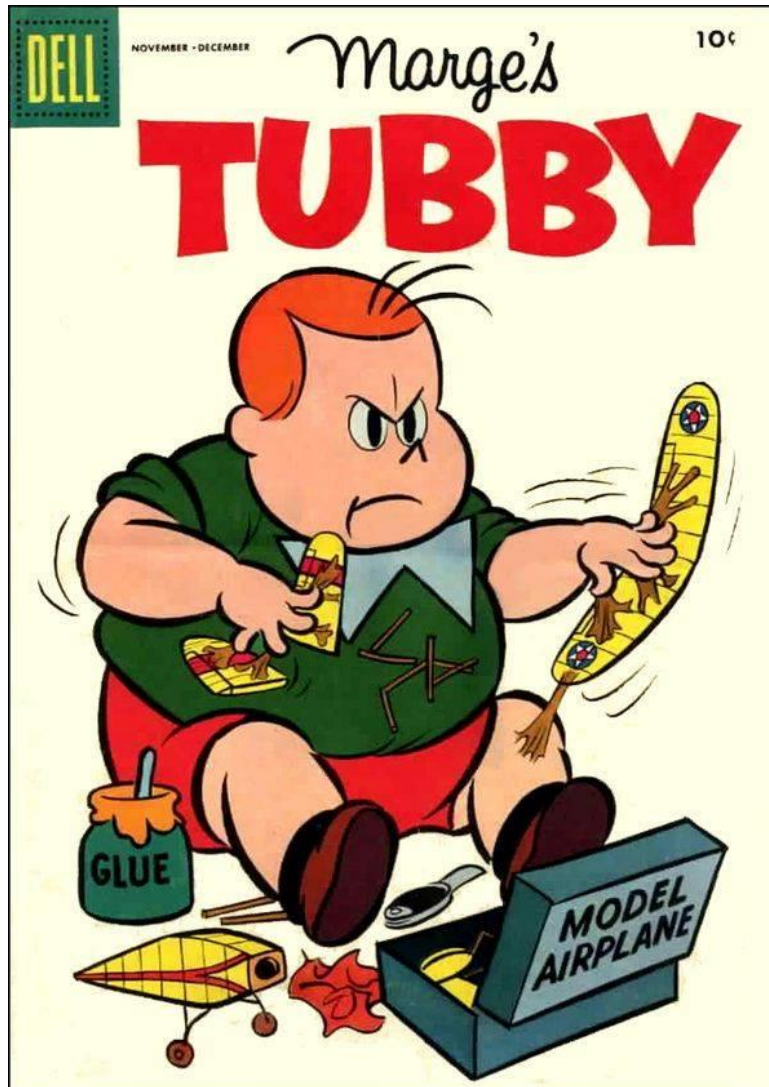


-----The Question ?? -----

Why The absence of Juniors in our model hobby?

From: jon farrelly

Speaking of which:



From: Tim & Debbie Nelson

This is not really a "juniors" issue in my opinion. Folks in general do not pursue "hands on" hobbies like they did back in the day. Stamp collecting, rock tumbling, bird watching, etc are all rare arts now. It's not just limited to men either – women who are passionate about quilting, needlepoint,

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sewing, etc are much more scarce. (Yes, I realize men & women can pursue these activities I've bucketed by gender, but you get my point.) There was a scrapbooking craze about 10 years ago that seems to have run its course. Bonsai, anyone?

What can we do about it? Having seen Bob Jacobsen/Mike Shaw & Emil generously host Make & Takes for years at the NWSM Show, with literally 2000 kids taking part, my conclusion is that M&T's are cool and a great good will activity, but they do little to really stimulate interest in our hobby. We need to appeal to all ages, not just from a skills & techniques perspective, but showing the social upside of what looks like a lonely pursuit. I believe our best bet is stuff like the following:

- Be seen frequently in public actively doing modeling (e.g. NWSM Show, FHCAM events, etc.) Look for other similar opportunities (e.g. Future of Flight "Maker Monday" events)
- Always be friendly and approachable at these events
- Always generously share advice and tips (when asked)
- Always have club and club event flyers to hand out at these events
- Be aware of and cross-promote other specialty clubs in the area (e.g. Galaxy Sci-Fi or PSAMA)
- Warmly welcome first-timers and returners when they come to meetings
- Conduct more seminars on varied aspects of modeling, especially to small groups, at club meetings or public events
- Embrace quick builds which promote the simple joys of modeling. Identify kits to recommend to beginners.
- Encourage those who summon the courage to bring a model to show at a meeting. Save the feedback for such time as you are asked to provide it - one unsolicited critique is generally enough to turn the recipient off the club or even the hobby forever.

All of the above is actually pretty easy, and mostly part of the fun we already like to have. It's a matter of turning up the wick. Other outreach ideas?

Cheers,
Tim

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From: jon farrelly

“Gundams” don’t count, they don’t encourage creativity. Yeah, right. Go look up Gunpla and see what’s being done out there before you make such BS pronouncements.



From: Russell Bucy

Here's my two pennies worth. I echo what Brian has said, but will go further. I think the absence of junior modelers is an effect of the societal values and education patterns in which we live today. Here's why I think that way:

- 1) It's true that History and English are combined curriculums in schools today, and are overshadowed by an ever increasing emphasis on Math/Science/Technology. This may or may not be a bad thing-- it's just the way it is because of the new world in which we find ourselves.
- 2) More importantly though, we no longer place a value on teaching kids how to create using their hands. "Legos" and "Gundams" really don't count IMHO, as these are mass produced pre-colored shapes that are highly structured to allow creativity without making a real effort to "create" something (for the casual builder anyway). They are great introductory tools, but take absolutely no effort to obtain, assemble or build into a scale model. They are more a "paint by numbers" approach than they are a sketch pad and paper.

My undergrad degree is from Seattle U. in Secondary Ed., and my wife was a teacher for 40 years. After I retired from the Army in 2006, I decided to become re-certified as a substitute teacher. In 2009 I was called to replace an ailing "Industrial Crafts" instructor at Thomas Mann Middle

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school in Clover Park School District for a week. Now, In my day, "Industrial Arts" meant drafting tables, machine shops, lathes and design work, and that's what I was expecting when I walked into the "Industrial Crafts" classroom at Thomas Mann. I was shocked to find 35 computer terminals, 4 3D printers, 2 automated paint booths, and exactly 0 technical manuals or textbooks. The teacher had thoughtfully written out instructions for me on how to turn on my "teaching terminal" and explained the week long project in great detail (he must have been expecting an old Luddite like me). The assigned project was for 9 teams of of 4 students per team to build a model a rocket and fly it, WITHOUT using their hands in any way! Each team had to design, manufacture, and build a model rocket on a CAD computer terminal, transfer the design to a 3D printer, transfer the printed model to the automated paint stations, then fly the rocket when finished (the only "hands on" part). Under no circumstances was a student allowed to use his hands to make, modify or finish any part of the rocket- to do so led to the loss of the grade for that team. To evaluate performance, the rocket would be equipped with a CO2 cartridge and launched from a rail located on the school recreation yard by a "launch control computer" equipped with camera and data recovery program. Grades were determined by attaining "acceptable performance parameters". Before anyone assumes this was in an advanced placement or a special school curriculum, I assure you it was in a standard public school setting, grade 6-8 (12-14 year olds).

When I was in school, "Industrial Arts" involved using your hands to craft something from a block of wood or chunk of metal. But today, kids are being taught to use "machines" to craft the work. The program the teacher was using is a nationally recognized Industrial Technology program, and came packaged with all the materials necessary, including CAD, CNC and related 3D technology and paint curriculum materials. I was surprised this has been going on in most schools since about 2005. I was even more surprised to see the kids were able to do the tasks with very few problems (thankfully for my Luddite level of knowledge). This new generation of kids has almost no experience building things without involving a keyboard, unless their parents are working with them on the side. Therein lies the real issue-- when this current generation starts having kids, there will be even fewer model builders since few parents will know what to do with their hands except type commands into a keyboard. I just hope we don't

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completely replace History, Literature, and rational thought with keyboarding or CNC operations.

VR, Russ



From: Hennessey, Brian

As someone with a child, and nephews, in the demographic of this subject I felt compelled to give my opinion.

If we are talking about getting **new** modelers interested in the hobby at the lowest level, it comes down to one thing, **subject matter**.

Despite the changes of social and family structure, children would be interested in building models if there are kits available of subjects that interest them. From there they can decide what level of skill and other subject matter they might want to build. They have no interest whatsoever in building a model of something that they have no interest in. There is always a desire to touch and feel something they think is cool, and an even deeper feeling if it is something they built.

My daughter and nephews play their share of video games and watch shows with vehicles and characters that they would definitely like to build models of, if they existed. They have no problem focusing and building Lego multi piece subjects with detailed instructions in lieu of actual model kits. So don't tell me it's because of a lack of attention span.

Another aspect is that history is no longer taught in schools, at the level we were taught in our youth, so there isn't an immediate interest in historical /combat aircraft and other vehicles.

A few areas where kids (the ones I personally know) seek out kits are Star Wars and Gundam.

Revell has some good snap together kits from the recent Star Wars movies that they can't get enough of.

And Gundam is an area where they are just starting to get interested.

Bandai seems to have both those bases covered.

They also like Blue Angels/Thunderbirds as those are something they've seen and can relate to.

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From there, as they mature and their education level increases, I could see them getting interested in cars and airplanes.

The bottom line of modeling is: build what you like, the way you want it, or it becomes tedious and no fun.

Once you connect modeling to a joyous feeling it becomes self-perpetuating. You just need the right 'gateway drug' model kit.

Thanks for reading,
Brian Hennessey



From: DeRosia, John

Eric- I was of course generalizing. No doubt we have exceptions in all aspects of life. There are literally mega-thousands of individual factors in everything.....and the world is far from how it was when a lot of us were younger. Parents are also faced with more challenges and pressures than ever I think.

I get extra tickled seeing the young modelers in magazines or at shows. However- as the subject started many emails ago- we just don't seem to see 'many' young/new modelers on average. There is not one simple solution for sure.

I was bummed seeing how membership in the IPMS / USA went down from last year. Reasons?...tons of them I'm sure.

The good news to me is all of us in the hobby keep promoting the fun of it, the great people and encourage new members with whatever subject interests they have. I love the diversity of our members and their different interests. Nothing wrong with even suggesting 'orange' is a great color every now and then.....

John

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From: Eric Christianson

Hi John, et al.;

Not so fast there, Cowboy. There is a modeler on this very list, aged around 15-16, that won several awards at our last show and has been a regular IPMS USA reviewer for eight months... and who routinely tackles kits from any and all manufacturers.

Easy kits (ala Monogram/Revell, etc.) may help, but this goes deeper than that. And I feel partially responsible for the decline of modeling when I look at the man in the mirror. I have two sons who started modeling, and then stopped. Some of the reasons why have to be on me.

My point is, the world isn't the only thing that has changed. Parenting has as well. And in some ways, not for the better.

My mother always used to say, regarding parenting; 'Set a good example, and let them fall on their own swords'. I am hoping that my sons move through life learning from their mistakes, and, fingers crossed, come back to modeling on their own. In the meantime, I plan to enjoy the heck out of this great hobby that I love.

Thanks!
Eric

From: DeRosia, John

Great responses from so many. Here is another of mine. Just my opinion and thoughts.

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Let's look at our hobby from the adult perspective. Almost 99.999999% of everything has to do with adults modeling. Nothing wrong with that.

But if I were a younger kid or an interested adult either wanting to start modeling or coming back to modeling- I would probably run and keep running. Why John?

Talk to experienced modelers or look at the magazines and articles. There seems to be nothing on the subject of 'easy builds'. What I mean is the pattern seems to be (a) buy kit, (b) buy aftermarket stuff for it –resin-different decals-PE-etc....(c) get 49 types of glues and fillers (d) mask, post shade, pre shade, no shade (e) get tools- compressors, paint booths, knives etc etc etc....(f) research your subject –can't build without that! – remember being young and having the box picture the only research you needed? (g) is the paint the right shade? dot filters? weathering.....and on and on.....you get the picture. Then the dreaded final word to the new comer "this little old 1/144thPanzer with 657 parts only took me 5 years to build!!!"

Would you run from this hobby? New comers then wonder " is this supposed to be fun?"

No more rambling but that's how I would look at things from a new perspective. Sort of scary. I'm not saying go back to the stone age- but where has the simplicity gone that so many newcomers would welcome more than anything.

I am now getting my straight jacket on to confront another day.....LOL!!!!!!!

John



From: Andrew Birkbeck

Gundam kits are what William, my son, cut his teeth on. The ease of assembly is second to none, and the parts are pre-colored. He could then watch the television show on which they were based. It used to upset me

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that he could build one in an afternoon (they aren't cheap), but as Morgan says, folks want instant gratification. They don't want to hear that it takes us a month to build something out of the box!

I picked up some of the "toon" kits from Meng recently, covering WW2 tanks. Toon as in cartoon. They sort of look like Shermans and King Tigers. And at under \$10, they are priced right. I plan on having them all built up and on display for next year's TankFest at the Flying Heritage Collection event on Memorial Day Weekend. And will happily tell folks "I built them in a weekend".

Cheers
AB



From: Morgan Girling

A free puppy with every model?

Perhaps more seriously, in which categories do we see a large and consistent group of young(er) modelers at the Spring Show? Gundams. Why? Some of it is the appeal of the subject to them. Some of it is that the Bandai kits are so precisely engineered that one can get very nice results by just clipping the parts and snapping them together, which means a relatively low bar to entry. Contrast the OOB quality of them to the run of snap-tite kits. I don't have kids, so this is a bit of a WAG, but I suspect that kit purchases are funded more by parents and less from the kids saving allowance or cutting lawns, so the builder's investment will be more their time than their sweat, which feeds into maximizing the results while minimizing the effort.

Sure, a Bandai Gundam doesn't compare with the results of a master modeler with a contemporary 10,000 part armor kit, a bucket of resin and PE aftermarket and decades of practice at the art. But, the Gundam builder doesn't need the decades of practice or all the tools and aftermarket bling to get a satisfying build that their peers can relate to with enthusiasm. One of the most common questions I get at any of our outreach meet-n-build

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events is “how long did it take you to build it?” They seem crestfallen when we cheerfully tell them that this one was a quick build that only took us a month. Our quest for perfection, while producing some spectacular models, is probably killing the hobby because the people we want to draw in don't have the patience or the time to invest in order to get the kind of results that they want.

Perhaps we need to collectively come up with a system of simple kits and techniques that don't involve a large investment in gear or training that will reliably give newcomers “pretty good” results in a weekend. A group challenge anyone?

Morgan Girling



From: James Schubert

Dear all,

This is indeed a problem.

Let's discuss it at the three TNI gatherings this month; perhaps we can come up with something that might work. Make & Takes don't seem to do it.

Cheers, jim bereft of any good ideas at the moment - or even any bad ideas



From: Daniel Ehrhardt

That is a problem we, as modelers, need to address as "envoys "as it were of the hobby that we so enjoy. Did I just write a run-on sentence? Dan.

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From: Jacob Russell

For those who are concerned about such things, there wasn't a SINGLE Junior or Children's entry in the PSAMA car show.

I think this is a PROBLEM.

Jacob



From: Bruce Biskup

Club Members,

I apologize for not responding to the blog post on this topic but I was not sure where the responses came from.

I believe that the answer to the question of Why the Absence of Junior Models in our Hobby is simply one of perception. From my experiences at our public events, there are many children and young adults who build models but see no value in joining a social club to support their model building efforts. The way our generation socializes is quite different from the youth of today mainly due to the rise of instant communications through cell phones and home computers. Simply put, the need to physically meet someone who has similar interests has mostly disappeared among teenagers and their young adult peers.

The popularity of video games such as World of Tanks and WarThunder shows that there is still a very strong interest in tanks, combat aircraft, and naval ships, especially from WWII. The popularity of these games has

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created a demand for models of vehicles represented in those games and especially the never built prototypes or variants. Most of our IPMS and NWSM members are very much focused on scale accuracy and so have no interest in these topics but the manufacturers see an untapped market and they have been exploiting that interest for several years now. Someone must be purchasing those models otherwise those kits would have been dumped and the product lines ended by now. I believe it is mostly young modelers who are building those kits.

I don't doubt that there are less people engaged in our hobby than there were when we were young simply because there are much more things to do. However, the industry we need to continue with our modeling passion is anything but dead. New companies are selling new and better kits using advanced technology that allows for limited production runs to be both of high quality and profitable. Molds for the models can be digitally designed and created on demand with much less investment cost. The demand for the models and finishing products are out there. If the hobby were dying, we'd be seeing a wave of consolidation among the manufacturers and a dwindling of the variety of models available to us.

To continue to promote our hobby, I strongly encourage our club to continue with our public outreach efforts as typified by our support of the FHC events and the Museum of Flight. However, at those events, we are playing to an audience that already has an interest in the topics we model. To promote the hobby to more people, we will need to find venues outside of the FHC and MoF events to reach the public who is not that familiar with the topics or our hobby. Unfortunately, I am at a loss as to what those events might be.

Tim's comments on the attitude to have at our public events is very accurate. I would add to have a plan in your mind to promote the hobby at these events. Over time, I have developed a presentation that seems to work well with those who stop by and look at my models. For example, at the FHC event, I specifically bring tanks that are familiar to players of World of Tanks. Many of my conversations with the children begin with them trying to name my tanks by type and model. It is not unusual for a teenager or even a younger child to correctly identify my Pzkw IIIE with the 37mm gun, my Pzkw IIIG with the short 50mm gun, and the Pzkw J/L with the long

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50mm gun. I know that it is those games that are promoting an interest in these tanks because many of the kids consistently mis-identify my T34/76 as an A20. The T34/76 is not that prominent in World of Tanks but the A20 is an early vehicle in the Russian armor lineup and is very effective in it's group. World of Tanks and similar games do not strive for historical accuracy so the more rare WWII tanks are much more prominent.

I intentionally bring a sample of kits from the easiest to the most difficult to show as questions arise when I talk with the public. 1/72 scale armor is also a wargaming scale so there are now good quality fast build kits (not snap tight) that I have purchased and show to the children and their parents. I also bring some 1/35th armor and 1/48th scale aircraft kits that I feel would be easy for someone new to the hobby to build. I tend to recommend a 1/48 scale fighter or the smaller 1/35 scale Tamiya kits over the 1/72 scale kits I build due to the smaller number of parts (aircraft in general) or larger parts (1/35th scale armor).

I also have a short discussion prepared on what is needed to start building models: sprue snips, a sharp knife, glue, acrylic paint, and a paint brush. I present my list as the bare minimum needed to build and paint a model. I can also provide a range of price for these tools so that they know what it is going to cost them. I point out that the sprue snips can be used instead of the knives and that the hobby in general is moving from enamel/lacquer based paints to acrylic paints due to environmental reasons. Parents are concerned about the health of their children and we need to be prepared to explain how to safely use the tools we use in our hobby.

We also need to be aware that those of use who support the public events tend to build models of combat aircraft and tanks. For this reason when I have been able to start a conversation at my table, I like to speak about Brandon's work since he builds very realistic submarines, various pop culture sci-fi topics and his scale dinosaurs. I also mention that we have several model car builders (Shelly) in our club too. My intent is to show that beyond what I present on the table, the topics available to model are endless and not limited to what is displayed. That message seems to work well with the women and younger girls who stop by. Once they realize that it's not all about tanks and airplanes, they become much more interested in the hobby.

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We should also be aware that the public sees many of the same trends that we see such as the dwindling number of retail hobby shops and a general lack of interest in hands on activities. Many adults who stop by are amazed that anyone still builds plastic models. People from Seattle are not aware of Skyway Models or Galaxy Hobby or some of the better on-line shops such as SprueBrothers, Scale Hobbyist, and Freetime Hobbies. However, when I point out that the selection and quality is much broader than what it was in their youth and that the internet shops provide worldwide access to products and supplies, these same people become interested in either trying to build a model themselves or have their children try. When I get a response like that, I feel that I have succeeded in promoting the hobby.

Just some thoughts,

Bruce Biskup
Bothell, WA