SILICON VALLEY SCALE MODELERS

THE STYRENE SHEET

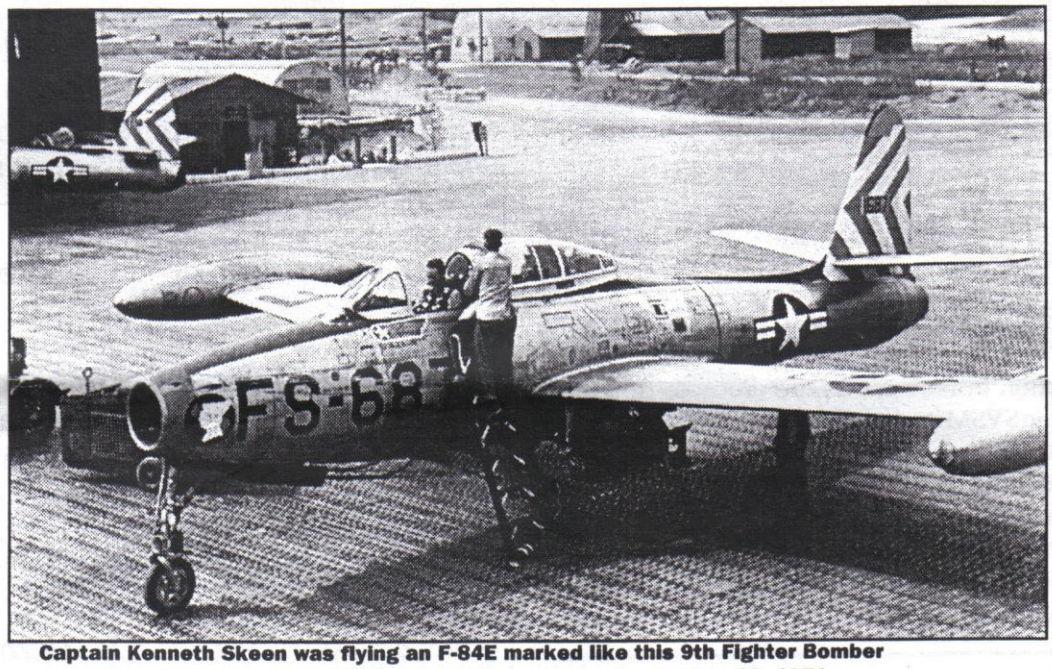
Vol. 34, No. 9 www.svsm.org December 2000

Turning *Tamiya*'s F-84 into a MiG master

By Chris Bucholtz

It was an all-out effort for the 49th Fighter Bomber Wing the morning of September 19, 1951. Four dozen F-84E *Thunderjets*, each loaded with a pair of 500-pound bombs, winged toward a mail rail complex between Sinanju and Pyongyang in North Korea.

One of the newest men in the unit was Captain Kenneth Skeen. A former F-80 driver, Skeen was in the number four position in Purple flight, the last flight of the last squadron, the 9th Fighter Bomber Squadron.



Captain Kenneth Skeen was flying an F-84E marked like this 9th Fighter Bomber Squadron aircraft during his MiG-killing mission September 19, 1951.

The radio silence was broken by the fighter controller. "MiG trains heading south," the controller reported tersely. Skeen wasn't concerned; after a year of air combat, tactics had evolved to the point that it was taken for granted that F-86 *Sabres* would deal with them. What he didn't know was that the F-86s assigned to this mission were still on the ground at Kimpo. The 49th was on its own.

As the group passed east of Pyongyang, the group leader calmly announced, "MiGs at one o'clock high." The pilots craned their necks to spot the MiG-15s and to ascertain their intentions. If the MiGs were being challenged by the expected escort of F-86s, or if they were speeding south to challenge another strike, the rail-cutting mission could continue. If not, the F-84s would be forced to fight it out with the faster and harder-hitting MiGs.

Suddenly, Skeen's radio came alive. "MiGs at three o'clock high!" "They're coming in! Salvo your bombs!" "Get up some speed!"

"BREAK RIGHT, PURPLE FLIGHT!"

Skeen grabbed the bomb salvo handle and yanked hard, then threw the throttle to the stops while slamming the stick to the right. Being the last man in the flight, he was already struggling to maintain position; now, as the man at the far left of the formation, he was dropping even farther behind in the turn. The MiGs overshot their initial attack and pulled high to the left of Purple flight, then turned sharply to the right, hoping to pull in on the tail of the F-84s. At the same time, a desperate Skeen cut across the formation, hoping to join with element leader Major Jim Sprinkle on the far side of the flight.

Just then, a blue MiG-15 darted onto Sprinkle's tail—just ahead of Skeen. The MiG popped its airbrakes open and wiggled as the pilot tried to line his sights up on Sprinkle; Skeen, meanwhile, was traveling at full throttle. Skeen lined the MiG up, took his feet off the rudder pedals to make sure the F-84 was flying straight, and opened fire.

The four .50-caliber machine guns spattered the MiG with armor piercing incendiary rounds. Pieces of the MiG flew back in the slipstream, followed by several bursts of flame and a long trail of smoke. Skeen pulled to the left to avoid colliding with the MiG, which was now badly on fire. The MiG disappeared through a thin undercast, and as Skeen turned his head to the left to check for other threats he saw another blue MiG on the tail of an F-84.

"F-84! Break! Break... MiG on your tail! Break right!" shouted Skeen, hoping the F-84 would lead the MiG into his sights.

Continued on page 10

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

EDITOR'S BRIEF

This month's meeting will feature the annual pizza party and gift exchange (see the article on page 15 for details). This is always the biggest meeting of the year, so be prepared for a lot of fun. Also, don't forget that non-members need to pay $5 for their share of the pizza party. Our club subsidizes the party for members, but we can't afford to pay for non-members to eat as well and still hope to pay the rest of our expenses for the contest, the room rental and the other various items we need to pay for to keep the club operating.

In addition to the fun and frivolity of the gift exchange, don't forget to bring your models for the Veterans' Administration Hospital model drive. Our ever-enthusiastic volunteers, led by Frank Beltran and his happy helpers, will gladly take any and all models off your hands for this worthwhile program.

As a result of the drive, patients in the VA's rehabilitative services programs can help regain their motor skills and abilities to focus by working on snap-together models. Glue-together models are used to provide other patients with ways of passing the time during recovery. SVSM's recent practice has been to give simpler models to the hospital and to auction off more complex kits to raise funds for supplies and additional snap-together kits. D&J Hobby sells the snap-togethers to us at cost, allowing us to give even more to the hospital.

If you have some kits in the closet or on the shelf that you know you'll never build, why not give them to this worthy cause? It's the least we can do for those who gave so much for us.

Our not-an-auction in November, the proceeds of which will be split between SVSM itself and the model drive, brought in more than $800. This was one of the most enjoyable and boisterous non-auctions in recent memory, thanks to the efforts of head auctioneers Mike Braun and Dave Balderrama. When even the *Starfix* kits sell, you know the audience is into the event-which-is-not-an-auction! A sincere thank you to all of our members who contributed models to the not-an-auction, since it was their generosity that made it a success.

This is the last issue for our regular members. Your membership becomes due in January for another year of SVSM (this applies to our local members, not to those who subscribe to the Styrene Sheet around the country). At the December meeting, see Bill Ferrante about paying for 2001 and ensuring that you don't miss any issues in the new year.

Finally, let the editor say just how big a year it was for SVSM in 2000, from our two building classes for youngsters to our display at the Children's Faire, from our delivery of models to soldiers in Bosnia to our members' wins at both the U.S. and U.K. nationals, from our support of our region's contests to our own highly successful Kickoff Classic. May 2001 be as good to us as 2000 has been!

—The Editor

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

STYRENE SHEET

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

CONTEST CALENDAR

February 24, 2001: **Silicon Valley Scale Modelers** host the **eighth annual Kickoff Classic** in Milpitas, California. This year's theme is "Camelot, 40 years after: 1961—1963." For more information, call Chris Bucholtz at (408) 723-3995 or e-mail him at bucholtzc@aol.com.

March 17 and 18, 2001: **The Southern California Area Historical Miniature Society (SCAHMS)** hosts the **17th Annual Historical Miniature Exhibition and Competition** at the Hilton Hotel/Orange County Airport. For more information, call Jim Sullivan at (714) 593-9071 or Jim Hill at (714) 774-4076.

April 22, 2001: **IPMS/U.S.S. *Hornet* & IPMS/Fremont Hornets' First Annual HornetCon.** Theme: "From Midway to the Moon—27 Incredible Years." On board the aircraft carrier U.S.S. *Hornet* (CVS-12), Pier 3, Alameda Point, Alameda CA (formerly NAS Alameda). For more information, call Ken Durling at (510) 843-4419 or e-mail him at kdurling@earthlink.net.
(Note: This event will coincide and coordinate with the 2nd annual Ship Modeler's Mailing List (SMML) convention, a three-day event commencing on the Friday of that weekend. For more info, contact Duane Fowler at (831) 338-7050 or by e-mail at dlfowler@uscg.net)

April 28, 2001: **IPMS/Silverwings** hosts its **Annual Contest** at the Kerr Middle School, on Elk Grove Blvd, Elk Grove, California. For more information, call Scott Bell at (916) 428-5520 or e-mail him at SnJmodprod@aol.com.

The first to fight: kitbashing an M4A1 Sherman

By Barry Bauer

The M4 Sherman was one of the most widely used tanks in the world. With nearly 50,000 of all types built, it ranks second in total number produced behind only the Soviet T-34 series. From its service introduction in mid-1942 through the present day, the Sherman (and its numerous derivatives) has proven its versatility in armed forces around the world. As recently as 1993, NATO forces in Bosnia impounded several Serbian M36s, a tank destroyer mounting a 90mm main gun, based on the M4A3 chassis.

A cast-hulled M4A1 Sherman, retrofitted with applique armor. This version of the famous tank was powered by a Wright aero engine.

The first type to be issued to operational units in significant numbers was actually the second version to enter production. This was the cast-hulled M4A1, powered by a Wright TR-975 Cyclone radial engine derived from an aircraft power plant. This version of the Sherman stayed in production throughout World War II, though it was continuously upgraded in armor, armament and maneuverability. Though the Sherman was never considered the best tank of its time, its mechanical dependability, widespread availability and near limitless versatility enabled the Allied armored units equipped with it to overcome tactically superior adversaries.

I have always been attracted by the wide variety of versions of the M4 family of vehicles, particularly those serving with the U.S. Army during the Second World War. In recent years kit manufacturers have brought us a wide range of Sherman variants. Almost any of the major production models (as well as some interesting sub-types) can be built straight from the box.

Various kit makers have offered the cast-hulled Sherman, the M4A1, in 1:35 scale over the years. *Italeri* produces a late version with the 76mm main gun in a "new" style turret and enlarged hull hatches in a modified forward hull. *DML* now makes an early M4A1 that is quite accurate, but does not portray the earliest style. The third M4A1 kit is the very old *Nichimo* offering. It has many inaccuracies but does provide a starting point for a conversion. This was the kit I chose to work with because it was the only one available to me when I decided to model an early cast-hulled M4.

In addition to the basic Sherman kit already mentioned, I needed the lower hull, suspension units, transmission housing and other details from a *Tamiya* M3 Lee (or Grant.) I also used a resin turret with the early M34 gun mantlet from *Verlinden*, and the road wheels, drive sprockets and T49 rubber block style tracks from an *Italeri* M4A1. With these parts at hand I started my conversion.

First, I measured the kit's upper hull. I determined that while it was the right length, it was nearly 1/8" too wide. This was a disappointing, yet not insurmountable obstacle for the truly obsessed modeler. I cut the upper hull right down the middle and sanded both sides of the cut until the desired width was achieved. Then I glued the two halves back together and reinforced the join with strips of 20 thousandths styrene on the inside. After minimal filling and sanding, the reworked area was unnoticeable. Next, I built the lower hull taking the time to blank off the holes *Tamiya* provided to enable the M3 to be motorized. At this point I added sponson floors and adapted the transmission cover to fit the new upper hull. This included lengthening the right side bolting flange, which was shorter on the side where the M3 mounted its 75mm main gun.

On examining my references, I saw that the driver and co-driver's hatches have a marked downward slope when viewed from the side. *Nichimo's* kit does not have that at all, so I had to

correct it. I also rounded off the forward edges of the hatches to give them more of a cast look. After narrowing the upper hull, the turret race was shaped like a football. I added .010 styrene shims to bring it back into round and to snugly fit the smaller diameter base of the *Verlinden* turret. (A note at this point: The *Verlinden* Sherman turret is slightly undersized when compared with others in this scale. However, it looks right and fits in this conversion. What else could I ask for?)

With all these details adequately addressed, I was ready to texture the hull. *Nichimo* does have casting texture on their upper hull but it is far too regular in appearance to correctly represent the irregular roughness of the original. In addition, my surgery on the hull had removed large areas of the surface detail. The method I use to create the rough surface is to brush a good coat of *Testors* liquid cement onto the appropriate area, allow it a few seconds to soften the plastic and then to stipple the surface with a stiff-bristled brush. On resin, or other non-styrene surfaces, I brush on a thin layer of filler putty, thinned with *Testors* liquid cement, then stipple it as stated previously. Take care not to follow a pattern; it's not supposed to be Zimmerit. With a little practice one can create a realistic scale cast-metal look.

Jaques Littlefield's M4A1 poses against the backdrop of the Bay Area. Today, unmodified M4A1s are somewhat rare.

While I waited for the exterior of the hull to harden, I assembled the suspension bogies. The mold makers at *Tamiya* must have been completely out of it when they made the M3 back in the '70s. The main road wheels have six spokes when they should have only five. Another major inaccuracy is in the tracks. The end connectors don't span between tread blocks. They're molded directly to individual links. If they were like that on the real track, you would have a pile of disconnected, individual links. The only remedy for both of these errors is for the modeler to discard and replace these parts. I used the tracks and road wheels from the *Italeri* M4A1 kit. I had to enlarge the holes in the wheel hubs to fit the *Tamiya* suspension axles, but otherwise the parts fit perfectly.

On the turret I used the early M34 mantlet. It's the narrow one that doesn't cover the co-axial machine gun. Later, some of the earliest Shermans were fitted with a small MG shield or even the full-width M34A1 mantlet. I mounted the barrel using a short piece of brass wire inserted into the back of the barrel and the front of the turret. I used the two-part hatch from the *Italeri* kit for the commander's hatch as well as the *Italeri* .50 cal MG. Finally, I mounted a scratch-built radio aerial and blade-type gun sight.

Back on the hull, I installed the lights, siren, towing pintle and lifting eyes. I then fabricated brush guards from .010 styrene for the lights and siren. Behind the turret I mounted the air intake armored cover that I modified from the kit part. I had to reduce its width to fit between the arms of the now narrower splinter shield around the turret and fuel filler caps.

With the basic assembly complete, I was now ready to paint and mark my early production M4. Since this version of the Sherman was continually in service from the battle of El Alamein with the British 8th Army in late 1942, through the end of WWII in '45, there are many camouflage schemes and unit marking options available. I chose to portray a vehicle from the U.S. Army's 1st Armored Division serving in central Italy in early 1944. The 1st Armored Division's tanks often had a tan or red-brown color painted in a disruptive pattern over the base coat of factory-applied olive drab paint. I chose to go with the tan color based on black and white photos I saw of this particular tank in the official 1st AD division history. This scheme provides an interesting variation from the typical overall olive drab color of U.S. Army vehicles in WWII. The serial number on this particular tank was a medium blue-gray as used prior to 1943. The national markings consist of white stars on the turret sides. Larger stars surrounded by wide white broken circles were painted on the hull front and turret roof. Unit codes follow standard Army specs, with white numerals and symbols indicating unit and individual vehicle in each platoon.

The tracks were painted dark gray on the rubber blocks and steel with a rusty wash and silver artist's pencil highlights. The road wheels and return rollers were given dark gray tires. (Note: the idler did not have a rubber tire. After the paint and decals were on, I installed the hand tools, turret-mounted AA machine gun, tow cable, suspension units and tracks. With these in place I weathered the whole tank using a wash of artist's oils in burnt sienna, followed by highlights of various colors of pastels. I finished with a coat of clear matte to seal it all.

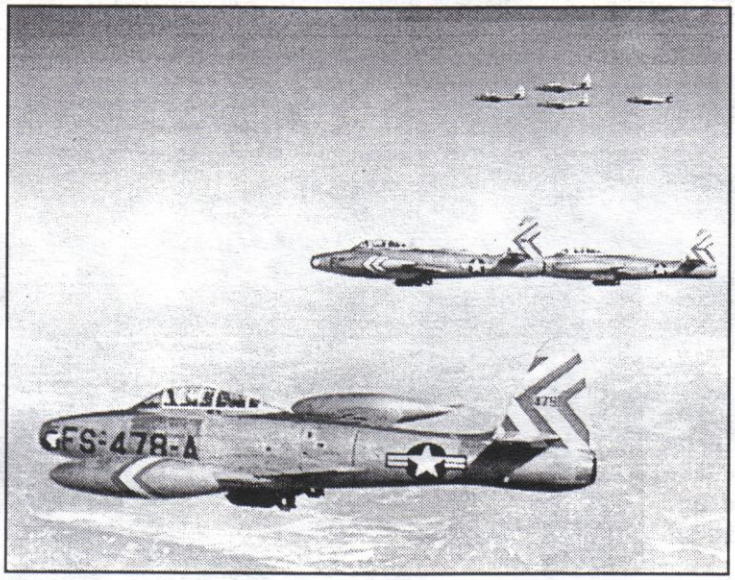
With this conversion I now have an interesting addition that fills a gap in my collection of Shermans. Though I used the old *Nichimo* M4A1, it would also be possible (and much easier) to backdate the much better *DML* kit.

Turning *Tamiya*'s F-84 into an -E model

Continued from page 1

When the F-84 broke, the wary MiG pulled up high to the left. As Skeen craned his neck to keep the MiG in sight, he broke through the low overcast, losing sight of the enemy. To his right, a single parachute floated by.

Climbing out of the low cloud, Skeen found the sky empty. Where seconds before there had been more than 50 aircraft, now he was alone. With fuel low, he headed south for K-2, the first—and only—air-to-air combat victor for the 9th FBS in the Korean War.



F-84s scored nine victories in Korea, and lost 18 planes in air-to-air fighting. Oddly, all of the victories came during 1951. However, the F-84 did amazing service as an air-to-ground weapon, flying 86,408 sorties and dropping 50,427 tons of bombs, 5,560 tons of napalm and 22,154 rockets on Communist emplacements. The F-84's most dramatic success came late in the war, when several units bombed huge dams in North Korea, precipitating floods that destroyed lines of communication and ruined valuable farm land.

The 9th Fighter Bomber Squadron on its way to a target sometime in 1952, at top; below, Kenneth Skeen, who shot down a MIG-15 in an F-84E in September, 1951.

I was looking forward to building the *Tamiya* kit of the F-84, as my enthusiastic-to-the-point-of-delirium review in the September 1999 issue of Internet Modeler (www.internetmodeler.com) would indicate. Although the cockpit of the model was very nice, I pondered using the *AeroMaster* Choice kit's resin and photoetch to make it a little nicer. I built up the multi-part *Tamiya* ejection seat and added some hoses and actuating handles made from wire, and painted and drybrushed the *AeroMaster* photoetched control panel. To add the acetate instruments to the brass panel, I swabbed the panel liberally with Future floor polish, then carefully dropped the panel over it. The Future, when dry, held the instruments in place and created lovely, shiny "lenses" in the instrument bezels. This was attached to the resin gunsight/forward cockpit section, which had nicer detail than that in the kit.

My plans came a cropper when I put the seat into the resin cockpit tub. When the instrument panel/gunsight section was added to the tub, it was clear that there was something wrong. The seat was about five scale feet from the instrument panel; since I have no records of orangutans being trained to fly combat missions, I assumed this was incorrect. A closer look at the tub revealed that most of the panel detail was spurious; this entire chunk of resin was unceremoniously dumped in the bin.

I went back to the kit cockpit, painting it green and tire black, with drybrushed gray details and a few red and green spots picked out with a small brush. Bert Kinzey's "Detail and Scale" edition on the straight-wing *Thunderjet* was instrumental (no pun intended) in getting these consoles to look right. The seat and control column from the kit were left out until after the kit had been painted; a few styrene strip structural details were added to the fuselage sides to obscure the ejector pin marks on the side of the cockpit. These parts all integrated nicely with the resin/brass control panel section, and the cockpit was installed into one of the fuselage halves.

Next came the splitter/nose gear section. The center of this is hollow, so I filled it with split shot to make sure the plane stayed on its landing gear once finished. The splitter was glued together, and the seam on the front was addressed, but a seam inside the nose wheel well was in accessible for files and sandpaper. Instead, I carefully cut pieces of styrene to match the outline of the "roof" of the nose gear bay to hide the seam. I also removed the pitot from the front of the splitter, drilled a hole where it had been, and replaced it with a piece of metal tubing with a small bit of wire inside it. This well-matched pair of pieces was taken from an actuator set intended for RC cars.

The tailpipe was provided in halves, but I had little desire to sand the seams inside a narrow tube, so I discarded these parts in favor of a length of brass tubing. The end of the kit pipe, with its nice engine section detail, was added to one end of the tubing; then the whole assembly was painted in a very dark shade of gray.

Before I closed the fuselage, I added a section of brass from the *AeroMaster* kit to what would have been the speed brake bay.

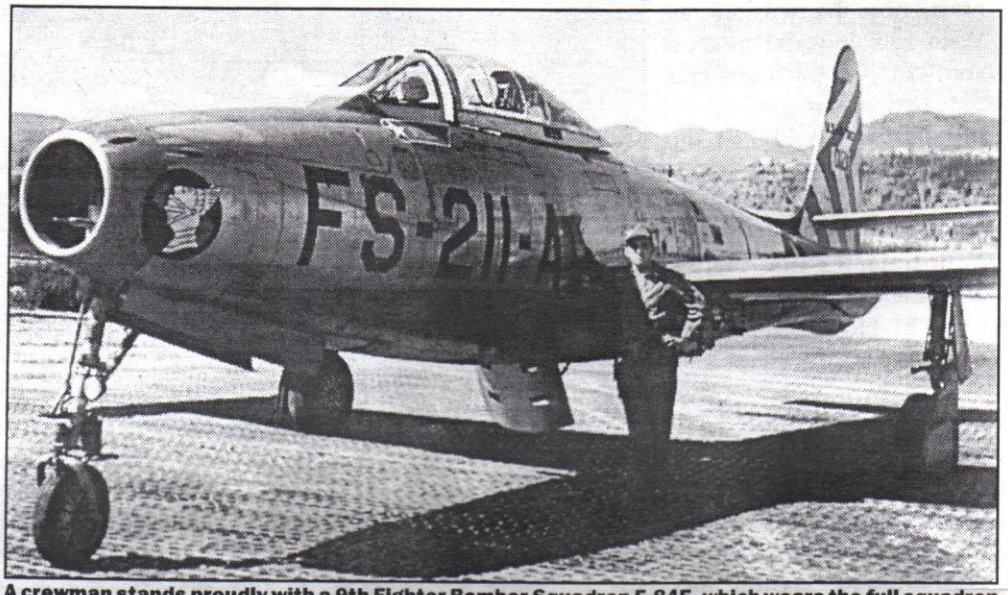
In looking around for a notable F-84 to build, I stumbled across the odd fact that 1951 was the one and only year for *Thunderjet* kills, and in 1951, the only *Thunderjet* models flying

in combat were -E models. The -E varies from the kit-provided -G model in a few ways—the tailpipe was slightly longer, the speed brake was different, there were no side-mounted blow-in doors, and there was no integral refueling port. I decided to do an -E, and set about making the necessary modifications. Now, I would have started with the *Academy* F-84E/G, which provides the needed parts to build either version.

I started by filling the blow-in doors with styrene and sanding them flush against the fuselage. The refueling port was also filled in and sanded flush. I picked a speed brake from the *AeroMaster* kit that was appropriate, and planned to add it later.

The fuselage went together with no trouble whatsoever, but the nose ring went on and left a titanic step between it and the rest of the fuselage. Worse yet, the ring included the cutout and door for the extreme front end of the nose wheel well, bust these were out of place so badly that you could see all the way to the table through the front of the intake. Bits of styrene were added and sanded down to cure this most unsightly flaw.

The wings fit together well, although I took extra care to sand the tip tanks to perfect roundness. The tip lights were added at this time, and it took some blending to get them to match the contours of the tank.



A crewman stands proudly with a 9th Fighter Bomber Squadron F-84E, which wears the full squadron markings. The "Iron Knights" logo was usually the last addition to replacement aircraft.

The wings went into place with a little difficulty; *Tamiya*'s engineering makes sure the dihedral is correct, but small gaps were left at the lower wing root, which were hard to address because of the integrally-molded wing pylons. The horizontal stabilizers went into place with no such problems; these fit precisely and required no filler.

However, this point in construction indicated that, even with the weight in the splitter, the plane would be a tail-dragger. Not to worry—I had yet to add the gun bay door on the top of the nose! I wanted to close the door anyway, so more birdshot went into this compartment, then the door was cemented closed. As with the nose ring, the fit of this part was abominable and required a lot of filling and sanding. As I was whittling away in the nose of my fighter, I wondered why so many of my 1:48-building brethren sang *Tamiya*'s praises so loudly when it came to fit while excoriating other companies' kits. Perhaps it just doesn't scale down well.

Once the step was fixed on the machine gun bay, I went back and rescribed the gun door panel line. I added four more details to the gunsight area—a small map light, a small red placard, the gunsight selector lever and the gunsight glass, fabricated from the cellophane front of an old *SuperScale* decal envelope. Then I added and blended the windscreen, leaving a slight gap at the front where the gun compartment door closed. I masked the windscreen with Parafilm, then touched up every panel line that had been obscured. Once this was done, I polished the model with Blue Magic auto polish; this prepared the surface for the natural metal finish and revealed flaws, which stuck out when the gleaming bare plastic was looked at under a strong light. The flaws were cleaned up, the model was polished again, and I was ready to paint.

Now it came time for me to pick an aircraft. Like any true sufferer of AMS, this required me to purchase every decal sheet I could find for the F-84: three from *AeroMaster*, a couple from *SuperScale*, and one from *Carpena*. The plane I really wanted to build, the one used by astronaut Wally Schirra to score a kill over a MiG-15 in November, 1951, was not available, and my efforts to find pictures of this aircraft proved futile. My next best bet was Skeen's aircraft, because of the story of his kill and because of the airplane's name, "Benny-San." Ben Pada is a constant inspiration with the number of excellent models he can build, so I opted to build his namesake, hoping some of his ability would rub off on me!

The markings of the 9th Fighter Bomber Squadron in Korea were simple enough—red stripes on a white tail. I started painting by masking off and painting the white tail. I masked the bare plastic so the natural metal paint would not be marred by the flat white; the fine grain of this paint could be enough to ruin the shine of the paint applied over it.

The tail was masked off, and I then masked off the olive drab anti-glare panel that runs the length of the fuselage. Getting this aligned is critical; tape can be deceiving and I spent a lot of time making sure the lines of the panel were constant and symmetrical. *Model Master* olive drab was airbrushed over the fuselage and the tape was removed, revealing a neat green stripe down the *Thunderjet*'s back.

I waited a few days and masked the anti-glare panel in advance of applying the natural metal scheme. Before I picked up my airbrush, I spent some quality time with *F-84 Thunderjet Units in Korea* from Osprey's series of all-color books on Korean War aircraft to familiarize myself with the nuances of the various shades of metal panels on the F-84. I also dug out the old Lumonz *Alclad Painting Guide*, which provided a handy coded diagram of the F-84's exterior and assigned different values to the color of the metal in various locations over the entire airplane.

After meditating on the various shades on the real plane, I

started with an overall coat of buffing aluminum, which was polished with a soft T-shirt. The model now looked like metal, all right; it looked just like a hood ornament! I used post-it notes, Parafilm and hand-held index cards to mask off various panels, and added drops of yellow, purple and black to the aluminum paint to achieve various shades of metal. For the area below the cockpit, which had a darker and less reflective tone, I used a bit of steel mixed with titanium. The leading edge of the wings were a bit too yellow when I first painted the model; it looked as if they had been anodized! I masked again and sprayed with non-buffing aluminum, which restored the look to something a bit more acceptable.

The completed model, finished using a combination of *Testors* metallizers and *SnJ*. The small data stencil decals came from the *Academy* kit.

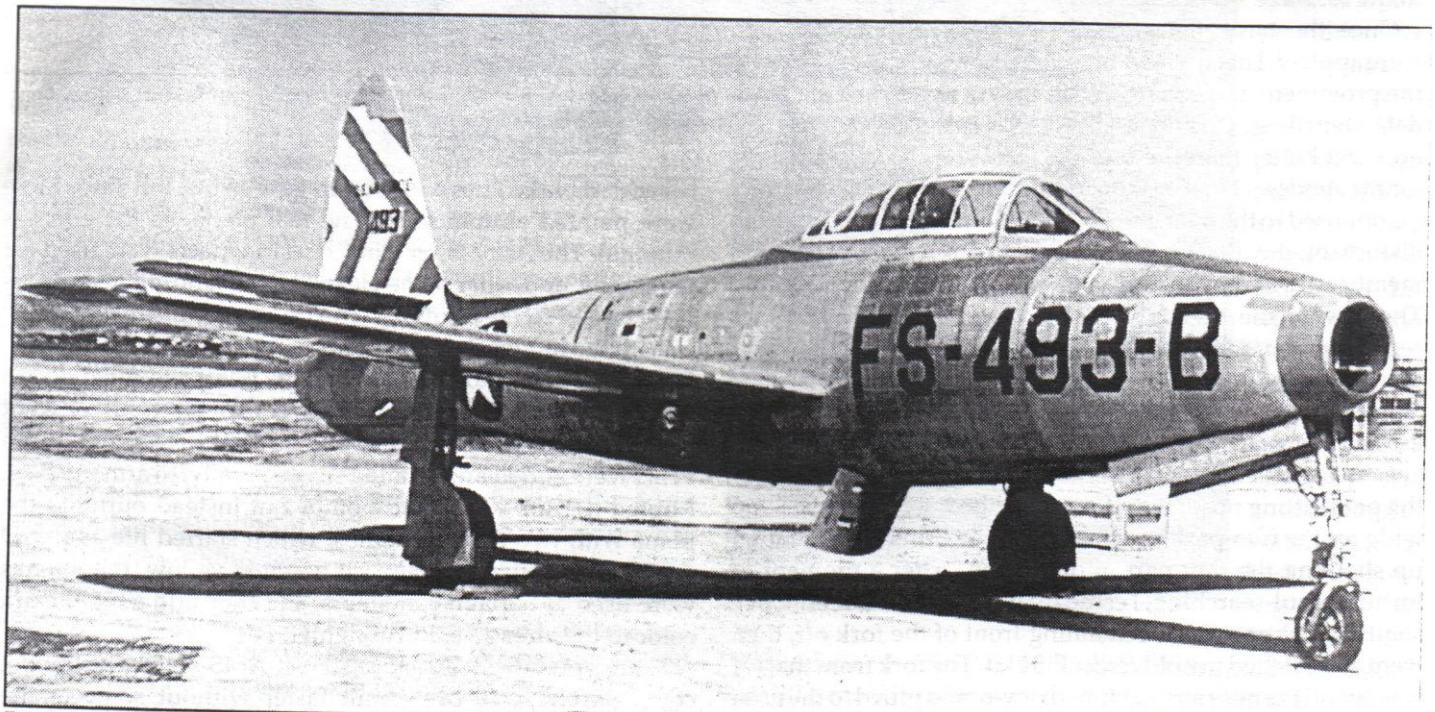
Various panels were then masked off and gently polished with *SnJ* powder. This made them look positively mirror-like, and I was glad I had been sparing with the effect! The tanks were also polished, since their round surfaces would really benefit from the extra shine.

The canopy was masked with *Bare Metal* Foil and painted twice—first, with non-buffing aluminum on the metal sections, then white for the fiberglass reinforcing strips. Masking these sections was not a lot of fun, and the *Cutting Edge* "Black Magic" vinyl masks I hoped to use proved utterly useless. The masks don't allow for the rather sharp curvature of the 1:72 canopy and simply don't fit the locations for which they were intended. I was able to use the round mask for the canopy equipment access panel, but even this required considerable modification to be useable. Once this was dry, I used the *AeroMaster* Choice equipment shelf and some sheet styrene to finish off the canopy.

Next came the most troubling part of the build: the decals. The *Carpena* sheet had the proper markings for "Benny-San," but the Iron Knights logo of the 9th FBS and the other markings seemed a little soft in detail. Luckily, I had the *AeroMaster* sheet with another 9th FBS plane and I planned to use the generic squadron markings from this sheet.

I quickly discovered I had decals at both ends of the quality scale. My *Carpena* test decal exploded on contact with water, while the *Cartograf*-printed *AeroMaster* decals refused to react to setting solutions! Some patience was required to get around these problems.

The *Carpena* tail markings didn't fit the tail of the *Tamiya* kit, and, as I expected, they shattered as I was trying to maneuver them into place. To get around this, I cut strips of red decal trim film and positioned them carefully on the white tail. I cut the silver block containing the serial number from the *Carpena* decals and applied it over the red trim film once the stripes were dry. The, a tiny "U.S. Air Force" legend was applied to above the serial. Each side of the tail had 12 different decals on it; this was a very arduous bit of decal work. Next time, I'll



Fresh from the U.S., an F-84E wears partial 9th Fighter Bomber Squadron markings. The diferent shades of metal are apparent around the nose. This plane also has the early-style speedbrake with rectangular cut-outs; later brakes would have round "cheese grater" cut-outs.

mask and paint.

The *AeroMaster* stars and bars and "USAF" legends on the wings refused to snuggle down, so they were stripped and replaced by decals from the *AeroMaster* Choice kit, which were printed by *Microscale*. All the trim film was cut from the decals; trim film has a nasty way of becoming very visible once applied to natural metal surfaces. The *Microscale* decals went on with no problems whatsoever.

The critical "Benny-San" and other personal decals came off the sheet intact and were applied with no problems. However, the *AeroMaster* decal for the red ring around the nose only reached the edges of the anti-glare panel—in reality, the ring wrapped all the way around the nose! I cut out a bit more red decal from the same sheet and negotiated its way onto the model.

The *Carpena* buzz numbers exploded on contact with water; these were replaced with *AeroMaster* decals, placed one by one in sequence to the fuselage sides.

Once the basic markings were applied, I needed to add the prominent and extensive data stenciling. I could find no sheet better than the one for the *Academy* F-84E/G; not only were these stencils correct (as opposed to the over-thick *Tamiya* decals, which outline the history of the F-84G, something of dubious use to crew members), but they were so thin they required no trimming. These were the best kit decals I have ever used, another recommendation for the *Academy* kit stemming from building the *Tamiya* kit!

Art tries to imitate life: at top, the finished model, in markings by Carpena and AeroMaster; below, Capt. Skeen is helped into the real "Benny-San" before a mission.

The wheel wells were painted yellow zinc chromate, and the landing gear struts were put into place. The fit of the nose gear was a little iffy, especially after the filling I had to do for the poor-fitting nose ring. Worse yet, the nose wheel was too wide for the two-part fork; in trying to get this to fit, I ended up shooting the tiny part into oblivion. After a moment of tortured soul-searching, I came up with a weird but effective solution. I chopped the remaining front of the fork off, then went and fetched my old *Heller* F-84 kit. The fork from that kit was cut off the nose strut, thinned down, and glued to the nose wheel. Then, I attached the fork/wheel combo to the nose wheel strut.

I added brake lines to the main gear struts, but since these were painted aluminum on the real plane, so the effect is minimal. The *AeroMaster* Choice resin wheels were used for the mains, and, after some clean up, the landing gear doors were added to the struts.

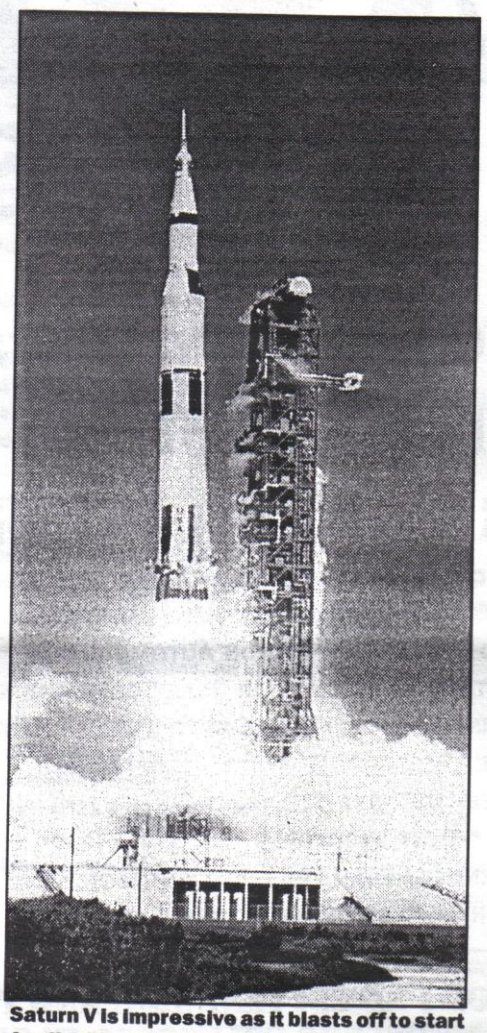
With the model on its wheels, the last few bits were added. I used *MV* lenses to replicate the taxi lights mounted on the inner gear doors, and a photoetched rear-view mirror went inside the windscreen above the gunsight. The fuel dump vents were added and painted silver. Finally, to arm my F-84, I opted not for 500-pound bombs but instead outfitted the plane with two napalm bombs, which started life as P-51D drop tanks in the *Hasegawa* kit. Painted yellow, these tanks were used as napalm containers, and they add a bit of extra color to the already colorful fighter.

There you have it—*Tamiya*'s F-84, AMS-style! This model could surely have been built faster without some of the modifications, but I like the way my *Thunderjet* came out, and that's what really matters.

Sizing up Saturn Vs from *Airfix*, *Monogram*

By Ken Miller

My interest in building a model of the Apollo Saturn V rocket started when I bought one at a garage sale when I was in elementary school. Unfortunately, I still remember that the kit was missing some critical parts (like the 2nd stage) so it quickly ended up in the trash. Bill Abbott came to my rescue a few years back when he gave me his *Airfix* Saturn V kit to build. Recently, I completed the *Monogram* version of the Saturn V that I intend to donate to the U.S.S. *Hornet* Museum. Having built both kits, I've found that each has its pluses and minuses. I'll provide a quick review of each kit that is both tongue-in-cheek as well as truthful and informative.



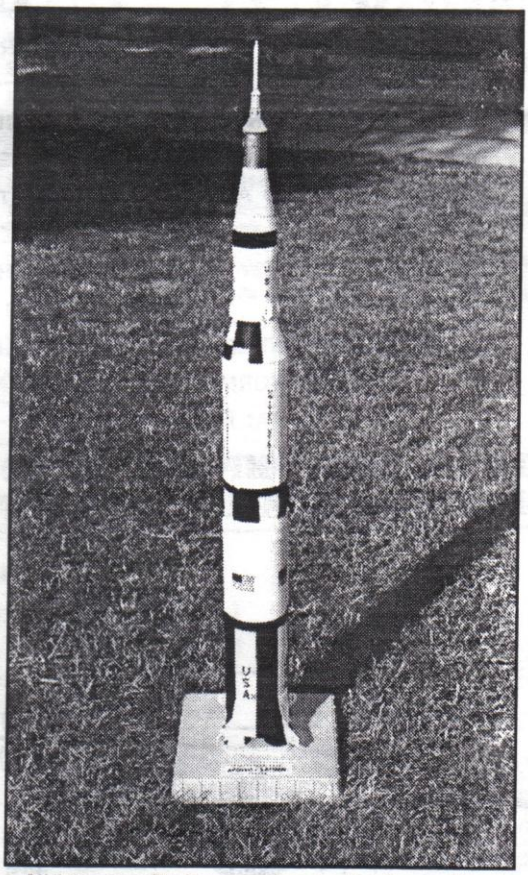
Saturn V is impressive as it blasts off to start Apollo 11...

I don't know the exact histories of each kit but assume that they were released at similar times. The *Monogram* kit is stamped 1969 on the bottom of the first stage so I'm pretty sure that both kits have been around quite a while. Overall detail of both kits is pretty similar, yet the *Airfix* one seems to have more surface detail on the exterior. The *Airfix* kit is molded strictly in white whereas the *Monogram* kit has a tree of gray parts for the metallic-finished parts such as engines and pressure domes within the stages.

The differences start at the base and work their way up to the command module. The *Monogram* base is more detailed and looks more realistic than the plain square of plastic provided for the *Airfix* kit. In reality the *Monogram* base isn't accurate either, but it does look a little better than the *Airfix* base. The representation of the second stage engines are what I consider the deciding factor between both kits. *Airfix* does a fine representation of the six engines, nozzles, and shield between them. *Monogram* pretty much dropped the ball and provided only the nozzles and shield. Where you would expect to find the engines there is only air. The nozzles are connected to the shield but there is nothing else between them and the second stage. "Star Trek" and "Star Wars" movie technology might be able to explain this arrangement but 1970s rocket science can't explain missing engines.

When you get to the lunar module, service module and command module you find that the *Monogram* kit has more "playability" designed into it. The Lunar Module has foldable legs and the descent stage separates from the ascent section. The *Airfix* kit does have separate thrusters to add to the lunar module and service module that look better. The playability of the *Monogram* kit is a bust unless you want to reenact an actual flight. I ended up breaking the pin that allows the lunar module to separate a few days after assembling it and just glued it all together. The *Monogram* kit has hinged doors, allowing the stowed lunar to be seen underneath the service module. *Monogram* gives another nod to playability by adding an unrealistic pin to the command module, allowing the shield and escape rocket to attach and detach.

Airfix provides an accurate capsule that I attached to the shield with a dab of RTV. Both kits provide figures that are a bit of a joke as they are 1:144 scale Micro Machine-sized. *Monogram* provides three technicians standing on the base waiting to get vaporized when the rocket launches. *Airfix* provides the three crew members seated together to go into the command module. They look like the three "see no evil, speak no evil, say no evil" monkeys. The problem is that there are no windows in the command module so you'd never know if a person added the crew or not.



...And is equally impressive as it sits on Ken's lawn. This is the 1:144 *Monogram* kit.

Both kits have their plusses and minuses. From an accuracy point of view the Airfix kit wins due to the *Monogram* kit missing the second stage engines. I do like the *Monogram* kit for the better looking base and opening doors to show off the stowed lunar module. To build the best kit a modeller should combine the *Airfix* kit with the *Monogram* base and opening doors. Good luck. Both kits build into quite a monster of a model showing off how large a Saturn V rocket really is.

SILICON VALLEY SCALE MODELERS PRESENT THEIR EIGHTH ANNUAL

KICKOFF CLASSIC

MODEL CONTEST

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24

AT THE MILPITAS COMMUNITY CENTER

THIS YEAR'S THEME:

CAMELOT 40 YEARS AFTER—1961-1963

SPECIAL AWARDS INCLUDE:

ARLIE CHARTER MEMORIAL AWARD—BEST USAAC SUBJECT, PACIFIC THEATER

AYRTON SENNA MEMORIAL AWARD—BEST COMPETITION AUTOMOBILE

MIKE WILLIAMS MEMORIAL AWARD—BEST SCI-FI, FANTASY OR REAL SPACE SUBJECT

BEST WESTLAND AIRCRAFT • BEST BRITISH SUBJECT • BEST CALIFORNIA SUBJECT

BEST AIRCRAFT IN FORIEGN SERVICE • BEST AFV (INCLUDING SOFTSKINS)

BEST ARAB-ISRAELI WARS SUBJECT • BEST U.S. ARMOR SUBJECT, ETO, 1942-45

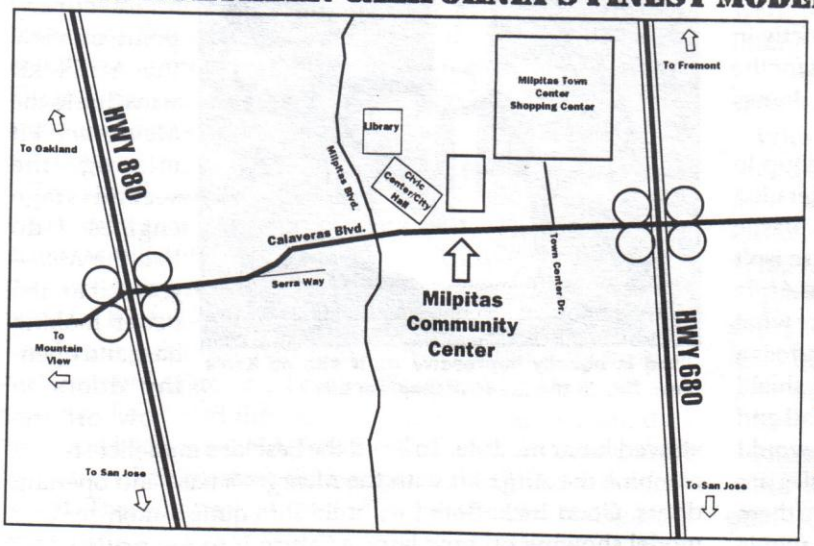
BEST AIR RACER • BEST VACUFORM

THE KENNEDY YEARS—BEST KENNEDY ERA (1961-63) SUBJECT

DESERT STORM: 10TH ANNIVERSARY—BEST DESERT STORM SUBJECT

KOREA: FIFTY YEARS LATER—BEST KOREAN WAR SUBJECT

FREE TO ALL NON-COMPETITORS! DOOR PRIZES! VENDORS! AND THE WORK OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S FINEST MODELERS COLLECTED IN ONE ROOM!



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL MIKE MEEK AT (408) 275-0909

VENDOR CONTACT:
BRAD CHUN AT (925) 829-0443
EMAIL CHUN325@AOL.COM

VENDOR TABLES ARE LIMITED IN NUMBER AND AVAILABLE ON A FIRST PAID FIRST SERVED BASIS.

CALIFORNIA RESALE/TAX PERMIT REQUIRED

TABLES ARE $40 EACH IF PAID BEFORE JANUARY 15, 2000; $45 EACH IF PAID BETWEEN JAN. 16 AND FEB. 26, 2000; $50 DAY OF EVENT (IF AVAILABLE)

Senior (18+ Years)

S1. Single Engine Jet or Rocket Aircraft, 1:72
S2. Multi-Engine Jet Aircraft, 1:72
S3. Single-Engine Prop or Turbo-Prop Aircraft, 1:72
S4. Multi-Engine Prop or Turbo-Prop Aircraft, 1:72
S5. Single-Engine Jet or Rocket Aircraft, 1:48
S6. Multi-Engine Jet Aircraft, 1:48
S7. Single-Engine Prop or Turbo-Prop Aircraft, Allied, 1:48
S8. Single-Engine Prop or Turbo-Prop Aircraft, Axis and Neutrals, 1:48
S9. Multi-Engine Prop or Turbo-Prop Aircraft, 1:48
S10. Jet and Rocket Aircraft, 1:32 and larger
S11. Prop Aircraft, 1:32 and larger
S12. Biplanes:Fabric & Rigging, all scales
S13. Rotary Wing Aircraft, all scales
S14. Civil, Sport and Racing Aircraft, all scales
S15. Jet, Prop and Rocket Aircraft, 1:144 and smaller
S16. Military Vehicles, Softskin, 1:35 and larger
S17. Armored Fighting Vehicles, Closed-Top, to 1945, 1:35 and larger
S18. Armored Fighting Vehicles, Closed-Top, post 1945, 1:35 and larger
S19. Armored Fighting Vehicles, Open-Top, 1:35 and larger
S20. Towed Artillery and Ancillary Vehicles, 1:35 and larger
S21. Military Vehicles, all types, 1:48 and smaller
S22. Ships, 1:350 and larger
S23. Ships, 1:351 and smaller
S24. Automobiles, Stock, all scales
S25. Automobiles, Custom, all scales
S26. Automobiles, Competition, Open-Wheel, all scales
S27. Automobiles, Competition, Closed-Wheel, all scales
S28. Space Vehicles, Fictional (Science Fiction or Fantasy), all scales and types
S29. Space Vehicles, Real, and Missiles, all scales and types
S30. Figures, Historical, all scales
S31. Figures, Fantasy and Fiction, all scales
S32. Out of the Box, all types and scales
S33. Dioramas, all types and scales
S34. Hypothetical Vehicles, all types and scales
S35. Miscellaneous
S36. Collections, all types and scales

Junior (13-17 Years)

J1. Aircraft
J2. Military Vehicles
J3. Automobiles
J4. Dinosaurs and Figures
J5. Miscellaneous

Youth (12 Years and Under)

SJ1. Aircraft
SJ2. Military Vehicles and Ships
SJ3. Automobiles
SJ4. Miscellaneous

Special Awards

SA1. Ted Kauffman Memorial Award
Judges' Best of Show (Senior)
SA2. Bill Magnie Memorial Award
Judges' Best of Show (Junior:Youth)
SA3. Arlie Charter Memorial Award
Best U.S. Army Air Corps Subject, Pacific Theater
SA4. Ayrton Senna Memorial Award
Best Competition Automobile
SA5. Mike Williams Memorial Award
Best Science Fiction, Fantasy or Real Space Subject
SA6. Best Westland Aircraft
SA7. Best British Subject
SA8. Best Aircraft in Foriegn Service
SA9. Best California Subject
SA10. Best AFV (including softskins)
SA11. Best Arab-Israeli Wars Subject
SA12. Best U.S. Armor Subject, ETO, 1942-45
SA13. Best Air Racer
SA14. Best Vacu-Form
SA15. The Kennedy Years
Theme Award: Best Kennedy Era (1961-63) Subject
SA16. Desert Storm: 10th Anniversary
Best Desert Storm Subject
SA17. Korea: Fifty Years Later Best Korean War Subject
SA18. Tim Curtis Award
Given to honor service to the Silicon Valley Scale Modelers .

Schedule of Events

9 a.m.-noon—Registration; Contest Opens
11:45—Judges' Meeting
12:30-2 p.m.—Judging
3:15 p.m.—Awards Presentation

Fees

Seniors: $4 Registration, $1 per model entered
Juniors: $1 Registration, .50 per model entered
Spectators: Free
Vendors: See information on front of flyer

General Rules:

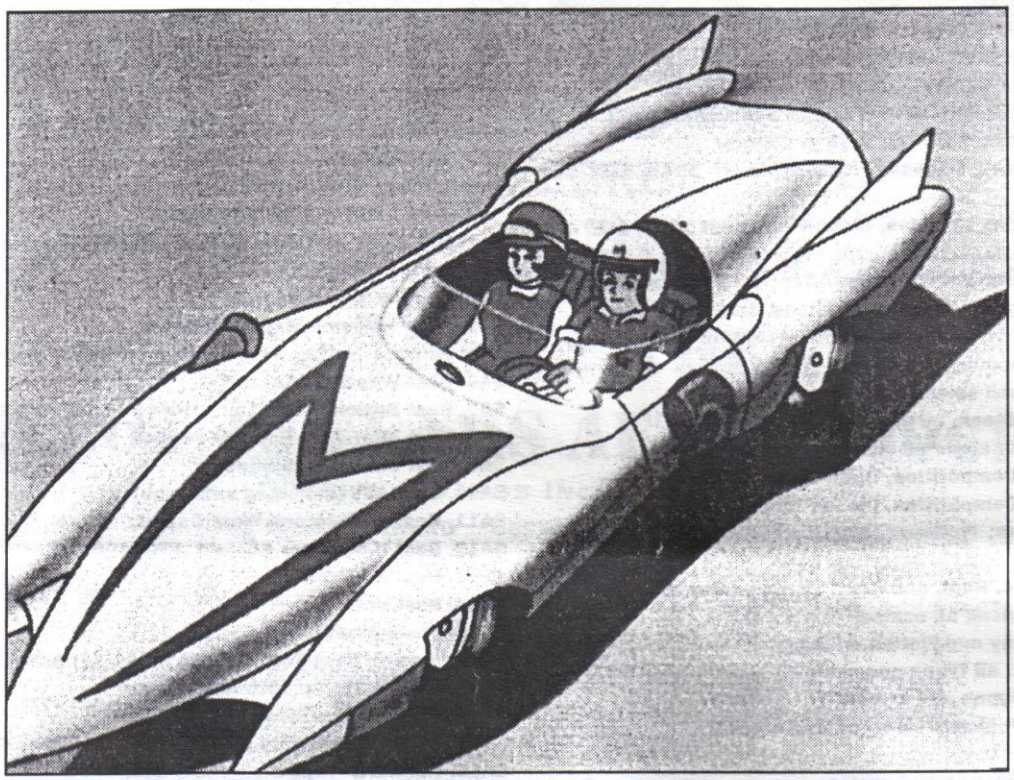
1. IPMS/USA rules and criteria will be used for this contest. However, no model may be handled by the judges. Model placement will be handled by the builder. SVSM invites members of other chapters to participate by joining our judging teams.
2. The contest director will make the final ruling on all disputes during the contest and may split or combine categories based on the number and nature of the entries.
3. No model that has won an award at an IPMS National contest is eligible, nor are any models that were first enetered in any Region IX competition prior to Feb. 27. 2000. SVSM appreciates the honor system, and hopes participants will as well.
4. SVSM asks that all contestants keep away from judging teams during the course of judging to ensure impartiality. Interference with judging teams by the contestants will be handled per IPMS USA rules, and could render the offenders' models ineligible for award consideration.
5. All work done on model entries must be done by the entrant.
6. All contestants must have fun—otherwise, they aren't doing this right!

Sizing up Speed Racer's Mach 5, times five

By Mike Yamada

As a car-crazy kid, I always made sure I got home from grade school in time to watch *Speed Racer*. I didn't care too much for the characters—for me, that cool car was the main attraction! I always thought Speed was kind of a wimp anyway. And Trixie was a girl...!

When I was a kid, there weren't many models or toys of the cars from *Speed Racer* available. However, there has been a recent upswing in the show's popularity, perhaps due to nostalgic 30-somethings like myself, and new younger viewers as well, resulting in the marketing of VHS videotapes of the original episodes, model kits, *Johnny Lightning* 1:64 die cast cars, action figures, graphic novels, and toys. There was even a short-lived animated show in 1994, *The New Adventures of Speed Racer*, which featured all-new adventures of the crew and an "updated" Mach 5, which resembled a cross between a Dodge Viper and the Corvette Stingray III concept car.



He's gaining on you so you'd better look alive: Speed Racer and Trixie in the Mach 5, which is available in model form in many kits. Few capture all the lines of this versatile racer.

I have tried to obtain as many of the Mach 5 kits (and other cars) as I could find over the years, and with the new 1:25 scale release from *Polar Lights*, I thought it would be interesting to compare them. I have limited this review to the 1:24/1:25 kits that I have in my collection. There was an earlier release from *Fujisaki*, but this kit was not in 1:24/1:25 scale and was somewhat toy-like. I have not included it here. Also, there is a new release of a large-scale (approximately 15 inches long) "Mach 5 Play Set" from *Resaurus*, to go along with the available action figures. Similarly, it is not included here.

The kits reviewed here are:

Imai 1:24 "The Mach" (kit 831051-2800)
Club M 1:24 "The Mach" (kit CM-MA01-19800)
Streamline Pictures 1:25 "Mach 5"
Polar Lights 1:25 "Mach V" glue kit (kit 6700)
Polar Lights 1:25 "Mach 5" snap kit (kit 6807)

The Mach 5 was designed by Speed's father, genius engineer/racecar fabricator Pops Racer. Featuring a special motor of his own design, the "GOV12," with output of 12,000 bhp, a 30,000 rpm maximum rev limit, and a 155 mph top speed *(ed. note: 12,000 hp only yielding 155 mph? And this makes Pops Racer a genius how, exactly?)*, the Mach 5 is equipped with all manner of special features, including auto jacks, special grip tires, rotary saws, deflector shield, special white light/infrared headlights, infrared goggles, underwater oxygen supply, periscope, homing robots, and winglets to assist aerodynamics. (See footnote 1.)

In the graphic novel, *Speed Racer: Born to Race, the Untold Origin*, Tommy Yune points out in his notes that the original Mach 5 design as shown in the Japanese manga (graphic novel) was actually a mid-engine design, not front-engined as seen on the TV series. This mid-engined configuration appears to be a V-8, gasoline-fueled, conventional design (eight air intake trumpets leading to the carburetor plenum) with an aft-mounted transaxle. In the TV show, the motor is mounted in the front of the car, and also has eight air intake trumpets. Also, the transmission appears to be a transaxle type, similar to the Porsche 928 or 97-current Corvette.

Since the Mach 5 exists only in animated form, determining the correct shape and outline is difficult. There is considerable variance between different episodes! However, the opening credit sequence is consistent throughout all episodes and so I will use that as the primary reference.

On to the kits!

***Imai* 1:24 "The Mach V"**

This model comes in injection molded styrene for the main parts, with chromed wheels, valve covers, etc., The saw blades are photoetched, the tires are rubber, and there are metal axles and wire for the ignition wires. The markings come on a sheet of waterslide decals, and there are two clear windshields (one vacuformed, one injection-molded) to go along with the clear headlight covers.

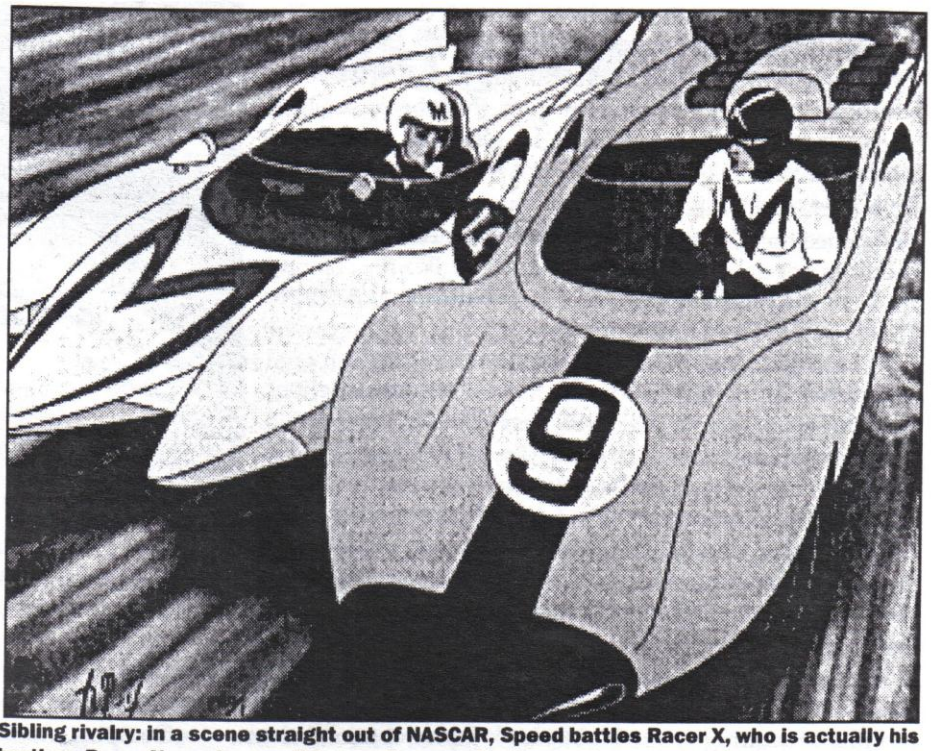
This version of the Mach 5 is front-engined with a 12-cylinder motor. The kit gives you poseable steering, move-

able saw blades, and an opening hood. Also, the periscope is deployable and there is an opening hatch for the homing robot. The auto jacks are also poseable.

The outline and shape look off; the pictures of the built kit on the box top indicate the model is too tall, unlike the "long and low" look of the prototype. The tailfins are also too tall and are the wrong shape. Also, this kit's hood opens in clamshell-fashion, while the prototype has a more conventional hood design. The body has an exaggerated "wasp waist" look.

***Club M* 1:24 "The Mach"**

This kit gives you a resin body, chassis and interior, with white metal detail parts, including suspension and disc brakes. Again, you get photoetched saw blades, but this kit includes only a single vacuformed windshield and headlight covers, resin tires, waterslide decals. Also included is a "Go Mifune" (Speed's Japanese name) resin figure.



Sibling rivalry: in a scene straight out of NASCAR, Speed battles Racer X, who is actually his brother. Racer X was less well-known for aversion to rearview mirrors.

Again, this is the front-engined, 12-cylinder version of the Mach 5, with an opening hood, poseable steering, moveable saw blades and poseable auto jacks.

The outline and shape are good, but the fairing aft of the driver's headrest is too short and should extend further aft. The tailfins should extend further aft. The hood opening front edge is incorrect; it should be farther forward. The kit is very complete mechanically, with monocoque chassis tub, A-arm front suspension, live rear axle with leaf springs and locating shocks. The motor is extremely detailed, with headers and exhaust system. There is even a white-metal radiator included!

***Streamline Pictures* 1:25 "Mach 5"**

This kit is a curbside model, with no opening features or engine detail. The body is resin, as is the interior and chassis. The windshield and headlight covers are vacuformed. This time, the tires are vinyl, with white metal wheels. Markings are provided as waterslide decals.

This is again the front-engined configuration.

This kit appears to be based on drawings found in the "NOW Comics" Speed Racer comics, published in 1989. These drawings are a close interpretation of the animated version. However, when compared to the TV version, the kit's fairing is too tall and does not extend far enough aft. Also, the shapes of the rear quarters are wrong. There appears to be a problem with the kit's side character line sloping downwards instead of being horizontal. The shape of the insides of the rear fenders is too full; they should not bulge into the trunk lid area. Also, the casting was very rough, with many voids requiring a lot of clean-up to be presentable.

***Polar Lights* 1:25 "Mach V" glue kit (kit 6700)**

This is laid out in the way most modern mass-produced model cars are laid out: most parts in injection-molded styrene, with vinyl tires and chromed plastic saws, disc brakes, and wheels. There's a clear styrene windshield with "bulletproof aqua canopy" and headlight covers. Markings are provided as waterslide decals.

This is the mid-engined design with turbine engine. Moving features include poseable steering, moveable saws, poseable periscope, opening hatch for homing robot, and poseable auto jacks.

This is the newest release of this subject. The outline and shape ap-

Speed Racer References

Moran, Elizabeth. *Speed Racer: The Official 30th Anniversary Guide.* Hyperion, New York, 1997, ISBN 0-7868-8246-8

Speed Racer #23, Vol .1, No. 23, August 1989
NOW Comics, Chicago IL, ISSN 0895-7509

Yune, Tommy. *Speed Racer: Born to Race. The Untold Origin.* Wildstorm Productions, 2000

Yoshida, Tatsuo. *Speed Racer Classics Volume One*
NOW Comics, Chicago IL, 1988

Speed Racer: Challenge of the Masked Racer videotape. Family Home Entertainment, Van Nuys California, 1966, 1995

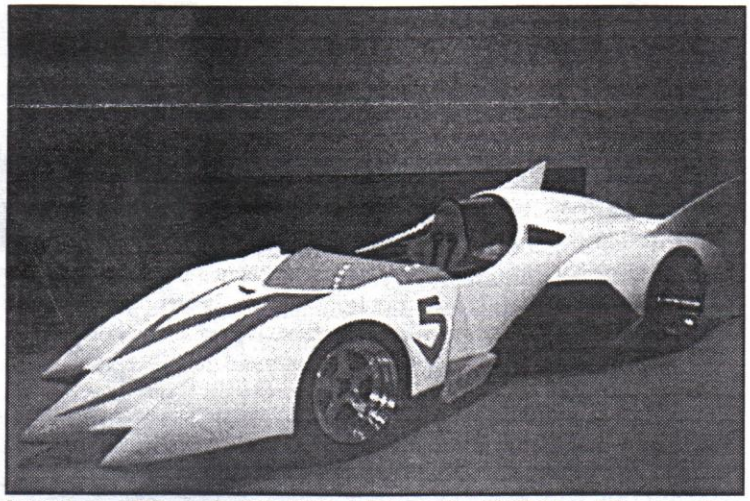
Speed Racer: The Desperate Desert Race #6 videotape. Family Home Entertainment, Van Nuys California, 1966, 1995

pear to be close to the "NOW Comics" drawings. The fairing should extend further aft per the TV version. The rear quarters should not bulge inboard so far. The overall size of the car is very small. However, the wheels and tires appear to be the correct size for 1:25, although the tires are very skinny. The homing robot is not accurate. It is not clear how *Polar Lights* decided on the mid-engined configuration, since the TV version was front-engined. The turbine motor is not described in any references. Besides, having the motor in the rear trunk area would make it difficult for Spritle and Chim Chim to stow away!

***Polar Lights* 1:25 "Mach 5" snap kit (kit 6807)**

Similar to glue kit #6700 with simplified construction. The chassis is attached to body using metal screws. No motor detail parts are included. The mufflers are simplified. Steering is not poseable. Metal axles are used to attach wheels. The wheels are solid and do not have opened brake cooling holes. Knock-offs are molded to the wheels, rather than being separate parts. No disc brakes, homing robot, or saws are included. The periscope is poseable. Markings are "stick on labels" rather than waterslide decals.

Some of these kits, such as the *Streamline Pictures* kit, are no longer available. The *Imai* and *Club M* kits required several months of waiting while HobbyLink Japan obtained them. Also, they were somewhat expensive and are not very accurate. In addition, they are limited-run multimedia kits with varying degrees of parts engineering and production quality. The *Polar Lights* kits are readily available, reasonably accurate, are engineered for easy assembly, and are inexpensive.

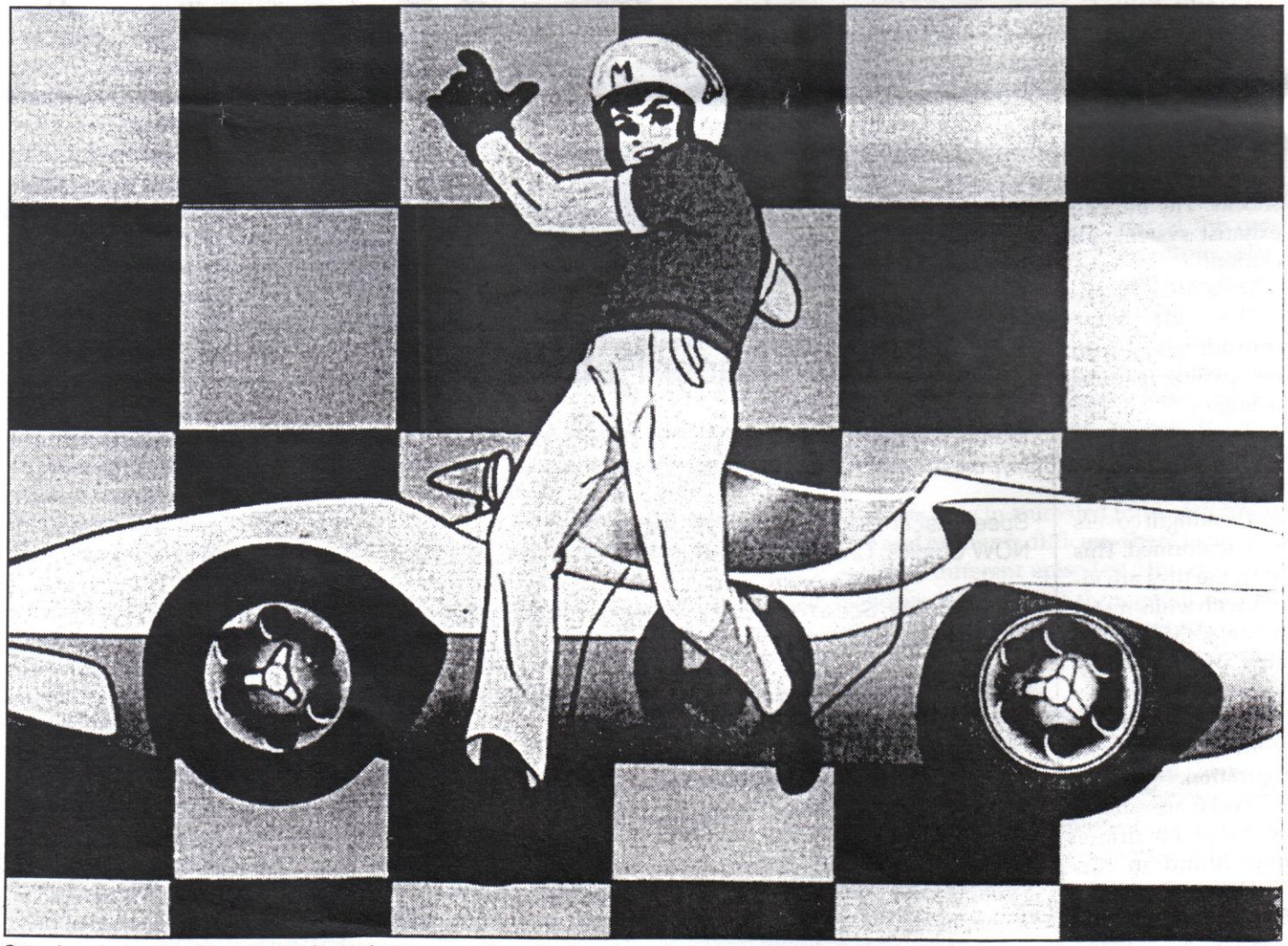


A mock up of the redesigned Mach 5 from the 1997 *Speed Racer* series.

Unless you are a collector and just have to have all versions of the Mach 5, I would recommend the *Polar Lights* glue kit as the best choice.

Go Speed Racer Go!

Footnote 1: Moran, p.97



Speed racer and his Mach 5, the fastest car ever entered in the somewhat unpopular 'monkey and toddler in the trunk' class of racing.

The horror that is the SVSM gift exchange

There's a chill in the air, the malls are full of surly people and there's a whole new section of ghastly music at the record store, which could mean only one thing: it must be December and time for the SVSM Pizza Party and Gift Exchange!At the December meeting, leave your built models at home, because we'll be eating pizza. Lots of pizza. Lots of greasy, gooey pizza. Unless you want your model camouflaged in reds and yellows, you'd probably want to leave the built models at home.

We'll have pizza for all our members free of charge; non-members (like family members, guests and others who just want to soak up the ambiance-yech!) will pay $5. We'll also have sodas, and from time to time members bring their own home-baked desserts. If you want to bring such items, feel free! Guests are encouraged to use napkins, plates and other eating utensils to avoid a repeat of last year's unsavory events.

After the fellowship and camaraderie of the pizza party, the mood will turn 180 degrees and the dark side of human nature will come to the fore. No, I'm not talking about competitive flatulence. I'm talking about the annual gift exchange. To get in on this bloodbath, bring an already wrapped gift to the meeting. The gift should be valued at $12 or so; more expensive gifts are not prohibited, and have the added value of making one person happy and, generally, three people miserable!

Please make these gifts items you would like to receive; *LifeLike* and *Lindberg* kits are strongly discouraged, old *Aoshima* models may result in a beating with a folding chair, and *Starfix* kits will draw a penalty that would make the Taliban cringe.

Each participant will have his name written on a slip of paper, which will go into a hat, can or other drawing-worthy container. At the start of the event, the first name is drawn, and that person picks a gift from the pile and opens it for all to see, much an African predator might inadvertently show its kill to the jackals and vultures. The second person whose name is drawn has the option of opening his own present or stealing the first gift. If the first gift is stolen, first person whose name was drawn must open a new gift. The third person drawn can steal either of the two now-open gifts or open his own present.

The ground rules this year are thus:

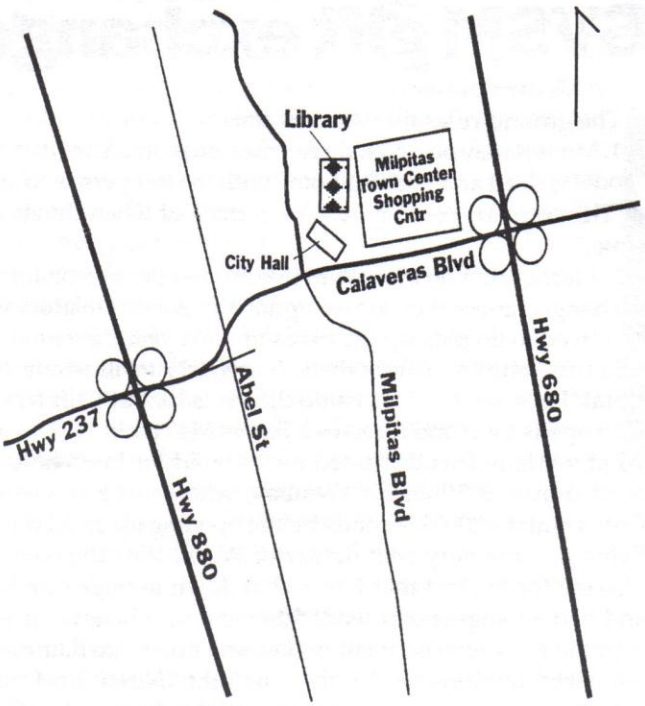
1. Models may be stolen three times, no more. After that, the model is dead and is going home with the last person to steal it. The secretary/editor shall keep track of when things are stolen.

2. Please bring no more than two models per person for the exchange, unless they are exceptionally good. Violators will be forced to go pick up the pizza for next year's event.

Let us employ a hypothetical scenario to illustrate this ritual. Let's say the first name drawn is that of Cliff Kranz. Cliff opens a gift and receives a *Testors* M47 tank. "This is just what my lady friend wanted me to build for her!" he says. Next drawn is Vladimir Yakubov, who considers stealing Cliff's tank for .0002 seconds before opening up an *ICM* I-16. "This was the very best fighter of World War II!" he says. "Except for the fact that it was shot down in huge numbers and had an engine that tended to explode whenever it was exposed to oxygen or aviation fuel, and burst into flames if it was hit by anything heavier than sunlight." Next is Jim Priete, who steals the I-16, just because he's that kind of guy. Vladimir opens the next model, and it's an *AMT* XB-35; he looks confused, since there's almost no way to make an XB-35 in Soviet markings. Mark Hernandez is next; he steals the XB-35, hoping to make it into some kind of hypothetical German aircraft. Vladimir steals back the I-16. Jim opens the next present; a *Hasegawa* Ki-84. Laramie is next; he steals Cliff's M47. Cliff steals the XB-35, Mark steals the Ki-84, and Jim steals the I-16. The I-16 is dead, having been stolen three times. Vladimir opens the next gift, a 1:72 kit of any WWII British aircraft, and declares his intent to build it as a Russian plane. Robin Powell gasps in horror and tries to hold back his tears.

This goes on, as is the way of SVSM, until all models are opened or until Bert McDowell has had his model ship stolen, whichever comes last. (In the event that Bert is unable to attend, the all-important ship will be stolen from Duane Fowler.)

Hopefully, as in past years, this routine will be lively, fun and mostly violence-free. If you have any questions, call the editor, or better yet, Bert McDowell.



Next meeting:

7:30 p.m., Friday, December 15

at the Milpitas Public Library 40 N. Milpitas Blvd.

For more information, call the editor at (408) 723-3995

E-mail: bucholtzc@aol.com

Chris Bucholtz, Editor
Silicon Valley Scale Modelers
P.O. Box 361644
Milpitas, CA 95036

DAN BUNTON
910 NIDO DRIVE
CAMPBELL CA 12345

Don't forget December means it's time to pay your dues!