



Turning the tide: Tom Cheek's Midway Wildcat

By Chris Bucholtz

The F4F-4 *Wildcat* was a compromise aircraft in many ways, but it also was the first version of the *Wildcat* design truly attuned to the carrier environment. Unlike the F4F-3, it boasted folding wings, which allowed carrier squadrons to go from 18 planes at the Battle of the Coral Sea to 27 planes at the Battle of Midway.

It also had six .50-caliber machine guns rather than four, the result of a British requirement for their version of the plane, the *Martlet*. This increased the *Wildcat's* hitting power, but did so at a cost. With four guns, the *Wildcat* could carry 1,720 rounds, or 430 per gun. With six guns, this was reduced to 1,440 rounds, or 240 per gun. American pilots decried the loss of valuable firing time, having found four .50s perfectly able to inflict mortal damage on the Japanese aircraft of the time.

Also unlike the F4F-3, when the -4 reached the Navy, there was already a set of tactics in place to use it to its greatest advantage. John S. "Jimmy" Thach, the commanding officer of VF-42, had developed a tactic in which four planes could work in concert with one another to minimize the benefits of the A6M Zero's maneuverability. The "Thach Weave" re-

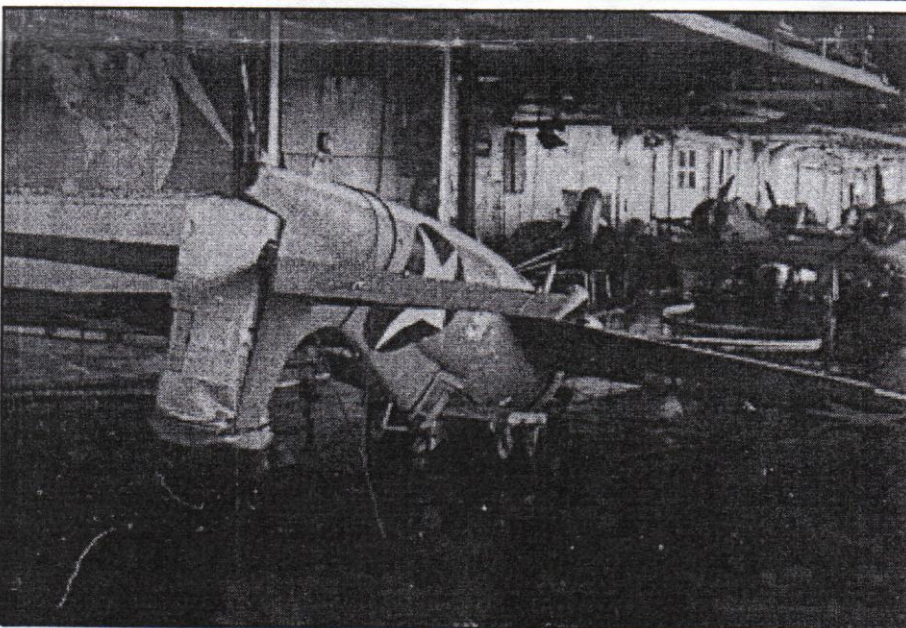
quired each section of two fighters to split-S toward and then away from each other, covering each other in turn. If a Zero affixed itself to the tail of one plane, it would present a good deflection shot to the *Wildcats* in the other section.

By the time of the Battle of Midway, the Thach Weave had

been proven in combat, most notably at the Battle of the Coral Sea. *Yorktown* embarked VF-42 at the Coral Sea, but the air group suffered substantial losses in the battle and was replaced, for the most part, by personnel from the air group from *Saratoga*. *Saratoga* was in port in San Diego completing repairs to damage suffered when she was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine off Oahu on January 11, 1942.

While the torpedo, scouting and bombing units came from *Saratoga* largely intact, Fighting 3 was somewhat different, including 16 VF-42 pilots, a group of new pilots from the Advanced Carrier Training Group, and VF-3's skipper, "Jimmy" Thach. They also embarked a full complement of new F4F-4s.

One of the men to continue as a member of VF-3, like Thach, was Tom Cheek. Cheek joined the Navy in 1935 and went to flight school in 1938. By the time of



At top, a factory-fresh F4F-4 *Wildcat* prior to receiving its squadron markings. Below, Tom Cheek's F4F-4 (BuNo 5143) rests on a dolly on the hangar deck of *Yorktown* after engaging the barrier and flipping over. Cheek shot down at least one Zero over the Japanese fleet.

Continued on page 10

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

EDITOR'S BRIEF

Welcome to the May issue. Thanks go to Mark Schynert and our new president, Greg Plummer, who have come through for us once again. Your editor is always pleased to bring you an all-1:72 issue, but our tables reveal our members have even greater tendencies toward 1:48. We also have plenty of armor, ship and auto modelers; it would be very pleasant if these folks would also take the steps they need to gain representation in our newsletter. In more plain language: get off your rumps and start writing! We need the articles, and when we have as many models on the table as our minutes show we do, yet the editor gets few submissions, it makes him cranky.

Also, we have received only a smattering of response to our roster questionnaire. Please e-mail or mail in your information so we can include you in our complete membership

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.

June 15, 2002: **IPMS/Planes of Fame** presents their **annual MiniCon** at the Planes of Fame Museum in Chino, California. For more information, call Al Parra at (909) 920-9917 or e-mail him at parrateach@aol.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.

roster.

In other news, your editor has been given the honor of serving as Region 9 Coordinator. One of the things that stands out like a sore thumb to anyone on the West Coast is that we win precious few "Chapter of the Year" awards. The reason no one is in the running from our region is that, in order to be considered for Chapter of the Year, you must win chapter of the region, and we just haven't awarded this honor. To remedy this, a new system will be implemented. Unlike other processes, in which the chapters vying for awards put together "bids" boasting of their achievements, Region 9's award will be based on points. The points will be awarded for things the clubs do—contests, public displays, make-and-takes, charitable works, and so on. Here's how each club can score:

1. Host a contest: four points.
2. Organize a public display: two points
3. Conduct a make-and-take: two points
4. Organize a charitable event (model drive, benefit, etc.): three points
5. Host a non-IPMS guest speaker: one point

The goal of the system is to get our clubs to interact with the "outside world," especially with people who aren't currently modelers. Contests get more weight, since they involve more work and provide a great gathering for many modelers, both newcomers and old-timers. If your contest also has a make-and-take, you get six points. If your contest has a make-and-take, and gives the proceeds to charity, take nine points.

This point system levels the playing field; a small but involved club could easily score more points than a large but lazy club. The points will be scored over a calendar year (January 1-December 31), and the winner will be announced at the Kickoff Classic (the first contest of the year).

This will be publicized to the clubs in the region in the RC9 newsletter, which goes out via e-mail; if you don't get this e-mail update but would like to, send a note to the editor's e-mail address and he'll put you on the list.

Finally, since this editor's brief is being written just after the 5.2 earthquake we enjoyed on May 13, it seems like a good time to think about safety. When it comes to your models, earthquakes are something you should consider when you're planning your display location. If you have a display case, make sure it is strapped to the wall; a toppling glass case could be hazardous not just to you models but also to you or your family members. For less serious quakes, you might want to consider adding a short strip of thin wood to the front of any shelves, especially open shelves. This could provide a "stopper" if models are shaking toward the shelves' edges. A bounce or two against this strip is surely less damaging than a four-foot fall off a shelf. Finally, make sure your tools are kept in an area where a temblor won't send them spilling. A collection of X-Acto knives scattered around the floor would probably be the last thing on your mind after an earthquake, but they could be the first things you find in your feet as you examine your workshop for damage!

Be safe—since we're modelers, we already know none of us is sane!

—The Editor

This June, you are cordially invited to



The SVSM Pet Show

Any model named for a dog (Bristol Bulldog, M20 Greyhound, Medium A Whippet, Range Rover) or a cat (M10 Hellcat, F-14 Tomcat, Gato-class submarine) qualifies. Win prizes and bragging rights by showing your animal side!

At the June Meeting

Sword's G-21 Goose gets good grades

By Mark Schynert

The G-21 *Goose* utility amphibian was a ground-breaker for the Bethpage, Long Island-based Grumman company, establishing a long line of twin-engined amphibians culminating with the *Albatross* in the late 1940s. The *Goose* was also the first monoplane to be built by Grumman (barely ahead of the *Wildcat*), its first twin, and its first design intended from the onset to be a civilian type. However, most of the production

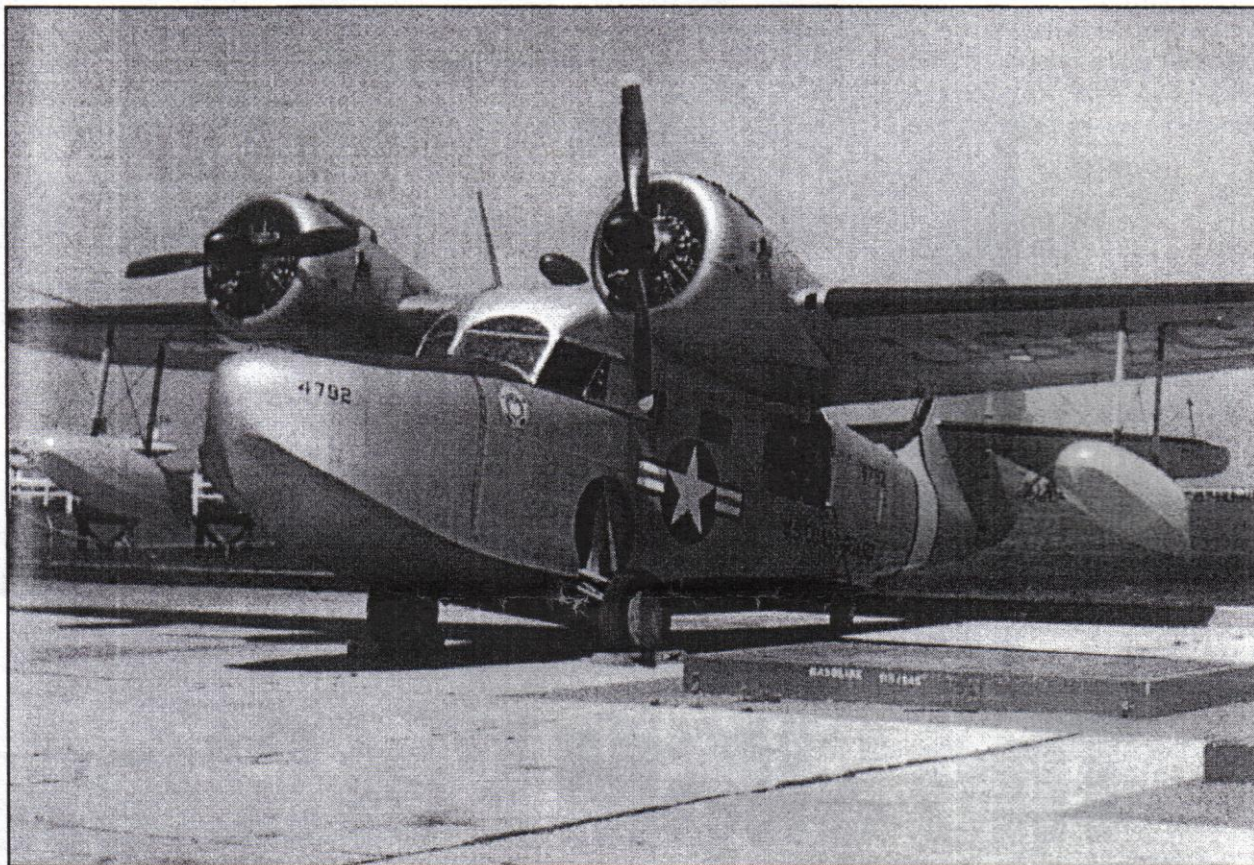
run was for the U.S. Navy and Coast Guard (as the JRF), the U.S. Army Air Forces (as the OA-9 and OA-13), and various foreign air forces during WWII, including those of Great Britain, Portugal, Bolivia, Peru, Brazil, Cuba and Canada. Postwar, the *Goose* showed up in the livery of the air forces of France, Sweden, Japan and Argentina as well, and with many civil operators. It was also the object of a variety of modifications and experiments post-war, being stretched, re-engined, fitted with skis, hydrofoils, hydro-skis, pantobase gear and even a tilt-wing (as the Kaman KA-16B), making it perhaps the only VTOL amphibian ever, apart from rotorcraft. Altogether, 345 were built, and a few still fly.

From the perspective of an injection kit manufacturer, the *Goose* is at best a marginal subject, which explains why there have only been a couple of vacuform kits in 1:72, by *Bjorn Andersen* and by *Rareplanes*. However, the continuing bonanza in 1:72 due to the vigorous release schedule of Czech companies has now given us a nice kit from *Sword* of the *Goose*.

The contents of the kit include two almost flash-free injected sprues with 51 parts (medium gray plastic, subtly-engraved panel lines), 13 resin pieces (seats, engines, engine details and an odd hull-step piece), two vacuformed canopies, two vacuformed clear blisters for the British version,

eight small injected windows, a decal sheet with American, British and French options, and a 12-page instruction booklet with clear and helpful diagrams, if not a lot of words. On the whole, everything, even the most delicate of the injection parts, looks good.

As for problems, absent actually assembling the kit, it's tough to say. One difficult operation with this particular kit will be whittling away the step to attach the aforementioned



A JRF-5G Goose in colorful post-war Coast Guard markings at the San Francisco USCG Air Station in 1951. The Goose found many eager users—including the Navy, Army, RAF and the air arms of Cuba, Portugal, Bolivia, Brazil, and Peru—when it first debuted in 1939.

resin piece, which offers some fine detail, but doesn't appear to do much to change the contour of the step. I will think long and hard before using this piece, since adding the detail to the existing hull step would probably be easier. The cockpit could also stand additional detail; seats with seat belts, instrument panel and two wheels are provided, but no rudder pedals or sidewall detail is included. The mainwheels are unfortunately done as two halves. Still, these are all minor quibbles. The hull measures right on for length, and the span of the wing is short by no more than a couple of scale inches. The shapes all look right, too.

This is a good enough kit that we might be excused for buying more than one, especially when you consider all the marking and modification options. I like the bulged side windows of the RAF one, but the deep blue of the French scheme is very appealing, and yet the U.S. color scheme just screams "Grumman." I wonder how much trouble it would be to scratch-build a tilt wing?

Whirlybird for beginners: the Hughes TH-55

By Greg Plummer

Hughes' TH-55 *Osage* is not exactly a well-known military helicopter; it has never carried arms or seen combat, after all. However, it was an important part of American aviation history. As the Army's primary trainer helicopter during the Vietnam war period and beyond, the *Osage* was the first piloting experience for over 30,000 U.S. helicopter drivers. In addition, the TH-55 was and is popular internationally, serving as trainers and utility craft in Europe, South America, the Middle East and Japan.

The TH-55's history begins in the mid '50s. Hughes, then mostly an aviation tool and supply company, saw a need for a light and inexpensive helicopter. The resulting design, given the model number

269, first flew in 1956. It was a simple machine, with its Lycoming engine, two-place cockpit, and three-blade main rotor held together with an open steel tube frame. Over 300 were made and sold for civilian use by the early '60s.

Working with the U.S. Army, Hughes made an improved model, the 269A (military designation TH-55A), and in 1964 the army accepted the type as its primary trainer. This was Hughes' first military contract. By 1969 the last one had been delivered to the Army, for a total of nearly 800 units. Keeping the tradition of naming Army aircraft after native American tribes, the helicopter was dubbed the *Osage* in U.S. service. This helicopter blazed the way for Hughes' excellent OH-6 *Cayuse*.

Rugged, reliable, and easy to fly, the TH-55A was popular with pilots in service. Hughes also sold the model in civilian guise, renumbered as the Model 300. Many served as agricultural and police helicopters throughout the world. Hughes' Helicopter division would eventually be bought out by McDonnell Douglas in 1984. The Schweizer aircraft company of New York bought the rights to the Model 300 line in 1986, and today makes the 333, a streamlined, turbine-powered progeny of the TH-55 that can carry four people. Yours for only \$550,000—so much for inexpensive!

Special Hobby, part of the modeling mafia in the Czech Republic, made a series of kits in 1:72 of small U.S. helicopters. The TH-55 was one of the models in the series. I picked up the

kit at D&J Hobbies, surprised that they had it on the shelves. I just couldn't resist the brightly colored U.S. Army version on the box top.

Inside the Crush-O-Matic open ended box, one gets a small bag of resin bits, a bagged sprue of injection molded parts of suspect quality, and a vacuformed clear sheet that makes up the "bubble" halves. These are all stapled onto a cardboard backing. Also included is a small sheet of decals and several pages of instructions. At first glance, one realizes that this model will be tiny. The total weight of all the parts couldn't be more than a few grams, and that includes the resin interior and engine. Just for reference, a 1:35 figure weighs about as much.

The first step is to select which version you want

to build, as colors and details like tail planes, fuel tanks, and antennas differ between the selections. *Special Hobby* includes parts and decals to build an overall red U.S. trainer version, an olive drab Swedish Army version, a Japanese type, and two civilian helicopters, one English and one German. It's easy to include many versions when the decal sheet is the size of a business card. Come to think of it, the model is barely bigger than a business card. One shortcoming here though: there are no skid mounted wheels for the U.S. Army version included in the kit.

I picked the Japanese version. Like many Japanese trainer aircraft, it's overall black in color. Oh, that Darth Vader look! In full scale, Kawasaki built the TH-55 under license; these craft were designated TH-55Js. Not much information is available on these helicopters, but it seems that they are no longer in current service, unlike the Swedish and civilian versions of this kit. Considering the wide usage of this helicopter, a large number of schemes could be built from this kit if one is willing to make the proper markings.

With a version selected, construction can start. The injected parts were pretty much unusable, as they were lumpy and required a lot of clean up to look good. Most of these parts were intended to replicate the steel tube structure of the craft, and were thus thin rods. The limits of short run molding were clearly displayed here.

Since the kit requires the builder to scratchbuild some of the



A Japanese TH-55J at a display. Japanese *Osages* are painted overall black. While the U.S. Army retired most of its TH-55s in 1974, the type lives on in other countries.

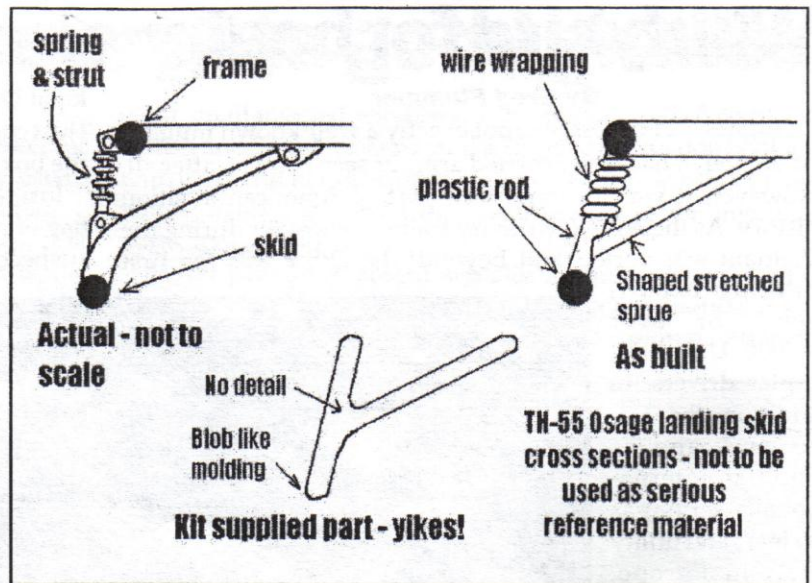
structure out of plastic rod anyway, I decided to go the whole nine yards and make all the frame from scratch. Using various sizes of *Plastruct* styrene round rod, I made the basic subframe using the kit part as a guide. I also constructed a tail rotor boom at this time.

The resin engine was fine as is, but its exhaust system was molded onto a resin sheet. This made clean-up of this fragile part darn near impossible. I heat formed exhaust pipes from plastic rod and used a wider diameter piece for the muffler, again using the kit part as a guide. These pieces were superglued together and the engine was glued to the back of the resin cockpit bulkhead.

The bulkhead was then glued onto the subframe, and here is where the fun begins. The tail rotor boom attaches to the engine, along with seven supporting tubes that had to be fitted and aligned. These were mostly .040" or .030" rod; for correct sizing, check references. The box top painting is a pretty good one. There are also some additional side braces that had to be added. Lots of patience is required here, although those who saw me in the building process can attest it went quite quickly.

The landing skids on the kit sprue were also useless. I used some more plastic rod to replace these, simply curving the ends up at the front. Again, the kit parts were used as a guide for this. The skid supports are quite like tiny MacPherson struts; I made four of them by wrapping fine wire around a short length of rod.

To get the skids on the frame, I first drew two measured lines on a cardboard sheet. The skids were taped down over the lines and the struts were then glued at an angle to the skids. The subframe/engine unit was then glued on top the struts, taking care to align everything. When the glue had set, the tape was cut and now the model had skids. Finally, some angled supporting rods were glued onto the skid struts and the subframe. This was not entirely prototypical (see the drawing above), but it worked.



A main rotor mast was glued directly to the top of the engine, along with a supporting strut and a pair of control rods made from stretched sprue. A tail rotor gear box and tail skid were also added. Rounding out the construction of the frame, a couple of support rods were installed at the back of the engine. The instructions didn't mention these, so check those photographs.

The kit resin instrument panel was used, but the cyclic control sticks were not, as they were fairly well attached to that resin sheet mentioned before. New ones were made from stretched sprue, as were the collectives. In fact, the instruction sheet shows how to scratch build the collectives as they were not included in the kit parts. Tail rotor control foot pedals (well, they can't be rudder pedals, can they?) were made from bent wire; they were simple tube-type deals on the real thing so wire looks right. Resin seats were molded onto the cockpit—one of them had soft detail but was still passable.

At this point, the helicopter was complete except for the canopy, rotors, tail planes, and fuel tanks. It was also completely unpainted. Here's where the benefit of an all black scheme comes in. The Japanese version of the TH-55 had a yellow warning band on the tail boom. I airbrushed this section in *Testors* yellow and then masked it off. Then the whole assembly, including the cockpit, was then sprayed with *Testors* semi-gloss black.

Photos of the Japanese versions showed that the seats were done in a dark blue fabric. I drybrushed blue onto the ribbed seat detail and then picked out the belts in khaki with silver buckles. The cockpit section was then sprayed with *Dullcote* for a more realistic look.

The cockpit bubble is vacuformed in halves. It looked difficult to assemble but it was fairly easy, actually. I cut the pieces out with scissors and sanded the mating surfaces down. The fit was good



The small size of the TH-55 is evident from this shot of seven (!) red Army Osage trainers.

and I glued the halves together very carefully with superglue, using small amounts to avoid fogging. The bottom section, which is not clear on the aircraft, was permanently taped for added strength. When the glue was dry, I dipped the canopy in Future, improving the looks of the piece.

I painted the side doors of the bubble by hand, while black decal strip served as the front framing. In case you were wondering, the TH-55 did have a vertical frame member running down the front of the bubble, so the seam from construction was no problem—it was covered by a decal strip. Fitting the canopy onto the cockpit bulkhead revealed some gaps; these were filled with strip styrene and Zap-a-Gap glue.

At this point, the model was starting to look like a helicopter, albeit a small one. A vertical tail plane was made from sheet plastic, replacing the kit's injection molded blob. A second plane sits to the side of the tail rotor at an angle; this also was made from plastic stock. This semi-horizontal tail plane on the Japanese machines is white with a red leading edge. I simply painted the red strip and then coated the part with Future - no need to paint something this small white when the plastic is already that color.

The small decal sheet was printed by Propagteam of the Czech Republic. The yellow was out of register on my example, but none of the Japanese markings had yellow, so I didn't mind all that much. As it turned out, there were 16 decals to put on for this version; most of them were about the size of a 1:32 "No Step" stencil. The white markings stayed white on the black paint, which says a lot about Propagteam's quality. They also went on smoothly with no silvering, and this was without the use of decal setting solutions.

Now, the two resin fuel tanks (the U.S. version uses only one on the port side) were added. These tanks appear to be correct for the civilian and Swedish army versions; the Japanese and U.S. tanks were smaller and more rounded. Oh well, I used them anyway. Fuel tank support brackets were given in the kit, but they were part of the resin sheet blob and I had just about enough of that. I made some new ones from wire, and they looked better than the kit ones. The tanks were sprayed black and added to the back of the bulkhead.

The kit's tail rotor was decent when cleaned up, so it was used—it would be the only complete part from the injection molded sprue that I would use on the model. It was brush painted red with a steel hub.

The kit's main rotor pieces were not so hot. The blade portions on each part were replaced with strip styrene sanded

into an airfoil shape. The three rotor blades glue onto a resin hub. The hub, being molded on that notorious sheet of resin, had a flat top surface. I added a resin bolt head to spice up the appearance there. The blade tips were left in white plastic while the blades were painted black. The hub was brushed with dark anodized gray metallizer (you can brush small areas) and then the whole unit was sprayed with Dullcote. I had to be careful in painting the rotor, as even my airbrush could easily blast it away if it wasn't held down.

The rotors and the tail planes were added, nearly completing construction. Details included painting the tail rotor guard end and the main skid front ends with red. The exhaust system was drybrushed with a mix of black and rust, and then Dullcote was applied. Japanese aircraft are usually well taken care of, so no real weathering was done. A beacon light was

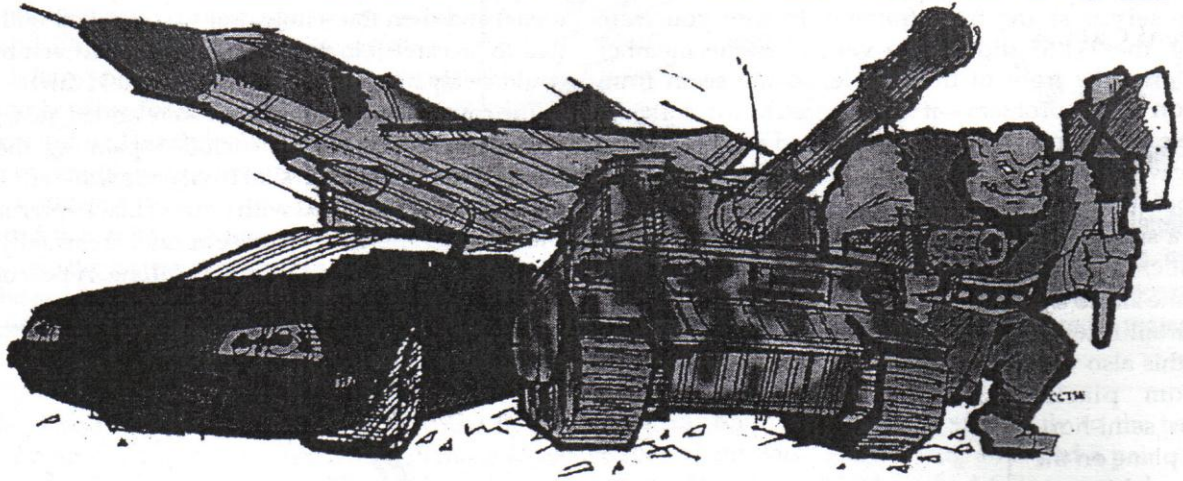


Greg's TH-55J, despite its level of detail, measures less than five inches long. The tail boom and many other parts are scratch-built.

made from clear red stretched sprue and mounted on top of the tail boom, while a hair-thin antenna was mounted on the underside. A cabin-mounted rotor guard was made from a strip of nickel sprue from a photoetch set. After the ends were formed down, it was carefully glued on top the canopy. This piece really should be black like the rest of the airframe, but it looked so cool in bare metal I kept it that way. A little customizing never hurts any model, I always say.

And there it was—a complete 1:72 TH-55 in Japanese markings. A very satisfying project, despite the fact that the fuselage is only around 10 cm long. The exposed engine and framework make for a visually interesting model. In other words, there is a lot of detail inside its small dimensions. Not that I added a whole lot of detail; one could really go to town on this model and add things like electrical wiring, control rods, and a correct suspension, all of which would be clearly visible on the finished item. Although it appears intimidating at first, there really wasn't any great difficulty in building the kit. There are certainly out of the box projects that require a lot more work to complete. When building something like this, however, just don't forget to measure twice and cut once.

IPMS Santa Rosa's
SCALE MODEL EXPO 2002



Saturday, June 1, 2002

You are invited to an exposition featuring:
Award winning models, displays by local historical societies of classic cars,
military vehicles and militaria.
Vendor sales of models kits, decals, books, and...

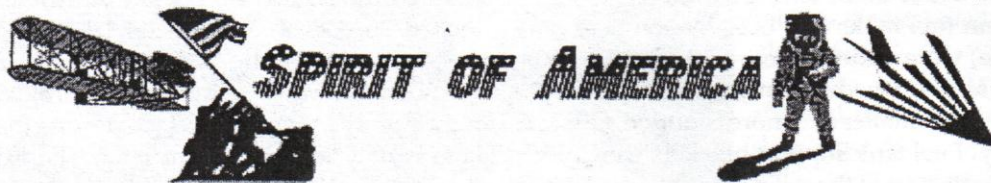
...an IPMS model contest.

10:00 AM to 4:00 PM
Sebastopol Veterans Memorial Building
282 S High St, Sebastopol, CA

**\$2 Adult Admission -or-
\$5 First Contest Entry + \$1 each additional model**

**\$1 Junior Admission (16 and under) -or-
\$2 First Contest Entry + \$1 each additional model**

Expo Contest Theme:



In addition to First, Second and Third awards in 39 categories, Best of Show, Best Junior and People's Choice trophies, there will be a trophy awarded the model entry that best represents the "Spirit of America".

For more information, go to: <http://grljj.home.mindspring.com/> and click on "Model Expo 2002"

See you there!

Special Contest Categories

Best of Show (Judges' Choice)
Best Junior Model (Judges' Choice)
People's Choice (by ballot of Attendees)
"Spirit of America" theme (by ballot of Attendees)

Individual Categories

Senior (17 and over)

Biplanes, Fabric & Rigging, all scales
Aircraft, Rotary Wing, all scales
Aircraft, Civil, Sport and Racing, all scales
Aircraft, all types, 1/144 and smaller
Aircraft, Single Engine Jet or Rocket, 1/72
Aircraft, Multi-engine Jet, 1/72
Aircraft, Single Engine Prop or Turbo-prop, 1/72
Aircraft, Multi-engine Prop or Turbo-prop, 1/72
Aircraft, Single Engine Jet or Rocket, 1/48
Aircraft, Multi-engine Jet, 1/48
Aircraft, Single Engine Prop or Turbo-prop, 1/48
Aircraft, Multi-engine Prop or Turbo-prop, 1/48
Aircraft, Jet or Rocket, 1/32 and larger
Aircraft, Prop or Turbo-prop, 1/32 and larger

Military Vehicles, all types, 1/48 and smaller
Military Vehicles, Softskin, 1/35-1/32
Armored Fighting Vehicles, Closed-top, 1/35-1/32
Armored Fighting Vehicles, Open-top, 1/35-1/32
Military Vehicles, all types, 1/33 and larger
Artillery, all scales

Ships, 1/350 and larger
Ships, 1/351 and smaller

Automobiles, Stock, all scales
Automobiles, Custom, all scales
Automobiles, Competition, Open-wheel, all scales
Automobiles, Competition, Closed-wheel, all scales

Space Vehicles and Missiles, Real, all scales
Science Fiction Vehicles, all scales
Anime, all scales
Figures, Fantasy, all scales
Figures, Historical, all scales

Dioramas, all scales
Collections, all types, all scales
Miscellaneous

Junior (16 and under)

Science Fiction
Aircraft
Military Vehicles
Automobiles
Miscellaneous

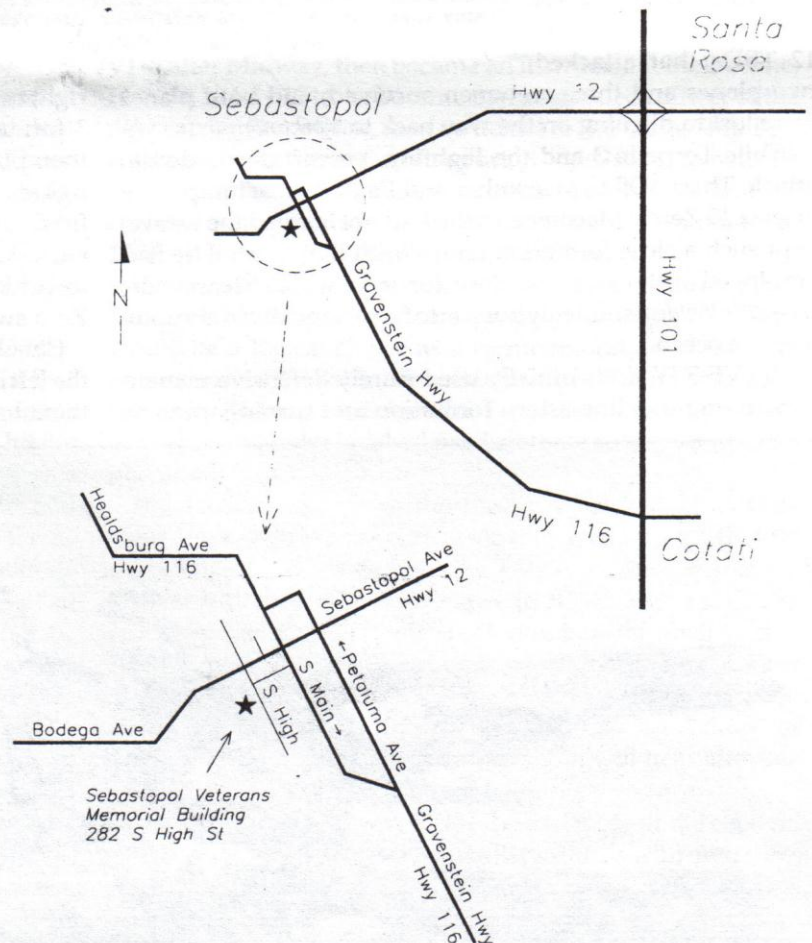
Veterans Memorial Building 282 S High St, Sebastopol, CA

From the south:

Take Hwy 101 north.
At Cotati, before reaching Santa Rosa, take the exit marked "Sebastopol - Hwy 116 West" and turn left at the bottom of the ramp. Drive approximately 8 miles on the Gravenstein Hwy (Hwy 116). As you enter Sebastopol, the road becomes "Petaluma Ave" and is one way. At the first light in town, turn left onto Sebastopol Ave (Hwy 12). Pass Main Street and take the first left onto S High St. The Veterans Memorial Building will be on your right after one block. There is parking on the sides and rear of the building as well as across the street.

From the north:

Take Hwy 101 south into Santa Rosa.
Take the "Sebastopol - Hwy 12 West" exit.
Drive approximately 6.4 miles on Hwy 12. Keep going straight. After the third light in town, which is Main Street, take the first left onto S High St.
The Veterans Memorial Building will be on your right after one block. There is parking on the sides and rear of the building as well as across the street.



Building Tom Cheek's Midway Wildcat in 1:72

Continued from page 1

of the Coral Sea, Cheek had served with Torpedo 2, Scouting 2 and Fighting 2, and in April 1942 had been advanced to Warrant Machinist.

When the *Yorktown's* new air group was ordered into the air, Cheek was part of a six-plane escort for Torpedo 3, along with Thach, Ensigns Robert A.M. "Ram" Dibb, Edgar "Red Dog" Bassett and Daniel Sheedy and Lieutenant (JG) Brainard T. Macomber. Thach argued with Commander Murr Arnold, the *Yorktown's* air officer, and *Yorktown* CAG Commander Oscar Pederson, begging for two more planes. Without those two, the Thach Weave would not work and two planes would be on their own. Until his dying day, Thach was sure that two more *Wildcats* would have saved more of Torpedo 3 from the fate they suffered at the hands of the Japanese combat air patrol. Of the 12 TBDs that attacked, two planes and three crewmen survived, and both planes were lost to ditching on the way back to *Yorktown*.

While Torpedo 3 and the Fighting 3 escort descended to attack, Thach, Dibb, Macomber and Bassett were jumped by at least 15 Zeros. Macomber, who had not learned the weave, kept such a close formation with Thach that, even if he had employed it, he was too close for it to work. Meanwhile, Bassett's *Wildcat* suddenly burst into flames and dived abruptly into the ocean.

The VF-3 *Wildcats* initially used purely defensive maneuvers, flying in a line-astern formation and turning away as

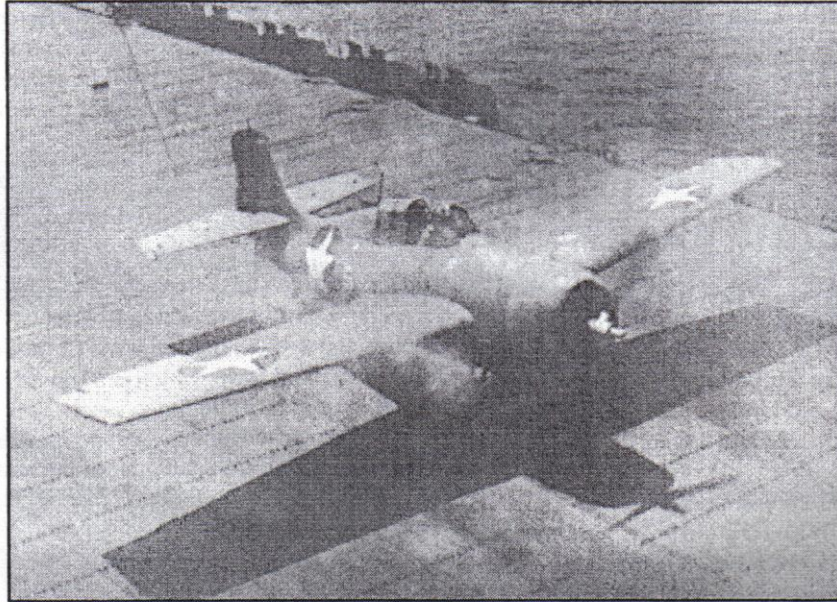
each Zero neared firing position, presenting a difficult deflection shot. While this was effective, it left little opportunity for a counter-attack. On one pass, Thach turned away and, as the Zero attacking him pulled out and slowed, Thach reversed course and peppered the Japanese fighter from close range, sending it slanting toward the water.

Over the course of several Japanese attacks, the five remaining *Wildcats* adopted an impromptu variation on the weave, and while the Japanese most often simply pulled out of firing runs before they became vulnerable, Thach and Dibb each downed a Zero using the weave.

Now, the Zeros were turning their attention toward Torpedo 3's *Devastators*. One A6M2 made a head-on pass at the first section of TBDs, passing between Lieutenant Commander The Zero rolled into a steep, climbing turn to the left, then leveled out into a wide, sweeping

right turn, angling for a run on the rearmost aircraft on the VT-3 formation's right flank. Cheek accelerated and closed in then pulled back on the stick to get his guns on the enemy fighter. With the *Wildcat* hanging on its propeller, Cheek fired. Tracers converged on the Zero's engine, then drifted back down the fuselage. The plane bucked, then dived back toward Cheek, who had now stalled out. As he recovered, the Zero swept past on his right, its pilot clearly dead.

Cheek next fired a shot at two Zeros diving on the planes on the left side of the VT-3 formation, startling them and causing them to break off their attacks with abrupt climbs. Another



Jimmy Thach comes aboard *Enterprise* after *Yorktown* was disabled. The white aircraft numbers were typical of VF-3's markings at Midway.



Besides the folding wings, the F4F-4 could be distinguished from the -3 by the small pitot probe on the left wing and the simplified windscreen.

Zero was deterred from attacking the trailing TBD on the right side of the formation with a similar long-range snap-shot. Another pair of A6M2s used the same evasive maneuver as Cheek reversed direction. He was becoming concerned that the TBDs were opening the distance between themselves and the *Wildcats* when a Zero dived between him and the trailing TBDs. Cheek rolled after it, sliding in for a no-deflection shot. Just before he fired, the Zero shuddered and dived into the sea, a victim of one of the TBDs' gunners.

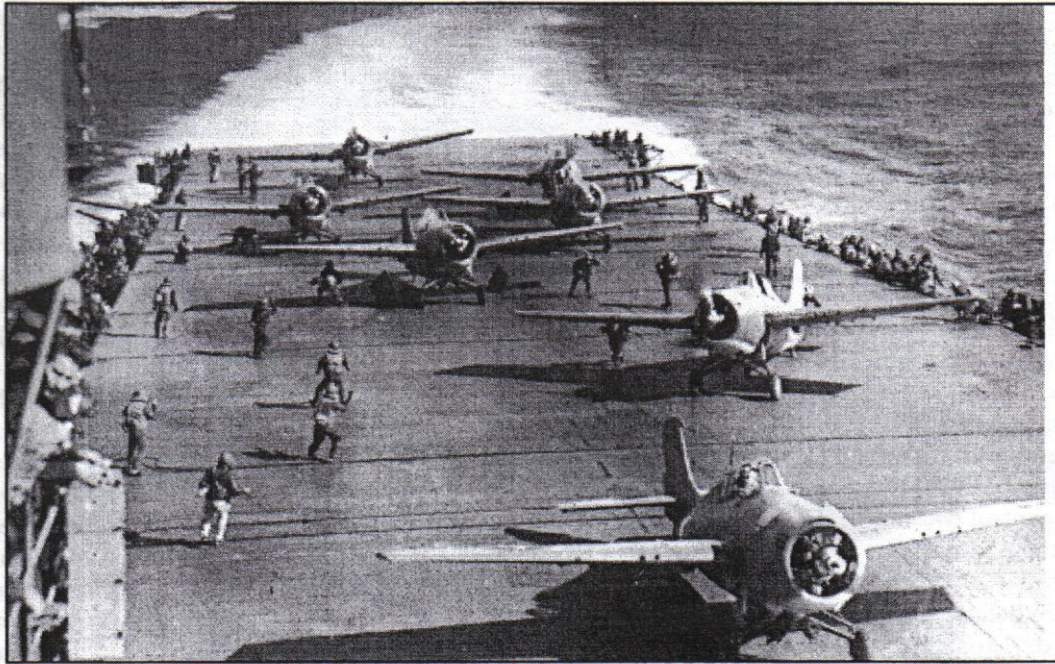
Suddenly, a stream of tracers flashed past on his right, then a second went past his left. When he hesitated, the 7.7mm tracers streaked past both sides of the canopy and Cheek felt the

impact of rounds against the back of his seat armor. The Japanese shooting stopped, then returned in the form of 20mm cannon fire. Cheek kicked the *Wildcat* into a violent vertical turn to the left and spotted a Zero, which had been tucked under his tail. Cheek snapped his plane to the right, hoping to catch him; instead, he was greeted by another stream of tracers just over his canopy. When he completed his turn, the Zero had disappeared, so he hurried to find the torpedo bombers.

He spotted a TBD gliding toward the water. A single parachute appeared behind the plane, trailed by a Zero that Cheek feared would strafe the helpless aviator hanging in his parachute harness. Instead, the TBD and the parachute hit the water, and the Zero pulled up and started climbing in Cheek's direction. Cheek saw other Zeros above him to his right, and he quickly flew into a layer of cloud, hoping to shake them.

He emerged from between two towering cumulus clouds expecting to see the torpedo group, but instead he spotted at least four Zeros 1000 feet above and behind him, another one about the same distance away flying parallel to him, and another one coming straight at him. He quickly depressed the trigger and saw his bullets hit this plane, then pulled up and rolled to the left, catching a second Zero and hitting it from nose to tail. Again, Cheek flew for the safety of the clouds. When he emerged, there were no aircraft in sight. Ahead of him and to his right were the four carriers of the Japanese Kido Butai, steaming at full speed. He scanned the sky, but something caused him to quickly look back at the carriers. The carrier at the center of the formation, the *Akagi*, had been hit by two bombs, and huge splashes leapt from the sea near her

stern. Almost simultaneously, the deck of the *Kaga* exploded, and *Soryu* was struck and began burning, sending up an oily black plume of smoke. The carriers had been surprised by Bombing 6, Scouting 6 and Bombing 3, which Cheek circled to the right, dumbstruck by what he had seen, until the command for a group rendezvous came over his radio.



Fighting 8 Wildcats prepare to launch on June 4. Like the bombing unit from Hornet, VF-8 failed to find the Japanese fleet; all 10 Wildcats launched ditched when their fuel ran out.

Returning to *Yorktown*, Cheek's day was far from over. His *Wildcat* missed the arrestor wires and smashed into the barrier, flipping upside down and briefly trapping him. He survived two Japanese attacks on the ship and eventually had to go over the side when the *Yorktown* was abandoned.

Cheek served with

VF-6 after Midway, then became an instructor at Melbourne, Florida. In July 1944, he became the hangar deck officer of the new carrier *Bennington*, then switched to the Large Ship Pre-commissioning Center in Newport, Rhode Island to help set up air departments for new carriers. Cheek flew and instructed in transports until his retirement as a Commander in 1956. He now lives in Pleasanton, California.

Having talked with Tom many times via e-mail through the Battle of Midway roundtable group, I thought his plane would be a logical choice as a commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the battle. Since he could provide me with first-hand details, I was confident that I could achieve the goal I set with every model: a finished product that could get the pilot's nod about its accuracy.

My *Wildcat* came from the *Hasegawa* kit, which, despite some imperfections, is a great starting spot for an F4F-4. In some boxings, most notably the F4F-3, the kit's wings are scribed with wildly incorrect panel detail; the kits have different lower wings, with different numbers of shell casing ejection ports, but all issues have three gun blast ports per wing and the F4F-3-style pitot boom on the left wing. Consulting a reference book on the subject, like the "In Action" or "Detail & Scale" volumes on the *Wildcat*, will help alleviate any confusion you might have.

The first thing, as always, was the assembly of the cockpit. The *True Details* cockpit set helps kill two birds with one stone, providing an attractive cockpit and a much-needed wheel well. The two parts interlock at the central console. Although some of the cockpit detail is difficult to confirm as correct, it was a vast improvement over the kit's cockpit.

I cut out the flash from the lower cockpit tub and sprayed the parts with *Testors* aircraft interior black to spot imperfections. The tub and fuselage interior were painted a color as close to bronze green as I had in my paint supplies; *Testors* Italian olive drab was a near perfect match! Details were picked out using various sheens of black, and the entire cockpit was carefully drybrushed. The *True Details* instrument panel was painted and installed, and the wheel wells were airbrushed gull gray (FS36440). The bicycle chain actuator on the rear wheel well bulkhead was made using very fine copper wire, the first of several additions to this area.

The kit seat was nice, but talking to Tom revealed that the F4F-4 at the time of Midway had no shoulder harness. I borrowed a brass seat from an *Eduard* seat for the F4U *Corsair* and added only the appropriate lap belts. I save the seat and the control column for installation later.

The engine in the kit is nice, but is a little lacking in detail. I carefully painted and drybrushed the kit parts, then added ignition wires to the cylinders. The reduction gear case was painted gull gray, with a small drop of blue at its bottom to represent the Pratt & Whitney manufacturer's logo, and the fuselage was ready for assembly.

I trapped the cockpit and wheel well inside the fuselage, and put the engine in its proper place. Next, I used superglue to seal the fuselage halves together. The fit of this kit is excellent; the only fit problems I encountered were the results of my own detailing efforts.

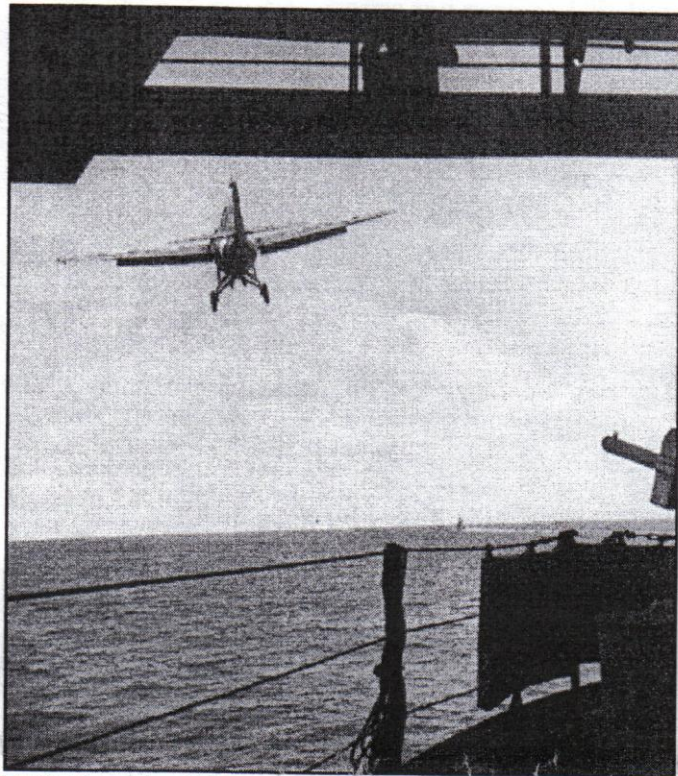
The front cowling ring was added next, followed by two lead foil intakes inside the cowling. The kit provides these in styrene, but the parts are overly thick and out of scale. My replacements look better, anyway!

At this stage, I discovered that, in my haste to join the fuselage halves, I had neglected to add the windows at the bottom of the fuselage! This presented a bit of a problem, since the windows were designed with a large flange that would enable them to be seated from the inside easily, but sticking them in from the outside was impossible. I carefully removed this flange, then sanded the windows until they were a near-perfect fit with the openings in the fuselage. To fit the windows in place, I put them outside-down on a piece of tape, then used the tape to position them in their holes. Nevertheless, the windows frequently popped out of their holes and bounced out of the open cockpit before they were seated properly. Once they were in place, I ran thin superglue around their perimeters, then sanded and polished them back to clarity. This was a lot of work to fix a problem that was

entirely my own creation, but the result was quite good and I would do things the same way were I to build another *Wildcat*.

With the fuselage together, I sanded the rear cockpit bulkhead and the headrest to eliminate any evidence of a seam. I also added superglue to the gap between the resin wheel wells and the fuselage, and ground out this area using a Dremel tool with a round cutting bit. I had to add a shim of styrene to fully close the gap, but it was soon eradicated and I could move on to more enjoyable things.

The wings came next; the F4F-3-style pitot boom was removed and a hole for the short pitot was drilled in the lower left wing tip. Next, I added bits of painted tissue paper to the under-wing intakes to get around a case of "see-through-joints." The upper wings were joined to the lower wings with no problem, and the completed wings were joined to the fuselage in an equally easy manner. The horizontal tail went on next and involved only the slightest bit of sanding and filling. The windscreens were superglued into place and were blended in carefully, then were masked with *Bare Metal Foil*.



VF-3's Executive Officer, LT William N. Leonard, gets airborne as part of Yorktown's CAP on June 4. Leonard shot down one B5N2 and damaged a second.

At this stage, the plane was nearly ready for painting. I used *Testors*' U.S. Navy Blue-Gray for the upper color and gull gray for the lower color. I used a loose masking tape mask to get the feathered line between the two colors, especially in the area around the cowling and the trailing edge of the wing.

At this point, I was sneaking up on the markings that make this a Midway model. The F4F-4s of VF-3 were delivered in the colorful markings of early 1941, with red-centered stars in blue disks (in this case, large 58-inch disks in all six positions) and red-and-white striped rudders. En route to the battle, the order came to remove the stripes and the red centers, as any trace of red on an aircraft was found to be enough to draw the fire of allied aircraft and ships. The rudder was painted over and the red centers were returned to white, but the crews had the same issues with red paint that modelers have: it tended to show through the white.

Painting the rudder was easy. I brush-painted a coat of U.S. Navy intermediate blue over it for some contrast with the Blue-Gray finish. For the stars, I'd have to be a bit trickier.

I gave the entire model a coat of water-based Varathane to provide a glossy surface for my decals. I used the "Felix the Cat" logo of VF-3 from the *AeroMaster* sheet for the F6F *Hellcat* (the scheme depicting Alex Vraciu's "Gadget" gave up the logo). The aircraft numbers came from a *MicroScale* HO model railroad sheet (No. 87-701, St. Louis-Area Shortlines), and tail data came from a *Ministry of Small Aircraft Production* sheet. I

grabbed large red-centered stars and disks from the old *SuperScale* sheet for the JRF *Duck*; my plan was to mask and paint the stars' centers with white paint. When this was done, the center was "whiter" than the surrounding arms, the opposite of my intention. I stripped the paint and started trying to conceive of another method. I finally stumbled across the idea of punching out disks of white decal trim film with an ordinary single hole punch; by pure coincidence, the disks were just about the same size as the red centers of the stars. When the white disks were in place, a faint trace of the red beneath them was visible. (Next time, I plan on using disks and stars with separate centers; I'll put the red centers down first, then add the stars over them.)

Weathering on this plane was minimal, since it flew a grand total of one mission. I mixed some burnt sienna water color paint with a few drops of water and a dollop of liquid dishwasher liquid. This method (I call the Hawkey-Boyer method, after Pat Hawkey, who first made it up, and Paul Boyer, who got the word out about it in *FineScale Modeler*) provides a goopy wash that I spread across the model. The soap thickens the wash, which gives it more of a grip on the panel lines, and makes it easier to get the excess off the model. This was the most successful wash I'd ever applied, and I'll use it again in the future.

When the masking came off the canopy, I added the seat, control column and gunsight. The sliding canopy came from the *Falcon* set; it was attached with a very small mount of white glue.

The landing gear in the kit is good, but it's hardly representative of the complex gear of the original. I glue the kit parts together, then built the rest of the structure using .020 styrene rod. In all, there are 12 additional bits of tubing installed, as well as lead solder plumbing, lead fishing lead brake lines and other details in the gear. I was able to carefully install this entire assembly into the wheel bay without breaking any-

thing but a mild, nervous sweat.

The kit wheels are virtually unusable, with recessed ejector pin marks that straddle the intersection of the tire and wheel. However, the *DML* issue of the same *Wildcat* kit provides good replacements, with brake detail and without the killer ejector pin marks. These were painted and added next.

The tailwheel comes molded to the fuselage. As is usually the case, it broke off somewhere along the line, so I drilled the

wheel strut and the fairing with a number 80 drill bit and inserted a small length of fine wire. When these three elements were all superglued together, the tailwheel had enough strength to withstand the rigors of holding up the F4F-4's tail. Short lengths of stainless steel tubing were added to the wing blast ports to represent the machine gun barrels.

I painted the propeller yellow, then masked the tips of the props and airbrushed them black. The hub center was added next, and the center of the propeller was painted with *Testors* steel.

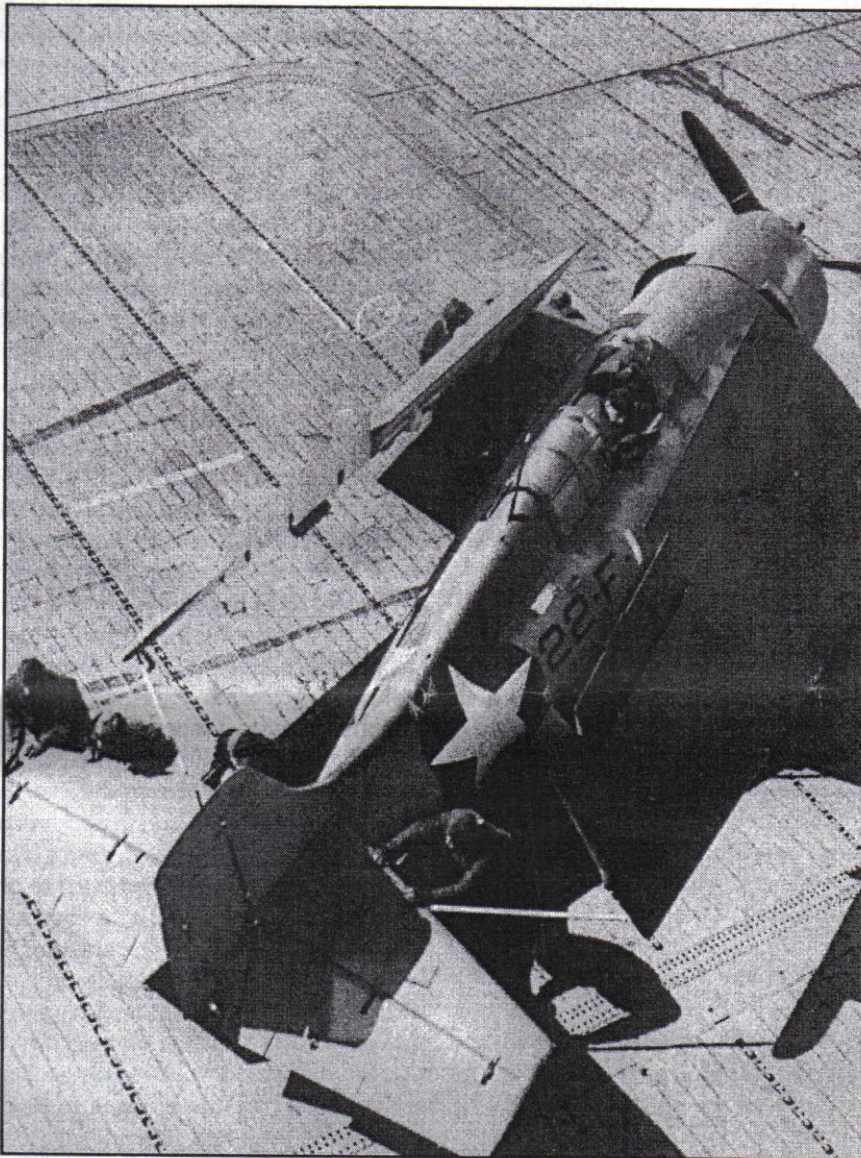
I drilled a fine hole in the port fuselage and in the tip of the rudder, into which I added pits of wire. The fuselage post became the lead-in insulator, while the tail post was the rear aerial mounting. The antenna mast was added next, and after it was painted I added an aerial from strands of

nylon thread from a pair of smoke-colored panty hose.

I carefully drilled out the openings for the exhaust stubs, then made new ones out of stretch styrene tubing, painted black on the inside and burnt sienna on the outside. Once installed and trimmed, they looked the part.

The final touch was the careful addition of the blue lights atop the wings, the red and green lights on the wingtips, and the white light at the tail.

With that done, my *Wildcat* looked as it did the morning of June 4, 1942, almost 60 years to the day! My thanks to William Reece, and especially to Bill Surgi and Tom Cheek, who provided invaluable first-hand information about this airplane.



Folding wings enabled carrier fighter squadrons to go from 17 or 18 F4F-3s to 27 F4F-4s at Midway and up to 36 later in the war.

APRIL MINUTES

At the April meeting, President Greg Plummer presented March's Model of the Month award to Mike Burton for his P-63 *Kingcobra*, citing the tears, sweat and, mostly, blood Mike had shed over this model. You may recall that Mike jammed an X-Acto knife into his hand at the last meeting while twiddling with the P-63's propeller, making this Model of the Month somewhat like a Purple Heart of modeling.

In model talk... Steve Travis picked up some cottage-industry vacuformed parts to build a 1:24 "belly tanker," a race car made from surplus drop tanks from P-38s and P-37s. With the addition of some wheels, an engine and some ingenuity, Steve hopes to add a distinctly different open-wheel racer to his collection soon. Ron Wergin brought in an exceptionally attractive base adorned with a quartet of 1:72 *Spitfires*. His *Airfix* Mk. I was a model he grew to like after spending quite some time on it; Ron rescribed all the panel lines on this old but accurate model. His *Revell* Mk. V was improved with a new gull-wing section and, after an accident involving some model cement, a new nose made of putty! Ron's *Italeri* Mk. V and his *Airfix* Mk. V both sported hand-painted camouflage schemes. Chip Harrison took his time in airbrushing the scheme on his Italian-marked Bf 109G, and this 1:32 project really benefitted from it. Chip's interest in things Soviet resulted in his *Eduard* P-39 wearing red stars, and his *Accurate Miniatures* Yak-3 was a natural after that. His current project is detailing the AMT A-20 *Havoc*. Vladimir Yakubov's C-Class Soviet submarine from around 1935 is one of a trio of models that come in a single *Anchor* kit. Vladimir says the hull and the superstructure are the only two salvagable parts, meaning he'll be doing plenty of scratchbuilding on this project. Coming along slowly is Vladimir's diorama of a beached Russian battleship at the end of the Russo-Japanese war; this month, he added the water and some rock detail to go with the partially-finished hull. Robin Powell has only to add all the "fiddly bits" to his *Dynavector* *Wyvern*, which boasts a number of resin interior and exterior improvements from *Compass Rose* (and a few that aren't included in that company's sets!). Robin claims he would have had the *Wyvern* finished if it weren't for *Revell's* *Merlin* HC.3, which goes together so well he could hardly set it aside. It's now complete except for the landing gear. Jim Lund's love of vacuform models and his love of historically important planes are being reconciled in his latest, a Fokker T.32. Frank Babbitt bought his *Airfix* *Strikemaster* when he was in high school; now, the model is painted in Kuwaiti colors (after an abortive start as a Kenyan machine) and is outfitted with the *Obscureco* interior set. Mike Meek can't let a model be, whether it's an air racer or a car. He took the *Testors* Che-Zoom 1957 Chevy and modified the wheel wells, reshaped the back, and finished it up in a teal paint scheme. His *Tamiya* 1:48 P-51 *Mustang* had modifications more closely based on fact; Mike has turned the plane into the RB-51 "Red Baron," and is almost ready to paint it. Mike's using a deal sheet he scaled up from the 1:72 *High Planes* kit, and has added *Obscureco* wheels and a propeller made by Roy Sutherland. Getting away from the scratchbuilding and customizing, Mike's spending some quality time with a *Monogram* F-86D *Sabre Dog*, which he says is a very nice kit. For a complete kit, says John Heck, the *Collect-Air*

Swoose Goose is the biggest scratchbuilding project he's ever done! Major projects have included the cockpit, the boarding elevator, the propeller and the landing gear. Roy Sutherland is stuck in whatever the German word for rut is; he has a bunch of Fw 190s in various stages in an attempt to finish his "Model A" collection. Closest to being done is his Fw 190A-7, which he's converted from the *Hasegawa* kit. Farther from completion is the *Tamiya* Fw 190A-3, which he's building as an A-2. Also in the queue is an Fw 190A-6, which will have gun bays from the *Aires* set. Roy's also making masters for new wheels for the otherwise lovely *Eduard Albatros* kits; the kit wheels are too small. Roy's making both 1:48 and 1:72 wheels. Pete Long spent many long hours sanding the *Seamless Suckers* intakes on his 1:32 *Tamiya* F-4E *Phantom II*; eventually, he plans on sending the model back to its manufacturer. Mike McMackin is painting up two *Tamiya* 1:35 British Eighth Army figures, but his plans to finish his diorama with 500 captured Italian figures may just be a little bit of mischievousness on his part. Buddy Joyce brought in two models of an extremely old vintage: a paper P-39 *Airacobra* from about 1944, and a *Monogram* kit of a Cord roadster that dates back to the early 1950s. Bill Abbott is also dabbling in an older form of modeling, working on a balsa wood DC-9 and an F4U *Corsair*, which he's had a few issues with in terms of aerodynamics. Bill's also spent some time with *Arii's* 1:144 A-10 *Warthog*, which he says is a very neat little kit that even has some cockpit detail. Bill finished his as an early A-10. Paul Burnett's probably the most knowledgeable member of the club when it comes to the old *Aurora* monster figures and their modern-day accessories, as is evidenced by the *Posthumous Productions* nameplate on his *Polar Lights* re-release of the Hunchback of Notre Dame. Paul used his own recipe for drool (stretched sprue, resin and Future floor polish) to make his *Halcyon* "Alien" even more wonderfully repugnant. Laramie Wright is working hard to convert *Italeri's* "Marine Sherman" into the M4A2 it's supposed to represent. Changes so far include re-setting the angle of the rear hull, modifying the turret, opening up the loader's hatch, building the wooden side shields from balsa, and contemplating increasing the hull by one-sixteenth of an inch. Mike Braun brought in the new *Tamiya* 1:48 Me 262 and the *Trimaster* kit of the same subject, allowing the curious to compare and contrast the kits. Ken Miller's had some decal difficulties with his *Airbu* between putting stripes on the wrong side and matching the color of the windows (some decals have black, others have gray windows). Ken also had two bins full of 737 parts, which someday will be his Aloha Airlines collection. Ken had planned to do five, but he's now learned that Aloha flew two variants of the 737 as cargo aircraft in addition to its passenger fleet. Mike Ackerman may have not done much assemblage on his 1:285 "microarmor" kits, but his painting and detailing work makes them look almost as detailed as large scale armor. Among the vehicles was a Sherman flail, a jeep and several trucks and half-tracks. Mark Schynert is using *Mainframe* conversion and parts from an *Aviation Usk* 'phoon Ib to build the Hawker *Tornado*. The hardest part outside of lots of sanding and filling, may well be drilling holes for the 12 .303 machine guns in the wings! Also com

along is his *Maintrack Supermarine Seagull*. Mark's worked on the cockpit, built up the pylon, and added a spar to the pylon to support the wings of his most unconventional amphibian. Chrs Bucholtz has painted the 1:48 *True Details* cockpit set for the P-47D in advance of assembling his *Hasegawa* P-47D-30, but his 1:72 version of the same airplane is much farther along. He's been doing most of his work in adding the extended tail fillet to the 1:72 *Hasegawa* kit. Chris also has the *Pegasus* F9C-2 *Sparrowhawk's* fuselage, lower wing and tail together, and his *Hasegawa* F4F-4 is painted, decalced and in the process of final assembly. Larry Roberts' little yellow Ford street machine was dubbed his "Tweet Rod," and he had to go through airline connections to get a good Philippine Airlines 747 model for his in-laws. The plane depicts the one he flew to the Philippines to get married. Greg Plummer has made several World Rally cars into street cars; this time, he's taken *Tamiya's* Nissan 350Z and turned it into a rally car. Greg used parts from a Celica and a Sefia—parts he took off to "street" them—and they fit the new model like a glove. Jim Lewis built his *Italeri* M24 Chaffee as it would have appeared as it arrived in Korea in 1950. Jim used *Fruimodellismo* tracks and scratchbuilt details like the infantry phone. Eric McClure is moving more quickly on his *Tamiya* jeep than the original could go! In just a couple of hours, he has the frame, engine and body together; Eric says that this kit is a great A.M.S. buster. Mike Burton showed off his *Hasegawa/*

Hobby Spot XF5U "Flying Flapjack," complete with *SuperCal* wood-grained propellers. Mike's SOC-3 *Seagull*, built from the *Wings* 48 kit, has been repaired after it had a 1:72 *AJ Savage* thrust upon it; Mike finished it in a late-war all-glossy sea blue scheme. Mike's also finished a 1:48 *Hasegawa* P-38E, which wears *AeroMaster* decals for an aircraft named "Betty." Cliff Kranz built the *Otaki* 1:144 C-5 *Galaxy* when both it and the kit were new; after walking through the plane at an airshow, Cliff was inspired to open both the nose and the tail of his C-5. Bill Ferrante glued the wings onto his *Monogram* F11C-1 *Goshawk*, and he's carefully filling the gaps around the struts with Mr. Surfer, one drop at a time. Bill marvelled at the fact that the kit decals, after almost 30 years, went on with no problems. Gabriel Lee built an F-5A in authentic Venezuelan markings, but went on a flight of fancy with his other three. He did a MiG-29 from the *Italeri* kit as a MiG-29N "Top Gun" adversary, an *Italeri* YF-23 as an F-23 "Blue Angels" aircraft, and a *Hasegawa* X-29 as an F-29 *Sabre Cat* in Swiss markings. And the model of the month goes to... Jim Lund's TB-3. Jim was inspired by Vladimir Yakubov's TB-3 to try the *ICM* kit, and struggled through it for two reasons. First, with the crazy corrugation and many parts, Jim actually had to read the instructions! Then, in order to get the wire wheels he wanted, Jim had to use photoetch from *Eduard*, something else he hates doing. The result, however, was a beautiful rendition of this big, gangly bomber.

SVSM BOOKSHELF

No Higher Honor: The U.S.S. Yorktown at the Battle of Midway

By Jeff Nesmith

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Anyone familiar with the naval history of World War II in the Pacific knows the pivotal role played by the U.S.S. *Yorktown*, starting with the hit-and-run raids that helped blood the carrier navy as an offensive force and her later crucial roles at the battles of the Coral Sea and Midway. The actions and the visual appearance of the ship are readily apparent to any who are interested enough to do some rudimentary research, but Nesmith's book succeeds in presenting the reader with something far more important: the ship's crew.

In 268 well-paced pages, Nesmith introduces us to dozens of *Yorktown* sailors and airmen. Some who have already passed on, like "Jimmy" Thach, are brought to us from older interviews, but many—men like Torpedo 3 radioman Ray Machalinski, Mess Attendant Thomas Allen, Aviation Ordnanceman Bill Surgi and others whose contributions made the *Yorktown* what she was—come from interviews conducted by the author.

Nesmith weaves these many interviews into a crisp story that covers the *Yorktown's* service in painstaking detail. We know the *Yorktown* was struck by bombs and torpedoes, but

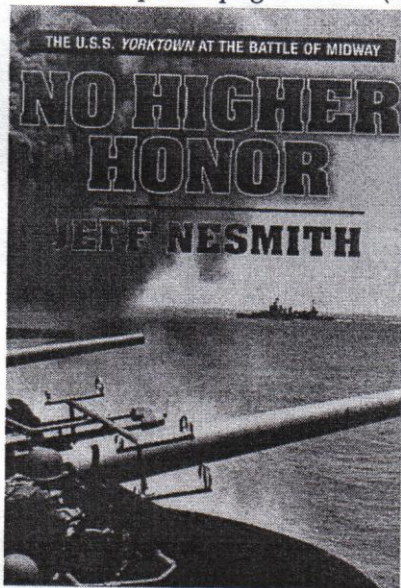
most of us don't have any knowledge about what happened to the men aboard when she was hit. Similarly, we know what the *Yorktown's* airmen did to the Japanese, but we have never had much opportunity to get to know them beyond Thach. Nesmith paints a vivid picture of what life was like aboard the ship in times of both calm and combat.

The depiction of the Battle of Midway is especially well done. By focusing on the Torpedo 3, Nesmith makes the plight of VT-3 (and Thach's escort of six planes, which he says

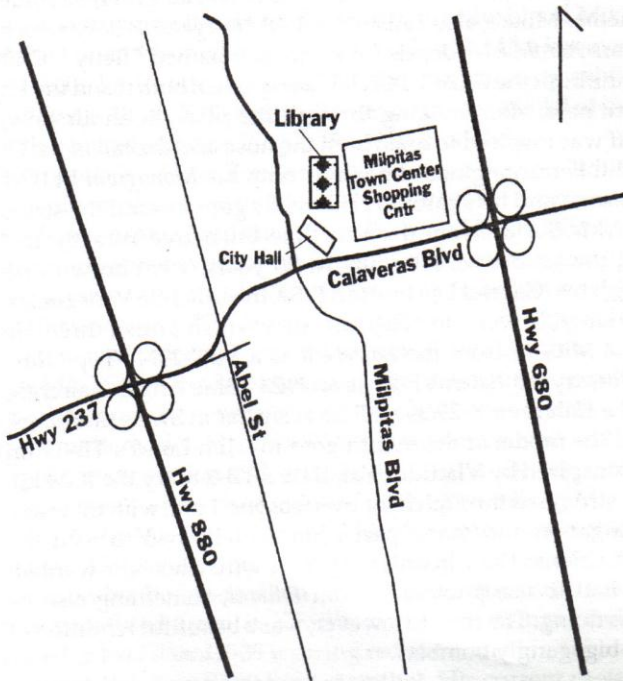
could have saved more VT-3 planes if he'd had two more fighters) plainly evident. Almost nothing is said of the dive-bombing attacks that destroyed three of the four carriers, but this tale has been told very often. It's refreshing to hear an account that focuses on men beyond the obvious "heroes." The attacks by the Japanese on *Yorktown* are even more compelling, going into great detail about the activities of the crew and the damage to the ship without slowing the pace of the book.

The nitpickers will be sorely disappointed by the terminology—they'll have little to complain about, because Nesmith gets it all right. This is probably because, unlike many authors, he was wise enough to let a former editor who happened to be a Lieutenant Commander in the war edit the book.

Our copy was found on the bargain rack at Barnes and Noble for just \$5.98, meaning that it should be a "purchase on sight" item.



Milpitas, until further notice!



Next meeting:
**7:00 p.m.,
Friday,
May 17**

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

**For more information, call the
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