

Taming Williams Bros.' graceful Gamma

By Mike Burton

Northrop. When the name comes up, even the average man or woman on the street will often respond "flying wing!" Such is the notoriety and fame John Knudsen Northrop's most passionately pursued design philosophy has gained over time. Although a huge fan of the wings, Northrop won my admiration and respect for his less well known works which have stood the test of time.

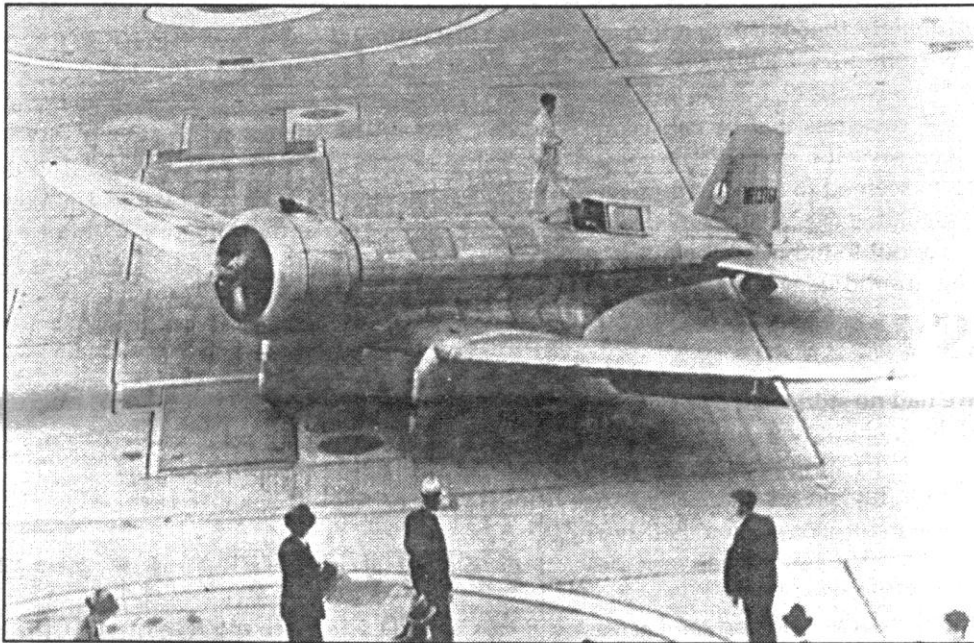
Northrop was an early pioneer, with the Lockheed Vega serving as an excellent example of his design philosophy, utilizing his expertise in carpentry and advancing the state of art with its monocoque (single shell) fuselage and stressed plywood skin wing. It was this airplane that provided him impetus to further this idea of strong, roomy planes with this type of fuselage, but in metal (17ST Aluminium).

The first of these successes was the *Alpha*, built on his own terms after he co-founded Avion Corporation, which became Northrop while the *Alpha* was in design. 13 *Alphas* of TWA made a 22-hour coast-to-coast air mail and express service, which demonstrated the government's faith in the airplane's cutting-edge leadership.

A sport airplane, the *Beta*, came next, but it was when a reformed Northrop Corporation came out with the *Gamma* that Jack Northrop began to be seen as a genius and not as an employee of other companies. The *Gamma* was truly a classic and a pioneer. It had high speed potential (248 mph) combined with a low landing speed (40 to 55 mph) thanks to a

light, strong multicellular aluminum wing, and the single shell fuselage powered by 14 cylinder Wright radial pleased all customers. The 2500 mile range at cruise speed (220 mph) which provided nonstop coast to coast capability in 1933/34. did a little to increase interest in the *Gamma* as well. Race pilot Frank Hawks was first customer, and with Texaco Company sponsorship, the *Gamma 2A* broke Hawks' four-year-old speed record from Los Angeles to New York in 1933, shaving over four hours off his time! Several other speed records between cities in U.S. and Canada by Hawks were re-written by Hawks that year with the *Gamma* "Texaco Sky Chief", giving Northrop's hot new design spectacular public exposure.

The number one *Gamma* X-12265 was not to retire in glory, though. Four years after its birth, and after being sold by Frank Hawks in



Howard Hughes taxis Jackie Cochran's Northrop Gamma, which she flew in the 1935 Bendix Trophy Race. engine vibrations forced her to cut her race short, but she returned to finish first in the 1938 event in a P-35.

1934, this beauty was entered in 1936 Bendix Trophy race, where the *Gamma 2A* caught fire in flight. The pilot bailed out and survived, but the aircraft was totally destroyed in the ensuing crash.

The second *Gamma* (2B) customer was more fortunate, and so was the airplane. Lincoln Ellsworth called his *Gamma* "Polar Star," and was used in two attempts (the second, in 1935 a success) to explore the Antarctic by air. The first try in 1934 may give you an idea how strong a *Gamma* was, especially by the standards of 1934. Due to a miscalculation of ice thickness, the ski-equipped Polar Star set down not on 25 feet of solid ice but on but a few inches, where shortly a crevasse began to open underneath it. While the crew watched, the

Continued on page 4

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dive! Dive! Dive!

A thank you to Bruce McBride for organizing the U-571 get together at the Century Theaters in Union City. Other than having to impose a standing order that no one blurt out "Hey! U-boats didn't have that!" the night turned out to be very rewarding indeed. After paying your own way in, attendees received a free popcorn, drink and an envelope loaded with coupons for local area hobby stores. Mine will be spent before the next meeting. And speaking of the meeting, a thanks to those of you who took the time to stop by the front table and say "hi." As this is the first time for me to hold any "public office," it's nice to get some feedback on how I/we are doing with the club. See ya at the meeting and the regional.

Unfortunately that was the message for the last month's news letter—I would have had it done earlier, but an engineer's job is never done. Here we are, fresh back from the Region 9 contest. The tour was great, the vendors were a sci-fi lover's heaven and unfortunately, the contest's announcer's hospitality was a far throw from ours. I will let the contest announcer run it any way he feels is right, but the only thing I will not put up with is the rudeness that he consistently shoveled out to the attendees, myself included. The consensus of people who I talked to seemed to agree with me. For example: when I was looking at the car category, I was told, "Can you get back? We are about to judge this area and we don't want anyone hanging around us when we do." Did I

here a please? Nooooo... Later during the awards ceremony, a pair of AV-8 Harriers were in the process of landing. Most people like myself will drop anything and watch. I don't need to hear a "Hello, Can we get back to the more important things, people?" being yelled at us from the front. Most of all, you never, never want to shout at the kids who are attending. They will more than likely be the people who carry on the modeling tradition. I was appalled when I heard the announcer scream on the microphone "Will you kids get back and sit down!" If you want to put on a regional, this is the type of announcer you don't want.

Here's a quick word of advice for any contest directors:

1. Be hospitable and treat the contest attendees with courtesy. If you treat them nice, they will spread the word of your event and come back next year, no matter how bad your contest may end up.
2. Be polite when asking people to stand back or leave an area that is about to be judged. If you don't, you and your club will end up with gripe letters like this.
3. As overheard on the collections table, "You know, I really don't like British airplanes, but we'll give it to him just because at least he has his on a base." Tell those judges to watch what they are saying. If overheard, they will make the participants feel like the category is about to get hosed by some know-it-all and most likely will not come back the following year.

EDITOR'S BRIEF

As of Tuesday, June 6, we had no stories for this issue. We had no stories about modeling, about new kits, about new decals, about new books, about anything that would set our newsletter apart from the monthly postcards the Fremont chapter sends out. We do have a minutes section that shows our membership to be very active. The conflict between these two facts has your editor very concerned.

No doubt, someone will step into the void and send at least one article the editor's way before it's too late. The entire club owes that writer a sincere thank you. However, this does nothing to make the editor feel better about the situation. In order to get the Styrene Sheet laid out, printed and folded, your editor needs time. There's been lots of it since the May meeting, but there have been no submissions in that time. The submissions that come at this late date don't help much. Between their lateness and other activities he plans to pursue (i.e., the Chino show) will force the editor to skip either the Fremont meeting or his Thursday night dinner with his friends, will keep him away from his wife, and will force him to work in a big hurry. Since he gets no overtime (or any compensation whatsoever, for that matter), this is an arrangement that is unacceptable.

The editor took this job in 1992 because he thought it would be fun, and indeed it has been. However, the now-monthly struggle to scrape together enough articles to keep the Styrene Sheet a vital and useful part of IPMS is taking its toll.

To our steady, dependable writers—Bob Miller, Mike Burton, and Brad Chun, chief among them—our most sincere thanks for making the editor's position appear easy. How-

ever, if no additional help comes soon, the editor's position will be empty.

—The Editor

CONTEST CALENDAR

August 20, 2000: IPMS/Central Valley hosts its **annual contest** in Fresno, California. For more information, call Nick Bruno at (559) 229-3675.

September 23, 2000: IPMS/Humboldt Bay hosts its **annual contest** in Eureka, California. For more information, call Mitch Bartel at (707) 826-1380 or e-mail him at mitchy2@juno.com.

October 22, 2000: IPMS/Orange county hosts **The Region 8 Convention-OrangeCon 2000** in Buena Park, California. For more information, call (949) 631-7142 or e-mail ocipms@aol.com.

November 11, 2000: The **Antelope Valley Group** hosts its **Fourth Annual Contest** at Antelope Valley College in Lancaster, California. For more information, call David Newman at (661) 256-6359 or e-mail him at dneuman@as.net.



WEST COAST HOBBY EXPO 2000

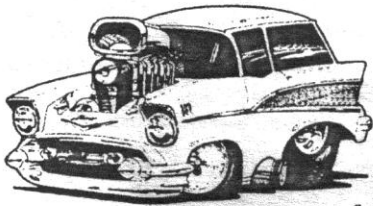


SCALE MODEL CONVENTION & TRADE SHOW

The *WEST COAST'S LARGEST* Scale Model
Convention & Trade Show Swap Meet

OPEN TO ALL

Model Cars, Slot Cars, Boats, Planes, Trains, Military, Science Fiction, Diecast, Gaspowered,
Electric and All Collectibles



NNL Western Nationals

JULY 15-16, 2000
SATURDAY JULY 15TH SET UP
SUNDAY JULY 16TH SHOW DATE

SANTA CLARA COUNTY FAIR GROUNDS
344 TULLY ROAD, SAN JOSE, CA 95111

500 BOOTHS Available
For Booth Info Contact Andy's @ (800) 419-1152 OR
Andy@andysautosport.com

MRTM

Scale Auto
Enthusiast

ERL

Tamiya

Revell
MONGRAM

Northrop's record-setting *Gamma* in 1:72

Continued from Page 1

opening eventually increased until the *Gamma* was solely supported by its wings. The ice floe then began to drift with the airplane wedged in the crack, and the support ship followed for over a mile before a rescue could be undertaken and the damaged ski-plane could be hoisted aboard for return and repairs at Northrop.

This same plane helped Ellsworth on his second expedition to claim 300,000 square miles of territory for the U.S. during a flight over many days to his goal, Admiral Byrd's Little America base in Antarctica. Radio failure aboard the two seater *Gamma* left the crew out of touch on the way, and only after a six-day sled ride to complete the final 25 miles to base did anyone know just how much these explorers went through. Fierce storms forced several landings including the one resulting in the final leg by sled!

Gamma 2B, Ellsworth's lucky Polar Star, now resides with National Air & Space Museum in Washington D.C., with all the wrinkles and scars to silently speak of the intrepid, determined souls who dared the Antarctic in the airplane.

The *Gamma* design evolved into attack bomber designs by way of the 2C (USAAC XA-13, nearly same externally as 2A/2B) and 5B (USAAC XA-16). These did not sell, but helped guide Northrop to the A-17 and A-17A dive bombers, which so impressed the Luftwaffe prewar. TWA used one of three *Gammas* purchased to explore high-altitude flight over weather

systems for planning the future of airline routing.

Jackie Cochran had a special *Gamma* made for her with a liquid-cooled Curtiss engine that made the plane look big and deadly. Unfortunately for her, a delivery-flight crash wrecked the landing gear and the plane was re-engined with a Pratt & Whitney Twin Wasp. After it was leased to Howard Hughes, Cochran used it to set a number of records. Hughes apparently did not impress her with his care of the plane, for it was destroyed in a hangar fire that Cochran blamed on Hughes' carelessness.

China was the customer to give the *Gamma* its warrior wings, with 36 model 2E two seaters delivered as attack bombers. Britain received a *Gamma* or two, and in fact the last one, the 2L, was an engineless airframe sold to Bristol Aircraft Company. It served a vital if unsung role as registry G-AFBT, for it was the test bed for the development of the then new Hercules sleeve valve engine. *Beaufacturers* by Jack Northrop? Well no, but he did help!

Douglas used the *Gamma* fuselage construction method in their justly famed DC series of craft, and again, Northrop's evident genius lives on under another's colors.

Speaking of transports, *Gamma* was revised into the *Delta* series, which looked a lot like a FAT *Gamma*, with the cockpit ahead of the wing and raised side-by-side pilot seating so passengers could ride behind and below. But that is another



Health pundit Bernarr Macfadden, clearly a modest fellow, waves to passers-by after ground-looping his *Gamma* 2E, resulting in heavy damage to the right main strut and wheel trouser.

story...

It's odd how, after so many years and so many subjects covered, the *Williams Brothers'* kits seem to engender same reaction as, say, vacuform kits. Everyone seems to enjoy one or more of the items offered, and many even buy some (don't deny it, I have seen some of you!) but no one ever brings one out for display! I know this is an exaggeration, but not much of one. Their 1:72 line has many of the beauties among the Golden Age pioneers, including the Boeing 247, the Martin B-10, and my favorite, Northrop's *Gamma* 2A/2B. The kit offers so much in such a little box, and for not much money.

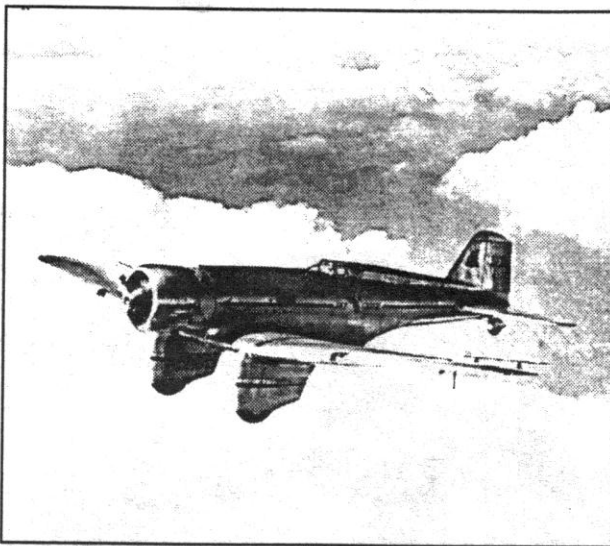
The parts and decals provide the modeler with the choice of the 2A "Texaco Sky Chief" flown by Frank Hawks or the 2B "Polar Star" flown by explorer Lincoln Ellsworth, and these each parts for more than one configuration, providing the basis of a nice collection with five possible different *Gammas*.

Having built "Sky Chief" Phase One (newly built) and Phase Two (first major rework) allows me to say with a little authority that these birds are attractive and overlooked single engine entries! Civilian air contestants should also take note.

Molded in soft gray plastic, there is a fairly small number of components, but since multiple options are offered the kit may seem more complex than it actually is on first sight. My best advice to offer at the beginning is that you take the kit instructions and any references you may have, and photocopy them in several times, especially the instructions. You can make yourself nuts devising a matrix or checklist to be sure that the particular sequence of parts and modifications for the plane you choose is done correctly and doesn't end up as a "hypothetical entry" like I nearly did, or you can simply

note on a spare copy of the instructions where you are without having to worry about wrecking any vital info.

While subtle in some ways, the different phases of each version stand out when you have them before you in three dimensions, and they make or break the final effect of the



The *Gamma* was used as an 'overweather' laboratory to pioneer high-altitude flying.

model. For *Sky Chief*, one fuselage phase has windows and one does not. For Ellsworth's aircraft, they both do. Simple enough, you say? *Williams* provides you one fuselage in halves with the window area thinned but molded shut. Be careful here if you plan on opening the window. Use a sharp-tipped knife and a file, and remember that "Sky Chief" has "low" windows while both Ellsworth's require "high" windows. You are provided a clear guide as to where to cut for either version, but it is easy to do one of each instead of the correct pair, and filling the round fuselage in the event of a mistake is not a picnic. Doing these windows should be one of your first operations,

for simple errors can be rectified by selecting another variant before you're in too deep.

The fuselage interior parts are few and simple. A decal for the instrument panel goes on a matching blank plastic part, and seats with "tuck and roll" cushions and control sticks goes on a floorboard with pedals. You'll not see much unless you decide to cut and mount the canopy open; this option is not offered but the glass is molded thinly enough that you could do it carefully. I left mine alone, as any errors meant buying another kit.

There's very subtle ribbing detail on the inside fuselage halves, but once painted (a non

specific light green, according to the instructions) it almost disappears. An equally subtle set of pegs provide your floorboard mount. I suggest you reinforce this mount once the



Inspired by a meeting with Roald Amundsson, Lincoln Ellsworth used this *Gamma* to explore the Antarctic. This plane resides in the National Air and Space Museum today.

floorboard is glued in or it will break free at the slightest pressure—for instance, sanding. A strip of styrene to firm it up underneath will serve nicely.

If you are doing the Ellsworth plane, the same interior parts are used with an extra seat whose mount is not seen when the plane is done as “Sky Chief,” and there’s only some flash around the rear cockpit opening that may need removal. Dry fit the fuselage halves once the interior is done to your level of satisfaction, and test fit the fuselage extensions for your version now. The instructions lead you to install the extensions later, but I found it best add them here. On one “Sky Chief,” it was easy enough to add this part later, but on the other, the parts did not fit and I ended up sanding the seam furiously. Had I checked, simply putting the extensions on each half of the fuselage before gluing them together would have simplified things tremendously.

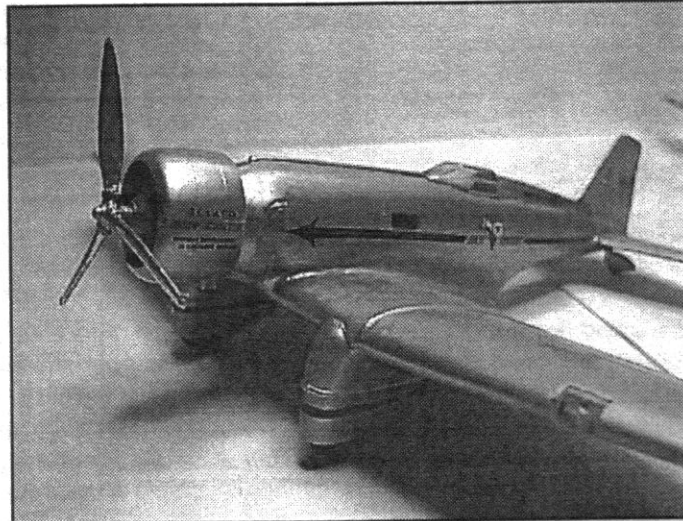
Now, some genius of the low-run injection mold-maker comes into play. The turtleback and upper fuselage (ahead of the cockpit) strip for the 2A and 2B are different lengths, but you get one set of parts. These two items would be nasty for the modeler and mold maker to deal with in any production mold kit, and *Williams’* solution is very helpful, though a bit tricky. Tape the turtle back in place very securely and then work forward, adding the canopy next if you’re building “Sky Chief” or the fuselage strip if you’re building the Ellsworth plane, and finally hold the last part to fit so a cut line can be determined. “Sky Chief” is fairly easy, because the canopy is small and needs only a little trim, and the fuselage strip is very thin and only requires a sharp cut on first try to be done. Gluing this on straight is a headache, but you are rid of two

fuselage seams when it and the turtleback are in place, thanks to the method of molding them separately from the fuselage.

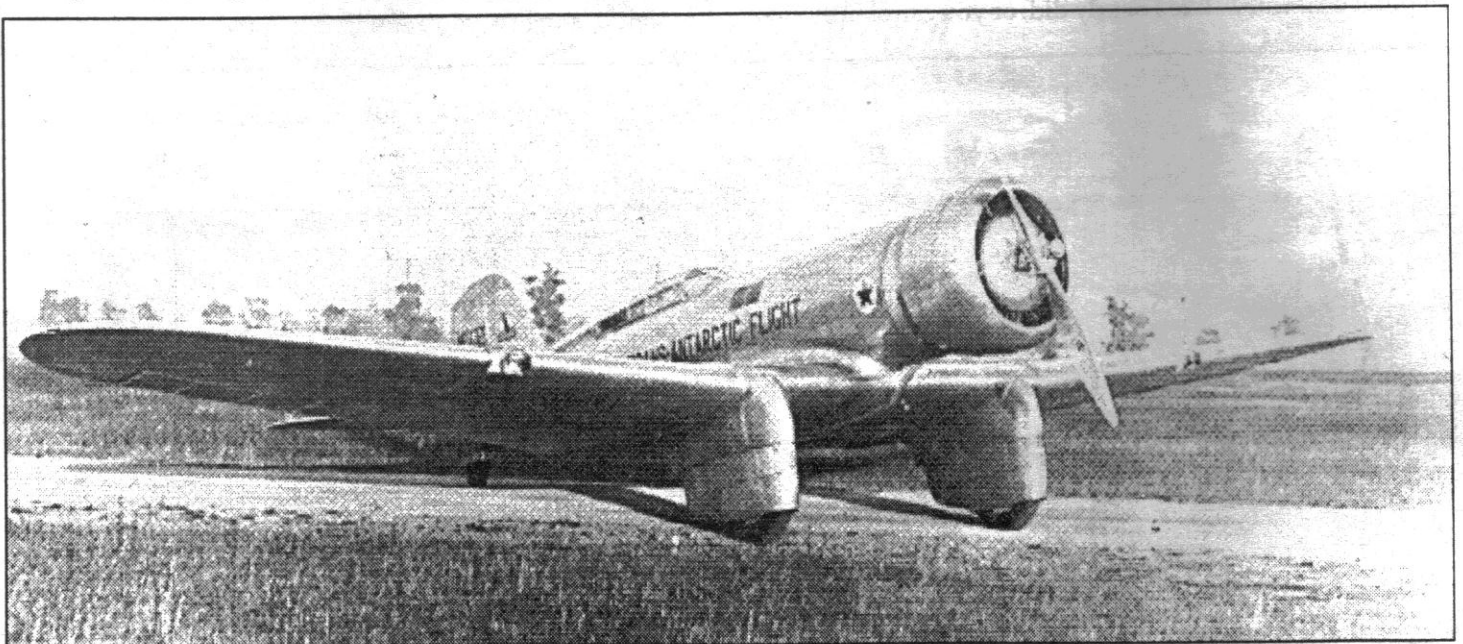
If you are doing a short tail version, as in “Sky Chief” or Ellsworth phase one, it would be best to make that modification after the fuselage is assembled and before the wings are constructed. The wings are two (upper/lower) parts with an appropriate airfoil shape and very subtle raised panel detail. Clear leading-edge landing lights are also provided. The tricky part of the wings is that there are no guide pins, so like a vacuform you must determine your best method of keeping the parts aligned while you are gluing them together. You must also remember to drill out the holes for the “park bench” ailerons. Four of five options provided in the kit have them, and they only vary in the number of supports.

The real work comes during the mounting of the wing assembly to the fuselage. I had one model that fit dead-on, and another that sanding nearly solved, but with the metal finish you can clearly see where

the problems were. The huge fillet is part of the fuselage. The wing nearly sits flush on the underside of the fuselage, with a tiny ledge the on wing as a guide to help determine the centerline of the two. When the wing is properly placed, the fillet almost vanishes into wing, but it is a devil if not in just right! The horizontal stabilizers on both of mine models fit only so-so. The mating point at the fuselage was mismatched in thickness and sanding was required. The wheels are one piece molds which are trapped between the halves of the wheel “trousers.” These proved to be a pain. The trousers, like the fuselage, have fillets molded in, and the idea is to fit them flush against the underside wing airfoil. Again, as with the



Mike Burton's *Gamma*, finished as Frank Hawks' 'Fire Chief.'



Ellsworth's 'Polar Star,' in its first phase. Its 710-hp Wright Cyclone wasn't enough to best bad Antarctic weather during the 1934 expedition.

wings, no guide pins are present so get yourself a third hand and some slow adhesive for this work.

Fitting the trousers to the wings on one *Gamma* went smoothly, but my other model needed sanding at the leading edge and all around the fillet.

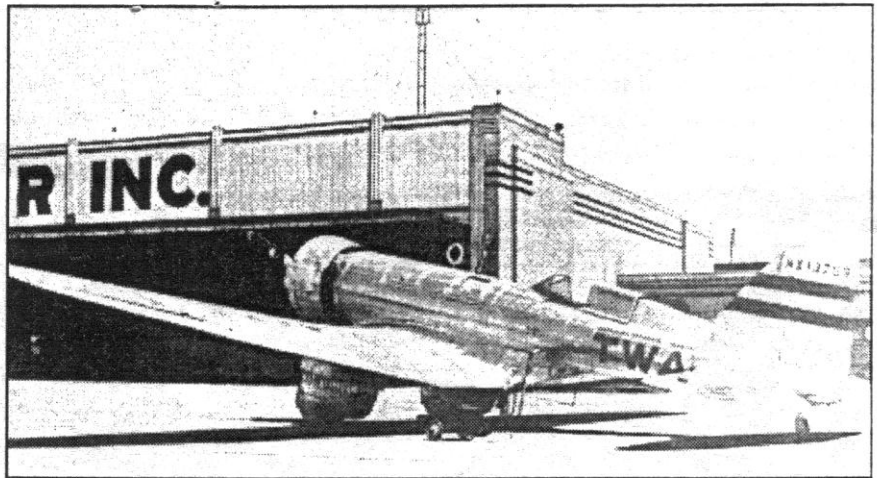
The engine assembly went well. For "Sky Chief" you have a two-bank radial with a three-blade prop and a small two-part cowling. Ellsworth's plane has a single part radial with a two-blade prop and a big two-part cowl. The exhausts will differ from plane to plane and between phases. I had no problems at all with the cowlings, which looked seamless look when done.

The park bench ailerons were somewhat of a pain, especially in keeping the supports aligned in all axes and in height. Get that third and fourth hand ready.

If you choose the fifth option, you will be inscribing your own inset ailerons. I have yet to go there with a *Gamma*.

Finally, before painting and final assembly, a choice of tail wheels is needed. There is a big panted tailwheel on "Sky Chief," and it's easier to paint the exposed tire after applying the metal finish. Ellsworth's "Polar Star" had an exposed wheel, which is easier to paint and mount later. Doing the fine wire pitots according to the provided kit plan was something I skipped, since losing them in transport with other models seemed inevitable.

All of these *Gammas* out of box are overall natural aluminium, with polished metal props. For mine, a thinned coat of *ScaleCoat* Railroad Silver was the drug of choice, with *Bare Metal Foil* on the prop blades (never again!) to get the polished metal look. This worked okay on one propeller, but I wrinkled it some on the other.

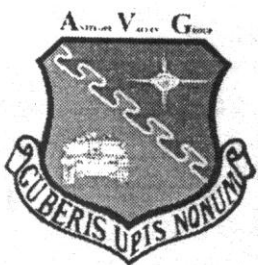


TWA operated the Gamma as a passenger and mail plane, but it did its best work in research roles.

The *Microscale*-printed decals for the schemes went on very well, with only small work needed to cut the "X" off the registration number and the "NR" substituted in front of the serial 12665 to differentiate between "Sky Chief" phase 1 and phase 2. That's the same thing required for the two versions of the "Polar Star," but the rest of markings are easy enough to sort for each version from instructions provided.

Perhaps my story has not promoted the true pleasure of completing these *Williams Bros. Gammas*, but what does it say that I have four more kits stashed that will allow me to complete three more *Gammas* out of box, plus use the *Esoteric* vacuformed conversion kit #BJ-3, which makes a *Gamma 2A* into a *Delta*, Coast Guard decal included. I purchased them all after doing these two, so the pain was not really that much! *Williams' B-10* is likely to be much harder if you try it. I built it and the *Rareplanes* kit at same time. I won't say which was more work.

Give one of these Northrop pioneers a try. They're a really



Antelope Valley Group/IPMS

Plastic Model Club is pleased to announce

Our Fourth Annual Contest Saturday, November 11, 2000

Antelope Valley College, 3041 W. Ave K, Lancaster, California

Special Awards For: Best Korean War Model
Best X-Plane

For more information, contact: David Newman, (661) 256-6359 or dnewman@as.net



The Schneider Cup was awarded permanently to the nation whose planes won three consecutive races. The S.6B won the 1931 race, winning the award for Great Britain.

R.J. Mitchell's 400 mph marvel: the S.6B

By Mike Burton

Spitfire! Thanks to a movie by that name made in the war years (1943), my appreciation for one of the most elegant designs ever to fly and fight has grown. The most informative part of the film for me was the evolution of what you might call the *Spitfire's* racy grandpa.

The Supermarine S.6B seaplane racer was the expression of one man's inarguable genius and vision. That man, Reginald J. Mitchell, managed to show the entire world in very few years what risk and reward pure competition could bring in the hands of the right champion.

Between March and August 1925, from the start of its career to its finish, the Supermarine S.4 went into history as milestone in seaplane development, although, sadly, it crashed in America just before entering the race it was expected to win for Britain, the International Schneider Trophy for seaplanes. Development delays prevented it from competing in 1926, but in 1927 Supermarine's S.5 took first and second in the race. 1929 again saw this line of Mitchell's seaplane speed demons take the trophy. With no competitors fielded in the allotted time, a little over five years since his design genius first won the contest, 1931 saw the Supermarine S.6B take the Schneider home to Britain for all time.

In September 1931, Mitchell showed the world still more of his design's true spirit, when a new absolute speed record of

407.5 mph was set by another S.6B with an "R" engine. The first airplane to ever break the 400 mph barrier was a seaplane!

Data from this effort directly assisted Mitchell in the design of the fighter plane he foresaw would be the great spear required to fend off the gathering threats soon to imperil Britain. That spear was the Supermarine *Spitfire*, itself evolving into many fine variants. Sadly, Mitchell did not live to see this full flowering. He succumbed to cancer early in the *Spitfire's* life. It is thought that he shortened his life through the strain of producing the plane, feeling that he could not afford to allow development to be delayed at the risk of a potentially disastrous cost to his country. Many have in history given their lives that we may live free. Certainly Mitchell deserves to be appreciated for his great personal sacrifice and artistic work achievements in his fruitful if only too short time on earth.

Originally issued in the 1960s for under a dollar under its original *Hawk Model Company* label, the 1:48 S.6B kit now sold by *Testors* has held up well over the ensuing years. Still to be found at a relatively low price on the shelf or occasionally at contest vendor tables, newer issues differ only in that the decals are not yellowed, or the base plastic color differs. The *Testors* issue comes in a pale gray close to FS 36622, and the detail is still a combination of fine raised line detail and the mild engraved "markings" so reminiscent of the period.

For a 1:48 kit, the parts count is very brief, but not lacking. The fuselage is clean and crisp, with the only problem to solve the atrocious "bench seat" which is the sole interior detail. With little reference on hand, I fabricated a simple seat with side walls, a control column from sprue mounted on sprue crossbar, and a plain small instrument panel. I used FS 36081 black grey for all but the column tubing and seat, which were painted silver.

Closing the fuselage went smoothly, with no mismatched joints, but some sanding was still required. The most tedious rework comes in filling the engraved areas on the tail for the "markings" and shaving away the raised "7" on the fuselage. A little superglue, a sharp knife, and light sanding took care of these problems.

The horizontal stabilizers are single parts with thin airfoil shapes and raised detail. They fit with little filling on fuselage. A poorer fit comes when the exhaust port fairings are put on the nose. I carefully test-fitted each one and selected the fit which seemed to provide the best solution with the least loss of detail or time. Again, superglue was the answer to this problem.

The wing is one piece, and is made thin with raised detail molding. It took some work with a knife to get the fuselage tab A to mate in wing slot B, and still I found that the wing fillet at the curved mating point to the fuselage is not of identical width nor without gaps. The roughest match to achieve is the front underside of the wing to the fuselage, where a flat plane transitions into a narrow curve.

Pontoons, the clear character mark of a seaplane, can be built up beautifully as long as one takes care to match the halves correctly. In my haste, I managed to get one set of pontoons with double slots and the other with no mounting slots at all, which became very clear when I tried to test fit

these items to the spars! It was recoverable, but painfully embarrassing. The worst time I had with this kit centers around the pontoon hardware. Thinning down the one-piece triangular frames to keep an airfoil cross section tested my

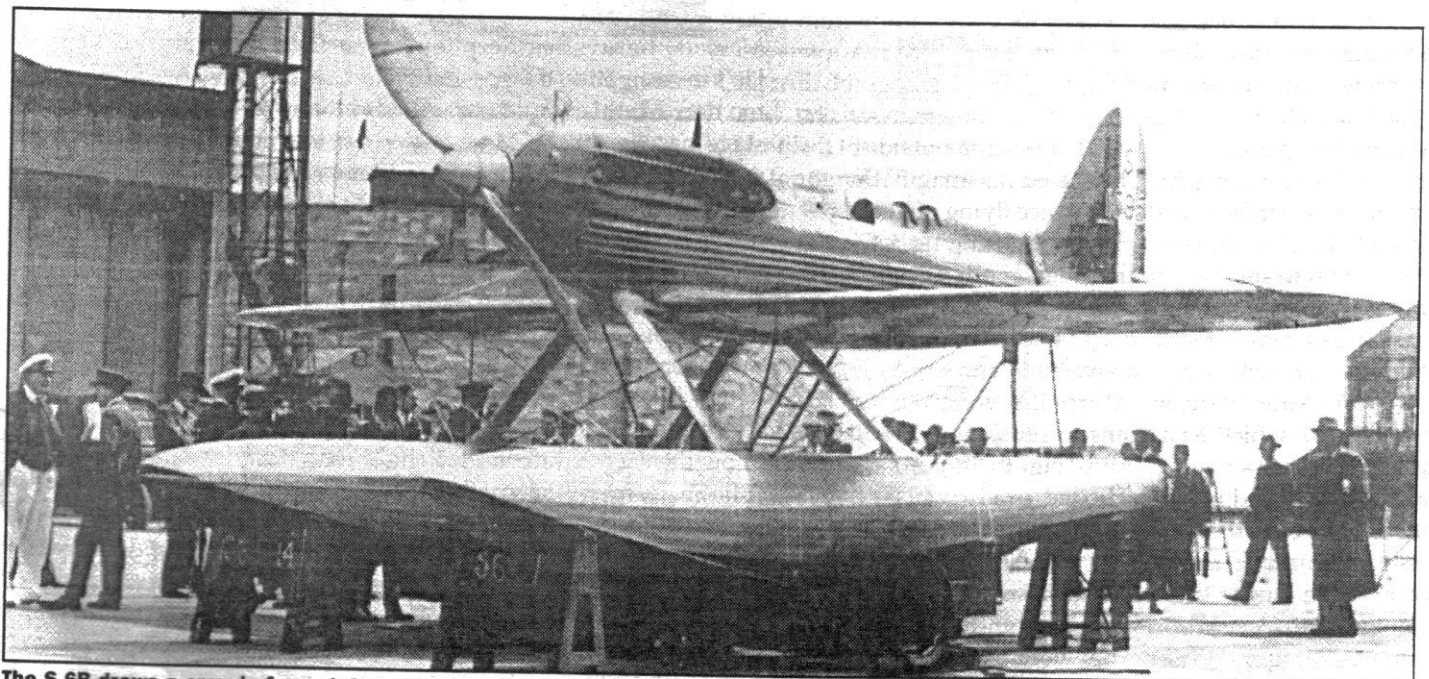
skill with Flexfiles, and repeated sandings were required. The slots below the wing and on the pontoons matched the frames, but not very well. I ended up filling one side, and cutting and sanding the other. Worst of all was the blending of the under-nose mating of the front frame to fuselage.

Once this was done, only the canopy needed fitting. Close examination of photos revealed that, out of box, the canopy sits too high in front. It should be flush. Thinning the front facing and beveling the lowered canopy fixed the problem, and I stuck it in place with watch crystal adhesive. Other than cleaning flash from one-piece spinner and two-blade prop, it was time to roll her into the paint shop!

The color scheme is lovely, and simple enough, a silver/aluminum dope with medium blue trim. Masking is more work than the painting here. The tail tricolor is well served with decals, as is the number 7 on the fuselage. Setting solution will be in order here since the ribbed fuselage area is traversed by the number. For the intrepid seeking to truly capture the essence of this R.J. Mitchell marvel, rigging can be added. For mine model so far, this adventure has yet to begin, mostly because of decisions about just how to rig the model. Wire is not easy for me, and I have rigged with sprue in 1:72 with success, but this will be a first for me in 1:48. It's a delightful model to have about, though, and when it is placed next to a *Spitfire* Mk 5 or the superb Mk 22 the family resemblance and rather compact dimensions of the S.6B stand out.



R.J. Mitchell, who designed the S.6B and later used data from it to create the Spitfire



The S.6B draws a crowd of spectators. This was the first airplane to top 400 miles an hour, a huge jump from the 340 mph recorded in its Schneider Cup win.

MAY MINUTES

All hands who attended the U-571 party planned by Bruce McBride reported having a great time, regardless of their opinion of the movie. Bruce also arranged free sodas and popcorn and discounts for four Bay Area hobby shops—well done, Bruce! Our hats are off to you—or at least turned around backwards so as to more easily peer through a periscope!

In model talk... Cliff Kranz is heavily involved in building a model of the *Yamato*, circa 2520 from the *Space Cruiser: Yamato* series. Cliff's built the model out of the box, and is now going to watch the movie to make sure he paints it in its correct colors. Ron Wergin found *Fujimi's* 1:72 *Spitfire* PR.XIX to somewhat expensive, but it yielded a beautiful model. He filled all the panel lines to better represent a speed-optimized aircraft. Ron also finished an *Academy* A6M5 Type 52 Zero, giving the model a wild camouflage scheme that he assures us is authentic. Continuing the parade of wonderful models in 1:72, Eric McClure had a *Hurricane* Mk. I in Battle of Britain colors. Eric used—and corrected—the *Hasegawa* kit. Ken Fadrigon decided it was time to get small, converting a 1:144 *Minicraft* 737 into a Boeing Business Jet. This was accomplished by adding winglets, and Ken opened the cabin doors and is installing some interior details to make this an airline that goes above and beyond. Chris Bucholtz is still toiling away on his *Fujimi* F-84 *Thunderjet*, backdated from a G to an E. Chris is taking full credit for causing the new, ready-from-the-box *Academy* F-84E to hit the shelves. Greg Plummer, taking a break from his ordinarily involved automotive sub-
hobby, used *Dragon's* 1:400 Airbus 320 as some therapy, building the plane as a Chinese airliner. Greg also took a flight of fancy in building an *Academy* A-37 *Dragonfly* as a British Operation Granby aircraft, complete with desert pink camouflage, small subdued British roundels, and a small thimble radar. Anita Travis had a few scary moments with *Polar Lights' Wolfman*, whose fit isn't as good as she would have hoped. Anita used a rock base to keep the lycanthrope from being a lying down-thrope, and painted the critter with Apple Barrel acrylics. She says the model isn't a direct pantograph of the *Aurora* kit, which is a little bigger. Chris Bowman says he had few problems with *Tamiya's* F4F-4 *Wildcat*, outside of the rather complex landing gear. Chris used his imagination for the markings, which he says depict an ace flying off the U.S.S. *Ranger* in 1942. Ken Miller's odyssey in bringing a *Glencoe* Convair 880 up to snuff continues; this month's discovery is that the doors don't fit on this 1:126 kit. Ken is also working in the smaller but more standard 1:144 scale on an *Academy-Minicraft* *Harrier*, which he's converting into an AV-8A to depict NASA / Ames' jump jet. Also in the works is a resin kit of the *Falcon* 50, which Ken plans to finish as a Spanish or Portuguese military jet. Steve Travis' eighth '34 Ford is a 1947 dry lake racer, owned by John Husted and driven by Reeve Adams. Steve rebuilt the frame, improved the instruments on the dashboard, made a roll-away canvas roof from tissue soaked in white glue (a trick learned from armor modelers), and painted with *Tamiya* spray paints. Randy Ray has been able to manage one or two hours per week for the past year on his *Tamiya* Steyr 1500 command car, but the results have been very rewarding. Randy added *Eduard* brass parts to the

model, which he says accounts for the long build time. Also delaying the Steyr's completion was a *Dragon* 50mm anti-tank gun, which Randy completed as a break from his truck. Ben Pada showed his typical modesty and typical skill in his *Tamiya* 1:48 F4U-1 *Corsair*, *Fine Molds Susuei* rocket plane and *Tamiya* F-84G, which was outfitted with decals from *AeroMaster*. Ben also has a *Tamiya* *Swordfish* well under way; his nearly completed fuselage accompanied his other models. Vince Hoffman's 2001: *A Space Odyssey* Aries 1B from *Captain Cardboard* needed a cockpit, he thought—so he made one! Both of Vince's attempts were on display, as was *Muroc Models' X-38* lifting body "lifeboat," an aircraft that will be used to provide an escape from the International Space Station. Greg Prindle saw an A-10 in person, and rushed out to buy the *Monogram* kit. After he finished his 1:48 model, he hung as much ordnance off its wings that he could find! Mark Jacobs did some very nice painting on two figures nicked from the *Kaiyodo* SF3D Mechs, namely a pilot and a mechanic. Pancho Oppus found a *Monogram* P-51B at MacFrugals at an irresistible price and the ultimate result was his lovely 1:48 *Mustang* in the colors of the 332nd Fighter Group. Mike Burton's menagerie of odd airplanes continues to grow with the addition of a 1:48 Supermarine S.6, built from the *Hack/ Testors* kit and finished the day of the meeting. Mike also displayed the moral opposite of a *Dynavector* kit, a *Contrail* Yak-28 which he says has no provision for adding the wing to the fuselage. Bruce McBride demonstrated that modeling need not be confined to styrene, fashioning a 9-inch tall figure of George Washington from paper. Ginger McBride kept the family's hand in the plastic by doing a splendid job on the *Revell* snap-together Wile E. Coyote pickup truck, which she finished in just one day. Jim Lund displayed some historic wooden patterns and styrene plugs, the product of the hands of Gordon Stevens, founder of *Rareplanes*. These patterns may have been some of the first vacuform kits ever made. Roy Sutherland says he's working on a cockpit for the *Tamiya* *Mosquito*; he says that, despite a too-tall fin, it's a lovely model. He's investigating the possibility that the nacelles are slightly too narrow; this would hamper his attempts to make a two-stage nacelle for the Mossie. Roy has also blocked out the wheel wells of an *Airfix* *Seafire* 47 and a *Hasegawa* *Tuphoon*. Mike Meek has redesigned the cut-down canopy and turtledeck on his *Hi-Tech* P-63 *Kingcobra* to better represent the plane designed and flown by Larry Havens. Laramie Wright's Sherman season is in full swing, with a M4A3 jumbo under way. Laramie got this variant by adding a *Tank Workshop* turret to the *Tamiya* hull and adding a mess of brass details. The tank will use Summerfield camouflage—cables welded to the fuselage and covered with chicken wire to allow the crew to adorn the vehicle with branches and other foliage. Laramie also had a toy remote control tank pantographed off *Tamiya's* Sherman series models. Mark Schynert will use an *Aeroclub* canopy on his *Airfix* *Meteor* F.3, but he found use for the over-thick kit canopy as a mask for painting. Mark's model will sport the all-white tactical paint scheme used in Europe at the end of WWII. Robin Powell is trying to build faster than he buys, taking an *Academy* *Hunter* from box to built-up in just six days! Robin re-shaped the nose

and took the dogteeth out of the wings to turn his model into a Hunter F.5 of 34 Squadron; the addition of Aeroclub's metal wheels, struts and tail pipe, a *Cutting Edge* cockpit and an ejection seat from *Cooper Details* made the model complete. Charles Lamb's lineup of 1:72 fighters included a Hasegawa Spitfire Mk. I in battle of Britain markings, a Hasegawa Fw 190D with *SuperScale* decals, a Hasegawa Bf 109, and a Hasegawa Fw 190A wearing the kit decals. Dave Balderrama showed the new edition of the old 2001 Orion shuttle, now

being sold by *Airfix* in spurious colors with no mention of the Kubrick film anywhere on the box. Dave's also getting further into science-fiction with *Academy-Minicraft's* 1:144 Stealth Fighter, which bears a striking resemblance to *Testors'* guess at what a stealth fighter would look like. And the model of the month goes to... Jim Lund for his 1:72 727 built from the KMC kit, which he finished in a lively red-and-orange Braniff livery. Jim said the model had a few outline problems but still builds into a nice replica of one of his favorite planes.

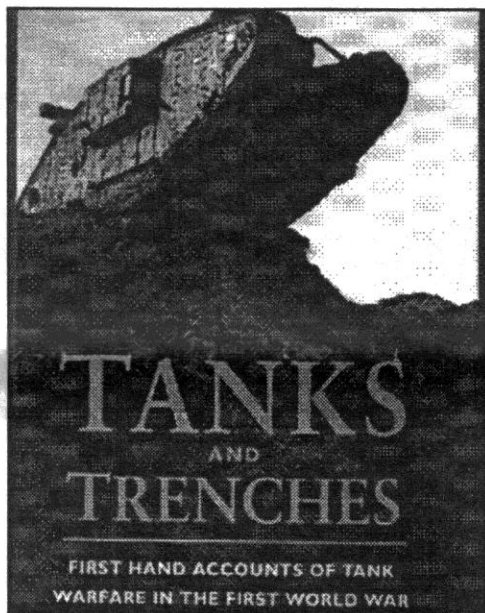
SVSM BOOKSHELF

Tanks and Trenches: First Hand Accounts of Tank Warfare in the First World War

Edited by David Fletcher.

1996, Grange Books, London

While flipping through the latest sale catalog from Zenith Books, I came across this title marked down to \$19.95. Always looking for interesting reference books on armor, I picked it up. The book is a collection of articles written for the *Tank Corps Journal* from 1920 through 1924. David Fletcher has added official documents, unpublished reminiscences and letters to these accounts. The book



is broken down into the nine major battles in which tanks took part. Each chapter starts with brief details of the tanks involved and an overview of the reason for the battle.

There are 125 black and white photos; most are of different vehicles but each chapter also has an aerial photo of the battle taken either just before or shortly after the battle to give the reader an idea of the conditions in which the tanks fought. Many of the photos are ones I have not seen before and the printing is quite clear. I found the firsthand accounts and most of the official documents for the most part to be very interesting reading, but as in most of the cases with official documents, some are downright boring.

The firsthand accounts not only talk about battle but what was done in preparation for battle. The time involved in traveling from the tank parks to the start line on some early missions is mind numbing (one account talks about taking 9 hours to travel 3 miles). Also, one chapter includes a translated German report on what needs to be done to combat tanks and another about the use of the A7V German tank. It is surprising how fast the German Army responded to the

tanks.

One point for modelers is that, from the written accounts and photos, it seems that Mk. IV tanks were not painted with the white and red stripes that *MB* and *Enlar* suggest.

Having read two recently published books about World War I, I found this book refreshing. By using accounts written shortly after the war, they don't try to explain what was done in light of recent history (or indulge in the editorializing that some authors do in history books to support their views). The accounts have a attitude of "get the job done that needed doing." If you are at all interest in tank history, this is a very good reference to have, especially if you can catch it on sale.

—Eric McClure

Albatros Aces of World War I

By Norman Franks

2000, Osprey Publishing

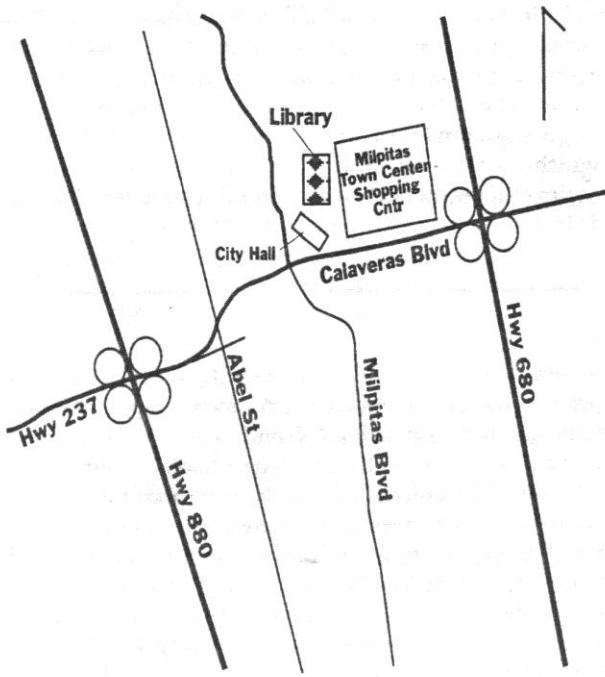
Last issue, we gave Franks' title on Nieuport aces a thorough scalding. While this volume isn't the ultimate word on the subject, it's considerably better than the previous book. Maybe the German aces left more combat reports behind, or maybe Franks was more into this subject, but the book is noticeably more energetic. Combat accounts abound, and the author questions Herman Göring's score in one lively passage. Other accounts come from British pilots. The photo coverage is just as good, with many that illustrate well-known aircraft. The profiles section is also a step up, with upper wing and tail diagrams to accompany some of the 42 aircraft profiled. One interesting inclusion is the scoring diary of Jasta 11 for April, 1917 which indicates the furious pace of the air war.

There are times when Franks' prose gets slow, but these are far fewer than in his Nieuport book. By including more combat reports, background on the pilots and brief synopses of the survivors' lives after the war, he focuses attention on personalities rather than on listing the aces.

The back of the book includes a set of drawings of all the Albatros scouts, from the D.I through the D.Va.

Anyone who's picked up the *Eduard* D.V kit should grab this book in a hurry. It's a great companion during your build and a handy (if not exhaustive) reference. And, if you're stuck for schemes, the profiles give you some good ideas. The Editor's wife has decided that he'll be building Josef Ma's Jasta 5 D.V based on this book. When a book on aircraft appeals to your wife, you know it must be good.

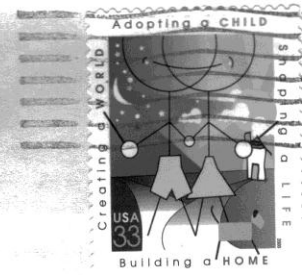
—Chris Bucholtz



Next meeting:
7:30 p.m.,
Friday,
June 16
at the Milpitas
Public Library
40 N. Milpitas Blvd.
For more information, call the
editor at (408) 723-3995
E-mail: bucholtzc@aol.com



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



DAN BUNTON
910 NIDO DRIVE
CAMPBELL CA 12345