



Turkey Shooter: Vraciu's Hellcat in 1:72

By Chris Bucholtz

When people debate then great fighters of World War II, the same names come up time and again: the P-51 *Mustang*, the Fw 190, the *Spitfire*, the Bf 109, the F4U *Corsair*, the P-38 *Lightning*. While each of these aircraft was a shattering surprise to the enemy when it first appeared, none of them had the impact of the F6F *Hellcat*. The *Hellcat* carried the war to Japan in 1944 and 1945, and although opposition pilots were sorely lacking in training, the type's 19-to-1 kill ratio is hard to ignore.

The *Hellcat's* origins date to 1938, when Grumman engineers began looking for ways to improve the XF4F-2 *Wildcat*, which had just lost a competition to the Brewster XF2A-1. The solution they envisioned was based around a much bigger engine—at first, the Wright R-2600. This would require a much larger vertical fin to offset torque and a radically different set of landing gear from the *Wildcat's* narrow track arrangement. When the Navy finally asked for the *Wildcat*, now equipped with the much better Pratt & Whitney R-1830-76, these plans for a redesigned *Wildcat* went by the boards.

Two years later, in September, 1940, reports from the European theater indicated that a fighter with better performance than the *Wildcat* would be needed if U.S. carrier forces were to compete with potential enemy fighters. The Pratt & Whitney R-2800-10 was already in use in the XF4U-1 *Corsair*, but Roy Grumman insisted that work resume on an R-2600-powered fighter,

since the R-2800 was still in its infancy.

On January 21, 1941, the *Hellcat* mockup was inspected by the Navy and approved, with some modifications. The Navy

was apprehensive about the carrier suitability of the XF4U-1, and the Grumman fighter seemed like a sensible contingency.

On June 19, 1941—the same day production orders for the *Corsair* were issued—the Navy contracted with Grumman for two prototype *Hellcats*. In a little more than a year, the first *Hellcat* flew and by August 8, 1942, the plane had switched to the more powerful R-2800.

One of the secrets of the *Hellcat's* success was its ease of manufacture. Grumman used techniques similar to those used for the *Wildcat* and the TBF *Avenger*, avoiding any compound curves and minimizing the use of flush-riveting. By 1944, after *Wildcat* and *Avenger* production had been transferred to General Motors, Grumman was cranking out 500 *Hellcats* a month. In just two and a half years, Grumman built 12,274 *Hellcats*, the epitome of America's ability to win the war through her industry at home.

The *Hellcat* was also better suited to carrier operations than the early *Corsairs*, which

were not approved for carrier operation in the U.S. Navy until January 1945.

In the meantime, the *Hellcat* ran up an astonishing total of kills. By war's end, F6Fs had downed 4,947 enemy aircraft in the Pacific; all other Navy and Marine types accounted for

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At top, an F6F-3 ready to be catapulted from a U.S. carrier. At bottom, one of the war's most famous photos: LTJG Alex Vraciu indicates to the bridge just how successful his June 19, 1944 mission has been.

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.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

In case you haven't heard, the 2002 Kickoff Classic was held on February 17. We moved to a new location, Napredak Hall, with more parking and space, but the lighting wasn't the best for judging. (Maybe just maybe, someone will build us a building, just for us, so we can hold our meetings and contests there!) I hope everyone had a good time and spent a lot of money with the vendors. Thank you to everyone who helped with set-up and clean-up, registration, the raffle, trophy presentation, and judging. Without your help, the Kickoff Classic would not have been a success.

And speaking of local contests, IPMS/Santa Rosa will be holding their contest on June 1 this year, a Saturday. IPMS/Mt. Diablo will be holding their contest in September or November also. They originally wanted to hold their contest in October, but apparently one of the Sacramento clubs is planning on also holding a contest in October.

We will be meeting at the Milpitas Community Center this month. The room should be open at 6 p.m., and I'll be starting the meeting promptly at 7-7:30 p.m., as we need to vacate the

room by 9:45 p.m. That way the building "engineer" won't be upset that we stayed past our time. I'd also like to thank Randy Ray for coordinating the Milpitas Community Room, and to Greg Plummer for coordinating with the Los Altos Library this past year.

Elections are this month. Wow, this past year sure went by fast! If you would like to serve the club as an officer, let someone know so you can be nominated. I sure learned a lot this past year as president and I hope I made it fun and interesting for everyone.

I would like to thank the following people for their service this year: Mike Burton, Angelo Deogracias, and Jim Priete, Co-Vice Presidents; Chris Bucholtz, Secretary and Editor; Bill Ferrante, Treasurer; and Randy Ray, Webmaster.

See you at the meeting, Happy Modeling, and thank you!

EDITOR'S BRIEF

The Kickoff Classic 2002 is now a thing of the past, and what a great event it was! It was the biggest event we've held so far, with 118 modelers (three more than last year) entering 343 entries (one more than last year). Despite upgrading to a larger space, the club was in the red by about \$200—well within our budget.

The people to thank for this are many, starting With Mike Burton, who gained us the venue by talking the rest of the e-board into going along with him by putting up his own cash! The judging teams, headed by Mike Meek and his co-head judges, Mike Braun and Brad Chun, were fair and impartial (nary a negative word has yet to be heard). Anita Travis, Steve Travis and Frank Beltran made sure the raffle ran smoothly. Frank Babbitt, Eric and Kent McClure, and Steve and Anita made sure the special awards assembled properly, and applied the thank you labels to the kits D&J Hobby so graciously allowed us to purchase at discount. Frank Babbitt got a team going to assemble and deploy the table signs for categories and the "don't touch" signs. Joe Fleming ran an excellent table organizing the judging, with an assist from Hubert Chan.

Bill Ferrante ran registration, and Joe Fleming and Steve Travis stepped forward to learn Bill's secrets; hands down, SVSM has the smoothest entry process of any club in the region.

Jim Priete got the vendor area in great shape, selling 21 tables, a big jump over last year's vendor numbers. Mike Braun took over as the voice of the contest and handled the many and varied names of our winners well.

The "Make and Take" was a huge success, thanks to Frank Beltran, Kris and Dave Balderrama, and Mary and Chris Bowman. There were many other club members who helped judge, set up and clean up. This was an "all hands evolution," as they say, and the club members did this work in the finest volunteering fashion. Thanks, folks!

On a similar note, be prepared to volunteer at the meeting for our expanded veteran's hospital model drive. John Heck will be asking for your help with our new and expanded program; he's broken the work into manageable pieces, so it shouldn't be too hard for any of our members to pitch in.

That's it for now—gotta go to Seattle for a contest!

—The Editor

CONTEST CALENDAR

June 1, 2002: IPMS/Santa Rosa presents **Scale Model Expo 2002** at the Sebastopol Veterans Memorial Building auditorium in Sebastopol, California. The theme is "The Spirit of America." For more information, see their website at <http://grljj.home.mindspring.com> or call Greg Reynolds, Expo Chairman, at (707) 829-6304 or email him at grljj@mindspring.com

September 7, 2002: The IPMS/Reno High Rollers present their **Third Annual Model Contest** at the Desert Heights Elementary School, 13948 Mt. Bismark in Reno, Nevada. The theme is "The Century Series." For more information, call Doug Summers at (775) 747-5931 or e-mail him at ghpltd@aol.com.

September 14: The Captain Michael King Smith Evergreen Aviation Institute, IPMS/Portland and IPMS/Salem present their **Fifth Annual Model Contest and IPMS Region 7 Convention** at the Evergreen Aviation Museum, McMinnville, Oregon. For more information, call Tony Roberts at (503) 282-2790 or e-mail him at roundelroberts@msn.com.

October 13, 2002: IPMS/Orange County hosts its annual **OrangeCon** in Buena Park, California. For information, call Nat Richards at (949) 631-7142 or e-mail him at richa5011@aol.com.

Massaging Meikraft's D-558-1 Skystreak in 1:72

By Mike Burton

Can you name the early postwar experimental plane in the bright paint scheme that set new speed records in 1947 but had less than ten hours total airtime? And can you name the pilot, and the branch of the military that pushed the envelope?

That's a cinch, right? The Bell X-1, Chuck Yeager, United States Air Force.

Sorry, you're incorrect. The correct answer is the U.S. Navy, and Commander Turner Caldwell piloting the Douglas D-558-1 *Skystreak* on August 20, 1947 to over 640 mph. Another acceptable answer: Marine Corps Major Marion Carl in the very same airplane five days later and a new record of over 650 mph, a flight that ended the number one *Skystreak's* flying career with only nine hours and 48 minutes of flight time on the airframe.

While the X-1 was the first aircraft officially credited with breaking the sound barrier, the *Skystreak* (nicknamed the "Crimson Test Tube") managed it as well. The X-1 required a rocket motor and a B-29 air launch to do it, but the D-558-1 achieved Mach 1 in a shallow dive—and it could take off under its own power.

Three *Skystreaks* were built and intensively used to research performance at the transonic realm, the area between Mach .75 and .85 primarily. A high speed escape system was provided without using a heavy ejection seat. Instead, the nose section was designed to separate, slowing it down and allowing the pilot to exit via a seat release through the rear of the section.

Sadly, this escape system was useless when a low-altitude compressor explosion of the J35 jet engine struck the number two D-558-1; test pilot Howard Lilly in the crash. NACA lost a pilot but did not lose its faith in the *Skystreak*. The reworked number three craft continued flying, with number one being used for spare parts. The six year, two month-program saw 229 flights between the three D-558-1s provided a very rich return on NACA's investment.

Today, *Skystreak* No. 1 (BuNo. 37970) is in Pensacola, Florida, on display in the National Museum of Naval Aviation, and D-558-1 No. 3 (BuNo. 37972) is in the U.S. Marine Corps Museum

in Quantico, Virginia.

Being a fan of experimental craft, finding a 1:72 limited-run injection-molded kit of "The Crimson Test Tube" was a treat. Seeing a beautiful hand-carved wooden 1:72 *Skystreak* made for a friend by a master scratchbuilder years ago increased my desire to have this plane in my collection. To my knowledge, only a very hard to find vacuform by Ken Rymal of *KR Models* was produced to provide modelers a D-558-1 before the

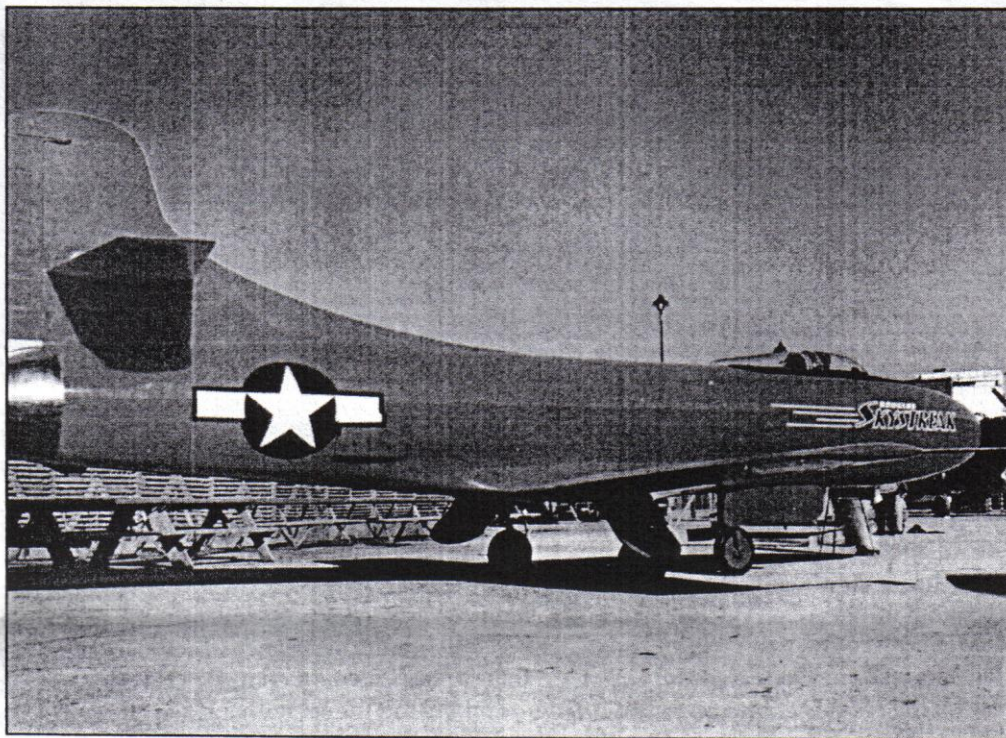
Meikraft kit. *Meikraft* was aptly named—you may craft a Douglas D-558 from the kit, if you are persistent! The nicest part of the model is the lovely box it comes in! There are only a few parts inside, most in a milky, white translucent hard styrene. *Meikraft* also put this out in a very vivid medium blue shade of plastic.

The box also contains a very fine pair of vacuform canopies, a sharp-looking decal sheet and

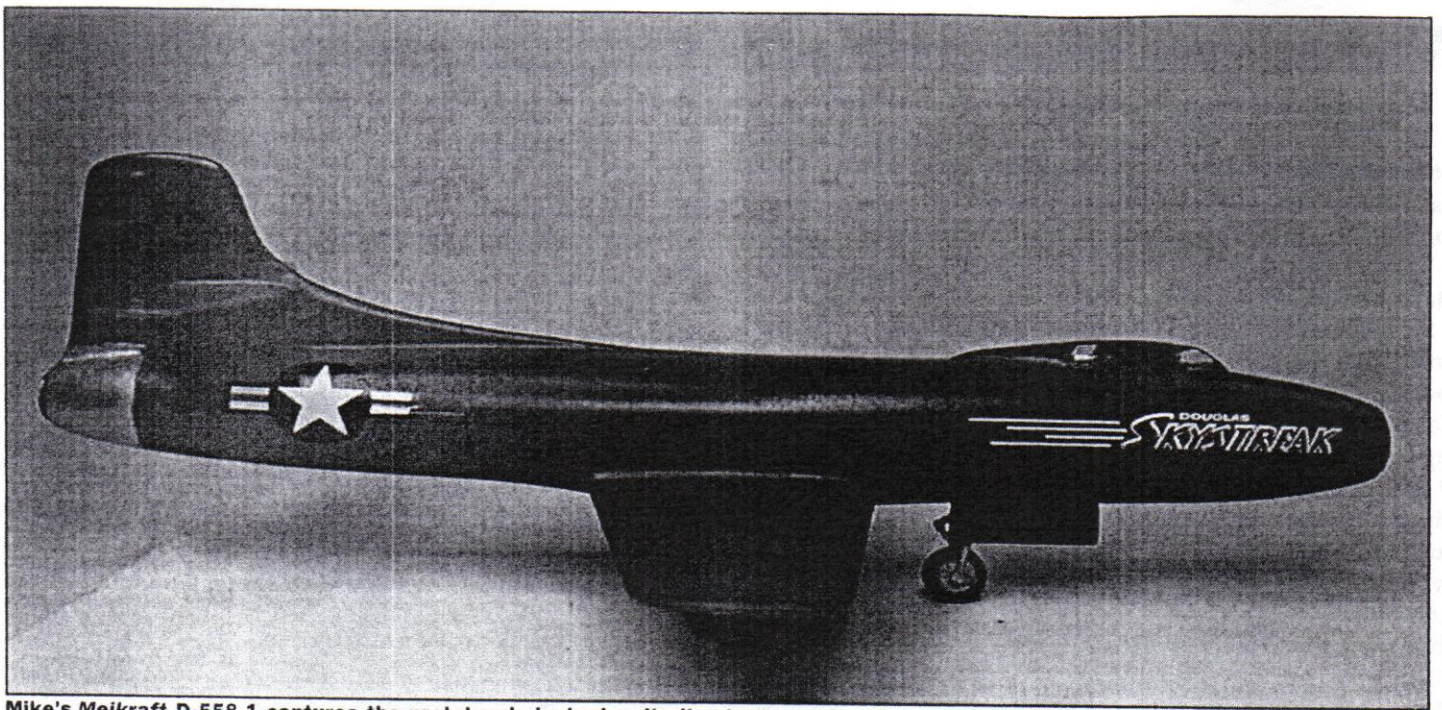
an instruction sheet with a very helpful four-view in 1:72 and an exploded view in miniature showing the parts assembly along with several color schemes. One word of caution before beginning: this white plastic is definitely translucent, so bear that in mind when painting any portions of the interior, especially if selecting the later white schemes for D-558-1, and nose when you add weight for the tricycle landing gear.

With only the exploded view and my prior model building experience as my guides, I began by trimming the wings, fuselage halves, horizontal tailplanes and cockpit items from the sprues. Dry fitting with masking tape showed a clear need for nose weight and also that several areas would require some styrene additions. I needed a blanking plate in the nose to close off the intake; otherwise, you could see into the cockpit. At the joint of the wing and fuselage, a piece of plastic card stock is needed to form the top of the wheel bay. The lack of an exhaust tube or a blanking plate inside the fuselage makes the kit fuselage look incomplete.

Starting there, I rolled paper into the shape of a tube, then added a blanking plate which acted as mount inside the fuselage. References reveal that for at least one *Skystreak*, a "short stack addition" resulted in a fairly long extension of the exhaust pipe out the rear end. I chose the "stock" configuration in order to leave my markings options open for later.



A D-558-1 *Skystreak* at Muroc Dry Lake Test Center (now Edwards Air Force Base) in 1947.



Mike's Meikraft D-558-1 captures the prototype's look, despite its short-run shortcomings. Five coats of paint were needed to give the 'Crimson Test Tube' its characteristic color.

Next, I installed the gear bay enclosure plate into the same fuselage half, then added the nose gear bay supplied in the kit, which assists in finding the final location of the rear cockpit bulkhead. Next, I added the cockpit floor, and made a circular bulkhead of scrap plastic to enclose the cockpit.

The fuselage as molded has a significant shape problem built into it. The intake is ovoid in cross-section, but it should taper while remaining circular like the rest of the fuselage. Since the nose splitter plate must be set back slightly, I used a styrene shim to both restore the cross section and to provide a mounting for the splitter. Nose weight was hidden in a compartment created by extending the nose gear bay with another bulkhead and filling this with steel shot.

The cockpit as provided includes a seat, stick and instrument panel. While some additional detail could be added to liven up this area, I chose not to do more than paint these items, because very little is visible if the late-style canopy is used in the closed position. You can choose to pose the cockpit opened, although kit doesn't specify this or explain how to do it. The odd rectangular curved plate with the small cutout is part of the fuselage which carries the windscreen and hood, which are provided separately but require a steady hand to separate from the vacuform canopies, which are molded as single pieces in the closed configuration.

When I closed the fuselage, I glued the rear of the fuselage together but left the section ahead of cockpit on the upper seam and forward of the nose gear bay on the lower seam unglued. This was so I could maintain a circular cross-section from tail pipe to nose intake. Styrene shims and liberal amounts of superglue glue were used to fill these gaps. Both the wings and horizontal tail planes are molded as single pieces, and like the fuselage, the have very lightly inscribed and delicate raised detail. The wells for the main gear on the wings are shallow and not deep enough, but I did not find the prospect of deepening them particularly inviting, so I didn't.

The wings and tail all butt-joined the fuselage. I drilled

holes in the fuselage and corresponding holes in the wings and tail and used staples reinforced with superglue to mount them. I had to do some minor filing and sanding on one wing joint, but otherwise I was impressed by the fit.

The parts requiring the most work ended up being the landing gear. In my kit, there were two identical sprues with landing gear and wing tip tanks. I don't know if this was Meikraft quality assurance in action or simply dumb luck, but their presence was a confidence builder nonetheless.

Picking out the set with the least flash, I cleaned up a pair of main gear legs, the nose gear leg with the wheel and tire, and the main wheels and tires. Faced with weak butt joints for attaching the main gear and nose gear, I instead drilled holes and fit the struts with more staples. I drilled holes all the way through the wings for maximum strength, then filled the hole on the top of the wing. One main wheel proved to be a poor match to the gear leg mount, but careful "pinning" ensured that all the wheels were in alignment.

Next came the canopy. You are provided with two vacuform canopies, but they are each unique, not duplicates. They're very delicate and narrow, and not too tall, so you'll need to exercise care in cutting them from the carrier sheet. I practiced by cutting out the early style "bubble" canopy, which the original scarlet Skystreak used. Once I had done this successfully, I started cutting out the vee-style canopy and managed to get it almost spot on, with only a little wet sanding needed to get a proper fit. Because the wall of the canopy is so thin, I feared that the bubble canopy could be fogged with superglue fumes while I was trying to get a good fit. The vee had the same thin walls, but is has fewer clear surfaces.

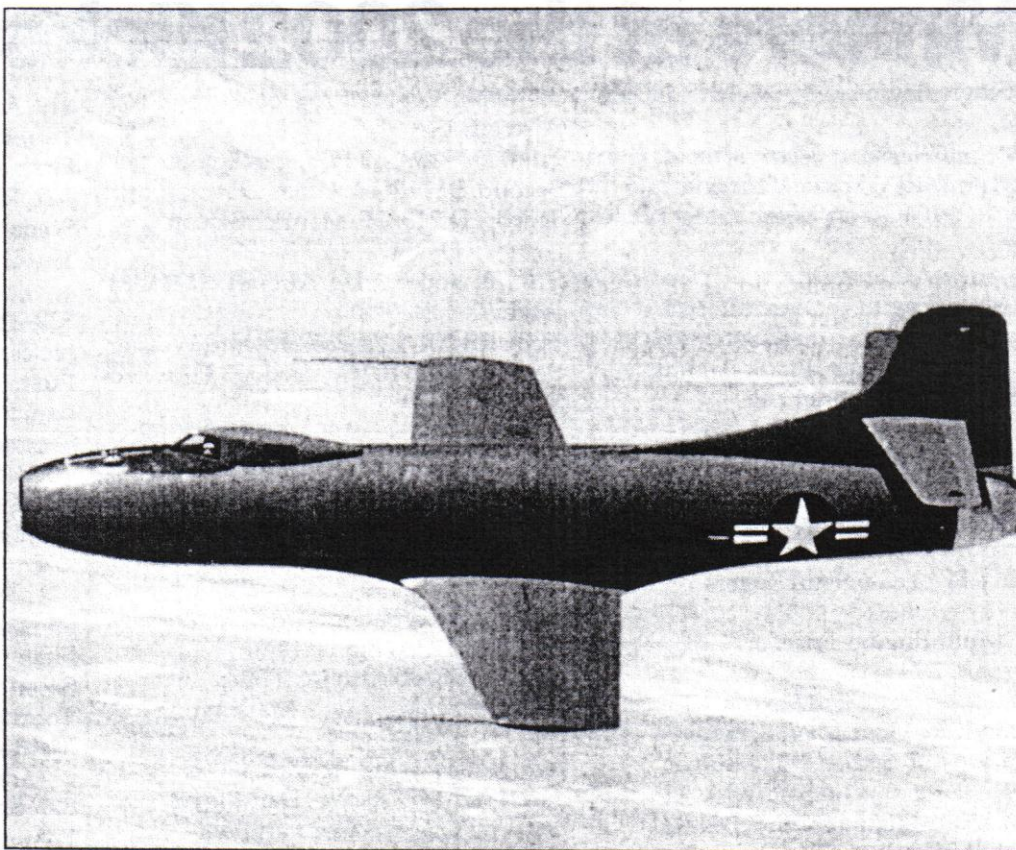
At this point, I discovered that the translucence of the white plastic was going to reveal dark shadows where the nose weight, painted exhaust tube and cockpit areas were. At this point, I figured the late overall white scheme Skystreaks were no longer an option for me. It got an overall scarlet paint job, but only after two thin undercoats of Humbrol Signal Red,

which were rubbed down with a soft cloth to smooth out the surface and remove the dust. This was followed by three thin coats of Insignia Red, which were also rubbed down, then a satin clear coat. This was the right sheen to capture the finish of these well-maintained prototypes without too much wear or a toy-like shine, as it avoided a cherry shade of red which the Insignia Red tended towards without the undercoat.

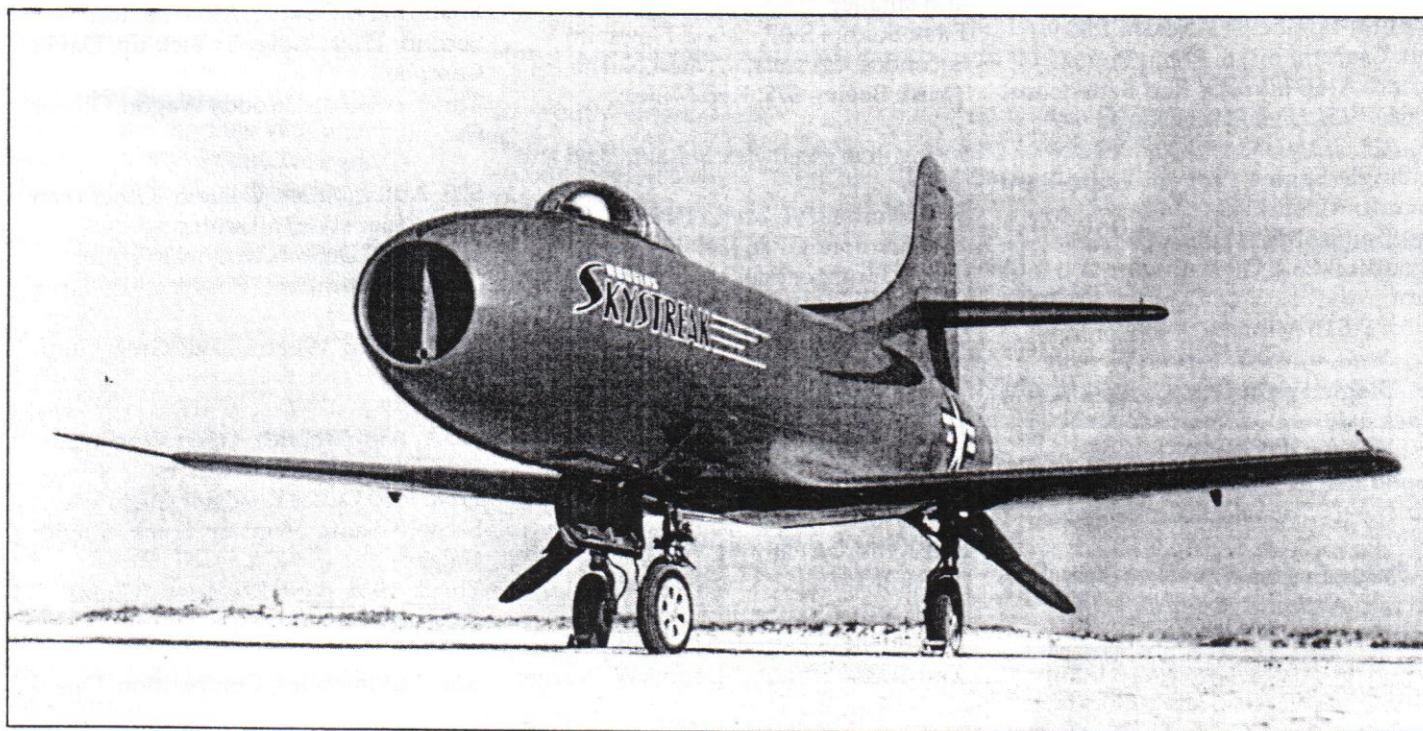
The kit decals provide you options for either the number one *Skystreak* in the original red with the bubble canopy, a World War II-style star and bar; the number one and number two aircraft in a red scheme with or without the *Skystreak* logo and updated star; the NACA early white scheme of for any of the three (NACA red/white/blue tail badge and "D-558" in text, no aircraft numbers); or the late NACA scheme with yellow-winged NACA tail logo and tail number 142 for *Skystreak* number 3.

I went with the non-speed record scheme for first *Skystreak*, so I had no tip tanks to deal with, and a striking "Douglas *Skystreak*" logo on both sides of the nose. For a competitive and fully accurate D-558-1, one needs to add the wing tip instrument probes and a white centerline on the antiglare panel. For my shelf, though, the *Meikraft* "Crimson Test Tube" looks pretty damned swift for a straight-winged jet as

it stands. Now, with the Ginter volume available as a splendid reference, I may even try to locate another of these limited edition kits, having the 1976 *Air Classics* and 1985 *Airpower* magazines noted in kit instructions for my main references for this one. If you're looking for something a little different or for contrast to any of the other X-plane models now available in 1:72, a *Scarlet Speedster* is hard to beat. Try one!



Pilots flying the D-558-1 had to wear helmets with chamois panels on their tops to avoid scratching the specially-designed canopy!



The D-558-1 looked fast from all angles. This portrait was taken right after one of the plane's world speed record flights in 1947.

Winners at the 2002 Kickoff Classic

- S1. Single Engine Jet or Rocket Aircraft, 1:72
First: F-100D *Super Sabre*, Mike Laxton
Second: X-15A, Harlan Schoeneweis
Third: F-104G *Starfighter*, Greg Plummer
- S2. Multi-Engine Jet Aircraft, 1:72
First: Me 262A-1, Chuck Betz
Second: BAe *Jaguar*, Frank Babbitt
Third: VF-5A, Gabriel Lee
- S3. Single-Engine Prop or Turbo-Prop Aircraft, 1:72
First: Fw 190A-6, Paul Rogers
Second: *Tempest* Mk. V, Chris Bucholtz
Third: Bf 109G-6, Paul Rogers
- S4. Multi-Engine Prop or Turbo-Prop Aircraft, 1:72
First: *Mosquito*, Mike Laxton
Second: Bv 138C, Mark Schynert
Third: AJ-2P *Savage*, Mike Burton
- S4A Multi-Engine Prop, B-36s
First: B-36H Phase III, John Ballman
Second: B-36, Bill Embry
Third: B-36, Ken Uffelman
- S5. Single-Engine Jet or Rocket Aircraft, 1:48
First: F-105G *Thunderchief*, Rod Bettencourt
Second: F-84 *Thunderjet*, Dan Clover
Third: U-2R "Dragin Lady," Ray Lloyd
- S6. Multi-Engine Jet Aircraft, 1:48
First: *Canberra* B(I).6, Robin Powell
Second: A-6E *Intruder*, Rod Bettencourt
Third: F-15J *Eagle*, Masa Narita
- S7. Single-Engine Prop or Turbo-Prop Aircraft, Allied, 1:48
First: *Spitfire* Mk. 24, Dan Clover
Second: P-26A "Peashooter," James Larot
Third: P-51B *Mustang*, Ken Connor
- S7A. Single-Engine Prop, Allied Naval Types, 1:48
First: *Martlet* II, Ken Connor
Second: F4U-1A *Corsair*, Mike Laxton
Third: A-1J *Skyraider*, Dan Eberstein
- S8. Single-Engine Prop or Turbo-Prop Aircraft, Axis and Neutrals, 1:48
First: Fw 190A-4, Jim Reid
Second: N1K2-J *Shiden*, Ken Connor
Third: Macchi C.205, Greg Plummer
- S9. Multi-Engine Prop or Turbo-Prop Aircraft, 1:48
First: Do 335A-12 *Pfiel*, Jack Riggarr
Second: Bf 110G-4, James Larot
Third: He 219A-7, Maurice Saicon
- S10. Jet and Rocket Aircraft, 1:32 and larger
First: RF-101A *Voodoo*, Howard Weaver
Second: RF-101C *Voodoo*, Howard Weaver
- S11. Prop Aircraft, 1:32 and larger
First: F4U-1A *Corsair*, Ken Connor
Second: Ju 87, Dan Eberstein
Third: SBD-3 *Dauntless*, Howard Weaver
- S12. Biplanes/Fabric & Rigging, all scales
First: Hs 123A, Bill Ferrante
Second: SPAD XIII, John Boes
Third: *Swordfish* Mk. I, Mark Wong
- S13. Rotary Wing Aircraft, all scales
First: AH-64D *Apache*, Dan Clover
Second: TH-55J, Greg Plummer
Third: AH-1E *Cobra*, David Campbell
- S14. Civil, Sport and Racing Aircraft, all scales
First: "Conquest I" *Bearcat*, Greg Plummer
Second: MD-11, Masa Narita
Third: Gee Bee, Harlan Schoeneweis
- S15. Jet, Prop and Rocket Aircraft, 1:144 and smaller
First: Sukhoi S-37, David Newman
Second: C-5A *Galaxy*, Masa Narita
Third: Boeing 377, Ken Miller
- S16. Military Vehicles, Softskin, 1:35 and larger
First: Ford GPA, Bryan Finch
Second: Ford GPA, Jack Riggarr
Third: Humber Scout Car, Greg Banks
- S17. Armored Fighting Vehicles, Closed-Top, to 1945, 1:35 and larger
First: StuG III (initial production), Mark Ford
Second: JS-2M, Hubert Chan
Third: JS-3, Bob Phillips
- S18. Armored Fighting Vehicles, Closed-Top, post 1945, 1:35 and larger
First: M24 Chaffee, Jim Lewis
Second: M46 Patton, Bob Phillips
Third: M60 "Blazer," Dennis W. Warner
- S19. Armored Fighting Vehicles, Open-Top, 1:35 and larger
First: Aufklarunspanzer SdKfz 140/1, Jack Riggarr
Second: M10 Tank Destroyer, Jim Lewis
Third: LVT-4, Lester Tockerman
- S20. Towed Artillery and Ancillary Vehicles, 1:35 and larger
First: 21cm Morser Howitzer, Greg Banks
Second: Zis 44 Ambulance, Lester Tockerman
Third: 3/4 Ton Dodge Munitions Carrier, Lester Tockerman
- S21. Military Vehicles, all types, 1:48 and smaller
First: Panzer IV Ausf J, Jack Riggarr
Second: Jagdtiger, Jim Gordon
Third: Vickers Mk. 4A Light Tank, Kent McClure
- S22. Ships, 1:400 and smaller
First: IJN *Akashi*, Sami Arim
Second: *Vnimatelinyi*, Vladimir Yakubov
Third: *Novgorod*, Vladimir Yakubov
- S23. Ships, 1:401 and larger
First: U.S.S. S-38, Brian Sakai
Second: U.S.S. *Olympia*, Ron Scholtz
Third: U.S.S. *Skipjack*, Thomas W. Holmes
- S24. Automobiles, Stock, all scales
First: J10TA Caspita, Mike Laxton
Second: 1950 Chevrolet Pick-up, David Campbell
Third: 1941 Ford Woody Wagon, Olivier Galgani
- S25. Automobiles, Custom (Other than Low-Rider style) all scales
First: 1960 DeSoto, Miguel Murillo
Second: Compact Pussycat II, Greg Plummer
Third: Cord Wagon Rod, Greg Plummer
- S25A. Automobiles, Open Wheel Custom, Other than Low Riders
First: 1932 Deuce Roadster, Steve Travis
Second: Santa Monster Truck, Olivier Galgani
Third: 1934 Ford Roadster "Cupake," Steve Travis
- S26. Automobiles, Competition, Open-

Wheel, all scales

First: Slingshot Dragster, Steve Travis
Second: 1929 Ford Gasser Dragster, Steve Travis
Third: 1934 Ford Land Speed racer, Steve Travis

S27. Automobiles, Competition, Closed-Wheel, all scales

First: Yamaha YXR500, Greg Plummer
Second: Calsonic Nissan Primera, Dennis Ybe
Third: GTS-1 IMSA, William Bauer

S28. Automobiles, Specifically Styled as Low Rider, all scales

First: 1970 Chevrolet Impala, Miguel Murillo
Second: 1965 Chevrolet Impala, Vicente Rosado
Third: 1964 Chevrolet Impala, Santos Gonzales

S29. Space Vehicles, Fictional (Science Fiction or Fantasy), all scales and types

First: "Star Wars" AT-AT, Blair Smith
Second: Falcon Mk. I, Chris Binnett
Third: Bird of Prey, Dennis W. Warner

S31. Figures, Historical, all scales

First: Mongol Warrior, Joe Fleming
Second: Mountain Man, Mike Saggs
Third: Mammoth Hunter, Steve Munroe

S32. Figures, Fantasy and Fiction, all scales

First: Allosaurus, Dan Brandt
Second: Northern Line Scout, Chris Binett
Third: King Kong, Anita Travis

S33. Out of the Box, all types and scales

First: *Shinden*, Rodney Williams
Second: AV-8B *Harrier*, Thang Le
Third: Bf 109B, Chris Bowman

S34. Dioramas, all types and scales

First: "Behind the Split Rail Fence," Joe Fleming
Second: Arabs trading rifles, Dennis W. Warner
Third: IDF "Dragon Wagon" and M3 Half-track, Dennis W. Warner

S35. Hypothetical Vehicles, all types and scales

First: Messerschmitt P.1101, Jim Gordon
Second: Messerschmitt P.1101, Steve Haas
Third: Me 262 "Lorin" Ramjet testbed, Mike Burton

S36. Miscellaneous

First: Nagoya Castle, Masa Narita
Second: Bugati T.50 Engine, Clarence Novak
Third: Addams Family House, Paul Burnett

S37. Collections, all types and scales

First: *Spitfires*, Robin Powell
Second: World War II Japanese Aircraft, Friday Night Group
Third: Pioneer Jets, Mike Burton

J1. Junior Aircraft

First: Do 217E-5, Andrew Haas
Second: F-86D *Sabre Dog*, Robert MacPherson

J3. Automobiles

First: 2000 Chevrolet Duallie, Melissa Carlton
Second: Morgan Plus 4, Kendra Schynert

J4. Junior Dinosaurs and Figures

First: Witch Hunter, Andrew Haas

J5. Junior Miscellaneous

First: 105mm Howitzer, Jonathan Yuen

SJ1. Youth Aircraft

First: Bachem Ba 49 *Natter*, Eric Haas
Second: F4F *Wildcat*, Ethan Winklebeck
Third: F4U *Corsair*, Rose McMackin

SJ2. Youth Military Vehicles and Ships

First: Lunar Excursion Module, Benjamin Yuen
Second: Minesweeper diorama, Trevor Gabriel
Third: U.S.S. *Lionfish*, Aidan McMackin

SJ3. Youth Automobiles

First: Acura Integra, Chris Perez
Second: Shelby Cobra, Torri Cole
Third: Kenworth Truck, Jessi and Torri Cole

SJ4. Youth Miscellaneous

First: German Desert Camp, Aidan McMackin
Second: Gundam, Duncan Harris
Third: Mage Knight Black Powder Rebels, Eric Haas

Special Awards

SA1. Ted Kauffman Memorial Award—Judges' Best of Show (Senior): F4U-1A *Corsair*, Ken Connor

SA2. Bill Magnie Memorial Award—Judges' Best of Show (Junior/Youth): Do 217E-5, Andrew Haas

SA3. Arlie Charter Memorial Award—Best U.S. Army Air Corps Subject, Pacific Theater: A-24A *Banshee*, Greg Lamb

SA4. Ayrton Senna Memorial Award—Best Competition Automobile: Yamaha YZR500, Greg Plummer

SA5. Mike Williams Memorial Award—Best Science Fiction, Fantasy or Real Space Subject: 2067 Corvette, Chris Binnett

SA6. Best Flesh & Bone Subject: "Behind the Split Rail Fence, Joe Fleming

SA7. Best British Subject: *Martlet II*, Ken Connor

SA8. Best Aircraft in Foreign Service: F-15J *Eagle*, Masa Narita

SA9. Best California Subject: 1929 Ford Gasser Dragster, Steve Travis

SA10. Best AFV (including softskins): StuG III (initial production), Mark Ford

SA11. Best WWII North Africa Theatre Armor Subject: Valentine, Lester Tockerman

SA12. Best U.S. Armor Subject, ETO, 1942-45: Ford GPA, Bryan Finch

SA13. Best Air Racer: "Conquest I," Greg Plummer

SA14. Best Vacuform: Canberra B(I). 6, Robin Powell

SA15. Best Non-Turreted Armor Subject (any era): Humber Scout Car, Greg Banks

SA16. Best Midway Subject Celebrating 60th Anniversary: SBD-3 *Dauntless*, Howard Weaver

SA17. Best Weekend Warrior Subject (National Guard and Reservists): F4U-4 *Corsair*, Mike Burton

SA18. Best Small Air Forces Subject: BAe *Jaguar*, Frank Babbitt

SA19. Best Need For Speed Theme Subject: X-15A, Harlan Schoeneweis

SA20. Tim Curtis Award—Given to honor service to the Silicon Valley Scale Modelers IPMS chapter: Mike Meek

Kitbashing a Turkey Shoot *Hellcat* in 1:72

Continued from page 1

1,530.

The *Hellcat*'s record was enhanced by some huge totals in key battles. Chief among these was the Battle of the Philippine Sea, better known as the Marianas Turkey Shoot. *Hellcats* decimated Japanese aircraft, knocking down 371.5 in the two-day battle. (In the battle, FM-2s claimed four, TBFs two and SB2Cs two and a half.) The battle made Alex Vraciu the Navy's leading ace, a position he would hold for four months.

Vraciu came to VF-16 aboard U.S.S. *Lexington* after a successful tour with Butch O'Hare's VF-6, where he'd bagged nine enemy planes. His first kill, a Zero, fell to his guns during a raid on Wake Island on October 10, 1943. On Nov. 25, he destroyed a G4M "Betty" over Tarawa, and on Jan. 29, 1944, he became an ace by flaming three more "Bettys" in a strike against Kwajalein. It was the first indication of his predilection for multiple-kill days.

On Feb. 16, Vraciu tagged three Zeroes and a "Rufe" floatplane on a fighter sweep against Truk, but VF-6's carrier, the U.S.S. *Intrepid*, was torpedoed that night and forced to retire to Funafuti for repairs.

Showing an inability to stay away from action, Vraciu requested another combat assignment when VF-6 was sent back to the U.S. He was sent to VF-16, commanded by 9-kill ace Paul Buie, aboard the U.S.S. *Lexington*.

Vraciu told the Styrene Sheet in an exclusive interview that the Truk raids were the most exciting missions he flew, and the assignment to VF-16 gave him ample opportunity to visit the Japanese fortress again. On April 29, 1944, he knocked down two more Zeroes over the island, and on June 12, he picked off another "Betty" while it attempted to shadow the fleet. Two days later, he skip-bombed a Japanese freighter, sinking it with a direct hit to its stern.

Five days later came Vraciu's most famous mission. Task Force 58, which included the *Lexington* eight other fleet carriers, plus five light carriers, and Task Force 52, an escort carrier force with 11 more flight decks, struck the Bonin Islands, then turned southeast as part of Operation Forager. The mission was to gain air superiority over the Marianas, a group of islands that included Guam, Saipan and Tinian. If these islands were taken, Army Air Force B-29s could strike the enemy homeland and destroy his ability to manufacture the

weapons of war.

The Japanese counter to this operation was A-Go, a plan to use both carrier- and land-based aircraft to stop the American fleet. The Japanese First Task Fleet included nine carriers and 439 aircraft, while Marianas land bases housed 630 more planes.



LTJG Alex Vraciu poses in the cockpit of his assigned plane after the conclusion of the Battle of the Philippine Sea. Note the perforated barrel on the inboard machine gun, the tape on the outboard gun and the prominent insulator on the aerial antenna.

On June 19, Japanese commander VADM Jisaburo Ozawa launched four waves of planes at the American fleet, starting with a 64-plane strike launched at 0830. "They were so green that they flew out and began orbiting, orienting themselves for their attack," Vraciu said. "By the time they were coming in, we had fighters all over them."

Nearly 200 *Hellcats* met the strike, hacking down 42 of them at a cost of three of their own number. By this time, Vraciu was airborne in his aircraft, and was struggling to

keep up with Buie. "The skipper got to pick out the best plane, with the best engine," Vraciu said. "His wingman [LTJG W.C.B. Birkholm] had problems and his engine quit. He spiraled down and ditched and was picked up by a destroyer 14 hours later."

Meanwhile, Vraciu's own engine was having problems. It was throwing oil on the windscreen, and worse yet, it wouldn't go into high blower, limiting his altitude to 20,000 feet. He had another problem he was unaware of. "My wingman [ENS Homer Brockmeyer] was waving and pointing toward my wing, and I thought he'd spotted the enemy, so I kept trying to turn the lead over to him," Vraciu said. Brockmeyer kept waving him off; what he was trying to tell Vraciu was that the red safety barrels on the folding wings, which indicated whether the wings were locked in place, were still up. "I didn't realize it until after I landed and reached for the handle to fold the wings," Vraciu said.

The incoming aircraft the VF-16 elements had been directed toward were gone by the time Vraciu and his squadronmates arrived, so they turned to orbit the task force. Just after they'd reached this position, they were vectored to a new group—either the last bits of the first strike, or the beginning of the second strike of 109 planes.

Vraciu spotted about 50 planes 2000 feet below him, with a disorganized fighter cover. He started a high-side run on a D4Y1 "Judy" dive bomber, but another *Hellcat* started after



U.S.S. *Lexington* turns hard to port to position herself into the wind while VF-16 Hellcats prepare to launch to intercept an incoming Japanese airstrike on the morning of June 19, 1944.

the same plane. Sensing the other pilot didn't see him, Vraciu broke off his attack and shot below the enemy formation, then pulled back up near the edge of the formation.

He picked out another D4Y1 and moved in close in spite of the rear gunner's best efforts to deter him. The plane quickly caught fire and slanted out of formation, trailing smoke. Two more "Judys" were flying a loose wing and Vraciu quickly set both of these afire. A fourth "Judy" was hit "right in the sweet spot," and it caught fire and twisted crazily out of control.

By now the action was getting close to the U.S. fleet. Trying to ignore the anti-aircraft bursts, Vraciu spotted three D4Y1s flying in a row, about to start their dives on a battleship. A short burst took apart the engine of the closest "Judy," and Vraciu caught the next plane in its dive. "I must have hit his bomb, because I blew him to smithereens," Vraciu said. The last plane was beyond his reach, but just as Vraciu radioed that he didn't think this plane would make it, a direct hit from the battleship's five-inch battery disintegrated the diving D4Y1. In destroying these six "Judys," Vraciu used just 360 rounds of ammunition.

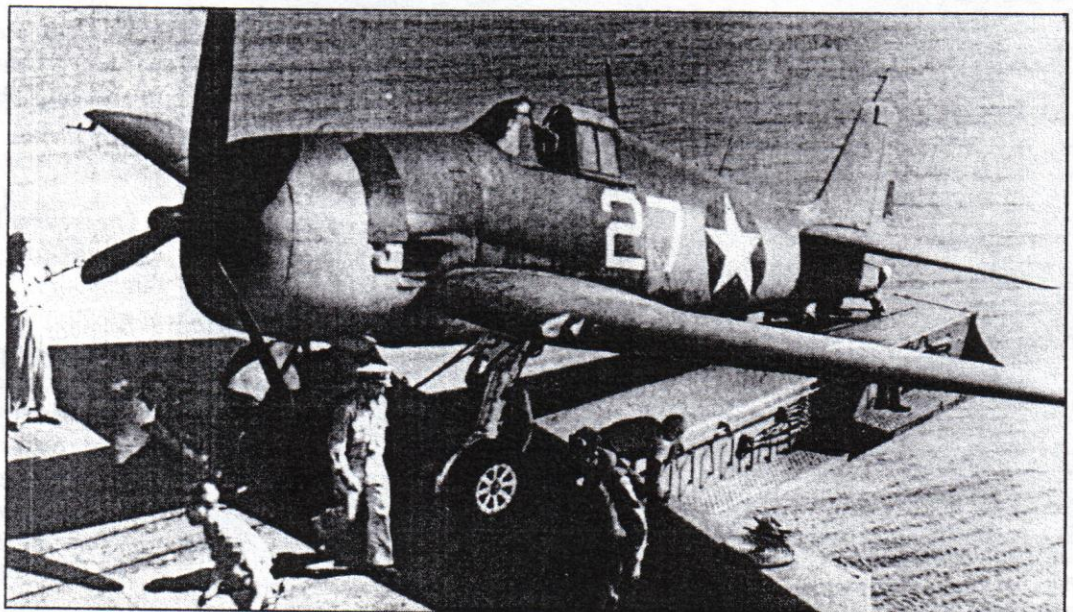
The next day, Vraciu claimed his 19th kill, a Zero, while escorting a strike against

the Japanese fleet on the epic "Mission Beyond Darkness." Over the course of the battle, VF-16 rang up 46 kills.

After he got word that he was soon to be stuck on a War Bond tour, Vraciu talked himself into another combat assignment, with VF-20. But on his second mission with the squadron, Vraciu was shot down while strafing Clark Field. He spent the next five weeks fighting with Philippine guerrillas, and returned to the U.S., where he served as a test pilot at Patuxent River. After the war, following assignments at the Navy Department, the Pentagon, the Naval Postgraduate School and aboard the U.S.S. *Hornet*, Vraciu was given command of VF-51, a squadron flying FJ-3 *Fury* fighters. In 1957, Vraciu won the individual Air-to-Air competition in the Naval Air Weapons Meet by doing two things—boresighting his own guns and getting in close

to the banner before firing. Even 13 years after his last kill, Vraciu still knew how to gain an aerial victory.

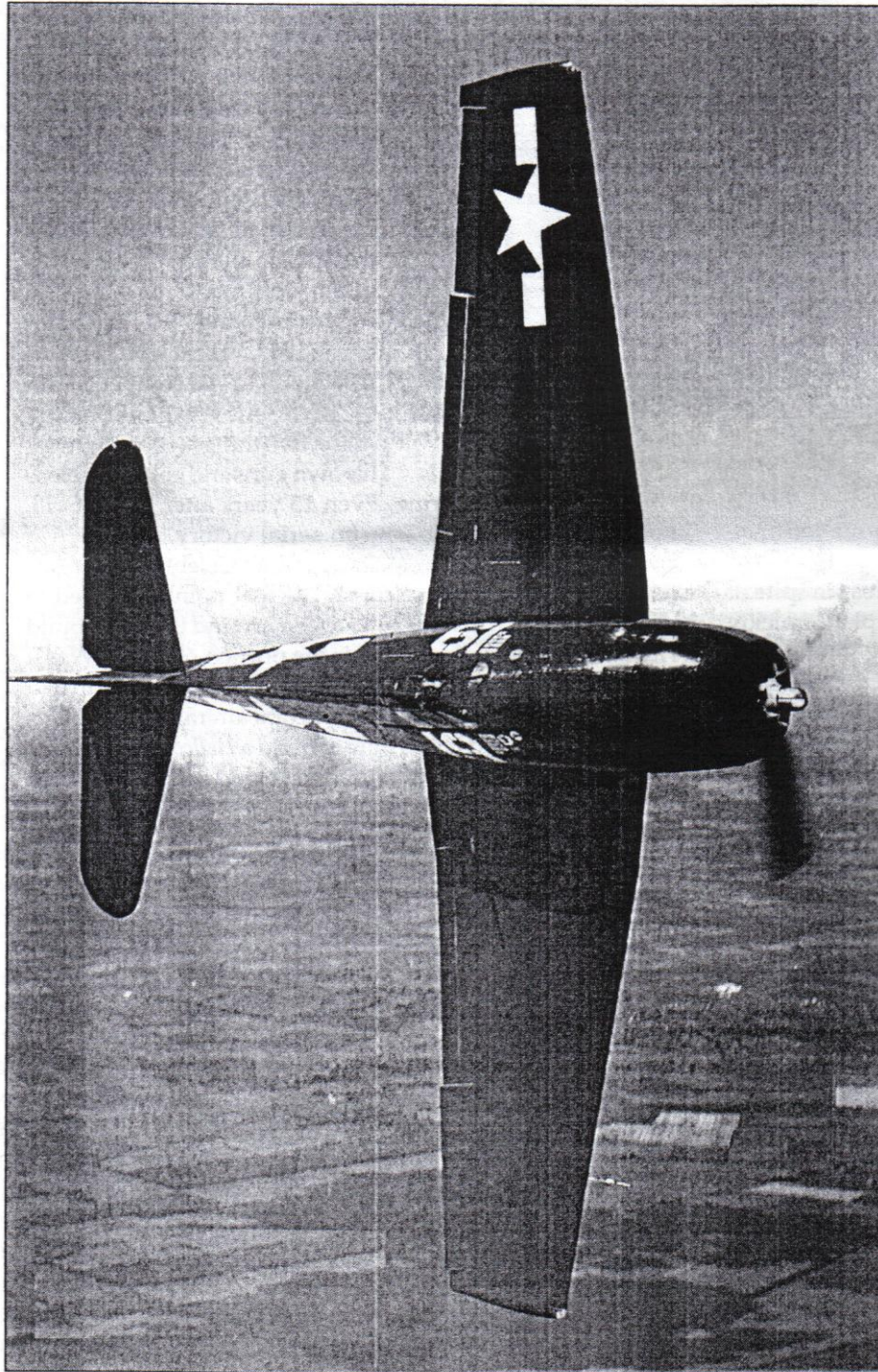
I first met Alex Vraciu in 1999 at the "Celebrate History" event in South San Francisco, and at that point I decided to build his *Hellcat*, when the time rolled around for me to build a *Hellcat*. The war in the Pacific is the portion of World War II that interests me the most, but even two years later, I still had no representative of this most important aircraft in my collection. When I decided it was time to build a *Hellcat*, I found that modeling clubs and contests have been kind to me; I had three *Academy Hellcats*, a *Hasegawa Hellcat*, brass from *Eduard* and



An early *Hellcat* is readied for a rare hangar deck catapult launch. Early F6Fs had gun fairings and an angled antenna mast. Note the bar-less national insignia.

Airwaves and two *Verlinden* sets, all of which I either won at raffles or picked up for next to nothing in auctions!

The *Academy* kit, since it had recessed panel lines, was a good starting point, but I found a few things that were dismaying. The trailing edge of the rudder was very thick, and thinning it would endanger the raised rib detail present on the kit. This was because the rudder is provided as halves, and the point where they join at the trailing edge is not very good. I broke out the *Hasegawa* kit and found my solutions by sawing off the rudders from each kit, then substituting the single-piece *Hasegawa* rudder for the two-piece *Academy* rudder. The *Hasegawa* kit would also provide a donor cowling;



While not the most attractive fighter of World War II, the F6F had an undeniably purposeful appearance. Here, a restored F6F in Alex Vraciu's VF-6 markings banks toward the camera, showing off the largest wing of any single-engine aircraft of the war.

having championed the *Obscureco* 1:48 *Hellcat* cowling for four years, I couldn't allow the *Academy* cowling on my model. The two support vanes in the intake below the engine are too close together. Although *Hasegawa* messed up their big *Hellcat's* grin, they got it right in 1:72. Other bits that were better the first time: the landing gear struts and the tailwheel.

The very first thing I did was to make sure I was building an F6F-3. The major identifying feature of the -3 was the windows behind the pilot's sliding canopy. I carefully opened the flashed-over positions for these windows and cemented the clear pieces in place with superglue, then made sure the outer seams were sealed by adding even more superglue. These

were sanded flush, then polished back to clarity with successive grits of sanding sticks and an application of Blue Magic auto body polish. I did this early on, because such polishing can create a static charge that draws all the dust collected in the fuselage to the area being polished. Since I had yet to add any of the cockpit pieces, let alone join the fuselage halves, this was the ideal time to put in the windows and eliminate their seams and the resulting dust.

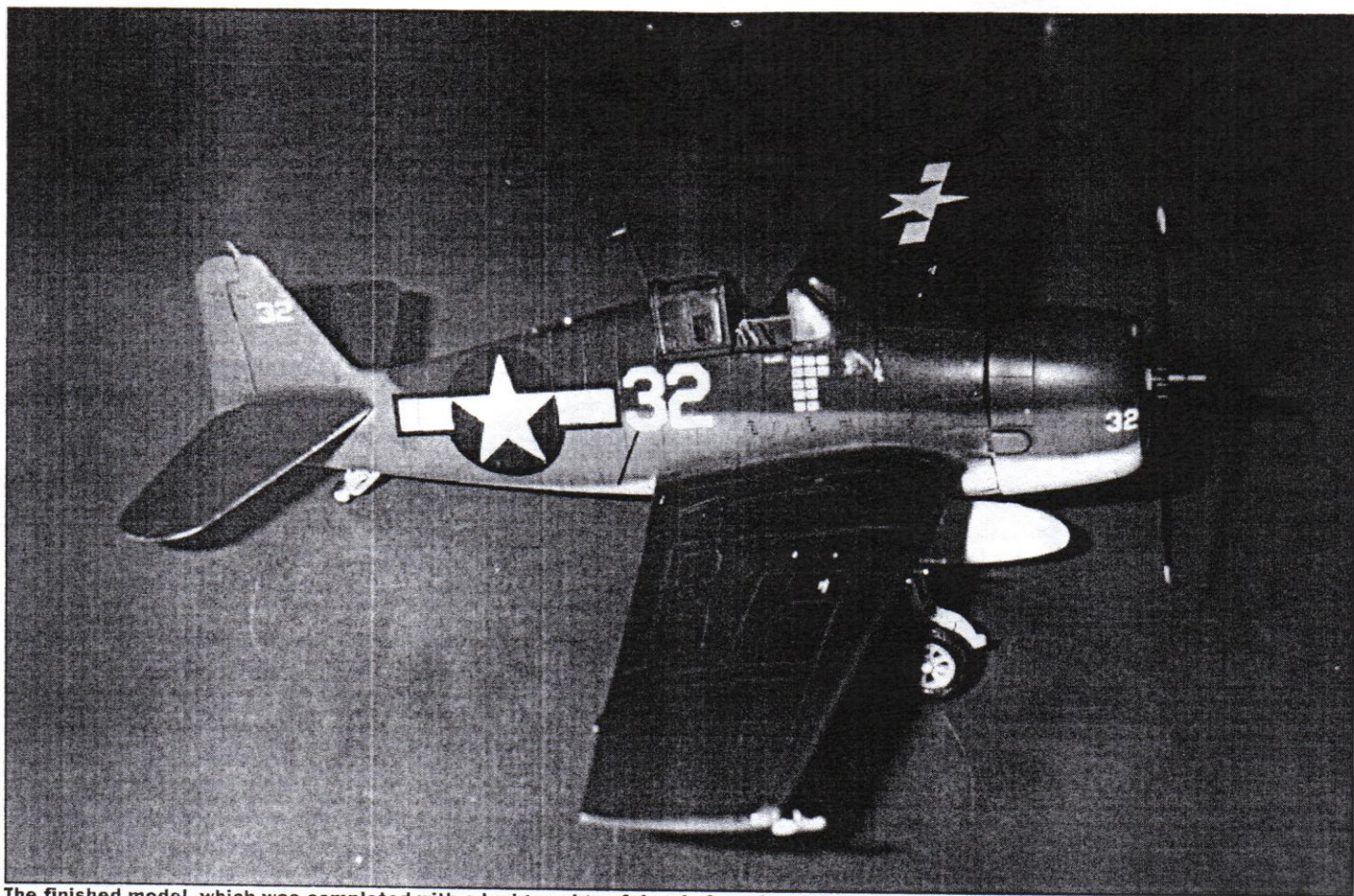
I masked the newly-installed windows and set about building the interior. I used many of the brass features from the *Verlinden* kit, including the kickboards, the sidewalls and the throttle quadrant, trim wheel, map case and other details. I painted these first with a coat of *Model Master* interior flat black, which is really a dark gray; this was airbrushed at a bottom-to-top angle on the sidewalls. Then, using a top-to-bottom angle, I sprayed a coat of bronze green over this. The result was a shadow effect that showed off the structural detail present in the set.

After the basic structure had been drybrushed with a lightened shade of green, various details were picked out in gloss and semi-gloss black, red and white. Then, I used *Model Master* steel to weather the cockpit, paying attention to the edges a pilot might scuff with his elbows and the kickboards where his feet often came to rest.

The rear bulkhead was taken from the kit, and was installed unmodified except for one major modification. I used a round file to create the cutouts present in the F6F-3 rear head armor; these were needed so the pilot could use those rear windows.

The resin seat from *Verlinden* was painted bronze green, then "scuffed" with steel paint before the brass seat belts were added. The fit of the seat was rather snug, to the point of endangering the other cockpit components!

The control panel came from *Eduard*, whose photo-negative approach to the instruments themselves I really like. I painted



The finished model, which was completed with a hodgepodge of decals from AeroMaster, SuperScale and Robin Powell's color printer!

the back of the film white; next, I painted the rear part of the panel bronze green and the instrument cluster black. After I drybrushed the panel lightly, I coated the front of the instrument transparency with Future floor polish and lined the panel up with the instruments, then set it aside to dry. This approach lets the Future work as both an adhesive and as "glass" instrument faces when dry.

The Eduard center pedestal was also used; the Verlinden part is simply incorrect in that it connects to the panel. In reality, the two are not connected. The rudder pedals went in next; I offset one, anticipating a slight offset of the Hasegawa rudder later on.

Joining the fuselage was fairly easy; the fit of the Academy parts was, in general, very good. Next came the lower wing, followed by the upper wing halves. At this point, the shortcomings of the kit's wheel wells are obvious. There is very little detail on the top of the wells, no sides to them, and no representation of the leading edge of the flaps, which make up the rear of the main gear bays.

I went at this problem using a solution I learned about while building another R-2800-powered machine, the P-47. I made rounded sections for the flaps from lead foil, cemented them in place and sanded them out. Next, I carefully lined each side of the wells with another piece of lead foil. The foil is flexible enough to allow you to mold it to the curves of the wheel wells, yet structurally sound enough to maintain its shape. I superglued the lead foil in place, trimmed it off with small scissors, then filed the remainder away and polished the surface plastic. I also made sure that I washed my hands after

each use of lead foil; I like building models, but I'm not willing to set myself up for any form of chemical poisoning in the process!

The tops of the wells were detailed with styrene strip, rod and a little wire. The Verlinden set provided two catapult hooks in photoetched brass; this was all the detail needed to replicate the Hellcat's gear bays.

The horizontal tail went on easily, with only a trace of a gap on the right side, which was quickly eliminated with a little superglue and sanding. The very tip of the vertical tail was cut out with a Dremel tool; no kit has quite captured this squared-off shape. Verlinden provides a replacement fin tip; this was superglued in place and blended into the vertical tail.

In sanding out some of the seams, some areas on the top and bottom of the fuselage needed to be rescribed. I did this by lining up a number 11 X-Acto blade along the panel lines, then carefully sliding it over until I connected the line. A little sanding took the sharp edge off these new lines. I also used a Bare-Metal scribe and some Dymo tape to sharpen up a few lines on the wings where they joined the fuselage.

Next, I built an Aires R-2800 engine to power my model. The Aires engine is a kit in and of itself: 18 cylinders in a crank case, with separate dual magnetos, distributors and front-section oil scavenge pump, plus a photo-etched wiring loom and a rear accessories section. Detail is so perfect that there's even a tiny disk on the lower reduction gear cover; that's the Pratt & Whitney logo plate, which I painted light blue! The only thing not provided are the push rod tubes. I made 18 of these from stretched black sprue and carefully installed them after

the engine was mostly assembled.

I recommend painting the cylinders and crank case first, then assembling the engine. I painted the cylinders grimy black, then drybrushed them with chrome silver; the crank case was neutral gray and the magnetos were black. I put the cylinders in place first, followed by the 18 pushrods, the wiring loom and then the magnetos, distributors and scavenger pump. Having built five of these engines now, I've found this is the only way to get all these parts in place without having to modify them.

The *Hasegawa* cowling was given the exhaust blisters from



Another posed photo of Vraciu's VF-16 mount indicated the color of the spinner and the placement of the number 32 on the cowling and forward gear doors.

the *Academy* kit, and the engine was put in place, braced by a sturdy length of styrene strip. The rudder was installed at a very slight angle, and the *Verlinden* bomb racks were put in place under the wings. The *Verlinden* gunsight was installed and given a reflector made from a bit of cellophane from a decal sheet envelope.

I masked the canopy using *Bare Metal* foil, then glued it into place on the fuselage and cleaned up the resulting seam. I modified the brass parts in the *Verlinden* set for the small fairings at the lower edges of the windscreen and superglued them in place. I also drilled the openings for the machine gun tubes, expecting to add stainless steel tubing later, and filed open the wing-tip formation lights.

With the model ready for paint, I chose *Model Master* colors for the intermediate blue and dark sea blue upper camouflage and *Humbrol* matte white for the lower colors. The cockpit was masked, and I sprayed the intermediate blue first, followed by the white lower camouflage and the dark sea blue upper colors. I spent considerable time going over these lines free-hand, trying to get the borders just right according to the photos I used as a reference. I began to obsess a great deal over

the demarcation line on the fuselage, until I realized that the enormous star-and-bar marking would cover this entire area!

The model was given a coat of water-based Varathane, thinned with water and a drop of Windex, to prepare it for decals. This was perhaps the most challenging part of the model, because Vraciu's Turkey Shoot aircraft has never been provided on a decal sheet. His VF-6 aircraft, "Gadget," which wore a number 19, is probably the second-best known single *Hellcat* (second only to David McCampbell's "Minsi III"), but VF-16's *Hellcats* have never been on a sheet in 1:72.

My friend Suzi Racho had given me a book of aviation art

for my birthday two years ago; two paintings depicted this aircraft. One, by Robert Taylor, shows this plane taking off with the dawn sun behind it; Vraciu says this is inaccurate, because of the time of day, the fact that he was deck launched and not catapulted, and several other details. Roy Grinnell's painting however, was done with Vraciu's assistance. In any event, both paintings agree on the markings of this aircraft on June 19: number 32 on the sides of the cockpit, and in smaller numbers on the tail and front of the cowling; 12 kill markings; the VF-16 logo, and the standard national markings.

I wrote a letter to Vraciu and asked whether the squadron and personal markings were on both sides of the plane; he responded that they were, so I could proceed with confidence that I was getting the markings right. I bought *AeroMaster* sheet 72-111, "Fighting *Hellcats*," for the correct size national insignia; naturally, Vraciu's

VF-6 number 19 was also on this sheet! The kill markings came from *AeroMaster* 72-177, "Southeast Asia *Mustangs*;" one scheme had two sets of kill markings, which were cut out and rearranged to represent Vraciu's 12 kills. The large number 32s came from a generic sheet of white 45-degree letters, while the cowling 32s came from the *AeroMaster Hellcat* sheet (one of the schemes happens to be a number 32 from VF-12), while the tail 32 came from a *SuperScale* sheet for *Bearcats*. The various stencils came from *SuperScale* 72-737, another *Hellcat* sheet. The marking on the gear door was snipped from a serial for a 1:144 F-100. Projects like this prove the value of a big decal collection!

The one marking I didn't have—and could not buy—was the VF-16 "Airedales" logo. Luckily, my friend Robin Powell is adept at printing decals with his inkjet printer. He scanned an image of the logo from a book, reduced it to a mere .018", gave it a dark blue background, and printed several copies for me. These worked perfectly, requiring only a bit of touch up with sea blue paint to blend in.

With the decals in place, I gave the model another coat of Varathane and washed the entire model with dark gray

watercolor paint. When the wash was dry and to my liking, I added a flat coat made up of Testors Dullcote thinned heavily with lacquer thinner. Then, I added exhaust streaks in pastel, starting with light gray and graduating through black, dark brown and white. I also added some black exhaust on the lower fuselage and some gun residue around the machine gun ports.

The wheels in both the Hasegawa and Academy kits were sub-par, so I grabbed a set of wheels from Hi-Tech's set for the F4U-5 Corsair and asked Bill Ferrante to cast a pair for me. Bill did an excellent job, as always, and the new wheels were re-

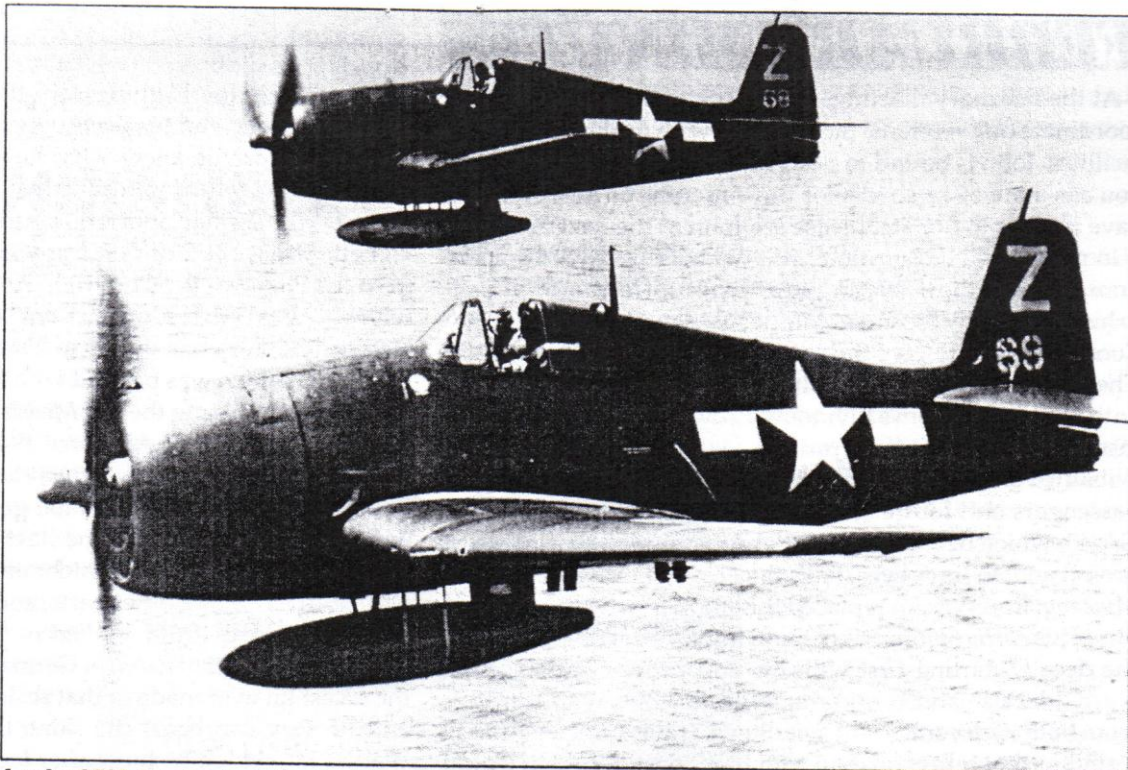
moved from the pour plugs, cleaned up and painted. The struts from the Hasegawa kit needed a little trimming to sit right in the Academy bays, but they looked very good once installed. I added anti-torque links from Eduard and brake lines made from fine solder to the struts before adding the wheels. The Academy gear doors had nasty knock-out pin marks in them that needed to be drilled away with a fine bit in a Dremel tool; once they were cleaned up, they were painted white and put in place. When this was accomplished the entire landing gear and wheel well area was given a heavy wash with thinner and black paint.

The tail wheel came from the Hasegawa kit, although I cut most of it away. I used brass pieces to make the tailwheel mounting arms, which have lightening holes drilled in them, and made my own door fairings from styrene. When these parts were assembled, I had a detailed but still sturdy tailwheel.

The drop tank had to come next. The kits provided the tank with the lateral reinforcement rib, which was the later style of tank. The Verlinden kit provided the vertically-reinforced tank, but it took considerable work to correct flaws including air bubbles, out-of-round portions of the tank and a misshapen pylon. Styrene strip was used to create the mounting braces and attachment arms.

I'd painted the propeller some time before in my usual way—yellow first, then, after the tips had been masked, semi-gloss black. The shaft on my Aires R-2800 was cut back and the prop was mounted in place, followed in quick succession by the tail and fuselage antenna masts, the pitot head, clear and blue lights on the aircraft's spine, and a clear light in the tail. The tailhook point was made by cutting part-way through .030 styrene rod, then sanding and cutting the rod to the shape of the protruding hook point.

The Squadron vacuform canopy was cut from the carrier,



A pair of F6F-5s, showing of both styles of drop tank. The plane in the background has the early style vertically-ribbed tank, while the F6F in the foreground has the late style horizontally-ribbed tank.

masked and airbrushed, then put in place with a little superglue. I also added brass shim to the cockpit sill to provide a track for the canopy to slide over.

I drilled three holes in a row (not as easy a trick as you might think!) and added red, green and amber MV lenses to simulate the signal lights. Next came the machine guns. In most references on the Hellcat, the guns have solid outer jackets, but in a photo Vraciu had sent, the guns clearly have perforated barrels. I dug out some Aires .50-caliber machine guns, which have amazing barrels whose perforations are visible, even in 1:72, and cut four sections of barrel (the outermost guns have only the ends of the tubes visible, and I made these from stainless steel tubing). The resin barrels were painted, then superglued into the wings. Then, I added photoetched sway braces to the bomb racks from the Verlinden set, and painted them in place. The same process was used to add the forward gear doors.

The aerial was made with a few strands of nylon from a smoke-colored pair of panty hose. The tail-to mast length came first, followed by the lead-in, which went to an insulator in the side of the fuselage made by inserting a wire into a very fine hole carefully drilled with a pin vise.

The final detail was the wingtip lights. I painted the notches I had filed earlier chrome silver, then drilled small holes and inserted bits of wire painted red and green into the appropriate wingtip. These were covered with three successive layers of Krystal Kleer, giving me a clear cover with a colored bulb inside.

And, just like that, I had a historic Hellcat! I want to thank my friend Suzi Racho for providing the inspiration to get this project off the ground, Robin Powell for his help in making the crucial VF-16 logo, and especially Alex Vraciu for graciously providing me with some of his time and advice to get this model's details right!

FEBRUARY MINUTES

At the February meeting, John Heck outlined his plans to coordinate our veterans' model drive with multiple local VA facilities. John is bound to need volunteers for this project; if you can store 50 or so kits for three months or less, or if you have models to donate, please see John at the next meeting.

In model talk... Newcomer Miguel Murillo added suicide doors, opened the trunk, and added the roof from a '59 Impala to his 1957 Chevy flip-nose. Miguel used wheels from a "Che-Zoom" die cast to give the car a proper sit. He also added a Chevy pick-up bed to a '53 flip-nose and replaced its wheels with some taken from a Plymouth Prowler! Jim Lund brought in a couple of vacuformed rarities: a kit by Bob Wheeler of the Wibault-Penhoët 280 trimotor, which was used to ferry both passengers and lobsters, and the *Execuform* kit of the Clark GA-43, which began as a General Aviation/Fokker America project and, in Jim's eyes, links the Fokker D.VII and the P-51 *Mustang*. Ron Wergin replaced the spinner, wheels and other bits of his *Airfix Spitfire* Mk. 22, and he had a horrible time with the decals, starting first with his odd pronunciation of the word "decals" and continuing with troubles with transfers from both *Airfix* and *War Eagle*. Steve Travis built a pair of El Caminos that reflect on the South Bay's past: a '59 that would have been seen cruising downtown San Jose, which he calls "First Street, Saturday Night," and a souped-up racer that represents Baylands Raceway in Fremont on a Friday night. Vladimir Yakubov worked hard to finish his Russian round monitor, a harbor defense vessel in Novgorod during the Russo-Turkish War of 1878. In a little bigger scale, Vladimir is scratchbuilding a BTR experimental tank destroyer from the 1970s with an 85mm gun in 1:72; the real one is in the museum at Kubinka. His scratchbuilt BA-11 continues to approach completion, probably because he's now found a kit of the BA-11! Vladimir's also working on a pair of BA-64s, one of which was modified into an armored car, both by *Extratech*. Laramie Wright's second "parking lot survivor" is almost finished; it's a M4A3 wet storage from the 9th Armored Division, modified from the *Tamiya* M4A3. Laramie's especially happy with his homemade recognition panels, made from lead foil. Barry Bauer spent time as a child at Laughlin Air Force Base in Texas, and his favorite sound was the roar of the F-100 *Super Sabre*. Now, He's trying to build a 1:72 F-100D from *Italeri* to recapture some of that experience. He says the kit is good except for some fiddly fit issues on the lower wing-to-fuselage joint. Clarence Novak used some steel rods to support the stacks, but otherwise his model of the sinking R.M.S. *Titanic* is a paper model from *GPM*. Clarence also built the *Peerless* 1:35 U.S. Jeep ambulance, an example of which his father drove in World War II; a *Lunar Models* futuristic attack helicopter, which had its pinholes obscured by an application of *Mr. Surfacer*, a resurrected *Spitfire* Mk. XIV, which wore its second paint job; the *Revell* Atlas booster's launch pad; and the *Red October* submarine from *Revell*, which he says needs a lot of work to look like anything from real life. Greg Plummer says the *AMTech* Ta 193 Hucklebein is a bit simplified in detail, but fits together well. He's not sure what his final paint scheme will be for this fictitious fighter. Rodney Rogers has the fuselage of his 1:48 *Tamiya* P-47 together, and his *HobbyCraft Sea Fury* looked splendid in a bright blue Royal Australian

Navy scheme. Joe Fleming says the figures that grace his *Tamiya* SAS jeep and his *Tamiya* Japanese Type 97 tank were painted "before he knew what he was doing," which only indicates that he had natural talent back then! Joe also built some *DML* German infantry figures into a street fighting vignette. Kent McClure's latest wargaming pieces escaped from the Planet of the Copyright Attorneys by calling themselves "Apes With Guns." Kent also had some Captain Nemo-style deep sea divers in 25mm scale, and a Mark VI light tank, which was painted with *Polly Scale* paints. Kent is also bent on building the *PM Models* Ta 183, but his will be in Italian Co-Belligerent Air Force 1946 markings. Cliff Kranz saw a picture of the new *Trumpeter* "Chinese Amphibious Vehicle" and decided it was too goofy not to be built. Cliff will take the goofiness to the next level by motorizing his model. Hubert Chan is scratchbuilding the fenders on his *DML* JS-IIM, among other parts, and he's dressing it up with a mix of figures from *Verlinden*, *Warriors* and *DML*. Roy Sutherland says that *Revell* of Germany's 1:144 *Hunter* may be the nicest kit ever made in that scale, with astounding detail and fit. Roy can boast the same thing about his Imperial Walker kit, which he built after looking at original models and speaking to some of the people who built the original Walker models at Industrial Light and Magic. Roy also added some detail to the gear bays of his *Spitfire* 22 from the *Airfix* kit. Chris Bucholtz is building three airplanes whose pilots he has some connection with. His F6F-3 *Hellcat* was finished as Alex Vraciu's Marianas Turkey Shoot plane, and he brought in a letter from Vraciu himself confirming the markings on the right side of the plane. Almost ready for paint is a *Hasegawa* F4F-4 *Wildcat*, which will be finished as Tom Cheek's Midway mount; Chris knows Tom from an Internet discussion group on the battle. Chris is also building Col. Joe Laughlin's P-47D "5 By 5" in 1:48 for the Colonel's 85th birthday, and he's sneaking a 1:72 version of the same plane into his collection at the same time. The fuselage and cockpit of this colorful Jug are already together. Brad Chun is the second member of the club with an *AMTech* Ta 183 under way; he took just four hours to get his model ready for paint. The third 1:48 Ta 183 in the club belongs to Mark Hernandez, who's added a jet intake to the nose. Mark cut an eighth of an inch from the top of the nose wheel bay to make it fit, and he added a 1:72 F-15 turbine blade at the back of the intake. Mark's Ta 183 will have the trapezoidal Heinkel-style nose gear door. Also in the queue for Mark is the much more real-life *Trumpeter* MiG-19 in 1:32, which has some shape problems he plans to correct. Mike Burton's small air force includes a restoration project, his 1:48 *Wings 48* vacuformed Curtiss SOC *Seagull*, which suffered an in-box collision with his 1:72 AJ-2P *Savage* that cost it its top wing. Mike's second *Rareplanes Savage* was present in a pre-painted form, along with his *DML* P-61B *Black Widow*, finished after weeks of work, Mike says. Also in 1:72, Mike's *Airmodel* vacuformed F-107 and KP Mi-24 *Hind* are awaiting paint, as is his 1:48 *Monogram* F-104 *Starfighter*. Mike used a *Falcon* conversion to create his Bf 109G-12 two-seater, adding *Fujimi* wings to finish it off. He's also got a *Horizon* 1:12 Captain America figure under way! Lou Orselli brought in a pair of Italian Bf

109s, his own *Falcon* G-12 and a vacuformed G-14 conversion that sports a tail from the *Monogram* kit. Both models are finished as Italian co-belligerent air force aircraft. And the model of the month goes to... Clarence Novak's 1:8 *Pocher*

Bugatti T-50 engine. Clarence tried a lot of tricks to get the turned metal appearance of the engine casing; in the end, he turned stainless steel sheet to get the right effect, then added the engine to a nice base made with chrome-plated brass rods.

SVSM BOOKSHELF

Flight Deck: U.S. Navy Carrier Operations 1940-1945

By Al Adcock

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Following on the heels of Squadron's excellent *Fleet Air Arm* is a book in a similar vein about the U.S. Navy's carrier operations in World War II. While the photos in this volume are not as fresh or as revealing as the images contained in the earlier book, this volume does provide a good overall view of what American carrier aircraft looked like during the war and could help inspire you to add a few more blue airplanes to your shelves.

Just as *Fleet Air Arm* does, the book's opening pages violate the premise contained in the title, showing such 1930s subjects as a Martin T4M and a Boeing F4B-4. These are certainly not unwelcome, but make one wonder what the title actually was supposed to be! Since the book is arranged chronologically, page 7 places the reader into 1941 and quickly moves him through the war.

Important actions like Coral Sea (one photo) and Midway (three photos) get very short shrift; even the few images included are ones that are frequently used. There are more photos of Army Air Force aircraft on deck being ferried than a real Navy enthusiast would like to see, and a *Spitfire* launching from *Wasp* is interesting but hardly relevant to the main topic of the book.

As the war progresses, the book becomes much more

useful. Shots of Atlantic-scheme *Wildcats* could prove helpful for anyone wanting a different sort of cat, and pictures depicting, in order, a K-class blimp, an R-4B *Hoverfly* helicopter and a remote-control target drone all on deck are extremely interesting. Also intriguing—and perhaps more likely

to be of use to modelers—is a shot of a TBM *Avenger* taking off from an escort carrier with assistance from RATO bottles. Another photo shows men arming an *Essex Hellcat*, which has been painted with geometric markings in a manner most modelers would find alarming, since the most distinct feature of the markings is the outline of the masking tape between the marking itself and a copious amount of white overspray!

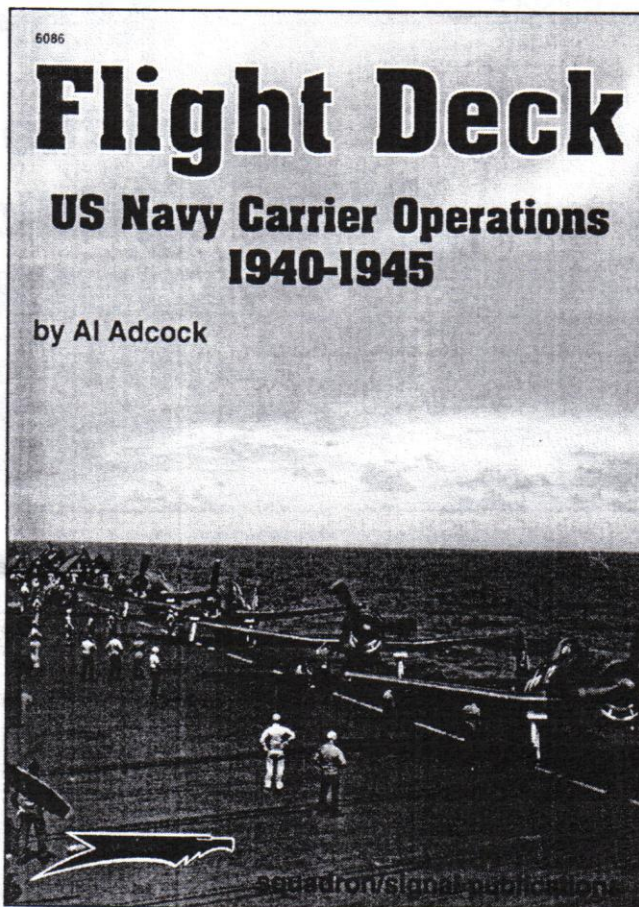
The text is brief, but gives an outline of where the Navy was engaged and what sort of opposition was faced. However, anyone with more than a cursory knowledge of World War II's events will find little to learn. This is a picture book, first and foremost.

The profiles by Don Greer and Andrew Probert are nice, but again some off-topic subjects—a *Spitfire*, a P-40K—are included.

The foremost book of this type would include a comprehensive listing of geometric symbols—for light carrier and escort carrier

air groups as well as the better-known fleet carrier air groups—and strive to provide more unusual, never-before-seen material. However, for newcomers to this era, the book should serve as a good introduction to the subject.

—Chris Bucholtz



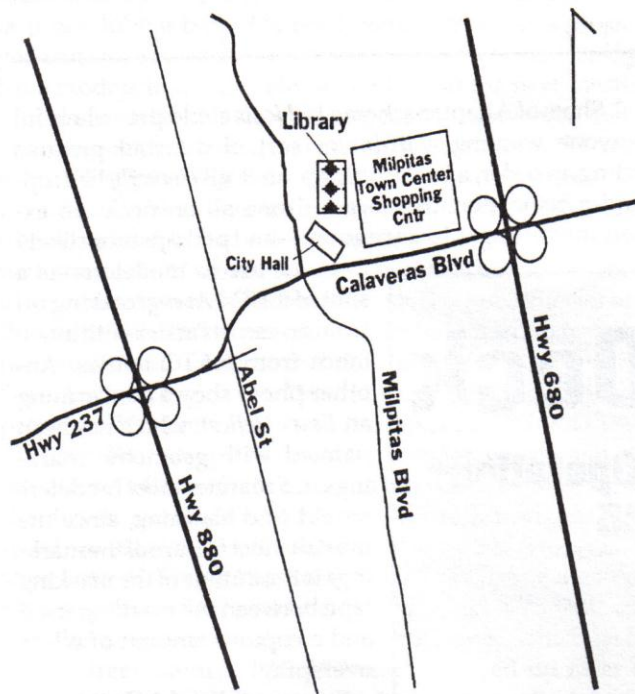
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