

## P-59: America's pioneering jet fighter

By Mike Burton

*(Author's note: In previous issues of the Styrene Sheet, I have covered the first three pioneering jets—the Heinkel He 178, Britain's E.28/39 "Whittle" and Italy's Campini Caproni. These were the first jets to be flown by their countries of origin, and I think they make up an engaging ensemble. To complete this set, I am resuming with the fourth pioneer, America's P-59 Airacomet. In a departure from my usual editorial style, I will not attempt to cover all kit sources for my subject matter. Only the particular model I have on hand will be my basis.)*

The Bell P-59 was America's first jet-powered aircraft, and was developed without the fanfare its German and Italian counterparts enjoyed. Bell Aircraft was given the nod to develop the aircraft because its Buffalo factory was close to the General Electric Schenectady plant, where the aircraft's Whittle-type engines were to be built.

Work on the P-59 began September 5, 1941. Because the engines were so revolutionary, the designers opted to design an airframe that took no chances. The two General Electric 1-A engines were nestled in the wing roots of the plane's straight tapered wing. The fighter was initially armed with two 37mm cannon, but armament soon was altered to one 37mm cannon and three .50-caliber machine guns.

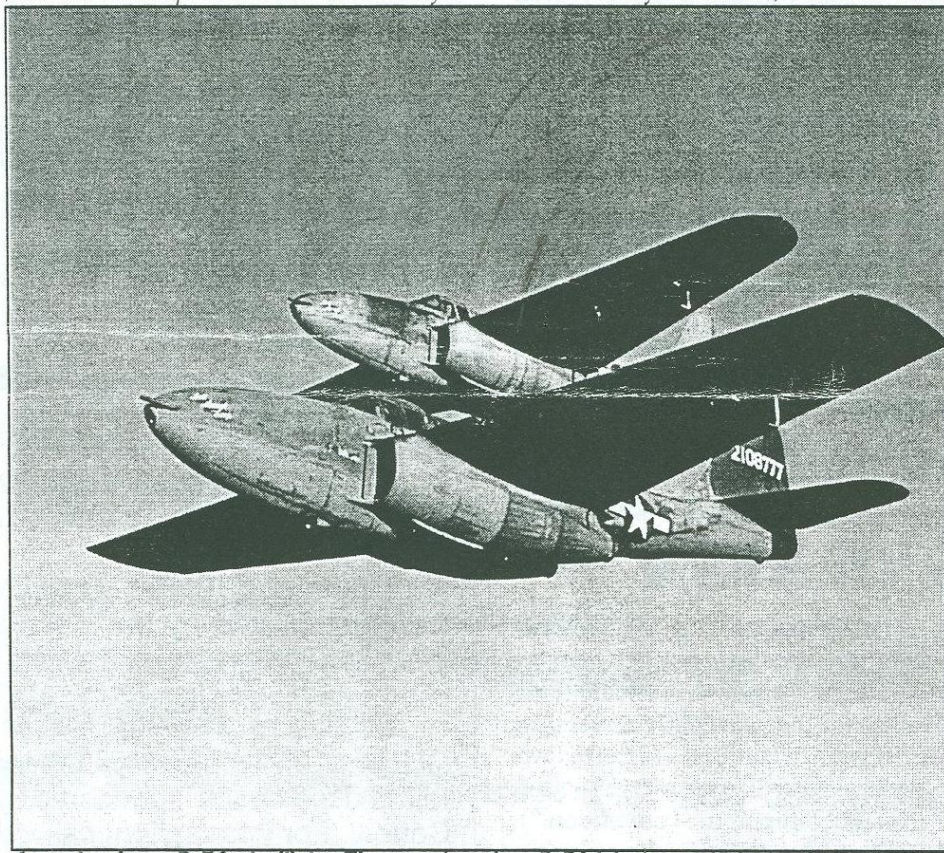
Tests began on the P-59 at Muroc Dry Lake on October 1, 1942. The plane's performance was nowhere near what Bell or the USAAF hoped for—409 mph, a number below that of the

current generation propeller-driven fighters entering service. The plane was sluggish, unresponsive and an indifferent gun platform, all thanks to its archaic design.

20 P-59As and 30 P-59Bs were delivered to the USAAF, which assigned the planes to the 412th Fighter Group, a unit created specifically to evaluate the new powerplant. No P-59s ever saw combat.

To build my *Airacomet*, I started with the *Karo-As* limited-

run P-59B. The kit includes 37 mostly well-molded components including two vacuformed canopies. The instructions, which include a fine 5-view line drawing, are in German and English, and make great reading. Two schemes are provided, one olive drab-over-gray and one overall natural metal. If you plan to use the QD/gray scheme out of the box, be aware that to accurately make a XP-59A from this kit you'll need to add round wing tips and rounded horizontal/vertical tail tips. Nowhere in the *Karo-As* kit is this stated; thanks



A study of two P-59s in flight. The top aircraft, a P-59A has rounded wingtips, while the P-59B below has the later square tips.

go to Gordon Stevens of *Rareplanes* for this information, since I used a *Rareplanes* P-59B vacuform kit as part of my reference material!

Bearing in mind that this is a limited run injection molded styrene kit, the overall quality is quite high. I usually treat these kits like a vacuform and spend a lot of time getting all the parts cleaned up prior to starting construction. What I mean

Continued on page 9

## EDITOR'S BRIEF

The contest calendar below is extraordinarily full on the weekend of the Sept. 19 and 20—three events will take place on two days. Obviously, this is not an optimal situation in a region where there are only 8-10 contests held in any given year. The reason this has happened: no regional coordinator.

Region IX's last RC, Dennis Bruno, resigned in May. He gave notice to the IPMS/USA E-Board at that time. According to the IPMS/USA constitution, the E-Board is supposed to appoint the RC. Occasionally, elections are held to find this appointee, but the integrity of these elections is compromised by the fact that there is no procedure in writing for holding these ballots and they end up being advisory votes more than anything else.

When Dennis, he began looking for his own replacement. Our own Jim Lewis, who had run against Dennis in the last RC "election," offered to do the job, but unfortunately Fred Horky, the director of local chapters, threw a monkey wrench into the proceedings. When Dennis spoke to Fred about the position, Fred said that Jim's appointment would be fine. Dennis offered to call Jim to give him the good news, but Fred said he would do it "so it would be official," to use Dennis' description of what happened.

Unfortunately, Fred never called Jim. And then, the real world butted in—Jim got a new job that keeps him very busy. At the regional in Vallejo, Dennis and Jim got together, and Dennis told Jim of his appointment. Problem is, Jim is now too busy to do the RC job. And so, Region IX is still without a Regional Coordinator.

How did this lead to the big weekend of 19-20 Sept.? The RC is the person tasked with making sure that chapters' events don't conflict. Since the post has been vacant since the spring, no one in an official capacity has been keeping track of who's

## LETTERS TO SVSM

At the convention banquet in Santa Clara, I announced that the executive board needed more time to chose between the two competing bids (IPMS Metro of Oklahoma City and IPMS North Central Texas of Dallas) for the year 2000 Convention. Though a very unpopular decision, it conforms to the bylaws of our constitution. (article 5, section 3D states "Announcement may be given to the membership at the convention.")

More discussions took place during the awards ceremony. Late that night, the board re-convened and awarded the 2000 Convention to IPMS North Central Texas. However, the ceremony had already ended, so the board's decision could not be delivered at that time.

The members of the board would have preferred an easy, clear-cut decision, but it did not happen that way. We felt that delaying the decision was in the society's best interests, but some have chosen not to accept this.

This card is intended to deliver the board's decision to every chapter in the most efficient manner. It will also be published in the next Journal, which will be available in another month or so. I am sorry this situation caused as much disappointment as it did.

Mike Brickman

Second Vice President, IPMS/USA

doing what. Since the IPMS/USA wants to keep control over the RC's position, the clubs in the region are without a unifying figure who can work to make sure we're working together and not against each other. This pattern has to end, and end soon.

No such divisive issues marred the regional, however. Thanks to Bob Moore, Chuck Speir, John Clements and the rest of the Devil Mountain Boys for a fine event. When you hear no complaints about winners and losers, you know things went as they should.

One of the highlights of the event was the "Dead Guy Sale" of the more arcane items from Hugh Silvis' collection. One of the nice things about this hobby is that nothing is lost, if your buddies and your significant other are wise to the ways of modelers. Hugh's love of the hobby will live on in the models of others who use the decals, kits and books that he saved up over a lifetime of modeling, which are now dispersed among Region IX's modelers. As he'd say, "Wunnerful, wunnerful!"

—The Editor

## CONTEST CALENDAR

**September 19: 1998 Humbolt Bay Contest**, hosted by IPMS/Humbolt Bay at the Veterans Building, 10th and "H" Streets, Eureka. For information, call Bill Bitner at (707) 441-9433.

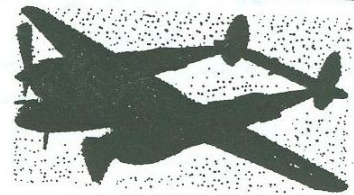
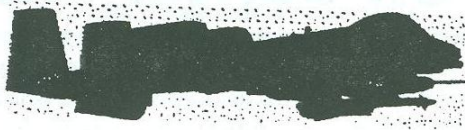
**September 19: Travis Scale Modelers Model Expo**, a display-only event at the Travis Air Museum, Travis Air Force Base. For more information, call Bill Stewart at (707) 446-2691 or Dave Shreeve at (707) 427-5978.

**September 20: IPMS Central Valley Annual Contest**, hosted by the Central Valley Scale Modelers at the Fresno Fashion Fair Mall. For information, call Nick Bruno at (209) 292-5695.

**October 18: OrangeCon '98**, the regional contest for Region VIII, sponsored by IPMS/Orange County. For information, call Peter Gatehouse at (562) 426-5818.

**November 7: Antelope Valley Model Show**, sponsored by the Antelope Valley Group (AVG) at Antelope Valley College, Lancaster. Special award for Best X-Plane. For information, call Nick Kiriokos at (619) 769-4473.

**February 28: 1999 Kickoff Classic Model Contest**, sponsored by Silicon Valley Scale Modelers, at the Milpitas Community Center. Theme: "Gone But Not Forgotten." For more information call Chris Bucholtz at (408) 723-3995.



# **Travis Scale Modelers Model Expo**

**Here is your chance to display your models without the pressure of a contest. We are offering modelers this opportunity at a "Display Only" Model Expo. Here is your chance to show off your favorite model or your worst nightmare. There will be a People Choice Award for the favorite model voted on by all who attend.**

**Where: Travis Air Museum**

**When: Saturday September 19, 1998**

**Time: 9:00 - 5:00**

**Cost: \$1.00 per entrant (bring all you want)**

**For information contact Bill Stewart at 446-2691 or Dave Shreeve at 429-0185  
For vendor information contact Curt Knowles at 437-5978**



# Bv 141: the Luftwaffe's off-center oddball

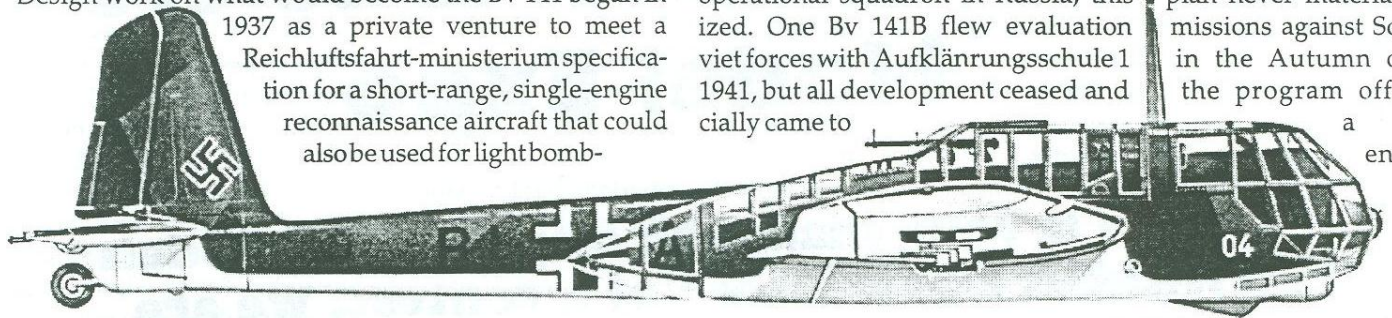
By Bradley C. Chun

The Luftwaffe's request for observation aircraft in the years prior to World War II eventually led to the development of the Fw 189, an unorthodox twin-boom aircraft unique among Luftwaffe types. One of its competitors, the asymmetrical Bv 141, was an even more offbeat design and is widely considered the most unorthodox aircraft to appear in WWII. The plane never went into full-scale production or saw much combat, due more to the reluctance of the German High Command to employ such an odd-looking aircraft than to any defect in the unconventional design.

Design work on what would become the Bv 141 began in 1937 as a private venture to meet a Reichluftfahrt-ministerium specification for a short-range, single-engine reconnaissance aircraft that could also be used for light bomb-

The original cockpit design was altered to resemble that of the Fw 189, and armament comprised of two fixed forward-firing MG17 guns and two flexible rearward-firing MG15s was fitted for service tests. All three prototypes performed well, but because of the Luftwaffe's lack of enthusiasm for the unconventional, only five more Bv 141s were ordered. These were produced as the Bv 141B with a more powerful engine and slightly redesigned airframe, which now included an offset tailplane to improve the field of fire from the tail guns.

The redesigned Bv 141Bs were not as satisfactory as the earlier versions, and although it had been planned to form an operational squadron in Russia, this plan never materialized. One Bv 141B flew evaluation missions against Soviet forces with Aufklärungsschule 1 in the Autumn of 1941, but all development ceased and the program officially came to an end

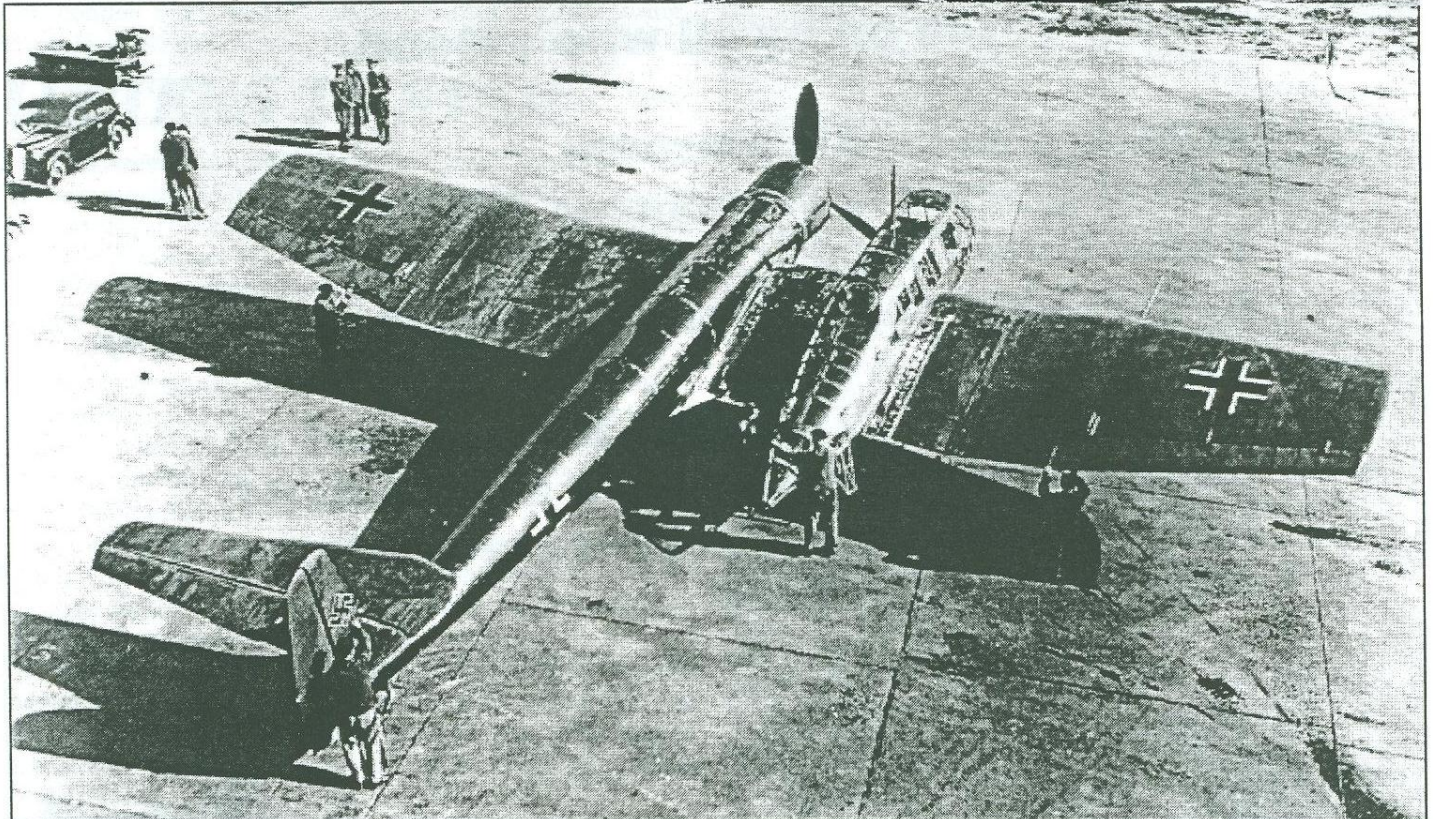


ing and ground attack. The bizarre layout—a single boom containing the engine and tailplane and an offset nacelle with the cockpit and observer's stations—was selected to provide the best all-around vision from a single engine aircraft. The first prototype first flew on February 25, 1938, and proved to be completely airworthy. Very few problems arose during the tests, and an order was given for three prototypes.

in 1943.

The only 1:48 scale kit of the Bv 141 that I know of is from *Karo-As*. This kit is a multimedia kit in the truest sense, with white-metal parts, four bags of resin parts, a bag containing the canopies, three sheets of white styrene vacuform parts and a decal sheet.

The instructions come on two sheets. A 8 1/2" x 11" sheet contains a brief history of the Bv 141, technical data and



A Bv 141 prepares for a test flight at the Blohm und Voss works in 1940. The plane's layout did not hamper its performance.

specifications, performance, and detail drawings of the cockpit. The 11" x 17" instruction sheet contains the parts layout, exploded assembly drawing, detailed assembly drawing for the cockpit, color and marking section, and four black-and-white pictures of the aircraft.

This kit is also one of the kits that *Karo-As* has upgraded with white-metal parts. The main landing gear struts, main landing gear strut scissors, tail wheel, machine guns, and ammo boxes are provided in sturdy metal in this kit. Once these parts have the mold line and what little flash there is removed, they will look great, especially when a coat of paint and weathering is applied.

The main landing gear bays, cockpit components, main wheels, propeller, landing gear doors, antennae, rear stabilizer strut, and duplicates of the previously mentioned white-metal parts are molded in resin. All of the resin parts are up to the high standards that we have come to expect from *Karo-As*. The main wheels need a little clean-up in the area of the wheel hubs, and the few air holes I did find were on the backsides of the parts. The usual clean-up to remove the flashing from the resin parts will prove to be little concern for any modeler who has built a vacuform kit before.

Two sets of clear vacuform canopies are also included. This has become the norm with vacuform kits released by *Karo-As*, and is much appreciated, since there is always the chance that you'll slip while cutting them from the carrier sheet or one of the little ones will come by, pick up your canopy, and turn it into a crumpled piece of clear plastic. As with most vacuform canopies, a little polishing will make them crystal clear also.

The main wing components, rear stabilizer, engine boom, engine cowling, and main fuselage are molded on three white styrene sheets. All of the parts are crisply molded with subtle recessed panel lines and detailing. These parts are also typical of the kits released by *Karo-As*.

Markings for two Bv 141s are included. Both aircraft are typical Luftwaffe RLM 70 / 71 over 65 camouflage with markings for NC + RF and NC + OZ. As with all kits of WWII Luftwaffe aircraft produced in Germany, the swastikas are split into two decals.

Once assembled, it'll be very hard to tell if this is a vacuform kit or injected kit. Another gap has been filled in my collection, or anybody's collection for that matter, by *Karo-As*. My Bv 141 will look at home when finished sitting next to my other Luftwaffe observation aircraft, such as the Ar 96 and Fw 189



***At this month's meeting...***

## **NATIONALS LOSERS CONTEST**

***We mean models (although the people pictured at left technically meet the requirement...)***

**AND**

## **AREA RULED**

**Wasp-waisted airplanes—like the F-102 and F-105—and cars, like '60s Mopars,—can compete!**

***And, coming up later this year...***

**September 98: Air Racers**

**October 98: That's Italian (aka "the Italians of October" (planes, cars, armor, surrendering figures, etc.)**

**November 98: What if? Vietnam 1980 and Mad Max Motoring**

**December 98: Only & All Vacuforms (No mixed-media conversions!) and Really Resin (all resin kits)**

**January 99: Snakes (planes, cars, you name it—*Kingcobra, Airacobra, Huey Cobra, Plymouth Viper, Don Prudhomme's funny Cars, Ford Cobra & Cobra II, Shelby Cobra, models of fantasy or real snakes!*)**

**February 99: Variable Geometry & VSTOL, LTA**

**March 99: Century Series (F-100 through F-111)**

# A bird's-eye view of *Falcon's* vacuformed *Swift*

By Bradley D. Chun

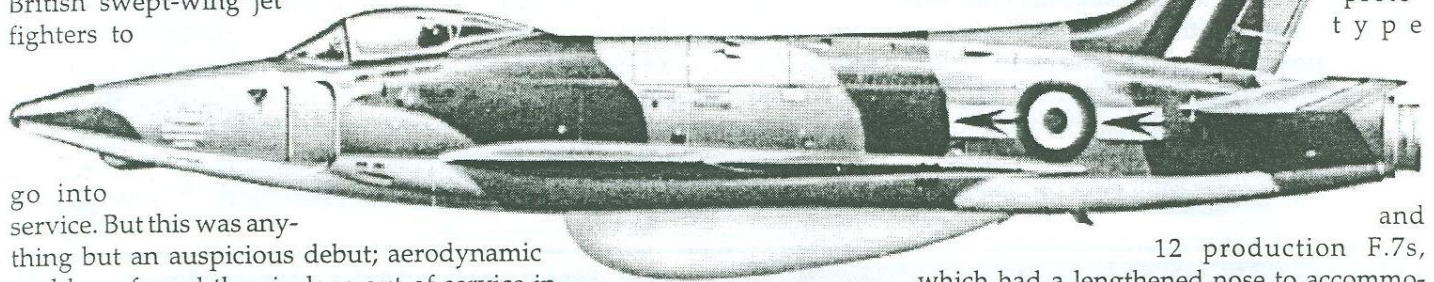
In 1946, the British Air Ministry began to shop for a replacement for the Gloster *Meteor* in the role of a high-altitude interceptor. Supermarine was already producing the straight-winged Attacker, and began work to develop a swept-wing land-based version of the aircraft.

This work progressed through three experimental designs before the Supermarine *Swift* emerged. The *Swift* F.1 was armed with two 30mm cannon and powered by an Avon RA.7 non-afterburning engine; the subsequent F.2 added two more Aden cannons and a new wing with a compound-taper leading edge. When these aircraft entered service with No. 56 Squadron in 1954, they became the first British swept-wing jet fighters to

the FR.5 was designed to emphasize the plane's reconnaissance capability. The FR.5 had an elongated nose to accommodate three cameras, a frameless canopy and a new wing with increased chord forward of the ailerons that created a dogtooth leading edge. Supermarine built a total of 62 FR.5s.

The first *Swift* flew on August 25, 1952. Unlike other British jets of the era, the *Swift's* stay was brief; No. 2 and No. 79 squadrons were the last operators, flying FR.5s out of German bases until 1961. In 1957 and 1959, *Swift* squadrons won the NATO reconnaissance competition.

The final chapter in the *Swift's* story came with the development of



two prototype

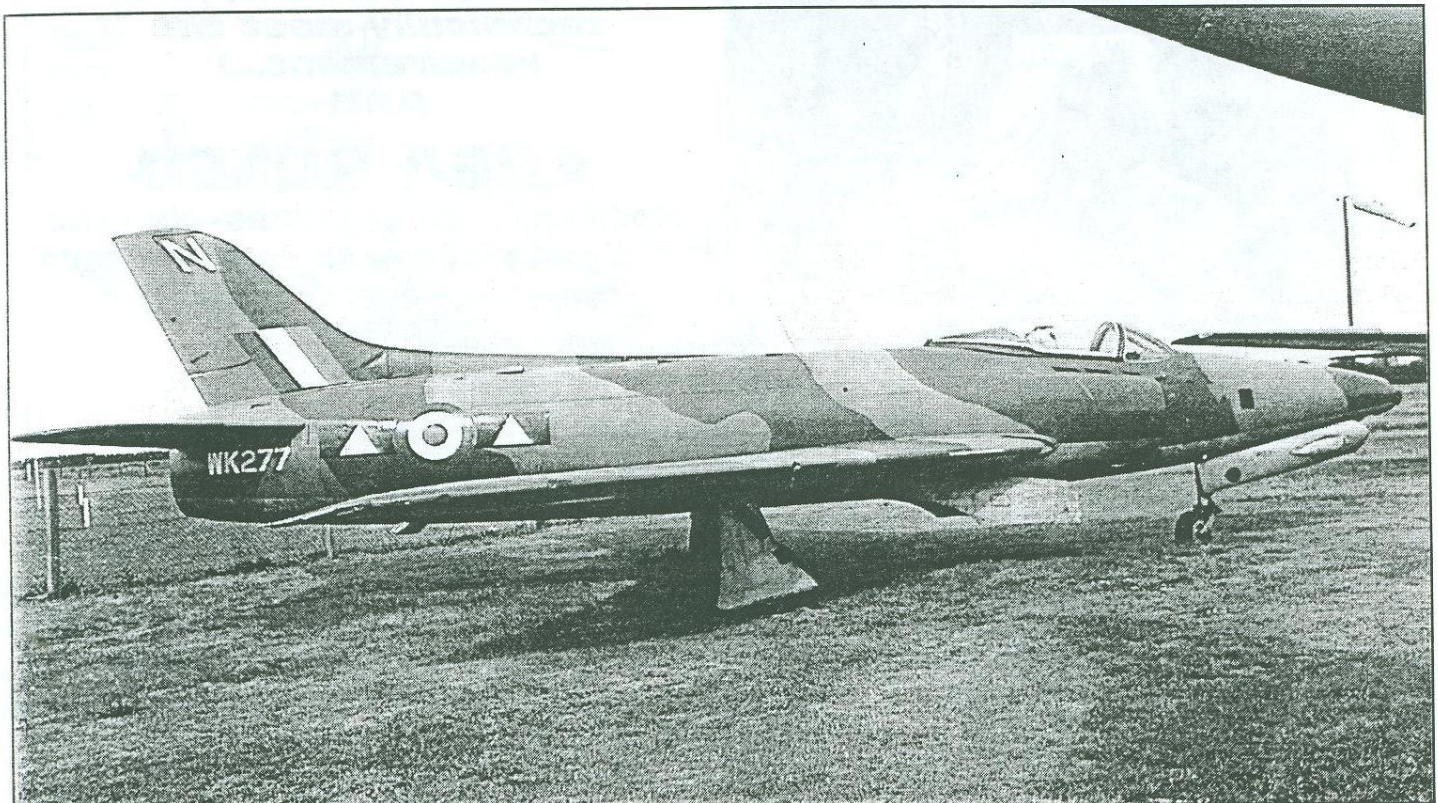
go into service. But this was anything but an auspicious debut; aerodynamic problems forced the airplane out of service in 1955, just a year after its initial deployment.

The F.3 was improved with the addition of an afterburner, while the F.4 featured a variable-incidence tailplane. Neither of these variants entered service.

All of these improvements did little to keep the *Swift* competitive as a front-line fighter, and Supermarine saw the writing on the wall. To salvage something from the program,

and 12 production F.7s, which had a lengthened nose to accommodate radar and the ability to carry four *Blue Sky* air-to-air missiles. The F.7 also had an increased span wing to accommodate these weapons. These 14 planes were used for weapons trials at RAF Valley, and ended their careers in a variety of experimental roles.

*Falcon's* vacuformed 1:48 kit of the *Swift* comes packaged in a plastic bag with an instruction sheet, a clear vacuform

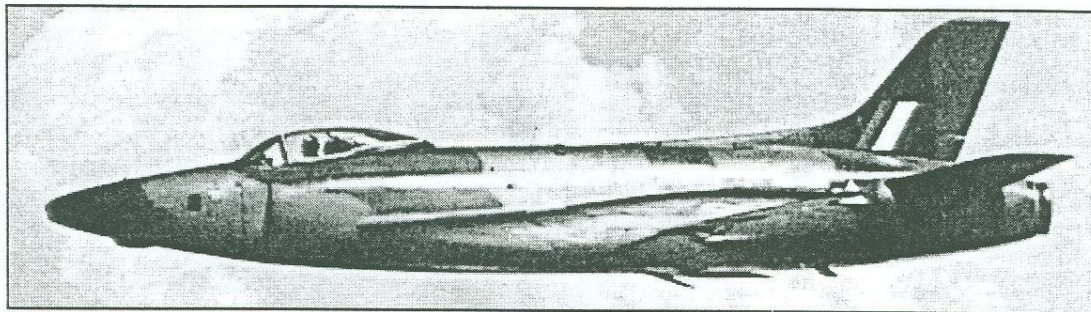


A *Swift* FR.5 in the markings of No. 2 Squadron. The small dark square in the nose is a camera port. The *Swift* had the misfortune of maturing just as the Hawker *Hunter* arrived on the scene, another factor that led to its early retirement from RAF service.

canopy sheet, two vacuform styrene sheets, a bag containing white-metal parts and a decal sheet. The kit contains parts for the later *Swifts*—the FR.5 and the F.7.

The instruction sheet is a single 11" x 17" sheet that includes assembly notes detailing construction, parts layout and table of parts, a color and markings section, and detail drawings of the cockpit, canopy, nose wheel door, and main landing gear. A separate sheet contains the history of the *Swift* and a reference listing for researching the aircraft, a nice starting point for superdetailers.

Two vacuform canopies are included, providing the right shapes for the FR.5 and F.7. These canopies are really clear and don't require any polishing, but the canopy frames aren't as crisp and sharp as some vacuform canopies I've seen. Another drawback is that only one of each canopy is enclosed. Some manufacturers include



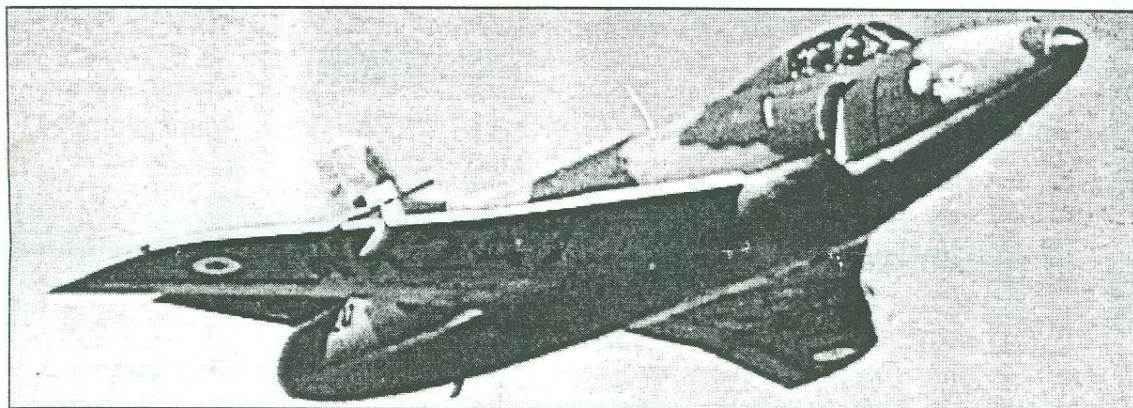
**A Swift FR.5 of No. 2 Squadron, one of the final operators of the type.**

replacing, along with the generic ejection seat. The main landing gear and nosewheel assembly need the usual mold-line to be removed and the spokes of the nosewheel need to be opened up. But, what ever happened to the control stick?

The decal sheet included contains markings for two FR.5s:

XD916 "E" of No. 2 Squadron and XD953 "F" of No. 79 Squadron. The basic color scheme of dark green/dark grey with silver undersides is outlined in the instruction sheet. I guess I'll just have to make up my own markings—and find some *Blue Sky* missiles—if I decide to build a F.7 version.

I have some work cut out for me when I get around to building this kit. I'm definitely going to do quite a bit of research, as not everything is covered in the instruction sheet and the crudeness of some of the parts doesn't help any. This kit is not a kit for someone who has just started building vacuform kits, unless you delete the cockpit assembly and paint the insides of the



**A rare shot of a Swift F.3 in flight. This variant, though it never entered service, introduced afterburners to the Swift series.**

canopies blue. For me, no way—with the recent article in *Scale Aviation Modeler*, I can now scratch build my cockpit using their drawings and illustrations. The *Swift* is a really nice looking plane and will look at home when its finished, sitting next to my British *Phantom*.

two canopies for each version, in case you happen to make a mistake removing one.

The two vacuform styrene sheets include the fuselage halves, the FR.5 nose halves, the F.7 nose halves, tailpipe halves, cockpit tub, nosewheel well, mainwheel doors, belly tank, lower wing, upper wing halves, tailplane halves, instrument panel, canopy fairing, FR.5 nosewheel door, F.7 nosewheel door, mainwheel wells, and the F.7 wing tips. All of the components are cleanly molded, with just the removal of the raised dimples from the molding process the only clean up you need to do. The instrument panel will look really good once you add a set of instruments to it. The cockpit tub is going to be the most time consuming portion of this kit as the it has no detail. All you get is the basic tub. If you are going to build the F.7 and add the extended wingtips, you'll have to re-scribe the ailerons onto the extended-wingtips once the wing has been assembled. There are no recessed panel lines on this aircraft, as only the panel lines for the engine bay covers are visible, but there are a few raised panel lines.

The white-metal parts include the ejection seat assembly, main landing gear and wheels, and the nosewheel assembly. The mainwheels look out of round and could probably use

### **Supermarine *Swift* FR.5 Specifications**

#### **Dimensions:**

**Wingspan: 32 feet, 4 inches**

**Length: 42 feet 3 inches**

**Height: 13 feet 6 inches**

**Weight: Empty: 13,435 lbs.; Maximum: 21,400 lbs**

**Maximum speed: 685 mph at sea level**

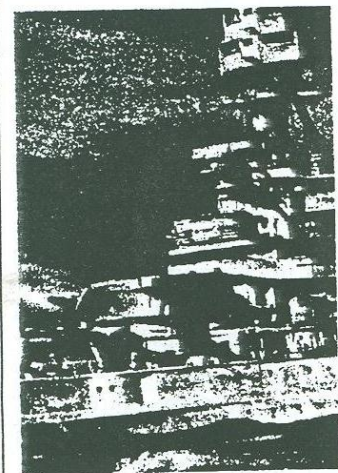
**Service Ceiling: 45,800 feet**

**Range: 630 miles**

**Powerplant: One Rolls-Royce Avon 114**

**(7,175 lbs. of thrust, 9,450 with afterburner)**

**Armament: Two 30mm Aden cannon, plus provisions for bombs and rockets**



**Best of Show**

**Theme Award**

**Best Automobile**

**Best Finish Awards**

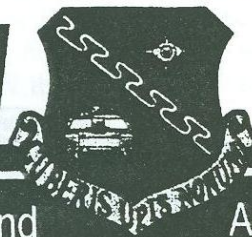
**People's Choice**

**Best X-Plane**

**First thru Third  
Place Plaques**



# Antelope Valley Group



Presents The Second Annual IPMS Contest

## Saturday, November 7th, 1998

## Antelope Valley College

Cafeteria Entrance • 3041 W. Avenue K • Lancaster, CA

### Categories

1. 1/72 Allied Prop Aircraft
2. 1/72 Axis Prop Aircraft
3. 1/72 Jet Aircraft
4. 1/48 Allied Prop Aircraft
5. 1/48 Axis Prop Aircraft
6. 1/48 Jet Aircraft, 1940 - 1959
7. 1/48 Jet Aircraft, 1960 - Present
8. 1/32 Aircraft
9. Tanks
10. AFV, Artillery
11. Ships
12. Auto - Competition
13. Auto - Street Machine
14. Auto - Custom
15. Auto - Miscellaneous
16. Figures
17. Diorama
18. Miscellaneous
19. Junior

### Schedule

10:00 - Noon	Registration
12:00 - 2:00 pm	Judging
1:00 pm	TBD
2:00 pm	TBD
3:00 pm	Awards

Adult Entry Fees are \$3.00 that includes 1 admission and 3 entries. Additional entries are \$1.00 each.

Juniors (15 and below): FREE.

Spectators: FREE.

#### Best Finish Awards.

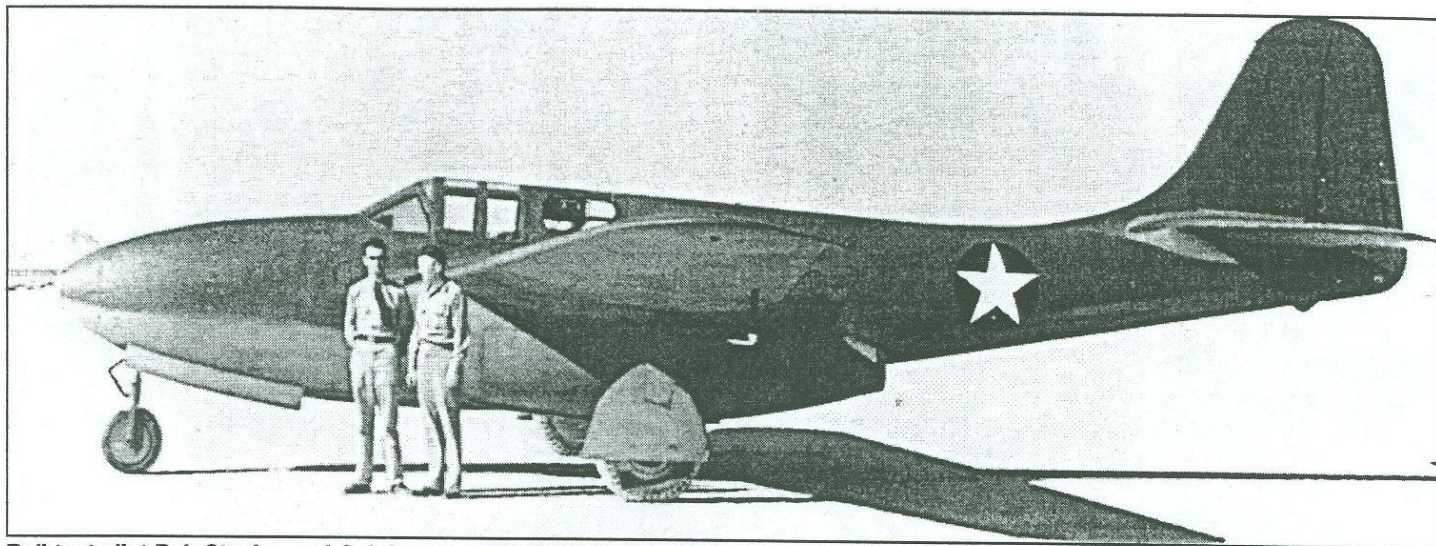
We will be presenting three awards: Automotive Best Paint, Best Weathering Technique, and Best Metalizer Finish.

**The Theme for this year's contest is Desert Warfare.** Any entree that qualifies for Theme consideration is automatically entered regardless of class, scale, or division entered.

IPMS Chapter Contact: Don Butzke at (805) 942.9827.

AVG reserves the right to change/alter class structures and entree classification as they pertain to IPMS Rules and criteria. Judges decisions are final. Neither AVG nor Antelope Valley College can be held responsible for any loss, damage, or injury to entrants, vendors, or spectators and their respective entries, merchandise, and/or personal effects.





Bell test pilot Bob Stanley and Col. Laurence C. Cragie, chief of experimental aircraft projects at Wright Field, pose with XP-59A No. 1 after becoming America's first jet pilots on Oct. 2, 1942.

## Building *Karo-As*' kit of America's pioneer jet

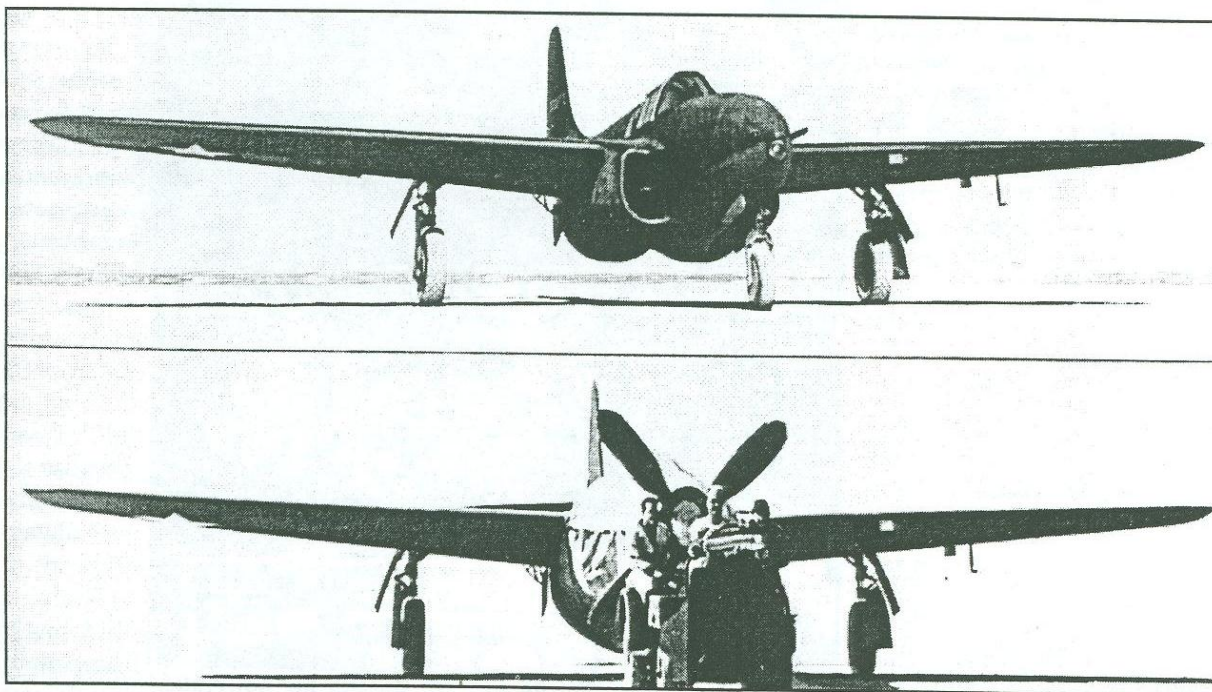
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is that removing short-run kit parts from their trees can be as much or more work than extracting vacuform parts from their carrier sheets! In the case of this kit, this process was almost trouble free. The only rough spot was the large sprue gates on both fuselage halves, which necessitated the use of a file to separate the parts from tree by cutting a groove then cutting the part free. The fuselage spine had a small blemish on the spine and a quarter-inch long "wart" in front of the cockpit opening which needed extra attention as a result of these large gates. It was a bit trickier to flatten a high spot from this sprue gate on the join surface of fuselage halves, but sanding and judicious use of an X-Acto knife solved this problem.

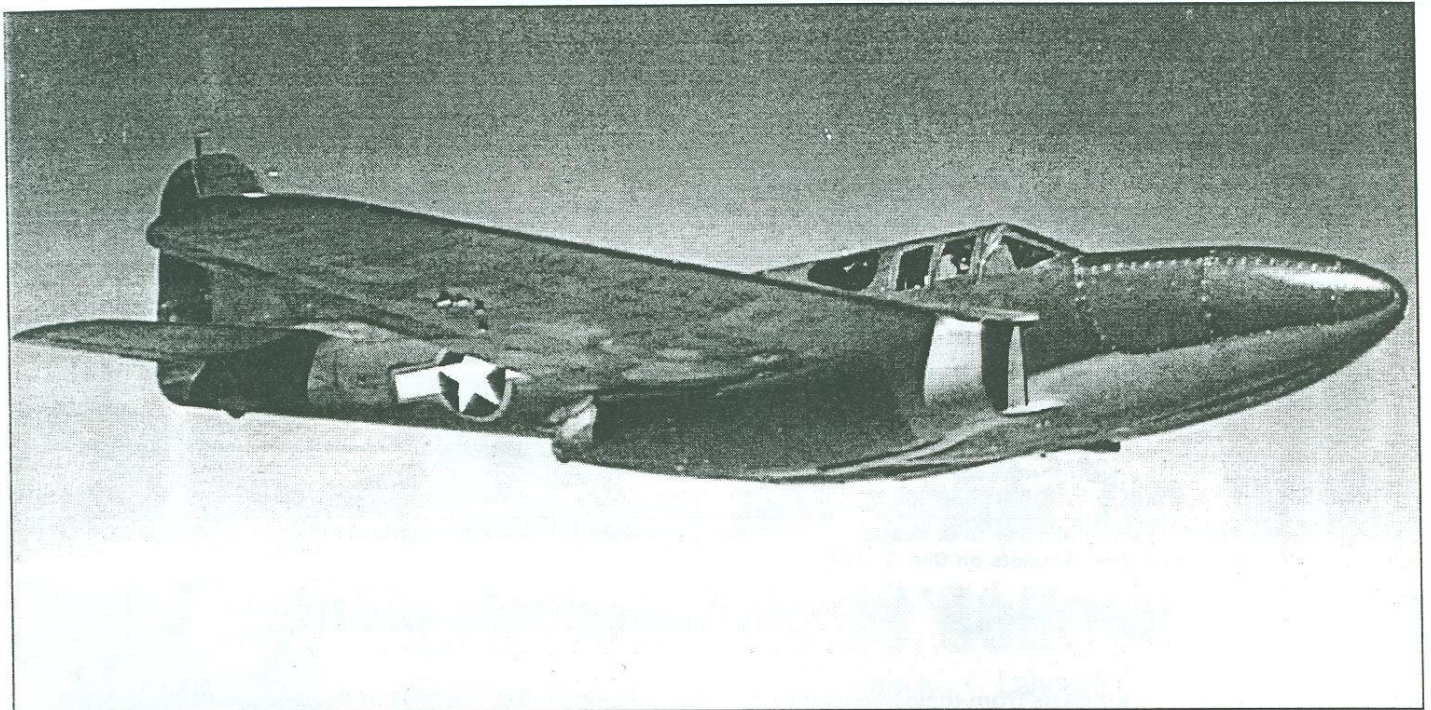
Once the sprue gates had been cleaned up, construction could begin. No nosewheel gear bay is provided, so I constructed a simple bay out of thin cardstock and painted it interior green before installing it into the fuselage. The kit provides a cockpit assembly of seat, stick, 3-part floor/back/rear deck, instrument panel and front coaming over the panel. This takes some care to build and maintain the right alignment between parts, but a bigger pain is that locating the assembly in fuselage is left to guesswork. Also, the cockpit parts don't conform to

the fuselage in the rear part of the cockpit, providing a nice view into the engine bays.

I installed a blanking plate to fully enclose the rear of the nose gear bay and the front of the cockpit. There is absolutely no cockpit wall or seat detail, and nothing more than a raised box on the rear deck, so with the references available one can add detail unimpeded by previous work. I chose to leave well enough alone. To assemble the fuselage halves, I taped them together first, then fitted the lower engine bay onto them. This required some trimming and sanding to fit. Then, I adjusted the halves to get the best fit. During this entire process. I treated this kit like a vacuform. There are no pins to align parts, so it's up to you to match up surfaces, add styrene strip to reinforce joints and use your own eye to ensure that parts are aligned.



How do you disguise a 'secret weapon'? If it's a jet, use a mock wooden propeller.



The second XP-59A on a test flight. At this point in its career—1943—it carried a red surround on its star-and-bar insignia.

Adding weight to the nose was vital to make sure the model sat on the landing gear correctly. Before glue was applied to the fuselage and engine bay parts, I taped them together and measured to check how much weight was needed to balance on the gear. I added a large amount of birdshot and superglue to the nose, making sure not to add too much glue at any one time to avoid a heat reaction that would have melted the nose. Then the fuselage halves were joined, with minimal misalignment. I left a high ridge at the rear of the nose gear bay since some sanding was required blend in the engine bay at this spot anyway. This left the rest of the fuselage with an almost perfect join line that needed very little clean-up.

With the fuselage and cockpit assembled, the single piece lower engine bay was added. The use of slow-curing superglue will help with alignment at this point. This is the time to do something with the huge openings in the cockpit described earlier. If you don't blank them off, you will stare into the engine areas. I used thin cardstock to form walls for this area.

Research revealed the "secret" of the intake bullets. I never realized how few photos show these until, while assembling material for this project, I spied them in a photograph. I had

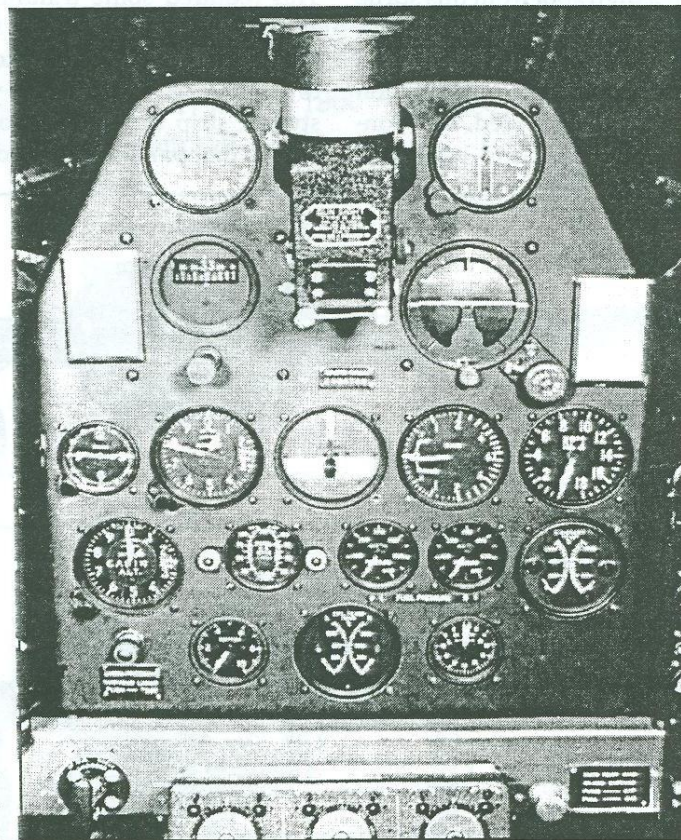
assumed that there were no shapes in the intakes, ala the P-80 or F2H. Actually, there is a very odd rectangular-then-round shape in the engine intakes. A drop tank from an old *Frog* P-38 cut and filed to shape yielded a pair of these exotic engine parts.

The *Karo-As* intake mouths are one piece, nicely molded so that no awful seam from the join line is there. The engine

exhausts are blanked off with little dimpled caps; place these inside where they best fit. This entire assembly will have some seams to clean up, but all are placed in logical, accessible areas.

The wings are well-shaped airfoils in halves. You may want to box in the main gear wells. When assembling the wing, consider the fit of the wing roots at the engine/fuselage box as a factor, since there is just a butt joint to hold the wings. I would suggest you make a tongue from scrap plastic to act as a guide for the addition of the wings. The joint has to be strong and secure because the landing gear legs mount in the wings, so they will always be under stress at the joint.

The horizontal stabilizers are thin, single-piece parts. Again, these mate to the fuselage in a butt joint, so you may want to fashion some sort of an attach-



Instrument panel of YP-59A No. 13. Despite the powerplant employed, this bears a striking resemblance to the panels in the P-39 and P-63.

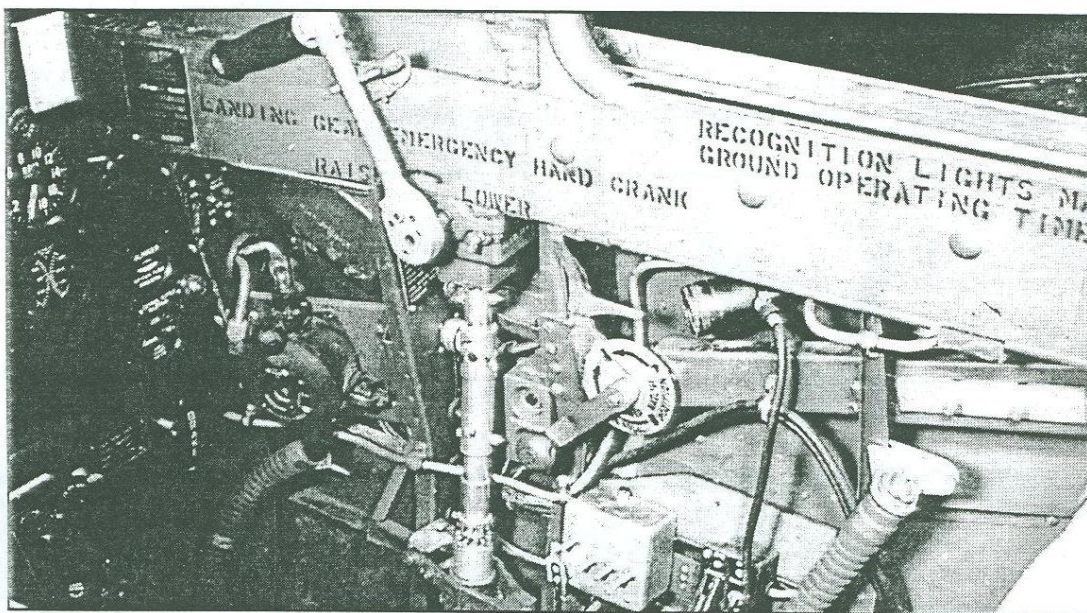
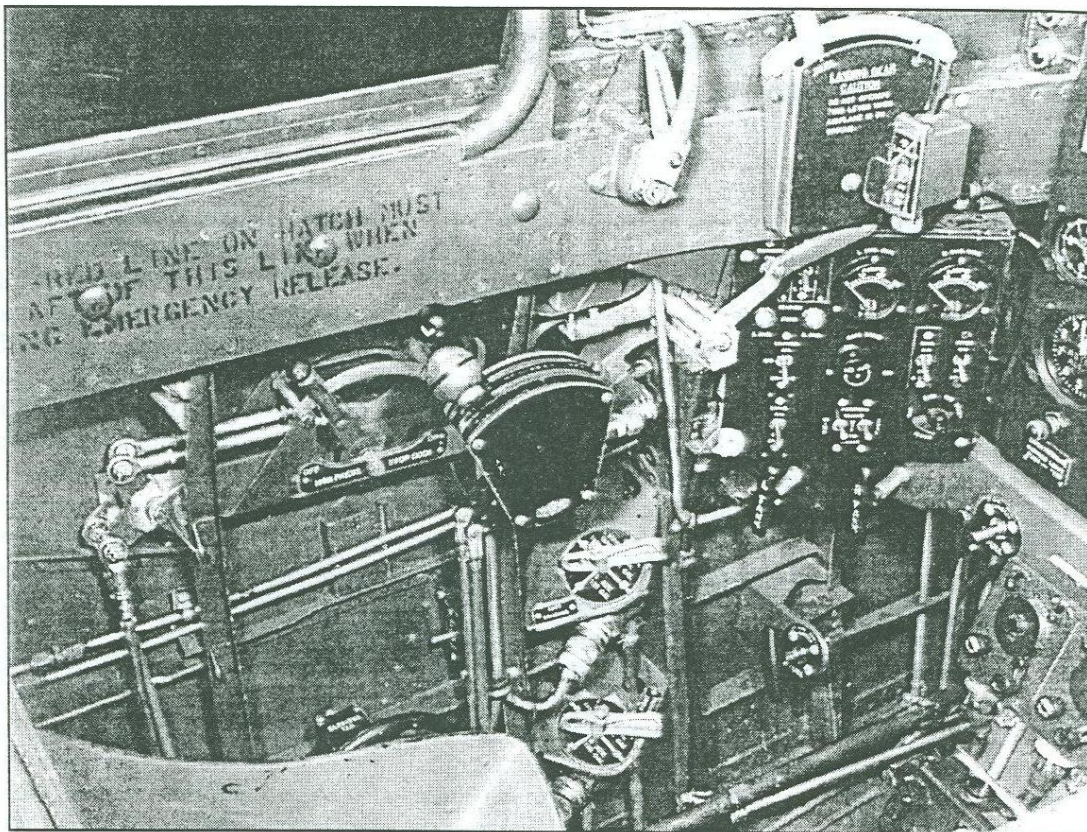
ment for greater strength. The nose gear is almost ready to use out of the box; the cross member to mount it in the wheel well is beveled to fit where it needs to. In all, a very elegant arrangement. The nose wheel and tire needs only a little sanding to clean up. A plastic oleo scissor for the gear leg is also a separate piece. The main gear legs are similar, but their fit is trickier. The main wheels/tires are in halves, which require flattening, sanding and careful gluing. The nose wheel doors are two thin plastic items, but the main gear covers are molded as one piece and the modeler needs to separate the inner and outer doors with an X-Acto knife. The upper gear leg cover in real life lays on top of the gear oleo, and the kit depicts this accurately.

A little effort is needed to put the canopy in its place as it is vacuform part mating to an injected part. A second copy of the canopy is provided, so if you have good luck with first one and an extra *Rareplanes* P-59 laying around in need of a better canopy, copy #2 has a home too! As for the scheme my P-59A will be dressed in, let us just say it won't be OD or metal but it will be authentic colors seen on at least one hard-working *Airacomet* with a pioneer heart.

#### References:

*Flame Powered: The Bell XP-59A Airacomet & the General Electric I-A Engine* By David M. Carpenter, copyright 1992 by Jet Pioneers of America

Carpenter gives you a complete, in-depth appreciation of all aspects of the engine and jet development history and use. There are reprints of the Jay Miller *Aerophile* drawings among the other illustrations, and since that is not an easy reference to find, the book is great source of data. Many of the photos will come in handy to the modeler; I found two pictures of the intake bullets in this book. There are excellent accounts of trials both humorous and terrifying. I can easily recommend this book to the aero history buff and the modeler.



Left and right sides of YP-59A No. 13's rather conventional-looking interior.

"Bell P-59 Airacomet" By Jay Miller, article in *Aerophile* VI #3, December 1977. The color cover shows two ends of the P-59 story. One shot is a fabulous profile photo of an early olive drab and gray test bird on the desert floor that really exemplifies the wear and tear you can attempt to model. Below it is an orange two-seater in a diorama-worthy scene. On the back cover is a color reproduction of a 1944 Bell ad featuring a "censored" painting of the *Airacomet* revealing the role of Bell in the "Buck Rogers" plane in "now it can be told" style. Inside you get a 22-page black & white photo history that is a real gem. LOTS of shots of P-59s in all types of poses, detail shots of many small features EXCEPT the intakes, and line drawings of paint schemes.

# Frankenstein fighter: the Fisher XP-75 *Eagle*

By Mike Burton

*(Author's note: This is the first installment in an occasional series—as in, on the occasions that I managed to finish a model—covering “P for Pursuit” aircraft that weren’t likely to do much towards fulfilling their design missions for the USAAF. In 1:72 scale, the intrepid modeler could accumulate a fair-sized collection using this theme. One might get enough examples of such aircraft in 1:48 scale for the five minimum to enter in a collections competition, but a lot more work would be involved.)*

The beginning of the war meant the possibility of very large contracts for major aircraft companies and those hoping to become major aircraft companies. McDonnell Aircraft sowed the seeds of its success in this era, even though its radical XP-67 *Moonbat* was cancelled in 1944 after the need for a bomber-destroyer evaporated.

A similar fate befell the Fisher/General Motors P-75 *Eagle*, whose one resemblance to its avian namesake was on its nameplate. While the P-75A production model would approach being pretty (though hardly an *Eagle*), the original XP-75 prototype was nothing of the sort. With components taken in their entirety from several existing aircraft and “kit-bashed” on a grand scale, it was “Body by Fisher, Styling by Ugly.”

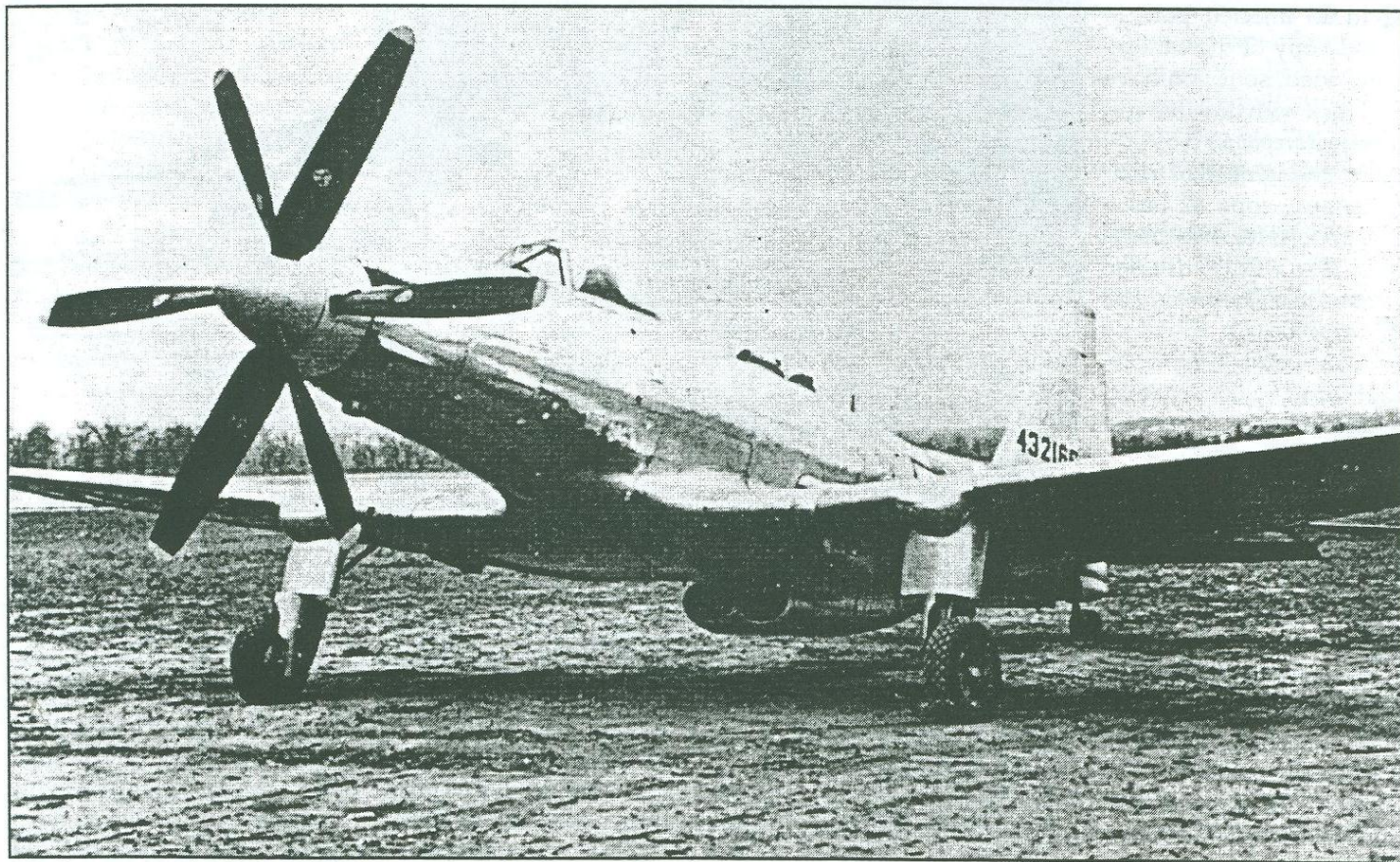
The idea for the *Eagle* was hatched in the early days of the war, when the Air Force was in dire need of high-performance fighters. Don Berlin, designer for General Motors, proposed putting together a stopgap fighter using components from other tried-and-tested airplanes. The plane would be armed with no fewer than 10 .50-caliber machine guns and powered

by the Allison V-3420, a combination of two sets of V-1710 heads and cylinders on a common crankcase, turning a contra-rotating propeller. The tail group was taken from the SBD *Dauntless*, the landing gear from the F4U *Corsair*, and the outer wings, cockpit and sliding canopy from the P-40 *Warhawk* to make a true “Frankenstein fighter.”

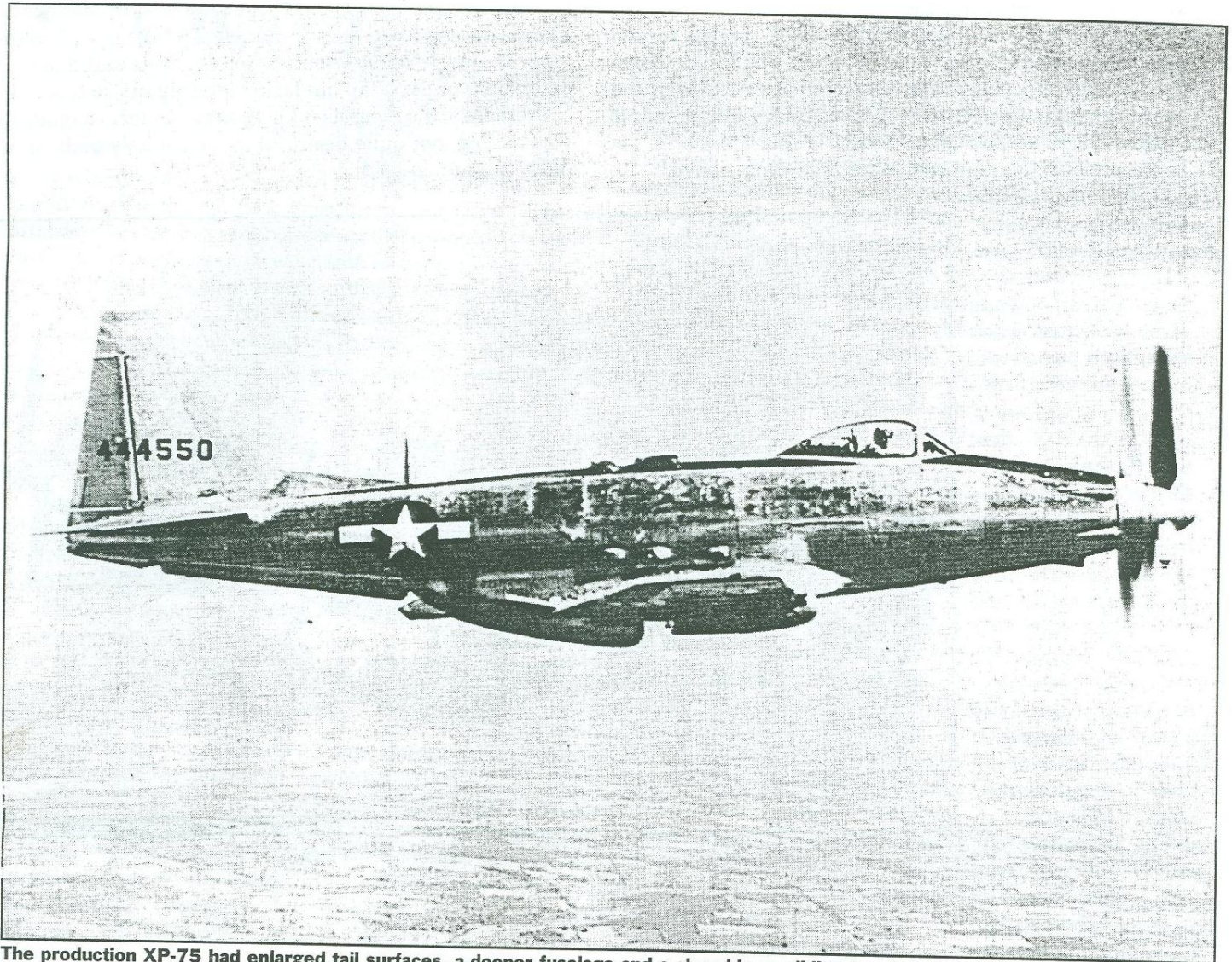
General Motors was, at first, pleased to be the prime contractor for the P-75. Why not, since this beast would be built by their Fisher division, powered by their Allison component, and propelled by their Aeroproducts prop subsidiary. By using existing components, GM's airframe R&D costs would seem to be very small and its profits potential high. This project was intended to provide the USAAF with a long-range high-performance escort fighter, and time and events proved this to be a real need—a need met by another contractor with a fresh design. That winning answer was North American's P-51 *Mustang*, which proved to be the right solution at the right time.

Ultimately, General Motors had to revise the *Eagle's* airframe almost entirely. In pursuing this dead-end, GM and the U.S. Government spent enough money to buy 500 additional P-51s. What they got for their money were eight production P-75A models that were of no real use by 1944 except as museum pieces; one survives today as just that in Dayton at the USAF Museum. A bit of Bay Area history is tied in here; one P-75A (s/n 44-4550) was flown to Moffett Airfield in 1944 for Ames (NACA) to test in wind tunnel.

*Rareplanes'* Gordon Stevens (its founder and for many years



The last pre-production *Eagle*, incorporating all the changes the introduced for the production aircraft.



The production XP-75 had enlarged tail surfaces, a deeper fuselage and a clear blown sliding hood similar to the P-47D's.

the sole pattern maker) wisely chose to put out the production example of this WWII weirdo. It is by far the prettier of the two, and it neatly sidesteps the problem of trying to vacuform the very odd shape of the XP-75 rear canopy!

This is not the model to start out vacuform building. Get a few projects under your belt before cutting this one up. The fuselage halves include the vertical stabilizer and rudder, tail wheel doors molded in the open position and a large "stepped" opening where the wing assembly will be fitted. This is one of the kit's problematic areas, as is the long ventral seam which runs from the tail wheel bay into the exhaust area. You have to sand very carefully to achieve a uniform airfoil at the tail end without shortening the fuselage too much or cracking it at the tail wheel bay. It is also possible to sand the fuselage too thin while you're at it, which makes for a very tough wing mating later.

I found that building the wings up first was the best way to approach this problem. The wing lower section molding includes the whole lower fuselage twin-intake section and exhaust scoop, all of which must blend to the fuselage without an awkward join line, bulge, or cavity. Building the wing first allows you to build the fuselage to match the wing, helping to cut down on the amount of work involved in blending in the

wing.

Assembling the wings offers its own challenges. The wings have thick roots on the upper side at the fuselage and stick straight out at first, then crank upward for the remaining two-thirds of their lengths. There are unexplained joint ridges at the point where this occurs; at first I thought these bands were points to cut the wings and sand, and then refit. Luckily I let this project languish so long that I was able to go to the USAF Museum, thanks to the 1997 Nationals, where—lo!—the real thing was there waiting to be studied. Those bands were nothing more than sheetmetal lathing to smooth over the joint at the wing abutment! Not welds or fancy rivet patterns—just loosely-fitted slat sheathing. If anything, the kit representations are almost too nice and even-looking compared to the real ones.

I didn't think an award winner was to be the end result of this model project, so no re-detailing for me here. Simply sanding the inside of the leading and trailing edges resulted in the reward of nice-fitting wings. The tricky areas are the bulges where the gear bays extend past the wing; these will likely need sanding to match up. There are three "pips" on each wing where the guns are; your best bet here is to remove these to smooth the leading edge in and craft nice replace-

ments if you want armed *Eagle*.

Once you have the fuselage and wings sanded to your satisfaction, assemble the wings for use as a jig for the assembly of the fuselage. Leave the cockpit out of the fuselage until you're done gluing together the fuselage sides. Fitting the tub, instrument panel and other details is much easier if you approach it from underneath rather than from above.

I filled the vertical stab with superglue to create a "solid" part. Rough cut and file/sand to finish opening up the twin intakes and exhaust chute on wing assembly, and create a box or similar "blanking" method to deal with the dreaded "see-thru effect." There are numerous little pipe exhausts all about fuselage which can be filled with superglue and then drilled open.

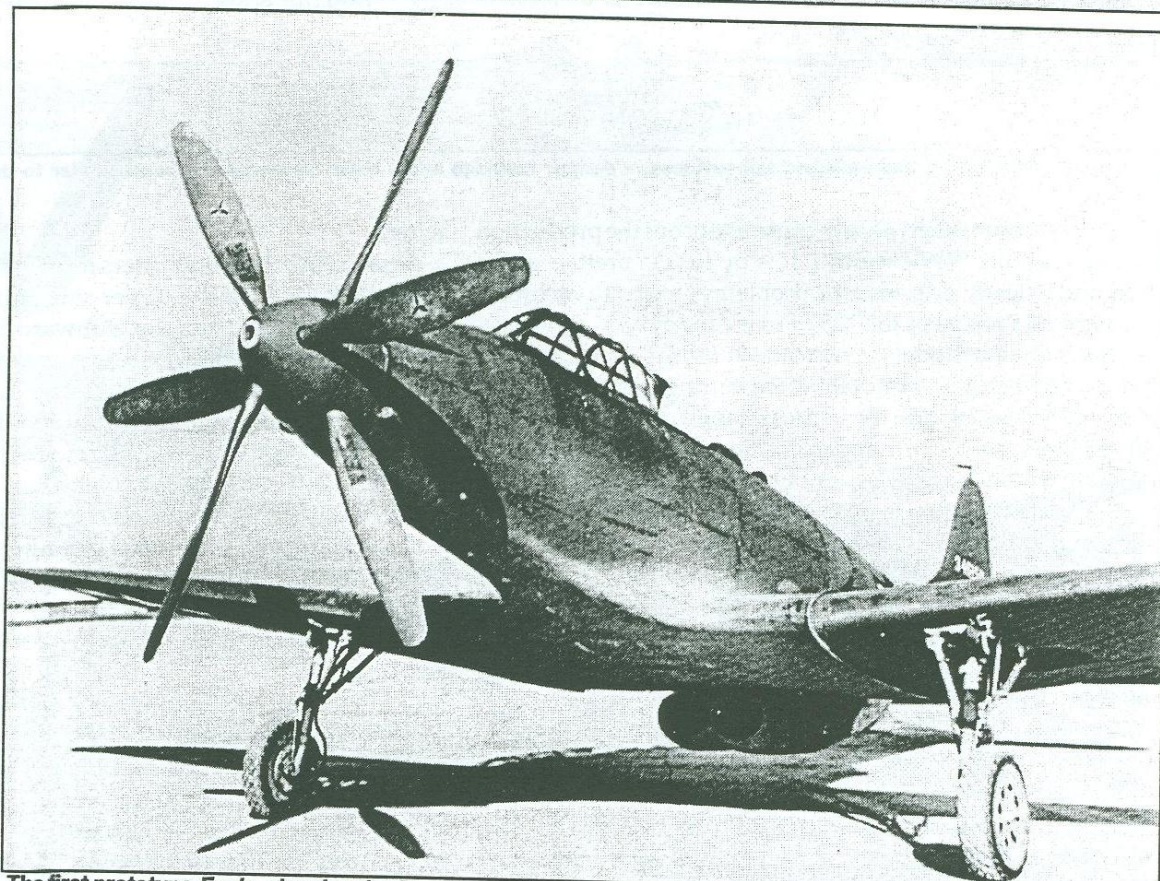
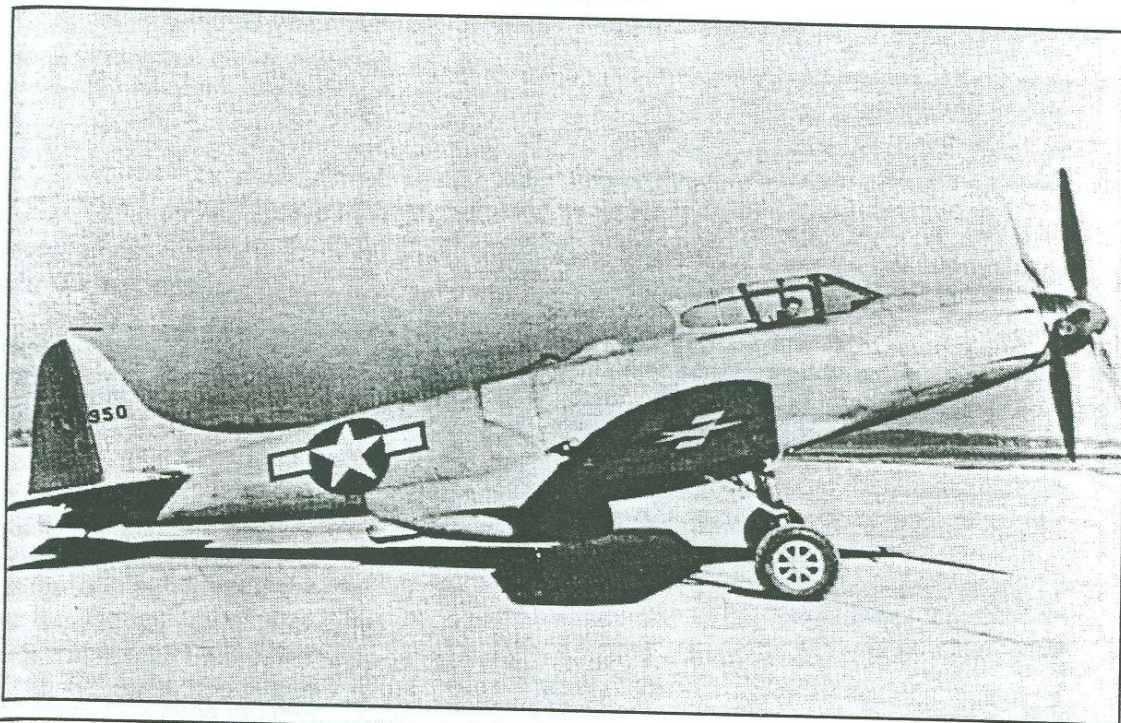
The horizontal stabs are a pleasure—simple flat pieces you sand into airfoil shape and then glue into place. You will need to fill gaps at the edges of the stabilizers, a task for which super glue is very well-suited. It is truly awesome how much larger the tail surfaces were in the production P-75 than in the prototypes; all you need to see for yourself is get a SBD kit to compare parts. These tail planes could almost substitute as wings on a Bede-designed aircraft!

The landing gear is tricky. The older kits come with single-sided injection molded parts for these. I ended up substituting modified gear legs from an *Airfix* Douglas *Invader*.

The wheel/tire halves of the kit were usable, but

sanding inside the faces for a glue joint to start was needed. Finish sanding them round, then drill a hole for the gear legs. The tail wheel assembly is another tale and due to the anonymity of the scrap bin I can't identify my source part!

Ultimately, the *Rareplanes* kit yields a model of a plane that was too big, not quite beautiful and definitely bad! An unlikely pursuit, indeed!



The first prototype *Eagle*, showing the *Dauntless* tail and gothic-style canopy trailing edge (top) and *Corsair* landing gear (bottom).

# JULY MINUTES

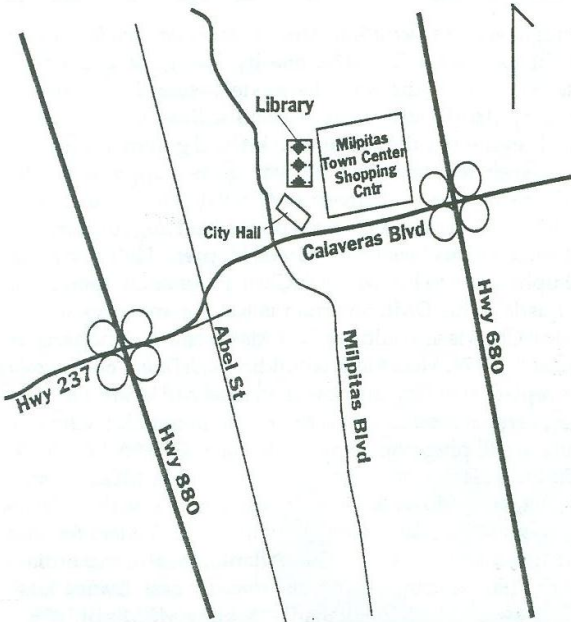
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The only business at the July meeting was the announcement that next year's kickoff classic will be on Feb. 28, 1999. Thanks to Rich Pedro for securing the site!

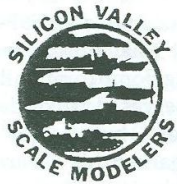
In model talk, Jack Van Zandt displayed a *Tamiya* PBR-32 along with the computer-created photograph he created with it and an A-6 model. Jack depicted a low-flying flight of Intruders buzzing a veritable fleet of PBRs! Robin Powell has his Cavalier *Mustang* in its warpaint; he measured a *Viscount* propeller blade back at home to make a new item for his converted *Tamiya* kit. Toby Smith painted his *Hasegawa* G3M "Nell" in a bright camouflage scheme used in China. Tom Trankle, the final owner of a five-person group-built *Accurate Miniatures Mustang I*, showed this nationals winner. Eric McClure used MV lenses to give some life to the head and taillights of his Tenara Ford C.100 racer. Eric's Sherman is built as if it were just out of a refit; he battled the tracks every link of the way, he said. Ed Van Brabandt had a similar struggle with his *Academy* P-38E, which he finished as Jack Ilfrey's "Happy Jack's Go-Buggy;" the fit of the parts was miserable in Ed's kit. Ed also tackled the *Hobbycraft Hurricane*, which has no cockpit but which "falls together," he said. Joe Fleming used *ADV's* resin kit to build a sporty little M20 armored car, which will find a final home as part of a diorama. Joe's Schwartzgrau Tiger I was the winner of a hotly-contested split category at the nationals. Jim Priete's 1:48 F2G *Corsair* conversion is crawling along; another few months should bring it to completion. Peter Wong took the time to fix up his 1:24 Chevy Vega; it was the only model in his collection damaged in the 1989 earthquake! Cliff Kranz is focusing his attention of *Ertl's* old International Harvester Paystar 350 dump truck; its chassis is built and is very yellow at this point. Ken Fadrigon is taking on a difficult rotorcraft conversion, turning *DML's* MD500 *Defender* into the San Jose Police Department's NOTAR. Bill Shipway and Richard Pedro dispensed with the rest of their figures and focused on the top part; Bill displayed a Terminator skull, and Rich showed a "Mars Attacks!" bust he painted while working the volunteer desk at the nationals. Brian Sakai's 1:72 armor executed a blitzkrieg at the nationals; his M3 Stuart and Chi-ha each took awards. Brian's also completed a KV-2, which had oversized rivets; once removed, these were useful for other models! Mike Yamada added scads of detail and a Micro Machines pilot to *MPC's* snap-together X-Wing fighter (a centerpiece of next month's Styrene Sheet!). Mark Hernandez has his hypothetical P.1111 on its landing gear; the solid resin model needed some clever modifications to sit on its tricycle gear. Dave Balderrama's models had an eventful nationals; his 1:144 B-2 won an award, his MiG-15 eggplane was broken during judging, and his Godzilla made some money panhandling. His Roswell UFO suffered heat damage from a lamp and a high-speed trip across the room before Dave salvaged it in a crash scene diorama. Ken Miller finished his 727 for an airliner event; it will depict the plane hijacked by D.B. Cooper copycat Richard McCoy. Kent McClure added a tiny clipboard and water bottle to outfit his rally car; he's also working on 6mm Napoleonic Hussars as a "little" break from bigger projects. Roy Sutherland's *Martlet V* and T. Rex were winners at the nationals; he's still hard at work on a 1:72 Fw 190

Rammjager and a *Sierra Scale Models* Fairey *Barracuda*. Laramie Wright has two 1:72 P-47s, one by *Hasegawa* and one by *Academy*, well on the way; the models wear the decals provided by *AeroMaster* at the nationals. Brad Chun's wasn't terribly excited by the conversion kit he'd gotten to depict the Roto-Finish *Mustang*, but he was quite happy with Dale Bohling's resin tail to convert *AMT's* P-40F into a long-tailed version. Steve Travis added a wooden beer keg fuel tank and Fiat wheels to his *Monogram* "Green Hornet;" He's also added real upholstery to his '34 Ford. Chris Hughes complains that the bustle of his *DML* Sherman is too big and rubs when it rotates! Chris is also adding *Tank Maker* and *Eduard* parts to a *Tamiya* T-34/76. Mike Meek is building a *HiTech* P-63 *Kingcobra* as a replacement for his now-deceased *MPM* kit. He's also doing serious modifications to *Testors' Bearcat* kit. Chris Bucholtz is still plugging away at his *Italeri* OH-6A Loach. Ben Pada built *Hasegawa's Hurricane* and *Macchi* MC.202 out of the box, but added a *True Details* interior to his *Tamiya Mustang*. Mike Braun won an award from *Testors* for most realistic finish for his TBM-3 in Atlantic theatre camouflage. His Fw 190—a combination of *Trimaster* and *Tamiya* kits—took an award too. Joe Callahan is tackling *MPM's* Bf 109B kit to build a Spanish Civil War bird. And the Model of the Month went to... The collected work of Hubert Chan! Hubert replaced the cannon barrel of his *Karo-As* T-38 tank, and he added lots of rivets to the kit. Hubert also showed a JS-III that he built in three weeks of 17-hour sessions to finish in time for the nationals, and a 1:16 German trooper figure from *DML*.

This month's club contest was straight-wing jets, and the table was chock-full of 'em. Chris Bucholtz landed an F9F-5 *Panther* in 1:72, built from the *Matchbox* kit. Mike Burton had a mob of entries, including a V-1 Flying Egg Bomb (originally built for another club contest, if memory serves...). Mike also showed an F-104 *Starfighter*, which had short—but straight—wings. Mike then cheated a little and parked his *Glencoe Viscount* and *Rareplanes Pucara* on the table. Yes, they have props—turbo-props! Ken Miller used *Hobbycraft's* F3H-4 *Banshee* to model a craft that crashed in Saratoga, and he also claimed the spot as the longest, straightest wings with his lovely 1:72 U-2. Laramie Wright turned a *Heller* kit into a Frog kit by turning the 1:72 *Vampire* into a French-operated *Mistral*. Eric McClure showed that he can master *Rareplanes* kits as well by fashioning a lovely FJ-1 Fury. Braulio Escoto chose the straight and narrow (wing, that is) when picking an F-84 variant to do, completing a nice F-84G. Mike Meek's rendition of Darryl Greenameyer's F-104 isn't yet complete but is looking promising. Cliff Kranz displayed not one but two *Airfix Sea Hawks*, wearing a decidedly evergreen shade of sky and German and Indian markings, and a P-80 *Shooting Star*, modified to represent an early variant. And the winners were... Sharing third: a stunning (not to mention big!) 1:48 F-89 *Scorpion* by Braulio Escoto and a sleek T-33 *Shooting Star* in air superiority gray by Mike Burton. Sharing second: Frank Babbitt's masterful Gloster E.22/26 Whittle test bed and Mark Hernandez' conjectural Zeppelin Rammer, built from the *Planet Models* kit. And sharing first... A sleek and shiny F9F-2 from the *Hasegawa* kit and Chris Bucholtz' heavily re-built *Airfix Sea Hawk* FGA.5.



Next meeting:  
**7:30 p.m.,**  
**Friday,**  
**August 21**  
at the Milpitas  
Public Library  
**40 N. Milpitas Blvd.**  
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