

Getting *Minicraft's* M60A3 on track

By Geoff Krueger

Last June, I got to spend a weekend at Camp Roberts with B Company, 1/149 Armor, a National Guard M60A3 unit out of Watsonville. Remember that tank at the Watsonville Airshow? Well, that's the unit I'm talking about. What an outstanding weekend! Not only did I get hands-on experience as a gunner on the M60, but I received much valuable information from the crews, of which 90 percent or more had served on active duty with the M1 Abrams. There were also quite a few *Desert Storm* vets.

I felt really sorry for those guys, having to switch from the M1 to the M60. The whole weekend was filled with complaints and comparisons to the Abrams. However, never having crewed an M1, I was perfectly content playing around in an M60. It's really cool getting to ride around out in the field and sighting in on other vehicles using the TTS (Tank Thermal Sight) and learning how to boresight the gun tube. I also learned how to "properly" attach the MILES gear to the vehicle, something which I chose to integrate into my model.

At night, the engine deck becomes a very toasty place to sleep. Riding around in tanks sure beats the hell out of walking everywhere with a heavy rucksack and a weapon. It gave me second thoughts about becoming an infantryman. Oh well... anyway, on with the model.

Coming home from that weekend, I was hell-bent on building an M60, so, with 40 bucks in hand, I set off for D&J Hobbies with the intent of buying *Tamiya's* M60A3 kit. However, in conversing with Al Ernat, I was turned on to the *Minicraft* M60A1 kit. Looking inside the two boxes and comparing the kits made up my mind rather quickly—I went with *Minicraft*.



An M60A3 trundles through the mud during REFORGER exercises in 1980

The two kits are almost identical except for some minor details. Plus, the *Minicraft* kit included molded rubber bogey tires. I couldn't resist!

This kit cost \$29.95 as opposed to the \$33.95 price offered by *Tamiya*, so I went to Burger King with the money saved.

The *Minicraft* kit comes molded in olive drab and includes a textured turret. There is some flash, but this is also present in *Tamiya's* kit. The molds are pretty much the same, so I'll just cover the differences and what must be done to convert the kit to an M60A3.

Starting at the front, only the center vision block in front of the driver's hatch is in the open position, just like the *Tamiya* kit. However, *Tamiya* molded the part as one solid piece of plastic that would need to be hollowed out. *Minicraft* has solved that one for you. Moving to the fenderboxes, *Tamiya* has the latches molded in, requiring you to remove these and fashion new

ones. *Minicraft* made these latches as separate pieces and they scale down nicely. The remainder of the hull is the same in both kits except for the guide marks if the reactive armor is to be used. If you don't use it, be sure to sand this line off.

Next, we review the engine bays at the end of the tank. *Tamiya*, much to my consternation, put two diagonal cuts, one on each side, that don't appear on the -A3. These cuts are non-existent on *Minicraft's* kit. On the roadwheels, *Tamiya* provides the newer style roadwheel, seen on most M60A3s, which included reinforced rims. *Minicraft* has the early M60A1 roadwheels, much to my worry. Quickly, I ran to my references and looked really hard for any picture of -A3s with that type of road wheel. Much to my relief, I found plenty. I would be able to use the included rubber tires after all!

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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 360793, Milpitas, CA 95036.

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EDITOR'S BRIEF

Last issue, I became a bit emphatic about the idea of sportsmanship at contests. This time, I'm going to continue in the same vein, albeit a little less vehemently.

This time, the topic is "perennial models." These are the models that come back, year after year, winning trophies in the same category in the same club's contests. This came to mind at Fresno when a certain gray rotorcraft graced the tables. This model was present at the first contest I ever attended, in 1992, and has been at most of the contests since, winning whenever a Rothhaar rotorcraft wasn't around. I can recall only one contest where the judges spotted the helo and nixed it from consideration, although I've probably missed a few disqualifications.

The question I have is: what's the point of winning the same trophies with the same model year after year? What are you proving? This isn't for money, and it isn't like some athletic championship that must be defended. It's modeling, and we'd all much rather see your new stuff than these retreads, pretty though they may be.

The "Sutherland Rules of 1994" have a provision about disqualifying winners at past regionals from competition elsewhere, so these repeat offenders should be barred by regional edict. Personally, I have no problem with regional winners competing later, especially when the Region IX regionals are often out-drawn by HobbyTown USA's contest, and I think that particular section of the rules should be changed. I do have problems with models that show up two, three or four years in a row, however. Allowing it would turn the contests into a display of the same old models, year in and year out. Sure, we'd see nice models, but they'd be the same ones every year as people trot out their best-ever, sure-fire winners, while those of us who actually build models for fun find better ways to spend weekend afternoons.

Personally, I'm an advocate of the "Kentucky Derby" rule. In horse racing, the big events are for the three-year-old horses. They can compete on that level for one year. When the year's up they're done and move on.

I treat the models the same way—one year and they're done. If I build a *Corsair* in time for our contest in February, it can compete all year until next February's SVSM event—when it is retired. If I build a model in time for the Castle show, it can appear at every show until the next Castle show. In other

words, the model makes one complete trip around the circuit and is then retired from competition.

This relies on the honor system (and a reasonably good memory) on the part of the modeler, but it results in the modeler's efforts being recognized all around the region and his model getting a chance to compete for a full year. After that—let the poor things rest! They've been locked in hot trunks, jostled by bad highways and survived a gauntlet of tiny, ignorant fingers for a year. Give them a break!

A self-enforced one-year limit per model is the best way of "limiting participation" in a sensible way. To me, this sounds more palatable than judging "vigilantes" having to informally disqualify models because of their longevity, and more reasonable than having a modeler build a nice kit just in time for the regional, winning, and being penalized for doing so by not being allowed to compete any more.

That brings me to another issue: the notion that the regional should be held in June. This rule was voted in to make the local season conform to the national season: local contests, followed by the regional, followed by the national. The problem here is that our region's events have always gone from February to November (and sometimes December), with a two- or three-month holiday (encompassing Thanksgiving and the Winter holidays) to give us time to spend with our families. By holding the regional in June, two things happen: you dismember the local season, and you penalize the club whose contest is held in August. Remember—if a model wins at the regionals, it can't enter local contests again! So, those 120 or so models that won at the regionals are ineligible, meaning that Fresno (or whoever ends up in August) will get a severely restricted turnout. Holding it in October or November gives the region a couple of months to build "replacements" for the regional winners.

This "regional in June" rule is aimed at customizing the season in the interest of people who go to the Nationals. While their number is quite high in this region (and includes myself), the number of people who support our local contests is far greater, and I don't think the region's calendar should be altered to provide a "logical climax to the contest year" at their expense.

What do you think? Let me know, and I'll make sure your viewpoint appears in the pages of the Styrene Sheet.

Remember our two club contests scheduled for November:

RACING ARMOR

ANYTHING GOES:

—M113 STOCK CARS

—HUMMER MICKEY THOMPSON RACER

—MERKAVA FUNNY TANK

—SD KFZ 232 SPRINT CAR

TIRED OF CAMOUFLAGE? THEN GO CRAZY!

SPECIAL OCCASION

AIRCRAFT

AIRCRAFT (ANY SCALE, PROP OR JET)

WITH SPECIAL MARKINGS, E.G: Tiger

Meets, bicentennials, squadron

anniversaries, Display teams,

'ends of an era'

Tired of camouflage? Then Go Crazy!

Inexpensive Panhard autos are little (old) jewels

By Bob Miller

Autos are not a specialty of mine, but the Squadron Mail Order sale list for January included kits of three autos from the French company Panhard dating from 1891 to 1904. These were among the earliest production autos.

Panhard still existed during the big import surge of the early 1960s, but they were pricey and never very popular. I assume the company disappeared into a merger or nationalization thereafter.

For \$2.99 each, the kits seemed worth a gamble. Between myself and modeling friends from work, I've seen all three, and I found these are kits you might term "diamonds in the rough." Unfortunately, if you don't speak French, it could be pretty darn rough.

The mailer gave the impression that the kit manufacturer's name was "Panhard," but the boxes say "Europe Model Kits."

Either way, the name was new to me and the box art said "struggling little company, 1970."

The contents were a surprise. The mold work of the 1895 coupe is gorgeous! I'm accustomed to supposedly flat windows that

these are flat, as well as being only .020 inch thick. Body panels on the earliest cars were typically either flat or single-curvature shapes, and again, these kits show a very commendable job of molding without sinks or distortion.

Other detail work is comparably fine, such as wheel spokes that measure only .027 inch wide at the outer end (.86-inch scale), which makes sense considering that this is literally a

horseless carriage, and light American carriages of the era had spokes about that size.

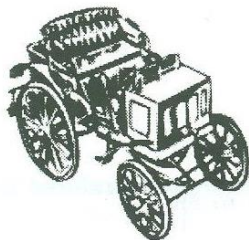
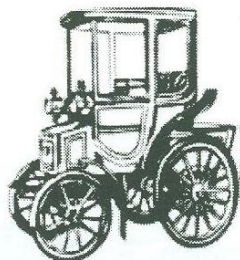
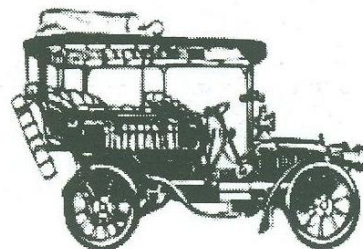
There are no details and the modeler is to paint the somewhat elaborate pinstriping but to aid this, they raised the striping term. Maybe it raised on the original, but you be tempted to:

it off. Also an odd decision was the lack of interior, to the extent of not even providing a floor to cover the void left by an integral-molded transmission. It's no problem—we've all thrown out airplane interiors and built our own—but the omission is odd. I would have liked some guidance on what interiors looked like 100 years ago.

A nice touch is that every tree is packaged in its own plastic bag, a la *Tamiya*, so there was no chafing or marking of surfaces.

Ah... and then there were the plans. For the 1905 "Roi des Belges," they were in French and English, but the others were French only. If you've built a few *Heller* kits, you can read *Coller et coupe, dessous et droit*, but these instructions overwhelm! The 1891 open car has a full text page of just painting details. My guess is that even if you took high-school French, you won't negotiate this without a dictionary. The incongruous part is that, otherwise, the 1891 plans look like a third carbon copy on newsprint, and the assembly drawings as an engineer's first cut at a design. The 1895 and 1905 kit plans were more conventional.

Do I recommend them? If you like old stuff, yes indeed! I would love to see a real car enthusiast do up one of these with the *Garde-boue avants in vieil ivoire (voir capots, only)*. Then maybe I will know what they were talking about.



Not doing anything on the first or fourth Friday of a month?

Then come to the Silicon Valley Scale Modelers modeling clinic

Bring a model, some tools and a good attitude and build in the company of your friends!

7:30-10 p.m. at the Reid Hillview Airport terminal

A splashy fighter: the XF2Y Sea Dart

By Mike Burton
•Part 4 in a series•

The NAS Moffett-linked Convair XF-92A and XFY-1 provided a good launch and a lead in to our next subject. Chronologically, we are back on track, since this was second Convair delta to take flight. Hope you like the water!

A Bold Blue Dream dashed (a little history)

Postwar England, not WWII Germany, was the apparent impetus behind the U.S. Navy's 1948 commissioning of Convair to build a seaplane fighter. A "mobile base" concept had been formed in navy post-war planning, and with it a bold vision of projecting strategic airpower. Martin's ambitious XP6M-1 *Seamaster* (as the strategic atom bomber) and Convair's R3Y *Tradewind* seaplane (for amphibious assault transport/support) were big pieces of this.

When England's Saunders Roe Aircraft in 1947 launched a jet seaplane fighter (the SR.A/1), it made

the concept of a seaplane fighter seem very viable. Convair began to explore a fighter for the navy's "Mobile Base" planners.

Convair's initial design looked very English in its lines. The *Skate* never made it to full size, but working scale models were built. With offset/stepped cockpits (pilot above and to the right, a radar man inside the fuselage to the left), swept flying surfaces and flowing lines, the *Skate* resembled many Supermarine and Hawker jet designs.

Convair turned from the *Skate* at the last to submit the delta-winged, twin-jet XF2Y-1 *Sea Dart* for which they received the go-ahead. Another departure from the *Skate* and England's SR.A/1 was the *Sea Dart's* use of a retractable hydro-ski, instead of a shaped hydrodynamic under-fuselage. The NACA (precursor to NASA) felt the ski idea would permit higher speed shapes and Convair bought in to this.

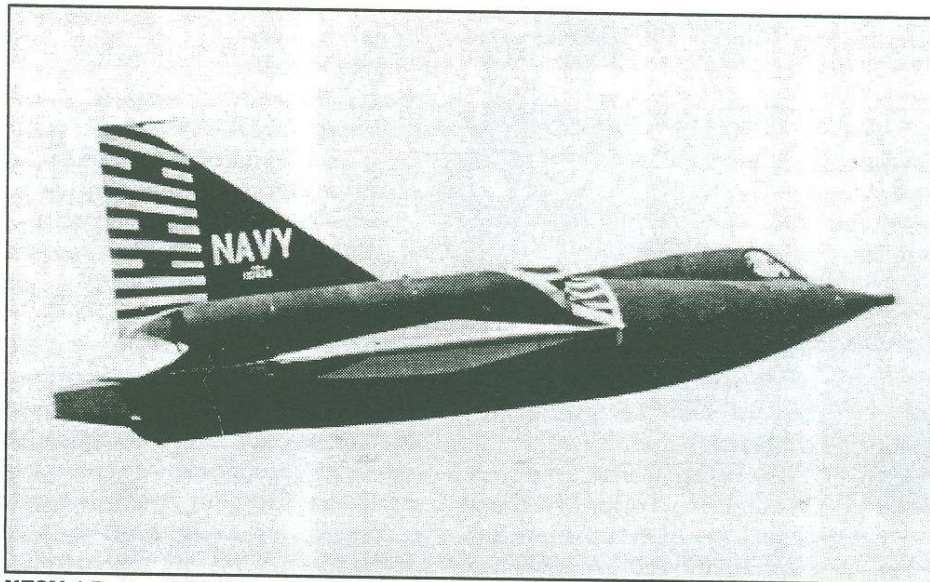
Five airframes were built, though only the first three *Sea Darts* flew, and the last two never received engines.

The XF2Y-1 *Sea Dart* debuted as a mobile, versatile modern fighter. Demonstrably capable of being based anywhere a large body of water existed, time showed that realizing this promise would be elusive. But, consider that Convair's YF-102 flew after the *Sea Dart*, and had the area rule lessons learned from the F-102 been applied to the final F2Y-1, the *Sea Dart's* history might have been different. Tested extensively from

1952 on until 1957, it wasn't to be, but not for lack of trying.

The technical problems of operating a jet based on salt water runways were neatly resolved for most part, and the design was able to go supersonic (Mach 1 in a shallow dive), only if the twin engines had had enough thrust. Navy evaluations confirmed the potential here, but this radical craft simply required more power, and later engines with afterburners emphasized this point.

Evidence further of the navy's confidence was the fact that, even after the #2 *Sea Dart* prototype disintegrated in mid-air over San Diego Bay on November 4, 1954, the program was continued. This plane was part of a three-plane, USN/Convair press/public demonstration of the "Mobile Base Concept." The Navy Accident Board determined that total airframe structural failure was brought on by pilot induced oscillations, not an inherent flaw in design or because of its sea water envi-



XF2Y-1 BuNo. 137634 in the air around San Diego. Note the yellow high-visibility markings, which were used for filmed evaluations of the plane's test flights.

rons. The program resumed.

Over 300 total test operations were made, including open sea takeoffs and landings, working with support ships (LSDs) as real combat missions would call for if the *Sea Dart* was deployed. The plane showed all around fine performance in the air and in the water (floating, taxiing).

What killed the *Sea Dart*, then?

Despite all its efforts, Convair was never able to satisfactorily overcome the problem of the incessant, intense pounding throughout the plane during takeoff and landing. Whether the sea state was calm or rough, or whether take off was made cross-wave, it made no real difference, even if single or double hydro-skis were heavily shock-damped. Service pilots would never be expected to work under such conditions.

After the navy gave up in 1956, Convair soldiered on to no avail through 1957. NACA's promising design idea simply didn't work realistically, and the resurgence of the aircraft carrier did nothing to help its chances.

Today you can see a preserved example of this beautiful blue sea bird with twin hydro skis extended mounted outside the San Diego Aerospace Museum.

Three kits are somewhat available for the *Sea Dart*, and there were four molds known to be done.

1:72 Convair XF2Y-1 *Sea Dart*, Airmodel # 183 (vacuform)
Advertised in the kit instructions as ideal for the neophyte

vacuform builder, nothing could be further from the truth with this model. No clues are given as to details of the engines or the intake/exhaust areas, and the hydro-skis are given a brief mention. The shape of model is too short as well; I've seen these built up and they do not look enough like real thing to be worth the effort. There are better choices out there now, so even if you get one free I could only recommend this kit as sanding practice. Pass, quickly!

1:60 *Strombecker XF2Y-1 Sea Dart*, mold of kit re-released as a limited edition by *RarePlane Detective* as kit # RDP01 (1989)

Long ago a hobby shop buddy brought in his original *Strombecker Sea Dart* for me to examine. Based on that experience I can concur with the review Steve Ginter did of this same mold; he built a *RarePlane Detective* kit edition for his *Sea Dart* book (Naval Fighters #23). If you get a hold of one of these kits and plan to build it, he recommends scrapping the skis and building your own. You make your own cockpit, too. Steve reports decals supplied with RPD01 kit are very nice, and are for the colorful yellow-trimmed "enhanced" test markings. The enhanced part is the large areas of solid yellow on the wings which contrast well against the dark sea blue background, and white details. He also says kit's actually a YF2Y-1, not an X. I'd say it's recommended. (P.S. Bring it to meeting un-built if you get one. I'd love to see this kit myself)

1:72 Convair YF2Y-1 *Sea Dart*, *Mach 2 Productions* 1991 ref. kit GP001 Inject molded, limited run

Steve Ginter (Naval Fighters book publisher) and Tommy Thomason (IPMS Tailhook Topics columnist) each built this kit for the N.F. #23 book. They differ on the satisfaction factor, with Ginter finding the ex-*Strombecker* 1/60 scale kit more satisfying and IPMS's Thomason going for *Mach 2*. The kit is a limited edition injection mold, and if you have any exposure to *Mach 2* kits then you already know their limitations. The fit problems are there in the fitting of wings to fuselage, fuselage halves, wing halves, engine nacelles to fuselage...well, you get the idea. None of the fits are especially bad, but the price of the kit is outrageous for the product delivered.

The shapes of all major parts are accurate when checked against the *Execuform* 1:72 scale plans, and as these are accepted as pretty good references, I use them for comparisons. The decals don't provide you with much, and the serial numbers and aircraft ID legends are not there. It's doubtful they'd be right anyway, as the box says this is the YF but the illustration shows the XF2Y, so *Mach 2* may not have a clue!

The truth is the mold is the afterburner-tailed YF2Y and the box art is wrong. The hydro-skis are usable, and the twin-ski design is provided. If you really hate vacuform kits, then this *Mach 2* product will be your salvation for getting a 1:72 scale *Sea Dart*, but there will be a very small amount of difference in the effort you must provide to complete this as opposed to *Execuform's* alternative product.

Recommended, but just barely.

1:72 scale YF2Y-1 *Sea Dart* by *Execuform* (vacuform, male mold)

This kit is actually a better value for the money than any other. At \$7 to \$10 retail, it's at least a third the cost of the *Mach 2* kit. If you took your *Mach 2* money and bought three of these and had no vacuform experience, you stand a better than even chance of completing a finer result. By building one, then taking your mistakes and difficulties into account to improve

upon for number two, by try #3 I bet you'd see that definitive *Sea Dart* come from working with this kit. You'll have spent same dollar amount either way.

This kit comes with a very good set of 1:72 scale line drawings of both the "Y" and "X" versions. Detail views are given for the beaching dolly, the dual ski gear for used with *Sea Darts* #2, #3 and the single ski and dual ski fittings for the "X" model. The instruction sheets' text and line drawings have many little important bits that you can use even if you build the *Mach 2* kit and just get this kit for cheap reference material. The kit is noted as having been molded as the YF2Y-1 version, and the kit instruction writer suggests experienced vacuform builders could use the plans to help in cutting away and rebuilding the tail to make the XF2Y-1. Also handy is the provision of an extra belly, molded in single piece, for use in building the skis and fuselage bays for insertion in the fuselage later. You can make your errors here and have no grief when finished.

The molding is good if basic looking, and the parts breakdown is thoughtful. The vertical stabilizer/rudder is separate of the fuselage halves, and the engine intakes and exhausts also are separate fittings. There are no decals, but most markings can be had from generic U.S. Navy decals with only the serial/ID legends being problematic. (The "easier" injection molded *Mach 2* kit has this same problem) For special yellow trim markings, decal and/or paint will have to be done by you (again, same as with the *Mach 2* kit.). This kit fulfills the advertising hype of its *Airmodel* vacuform predecessor, with no hype. Recommended.

References for the *Sea Dart*

Convair XF2Y-1 and YF2Y-1 Sea Dart by B.J. Long, ca 1992 Steve Ginter Publishing

Naval Fighters book number 23 (N.F. #23) in the very good series by Ginter is THE one reference to have. It's reasonably priced, provides four good glossy color photos for markings references on the covers, and inside covers very thoroughly the five *Sea Darts* built. Interiors, skis, in-action shots, and even a fine sequence of shots that lead you through the fateful day of #2's demise are included. The author's credentials are fabulous, as he was a *Sea Dart* test pilot and knew well the other people involved. His writing is fine, and the photos all are black and white, but you get details galore with them. Also (as with all the books in this series), a mini review section with photos of built-up models is included. There aren't many true bargains, but this book is one of them. Get it.

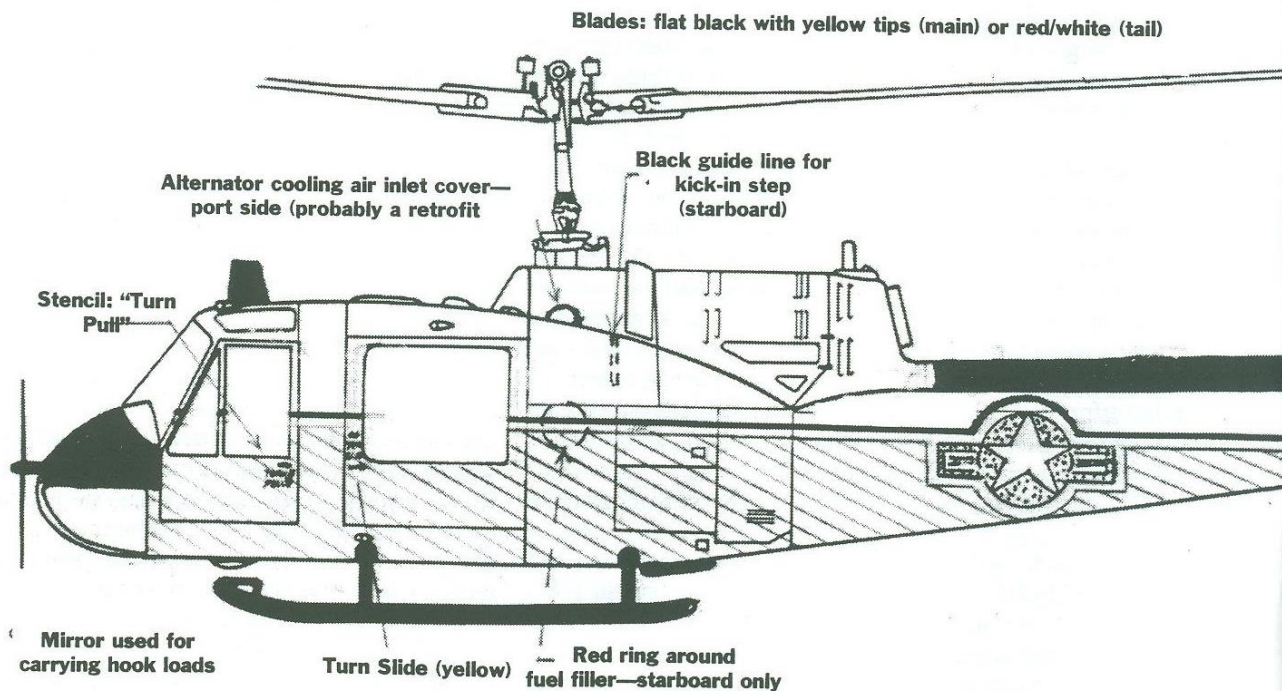
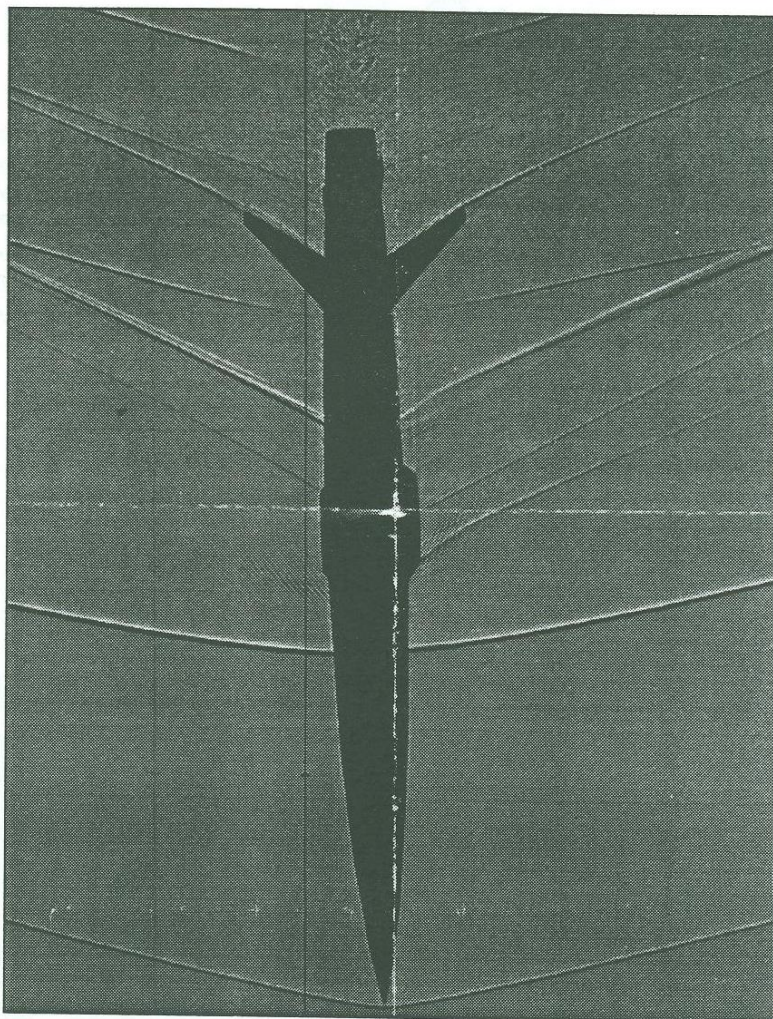
Delta Wings - Convair's High Speed Planes of the '50s & '60s by C. Mendenhall

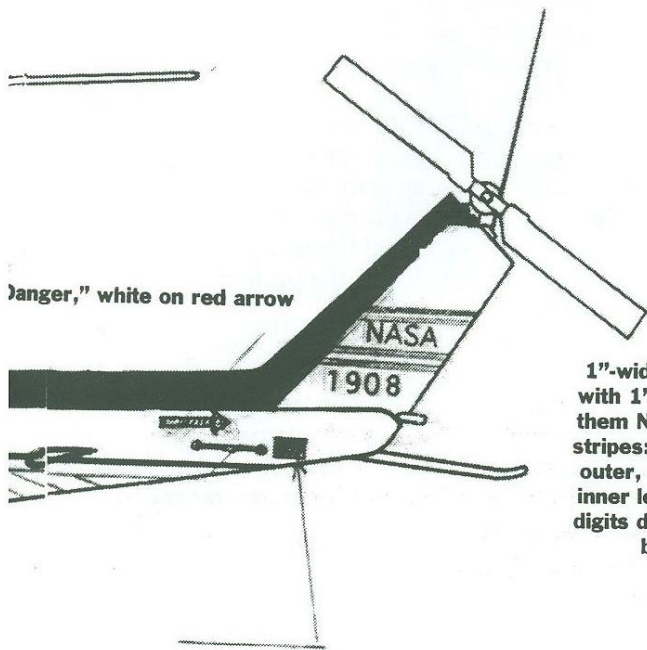
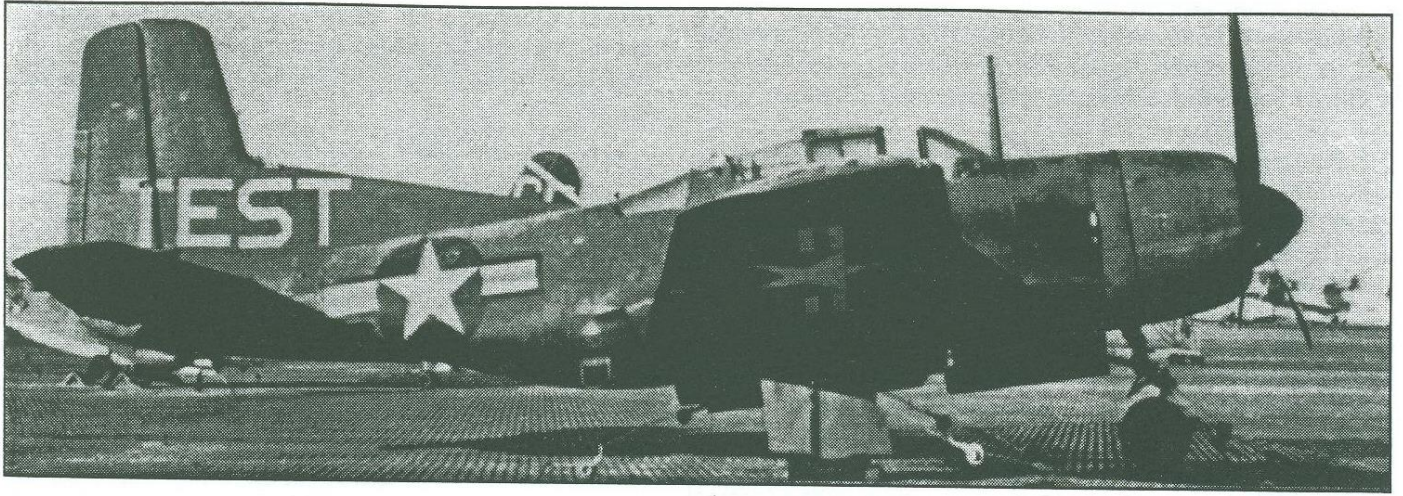
No color shots, but the single chapter on the *Sea Dart* has 17 pages of text and photos, and a multi-view line drawing. An interesting feature are the illustrations of the immediate predecessor, the *Skate* seaplane fighter with its "English" aero design influences. The text includes analyses by the author, the navy and Convair of the design's performance and potential. In the back of the book is a complete mini-history of the *Sea Dart* family, as there were planned production follow-ons with serial numbers issued, so confident were the navy and Convair that the *Sea Dart* could be made to work

I've now taken us halfway through the Convair delta wings. A look at a *Dagger* is next, a *Hustler* to follow and, finally, we'll close on the same note as we opened, with a *Dart*.

Hangars-on: a pictorial supplement to 'Memories of Moffett'

Bob Miller's monthly column takes a break this month so that we can bring you some images we simply couldn't fit into past issues. At right is a shadowgraph of the aerodynamic shape NACA dropped to study transonic and supersonic aerodynamics (See "The Day the NACA Bombed Milpitas," March 1995). At the top far right is one of the rarer of NACA's test birds at Moffett, a BTD-1 resplendent in its test markings. Below is a schematic depicting the coloration of the NASA UH-1B Bob Wrote about last month, and at the bottom far right is the helicopter hauling the PAET (Planetary Atmosphere Entry Test) package.

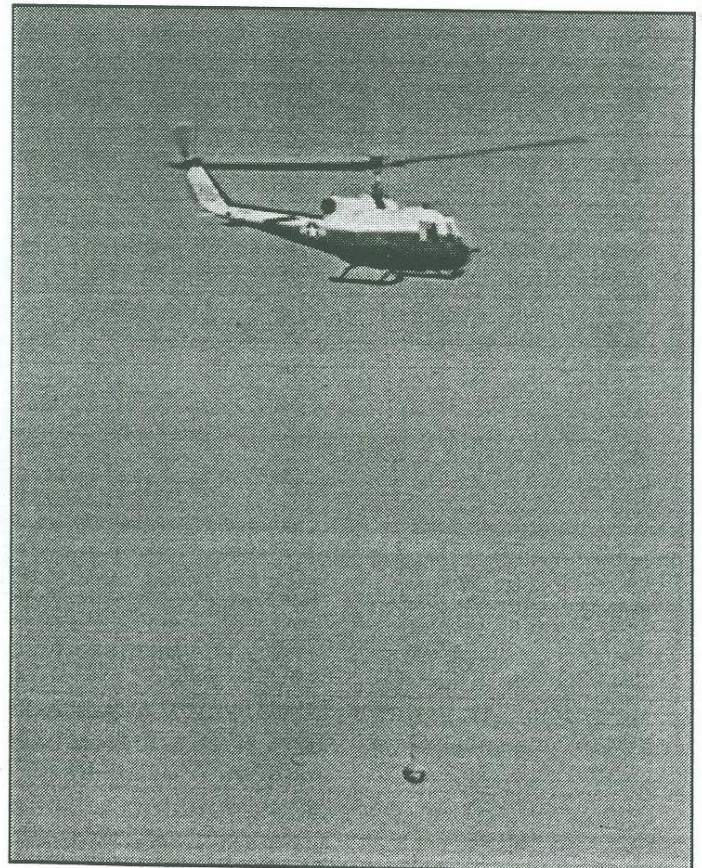




"Danger, white on red arrow"

1"-wide stripes with 1" between them NASA blue stripes: light blue outer, dark blue inner letters and digits dark NASA blue

"Antenna: Do not push" or similar words on black



M60A3

Continued from page 1

The turrets are identical, except that *Minicraft* didn't include a wind sensor mast since the M60A1 didn't have one. You can either borrow one from *Tamiya's* kit or fabricate one from scratch. The ball part on to is removable on the real thing, being stowed inside the turret.

The mast goes on the left rear corner of the turret. According to one National Guard tank crewman, the wind sensor mast was made to stick a canary cage on during an NBC threat, and, if the bird croaks, you should don your pro-mask!

The commanders cupola is incorrect on *Tamiya's* M60A3. On the right side of the gun mount, there is supposed to be a molded-in part which belongs (I think) to the elevating mechanism of the .50 caliber machine gun. Once again, *Minicraft* solves the problem with a new piece. The design of the gun tube is the same for both kits, with the mantle being in two main parts that leave you no choice as to the position of the gun. *Tamiya* does include an extra gun tube with a thermal shroud.

One quick note: the sight telescope cover (*Minicraft* part D36) should be switched with part D37 if an -A3 is being built, as

this has the correct rounded shape.

Next, we move to the accessories. *Tamiya* includes a commander figure and a few track shoes. It also includes a sparsely detailed driver's compartment. Decals consist of a vehicle from the 5th Infantry Division with blue REFORGER style number panels and markings for a Marine Corps M60A1 (complete with a snorkel).

In addition, a piece of string is provided for tow cables. *Minicraft* provides you with a number of jerry cans, canvas bundles, cots (useful for any tank being modeled; one of the Guard crewman even had a folding bed strapped to his tank) and three rucksacks with (gasp) frames!

Also included are spare track blocks, road wheels, and crew members that aren't even worthy of the scrap box. Decals consist of two different Marine Desert Storm markings. Both kits include wire mesh for the bustle rack.

Also included in both kits are parts for a Xenon infra-red search light, but since the advent of the TTS, -A3's generally don't carry it.

No matter which kit you build, I would recommend buying *Tamiya's* Modern U.S. Accessories kit. Included in this kit are a whole mess of nifty little goodies such as 105mm and 120mm tank rounds, ammo crates and hoffman devices.

Assembling the kit is pretty straightforward. I chose to "activate" the suspension. This makes the model much more interesting to the viewer and the process is easy, too. Each suspension arm has a raised peg on the portion that is inserted into the hull. That peg locks the arm into place if you want the tank to sit on flat ground.

To make these arms moveable, simply cut off the pegs. However, be sure not to activate the suspension so much that the tracks won't fit! Also be sure to lengthen the shock absorbers, which are mounted on the first two arms as well as the rear two.

One major fit problem occurred on the lower hull section. Parts B1 and B2, the upper portion where the return rollers mount, have large seams which must be filled. There are also a lot of gaps back behind the drive sprockets. The rear fenders have what appear to be equipment tie-down handles mounted around the outside. None of the M60A3s I've seen have these, so I sanded them off, being careful not to sand the three bolts on the outer edge.

The gun tube comes in two halves. Needless to say, the resulting seam was very aggravating. Since the detail on the smoke grenade launchers is rather poor, I chose to make covers for them out of tissue paper. The rest of the assembly went as per instructions.

All in all, the kit builds into a very nice replica of the M60 and I highly recommend it.

For those of you who swear by *Tamiya*, you might be pleasantly surprised.

I know I was.

I modeled my M60 with a dozer blade, described below. I chose the three-tone paint

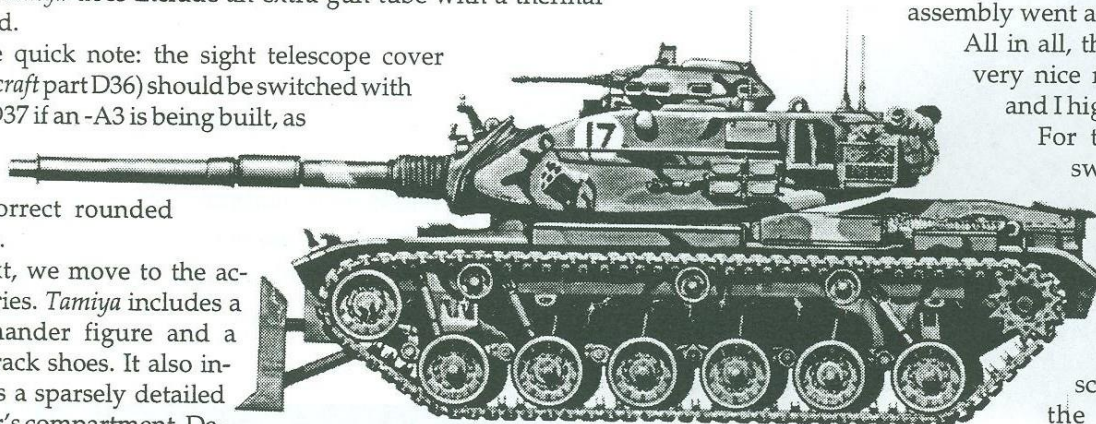
scheme carried by most

NATO armor these days, using *Tamiya* flat black (XF-1), olive green (XF-58) and dark tan (FS 30219). I then added MILES gear using paper and styrene rod cut into disks for the individual sensors.

Opting for a REFORGER tank, I muddied it up (REFORGER exercises were generally held in the fall/winter during wet season), draped camo netting on the turret and gun tube, and stuck identification plates on the turret side and bustle rack. I then stuck a mix of *Verlinden* and *Tamiya* tank crewmen in the open hatches, slightly modifying the uniforms to represent the nomex tanker coveralls.

Next, we'll discuss *Verlinden's* dozer blade kit. It costs around \$30, depending on where you go. If you build armor and happen to see one of these kits laying around, grab it, because it is no longer on *Verlinden's* catalog and I got the last one at San Antonio. This kit contains the dozer blade, its mountings, the reservoir, new headlight fixtures and a collection of tubes and rods.

It's actually a pretty decent kit, all things considered. I have only two major peeves about the kit: first off, nearly every step if the instructions calls for the use of brass wire. However, my kit came with only about an inch of the stuff! Thanks a lot, Mr. *Verlinden*! Secondly, the moldboard, which fits on the glacis plate was molded in a very stupid way. The excess resin is at the bottom of the piece, requiring hours upon hours of sand-



ing so that it will sit flush on the bow the way it's supposed to. I never did get it right. If you are one of those totally incompetent people when it comes to working with resin (such as myself), then this kit will definitely be a challenge. *Verlinden* was nice enough to include some helpful photos on the instruction sheet.

One tricky part is mounting the reservoir (the large box with the hoses coming out of it on the left rear fender). You have to break out the Dremel tool and cut out that whole portion of the model, which is a gamble with a \$30 piece of plastic!

Then, if you are lucky, the reservoir, which includes a replacement piece of fender, will fit. I lucked out this time.

Next, you will have to cut a square hole on the inside of the curved portion of the fender, about halfway down, for the tubes. These tubes run underneath the hull and terminate somewhere. My guess is as good as yours as to where; I couldn't find any pictures of that section of the tank.

When installing the new headlights, be sure to use the kit headlight guards (B18 and B19) for the part that extends over

the fenders, but cut off the part that extends out around the actual headlights. The locator hole for this section should be filled with putty. Once that is finished, you can stick the blade on. DRY FIT EVERYTHING!

Getting the blade to line up with everything is a pain, but the result is well worth the effort. Everybody builds M60s, but how often do you see one with a dozer blade.

That's the kit. If you build it, good luck and may the force be with you.

One last thing: in Vietnam, M48s were fitted with a blade as well. The blade and most of the other components are identical, except there are more external hoses and wires on the M48-mounted blades. With some extensive modifications to the moldboard, you could have a truly unique kit and a neat conversion.

Author's note: I would like to say so long and thank you to all the members (and non-members) of SVSM. I've learned a lot from you guys. August's meeting will be my last as I have joined the Army and will ship out to Fort Benning, Georgia on August 22 for basic training. I've had a blast!

Italeri's F4U-5N: better than you've heard

By Chris Bucholtz

At the Nationals, I noticed at least two very neatly-done F4U-5N *Corsairs*, built from *Italeri's* new 1:72 offering. As a *Corsair* freak, I can tell you that this is the first really good mass-produced Dash 5—but it has its problems.

These problems aren't as horrible as the word of mouth makes them out to be, and any experienced modeler should be able to fix them without much difficulty.

I haven't gotten around to building the Dash 5 yet, but I can list the problems that suggest themselves at a quick look.

1. The fuselage is about 18 scale inches too short. If you add a plug made from strip styrene, you should be able to lengthen the fuselage without too much problem.

2. The exhaust hiders on the sides of the fuselage are not angled, as the kit portrays. They should be parallel to the fuselage, so sand away the raised (!) mounting points and glue them on the way they should be mounted.

3. The oil coolers had curved vanes instead of the straight ones in the kit.

4. Reliable sources tell me that the propeller hub is totally inaccurate, and the quest is already on to find someone who can cast a decent resin prop (like for the B-50 *Superfortress*? Or the A-1 *Skyraider*? Anybody?).

Other than that—and some overly-emphatic ribbing in the wheel wells - this is an excellent kit. My copy had a small pin

mark in the wing leading edge, but the rest of the model is quite clean. The cockpit is the correct, full-floored version for the Dash 5, and the detail inside the cockpit is very nice (this is something I almost NEVER say about kit cockpits). The engine face comes as part of the front cowling piece; I plan to clean this out with a motor tool and add a replacement engine. But the rest of the F4U-5N equipment is here, including flash hiders on the cannon and a well-molded radome.

This kit comes as the F4U-5N night fighter, with decals for a Marine bird and Korean ace Guy Bordelon's *Corsair*. The decals are very nice, with Bordelon's stars-and-bars printed

in the proper baby blue (unlike those from a certain aftermarket company that apparently used black and white photos for research).

A F4U-5N is neat, and I plan to build one. But you can also build a straight Dash 5, just by removing the flash hiders on the cannon, the flash shields on the fuselage and the radome and altering the antenna array. Or, the F4U-5NL all-weather fighter can be built by adding de-icer boots and rearranging the antennae. Or, with some appropriate bumps,

the F4U-5P recon bird. The *Italeri* kit supports all of these modifications.

You may have heard people talking about how badly flawed this kit is, but, for about \$8, the flaws are easy to take. Thanks to *Italeri* for bringing out the first new 1:72 *Corsair* in almost 20 years. Could an AU-1 be far behind?



An F4U-5 in flight. The troublesome F4U-5s made just six operational cruises, on *Midway*, *Coral Sea*, *Franklin D. Roosevelt* and *Wasp*

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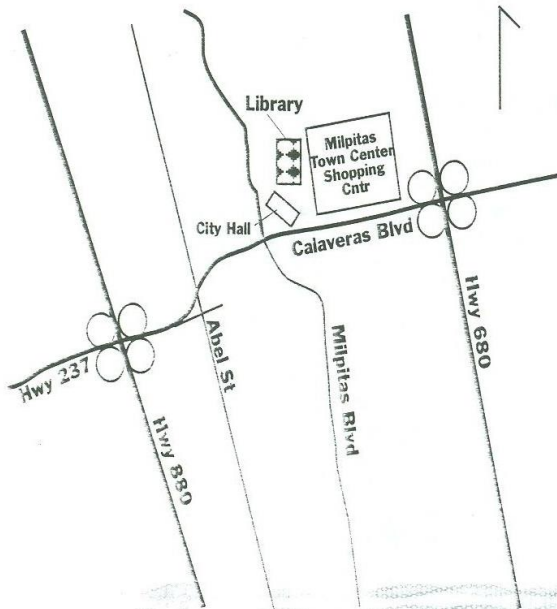
AUGUST MINUTES

At the July meeting, we talked too long about the regional judging committee—we apologize! The vote on that will be put off until September. In other business, HobbyTown USA is holding its twice-yearly contest on September 30. The U.S.S. *Hornet* is open for tours Thursdays and Saturdays through October 14; they hope to raise \$40,000 to save her from the scrap yard. Thanks go out to *Monogram Models*, who donated two more of their Pro Modeler edition kits to our raffle, and to D&J Hobby, which contributed five posters. Also, thanks to Paul Ward for the *Minicraft* kit of the first locomotive, which we auctioned.

Some upcoming dates: Saturday and Sunday, September 16 and 17, San Diego is holding its event (Info: Mark Knowlton, (619) 585-9948). Sunday, September 24, the Region IX meeting is being convened at the Castle Air Museum Banquet Room; Dennis Bruno says he'll try to arrange things so it won't be just a dry business meeting. Plus, there are real airplanes! Everyone is invited to attend. (Info: Dennis Bruno, (209) 673-3208.) HobbyTown USA's contest is Sept. 30. The Regional contest will be in Redding on Saturday, October 21 (Info: Harold Offield, (916) 221-5716). Fremont is holding its contest on Sunday, November 12; call Roy Sutherland for details at (510) 494-9404. And Sacramento is planning their contest for Dec. 10 (info: Dennis Trimble, (916) 363-6650).

In model talk, Ralph Patino showed that he can actually build a kit (instead of just using sheet styrene) by displaying five neat cars, including two Richard Petty stockers, a 63-1/2 Galaxy and the stock car Terry Bradshaw and Mel Tillis dumped in a swimming pool in the cinematic epic *Cannonball Run*. Geoff Krueger, in his last meeting before trooping off to army basic training, showed a model he'd built before coming to the club, a P-51 by *Monogram*, and an A-6E TRAM from the *Fujimi* kit that he'd made after joining the club, showing a seamless (and I do mean seamless) transition between pre- and post-SVSM periods. Geoff also tricked out *Minicraft's* M60A3 Patton (see story, page 1). Jim Gordon carved a real wooden propeller and wing skids for his 1:72 *Airfix* Dr.I, and he scratchbuilt the tiny interior and machine gun covers. He built his 1:35 Panzer IV from *Tamiya* out of the box with the exception of the zimmerit, which he applied using a modified soldering iron, burning the pattern into the hull! On a smaller scale but no less ambitious was his 1:72 *Stürmtiger*, a conversion of the *Airfix* Tiger complete with mortar shells, and his Me-163/262 hybrid, featuring the fuselage of one and the wings of the other and painted red as if to say "I'm weird und I'm proud!" Speaking of weird and proud, Mike Burton's entry into Redding's *Monogram* P-51 contest has been partially painted, and his XP-47H by *MPM* is nearing completion. If only he hadn't lost one of the propellers! Joel Rojas' never-ending F-8 *Crusader* has its fuselage ready for scribing; it will be a hybrid *Heller/Revell/Monogram* bird when it's finished. Chris Bucholtz has *MPM's* XF-85 *Goblin* assembled, save for the tailplanes; he's polishing the skin in preparation for a natural metal finish. Mark Hernandez showed off some parts for 1:32 kits from *Scratchbuilders*, a Me 410 (\$95) and a Shinden (\$74). Mike Williams scratchbuilt a Death Star gun tower, using "The Art of Star Wars" book and some clever tech-

niques. Mike drew out the patterns he wanted on computer, then ran thin sheet plastic through his printer. Viola! Pre-printed pieces to cut apart and assemble! Peter Wong's Kubelwagen is so old he doesn't remember who made the kit, but his *Monogram* F-4J in the colors of Randy Cunningham is brand-new. Ken Miller displayed parts from the F2H *Banshee* that crashed off of Skyline Boulevard in Saratoga back in the 1950s, and he also displayed his model of the plane built from the *Hobbycraft* kit. Tom Trankle's beautifully painted *Spitfire* Mk. I from the *Tamiya* kit is detailed with *Eduard* parts. Angelo Deogracias finished his M1 prototype in time for the IPMS Nationals, and painted it a deep, never-seen-the-sun green befitting a factory-fresh tank. Laramie Wright detailed the rather spartan *Minicraft* M551 Sheridan, adding appliqué armor and other details to depict a *Desert Shield* tank before it received its desert war paint. Laramie also displayed two I-16s, one in 1:48 by *Hobbycraft* and one a much older 1:72 *Revell* offering. Eric McClure had a pair of trains on the table, and he says that train stores are great places to pick up little detail pieces. He's also working in earnest on the old *Revell* P6M *Seamaster*, as an experiment in scribing, and is using *Polly-S* paints to spruce up the X-Men from his son's board game. Ben Pada's got four more 1:48 birds in the air, including the TC kit of the Tojo made from resin and metal. Benny also displayed Erich Hartmann's Me 109G-14, a *Hasegawa* Macchi 202 and *DML* Fw 190A-8 in JG 1 markings. For some reason, Dave Balderrama is building the godawful *KP* Tu-2, which he says belongs in a certain column, the name of which escapes me. He's also cranking out a *Monogram* P-51D, and he's rescribed a little tiny model of the Star Trek Enterprise. Brad Chun is building a *Monogram* 1:72 X-15, which he says has very little flash for such an old kit, but oh, those gaps! Kris Johns floated a *Monogram* Ensign Darwin, which awaits painting. Rich Pedro is toiling on a politically incorrect figure he picked up at the nationals which is giving him two problems: the assembly is tricky, and the model is in white resin, which makes it difficult to see where any seams are. Rich is also nearing completion of a *Monogram* Mirage 2000, and he'll be even nearer completion when he finds the landing gear and the tail cone. Randy Rothhaar has added a *Tom's Modelworks* nose and *Eduard* details to his in-progress *Monogram* Pro Modeler A-26, and his *Minicraft* Su-27 looks like another winner. He says the kit is almost perfect, the only problems being the intake and the back of the fuselage. Matt Matsushita displayed his F4F *Wildcat* with working landing gear, a project he's been toiling at since 1989. Jack Van Zandt sent dozens of bad actors to their doom, outfitting *Entex's* *Titanic* with lighted portholes and a "band" that plays the "Love Boat" theme. Bill Dye's *Javelin* by *Heller* was fresh from the spray booth, wearing gray and green camouflage. Cliff Kranz modified the *Airfix* B-29 to depict the Enola Gay, stripping and filling turrets and astrodomes to achieve an accurate effect. And the model of the month goes to... Bruce McBride's 1:12 scale house, which will serve as a display to illustrate the dangers of household lead poisoning. With lighted storyboards and a lot of beautiful scratchbuilding, Bruce's house is a deserving—and educational—winner!



Next meeting:
7:30 p.m.,
Friday,
September 15
 at the Milpitas
 Public Library,
 40 N. Milpitas Blvd.
 For more information, call the
 editor at (408) 247-2204



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