



## Aztec Eagles: 201 Escuadron and the P-47D

By Gabriel Lee

They were far from home at Porac Airfield on Central Luzon in the Philippine Islands. Some could argue they were farther from home than their 5<sup>th</sup> Air Force brethren, a fact they were constantly reminded of when they stared at the signpost pointing in the general direction of Mexico that read "El Zocalo-10000 Km." Yet at the same time it was like staying with distant relatives. The climate and vegetation was similar to what could be found in parts of their country. The islands and those who inhabited them had names that they could easily pronounce (unlike the members of the other three elements of the 5<sup>th</sup> Air Force) or were the same as that found in the land of their birth. Even in this

exotic locale, they found people who spoke Spanish like they did. The people they were helping to liberate were, for all intents and purposes, "family." In this day and age few people remember why World War II was called a world war. One reason was that there was combat or other operations going on just about everywhere in the world. The real reason is that just about every country in the world either sided with the Allies or with the Axis, and very few stayed neutral. Some of these countries contributed to their side by providing food, money, intelligence, or facilities. In Mexico's case, they sent in aviators. Very few people outside of Mexico remember this, and even fewer people remember this in Mexico.

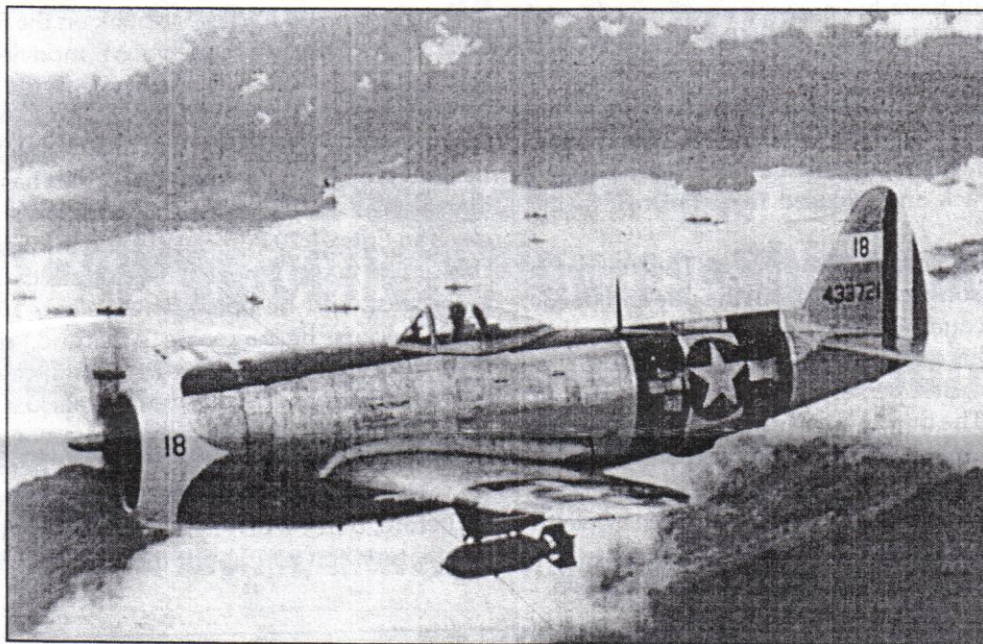
It is interesting to note that a Walt Disney cartoon predicted (in a way) the Latin American countries that sent combatants to fight alongside the American troops. The 1945 cartoon *The*

*Three Caballeros* had Donald Duck travel through Latin America. His traveling companions were Panchito Pistolas (a feisty rooster dressed as a Mexican gentleman-cowboy who carried a pair of pistols at his sides) and Jose Carioca (a parrot from Brazil who loved to dance). The cartoon was planned and in production before either country entered the war or sent combatants to theatres of operation. These two countries sent troops and/or aviators to fight alongside the U.S. and were the first in Latin America to be equipped with P-47 *Thunderbolts*.

Mexico entered the conflict on May 28, 1942. The road to war had started on April 24, 1942 with the sinking of the PEMEX tanker *Tamaulipas* by U-553. This did not raise as much furor as later

events since the tanker had been manned by foreign crews and sailed under an American flag. Nationalistic tempers flared on May 13 with the sinking of PEMEX tanker *Potrero de Llano* off the coast of Miami by U-564, the ship was flying the Mexican flag and the crew was also Mexican. Fourteen crewmen died in this sinking. President Miguel Avila Camacho's government demanded that their neutrality be respected, and they demanded that the Nazi government pay and apologize for the sinking of this vessel. The Nazi government arrogantly ignored the pleas from the Mexican government and answered them by sinking the PEMEX tanker *Faja de Oro* with U-106 on May 21. Ten sailors died. This was too much for Mexico and so the nation declared war on the Axis powers.

At first Mexico was content with Coastal defense, using their newly acquired AT-6s to patrol Mexican territorial waters. The



One of the 201 Escuadron's P-47D-30s carries bombs on a ground support mission over the Philippines, with units of the U.S. invasion fleet in the background. The unit flew 96 missions and 791 total combat sorties.

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The *Styrene Sheet* is a monthly publication of the Silicon Valley Chapter of the International Plastic Model Society (IPMS). Articles and comments should be submitted to Chris Bucholtz, Editor, P.O. Box 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

It's December, which means that our monthly meeting will be a little different than usual. It's the month of the gift exchange, where gifts will be given, stolen and pronounced dead—all among friends, of course!

As we did last year, we are holding the event at Round Table on Saratoga and Moorpark. It's an all-you-can-eat event; it's also an all-you-can-pay-for event.

Here's how to participate in the exchange: bring an already wrapped gift to the meeting. The gift should be valued at \$12 or more; make it something you'd like to receive yourself. The dregs of the hobby (we're speaking of kits, like *Lindberg*, early *Aoshima*, *Lifelike* and *Starfix*, as opposed to certain modelers) should be left at home; bringing one will mean that Mike Meek has to go home for his blowtorch and a pair of pliers. This year each participant may bring two gifts.

Each participant will have his name written on a slip of paper, which will go into a hat, can, *Trumpeter* aircraft carrier hull or some such container. Also, put your name on the outside of the gift. That way, if the present is inappropriate, like a *Tamiya* P-47D box full of athletic socks, the giver will be identified, mocked, attacked with either a banana or a pointed stick, given his gift back and excused from the rest of the exchange.

Otherwise, things remain as they ever were. The first name is drawn, and that person picks a gift from the pile and opens it for all to see. 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 are thus:

1. Models may be stolen three times. After that, the model is dead and goes 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.

To illustrate how this works, let us create a scenario. John Carr opens the first gift, a *Tamiya* 1:35 Wespe self-propelled gun. After John's usual excessively demonstrative display of emotion at opening such a cool kit, Bill Ferrante demonstrates nearly the same degree of emotion when he opens an *Academy* M3 Stuart tank. After Bill trudges back to his seat, Postoria Aguirre steals the Stuart, contemplating finishing it as a tricked-out three-passenger business tank. Bill opens the next gift from the table, an *A-Model* An-22 Cock. Vladimir Yakubov then keels over in a dead faint. Next is Barry Bauer, who makes some reference to the An-22's code name as you would expect him to and steals the big kit. Bill decides to steal the Stuart. Postoria opens the next kit, a *Bandai* starship *Enterprise*. Brian Sakai then keels over in a dead faint. Steven Quock opens the next gift and gets a book on the Banff Strike Wing. Several pasty-complexioned RAF modelers keel over in a dead faint. Brad Chun is next; he steals the Wespe from John Carr, who steals the Stuart from Bill, who grabs Barry's... An-22 (have to be careful with that code name!), and Barry steals the *Enterprise* from Postoria. The Stuart has been stolen three times and is "dead," meaning it's John's to keep. Postoria opens an Entex 1:20 Porsche 914 and thinks, "how hard could it be?" Scott Nagle is next and theorizes that the biggest must be the best, and he opens an *Academy* 1:32 F/A-18. He is happy, because he is a rookie to this and is unaware of the 15 other guys in the room waiting to pounce on his model like jackals—Christmas jackals, but jackals just the same.

This continues until all models are opened, until Bert McDowell's ship is stolen, or until Jim Priete makes a little kid cry, whichever comes last. If you have never been through this before, don't worry; you'll figure it out as we go along, and it'll toughen you up for the holidays!

—The Editor

## CONTEST CALENDAR

Feb. 22, 2004: **Silicon Valley Scale Modelers** host the eleventh annual **Kickoff Classic** at Napredak Hall, 770 Montague Expressway, San Jose. The theme is "Stars and Stripes." For more information, call Chris Bucholtz at (408) 723-3995.

March 27, 2004: **IPMS/Fresno Scale Modelers** host the **Region 9 Convention and Contest**, to be held at the Fresno Air National Guard station or, in the event of national defense conflicts, at an alternate site. More details to be announced.

May 1, 2004: **IPMS/Santa Rosa** hosts **Model Expo 2004**. More details to be announced.

May 14-15, 2004: **IPMS/Las Vegas** hosts **The**

**Best of the West XI** at the Imperial Palace Hotel, 3535 Las Vegas Blvd. South, Las Vegas, Nevada. For more information, call Warren Pratt at (702) 871-6797.

May 22, 2004: **IPMS/Fremont Hornets** host the **2004 Tri-City Spring Classic** at the Newark Community Center, 35501 Cedar Blvd., Newark, California. For more information, Call Mark Schynert at (510) 796-3351 or e-mail him at [mass22@earthlink.net](mailto:mass22@earthlink.net) with the subject "Tri-City Contest" in the subject line.

October 16, 2004: **The IPMS/Redding Dambusters** host their **model contest**. The theme is "Testing, Timing and Records." More information as it becomes available.



**IPMS/Fremont Hornets and the Newark  
Community Center Proudly Co-Sponsor the**

# **Tri-City Spring Classic**

**Scale model contest and exhibition**

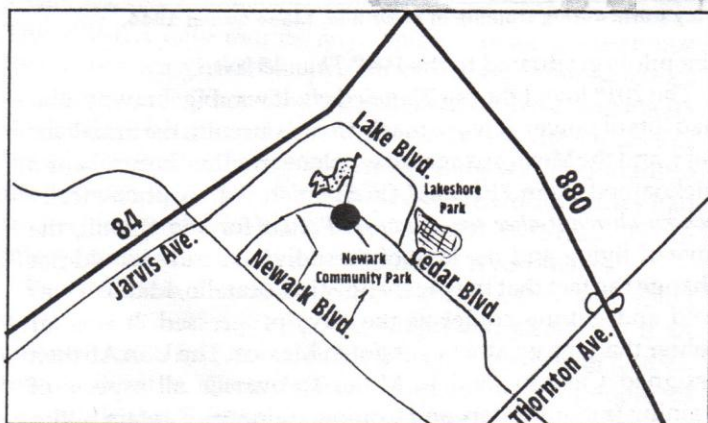
**Saturday, May 22 2004**

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**47 Categories for  
Aircraft•Automobiles•Figures•Ships•Military  
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**Special awards for Best aircraft or space vehicle, Best armor, Best civilian land vehicle, Best ship, Best figure or robot, and the Tri-City Award for best tri-themed entry (trimotor airplane, triceratops, Triumph car, Trident missile, etc.)**

**Plus vendors, a raffle and a free  
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Free admission to all  
non-competitors!**



**Entry fees: \$6 for modelers 18 and older, plus \$1 for each model after the first two entries. \$1 for 17 modelers and younger with no charge for additional entries.**

**For Vendor information, call Jim Priete weekdays between 9 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. at (925) 323-1845. Tables are \$40 until April 1, \$45 until May 21 and \$50 on the day of the event.**

**For more information, contact Mark Schynert at (510) 796-3331 or e-mail him at [mass22@earthlink.net](mailto:mass22@earthlink.net) (with 'Tri-City Contest' in the subject line)**



# The Mexican Air Force in combat in WWII

Continued from page 1

sinkings continued however, becoming more brazen as time went by. On July 5, an AT-6 flown by Major Luis Noriega Medrano damaged *U-129* (which by that time had already sank the tankers *Tuxpan* and *Las Choapas* off the Mexican coast) using a pair of 1000-pound bombs. In April 1943 President Franklin D. Roosevelt invited President Avila to participate as armed combatants. President Avila had to carefully consider this, since it went against previous Mexican national policy. As the casualty count mounted (with *U-171* sinking two more ships) and public outcry became louder, President Avila seriously thought about sending an armed contingent to fight alongside Allied forces. He knew that he now could easily get congressional and public approval to send combatants, but who to send? As a former military man himself (he was a general in the Mexican army) he knew the army was in no condition to be sent overseas. A tactical fighter unit was another story entirely. That was actually doable.

## Training

The government set up a special training unit in Mexico City. The best and the brightest of all the Mexican military were gathered there, where 300 would be chosen to go overseas. In a way they were similar to the Rough Riders of the Spanish-American war, where the members came from varying backgrounds and social classes. They had sons of the rich, the poor, the son of a former Mexican politician, and even an honorably discharged Mexican-American paratrooper. They were to be called *Fuerza Aerea Expedicionaria Mexicana* (Mexican Expeditionary Air Force). More properly they were *Escuadron de Pelea 201* (201<sup>st</sup> Fighter Squadron). The FAEM were to be commanded by Colonel Antonio Cardenas Rodriguez. Day-to-day command of the squadron was left up to Captain Primero Piloto-Aviador Radames Gaxiola Andrade (1<sup>st</sup> Captain Pilot Aviator Radames Gaxiola Andrade).

On July 20, 1944, President Avila reviewed his Mexican heroes at El Zocalo.

El Zocalo is a plaza in downtown Mexico City. It is a major symbol to the Mexican people (also known as the Plaza of the Three Cultures) much like the Lincoln Monument in Washington D.C is to Americans. On one side lies the *Catedral* (The Cathedral-symbolizing the Spanish culture), on the second side lies the ruins of the *Templo Mayor* (the ruins of the grand Aztec temple symbolizing the pre-Columbian culture of Mexico), and finally *El Zocalo* (a government palace that symbolizes the Mexican culture). In a stirring speech President Avila spoke to them about the hardships they were about to face and reminded them that their Brazilian brothers were already at war in Italy. After tearfully saying goodbye to their families and friends, the 201<sup>st</sup> boarded a train to Nuevo Laredo on the Texas border.

The train finally arrived at Nuevo Laredo on July 26, 1944.

Again, crowds, media and government functionaries (this time from both the Mexican and U.S. governments) met the 300 Aztec warriors to cheer them on. For the first time ever, Mexican fighting men were crossing the U.S. border to fight overseas. Mexicans were going overseas to fight alongside Americans. "Viva Mexico! Viva el Escuadron 201! (Long live Mexico! Long Live the 201<sup>st</sup> Squadron!)," they screamed. Once the 201<sup>st</sup> crossed the bridge into the U.S., they climbed onto another train. This time their destination was Randolph Army Air Base in San Antonio, Texas.

At Randolph, the 201<sup>st</sup> was split for specialized training. Ground crew went one way (in actuality, to several different bases depending on their duties) and pilots went to Victoria, Texas. The pilots went on to learn their trade while flying P-40 *Warhawks*. The pilots were subjected to intensive training: formation flight, nocturnal flight, aerial gunnery and air combat tactics. When they weren't flying, the WACs (Women Army Corps) taught the pilots English. They also taught the U.S. instructors Spanish. After training, evaluation and testing,

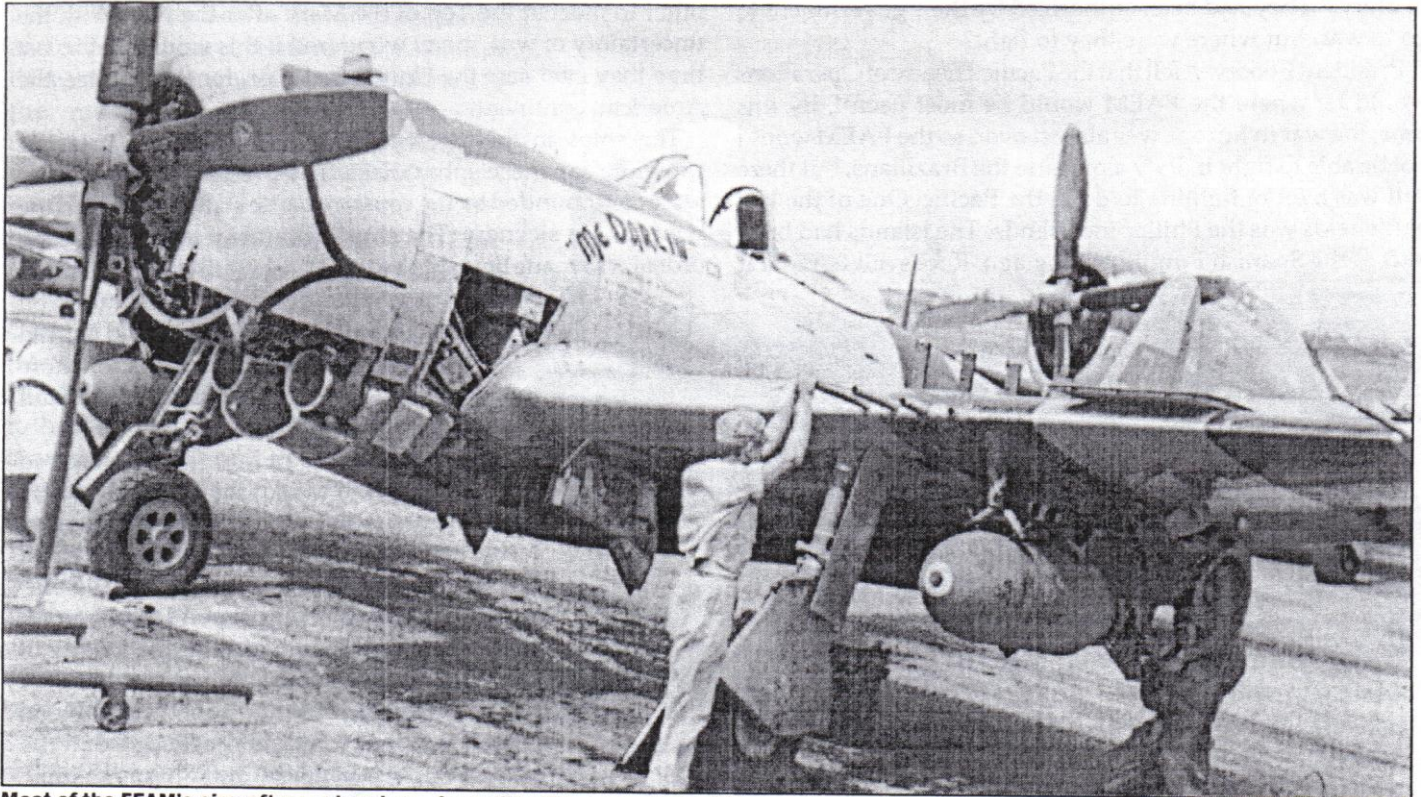


FAEM personnel try to stay warm during training in Pocatello, Idaho during 1944.

the pilots graduated to the P-47 *Thunderbolt*.

The 201<sup>st</sup> loved the big *Thunderbolt*. It was big, brawny, and had lots of power. It was a macho man's aircraft, the Brazilians said, and the Mexicans agreed wholeheartedly. The mechanics nicknamed them "Pecuas" (in Spanish P-47 is phonetically *peh-ku-ah-rehnt-ah-see-eh-tay* or *Pecuas* for short). Still, the love of flying and the love of these flying brutes would not change the fact that they were now in Pocatello, Idaho. It was cold and getting colder as the days progressed. It was far colder than the weather ever got in Mexico. The USAAF then assigned Captain Paul B. Miller to oversee all aspects of training (mainly Safety and Combat training). Captain Miller was a strict disciplinarian-this he believed would lead the 201<sup>st</sup> to success in combat. Far from being (at least from the 201<sup>st</sup>'s point of view) an uptight anglo pain in the butt, Captain





Most of the FEAM's aircraft were hand-me-downs like this one, which still wears the markings of a previous owner, the 41st Fighter Squadron of the 35th Fighter Group. Note the symmetric Curtiss-Electric propeller on this example.

Miller was a great fit with the unit. He was fluent in Spanish (he had grown up in Peru) and he had been an assistant air attaché in Mexico City. He knew the language, he knew the culture and he knew what vital lessons he had to impart to the Mexican pilots. You couldn't have asked for a better teacher.

As fall progressed to winter, the weather in the skies over Pocatello worsened. Conditions and freezing temperatures hampered flight training, slowing down the training schedule. It was vital that the 201<sup>st</sup> Squadron train as much as possible in flying the *Thunderbolt*. Conditions were miserable. Scheduling Spanish-language movies once a week did not help the Mexican unit's morale. Because of this Colonel Cardenas requested a change of station for the unit. Orders were cut for the unit to head to Majors Field located in Greenville, Texas, a 45 minute drive northeast of Dallas.

The Mexican flyers were greeted by a sign over its main street: *Welcome to Greenville- the blackest land- The whitest people*. This did not help morale any. There was an international incident brewing here. First, the Mexicans were refused service at a local eatery. Then they were denied off-base housing by the locals, who refused to rent apartments to the spouses of the squadron members. Off-base housing was important to the squadron members that had wives and children- they had to live somewhere. Racism was about to break up an international alliance meant to fight the Axis powers.

Base officials and civic leaders got together and acted quickly. It would not help the Allied war effort any if an alliance with a friendly country fell apart because of a small town's bigotry. Civic leaders convinced the people of Greenville that the Mexicans were there as allies in the war effort and therefore respect for them was required. Furthermore, Captain Miller interceded with the townsfolk to explain to them that the men of the 201<sup>st</sup> came from good

families. Because of this, those that required off-base housing found off-base housing.

It was here in Greenville that the 201<sup>st</sup> Squadron had its first loss. On January 23, 1945 after a heavy rainstorm, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Cristoforo Salido Grijalva lost his life trying to take-off from a muddy taxiway. The *Thunderbolt* had nearly accelerated to take-off speed when Salido saw that something was wrong and he was not on the runway. Realizing his error, the young pilot hit the brakes. This action made his aircraft flip over, and the pilot drowned in the mud.

Every fighter squadron seems to have a hotshot, a pilot whose exuberance and flying skills makes the pilot's career a near impossible balancing act. It could be argued that Lieutenant Reynaldo Perez Gallardo was the unit's hotshot. Here in Greenville, he nearly got his wings clipped. To celebrate his recent marriage, he buzzed Greenville's main street. His engine roaring at full throttle and wingtips nearly rubbing against the buildings that bordered Main Street, he came in low, shaking those same buildings. This was definitely against regulations. Unfortunately, one of these buildings contained a movie theatre. Watching a movie were Captain and Mrs. Miller. Captain Miller was furious. He immediately restricted Lieutenant Perez from flying duties and assigned him to be the officer in charge of the squadron's mechanics. This change of duty shocked the young lieutenant into following regulations a little more closely. He eventually would return to flying status.

On February 22, 1945, the 201<sup>st</sup> graduated. In a ceremony full of pomp and circumstance, two military bands, a 21-gun salute, and a presidential speech, the 201<sup>st</sup> squadron received their battle flag from the Mexican government. President Avila ended his speech by saying, "Maybe this battle flag will come back torn, full of bullet holes, but nevertheless covered



in glory." They had been authorized by their government to go to war. But where were they to fight?

President Roosevelt felt that the Pacific Theatre of Operations would be where the FAEM would be most useful. By this time, the war in Europe was almost over, so the FAEM would not be able to fight in Italy alongside the Brazilians, but there still was a lot of fighting to do in the Pacific. One of the key battlefields was the Philippine Islands. The islands had been part of the Spanish Empire of long ago. Roosevelt felt that it



**201st Escuadron commander Capt. 1/o. P.A. Radames Gaxiola Andrade and his crew chief, Sgt. Mec. M.A. Chavez.**

would only be natural to send the FAEM to the Philippines since they both shared that common history. Orders were cut for the unit to ship out of San Francisco to the Philippines on March 27, 1945. Until then, there was plenty of time to continue honing their fighting skills.

March 10, 1945, as the sun was setting, Lieutenant Javier Martinez Valle flew his P-47 over the Brownsville air-to-air gunnery range. His objective was a towed target trailing behind another plane. Suddenly his aircraft spun out of control and crashed. Crash investigation determined that Lieutenant Martinez had flown into the tow cable or the target's counterweight. He was the last stateside training death for the 201<sup>st</sup> squadron.

The Mexican squadron was shipped by rail to Camp Stoneman in Pittsburg, California. They remained there for a few days until finally shipping out on the March 27. They had secret and cryptic orders- *ship out to a point in the Pacific.*

#### To War

As the Victory Ship *SS Fairisle Victory* steamed out of San Francisco Bay with the 201<sup>st</sup> and 1500 other fighting men, one can only imagine their thoughts as the ship passed under the Golden Gate Bridge and the San Francisco skyline rapidly receded. Some would have looked for the Mark Hopkins Hotel, where some would have spent the previous night at the Top of the Mark Bar (at the top floor of the hotel). Along with drinks came the promises of hoisting glasses in memory of those that would not come back at this very bar-this was a common occurrence at that time. Friends would promise each

other to meet at the Top of the Mark after the war. With the uncertainty of war, many wondered if this would be the last time they ever saw the United States or, for that matter, the American continent.

The ships in the convoy proceeded cautiously to avoid prowling Japanese submarines. The pressures of the cruise were compounded by the constant battle station drills and the bouts of sea sickness. The ship's complement's month-long ordeal was made bearable by the 201<sup>st</sup> Squadron's strumming and singing of traditional Mexican tunes on their guitars during the warm and humid Pacific nights. This made the situation more tolerable for all as they steamed to war and an uncertain future.

On April 30, 1945 the *Fairisle Victory* entered Manila Bay. On May 1, the 201<sup>st</sup> was met by high-ranking officials to welcome them to the theatre of operations. They then boarded a train to their base of operations at Porac Airfield. They would spend one month acquainting themselves with the theatre of operations.

The airfield itself had been originally an encampment crudely hacked from the clutches of the jungle by the Philippine Army. Then it was taken over from the Filipinos by the Imperial Japanese Air Force and turned into an airfield. After that, the Allied forces liberated the airfield and claimed it as their own. Finally, a spot was separated for the FAEM. Bordering on the airfield was a newly-liberated POW camp. The sight of the walking

human skeletons that the POWs had become shocked the members of the 201<sup>st</sup>.

It was still a war zone. Artillery units were still directing fire at the retreating Japanese forces, and the "swish-boom!" sound of the guns punctuated their everyday existence. The area was not safe either; marauding Japanese forces were in full guerilla mode. It wasn't pretty but for the moment it was home.

When they weren't in training, the 201<sup>st</sup> tried to make the best of it. Porac Airfield was littered with all sorts of Japanese war materiel that had suddenly been turned to junk by allied ordnance. Lumber, stones, bamboo and other surplus materials were also around. With a little Mexican ingenuity, they managed to build a proper military base complete with a dinning facility, medical facility, maintenance facility and a central area with the Mexican flag flying from a flag pole in its very center. Like the other allied contingents in the area that had similar arrangements, they named the base's streets after famous or large streets and boulevards from their country. The Mexicans, of course, named theirs after streets and boulevards of Mexico City. Someone with a wry sense of humor painted a sign pointing in the general direction of Mexico. It read: "El Zocalo-10000 Km."

2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Miguel Moreno Arreola was exploring the wrecks of Japanese vehicles littering their base. Among the junk was the wreckage of a Nakajima Ki-84 Hayate or "Frank" in Allied parlance. Incredibly, a portion of its left wing was in pristine condition. Lieutenant Moreno had an idea. He called

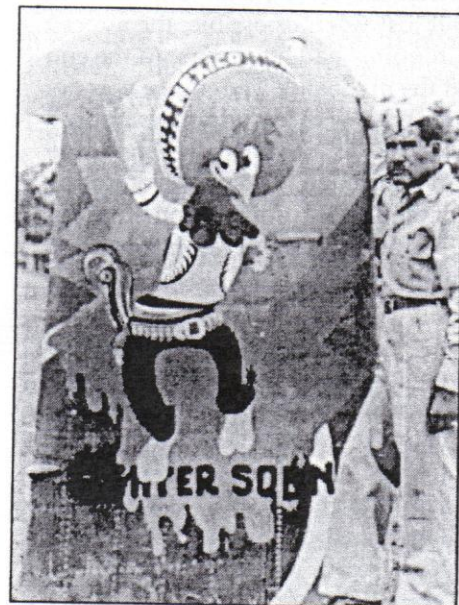


over several squadron aircraft mechanics and ordered them to remove that portion of the wing. The wing was then transported to the main entrance of the Mexican encampment and planted upright in a highly visible spot. Before the war Moreno had been an architecture student. While the 201<sup>st</sup> had been training in the US, *The Three Caballeros* had been released. It was a travelogue with Donald Duck (U.S.), Jose Carioca (Brazil) and Panchito Pistolas (Mexico) traveling all over Latin America. Panchito Pistolas was particularly appealing to the men of the FAEM. Here was a cartoon character that dressed in Charro fashion (a Mexican gentleman cowboy, many times incorrectly identified in the U.S. as a Mariachi) and symbolized the country of their birth. Putting to use his artistic talents and whatever aircraft paint colors he could

get his hands on, Lieutenant Moreno painted this character on the upright wing of the Ki-84, which greeted all entering the base. It was instantly adopted by the FAEM as their unofficial mascot. The mascot's image permeated the Mexican sector of the base: it was on unit patches, the unit newsletter and other publications within the unit, all unofficial, of course. The Mexicans finally had something to smile about.

One thing they could not smile about was the situation with their aircraft. They were a mix of "owned" (actually owned by the FAEM under the Lend-Lease agreement) or "borrowed" (aircraft not used by the parent unit loaned out to the 201<sup>st</sup> Squadron) aircraft. The borrowed aircraft came from the 58<sup>th</sup>, 348<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> Fighter Groups. They were war-weary aircraft that had been traded in for P-51Ds. There was a reason why

the "borrowed" aircraft were not in use by their parent units. Standard practice was to use the best aircraft in combat. The unused aircraft that did not perform as well were put off to the side, many times cannibalized for parts. These unused aircraft were the ones that the FAEM had been given and designated as "borrowed" (mainly a hodge-podge of razorback *Thunderbolts*). More often than not, these



The Panchito Pistolas mascot painted on the wing of a destroyed Japanese aircraft by 2nd LT. Moreno.

*Thunderbolts* were far more dangerous than the Japanese Forces arrayed against them.

Somehow, the 201<sup>st</sup> succeeded in making the fighters flyable again. Through a lot of hard work the maintenance personnel



A pilot poses with one of the FAEM's well-worn *Thunderbolts* at the end of the war.

of the Aztec Eagles turned the dangerous-to-operate fighters into flyable fighting machines. During the hot and humid days on the unprotected tarmac, bombarded by the sun, they worked on sometimes very hot engines. On the "owned" aircraft they painted the vertical green, white and red stripes of the Mexican flag on the P-47D's rudder. This pattern was repeated on the tips of the propeller blades. The cowling on most aircraft was tulip patterned and white. The name of the pilot and his crew chief was then written on the side of the fuselage in Mexican script (resembling old English). The Mexican Air Force Triangle was then painted on the starboard wing (with the U.S. roundel and bars on the port wing). Finally, the P-47s had black identification stripes painted on their aft fuselage sides and on their wings. The rest of the aircraft was left in natural metal.

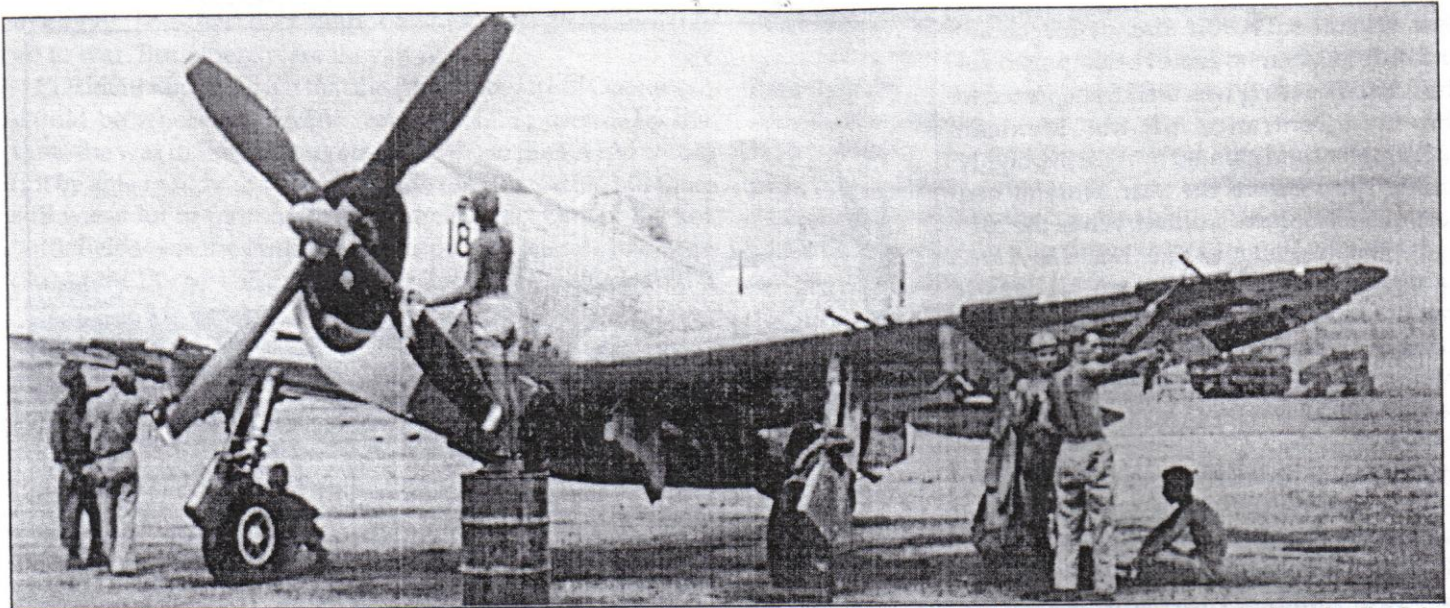
The 201<sup>st</sup> made up the fourth element of the 58<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group, 5<sup>th</sup> Air Force (the other three elements being veteran fighter squadrons of the New Guinea campaign of the Pacific War). The 5<sup>th</sup> Air Force was under the command of General George C. Kenney. As commander of the FAEM, Colonel Antonio Cardenas became part of General Kenney's staff. Supervising the activities of the 201<sup>st</sup> was the commanding officer of the 58<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group, Major Ed Roddy. Day-to-day command of the squadron was Captain Gaxiola's responsibility. The squadron was further divided into four *Escuadrillas* of 7 aircraft each. They were designated A, B, C, and D. Rounding off the squadron were five USAAF pilots.

On June 1, 1945 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Fausto Vega Santander (nicknamed by the squadron "Cachito") died during a practice dive bombing mission. A couple of his fellow pilots claimed that he died during a secret mission that was subsequently covered up. What is the truth? The only thing that can be said is that 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Vega was the last death before actual recorded combat.

#### At War

As the 201<sup>st</sup> finished getting acquainted with the intricacies of combat in the Pacific Theatre of operations, they couldn't help but feel that the rest of the 58<sup>th</sup> looked down upon them. Most felt that it had more to do with racism than anything else. Others felt it had to do with the fact that the 201<sup>st</sup> was a





Maintenance was carried out in the open at Porac. Note the Cletrac and trailer at right; also of note is the Mexican insignia under the left wing.

yet untested in combat while the other three elements had lots of combat experience under their belts. Finally, on June 4, 1945 they got their chance to show the veterans that they too had the right stuff. There were five sorties that day.

The very first sorties of the Aztec Eagles were done under U.S. command. The 201<sup>st</sup> would perform its missions under orders from American officers and in conjunction with other squadrons. Since by this time the Japanese air presence was virtually nil, the sorties tended to center on air to ground attacks. Bombing of military targets, strafing of enemy troop concentrations and close air support was their job now.

Lieutenant Perez's P-47D had just strafed a Japanese column that had been traveling along a road. Always the hotshot, he celebrated by performing a triumphant barrel roll.

"Look at that crazy Mexican!" said someone on the radio. Lieutenant Perez took offense at this commentary. Words were exchanged over the radio and an appointment was made to meet behind the hangar for some mano-a-mano action. At the appointed time Lieutenant Perez found that his opponent was at least four times his size. The American pilot asked if Lieutenant Perez still wanted to fight. The young Mexican pilot responded in the positive. Fortunately the fight was nothing major. The larger American pilot was impressed by Lieutenant Perez's willingness to fight even though he was physically overwhelmed in the fight. The two shook hands and became friends after the fight. The 201<sup>st</sup> was now "one of the guys."

On June 4, Lieutenant Joaquin Ramirez Vilchis returned from a sortie in P-47-28 RA s/n 42-28528, a "borrowed" aircraft when he felt something was wrong with his engine. He noticed that it ran hotter than it ought to. The situation called for Lieutenant Ramirez to land the *Thunderbolt* in an emergency landing area. When the mechanics arrived and assessed the situation, they informed him that once they patched up the plane, its last flight ever would be to Porac Airfield, then to the junkyard.

Lieutenant Jose Espinosa Fuentes had worked his way up in the military. Being tall he was nicknamed "chiquito" (meaning small, exactly like military aviators in the U.S. armed forces

nickname guys who should have been in the NFL as "Tiny"). He had started his military career as an enlisted soldier nearly ten years before. Lieutenant Espinosa got his wings in 1943 and had been an instructor with the Mexican Air Force; this made him one of the most experienced pilots in the squadron. He was also the assistant to the chief of operations of the squadron. One of his duties was test flying aircraft in order to determine if the problem had been fixed or to diagnose the problem. On June 5, P-47D-28 RA s/n 42-28528, squadron number 6, a "borrowed" machine, had been reported having engine problems. Strolling to 42-28528, he met up with Lieutenant Ramirez. The latter asked the former what he was doing that day. "Chiquito" responded that his orders were to test 42-28528 to find out what was wrong with it. Lieutenant Ramirez responded that it just wasn't possible; the aircraft was a death trap. Still, "Chiquito" had his orders. At the end of the runway he checked the magnetos. The engine was not spinning the propeller properly, as many witnesses noticed the sudden and erratic drops in RPM. He taxied the *Thunderbolt* to the take-off position and proceeded to do so. Major Roddy was on the Mexican side of the airfield on squadron business. He commented on the sputtering engine as he watched Lieutenant Espinosa begin his take-off roll. This was not a safe plane to fly.

As the P-47 climbed above the airfield the engine sputtered once more and died. Lieutenant Espinosa knew the drill for a forced landing with a dead engine in a *Thunderbolt*: keep it straight otherwise it would stall. Unfortunately, this would have meant plowing his aircraft into an American troop encampment at Florida Blanca. He could survive that, but it might possibly hurt or kill those in the tents. He chose to steer to starboard; the *Thunderbolt* stalled and dove the into the Pampang sugar mill. The *Thunderbolt* burned on impact, killing Lieutenant Espinosa. He was a newlywed with no children. He was very popular in the squadron and would be sorely missed. Subsequent investigation showed that the engine failure just exacerbated the situation on the plane, since the rudder trim-tab linkage was installed wrong.

Hours later, after being informed of the incident, Major



Roddy went to Captain Gaxiola to express his condolences. He noticed that the Mexican flag was still flying full mast. Expressing his surprise at this he explained the American custom of flying the flag at half-mast to show mourning. Captain Gaxiola was unsure of what the Mexican custom was in this situation (this being the first time a Mexican combat unit was overseas and truly in combat status), so he phoned Colonel Cardenas at Fort Stotsenberg (HQ for the 5<sup>th</sup> Air Force next to Clark Air Base) to inquire about this. Colonel Cardenas informed Captain Gaxiola that protocol and Mexican law stated that the flag would only go to half-mast to mourn the death of a great statesman only. Major Roddy then decided that if the Mexican flag could not go to half-mast in order to show mourning, then he would order the American flag to go to half-mast to show mourning for the loss of a member of the 58<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group. This gallant gesture deeply moved the members of the 201<sup>st</sup> Squadron.

Close air support in those days depended on the orders given by a forward air controller, usually flying an Stinson L-5. The FAC would drop smoke bombs in the area that needed attention and the CAS aircraft would bomb that area. First after the L-5 would mark the area with smoke, the flight leader would do a dry pass (non-bombing run) over the marked area. Next the flight leader would have the rest of the squadron follow him down on a bombing run. When they ran out of bombs, of course, they would strafe any targets of opportunity. Eventually ground troops found that the 201<sup>st</sup> were good at what they did. Infantry called them "White noses" since their P-47s had their cowlings painted in white. They still flew a mixture of "borrowed" and "owned" P-47s. Little by little "borrowed" aircraft were cycled out in favor of "owned" aircraft.

Even the ground crew got into the act. Just like the generation of the Gulf War, they painted messages on the bombs to show they were into the effort, too. Photos show some of the more interesting messages: "A Tojo de la FAEM (To Tojo from the FAEM)," "Buen Provecho con este Taquito (Bon Appetit hope you like this taquito)," and "201 Escuadron Mexicano Islas Filipinas (201<sup>st</sup> Mexican Squadron Philippine Islands)."

On June 10, 1945, the Japanese Army was trying to retake the islands. A key area was a bridge over the Marikina River. Control of the bridge was key to General Yamashita's strategy to try to push back American forces on the island of Luzon. Moreover the bridge was necessary for logistical support;

without it, he would have to pull back and give up territory in an already losing battle. Once American intelligence found out about this, they called the 58<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group. They dispatched the 201<sup>st</sup> and another squadron. The Japanese had defended the bridge heavily. Guns bristled upward and stitched the sky with rounds.

Lieutenant Perez was flying that day. As usual, anti aircraft rounds exploded around their *Thunderbolts*, but with great discipline they stayed on target. Lieutenant Perez spied an opening and dove his *Thunderbolt* at the bridge. He released his bomb. He didn't know if it was luck, karma or destiny but his bomb hit that very vital bridge and did its job. The bridge was not destroyed, just heavily damaged, but as far as the Japanese were concerned it might as well have been. The Japanese would have to think of something else to do in order to drive the Allied forces back. They didn't have the time or the resources to repair the bridge. As for Lieutenant Perez, he went back to base to fight another day.

Lieutenant Amador Samano Pina was part of C Flight. One day, C Flight was assigned time off. Like other soldiers in a foreign land, given some time to explore, he took up the offer and went exploring with other members of C Flight. They borrowed a pair of vehicles from the squadron's vehicle pool in order to visit Manila. Their flight surgeon, Major Ricardo Blanco Cancino, warned the Mexican Pilots not to eat fruits or drink the water (something modern day Americans could find highly ironic) since it could give them digestive problems. After strapping on Colt M1911A1s .45s (since they would be crossing areas where marauding Japanese troops were known to operate) they headed off on leave.

Upon arriving in Manila, they found that Roosevelt had a point after all. The members of C flight found a group of Filipinos that spoke Spanish and not Tagalog. The accent was a little different from theirs, but that wouldn't be unusual even in Mexico. They had met their "cousins." Walking around town, they made friends wherever they went, sharing the same language with the locals. They inquired about eating establishments and were directed to what the locals called the best in the area. The food they found was good, but the portions were small (thanks to the war conditions) and somewhat expensive for the 201<sup>st</sup> (they were paid in Pesos). They fondly reminisced about the huge quantities of food they could get in Mexico for a low price.

Eventually the members of C flight met up with the Filipino



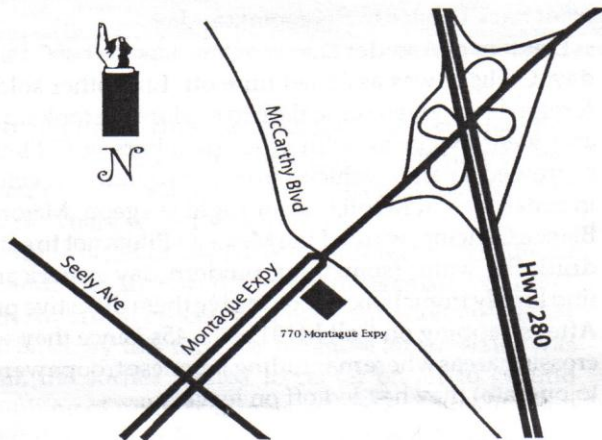
A 201 Escuadron P-47D (left) shares runway space with a 41st Fighter Squadron *Thunderbolt*. Pacific Jugs wore many varieties of ID stripes.





# SVSM 2004 Kickoff Classic Model Contest

**Sunday - February 22, 2004**  
**Napredak Hall - 770 Montague Expwy**  
**San Jose, CA 95131**



## Theme - "Stars 'N Stripes"

Anything involving Stars or Stripes in markings, insignia, etc.

- Racing Stripes,
- Invasion Stripes,
- Anniversary Schemes

### Air Forces such as

- United States
- Israeli
- Yugoslav
- North Korea
- North Vietnam
- Chinese (ROC & PRC)
- USSR
- Angola
- Cuba
- US Army
- Chrysler Corp (Dodge, Plymouth, Chrysler)
- Mercedes-Benz vehicles
- Zebra dazzle ship camo schemes

### Schedule of Events

9am -Registration, Contest/Vendor rooms open  
12:30pm - Judges Meeting  
12:45-3:15 - Judging (room will remain open)  
4:15 pm - Awards Presentation

Model Building "Make N' Take" and other possible activities will be announced and scheduled "Day of Event"

### Fees

Seniors: \$5 Registration, \$1 per model entered  
Juniors: \$1 Registration, \$.50 per model entered  
Spectators: Free  
Display Models if space available, will also be free and welcomed.

### General Rules Briefly:

IPMS/USA rules and criteria will be used for this contest. • Handling of models will be limited to the builder; no models will be handled by the judges without permission. • SVSM encourages members of other chapters to participate by joining our judging teams. • The Contest Director will make the final ruling on all disputes during the contest, may also split or combine categories based on the number and nature of entries. • No model that has won an award at an IPMS National Contest is eligible, nor are any models that were first entered in any Region IX competition prior to Feb. 22, 2003. • SVSM appreciates the honor system and hopes the participants will as well. • All work done on model entries must be the work of the entrant. SVSM asks that all contestants avoid the judging teams during judging to insure impartiality and expedition of process. • Interference by contestants will be handled per IPMS/USA rules, and could render the offender's models ineligible for award consideration. • Most importantly, all participants and staff must have fun.



### Special Awards - in addition to our numerous traditional special awards

- Best contest Theme Stars 'n Stripes subject
- Best Russo and or Japanese War Subject
- Best Mustang
- Best 1944 subject
- Best Night Fighter

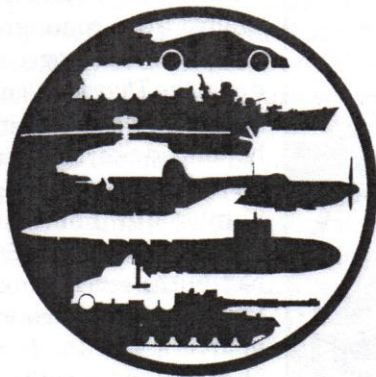
### Vendors Tables:

\$50 each if paid before Dec. 20, 2003.  
\$60 each if paid between Dec. 21 and Feb. 15, 2003.  
\$65 on day of event, if available.

**Vendor Contact** - Jim Priete, Weekdays 9 am and 3:30 pm  
at (925) 323-1845

For more information visit the SVSM website at: [www.svsm.org](http://www.svsm.org) or call Chris Bucholtz at (408) 723-3995





# SILICON VALLEY SCALE MODELERS

The following categories are planned for the contest.  
If needed, some categories may be split.  
Entrants should neither plan for nor expect splits.

## Senior (18+ Years)

- S1. Single Engine Jet or Rocket Aircraft, 1/72 scale
- S2. Multi-Engine Jet Aircraft, 1/72 scale
- S3. Single-Engine Prop or Turbo-Prop Aircraft, 1/72 scale
- S4. Multi-Engine Prop or Turbo-Prop Aircraft, 1/72 scale
- S5. Single-Engine Jet or Rocket Aircraft, 1/48 scale
- S6. Multi-Engine Jet Aircraft, 1/48 scale
- S7. Single-Engine Prop or Turbo-Prop Aircraft, Allied Naval 1/48 scale (NEW)
- S8. Single-Engine Prop or Turbo-Prop Aircraft, Allied Other 1/48 scale
- S9. Single-Engine Prop or Turbo-Prop Aircraft, Axis and Neutrals, 1/48 scale
- S10. Multi-Engine Prop or Turbo-Prop Aircraft, 1/48 scale
- S11. Jet and Rocket Aircraft, 1/32 and larger
- S12. Prop Aircraft, 1/32 and larger
- S13. Biplanes/Fabric & Rigging, all scales
- S14. Rotary Wing Aircraft, all scales
- S15. Civil, Sport and Racing Aircraft, all scales
- S16. Jet, Prop and Rocket Aircraft, 1/144 and smaller
- S17. Military Vehicles, Softskin, 1/35 and larger
- S18. Armored Fighting Vehicles, Closed-Top, to 1945, 1/35 and larger
- S19. Armored Fighting Vehicles, Closed-Top, post 1945, 1/35 and larger
- S20. Armored Fighting Vehicles, Open-Top, 1/35 and larger
- S21. Towed Artillery and Ancillary Vehicles, 1/35 and larger
- S22. Military Vehicles, Allied all types, 1/48 and smaller (NEW)
- S23. Military Vehicles, Axis all types, 1/48 and smaller (NEW)
- S24. Ships, 1/400 and larger
- S25. Ships, 1/401 and smaller
- S26. Automobiles, Stock, all scales
- S27. Automobiles, Custom (Other than Low-Rider style) all scales
- S28. Automobiles, Competition, Open-Wheel, all scales
- S29. Automobiles, Competition, Closed-Wheel, all scales
- S30. Autos, Custom, OpenTop/Vert Spec Styled as Low Rider, all scales (NEW)
- S31. Autos, Custom, HardTop Spec Styled as Low Rider, all scales (NEW)
- S32. Space Vehicles, Fictional (Science Fiction or Fantasy), all scales and types
- S33. Space Vehicles, Real, and Missiles, all scales and types
- S34. Figures, Historical, all scales
- S35. Figures, Fantasy and Fiction, all scales
- S36. Out of the Box, all types and scales
- S37. Dioramas, all types and scales

S38. Hypothetical Vehicles, all types and scales

S39. Miscellaneous

S40. Collections, all types and scales

## Junior (13-17 Years)

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

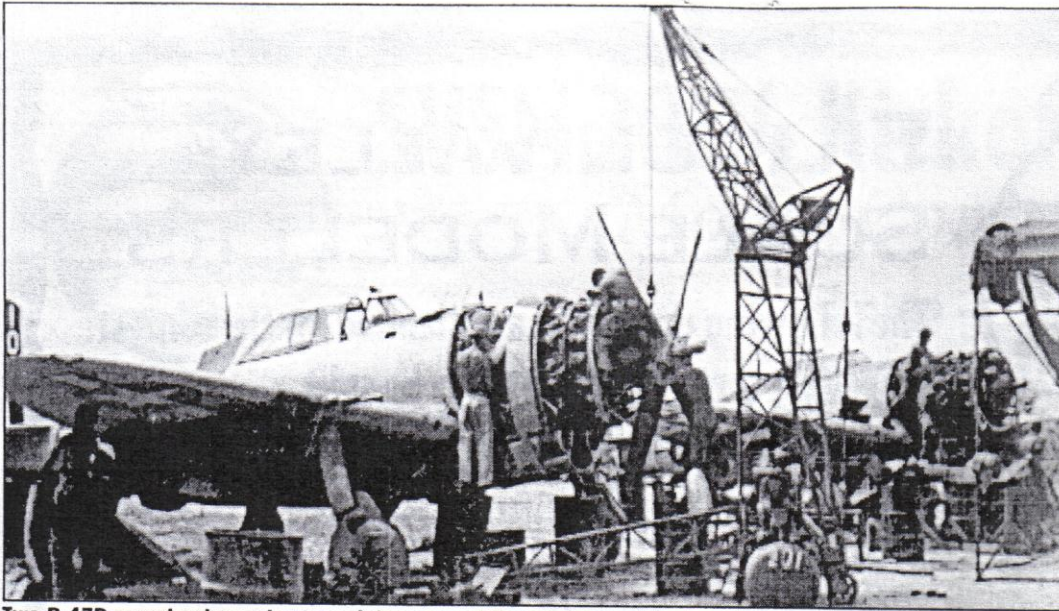
## Youth (12 Years and Under)

- 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 CONTEST Theme Stars 'n Stripes subject
- SA7. Best Russo and/or Japanese War Subject (Any Russian, Japanese related item of war, special consideration given to Russo/Japanese 1904 conflict entries as 100th Ann)
- SA8. Best Mustang (all types, animal, aircraft, auto, etc.. Special consideration given to Auto as 40th anniversary of Ford namesake)
- SA9. Best 1944 subject (emphasis on D-Day, Leyte Gulf, Battle of Bulge, Op Market-Garden, Russian Crush of Wermacht AGC, but all 1944 circa items eligible)
- SA10. Best Vacu-Form
- SA11. Best Night Fighter
- SA12. Silk Purse Award - Best Model from Worst Kit
- SA13. Best Racer (Air, Land or Sea)
- SA14. Tim Curtis Award - Given to honor service to the Silicon Valley Scale Modelers IPMS chapter.
- SA15. Hugh Silvis Award Given by R9 RC to award efforts to best characterize "Chapter of the Year Region 9"





Two P-47D razorbacks undergo maintenance at Porac. The tank below the crane has "201" chalked on it to indicate who owns the equipment.

Consul Alfredo Carmelo. Carmelo was something of a legend in the Philippines, being an aviation hero and pioneer. He was also regarded as a renaissance man by his fellow Pinoy since he was an accomplished painter. Mr. Carmelo adopted the members of the 201<sup>st</sup> and opened his house to them. Whenever the FAEM came to Manila, they had to stop at Mr. Carmelo's house, something he insisted they do. He acted as their translator whenever it was needed (at that time many Filipinos were taught Spanish in school). After the war he was made an honorary member of the FAEM by Colonel Cardenas.

The war in the Pacific still raged. Even though Italy had already given up and Hitler had committed suicide, the Japanese fought fiercely for every inch of territory on Luzon. The 201<sup>st</sup> went out every day to fight. By now they had the respect of the rest of the 58<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group as they had proven themselves in combat. The infantry had come to love the 201<sup>st</sup>'s uncannily accurate bombing of the enemy. Their skill at close air support was such that there had been up to that point no "blue on blue" casualties. The ground-pounders just loved that the enemy got the bombs and not them, even by accident. The "white noses" were all right by them.

On June 17, 1945, over the Pavayan Restolow region, the squadron encountered an enemy column traveling on a secondary road. There were seven planes on patrol that day. Lieutenant Amador Samano Pina turned his *Thunderbolt* into a dive and the column rapidly filled his windscreen. He let loose two short bursts of his .50 caliber machine guns on the column. The vehicles in that particular column instantly burst into flame as .50 caliber rounds poured into them. Very quickly they pulled up off the burning vehicles in order to avoid the secondary explosions from these same vehicles. Yet the enemy did not just give up and die. Some of the Japanese soldiers used small arms fire to shoot at the diving *Thunderbolts*. Two *Thunderbolts* were damaged but not shot down. In addition in another sortie the 201<sup>st</sup> destroyed several Japanese tanks. It was just another ordinary day for the Aztec Eagles.

That same day Lieutenant Carlos Garduno Nunez (the commanding officer of B Flight) was revving his engine for take-off. Just as his *Thunderbolt* was about to achieve take-off

speed, to his horror, his engine caught fire. His P-47 was loaded with bombs for use against troop concentrations. Somehow he managed to slow down the *Thunderbolt* enough to safely stop it. Just in time, he jumped clear of the burning plane. Incredibly enough, the bombs did not cook off because of the fire. Still, he had burns severe enough to take him out of action for a nearly a month. It was a "borrowed" plane. "Borrowed" *Thunderbolts* were still the leading cause of death among the 201<sup>st</sup> Squadron. They would welcome the time when they got newer aircraft.

An ordinary day for the Aztec Eagles actually started the evening before. The evening before the sortie in question, Captain Gaxiola would give a thorough briefing to the squadron. Just before going out on the sortie the next day, he would give them a less detailed briefing. At approximately 0800 the aircraft going on the sortie would be ready for take-off. The missions lasted longer and longer as the days went on. The Japanese army was farther away from the airfield as they lost territory; therefore the planes had to fly farther to their targets. After the mission, the planes would land and the ground crew would attend to them. In the midday sun, the mechanics would deal with the still hot engines. Armorers would clean machine guns and ensure they were ready to go. Communications technicians would ensure that radios and other communication gear was working correctly. While the pilots took a load off their feet and got briefed on the next mission, the ground crew worked under the hot sun in humid central Luzon next to the runway. The second mission of the day would take off at approximately 1300. They would then return, rearm and start the cycle all over again. This was the definition of a normal day in Central Luzon.

On July 4, 1945, in a broadcast speech General Douglas MacArthur declared the hostilities over in the island of Luzon. Still, there were approximately 20,000 Japanese soldiers wandering the countryside and doing their best to hassle the allies. They had not heard General MacArthur's speech and were still causing trouble all over Luzon. Plans however were being drawn up by high command to invade Japan. This meant that the 58<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group's mission was about to change. No longer would they be attacking ground targets exclusively. Air combat was now a definite possibility as the allies got closer to Japan. The 201<sup>st</sup>'s new P-47D-30s had just arrived in time to perform fighter sweeps. While the Aztec Eagles waited for their new *Thunderbolts* to be delivered, the rest of the 58<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group had their orders to deploy to Okinawa while the 201<sup>st</sup> would remain in Porac until totally re-supplied.

Twenty-five new aircraft had been portioned out through the Lend-Lease Act. They were more than enough to cover the



Aztec Eagle's needs. But first they had to transport the fighters to Porac. The P-47D-30-RAs had been transported by ship to Biak (near New Guinea) and Tacloban (on Leyte Island). These *Thunderbolts* had almost no flying hours on their airframes. They had the new bubble canopy and dorsal fin. The *Thunderbolts* were also much stronger than the ones the Aztec Eagles had previously flown, so they could now dive. In addition, the new *Thunderbolts* came with an IFF (Identification Friend or Foe) system.

Lieutenant Samano looked at the airfield at Tacloban from his perch in the tail gunner's position on the B-25 *Mitchell* transporting him and Lieutenant Fernando Hernandez Vega and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Manuel Farias Rodriguez. From his point of view he could see many wrecked aircraft from both the Allied and the Japanese forces littering the sides of the runway. Yet on another part of the airfield were hundreds of *Mustangs* and *Thunderbolts* lined up and waiting for pilots. This convinced the young pilot that the end was near for the Japanese empire.

The three Aztec Eagles flight-tested their new mounts for an hour. These new P-47D-30-RAs were modern and responsive compared to their older *Thunderbolts*. They were proud and thankful for them. They thought of the pilots that had died before getting these new *Thunderbolts* and other sacrifices they had gone through. Their element landed triumphantly and safely back in Porac, ready to go on their next mission.

Command did not wait too long to assign them a new mission. On July 6, 1945, eight *Thunderbolts* took off in an incursion over Formosa. They took off at approximately 0830 and were flying over the Formosan skies at 1100. The weather was lousy. They couldn't see any targets and no enemy came up to greet them. The 201<sup>st</sup> returned at 1300 to Porac.

The next day, July, 1945, ten *Thunderbolts* took off on an incursion on Formosa Island at 0900. Their objective was to maintain aerial superiority over the island. Formosa was a key component for the proposed amphibious landing on Japan. At approximately 1045 the 201<sup>st</sup> observed a flight of four unidentified aircraft flying ahead of them at 3,000 feet. The Aztec Eagles attempted to engage, but due to the load of fuel in their tanks, the P-47s could not catch up to them. They noticed fires blazing on Shokotosho Island. They also saw some amphibious aircraft too far for them to engage. They noted that an airfield near Tokyo had been repaired. While there was no air-to-air action, it was not the case that the skies were calm. Allied aircraft flying near and over Japanese territory were traditionally greeted with lots of anti-aircraft fire, most of it ineffective but worrisome nevertheless.

The fighter sweeps were actually very long range patrols. On the average the pilots had to fly their P-47s approximately 600 miles to the target, perform their mission and return. The *Thunderbolts* flew the 600 miles mostly over water. These flights were perilous even without enemy action. The planes were loaded to capacity with fuel and ordnance at take-off, making it a nerve wracking exercise to the pilot. Once airborne the single engine fighter-bomber had to navigate (using very

simple instruments) to the target with nothing but ocean under its wings. Bad weather, navigational errors and other factors made watching the fuel gauge a must. To do otherwise might lead to ditching the fighter-bomber in the sea. As if that wasn't enough, the pilots had to contend with the sun's heat, dehydration, and fatigue before and after arriving over hostile territory. Usually after sitting in the cockpit for so long during these long distance sweeps, the pilots would have to be helped out of the cockpits. Once the pilots got their legs to work again, they would be given a couple ounces of hard alcohol to bleed off the tension. After that the pilots would be debriefed.

After July 9, 1945 there was a lull in combat. Fighter sweeps by the 201<sup>st</sup> were temporarily discontinued. The Aztec Eagles did not know that a top secret operation was in the works. Maybe the rest of the 58<sup>th</sup> Fighter group stationed in Okinawa would get an inkling of what was to happen, when the massive B-29s would land there.

Taking advantage of the pause in combat action, the 201<sup>st</sup> decided to speed up the ferrying of their new aircraft. They



**SubTte.P.A. Raul Garcia Mercado, Capt.1/o.P.A. Radames Gaxiola Andrade, SubTte.P.A. Mario Lopez Portillo, Capt. 2/o.P.A. Pablo Rivas Martinez and SubTte.P.A. Roberto Urias Aveleyra discuss an upcoming mission.**

looked forward to being used in the upcoming invasion of Japan, and for this reason new fighter-bombers were a good thing.

Lieutenant Hector Espinoza Galvan (nicknamed "Pinocho") was the commander of C flight. On July 16, 1945 he and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Praxedis Lopez Ramos flew in formation with a pair of 310<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron (also part of the 58<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group) pilots ferrying new P-47s to their squadrons from Biak. During the flight back, as reported by Lieutenant Gus Roberts of the 310<sup>th</sup>, "Pinocho's" plane ran out of fuel and he crashed into the sea. Captain Gaxiola gave the sad duty to Lieutenant Samano of placing Lieutenant Espinoza's belongings in a box to be sent to his next of kin.

On July 19, 1945 Second Captain Pablo L. Rivas Martinez climbed on board a P-47D-30 RA (s/n 44-90058), his new mount. Captain Rivas was the squadron's operations officer and its second-in-command. Nicknamed "Pablito," he was



one of the squadron's best and most respected pilots. The element flying from Biak (New Guinea) consisted of four *Thunderbolts*, lead by "Pablito." As the element got closer to the Philippine islands, they were enveloped by a violent thunderstorm. This could not help fuel consumption at all. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Guillermo Garcia Ramos was part of the element and he was being tossed about roughly. His *Thunderbolt's* cockpit almost literally fell apart due to the violent rocking. He found it impossible to navigate in these conditions, much less fly a plane.

2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Garcia saw that his aircraft was in an unrecoverable dive and decided to jump to safety. He landed approximately 10 miles outside of Sarong Bay, which was still Japanese occupied territory.

Meanwhile the element landed in Porac. It was missing two members; 2<sup>nd</sup> Captain Martinez and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Garcia. The Aztec Eagles hoped the missing men had just ditched their P-47s in the ocean and swam to an island.

Lieutenant Garcia hid in the island's foliage during the day. Spying a flight of B-25s flying overhead, he signaled them with his signal mirror. The B-25s did not know whether it was

real or a Japanese trap. Major Larry D. Dennis, USAAF, on board one of the *Mitchells* decided that it was genuine. On July 20, 1945 he returned on board an Australian-built OA-10A *Catalina* to rescue Lieutenant Garcia. But what happened to "Pablito?"

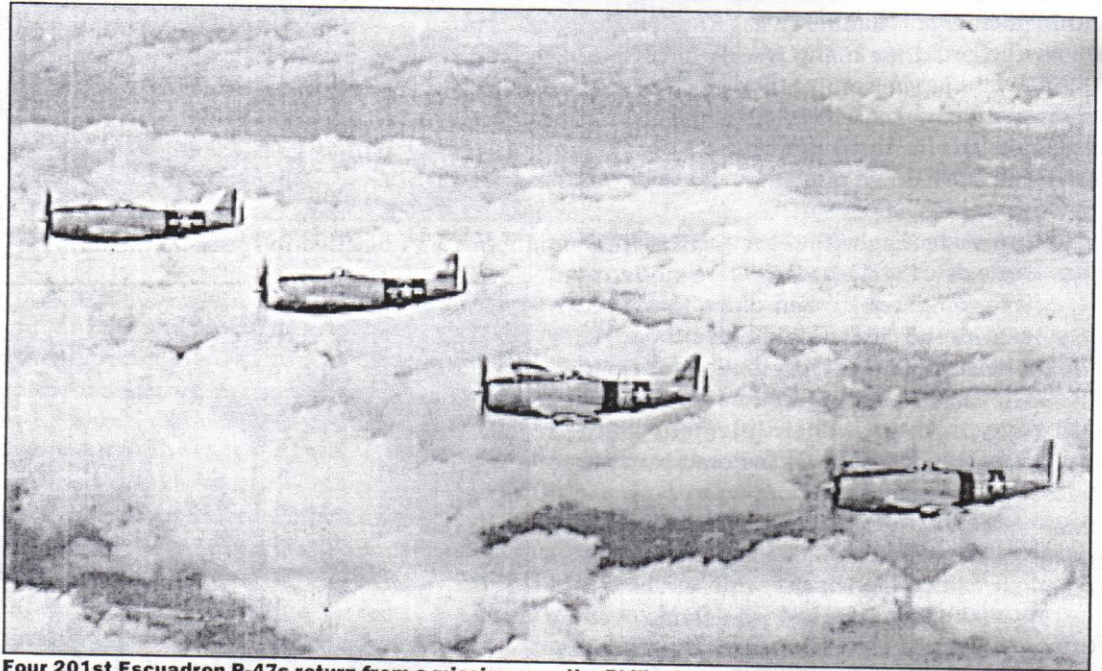
It was thought that he ran out of fuel and ditched or crashed his plane. He could have been taken prisoner, they thought. 2<sup>nd</sup> Captain Rivas was declared MIA, since nothing conclusive could be found about his fate. His body was never found. "Pablito" was declared MIA presumed KIA on August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1947 by the Mexican government and posthumously promoted to Major. Again Lieutenant Samano had the sad duty of gathering "Pablito's" personal effects in a box to give to his next of kin. It would not be his last box, either.

On July 21, 1945, Lieutenant A.Z. Harris of the 69<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron, 58<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group led 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Lee A. Houk (311<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron) and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Mario Lopez Portillo (201<sup>st</sup> Squadron) on a ferrying flight from Tacloban. The flight encountered bad weather and reduced visual conditions. Lieutenant Harris broke formation in order to ascertain his position. The two 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenants descended to see if it was clearer below the cloud cover (while flying on instruments). The two aircraft then slammed into a mountainside, killing both pilots instantly. Again Lieutenant Samano gathered Lieutenant Lopez's belongings and placed

them in a box.

The squadron had lost three members in less than a week. Two of the three were key members of the Aztec Eagles, leaders in some way or another. The three were also some of the more experienced members of the squadron. The future looked bleak for the 201<sup>st</sup>. Because of these losses, the 58<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group was re-considering the role 201<sup>st</sup> was to play in the coming invasion of Japan. They were definitely under strength and for all intents and purposes there was no replacement group for the 201<sup>st</sup>.

Peril could also be found on the ground, not just in the air.



Four 201<sup>st</sup> Escuadron P-47s return from a mission over the Philippines, 1945. Only one has the white "petal" on the cowling. Also, the placement of the ID stripes varies from plane to plane.

On July 23, 1945, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Guillermo Alberto Robles, who worked in the administrative part of the unit, was leading a detail into the Bataan Peninsula to cut wood. While the detail was doing its duty, a Japanese soldier crept up on to the lumber detail and started shooting. The surprised Mexicans weren't expecting this. Private Enrique Moedano Gomez was wounded in the arm and later sent to a military hospital in Manila. The Japanese soldier escaped back into the jungle.

On August 8, 1945 the targets for the 201<sup>st</sup> were some buildings in the port of Karenko, Formosa. Eight *Thunderbolts* took off from Porac Airfield at 0745. Two aircraft did not make it to the target due to lack of fuel. They were then diverted to Laogag where they landed at 1115. The remaining six *Thunderbolts* loitered over the target at 12,000 feet for approximately 40 minutes. The mission was led by the commander of D flight; Lieutenant Amadeo Castro Almanza. The mission profile on the surface did not appear particularly difficult: fly over the water to the target, drop a 1,000-pound bomb on the assigned targets and return. The reality was that the P-47s would be outfitted with a drop tank on the starboard wing and belly with the 1000 pound bomb on the port wing. The pilots would fly to the limit of their range for a two way flight mostly over water (a submarine and a *Catalina* were to be posted near the route in order to rescue anyone that had to ditch). The Japanese forces on Formosa, of course, were not



about to let the allies get their way easily. Heavy ground based anti-aircraft fire was to be expected. Radio silence was to be maintained until over the target area.

Using primitive instruments, the *Thunderbolts* navigated to Formosa from Porac. The the pilots were on edge for the entire journey, continuously trimming, correcting and balancing the *Thunderbolt* as it rapidly consumed its fuel while its bomb load remained constant. Lieutenant Castro led his remaining six P-47D-30-RAs over the assigned target and began his bombing run. He released his bomb and was surprised as his plane's starboard wing lurched towards the ground, due to the sudden change in weight and the nearly empty starboard fuel tank. Quickly he recovered, avoiding the hitting the ground or entering the zone of the exploding 1,000-pound bomb's concussion wave. Lieutenant Castro radioed the remaining aircraft to warn them about this and avoided disaster. AA was heavy and lightly damaged several aircraft. The bombs did not hit their designated targets. The bombing was declared ineffective.

Returning from the bombing run, two aircraft ran into trouble. They had run out of fuel and/or were damaged by enemy fire. These two aircraft, flown by Lieutenant Perez and Lieutenant Ramirez, were diverted to Lingayen. Even though Lieutenant Perez was slightly wounded during the mission (he dismissed it as part of the job), he landed his plane with no problem. Lieutenant Ramirez was not so lucky. The reason he was out of fuel was that his wing drop tank was not transferring gasoline to the engine. Worse yet, he couldn't get rid of it either. The *Thunderbolt* was not only unbalanced, but Lieutenant Ramirez had the misfortune of landing in a crosswind.

The P-47D-30-RA was heavy on its starboard side as Lieutenant Ramirez tried to balance it on descent. As he was correcting the wing's attitude, the drop tank hit the runway's surface. In a shower of sparks, the starboard wing ripped itself off the fuselage. Lieutenant Ramirez overcorrected and the port wing hit the runway. It too ripped off. Finally, the *Thunderbolt* hit the end of the runway with its nose dug in firmly into the ground, the fuselage at almost 90 degrees to the ground. By some miracle, Lieutenant Ramirez managed to walk away from this landing.

Complaining to the medics that his wounds were really

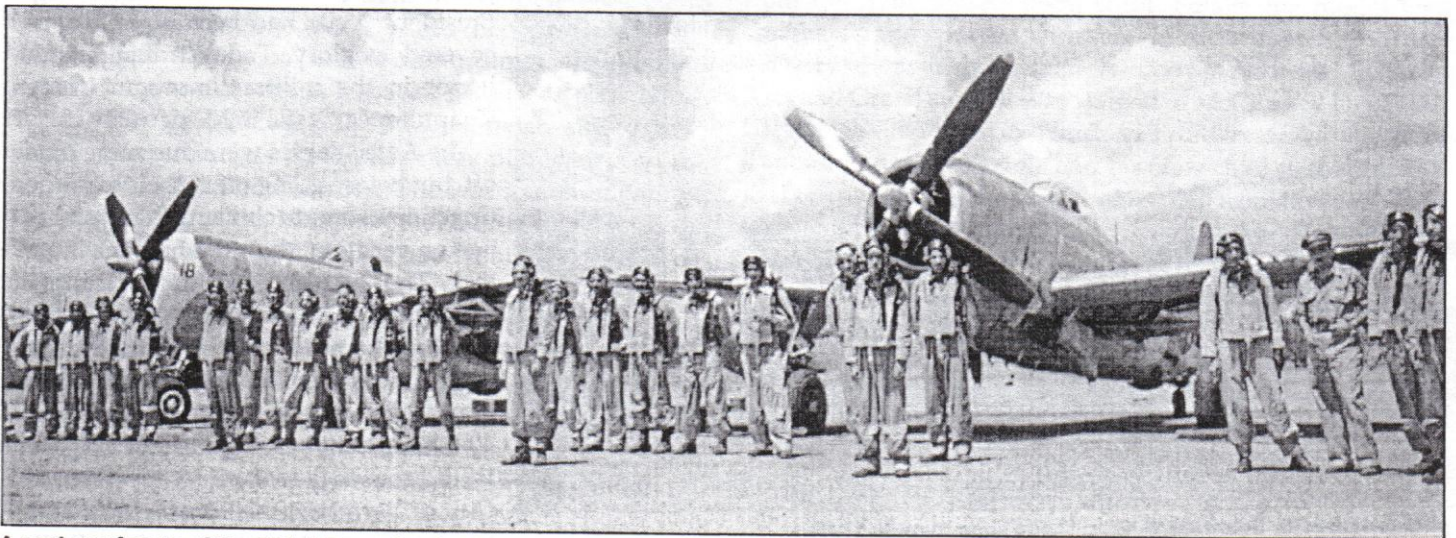
nothing to worry about did absolutely nothing for Lieutenant Perez. They insisted that the Lieutenant go to the infirmary. Next to his cot, a GI curiously eyed him. The GI had noticed that Lieutenant Perez was not American. Lieutenant Perez had noticed the GI staring at him and noted that he was more seriously wounded than himself. The GI politely asked Lieutenant Perez if he was a "white nose." The young Lieutenant answered in the affirmative. He was surprised by the reaction of the GI. The GI got up of his own cot and grabbed the surprised Lieutenant in a bear hug and loudly declared his admiration for the 201<sup>st</sup> Squadron and all they did for the guys on the ground.

This was the last time the 201<sup>st</sup> flew for the 58<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group. The 58<sup>th</sup> felt that due to the losses in the Philippine Islands, the 201<sup>st</sup> was far short of what was needed in a front line squadron. There had been replacement group of pilots envisioned for the Aztec Eagles, but they were still in training in the U.S. In fact, to date two replacement pilots had already been killed stateside in training accidents. High command decided that it would be best if the Aztec Eagles were assigned to the Air Services Group, escorting convoys just in case they were jumped by Kamikazes based in Formosa.

Doubtless, a few of the 201<sup>st</sup> were somewhat disappointed by this. They did not know about events happening in Hiroshima and Nagasaki that were shortening the war.

August 24, 1945 saw the 201<sup>st</sup> wheels-up at 0600, escorting a convoy that passed through the Philippine Sea. They were relieved at sundown by a squadron of P-61 *Black Widow* night fighters. High command thought it a high risk that Kamikazes might attack the convoy. Nothing of the sort happened.

Lieutenant Jose Cruz Abundiz Cano was not a pilot. His specialty was meteorology (a weatherman by any other name). On August 26, 1945, another detail had been sent to hunt for lumber. He and 10 enlisted men stumbled upon a platoon of Japanese guerillas in the jungle. The Japanese had been eating at the time the detail stumbled upon them. One of them tried to throw a grenade. Corporal Ricardo Quintal Pinzon was an armorer; seeing what the Japanese soldier was about to do, he leveled his rifle and wounded that particular soldier. During the melee another Japanese soldier was wounded. The two wounded soldiers were captured and the rest of the Japanese platoon fled into the jungle.



A post-war image of the 201<sup>st</sup> Escuadron's pilots and airplanes. The unit picked up 25 new P-47s on its return to North America.



Lieutenant Samano was on base when Corporal Olegario Gomez Rodriguez drove up to the Mexican compound with the two POWs. Seeing how gaunt and dirty they were, he realized that they too were suffering because of the war. He gave them food and cigarettes, feeling sorry for them, as the POWs were handed over to United States Military Police. War he felt was tragic, but as warriors, they weren't allowed to get emotional about what they did every day. As professionals they felt no real hate for their enemy, just the need to do what they were ordered to do professionally.

As the day became night, the squadron did what they did on that night of the week. The tent flap was closed and the projector started—it was movie night. Movies were something they looked forward to, something to take their minds off of the perils they faced on an everyday basis, just like soldiers everywhere.

The movie was at its midway point when Captain Gaxiola purposefully strode into the middle of the tent and into the middle of the projection screen. He ordered the movie stopped and the lights turned on. The squadron looked at their commander, eager to hear what the news was. It had to be important, since he had interrupted movie night. Captain Gaxiola related to his squadron about the happenings of August 6 and August 9 in Japan. He related to them the news of the awesome new weapon the United States now had, a single bomb that could wipe out an entire city called an atomic bomb. Moreover, because of this bomb the Japanese government had given up. Instantly whoops and screams (in the traditional Mexican style) erupted in the tent. The war was for all intents and purposes over.

On September 2, 1945, the Japanese Government signed the unconditional surrender on board the U.S.S. *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay. General Yamashita had to give up and also signed the unconditional surrender of what few troops he had left. The FAEM now had to wait for their turn to be rotated back home. Until then, they had plenty of time on their hands.

2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Moreno proposed to the rest of the squadron that they build a monument to those of their squadron who had died in the war. The monument was completed on

September 25. The monument was topped off with a Mexican styled eagle sculpted by a Filipino artist known as Tolentino.

On October 12, 1945, a day when the FAEM would be ordinarily celebrating Dia de la Raza (Columbus Day) back home. It was not an occasion to protest but rather to celebrate, in those pre-politically correct days, particularly for those whose mother language was Spanish. Instead, it was something of a day of mourning for the FAEM. Their beloved *Thunderbolts* were to be handed over to the Aerial Services Group and left to be salvaged in the Philippine Islands. It wasn't much consolation that they had the respect and admiration of the U.S. officials in the area.

The FAEM said goodbye to the Philippine Islands on October 23 as the S.S. *Sea Marlin* sailed towards the U.S. They arrived at San Pedro, California on November 13 (the trip made faster by the absence of Japanese submarines to dodge). Colonel Cardenas and his staff had already been in the U.S. for some time. They had earlier flown to meet General MacArthur in Tokyo, where the general had expressed his thanks for their cooperation. Some more negotiation had gone on there by Colonel Cardenas.

The FAEM boarded a train and headed to the U.S./Mexico border. They crossed the border on November 16. Every time the train stopped, the FAEM was greeted by crowds screaming their names. "*Viva Mexico! Viva el Escuadron 201!*," they proclaimed loudly at every city. The FAEM finally entered Mexico City in triumph on November 18, 1945.

2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Moreno and the rest of the FAEM were dressed in their best and crispest uniforms. On either side of him were FAEM soldiers with rifles held at shoulder arms and wearing their helmets. He could see far ahead the streets lined with people, flags, bunting and all sorts of signs. He placed the FAEM's battle flag in the flag holder on his bandolier and waited for the order to march.

The 201<sup>st</sup> marched proudly down the boulevard with 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Moreno carrying the flag and in the lead. Confetti rained down upon them, as did cheers and adulation. Finally at the end of the boulevard stood a podium with President Avila and other government dignitaries on it at El Zocalo. The

president gave a speech saying how proud he was of the 201<sup>st</sup> Squadron. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Moreno presented the president with the FAEM's battle flag. President Avila had been right: it was covered in glory. Today it hangs with honor in the military museum inside Chapultepec Castle in Mexico City.

The Aztec Eagles were due some time off, but before going off in their separate directions, some to civilian life and others just on vacation, they still had one more task. The 201<sup>st</sup> climbed on yet another train and again headed to Nuevo Laredo to cross the border yet one more time. Once across they headed to Greenville, Texas to take possession of 25 new P-47D-30-RAs proudly bearing the FAM insignia. With a roar they took off for the Mexican City of Veracruz, the *Thunderbolt's* new headquarters. A section of four P-47s



A pilot prepares to board his P-47 at Porac some time in 1945.



under the leadership of Captain Gaxiola landed in Mexico City's new airport (still under construction at that point) to be the city's protectors. The FAEM had ceased to exist. The 201<sup>st</sup> still exists to this day and it still specializes in close air support. Its insignia is still a stylized *Panchito Pistolas*.

The members of the FAEM all got promotions to the next highest rank. They were decorated with the medals for Far East Service, Mexican Legion of Honor, Liberation medal of the Republic of the Philippines with Presidential recommendation, U.S. Army Air Force Efficiency medal, Asia-Pacific Campaign Medal and many others. Streets and parks were named after the squadron. All (regardless of rank or specialty) became leaders in all walks of Mexican life. Those that stayed in the military would lead the Air Force until the jet age.

For the next years, during the celebrations for Mexican Independence Day, the Aztec Eagles would march in the giant parade. Their numbers got smaller and smaller as age, crime and accidents claimed members of the 201<sup>st</sup>. Eventually their spot in the parade was taken over by the Mexican Military Academy as none of the surviving members of the 201<sup>st</sup> could actually walk the parade route.

Like many of their counterparts in the United States and perhaps the rest of the world, at first their exploits were widely talked about in the media the first few years after the war. As other stories captured the world's attention and the political attitudes changed during the '60s and '70s they were mostly forgotten. Some might remember them as a footnote in history, a piece of trivia. Younger people who did not know the whole story felt that the 201<sup>st</sup> was an embarrassment and object of ridicule, or they were American flunkies, or even just a work of fiction. In a forum at a web-site discussing Mexican aviation, a member illustrated this very elegantly. The member had given his address to an acquaintance as "201 Squadron Street House #1234." The acquaintance asked, "why does your house have two numbers?"

Thankfully, not everyone had forgotten the 201<sup>st</sup> Squadron. In 1999 a monument to them was unveiled at Chapultepec Castle. The castle was at one time the residence of Emperor Maximilian (during one of the European occupations of Mexico). After that it again became the site of Mexico's equivalent of West Point. Here, during the Mexican-American war teenaged cadets put up a tremendous fight to the death against a larger group of U.S. Marines (hence the line in the Marine Hymn "From the Halls of Montezuma....."). For their bravery they are known in Mexican history as "Los Ninos Heroes" (the child heroes). To show the twists and turns of history, the monument to the 201<sup>st</sup> was placed next to the monument to the Child Heroes. One was a monument to a war fought against the U.S., the other a monument to a war fought alongside the U.S. The last seven surviving members of the 201<sup>st</sup> attended the ceremonies. President Vicente Fox fulfilled a promise to them that had been promised some administrations before. On November 16, 2002 the remains of Lieutenant Jose "Chiquito" Espinosa and Lieutenant Mario Lopez were moved to the monument itself and interred inside. The fallen Aztec Eagles had found their honored roost.

Some things just seem to be cursed from the beginning. Wanting to shock the rest of the members of SVSM and Fremont Hornets by showing an honest to goodness non-

Venezuelan subject and knowing that Aztec Models actually had a decal sheet for such a little known subject, the project was started. The author had already built a P-47D-30 using *Revell* of Germany's 1:72 kit, so it would not be unexplored territory. Assembly was supposed to be straight forward. At least it was until the fuselage halves were put together. Maybe it was a trick of perspective, but the tail looked somewhat skewed to the author, but it was so slight as to be impossible to prove either way. Then after painting the fuselage with *Testors* aluminum plate, the author carefully peeled the masking tape from the areas masked for the identification stripes. Even though the aluminum plate had been protected by glosscote, parts of the finish came off with the tape. The paint was stripped off with ELO paint stripper at which point the wing separated from the fuselage.

One of the advantages of being fluent in more than one language is that one then has a much larger vocabulary to curse in. After repairs were performed on the P-47 and it was painted again, the model was weathered and covered in dullcote. Not only did it dry with the look of the back of a tortoise, with all sorts of mottled breaks and bumps, but somehow a wheel had broken off while drying. That was it for that model. The author will use the model as a target to shoot at; however the author is not certain whether to use an airbrush or some projectile device.

The movie folks say "once again, from the top." The author purchased another *Revell* of Germany 1:72 P-47D-30. Again the *Thunderbolt* was built straight from the box. Parts of the first model were salvaged for use in the second model, namely the pilot and the bombs. The thinking on how to paint the model was then turned upside down from the first disastrous model. The first paint on plastic was a coat of black on the canopy itself and the areas to be turned into future identification stripes. These areas were covered with masking tape and sealed with glosscote. Next came the very light white undercoat. A photocopy of the decal sheet was made. The cheat lines for the tulip on the cowlings were then glued to the masking tape and masked over the white color. Again the masking was sealed with glosscote. *Testors* aluminum plate was sprayed on over all surfaces. This was allowed to dry. Thankfully, the paint behaved this time. Most of the stencil decals came from the kit itself, with some additions coming from the *Aztec Models* decal sheet. Finally the model was weathered and sprayed with semi-gloss lacquer.

The base was an unfinished wooden plaque from Michael's Arts and Crafts store. It was stained in McCloskey Heirloom Gloss One Step Stain & Finish in Fruitwood. An image of Captain Radames Gaxiola and his crew chief posing next to the cockpit of his plane was photocopied from the Hagedorn book and blown up to size. This image was then sprayed with diluted coffee to give it a patina of age and then glued to a plastic backing (to resemble a photograph). This last assembly was then glued to the plaque. When all were dry, the stand was sprayed in dullcote. The P-47 was then superglued to the plaque.

The author's overall intention was to make a model that was interesting to look at and would honor the sacrifices of the nearly unknown Aztec Eagles. It is the author's wish that the 201<sup>st</sup> Squadron is remembered by present generations.



# NOVEMBER MINUTES

The November meeting was well attended with all the tables gushing with models. We were graced with two new visitors, Mike Powers and Shenvin Shambayati. Let's hope to see them many times in the future. Mike likes to build in a variety of disciplines and has recently built a couple of Korean jets. Shenvin prefers to build 1:72 aircraft.

Steve and Anita Travis have taken over the Veterans' Model Drive. The Travis' have been invaluable in the success of the model drive so far. Every other month they have been driving the required number of snap-together models to each of the Bay Area Veterans' hospitals. Now they are expanding their duties to include the sales of donated models and other paraphernalia to raise money for the snap together kits for the vets. Outgoing model drive coordinator John Heck said the Travis' have been doing 90 percent of the work all along, and now they will get credit for it. John also stated that being in charge of the model drive has been a tremendously rewarding experience and encouraged everyone to dig deep when donating and buying models.

Our usual editor and minutes taker was unforgivably absent from the November meeting. In his stead, John Heck, who will be taking over all newsletter duties in the near future, attempted to keep track of who's model belonged to whom. Let's see if he got it right. In model talk... Mark Hernandez displayed his table-hogging 1:18 P-47D Razorback made by *21st Century Toys*. Our own Roy Sutherland produced the paint guide for the giant model. Bill Bower used a trans kit to convert a Porsche 962 from a right hand drive to a U.S., left hand drive version. His own *M+S Hobbies* produced the conversion kit. Chris Hughes brought in his 1:48 *Tamiya* Kubelwagon. He reported that it was quite easy to build with no seams to fill. New member Mike Powers had his 1:72 *Valkyrie* that he built out of the box. Ken Miller brought in several 1:144 items including a Russian Badger that he says was built largely of super glue. Ken also had on hand a Boeing 737-300 and 737-400, both by *Minicraft*, as well as a vacuform Ba 146 which took first place at the Airliners International contest even though the judges didn't notice that one of the decals was on backward. Silly judges. John Heck hogged most of a table with his 1:48 *Monogram* C-47 diorama. The model was a gift to his father in law who was a paratrooper in the 101st Airborne Division. His father in law jumped out of a similar, if much larger aircraft in Operation Market Garden during WWII. Included were nine of the *Monogram* paratrooper figures in the Market Garden green uniforms. Don Savage brought in a Porsche 936, which he painted with *Tamiya* paint, a chrome yellow GT-3, and the insides of a *Nichimo* Lotus Europa. His entry for the past month's *Monogram* Madness got as far as two nicely painted cowlings for a *Monogram* Grumman *Albatross*. Braulio Escoto built a *Hasegawa* *Marlin* for Bruce Barth, who is the author of a book on the *Marlin*. It took him only six years to complete. Braulio also brought a *Revell* pole-mounted 1:48 A4D *Skyhawk* and a *Hobbycraft* 1:48 F4U that he converted to a -5N with resin parts. Ben Pada is nearing completion of his 1:48 *Revell* F-86D. Ben made use of a *Black Box* cockpit but still had to scratch build some details behind the seat. He reported that the soft plastic was easy to work with and it had a good fit. It is

finished in *Alclad* paints and *AeroMaster* decals. Matt McMackin managed to build a nice looking French 75 gun in spite of its poor fit. He is making progress on his 1:35 scale German Afrika Korps troops on a base of Styrofoam covered with sand. Pilfered desk accessories make up the bulk of Kent McClure's scratch built steam punk tank painted in French camouflage. It makes quite a conversation piece as it towers over dozens of French troops. Kent said that all is fair in Victorian Sci-Fi. Kent is also into 1:144 aircraft. He shared a B-26, a DC-3, a Beriev Be-12 and an F-22. Shenvin Shambayati is new to our club, but he appears to have been busy building models with out us. His display consisted of *Accurate Miniatures'* 1:48 P-51B built straight from the box with the exception of scratch built armor plating and a P-51B canopy swiped from a *Tamiya* kit. Shenvin said his 1:72 *Italeri Hurricane* IIC was built out of the box and an easy build. His 1:48 *Hobbycraft* Bf-109G was finished as a night fighter using *AeroMaster's* Wild Sau decals. Vince Hutson is still at work on his *ICM Spitfire*. Ron Wergin uses thinned Rub and Buff to create convincing metal finishes as he did with his 1:72 *Revell* P-47. Jim Lund's table bending display included *Trumpeter's* massive 1:72 Tu-95 Bear. Jim found it easier to finish the model with the wings separate from the fuselage and then attach them upon completion. Another example of Jim's interest in early variants was exhibited in his B-26. He did extensive modification to back date the *Frog* 1:72 kit to represent the very first to roll of the assembly line. For comparison he displayed an operational version next to his prototype. Both were finished in *Alclad* paints. Rodney Williams talked about the slow but steady progress he is making on his 1:32 F2G *Corsair* conversion. The process has been complicated by having to make several revisions to the landing gear and by having to completely replace *Verlinden* parts that do not fit. Iannis Papageorgakis took a break from building aircraft to tackle *Tamiya's* 1:35 King Tiger. Iannis is improving on the already excellent kit by adding a metal barrel and metal tracks and says he is doing a lot of priming and sanding. Laramie Wright is making quick work of *Trumpeter's* 1:35 JS-III Stalin tank. It is very similar to the *Tamiya* kit but has a few improvements. Laramie is very pleased with the kit but says that the hull is a little too shallow and plans to raise the upper hull using sheet styrene. The kit tracks will be replaced with metal because, he says, nothing hangs like real metal. Bill Abbott is still widening his *Monogram* *Mosquito* and is still planning to enter it in the *Monogram* Madness contest that took place a couple of months ago. With all the after marked extras and scratch building, Bill's model has very few actual *Monogram* parts. Bill Ferrante has a 1:1 scratch built vacuform machine that he will use for scratch building parts for his 1:72 *MPM* PT-19. Bill warms his plastic sheets with a toaster heating element. On a recent visit to celebrate his father's birthday, Steve Travis assembled a 1:17 *Mantua* Roman Catapult made not of plastic but honest-to-gosh real wood. In addition to being a great looking display piece, the catapult actually works. To demonstrate its lethal capabilities, Steve launched a projectile into Barry Bauer's F-94C. For his revenge, Barry told us about all five of the 1:72 aircraft he has been building. Barry has plans for his *Italeri* F-100 to be finished in



*Alclad* paints. His *Hasegawa* P-38J has been backdated to a G model. For his father, Barry built a F-80C which he re-scribed and finished in *Alclad* and kit decals. As a nice comparison, next to the F-80C, Barry placed a YP-80A. Barry is making progress on an *Emhar* F-94C, which is awaiting primer. He says that the kit is nice looking but crude. Death arrived with Terry Huber's Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, which were kit-bashed from *Games Workshop* kits. Even more terrifying was Terry's rendition of the Undead Comic made of a *Games Workshop* skeleton with a tiny arrow through it head—a vision of Steve Martin in the after life? The ever-productive Mike Burton has been cranking out a wide variety of subjects. Mike's collection of P-51s has grown by two. He built the two *Monogram* 1:48 kits for the purpose of displaying the different markings. Taking advantage of his own P-63F tail conversion for *Obscureco*, Mike added a new tailpiece to his 1:72 P-63. His unaltered 1:72 P-63E is finished as one of only five Honduran aircraft. He also displayed his 1:72 *Hobbycraft* de Havilland *Canadair Tutor* in Malaysian markings. Mike used the *Dynavector* cockpit as a basis for the cockpit in his incomplete 1:72 *Frog Hornet* and built his H-13 helicopter on Coast Guard floats. Mike is refurbishing a *Hawk* Convair C-131 *Samaritan* that he started building when he was 11 years old. He is converting it to a Model 340 and using Braniff Airways decals. Mike is making progress on his *Horizon* Captain America and Red Skull diorama. The biggest challenge has been all the masking necessary to paint the various shades of *Alclad* on the diorama base. His *Heller* 1:72 F-86 was dressed in German Richtofen Squadron markings and, lastly, he has completed his lovely 1:72 *Italeri* B-25C in desert pink *Polly S* paint. With only the addition of pilot armor, Greg Lamb built his *Accurate Miniatures* P-51 right out of the box. Greg finished his *Mustang* with *Model Master* paints. And the Model of the Month goes to... Matt McMackin's son Aidan with a 1:35 figure of General Eisenhower that he said he swiped from his father's stash. Aidan said he spent only about 20 minutes building and

painting the tiny Eisenhower. It will be interesting to see what he can accomplish with 40 minutes!

*Tamiya* was the subject of this month's in-club contest. Because *Tamiya* has been making so many nice models of so many different subjects for so long, it was easy for our club members to dust off one or more entries. Bill Abbott threw down the gauntlet with his radio controlled (minus the radio control) screw together, Tyrrell P-34 six-wheeled Formula One racecar. As a curious juxtaposition, also entered his U.S.S. *Halibut* submarine. Chris Hughes submitted his in-progress *Eastern Express* PT-26. Ben Pada submitted a 1:35 Marder III-M. Ben said it was fun to build. Frank Babbitt built his nicely weathered A-1 *Skyraider* in South Vietnamese markings produced by *AeroMaster*. Cliff Kranz entered three 1:35 scale tanks. One *Tamiya* M48A3 was converted into an M48A5 and was painted in green and white winter camouflage. Cliff altered another M48 to a West German version. The trio was rounded out with a West German Leopard. Ron Wergin entered a Jagdpanzer IV and *Tamiya's* old M4 Sherman, both finished in *Gunze Sangyo* paint. Ron also used his diluted Rub and Buff bare metal finish method on his 1:48 P-51D. He backdated the kit to an early D by removing the tail file. Laramie Wright did a lot of work to correct the turret of *Tamiya's* T-62A. Finishing off the evening's contest entries were Mike Burton's two kits. Mike says that his incomplete *Tamiya* 1:72 F-84G is so nice that it would be hard to mess up. *Tamiya's* old 1:35 M3 Lee was Mike's first armor kit and he built it in just one week. And the winners were: in third place, with a Panzer III L, was Laramie Wright. Laramie added photo-etched detail and assorted other "bits" to what he said was already a really great kit. In second place, with a 1:48 F-84G, was Ben Pada. Ben built his *Thunderjet* out of the box with *SnJ* and *Model Master* paints. And in first place was the M4A3 Sherman built by Laramie Wright. Laramie's model was built and detailed to match a photo. He must have matched it well!

## Japanese rarity: AML's Nakajima C3N1

By Chris Bucholtz

During the formative years of Japan's air forces, she purchased some foreign types for evaluation and allowed her own fledgling industry to take a stab at their own advances. Sometimes, the results were startling; other times, they were dead-ends. One of these dead-ends was the C3N1. Although the experienced gained with it would pay off in the later C6N1, the C3N1 was not what the navy wanted, a high-speed long range carrier observation plane. It was a different-looking scout for 1937: long, streamlined and, most importantly, a monoplane. It had spatted landing gear and a single-bank, nine-cylinder Nakajima-built engine, the only less-than-modern features on the aircraft. Despite its modern looks, the C3N1 was terminated after just two examples were manufactured, and they went to serve in Shanghai with 12 Kokutai. They performed long-range reconnaissance missions through 1940, when they were withdrawn from service.

AML's kit is simple—40 parts in all, including two vacuformed canopies—and the panel line detail is quite nice. The cockpit begins with a floor that looks like it started life as part of a Hasegawa B5N1, and is outfitted with three seats, a bulkhead between the pilot and observer, and a simplified

control panel and stick. The seats need belts and a little more detail could help, especially since the fuselage sides have full stringer/former detail.

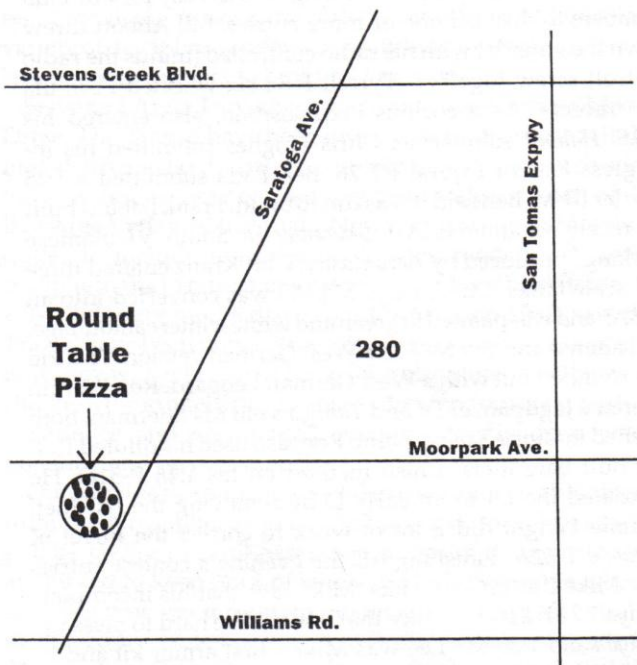
The cockpit parts go between the fuselage halves. A one-piece lower wing is topped by two upper halves, and the horizontal stabilizers are single pieces that butt-join the fuselage. The tail wheel unit butt-joins the lower fuselage, and the engine, supplied oddly as front and back halves of the same bank of cylinders, goes on the tapered mount in the nose. The cowling is provided as two halves and a front ring with separate exhaust stubs. The propeller is three blades and a hub, which look like they'll need care to assemble. The wheel pants have separate wheels, a nice touch, but the wheels are provided as halves.

The instructions show how to cut the canopy to open the rear cockpit and expose the gunner's 7.7mm Type 92 machine gun (a Lewis gun, built under license).

Decals are for one aircraft, 3-92, from Shanghai in 1937. The aircraft has a silver overall scheme with a red vertical fin and horizontal tails and a black cowling. With the addition of hinomarus and a fuselage band, the plane looks quintessentially Japanese.



# Christmas Gift Exchange Time!



Next meeting:

**7:00 p.m.,**

**Friday,**

**December 19**

**at Round Table Pizza**

**Moorpark Avenue at**

**Saratoga Avenue, San Jose**

**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**

**If your renewal date is in red, it's time to pay your dues!**