



Building Minicraft's Boeing 377 Stratocruiser

By Bill Abbott

Minicraft's Boeing 377 Stratocruiser in Pan Am markings is not a "fall together" kit, but none of the challenges are beyond a careful, thorough modeler.

The parts breakdown is about what you'd expect. On the plus side, it is a Boeing 377! There's a clear dome for all the forward windows, and the exhaust and turbosuperchargers are on the correct side for an airliner instead of being recycled KC-97 nacelles.

On the minus side, there are some assembly problems. The pegs and holes provided to align the nacelle halves on the bottom of the wing don't line up. You'll have to shave the pegs or drill your own holes. The locating peg between the vertical stabilizer halves is too long, and it will poke out the far side or get pushed out the side it's molded to unless it's cut down. The wing bottoms are smooth airfoils with two-piece nacelles and one-piece cowlings (which include the engines) that attaches to their fronts. The cowling/engine mounts to a geometric plane established by a nacelle shape molded onto the leading edge of the top half of the wing and the two nacelle pieces glued to the bottom half of the wing. With three pieces behind the firewall, there's plenty of opportunity to misalign something, as I did in the Pan Am bird I took to AI-2004.

The horizontal stabilizer doesn't fit to the fuselage on the bottom. The pieces will have to be very carefully carved to

fit. This leaves a slight gap on the top on my example. This is difficult to fill if your finish includes a white fuselage with a natural metal horizontal stabilizer. You have to carve and fill this seam before you paint.

The props are hopeless. One of the four blades has an almost-airfoil shape, a 45-degree root angle of attack and a 0 degree angle at the tip. In other words, it's in "full fine" pitch. The other

three blades are essentially flat with no twist. The main gear legs mount too far forward, and the small door that covered the gear strut (behind the big doors for the wheels) is missing, as is the cutout it covered in the nacelle!

Minicraft intended the modeler to mount the nose gear before joining the fuselage halves. You'll need to engineer a way to install it after you've sanded and painted.

The fit of the nose "fishbowl" to the front fuselage not perfect. To fix

it, shim the fuselage with .010 or .020 styrene strip to match the fishbowl at the top. Then, use applique shims on the outside of the fuselage at the lower part of the upper lobe, from the crease to the beltline.

The nose gear door is too long, as is the opening for it. Cut the door shorter and glue the leftover piece into the aft of the opening.

The wings are said to be too thick outboard the engines, the gear doors are too thick, the main gear tires and wheels are too narrow and the gear legs are both flimsy and inaccurate. The wing sockets in the fuselage are oversize and need careful



Bill finished his Boeing 377 Stratocruiser in white and natural metal Pan Am livery. Bill used a lot of elbow grease to bring the Minicraft kit up to spec.

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EDITOR'S BRIEF

As I find myself dealing with life of late, when my mind wanders I find that it has wandered to SVSM. Perhaps it's because I have a newsletter deadline that I have no interest in keeping, or because I recently went to the IPMS Nationals and had a great time, or possibly because the Web site, at this time, needs some semi-serious considerations for it to be what I want it to be. Of course the reason I have a deadline and had a blast at nationals and worry about the Web site is because I have chosen to make SVSM and IPMS important to me. The more I am involved with the club, the more rewarding the experience, I have found.

I love editing the Styrene Sheet even if sometimes I only love the part where I drop it in the mailbox. I enjoy Nationals, ironically, not because of models but, as with our monthly meeting, it is because I get to hang out with my friends who also like models—but at Nationals, I am on vacation.

SVSM is for me and I assume a lot of you (judging from your annual output of completed models) a place to see your friends. Who would have thought that a hobby that is so intensely solitary could generate such a strong social network? I truly have most of my fun when hanging out with my modeling buddies.

This hobby and these friendships are not without peril, however. Others might remember this event differently but I think this version is the most funny. On the way back from the Atlanta Nationals, three of us were sitting in the very back

of the plane. You know, those three seats that don't recline? Vladimir had his laptop open and we were looking at some of the photos that we took at Nationals.

A very attractive woman who was sitting in the aisle seat in front of us was standing because she was tired of all the sitting. She noticed Vladimir's laptop and began talking to us about computers. She wanted to get a new one but didn't know what to get. She usually used and preferred Macs but needed a Windows machine for work, etc. We talked for about 20 minutes about everything from computers to where we live, the cost of housing and, of course, the weather in those different cities.

Then she asked if we were in Atlanta for the Microsoft convention. I said "no, we were in Atlanta for the OTHER convention." She asked what convention I meant. I said, "Vladimir will tell you."

Vladimir did. She smiled and sat down. I said, "Well that shut her up."

Roy tried to make a save. "I build models professionally. I worked for George Lucas on Star Wars Episode I and II," he said.

She didn't say anything. I said, "No good, Roy. I think she saw those movies."

She did not talk to us for the rest of the trip.

— The Editor

CONTEST CALENDAR

August 20, 2005: **IPMS/Ontario** presents **MiniCon '05** at 225 East B Street, Ontario CA. For more information visit www.ipms-ontario.org or contact Al Parra at parratech@aol.com.

September 10, 2005: **The Reno High Rollers** host their **Annual Model Contest** at the Desert Heights Elementary School, 13948 Mt. Bismark, Reno/Stead, Western States, NV 89512. For more information contact Neil Hulse at KNK41063@aol.com.

November 5, 2005: **IPMS/Antelope Valley** hold their **Desert Classic IX** at the Antelope Valley College. For more details contact Mike Valdez at (661) 256-0410, or email him at mikevaldez151@msn.com

October 8, 2005: **IPMS Santa Rosa & IPMS Mt. Diablo** hosts its **Model Expo 2005** at the Sebastopol Veterans Memorial Building, 282 S.

High St, Sebastopol, CA. For more information contact Greg Reynolds at (707) 829-6304 or email him at ipmsgr@sbcglobal.net.

October 16, 2005: **IPMS/Orange County** present **OrangeCon 2005 - Region 8 Regional Convention** held at Anaheim Park Hotel - Fullerton, 222 W. Houston Ave., Fullerton, CA. For more information visit www.ipmsoc.org or contact Nat Richards at richa5011@aol.com

November 5, 2005: **IPMS/Antelope Valley** hold their **Desert Classic IX** at the Antelope Valley College. For more details contact Mike Valdez at (661) 256-0410, or email him at mikevaldez151@msn.com

December 3 2005: **IPMS/Silverwings** hold their **Holiday Classic** at the Elk Grove Middle School in Elk Grove, CA. For more information call Michael Scott at 916-351-2321.

THE ORANGE COUNTY CHAPTER OF THE INTERNATIONAL PLASTIC MODELER'S SOCIETY
presents

ORANGECON 2005

IPMS/USA REGION 8 REGIONAL MODEL CONTEST & VENDOR FAIR

DATE & TIMES

Sunday, October 16th

Open to the Public
9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Vendor Setup
8:00 AM to 9:00 AM

Model Contest Registration
9:00 AM to 11:30 AM

Contest Room Closed
12:00 PM to 2:00 PM

Awards Presentation
3:30 PM to 5:00 PM

LOCATION

Anaheim Park Hotel
222 W. Houston Ave.
Fullerton, CA

Located at the 91 Freeway and Harbor Blvd.

ADMISSION

General Admission \$ 7.00
Young Adult, Age 13-17 2.00
Junior, Age 12 & Under Free*

*When accompanied by a paying adult.

Model entries,
Adults \$ 1.00 each
Young Adults Free
Juniors Free

INFORMATION

IPMS Orange County
P. O. Box 913
Garden Grove, CA 92642
(949) 631-7142
web: www.ipmsoc.org
e-mail: ocipms@aol.com



Current IPMS/USA National Members can receive a \$ 2.00 discount on the General Admission by showing their current IPMS/USA Membership Card at the door.

Vendor Table Registration Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Tel: _____ Fax: _____

Vendor Tables: 30 x 96 in
Undraped

Price per table: \$ 50.00

Please reserve _____ tables.

Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Return this completed coupon along with a check or money order made payable to IPMS Orange County, c/o Nat Richards, P. O. Box 5263, Irvine, CA 92616.
Vendor tables must be reserved in advance, none will be available at the door.

California law requires that all vendors possess a valid California Resale Permit, and a copy be on file with our event.
Please enclose a copy of your permit with your payment. Temporary, "One Day" permits are available upon request.

Nationals Lampoon's—Model Vacation

By Chris Bucholtz

On Tuesday, July 19, I boarded a plane from Oakland at about 5:45 a.m. for my journey to Atlanta for the nationals. This annual pilgrimage always involves a late night the evening before the trip, because I am one of those weird types called a “vendor.” The tradition calls for me to bring three bags: one big one full of merchandise, a second big one with my clothes and any extra merchandise I couldn’t fit in the first bag, and a carry-on with my model entries and any extra merchandise I couldn’t fit in bags one and two. That third bag is also to be carried very gingerly. For God’s sake, it has models in it! Careful!

I checked in at the America West desk and rushed over to the nightmarish security line at Oakland, noting that it looked light now but was filling up fast. When I got to the front of the line, I realized that I’d left my itinerary and my in-flight reading back at the America West desk. I got out of line, grabbed my itinerary (sitting right where I’d left it atop the self-check-in kiosk) and got back in the security line, which was now 300 feet longer than it had been when I first got in line. Briefly, I understood what Roy Sutherland’s life is like.



Ladies - your escorts for this evening... SVSMers at the hospitality suite. Any company that hands out free beer and prizes is okay by me. Even Obscureco!

I went through the security striptease, taking off my shoes, jacket and belt and putting them in one the standard grey tub. I waddled up in my stocking feet to the conveyor belt and put the tub and my bag full of incredibly delicate models in place. Before I could say anything to the TSA worker standing there, she took my model bag and brusquely flipped it on its side! I began to stammer like Ted Knight as Judge Smails in “Caddyshack,” then realized she really did not care what I had to say and that nothing was going to be accomplished by my making an ass of myself at the airport. I skulked to the end of the conveyor belt,

The Waverly is pretty swanky and the indoor balconies have spectacular suicide potential for after the awards ceremony. Fortunately there was no awards ceremony.

gently righted the model bag and resumed my fully-clothed state for the flight.

The flight itself was fine. I got in at 4:30 local time in Atlanta, grabbed my bags and went in search of a taxi. Upon leaving the terminal, I realized two things: one, the taxi line was about 400 people long (a technology trade show was also starting Wednesday), and two, Atlanta in July is hotter than two rats fornicating in a wool sock. Good God! Why did the north fight so hard for this place? I now understand why Sherman wanted to burn it: as a public service to spare the residents from living in such an oppressively humid hellhole. By the time I reached my cab I was thoroughly drenched. It was like disembarking from a log flume ride

filled with water heated to 130 degrees. After a pricey cab ride, I checked in to the rather posh Waverly and immediately took a shower. After I turned the air conditioning to max.

Tuesday night involved relaxing. I watched an HBO documentary about the Boston Red Sox and inspected the models, which were not broken, then went down to the sports bar in the lobby and grubbed out on the pub food they served there. At about 10 p.m., I heard something familiar and discovered that Mike Reeves and Scott Brown, two of the loudest modelers on earth and partners in the new Afterburner Decals, had just

arrived. The three of us judged together a number of years ago and have been nationals drinking buddies ever since. I caught up on a number of inconsequential controversies, talked a little modeling and then decided to turn in to rest up for the first big day of the show.

Wednesday - I woke up at about 8:30, did 100 push-ups and 75 sit-ups and went downstairs, where I ran into Jim Clark and Craig Davis, two more Phoenix guys who we've caroused with at various nationals and a couple of Lancaster shows. We wandered up to where the show was scheduled to open later, and the registration area was already starting to get busy. There were a number of familiar faces around, like Paul Cotcher and James Corley, who were up to their not-inconsiderable derrieres in work, since they were two of the head honchos for the contest. Soon, I ran into Nat Richards, a member of the Orange County Club, and we went downstairs for lunch at "Jocks and Jills," a sports pub in the mall downstairs from the event site that would be plagued by modelers for the next several days. Nat works for Yanks Air Museum, which is planning a big move to a new site; they also have such interesting items as an F11F-1 Tiger and an A-4C Skyhawk that's on the civilian register. With about an hour left until the show opened, I thought it wise to get my junk on the vendor table and prepare for the onslaught.

To get to the vendor registration area, I had to go outside. This became my number one thing to avoid while in Atlanta. The convention hall itself was very comfortable, in contrast to the outdoor environment. I checked in, went to my table and threw all the resin bits out where they could be seen by the public. Then, I wandered around and saw a few of my fellow vendors: Alex Bernardo of Cobra Company, Jerry and Judy Crandall from Eagle Editions, Jack Morris of Hotel Sierra Decals and JMDC, and many others. Next door to me was Dave Roof of Marine Corps fame, and Brett Green of Hyperscale popped by for a bit. Meteor Productions had 40 tables, and so had its own cult-like compound toward the middle of the room. Cobra Company trumped them by having the cockpit of an OV-1



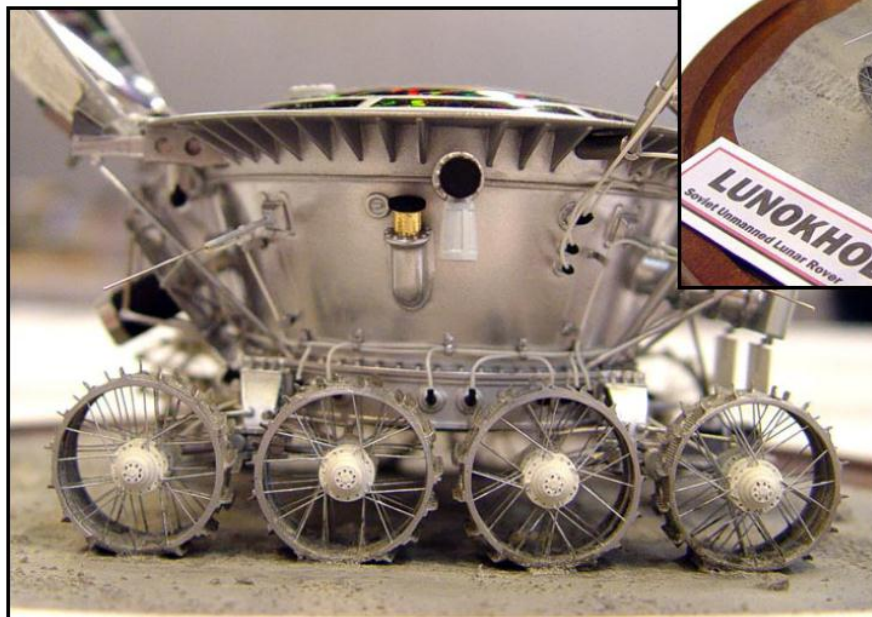
The vendor room had over 400 tables giving the attendees a wide selection of products they could get anywhere else for exactly the same price!

Mohawk backed against the wall by their booth.

When the time came, the PA announced that there were five minutes until the show opened, people scurried to their tables as if someone had called general quarters on a ship. The next few hours were a blur of sales and discussions with many, many people. Walt Fink and George Cully, two very respected and long-time IPMS members, both renewed their subscriptions to



George Lee won best of show with this amazing Lunokhod Moon rover that was entirely scratch built.



the *Styrene Sheet* that evening. The room closed at 7 p.m., at which time I packed up and took my merchandise to my room, along with a decent-sized wad of currency. As always, Wednesday was a good day.

That evening, I chatted with Jack Kennedy,

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Decaling the Aviation Usk 1:72 F2G Corsair

By Rodney Williams

Several years ago, I built two 1:72 Aviation Usk F2G Corsairs kits and turned them into racing planes. These kits came with the decals for Cook Cleland's red and white racer Number 57. I had Dave Newman make the decals for Number 74, including the white squares for the cowling.

After WW II ended in 1945, the air races resumed in 1946 at the airport in Cleveland, Ohio. Cook Cleland, who was an ex-WW II Navy pilot, purchased four F2G Corsairs. These aircraft were referred to as racers Number 57, 74, 84, and 94.

The most difficult part of making these models into Cleveland racers was the decals. The markings on these planes were extensive and certainly not available on any commercially-produced decal sheets. That left it to me to make the decals myself – or at least enlist the help of some people who knew how.

When making your own decals, you first should have some art talent so you can duplicate certain names and logos which were on the real aircraft. Work from photographs, if at all possible. On a few occasions, I've found mistakes on drawings, such as misspelled names and wrong numbers.

It was rather easy to make the block type letters and numbers for Number 84, and Number 94. I sent Dave some sizes for these aircraft, and Dave printed up some samples. I just cut them out and lined them up on each model. If these samples needed to be reduced and/or enlarged, I let Dave know. The end results were excellent.

During its lifetime, racer Number 18 had three separated color schemes. In 1949, Ron Puckett repainted his F2G a two-tone color scheme of medium blue and light gray. He added the name "Miss Port Columbus" on both sides of the cowling, along with the names "Shirley" and "Betty." These three names were gray. I acquired the photos of the cowling from Al Keller in the early 1990s.

I scanned in the 1949 paint scheme drawing and then enlarged the name of "Miss Port Columbus" to about four inches wide and printed it out on plain paper. I took tracing paper, laid it on top of my printed copy and traced over the outline. I then scanned this new drawing into my computer. With the help of my grandson Jonathan, we filled the inside

of the name with a gray color. We did the same thing for the names "Betty" and "Shirley."

For the data blocks that were on both sides of the fuselage just under the canopy, I sent Dave a photo, and some measurements as to what I thought would be the right size. Dave printed them and, again, they fit perfectly.

Jonathan and I designed the "B G" spark plug and the "Ambrite Products" logos, and applied the colors. We had an accurate "SOHIO" logo on an old Superscale railroad decal sheet with the correct color of red laid over a plain white background. The Aviation Usk "Sohio" logo had black and red colors over a white background, which is wrong. The "Kendall Oil" logo, which was on most of the F2Gs, came on the kit's decal sheet.

We reduced the original 1949 three-view drawing of Number 18 so that one half of the kit's fuselage would fit to perfection on top of the drawing. We enlarged the wing drawing in the same manner so that the kit's wing's fit was next to perfect. We looked at the real photos and then at the drawings to see if they were a perfect match, or at least very close. All I had to do was to measure the height and width of the fuselage, wing and rudder numbers and letters.

All of these applications were recorded when I made up everything for racer Number 74. I kept all of Dave's notes on how to change things so he could print everything correctly. Dave wanted all the measurements in thousandths of inches. I used my micrometer, and presto, the job was finished. We repeated the above process for racer Number 84 and Number 94.

Cook owned and flew F4U-4 "Lucky Gallon," Number 92, in 1946. Lo and behold, Dave had made these decals before. I had some photos for another F4U-4 by the name of "JOE 99." Dave made them up, including "JOE 90." I hope to build "JOE 90" soon.

If you care to acquire more data on the racing F2Gs, go to the web site of The Society of Air Racing Historians at www.airrace.com. The site has several photos of these racers, plus the history on each aircraft. The site also includes Cook's racer "Lucky Gallon."

For an in-depth review of the F2G, I have a four-part story on how I built my crashed F2G, and three stories on the history



Cook Cleland's red and white F2G Corsair air-racer. Since Rodney converted the Aviation Usk kits to racers from "standard" F2Gs, he needed markings not included in the kit, so he made his own.

of the F2Gs, including one story on how I built racers Number 57 and Number 74. My articles can be seen on the Aircraft Resource Center Web site at http://aircraftresourcecenter.com/Gal-Fea%20Archives/Prop/F2G_Racing_Corsair/F2G.htm.

Go back to ARC's "Prop" category and look for my 1:72 DC-3 "POLYNESIAN AIRLINES" model. It will show you how Jon and I made the art work so that Dave Newman could make my "palm tree" logo and other decals.

If you want to view racer #57 in 1:32 scale, just pop over to the Skywriters website in England at www.skywriters.net.

All of my 1:72 F2G racing models were at last year's SVSM contest. If you have any questions, you can reach me by email at rjw07@mindspring.com



Miss Port Columbus in her two tone paint scheme. Rodney used photos like this to create the artwork that would be used in making his custom decals.



Sometimes a Big Plug is just what you need. Rodney drew his own art and then had the image reduced and printed on decal paper.



After creating and printing all the decals, they were applied to Number 18. The results are quite convincing.

All the markings on Number 18 were either masked and painted or created with custom decals.

Rodney Williams has been building plastic models since 1977 but was building flying stick models as far back as 1937. He has been a member of SVSM since 1984. Rodney's prefers to build jet and prop aircraft, especially the F2G.



Reworking Minicraft's 1/144 Stratocruiser

Continued from page 1

filling and sanding. The engraved detail is not crisp, and the engraving of lower fuselage door is very poor. The exhaust pipes have a square or rectangular cross section instead of being round.

The kit is also missing some major items. There is no engine detail, just a flat filler and the nose of the reduction gear box inside a too-shallow cowl. There are no antennae, no astrodome/periscope sextant window (either as clear parts or in decals), no navigation lights, beacons or landing lights, and no cockpit detail at all. Despite the clear cockpit windows, decals are used for the fuselage windows. There is no intake in the vertical stabilizer leading edge for the de-icer combustion heater, and the cowl flap detail is weak.

Building a respectable model from this kit, as I did, requires some effort...

Basic cut-out, clean-up and first-pass gluing took about an hour. I then spent a relaxing evening sitting on the sofa watching TV while assembling the nacelle pieces (and I got the mounting plane for the #2 engine wrong, so it's got some degrees of up-thrust). My first 30 minutes of work on the horizontal stabilizers

got them to fit, but left huge gaps on the underside; sanding off material at 45 degrees was too much work, so I filled the gap, sanded the area back to shape and tried again. Eventually I shaped them to fit the root shapes provided. At least the seam is in the right place for the painted fuselage/natural airfoil combination to come later. There's a sink mark in the fuselage above the slot for the mounting tab that I'd have filled if I'd spotted it in time.

The seams where the lower nacelle halves meet the bottom of the wing are extensive and hard to fill, as are the wing-to-fuselage sockets. In both cases I used my favorite thinned putty slurry, a mix of Squadron Green and White putties to give the same tonal value as the plastic, thinned with Aero Gloss Dope Thinner. This has lots of bite and brushing consistency, which allows you to build it up as thick as you want, where you want. I flowed it around the nacelle/wing joints and then sanded with 220/400/600 wet-dry paper wrapped over the end of a flat stainless steel rod. A small screw-driver, Popsicle stick or

trimmed sanding stick would work as well. Missing detail was restored with a narrow triangular file.

The complete lack of a cockpit bugged me, so I built one. It took about a year, part time. I used Nick Veronico's Airliner Tech book for reference, and thanks to Dana Kopher, of the Airline Modeler's Digest, who found me a contemporary color photo, I even got the seat colors for Pan Am, a light maroon/pink. Nobody can see any of it without a powerful light. I put a barrier coat of Future on the inside and outside of the clear part before gluing it to the fuselage. With Future over the part that must be clear, I have no fear of glue damaging the clear parts and I used my normal Testors Blue non-toxic liquid cement just as I had everywhere else.

I put a few laminations of 1mm (0.040) styrene under the cockpit floor to bring the instrument panel and seats to the right height; maybe I built them too low?

With a big nose weight, the cockpit and the fishbowl installed, the final smoothing, filling and sanding took a fair amount of effort. The mounting holes for the air-refueling hardware and nose radar have to be filled, and the clear piece-to-fuselage fit needed work. I should have shimmed the fuse-



With all the putty sanded down, Bill's Stratocruiser is almost ready for paint. Bill used strip styrene to create some stringer detail in the gear wells.

lage to fit the front dome, a .25 or .5mm (0.010 or 0.020) strip at the top would separate the fuselage halves so that they were as wide as the upper lobe of the clear bowl. The bottom of the clear piece is narrower than the lower half of the upper lobe of the opaque fuselage halves. That leaves an unpleasant .25mm (0.010") step. I had to work down the clear part to match the fuselage, while carefully avoiding the area that would be the aft cockpit window. Once I had everything smooth and the joint between clear and opaque reduced to near oblivion, I had to carve a panel line almost exactly over it to match the engraved line in the lower lobe of the opaque parts.

Next time, I might try 0.005 styrene sheets applied with liquid cement. Happy as I am with thinned putty, solid styrene makes a better filler, especially when you want it to look like bare metal. I suppose one could wet-sand the lower part of the fuselage halves. I'm not sure such a step wouldn't just make the lower part of the upper lobe not fit.

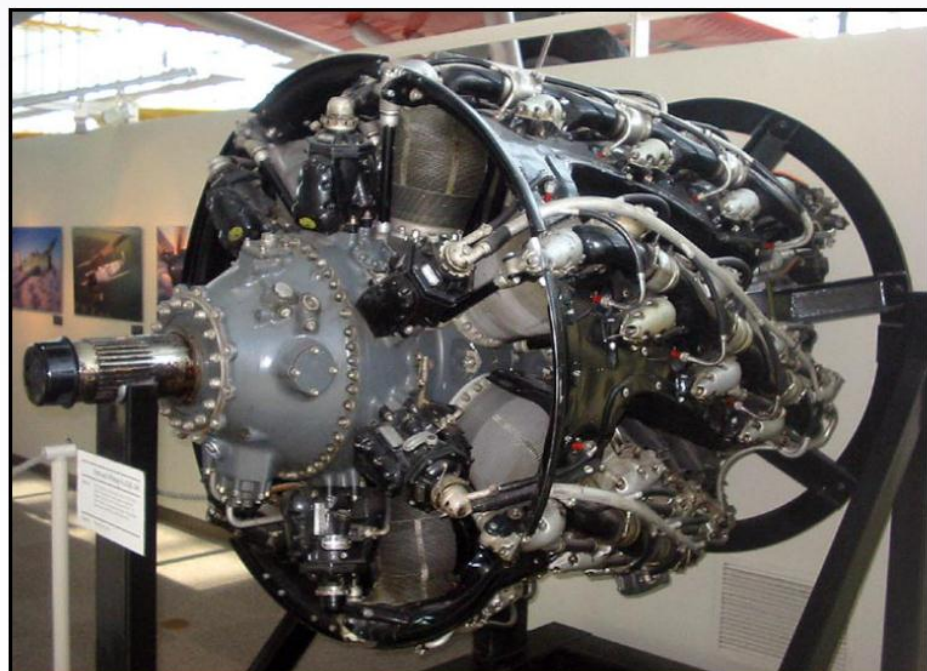
I also should have carved out the engine fillers and built

something when I started. Having read an Internet posting by someone who'd reduced a photo of an R-4360 and made four copies for the four engines, I did the next best thing, guessed that the 4360s at Pan Am were the seven-magneto version and put seven little bits of styrene rod in a symmetrical pattern around the gearbox nose. (4360s came with 4 X 7 cylinder magnetos and 7 X 4 cylinder magnetos.) This was not really to scale, but it was cheaper than the Cobra Company replacement engines. I still had to work with the kit props, which are junk. I tried sanding an airfoil into them, since they're so thick, but they have no twist and while you can sand in the twist you won't get the shape. I started to make my own props, but stopped and just used the kit items. They definitely detract. A brave soul could chop up the four props, assemble the four "good" blades into a single, good prop and then cast copies of it. The "hub" on the props is really the back part of the spinner, and the pointed front goes on the front of it, leaving an ugly seam. I've seen this fixed and it makes a big difference, but I ran out of time and just went with what I had.

I made up some stringer detail for the inside of the main gear wells (0.015 X 0.010 strip) and boxed them in fore and aft before carving the slot for the main gear into the back edge of the big openings. I used the Crown B-29 and some photos of the Castle AFB Museum KC-97 for reference.

I painted the top white before assembling the wings to the fuselage. I masked off where I thought the blue Pan Am cheat line would be, then used Testors Flat White. Out of the can and on the model, it turned a lovely light beige compared to the kit

decal, or Polly Scale white. Oh well. Maybe the can's so old it's rusty inside. Paint, even white paint, shows defects, and so the filling and sanding continued after the first coats of white went on. I got some orange-peel texture from the paint as it built up, so I wet-sanded it smooth using 600/1000/1500 paper. When it was all done, I glossed the flat white with Future. When it was all dry, I masked the white and sprayed rattle can Metalizer on the wings, fuselage and horizontal stabilizer. More finish problems appeared and I spent several hours sanding, polishing, filling and fixing damaged engraved detail. I improved the engine cowl flaps at this point. On the underside of the wings I could indeed see bulges where the outboard jet pods went on the later KC-97s, which I sanded down along with the other problems.



The 377 Stratocruiser was powered by four Pratt and Whitney R-4360 "Wasp Majors." The "Wasp Major" engine was developed during World War II though it did not reach service until after the war.



An in-flight view of a Pan American Airlines 377 Stratocruiser.

After I liked the look of the parts, I glued the wings to the fuselage, then filled the deep and asymmetric gaps between them with two or three coats of putty slurry. When it was sanded down, I went over the whole model one more time with fine sanding sticks and 600/1000/1500 wet/dry, all with lots of water. A trial shot of metallizer showed more areas for improvement, so I did more work, and then applied the final metallizer finish in several light coats. I polished the paint and sealed it with a light coat of Future before removing the masking. It looked OK when the masking came off, but the panel-by-panel mask I'd applied to the nose windows hadn't been as well aligned as I'd hoped. Fortunately, the paint didn't stick all that well to the Future'd clear parts and I was able to gently slice it to shape using a brand new #11 blade. I knocked the paint completely off a couple of places, and restored it with a 00000 brush.

I'd read an article on the Internet that said you should glue the gear doors in place, then assemble the wheels to the struts, and then

install the wheel/strut combo into the nacelle. The article was correct; if you glued on the leg, you really would have a hard time with the gear door hinges Minicraft thoughtfully provide for the doors. If you glue the doors on first and then put in the legs, you'll never get the wheels on the axles. I'd installed the nose gear as per the instructions and managed not to break it, but when I took off the masking after painting the fuselage white, it was gone! So I wrote to Minicraft for a replacement, and they sent it out within a couple of weeks. I mounted it after cutting into the sockets at the top of the bosses molded into the sides of the fuselage.

The kit decals went on fine. I had a nice gloss going on the white, and the metallizer was very smooth. I used the MicroScale system: Micro Set under the decal as I applied it, Micro Sol over the top after the decal had dried. The tail stripe and "PAA" settled down to fit the leading edge of the rudder perfectly! If only I'd looked at a reference, the box or the instructions, to notice that the lower blue stripe in the kit tail windows should be flush to the top of the fuselage! Oh well. A little Future over the decals makes them look sweet. I used a big, soft, brush to put on Future mixed 50:50 with water in two coats over the decals. I filled the gap between the left and right side stripes around the vertical stabilizer and rudder with Tamiya blue, which appeared dark enough. I also did some touch-up with the same color where the nose part of the decals met at the front windows.

Areas that received touch-up paint received touch-up Future as well. I made a glide-slope antenna out of 0.010 (.25mm) sheet, then cut down through the paint to raw plastic and glued the pylon in place with Testors non toxic liquid. When the pylon was dry, I added the actual antenna, and painted the assembly white. The last steps were a rusty metallic wash for the exhausts and turbines and some metallic gray washes on the engines, followed by the application of glossy black on the magnetos and glossy engine gray on the gear box nose.

Why wasn't my kit a winner? Well, the misaligned No. 2 engine was fatal, as was the mis-match between the white paint and white decal. If I'd wanted to win, I'd have stripped it and started the paint over. It wasn't worth it to me. The lack of antennae and lights beyond the very prominent glide slope antenna didn't help. Neither did the kit props, nor did the various blemishes in the white and natural metal finishes. Another weak spot was the area about mid-chord of the horizontal stabilizer where there was a gap between the stabilizer and fuselage. The nose window framing around my clear windows wasn't

as straight and even as it should have been. And possibly the judges marked it down for inconsistency, based on the clear nose windows paired with decals for the cabin windows. It wasn't better than the Connie that took third, and probably not better than the Britannia that would have taken fourth if they awarded it. It wasn't close enough the too-high vertical stabilizer and rudder decal mattered. I had it straight, even and painted the gap between left and right correctly.

Of course, Ken Miller made a contest-winner out of this same kit in 2001. He used the Cobra Company engine and prop set. Mark Hooper built a stunning TransOcean 377 for AI 2005, with full cockpit, home-fixed engines and propellers, and dropped flaps!

377, C-97 and B-29 flaps are all the same basic arrangement. They are Fowler flaps (increasing wing area by extending backwards as well as pivoting down). Rather than splitting the trailing edge, Boeing included the last two to six inches (50-150mm) of the top of the wing in the flap, so the flap-to-wing joint is

visible from underneath only at the leading edge, and there is a joint all along the aft of the wing on the upper side. It takes a fair effort to drop them; you must cut a little piece off the upper wing (about the width of your razor saw) and fake-up the same piece on the top of the flap. Beside that, the aft end of both nacelles was attached to the flap, so you'd have to free them and thin the exposed edges so it looked in-scale. This is not



The Minicraft Boeing 377 Stratocruiser is not without its problems. Even experienced modelers may find this kit challenging.

a small amount of work. It looks terrific, but it is not for the faint of heart!

Aeroclub makes props, probably for the ATP and/or Welsh vacuformed kit. It's not clear whether they or Cobra Company's are better. Cobra's resin is wonderful, but I think they've got the cylinders mis-indexed in their replacement set; none of the front bank are really at 12, 3, 6, or 9 o'clock on a real 4360 (I've inspected a couple), but the closest to an even index is at 9 o'clock. Cobra put theirs at 6 o'clock. The fit issues are bad enough that I'm almost tempted to build a vac version for comparison, but it is likely my next one will be from Minicraft.

Bill Abbott has been a member of SVSM since 1992 and been building plastic models since his dad bought him a McDonnell Banshee in a plastic bag in 1961. He builds airliners, road racing cars, US Navy and RAF planes, as well as balsa and paper flying models. His son Benjamin often helps him with part cutting and assembly.

A record setting IPMS Nationals in Atlanta

Continued from page 5

who's running unopposed for president of the organization, and heard stories of nationals gone by. Two of the more amusing stories involved Jack being pickpocketed by a hooker and a figure painting seminar he was giving that was interrupted by a stripper-gram. Obviously, we of the younger generation have much to aspire to.

The evening was made complete by the arrival of Mike Reeves, Scott Brown, Craig Davis, Jim Clark and Bob Sanchez of TwoBobs Decals. We sat, drank and chatted and made great sport of the notoriously "ignorant" representative from Tamiya sitting nearby, a man who never seems to know what his company is up to. What's next from Tamiya? Are they doing a 1:48 B-17? A 1:35 European Cattle set? A 1:32 B-32 Dominator? He could neither confirm nor deny any of these rumors, nor any of the equally preposterous things we asked about. Much beer was disappeared and a good time was had by all except for the Brazilian bartender, who was a little overwhelmed.

Thursday - With the doors of the vendor room set to open at 9 a.m., and an appointment to have breakfast with Jim Clark and Craig Davis, I hauled out of bed at about 7 a.m., grunted through my sit-ups and push-ups and hustled down in time to wait for a table at the lobby breakfast area. By the time I was seated and had my stack of pancakes set in front of me, I had 10 minutes to choke them down before throwing some bills on the table and excusing myself. Again, I set up my table and moseyed around the vendor room, but this time I actually bought some things. Cobra Company had an update set for the Matchbox Privateer, the kind of weird thing I would do, so I had to buy one and Chris Miller and Alex Bernardo gave me a courtesy price on it. I also grabbed two Fine Molds 1:72 Bf 109s, a G-2 and an F-4, for \$50, a good price considering they had price tags for \$35 on them. I'm finding the best way to get discounts in the vendor room is to be a fellow vendor!

Soon after the doors opened and the sales began, the familiar faces from home began to show up. John Heck, Vladimir Yakubov, Ray Lloyd, Pete Long, Postoria Aguirre, Bill Bauer, Frank Babbitt and Mike Braun all made their appearances, and Vlad and John were kind enough to babysit my table while I ran to the Regional Coordinators' Meeting. There wasn't much news that came out of this confab; Region 5 is likely to split into two regions, since it has 30 clubs. But that's a region 1500 miles east of our region, so it's of little consequence. We RCs had our photos taken holding up fingers corresponding to our region's numbers, an event that made me glad I wasn't from Region 11.

Meanwhile, back in the display room, the place was starting to get really full. I took one pass through and immediately reconciled myself to the fact that I would continue my six-year losing streak at the nationals. The photos of the event speak for themselves: the level of quality was absolutely tremendous in nearly all categories. People are getting better and better.



Pete Long's Leopard 2 won third place in an armor category split.



Roy Sutherland's nude Mosquito won first place in an aircraft category split.



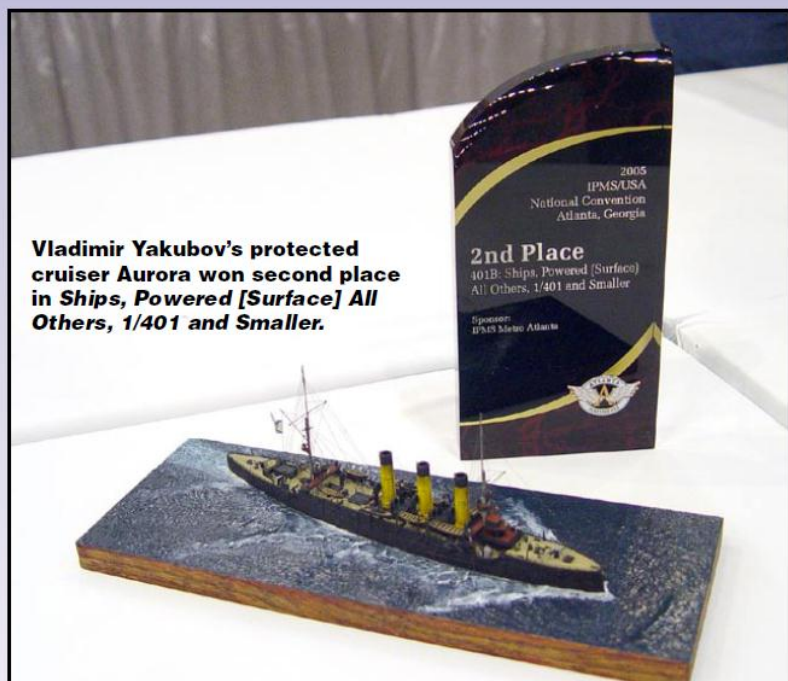
Frank Babbitt took third in Large Prop, Turbo-prop, Glider 1/72 with his Cant Alcione Z1007 Italian AF.

The vendor room remained open until 7 p.m., but at around 6 p.m. I realized that the instructions and labels for my F2H-3/4 Banshee set were nowhere to be found. I called home and asked my wife to look for them, but they were not where I thought I'd left them, which resulted in an escalating sequence of frustrated messages between us. After a last argument-filled phone call, I went back to shut down my booth. Let's just say that while I was packing up, this little crisis achieved a resolution worthy of a sitcom. John Heck was there. Ask him about it. I refuse to put anything into print that might incriminate me. Anyhow, Elizabeth faxed a copy of the instructions to the hotel and after much gnashing of teeth, all was right in the world.

At 8:30 the fun resumed with the TwoBobs hospitality event. Actually, TwoBobs organizes it, but a lot of cottage industry companies (including Obscureco) contribute money to the event, which gives away plenty of free beer and hors d'oeuvres. It was a great gathering of modelers and a fun time to schmooze, with people like Lee Coll and – hey, isn't that Roy Sutherland? He's finally here? It was also good to see Mike Idacavage and Paul Cotcher taking a break from their duties as organizers to enjoy themselves for a few hours. When the free beer ran out, we had to resort to the bar's beer, and we continued the merriment until the wee hours, with Vladimir, John, Ray and the rest of the Bay Area people (except Roy, who I expect was still tired) again pestering the hapless Brazilian bartender. At the end of the evening, I collapsed on my hotel room bed and fell asleep in my clothes.

Friday - I woke up at about 8:15 and said to hell with the push-ups and sit-ups. I again gathered all my stuff, including my models, and headed down to the vendor room. When Vladimir gave me a break, I got registered (I still hadn't done that!) and discovered the banquet was sold out. Drat! I put the models on the tables and they looked good among the competition, although I knew they'd get massacred when judging came around.

Roy delivered the parts for our new F2H-3/4 Banshee set, and they sold like hotcakes (and not the slow-to-be-delivered hotcakes from yesterday's breakfast). We sold 23 of them the first day, and my biggest problem was that I ran out of boxes for



Vladimir Yakubov's protected cruiser Aurora won second place in Ships, Powered [Surface] All Others, 1/401 and Smaller.

them. Thursday is the biggest day for sales at the nationals; by the time Friday rolls around the hard-core people have already run out of steam and are sniffing around for bargains. You also get a lot more walk-ins, who are just seeing things like resin detail parts for the very first time. Things started to slow up a little, which was not necessarily a bad thing.

In the evening, John, Vlad, Frank and Ray all vanished, to do what I really have no idea. I went to judge, which I thought would be a true nightmare with 3,222 entries on the table. The dinner was a decent enough sandwich and some other items, and we sat through the annual speech from Arris Pappas, the head judge. They handed out awards for guys who have judged for 10 years, announced some new stuff for the event (like the "premiere" awards) and turned us loose to go to our divisions of the room for the judging. I had not judged the year before, so I was not assigned to a team and instead had to wait until all the pre-assigned teams were dispatched. It's a little like waiting to get picked for a baseball game; you hope not to be the last person called on. As it was, I was chosen to be a team leader with co-leader Pat Donohue and another judge, plus two OJT trainees, one of whom was Lynn Rittger of Hyperscale volume-posting fame. We were given the split 1:48 Small Prop, U.S. Navy, World War II, a category replete with Wildcats, Dauntlesses, Avengers, Kingfishers, Hellcats, Buffalos and Corsairs. Pat and I melded our approaches to help whittle down the top five from a 29-model category, then started working over those five to get the top three. It was very organized and to-the-point. When we turned in the sheet and asked for another category, there were no more! It was dumbfounding! We cross-checked a second category, then stuck around for the choice of best aircraft.

The best aircraft nominees included a number of entries, including the eventual winner, a super-detailed AC-130 that I found to be over-weathered on the outside and under-weathered on the inside. I don't think I'm giving anything away by saying that Roy Sutherland's charbroiled Mosquito nightfighter was the runner-up; I guess extreme weathering is the key to winning these days! When the vote was complete, we were done—at 11:15. This was really an astoundingly quick judging session,



John Heck's 1/48 F-104C won second in Ships, first in Military Vehicles, among others.

thanks in part to the 250 volunteer judges.

Roy, Mike Braun, Lee Coll went to the bar, which promptly announced last call. I later discovered this was something the frazzled bartender did to rid the place of excess and unwanted customers. We instead went to "Jocks and Jills" and hoisted a few beers while eating nachos and discussing the intellectually stimulating television show "Most Extreme Elimination Challenge," which is about as sophisticated as you can get after three days of the nationals. I believe the discussion centered around the unfortunate omission of the "pole riders" event from MXC Season II.

Saturday - I woke up and fell out of bed, showered, dressed and immediately went to the vendor room. The sales were definitely flagging by now, which explains why Roy chose this point to set up his Cooper Details stand. Despite his best efforts, he did make some money. I did too, but I spent much of it. Mike Belcher wandered by with Mike Grant, and John Heck and I both immediately hit Grant up for his Italian smoke ring decals. Apparently, Mike has figured out a way to sell at the nationals without a table; he had decals in his bag and was happy to trade them for our boring, monochrome American money. I also picked up some Prieser figures from Chris Merseal at CRM Hobbies, and a couple of Neomega interiors and some decals from Victory Models. Late in the day, Pete Long became bored and announced he wanted to go haggle for the new Hasegawa 1:72 Lancaster. I told him that if he could beat \$45 I'd take one. He came back with two of them that he'd dickered down to \$42 apiece. Who says there are no bargains at the nationals?

When the vendor room closed down, I did a last pick-up and got ready for the awards banquet. The hallway outside the banquet room was already crowded when I got there, and so Vladimir, Ray and Frank thought it wise to get close to the doors so as to secure a table when the doors opened. Of course, they opened the doors at the far end of the banquet room first, leaving us high and dry. We snagged a few seats at a table toward the back with four modelers from Alabama who actually looked a little weirded-out when Postoria sat down. Imagine that! A black guy who builds models? However, when P.A. started



talking car modeling with them, the demeanor of these guys visibly changed. It was truly inspiring to see P.A. stand down their apprehension by being so friendly and outgoing.

The banquet food was decent, and the ceremony went as it usually does. People were thanked, awards were awarded and the 2007 hosts were announced: Orange County. This was not much of a surprise to me, since I knew they were the only bidders, but it was still a surprise to some. Then, on the video screen, they showed a humorous video made during the event that can charitably be called "folksy," although I believe Vladimir may have said "this sucks!" 24 or 28 times during the eight-minute presentation.

When the time came to run the program of the winners, things got a little weird. The presentation software crashed, and we waited 20 minutes until it was announced that the crash was terminal. We'd have to scamper to the display room to see who won what in the categories, although the big awards were announced in the banquet room.

Unfortunately, like any post-awards night, all the models beat a hasty retreat from the display room. We discovered that Roy, Frank, Pete, Vladimir and Mike Braun were all winners. What won in other categories remains unclear. John Heck discovered that he could make his model look like a first-place winner by borrowing a trophy from another model and taking a quick photo before the real winner was aware of what he was up to.

Once the models were safely sequestered away, the rest of the night was a blur. I believe it involved lots of beer, lots more beer, a drive in Frank's minivan to a high-class establishment called Steak 'N' Shake and the consumption of some food that makes the Mini Gourmet seem like it's actually operated by mini-gourmets. There was much laughter, although much of it was inappropriate.

So, that was the nationals. I got a lot out of it. Of course, I had a vendor table, so I got more out of it than many people. Suffice it to say it was four fun days with friends and fellow modelers that have me looking forward to next year.



After several weeks, P.A. and Bill grow weary of waiting for the Nationals awards results.

Chris Bucholtz has been building models since 1973 and has been a member of SVSM since 1986. His interests include 1:72 scale aircraft of all types, but specifically World War II and subjects whose pilots or crew he has met. He also enjoys hot, humid weather.

JULY MINUTES

At the July meeting, we were treated to an impressive and enlightening talk by Al Bulloch, who served as a photographer's mate aboard the cruiser U.S.S. Santa Fe for five years and who is responsible for many of the images we commonly see of combat in the Western Pacific, including the moving photos of the U.S.S. Franklin's ordeal. The Franklin was hit by two Kamikazes and suffered 1100 dead, but the survivors saved the ship and sailed her back to New York City. Al's combat photography included many missions flying in the back seat of the cruiser's OS2U Kingfisher. Before the invasion of Tarawa, he and his pilot were assigned to see if there were planes in the revetments

on the island's airfield. The Kingfisher had to fly low enough to see into the revetments, and while he was snapping away Al heard the gravel from the airfield striking the airplane! Upon returning to the Santa Fe, he discovered that the gravel was actually a hail of Japanese bullets which s o m e h o w

missed him! Al was perhaps carrying the Santa Fe's luck with him; the ship was never damaged in combat despite its long career. It was hit by a torpedo that bounced off and then detonated in the ship's wake; it was present on a day when over 400 Kamikazes were sent against the U.S. fleet. Still, the ship wasn't hit. Al joined the Navy in 1940, hoping to leave cold New York for the warm Pacific. Of course, the first cruise he made on the Santa Fe was to the Aleutians! After he retired, he worked as a cameraman for KGO-TV for 32 years and shot everything from the Jonestown Massacre to the Patty Hearst trial. Al provided us with an almost-forgotten angle on what it was like to be in combat at sea in World War II, and the membership was very appreciative of his talk.

In model talk... Cliff Kranz is almost done with his 1:144 space shuttle, which he plans on finishing as the Columbia. He's also working on a Revell 1:100 P-3 Orion, and, encouraged by his all-gray SR-71, he's building a YF-12 Blackbird as it would have appeared as a production fighter. Cliff plans to finish it in 106th Fighter Interceptor Squadron markings! Bert McDowell brings news that Tom's Modelworks has sold the patterns to its Casablanca-class escort carrier to Loose Cannon, but the kit now includes a laser-etched wooden deck, shortening Bert's deck-weathering

process by a step! Vladimir Yakubov is working on a couple of Combrig kits, starting with a submarine he's converting into a waterline model and converting to an earlier outfit than the kit provides. He's also accurizing the cruiser Svetlana. Vladimir is trying to finish a conversion of a BT-2 into the prototype Christie tank obtained by the Soviets, making alterations to the hull, removing the turret and scratchbuilding the interior. Vlad also has an Ace Russian self-propelled gun in the early stages. Ron Wergin didn't think highly of Aoshima's Japanese destroyer Suzutsuki, but he improved it by adding lots of brass parts, including crewmen. Ron used

Eagle Strike decals to finish his 362nd Fighter Group P-47, built from the Revell 1:72 kit, and he added scratch-built pilots to his Academy Bf 109G, Hasegawa Fw 190 and Italeri F6F Hellcat. Ben Pada's finished Hasegawa's P-40E and he's gone a long way toward finishing Classic Airframes F2A Buffalo, which he says is nice but perhaps not worth the money being asked for it. He also has a Tamiya P-47D done and dressed in SuperScale decals. Jack Clark says his 1:72 Italeri M4

Sherman went together with a minimum of fuss and mess. Charles Smith's two Hasegawa Fw 190s and his Hasegawa Bf 109K-4 were all based on photos from his collection. One of the Fw 190s belonged to "Pips" Priller, while the 109 was a machine used in Operation Bodenplatte. Steve Travis took Tamiya's 1:100 kit of the Me 262

and the Me 163 and painted them with Model Master acrylics. Steve says the models are part of his ongoing efforts to hurt himself with increasingly small models. Chris Hughes is making good progress on the DML 1:35 7.5cm PAK 37/98 anti-tank gun. Chris says the kit needs some extra attention to add all the small details of this artillery piece. Andy Kellock had some decal adventures with his 1980s-vintage Monogram Folgers NASCAR kit—they exploded on impact



Al Bulloch served as a photographer's mate aboard the cruiser U.S.S. Santa Fe. Al is not only an amazing photographer but an excellent story teller as well.



with the water! Andy's ingenuity (and some spare decal sheets) got him past this trouble. He's also finished two 1971 Dodges, an RT Charger and a Superbee, which started life as the same kit but have been converted with modifications and authentic paints from MCW. Bill Bauer's Mustang GTP is an accurate body to replace the inaccurate Revell body. His new kit includes wheels and decals to finally get a good Trans

Am Mustang racer. Greg Plummer isn't a fanatical armor builder, but he did stick a set of Fruimodellismo tracks on Tamiya's Centaur. He also painted the model in an intensively-researched shade called "brown." Gabriel Lee had some issues with the plastic used to mold his Italeri C-47, so he abandoned his plans for a natural metal scheme and went with a nice white-over-gray Venezuelan scheme. Gabriel's also drilling out the holes in the side of the Revell 1:192 submarine Lionfish, and he plans to finish the model as the Sea Tiger from the movie "Operation Petticoat," complete with a pink finish. Also in the works from Gabriel is an updated CF-105 Arrow, which now has a Phantom II's nose, canards from a Berkut, intake ramps from an F-15 and burner cans from some F-16s. Finally, Gabriel's got the basic construction finished on an Airfix 1:144 DC-10, which will wear Viaza colors. Mike Braun finished his Hasegawa P-40E in colors worn by a U.S. plane in the China-Burma-India Theater. Mike said the model looks great but isn't an easy build because of the multiple parts that make up the fuse-

lage. Build the halves first, he said, then put the halves together. Mike Braun showed off his Hasegawa Grace torpedo bomber, which features a scratch-built cockpit, added detail in the engine and wheel wells, and expertly chipped paint. Chris Bucholtz finished his 1:72 Academy P-51B as William Whisner's "Princess Elizabeth," using Aeromaster decals and Testors Metallizer paints. The model also has a Hawkeye cockpit and dropped

flaps from the Puget Sound Models wing for the P-51D. In a much earlier stage of completion is Chris' Azur Martin Maryland, for which he is scratchbuilding a cockpit. Mike Burton is into small amounts of stealth; his DML 1:144 F-117 was dwarfed by the Revell 1:144 Sea Shadow stealth ship. Mike's also got an all-resin 1:72 N1K1 Kyofu floatplane in the works, as well as a Monogram X-15A-2 that will feature prominently in this month's Tickled Pink contest, a DML P-38, and a Special Hobby Lockheed Model 10 Electra that will become a Spanish Civil War bomber. John Heck has almost completed his ejector pin mark-laden Hasegawa F-104C, which now sports an Aires cockpit and exhaust and decals from Eagle Strike that give it a nifty set of olive drab stripes. And the model of the month goes to... Mike Braun, who finished his Hasegawa P-40E in colors worn by a U.S. plane in the China-Burma-India Theater, taken from the AMTech decal sheet.. Mike said the model looks great

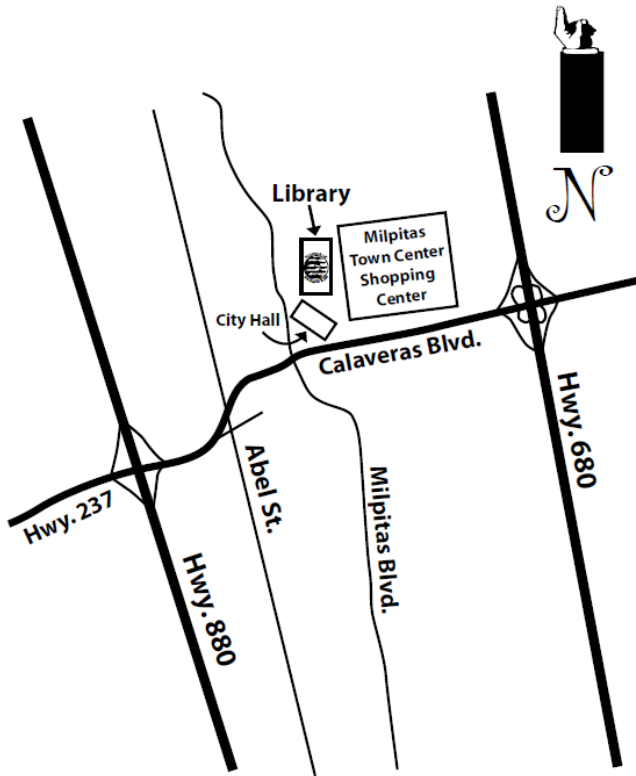


The usual fondling of and yacking about models at the July meeting. July's meeting was held at the Los Atlos Library.



Mike Braun won model of the month for his Hasegawa 1:48 P-40E in a CBI scheme. Mike's P-40 also won first place in Small Prop and Turbo-prop, Single Engine 1:48 as well as Best Out Of Box in the same category at IPMS Nationals.

but isn't an easy build because of the multiple parts that make up the fuselage. Build the halves first, he said, then put the halves together.



Next meeting:
**7:00 p.m.,
Friday,
August 19**

at the
**Milpitas Public Library
40 N. Milpitas Blvd.**

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