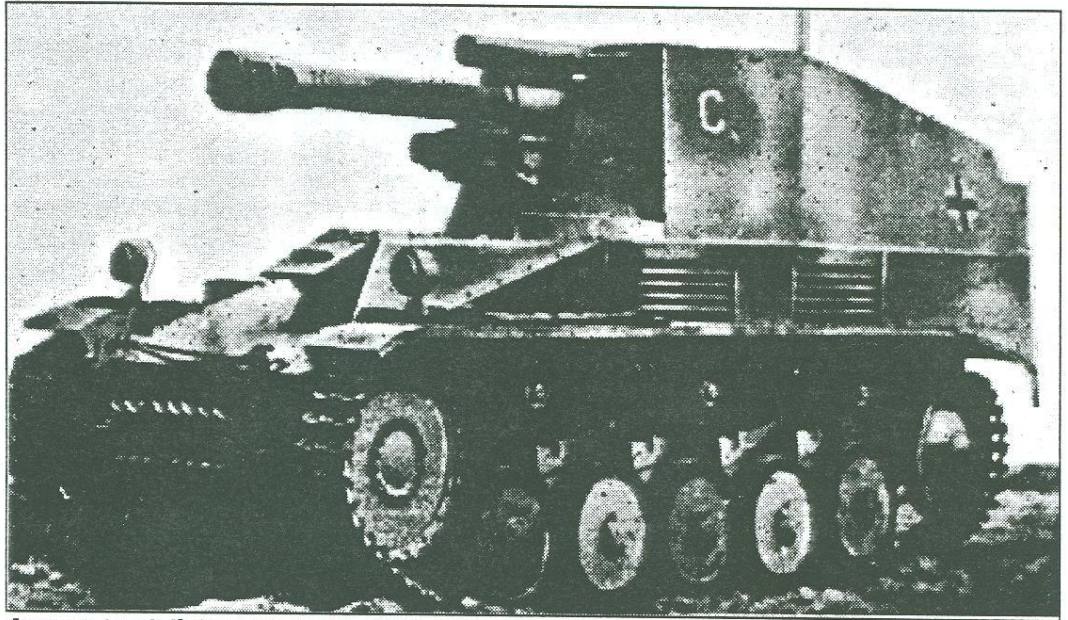
I primed the *Fruilimodelismo* tracks with *Tamiya* Flat Black. I then followed this up with a wash of *Pre-Size* (now *Hudson & Allen*) medium rust. After this dried, I then washed the track runs with raw umber oils. After the oils dried, I highlighted sparingly with *Tamiya* chrome silver. I dull-coated the tracks, and then washed them with Medium rust and raw umber again. One final dull-coating ended this madness.

As a small vehicle, the *Wespe* didn't afford the five-man crew much room to stow gear, personal or combat. Except spare wheels and track runs, *Tamiya* doesn't give you personal equipment either. A modeler interested in diorama or historic representation might want to seek out additional equipment to adorn their model *Wespe*.

Rummaging through the spare equipment boxes, I came up with an assortment of equipment for the kit. I finished each part like a model, individually, and weathered them to different degrees, simulating actual use. This is tedious-sounding but actually isn't in practice. It is a good way to fill in time between other projects, as well as add a touch of realism to the model project. I have as much fun on the spare equipment as I do on the full model.

Tow cables are commonly found on armored vehicles. Usually, *Tamiya* provides one, but not this time around. I quickly made one up from waxed twine and brass tube for the

loop caps. I painted these red, and heavily weathered them. I made the artillery range pole from plastic rod. *Tamiya* give you this part, but I broke mine during cleanup. With simple foil hooks, and a red and white paint job, you're back in business. The helmets I used for my project are excellent offerings from *Warriors*. I painted them with white covers for impending snow operations. This helped to break up the dark



A spare track link on the front of this *Wespe* doubles as additional armor.

yellow of the fighting compartment.

I tossed in an early jerry can from *DML*, along with a couple of liquid containers for variety. I tossed out the *Tamiya* jack block and made up a real wooden one, severely worn and beat-up to wrap things up.

A crew that fought far from its supply center carried everything they possibly could. Resupplying the field forces became increasingly difficult for the Germans as the war progressed. Modeling this historical occurrence tempts a modeler to “festoon” their project with so much stuff that their work becomes lost behind it. With the *Wespe* this is easy to do, as just equipping it with its basic combat supplies nearly

overburdens it. Toss in five crewmen, their gear, and perhaps a little “war booty” like a case of wine, and you've got a potential mess on your hands. Consulting photos of the *Wespe* in the field, you'll

see that the vehicles weren't generally overburdened with external gear. I chose to keep mine to a minimum too.

The *Tamiya* *Wespe* has to be one of the best armor models available, for both a novice or master armor modeler. Its engineering and fit is fantastic, the level of detailing without compare, and subject matter challenging but enlightening. It isn't too much of a model to swallow, but is more than a weekend project. It is difficult NOT to get a superb finish, whether superdetailed or built “Out of the Box.” I admit to considering *Tamiya's* *Kubelwagen* the ultimate as far as military vehicle kits go in all of these terms, but find the *Wespe* equal in all respects.

Wespe References

Wespe—German Self-Propelled Artillery in WW II, by Joachim Engelmann, Schiffer Military History Vol. 61., Schiffer Publishing Ltd. 1992

Panzer Colors I, II, III, by Bruce Culver and Bill Murphy, Squadron Signal Publications 1976, 1978, and 1984

NOVEMBER MINUTES

November's meeting started off with Jim Lewis' account of OrangeCon and the enjoyable meeting he had with the members of the Tuskegee Airmen who were in attendance at the contest. Bruce McBride reminded the club that there are lots of neat prizes to be won by donors to this year's VA Hospital Model Drive, and don't forget that December is the SVSM Pizza Party/Present Swap.

In model talk... Jim Priete is tackling the re-issued *Frog Avro Shackleton*, using a resin conversion set to turn the plane into an MR.2. Jim Rasp applied his painting talents to two squads of Warhammer game figures, including some Vulture Marines and the Legion of the Damned (sounds like a Monday Night Football match-up...). Chris Bucholtz has the airframe of *Hasegawa's A-1H Skyraider* built, and now he's waiting on the arrival of a resin engine to complete his VA-176 SPAD. Roy Sorensen used parts from an Impala and a Mercedes M Class to create the world's most expensive dune buggy. Roy had the two-tone paint job half-finished, but it already looked sportier than Mercedes-Benz could ever manage on their own. Roy Sutherland has revived his interest in Dinosaurs, taking the already lovely *Horizon Tyrannosaurus Rex* and repositioning it into a running pose with the help of lots of putty. Roy also displayed the Fw 190A-1 conversion from his *Cooper Details* line, and also used a *Cooper* cockpit in his *Tamiya Spitfire V*. Brad Chun has given his *Liberator* a nose job, combining a *Koster Aero Enterprises PB4Y-1* conversion set to a *Monogram B-24*. Brad's also added *Verlinden* machine guns to the Navy bomber, which he hopes to finish in a three-tone blue scheme. Laramie Wright had two German medium tanks on the table, a *Tamiya Panzer IVH* in a late war scheme decked out with aftermarket pioneer tools and idler wheels from *Armor Research*, and a *Tamiya Panzer III* in a transitional scheme used in Russia in 1943. Marc Wilson stripped all the paint off his *Revell '67 Chevelle* prostreet conversion, opting to get it right instead of just getting it done. The car already has an interior from a Chevy Malibu and new tires from a funny car. Mark Hernandez added a German hypothetical aircraft that pilots would have not wanted to fly—the A-4B, a piloted V-2 with wings for extended flight. Chris John used the *Lindberg* kit to create a gleaming model of the latest Jaguar sedan. Dave Balderrama, having too much fun as usual, added HobbyTown USA advertising to a *Glencoe* Navy blimp. Ken Fadrigon is working on the instruments of his *Revell/Monogram Tornado IDS*, a massive kit in 1:32. Lou Orselli used a 3M sanding foam block to de-rivet the *Monogram HU-16B Albatross*, which he plans to finish as a Coast Guard plane. Lou's not forgetting Italy in his flying-boat escapades—he has a CANT.501 built up and nearing completion, with markings Lou pulled from an old Squadron book. Bill Shipway used small lengths of wood to build a clubhouse for his HO scale railroad layout. Speaking of railroads, Kent McClure built two display-only logging engines in HO scale, stubby little engines that Kent used some "imagineering" to complete. He's also planning to complete two 1:43 racers—a Tyrell O-11 from 1983 and a Porsche 917PA—and his fleet of "Flash Gordon" spaceships made from the *LS Soviet* weapons set is finished and painted. Matt Reich's Caprice police car is almost finished, although he says he has a few details to add

before it's complete. Matt brought a '92 Caprice police cruiser built by his brother to contrast the two different model years. Tom Bush Jr. de-Speilberged the Mercedes M Class from "Jurassic Park: The Lost World," and built a K Class to go along with it. The K Class was painted using *Plastikote* auto paints; the M Class will be finished as a law enforcement vehicle. Ben Pada built *DML's* 1:48 Ho 229 as a day fighter from JG 300, complete in a "Luftwaffe lizard" scheme. Ben's version of John Glenn's F-86 "MiG Mad Marine" is approaching completion, and his *Monogram* P-47D bubbletop "Rat A Dat" is already there. Ben also has a *Tamiya* F4U-1 "birdcage" *Corsair* under way, although it "wasn't ready for the *Corsair* contest," Ben said. Joe Fleming used a Dremel tool to texture the armor on his *Tamiya* Su-85 self propelled gun, which also benefited from new engine deck screens and individual track links. Joe also has added details to *Bandai's* 1:48 Panther, which he says had a nice interior to start with. Continuing the shrinking act, Ken Miller did a great job of converting a 1:144 P-63 *Kingcobra* into Lefty Gardener's bright red Race 28. Kelly Avery built two *Hasegawa's* 1:48 P-47D bubbletops, one in natural metal and one in imaginary colors as "The California Kid," basing the camouflage on that used by the 56th Fighter group. Kelly also produced a pair of P-36s, both from the *Hobbycraft* kit. He trimmed all the carrier film from the decals so that it wouldn't show on the chrome silver planes. And the model of the month goes to... Barry Bauer, who converted *Verlinden's* 1:35 Vietnam artilleryman into a Barbary Coast *Corsair*, removing the guy's army boots, hair and equipment pockets and adding a pistol, cutlass and striped trousers. Very in keeping with the subject of our club contest in November...

Corsairs! We had a mob of *Corsairs* in 1:48 and 1:72, and even some fragmentary bits in 1:32. Frank Babbitt is well along on an A-7 in a one-of-a-kind desert camouflage scheme tested by VA-22. Matt Reich put his skills to use on *Hasegawa's* F4U-4, while Kelly Avery built his *Otaki* F4U-1 as an example from the U.S.S. *Bunker Hill*. Cliff Kranz' father built the ancient *Lindberg* F4U-5, also in *Bunker Hill* markings. Barry Bauer converted *Matchbox's* 1:72 F4U-4 into a REAL F4U-4. He also had an *Italeri* F4U-5, with a nose plug to add the missing nine scale inches aft of the firewall and a new engine swiped from an *Airfix* F6F *Hellcat*. Jim Priete gave it a good try, getting the

CONTEST CALENDAR

Feb. 7: **Fifth Annual Kickoff Classic**, hosted by the Silicon Valley Scale Modelers in Milpitas, California. Theme: Made in the U.S.A. For information, call Chris Bucholtz at (408) 723-3995.

July 1-4: **The 1998 IPMS/USA National Convention and Contest** at the Santa Clara Convention Center, hosted by IPMS SemiCon and the members of Region IX. Theme: Rockets' Red Glare. For more information, call Chris Bucholtz at (408) 723-3995.

Hasegawa 1:72 birdcage *Corsair* together, with a *True Details* cockpit and rescribed panel lines, but ran afoul of some goofy paint that prevented him from finishing in time. Ken Miller made a new canopy for his 1:144 *Corsair*, which he finished as a lovely little racing plane. Rodney Williams had the wing section for his 1:32 F2G *Corsair* present; Rodney's finishing the plane as a racer that crashed at the Canton airport in the 1940s. And the winners were...

In the 1:72 category, third place went to "Big Hog," Tommy Blackburn's F4U-1, built by Chris Bucholtz from the *Heller* kit.

Second place went to Barry Bauer and his *Hasegawa* "birdcage" F4U-1. And the winner, for his clipped-wing Fleet Air Arm camouflaged F4U-1, built from the *Hasegawa* kit, was Marc Wilson! In 1:48, Cliff Kranz and his A-7E in Desert Storm commemorative markings and two-tone tan camouflage, claimed third place. Second went to Dennis Ybe and his Korean War F4U-4. And the winner, with a *Tamiya* F4U-1 birdcage *Corsair* that displayed beautiful weathering, was Joe Fleming. Congratulations to all the modelers who made this contest a success!

The SVSM Gift Exchange: how it works

Once again, it's time for that time-honored ritual at SVSM—not the monthly attempt to get Rodney Williams' attention when it's his turn to talk, but the annual Pizza Party and Gift Exchange! For those who have been to this event, they understand the pain and horror—er, the joy and camaraderie, I mean—of this annual occasion. For the uninitiated (or "pollywogs," as your editor, the former bosun's mate, likes to say), here's how things work:

The officers of the club and a few other dedicated volunteers will arrange for there to be pizza and drinks for the members and their paying guest. All members, as listed by name on the club roster, will eat for free. Others may attend and eat for a \$5 fee, which we will enforce scrupulously this year. (Mike Burton is our doorman, and he will make sure that all non-SVSM'ers pay their share.) And, please, this year, remember to share—last year, the people who brought the pizza and drinks never got any pizza, because the rest of us scarfed it up so fast.

Like last year, the only models you should bring are the entrants in our club contests, "Twins." If the model isn't connected to that term in one way or another, keep it on the shelf at home, lest it be covered in tomato sauce and melted cheese.

After the face-stuffing, we will settle into the gift exchange portion of the evening. The gift exchange follows these simple rules:

Each person who wishes to be an accessory or perpetrator to the crimes that are to follow, bring a gift-wrapped present, like a book, model, tools or other model-related present. This year's arbitrarily selected suggested price range is \$14.83, but the more generous the gifts are, the more fun the evening can later as the stealing starts. So, feel free to bring in that *Azimut* resin SAM-2 or a *Hobbycraft* *Caribou*—someone will appreciate it, and three others will think they're going to appreciate it...

For the sake of completeness, we ask that the kit be shrink-wrapped, or at least have the parts still sealed in the packing bags inside the box. Because the holiday season is one of goodwill toward men, we ask that you bring no *Lindberg* kits (except, perhaps, the Crown Victoria...).

The gifts will be heaped on a table, and each person who brings a gift will have his or her name written on a slip of

paper, which will be placed, into a hat of some type.

After the pizza has been consumed, we will draw our first name. The first person selected (we'll call him "Mister X," although his real name is Mike Meek) will choose a present from the multitude of gifts on the table. He'll open that present for all to see. "Ah! A *Tamiya* He 219!" he will say in his joy. "I can convert it to a firebomber or an air racer!"

The next name is drawn and it is Mister Y (known in real life as Brad Chun). Mister Y has the option of choosing a gift from the pile and revealing it to the assembled multitude, or he can take the known commodity that Mister X has already opened. Mister Y, seeing that the first gift is not a ridiculously difficult vacuform, chooses from the pile and opens the *Rareplanes* 1:72 PB2Y *Coronado*. "This is going to be painful to build!" says Mr. Y. "Just what I wanted!"

Now, Mr. Z (Larry Roberts) has his choice—new kit, or either of the first two kits. "Hey, I can make my He 219 in markings from Bulgaria!" crows Mr. Z, who takes Mr. X's present. Then, Mr. X can steal Mr. Y's vacuform, or choose from the pile.

And so on, until we all have presents and a deep, abiding mistrust and resentment of one another. The exchange continues, as the hallowed tradition holds, until Bert McDowell has his ship model stolen from him or all the names have been drawn, whichever comes last.

Any person (regardless of the letter, number or symbol behind "Mr." in their pseudonym) who has a gift stolen may select a new gift OR may steal someone else's gift. The exceptions to this: you may not steal a gift that has been stolen in that round (the dreaded "no backsies" rule), and no present may be stolen more than three times.

Helpful hint: Buy a gift YOU want, then conspire to steal that gift from someone else! That way, you'll get the kit you want, plus the satisfaction of knifing one of your buddies in the back! *Feliz Navidad, Senor Loser!*

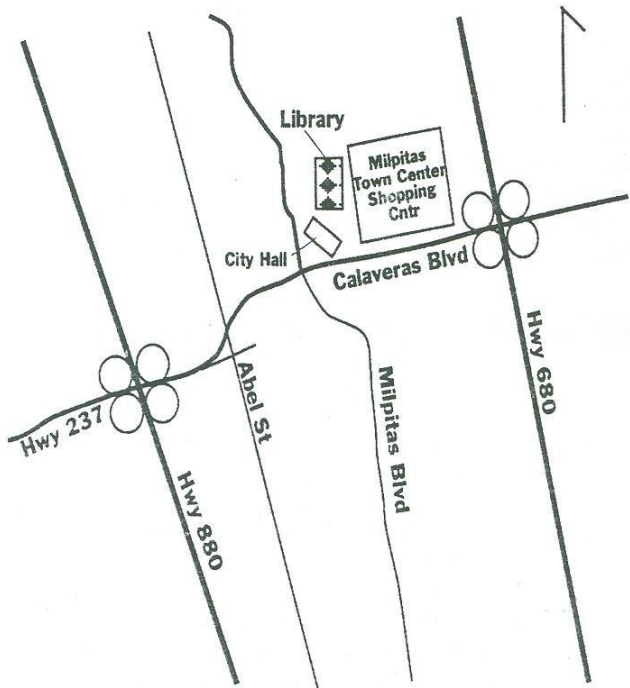
This system is a lot of fun and no one has ever been killed as a result of the exchange. If you have any question, call the

editor and he will try to walk you through the process and reassure you that you'll make it home okay, no matter how many models you steal.

So join in the holiday spirit, get a free dinner, bring home a model and have a great time! We'll be stealing—er, seeing you!

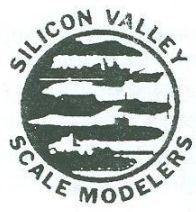
To submit stories, letters, requests for help, or wants and disposals to the
STYRENESHEET

Write to:
Silicon Valley Scale Modelers, P.O. Box
361644 Milpitas, CA
or, by E-mail, to bucholtzc@aol.com



**Next meeting:
7:30 p.m.,
Friday,
December 19
at the Milpitas
Public Library
40 N. Milpitas Blvd.**

**For more information, call the
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