

NEWSLETTER

EDITED BY KEVIN CALLAHAN

DECEMBER 1993

Best Or Worst of Times?

First of all, on behalf of the leadership of IPMS-Seattle, I hope you had a fine Thanksgiving and are looking forward to an equally fine Christmas. Part of this no doubt includes subtly leaving Hasegawa catalogs in a prominent place, with little yellow post-it notes adding some emphasis.

A couple of announcements this month, one concerning the December meeting, and another involving the 1994 IPMS-Seattle Recon. Those of you who have been members of IPMS-Seattle for a long time know that the December meeting (on the 11th) is meant primarily for schmoozing. Many of the members bring cookies, brownies, drinks, or whatever, and we all stand around gabbing and gorging for the better part of the meeting. So feel free to bring a snack and join in.

The second announcement is that we have determined the date and location of the 1994 Recon. It will be held on Saturday, March 26, at our new meeting location, the Washington National Guard Armory in western Seattle. We have rented the main cafeteria and two classrooms (one of which will serve as the vendor

room). Though we still have to arrange for table covers, the total cost for the facility is less than 10% of what we paid the Red Lion for the 1993 Recon. The location, while lacking decent freeway access, has vast amounts of parking and is still fairly central to the metropolitan Seattle area. By the time you receive this newsletter, I will have finished the event flier, and we will be asking some of you to distribute them to hobby shops in your area as soon as possible. One of the main reasons for the good turnout at last year's show was our advertising effort, and with a new location we need to do at least as well in 1994.



Since 1993 is just about gone and we are approaching the time when the 1994 release schedules will begin to filter out from Tokyo, Nuremberg, and London, it might be worthwhile to both look back and consider what is ahead for modellers.

While hardly uncommon, it seems as though a lot of releases from normally reliable producers were delayed for abnormally long periods of time. DML and Minicraft are drastically stretching out their

release schedules, and even Hasegawa has been a bit slow in making good their promises. It is hard not to suspect that the kits they *have* released haven't sold up to expectations, and that they are slowing down their release cycle in order to minimize the damage to their cash flow situation. We all know that the development cycle for a kit runs between 18 and 24 months. If kits didn't sell well a couple of years back, during the most recent big pulse of new kits, the results will be fewer new kits in the pipeline for release now.

There are exceptions. AMT struck it rich on their KC-135, selling three times more units than expected. Their problem may be the exact opposite; they need time to orient themselves as a major cash-rich player in the aircraft model market.

Supporting the idea of trouble in new kit sales is the recent series of Hasegawa price cuts. New releases in their line of WW2 aircraft have dropped from \$15 to \$10. I must say that \$10 seems more realistic for what comes in the box, but drastic price cuts hardly sound like an industry acting from strength. Things aren't so rosy in Europe, either. ESCI

supposedly took a bath on their multiple-version F-27 kits. Airfix/Heller has been on the ropes for years. Revell-Germany turns out the occasional new -- and usually quite nice -- model, but they still haven't fully digested their purchase of Matchbox.

So where are the bright spots in our hobby? Strangely enough, most are in Eastern Europe and a series of small warehouses in the UK. If it weren't for the cottage industries and the emergence of former Communist countries, there would be many fewer interesting models on the retail shelves in 1993. MPM is producing a line of high quality multi-media kits, Kopro's standards have improved tremendously in the last year, and (though the quality is still pretty bad) a lot of strange little kits seem to be sneaking out of the old USSR. The combination of economic factors -- cheap labor and the desperate need for hard currency -- make for reasonably priced Eastern European imports. The other small EC manufacturers, like Pegasus, Aeroclub, and especially Huma, are turning out kits that look less like garage kits and more like the type we are used to seeing from the majors. And even though they don't count as kits, Airwaves has generated a lot of enthusiasm (and, I imagine, profit) from their etched brass detail parts.

What can we expect from the model manufacturers in 1994? Probably less of the same. There seem to be two

philosophical approaches to kitmaking. Either the manufacturer tries to choose aircraft that have never been done before (the Kopro Pogo and AMT KC-135 come to mind) or they try to produce a state of the art version of an aircraft that has already been done many times (such as the Minicraft B-24 and B-29, or the Hasegawa line of WW2 models). Both approaches have their merits, though I have a sentimental love for the kitmaker who goes a bit more out on a limb.

Minicraft has hinted that their next big WW2 bomber will be British (Lancaster, perhaps?) and Kopro has had a Wellington on their rumoured list for a while. There is a persistent story that Heller will be following up their 707 with a 1:72 DC-8, thereby increasing their presence in commercial aircraft. Italeri and Revell-Germany have been retooling many of their late-30s bombers into civil airliner versions (Fw-200, Ju-86A); a retooled He-111A might be considered a natural.

Not much emerged from the November Chicago Toy and Hobby Fair, the first of the season's trade fairs. A few reissues, not many new kits. Monogram has a 1:48 Douglas A-20 coming (sure to give headaches to any of you slaving away at the Koster Aero vacuform). The biggest news that I heard came from AMT, who announced a Northrop XB-35 flying wing for 1994, with an XB-49 promised for 1995, along with various B-52 and KC-135 subtypes. Not

much information so far from DML and Hasegawa (except for the F4F Wildcat), who usually account for most of the goodies in any given year. Hopefully this anemic list will be expanded when the full list is released at Nuremberg or Earls Court.

No doubt there will continue to be the inevitable gaps. No large kitmaker seems particularly interested in producing models of biplanes, except for DML's 1:48 series and various short-run and vacuform producers. And, surprisingly, the immediate postwar period has been neglected. We could certainly use updated models of such stalwarts as the P-80 (or the P-59) and the rather interesting series of postwar British jets. Hobbycraft has recently been delving into parts of this territory in 1:48; perhaps they should consider scaling some of them down. And, from the recent IPMS-UK Nationals, I have heard that Airfix was dropping hints about a 1:48 Buccaneer, possibly to be followed by a 1:48 Lightning.

It is important to note that we, as modellers, are pretty well served by the current hobby industry. That may seem hard to support at first, given a comparison to the 60s, when new models of unkitted aircraft were coming out on an almost weekly basis. But compare that weekly Airfix kit with a current monthly Hasegawa or DML kit. Plus, the aftermarket producers that have sprung up in the last two decades are giving us conversion parts, etched brass, decals,

reference material, and resin parts that no one would have predicted in the 1960s. Even if the flow of new kits is reduced in 1994, there is still a vast catalog of very good kits and accessories out there for us to deal with.



This issue you'll see two articles that were pushed out of last issue by lack of space. The first is a review of the recent 1:72 Hobbycraft A-1 Skyraiders, and the second is the first chunk of Lamar Fenstermaker's treatise on

World War 2 German anti-tank weapons. As usual, I have reprinted the map to our new meeting location on the back page of the newsletter.

Kevin Callahan

Hobbycraft 1:72 Skyraiders

BY GERRY NILLES

I am a fan of US Navy prop-driven carrier aircraft, and have been for many years. So, I was both pleased and encouraged by the news that Hobbycraft was about to release several versions of the Douglas Skyraider in 1:72 scale. The company is building a good reputation and has recently released a number of good kits, including a 1:72 series of the much neglected and overlooked Northrop F-89 Scorpion. With the Skyraider, I thought to myself that finally a decent 1:72 example of the perennial big navy attack beast would now be available.

Before I go any further, I should note that I do consider the Monogram 1:72 AD-5 Station Wagon a good kit considering its age. However, I do not share this feeling toward the two other offerings in this scale by Fujimi and Airfix. First, the Fujimi kit is closer to 1:69 scale, and, as such, is too large to be usable. The Airfix AD is a true 1:72 scale, and is for the most part the right shape, but requires

much effort because of the baseball-sized rivets, folding wings with large gaps, and its lack of any interior detailing.

The New Kit

I just happened to be at my local hobby shop when the latest Hobbycraft offerings arrived. The selections included the AD-4/6 in French markings and the A-1H in South Vietnamese markings. I understand the A-1H is also available in USN markings. I bought both of the kits, and it took me about a nanosecond to open the boxes. First, you should know that the only difference between these two kits is the decals. The second thing is that as current quality goes, the kit is a bit of a disappointment. However, the news is not all bad. The Hobbycraft release is still better than what is currently available in 1:72, and is fixable if you do a little kit-bashing. But, I am getting ahead of myself.

The problems

Let's start with the bad news first. The problems that I found were as follows:

1. The most glaring errors involve the engine area and cowling. The Skyraider cowl has a subtle but distinctive taper to it. The kit's cowling has no taper. The kit's cowling flaps are just a separate simple flat ring with no divisions, and again is not the right shape. There is no separate engine, just a hub molded into the one piece cowling. The small but unique exhaust glare deflector tabs -- which should be below the windscreen and just aft of the upper exhaust stacks -- are missing, as are the exhaust stacks themselves.
2. The body of the kit is, for the most part, a correct shape, but I will address that later. The problem is that it has molded-in armor plating around the outside of the cockpit and belly. This plating, which was a field mod, is very heavy-handed, and is I would guess 3 to 4 inches thick, scale-wise.
3. The last significant molding problem involves the two-piece windscreen and canopy,

which is a little too wide and heavy, especially the canopy section. The windscreen portion is usable as is, but a replacement for the canopy is my recommendation.

4. Other problems include lack of detailing in the cockpit and wheel wells. In truth, detail is practically non-existent in most interior areas. The Hobbycraft kit is by no means up to today's standards in this category.

5. Also, the French AD-4/6 version indicates that you can do one of the "Q" night attack birds that had the dive brakes removed and a radar operator compartment built into the fuselage. This compartment was in the aft part of the body, behind and below the cockpit, and accessible by side doors located just behind the trailing edge of the wing. These doors had small elliptical-shaped domed windows built into them. The kit's answer to this is a decal outline of the door, with a black, round spot for a window, and instructions to fill in the dive brakes' seams. The "Q" birds also had an equipment cooling scoop built into the top of the fuselage just aft of the canopy and carried a radar pod on the wing. Neither of these items comes with the kit.

The good news

I stated in the beginning of this review that the kit has some problems, but that it is quite salvageable. All you need is a

few parts from the Airfix kit, a Squadron aftermarket canopy, and a little effort. I might have missed a few things, but I felt that the kit has the following positives:

1. The overall shape, excluding the cowling, is correct. The heavy armor plating is easy to remove or thin down, with a file and sandpaper. Use a little care to maintain the proper contours and replace panel lines.

2. Speaking of panel lines, the kit's are finely engraved and correctly positioned.

3. Another plus is the variety of antennas molded into the top of the fuselage. This feature allows you to pick the configuration you want and just cut off the others.

4. Fit is good to above average, with only a little filling needed here and there.

5. The prop, landing gear, tailwheel, tailhook, antennas, and cannons are nicely molded, being both fine and sturdy. The main gear doors are a little thick, but still the right shape. Filing them a little thinner helps.

Fixes

1. I noted in the problem section that the Hobbycraft cowling and cowl flaps are the wrong shape, but that replacements are available. The Airfix Skyraider kit's combined cowling and cowl

flaps are correct and fit almost perfectly onto the Hobbycraft firewall. Only a few things need doing to adjust it. Start by thinning out -- from the inside -- the cowl flaps. After thinning is completed, scribe or notch these flaps into three equal parts per side. Next, thin out, almost to the engine itself, the back plate of the Airfix engine assembly. This allows the cowl to fit tightly around the Hobbycraft firewall.

2. Plastic card stock .010 to .015 thick works well for the exhaust deflector tabs. The correct shape is shown in reference publications such as "Skyraider In Action" by Squadron-Signal.

3. The kit windscreen is the right shape and very usable, especially if you build the model with the canopy in the open position. I suggest using the aftermarket replacement vacuum-formed canopy by Squadron. You of course only need the bubble portion and its frame. Be sure to include the wide part of the frame at the base of the canopy, where the slide assembly is.

The amount of detailing on this kit, or on any kit, is an individual thing. I only hope that the finished product you get is as pleasing to you as mine was to me.

WW II GERMAN ANTI-TANK WEAPONS (part one)

BY LAMAR FENSTERMAKER

With the returning popularity of anything German or World War II, it is now possible to build models of most of the common -- and many of the uncommon -- German anti-tank weapons without becoming too much of a serious scratchbuilder. Being inspired by recent catalog and magazine ads I put together the following list. The list may not be complete but I am continually amused at the recent proliferation of artillery kits. Try an anti tank gun; the injection molded kits are still relatively cheap and they can be habit forming. This list could keep you busy all winter.

Scale drawings of artillery are very hard to come by and most books only have a few pictures of each weapon. I presume this is because artillery people are not modelers. However, all is not lost, as the really complicated parts are located where you can't see them well anyway. Another advantage is that a gun carriage is often used with more than one barrel, a good example being the PAK 35/36. This list contains five anti-tank guns (and there are a couple of infantry guns too) that use this carriage, the only visible

difference being the gun barrel.

I highly recommend the two following Artillery books for reference. The pictures are really all you need for the conversions and the books are rather common in larger public libraries.

Weapons of the Third Reich; Terry Gander and Peter Chamberlain. Mostly pictures, with a short description of each weapon. Each chapter has a short development summary. If you only read one book, this is the one to read.

German Artillery of World War II; Ian Hogg. More text and fewer pictures of guns, but more information on the projectiles, cartridge cases, fuses etc. An excellent, but sometimes hard to read, book. Hogg is a former Master Gunner in the British Army so he gets into more technical detail.

First of all, an explanation of tank killing. There are three basic ways to destroy a tank. One is to use a high-speed projectile that by brute force punches its way through the armor and then bounces around inside, generally making life miserable for the crew. (Some projectiles also

have a very small explosive filling which does little but does help to start a fire).

Armor penetration is dependent on the weight of the projectile, the material that the projectile is made from and its speed, so to get deeper penetration the projectile must get heavier, harder or go faster. Since the projectile continually slows due to drag, as range increases penetration decreases.

If you really want to increase projectile speed the same amount of gunpowder moves a small projectile faster than a big one. Today the projectile, which looks like a big dart, is enclosed in a plastic box (sabot) that is discarded at the muzzle. During the pre-WW II years nobody seems to have thought of this simple solution, so the German Army found a difficult, but technically innovative way to do the same thing. To increase the projectile velocity they tapered the gun's bore. The projectile has two flanges that fit the rifling and are squeezed down as the projectile travels down the gun tube. Usually the last few inches of the bore are smooth to remove the rifling, which helps with drag. All this is complicated to manufacture and the gun wears out after a few hundred rounds.

The counter for this brute force penetration is to make the armor thicker, make it out of harder steel or place it at a steeper slope, which also helps the projectile bounce off. Armor quality hasn't increased for many years -- it's about as good as it can get. Throughout the war, armor got thicker and the weight of the projectile increased. Of course, as the projectile gets bigger so does the gun's weight, much to the dismay of the crew.

Another way to get into a tank involves some tricky physics. So the story goes, around the turn of the century an American named Monroe discovered that if he carved his initials into a block of explosive, set the explosive in contact with a piece of the US Navy's armor plate and detonated it, his initials were carved into the armor plate by the blast, this is the "Monroe effect". Anyway, if you make a shell with a cone-shaped hole in the explosive, line it with copper (no, I don't know what the copper does, but it helps penetration) and set it off the right distance from the armor a hot flame jet melts its way through much more armor than the same size of brute force shell (using less propellant) and fills the tank with real hot air and little drops of molten steel. Since the depth of penetration depends on physics not velocity, shaped charges penetrate to the same depth regardless of range.

Since spinning the shell severely degrades penetration,

some pretty complicated means (like ball bearing rifling bands) have been used to make sure the shell doesn't rotate when fired from a normal rifled gun. Uncomplicated guns, like bazookas, RPGs and smooth-bore guns don't rotate the shell but use fins for stabilization. To counter these shaped charges you cause them to detonate too far from the armor plate or cover the armor with something that doesn't melt well -- like sand. That's why German tanks have the extra armor plates hanging all over and Shermans are covered with sandbags, lumber, spare track links and other assorted junk.

Finally, you can get a big bunch of explosives and just blow the sucker up. Anti tank mines fall into this classification. Mines work on the bottom of the tank where the armor is the thinnest and even when they don't cause penetration of the armor they remove exterior things, like tracks and suspension wheels.

General notes:

1. Many artillery kits are made of metal. For those of you unfamiliar with metal kits, please note that the surface is not always smooth, flat or straight. Large flat pieces like gun shields are often slightly wavy, gun barrels are often warped and cast details are usually not as crisp as injection plastic. All of this is relatively easy to correct and the finished, painted piece makes a perfectly good model. Keep the faith when you take it

out of the box; it will end up looking OK, honest.

2. Most German guns have a two piece gun shield with an inch or so of air space between. Tamiya and Italeri injection kits have two piece shields but the center is solid. It's really worth your effort to thin both parts and use stretched sprue for spacers. Most resin and metal kits have a one piece shield with a groove. This really doesn't look like two pieces and other than by scratch building it can't be improved. Camouflage net, anyone?.

3. References on armor penetration never seem to give the penetration depth at the same range and same armor slope. Also, there are often several different rounds for each gun, each with a different weight and different penetration. The bigger the gun, the more different rounds. For example, an 88 can fire anti aircraft, anti tank, chemical, smoke, propaganda (a shell full of "why don't you give up" advertisements). And, of course, the Luftwaffe often uses different shells from the Army.

If a projectile penetrates 100 mm at 100 meters at 30 degrees slope and 50 mm at 200 meters at 0 degrees slope it DOES NOT penetrate 75 mm at 150 meters at 15 degrees. This makes comparison of penetration difficult. Also, some armies consider 0 degrees to be vertical and others consider 0 to be horizontal. Penetration

in the list assumes that 0 degrees is vertical.

4. The German naming convention for gun bores is in millimeters if it's less than 20 and centimeters if 2 or more. So it's a 15 mm MG 151/15 and a 2 cm MG 151/20 even they are identical except for the bore.

5. Hinchliffe kits can be hard to get in the USA. However, a couple of months or so ago the Squadron Mail Order Supplement had them. Of course, I couldn't find the list when I made this up. Prices are similar to Airmodel and Schmidt.

6. As I said, good scale drawings can be hard to find. If you need help with any of these guns I can provide most of what you'll need.

The Weapons

Hand Grenades

The German army developed some anti-tank hand grenades, but the references don't give penetration. This consisted of a small shaped charge attached to a wooden handle complete with cloth fins for stability. It may even have worked if you could throw it accurately.

The regular German hand grenade has an explosive-filled metal head (about 500 grams of TNT) attached to a hollow wooden handle. To fire the grenade you unscrew a metal cap on the bottom of the handle and pull a string attached to the fuse. By

unscrewing the handles and removing the fuses six heads can be taped to a seventh which still has a handle and fuse. This was used when more bang was needed and was used as an improvised anti tank weapon. I really doubt that this contraption can be thrown very well, but it would no doubt do some suspension damage.

Almost every manufacturer makes German grenades. Tamiya German infantry weapons kit no. 35111 at \$4.95 has a seven-headed one and Verlinden has a new pair of 1:35 tank hunters (kit no. 829 at \$18.95) armed with anti-tank grenades.

Tellermines TMi 29, TMi 35, TMi 35(stahl) and TMi 42

There are several of these mines in various sizes. All are round and flat with a handle on the side. You can only tell them apart by the shape and texture of the top. They contain from 10 to 20 pounds of explosive and many can be fitted with a hand grenade fuse to be used as a booby trap when someone picks up the mine. Dan Rowbottom has a video of a German training film in which an intrepid infantryman runs up to a Russian T -34, sticks a Tellermine under the turret overhang, pulls the string and ducks. I suspect he would get some posthumous decoration.

Tamiya's infantry weapons set and Italeri's kit no. 407 at \$5.25 contain Tellermines. I prefer the Tamiya set.

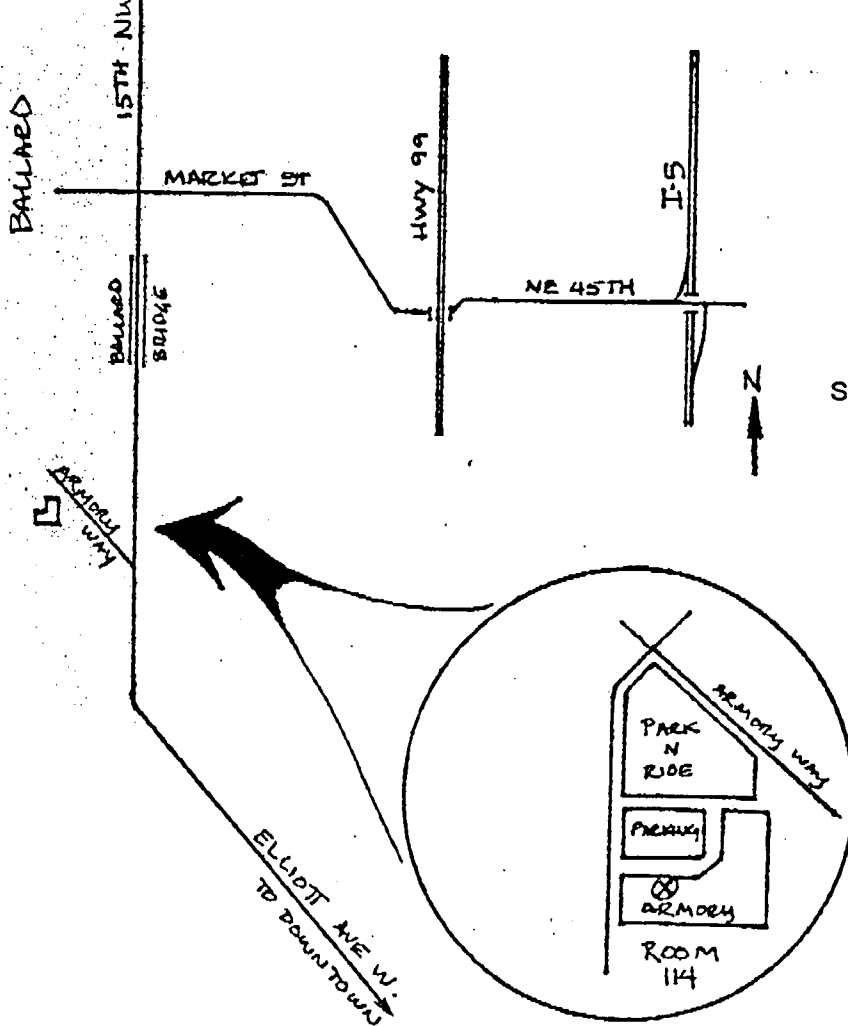
Haft-hohlladung 3 kg

This is a shaped charge with three magnets to hold it to the tank. You just stick it on the tank, pull the string and run. I suspect that it works best in urban warfare when used by people who are (a) sneaky, and (b) very fleet of foot. My references, again, don't give penetration, but it must have been good. Tamiya's German infantry weapons set (kit no. 35111) contains two. By the way "Zimmerit", that funny looking grooved stuff stuck all over German tanks, is a sort of concrete mixture intended to defeat this sort of magnetic charge.

Leichter Landunstrager "Goliath" SDKFZ 303

This is that cute little tank that ESCI made several years ago. I couldn't find it in any catalog, but that's probably because it's part of a set with a name that doesn't indicate the inclusion of a tank (or maybe it's out of production). This is an armored, mobile, 180-pound demolition charge, powered by a motor cycle engine and wire guided. The idea is that the combat engineers would drive it up along side an obstacle, which is then removed! It wasn't intended to be an anti-tank weapon but it sure worked.

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT IPMS-SEATTLE NEWSLETTER!



NEW MEETING LOCATION!!

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 11 at 10.00am

NATIONAL GUARD ARMORY
 Room 114
 1601 W. Armory Way
 Seattle, WA

From north- or southbound I-5, take the NE 45th st exit. Drive west on 45th under Highway 99 (Aurora Ave) to Market Street. Continue west on Market St to 15th Ave NW. Turn left and drive south on 15th Ave NW across the Ballard Bridge to Armory Way. Watch for signs!

If you are coming from south Seattle, take Highway 99 onto the Alaska Way viaduct to Western Ave. Follow Western north to Elliott. Continue north on Elliot to Armory Way. Watch for signs! There is plenty of parking.



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NEXT MEETING: Saturday, December 11 at 10.00am.
 See the above map for meeting location.

William Holowchuk
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