

Seattle Chapter News



Seattle Chapter IPMS/USA
January 2006

PREZNOTES



Happy New Year to you all! Once again, I've set no personal resolutions for 2006, so don't look for me to try to build to my pace of 11.34 models per year this year, or try to get over my aversion to decals (which has somehow replaced my aversion to putty!). I probably won't change scales or change my focus from movie planes, colorful subjects, captured types, or any of the other areas of interest that occupy my modeling interests. And I won't be focusing on Me 109s (unless it's one of the aforementioned captured types)!

A few weeks ago, I posted a question on Hyperscale because there seemed to have been an inordinate amount of articles and models of the Me 109. My question was simple: "Why are you so passionate about the Me 109?" The response was overwhelming, with a seemingly unlimited number of answers. "They built over 30,000, so there's an unlimited number of color schemes" or "it's one of the best known fighters EVER!". So on, and so on, ad infinitum, ad nauseum. A few responses were somewhat hostile as if I had tried to demean the love of their favorite aircraft. Some responses seemed to me to be to the point of obsession, and a few...well, some people need to get a life. I dunno, it sure seems like we've been inundated by 109 stuff recently. Seems like there is a new book or five new decal sheets, or even a new kit issued on a weekly basis. Or is it my imagination? However, until I see the definitive version of the Me 109G-14/A4/R2/AM&FM/12 Squared version produced in kit form or the newest decal sheet that I can model as the one the British captured on August 7, 1944 in eastern France and painted overall Sky Type S with type B roundels in six locations, and flown by Squadron Leader Biggles, I'll give it a pass. Besides, who in their right mind would want to model all 30,000+ Me 109s? Now, I have a passion for a lot of things but I certainly don't obsess about them. It's been years since I completed my last B-17. No obsession there, but then again...

In last months column I mentioned working on the Classic Resin Airframes kit of the Curtiss SO3C Seagull/Seamew. I've made some progress on it, epoxying the wings and horizontal tail surfaces on this past weekend. It's beginning to look like an aeroplane now. My experience with resin is somewhat limited, especially with complete resin kits, but it seems to be going together quite nicely. Only a bit of work with the bench sander to get the fuselage halves to fit! And it requires quite a bit of putty at the wing roots because I removed too much resin past the pouring gates. Other than that, it's been a rather fun project and since I used 5-minute epoxy instead of cyano adhesive, I haven't glued one single part to me or my workbench. That's cause for celebration all by itself! What's interesting about this particular model is that there's now an injection molded kit by Czech Model that appeared last month at the local hobby emporium, of which I knew nothing about until after I started my resin kit. A few months ago I was fiddling about with my Falcon vacuform Canberra kit and now Classic Airframes **and** Airfix have announced forthcoming kits in 1/48th scale. I'm almost afraid to start my resin Pucara or my vac Blackburn Beverly kits, because as sure as it rains in Seattle, someone will announce an injection molded kit!

We'll see you at the meeting,

Terry

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IPMS Seattle Web Site (Webmasters, Jon Fincher & Tracy White): <http://www.ipms-seattle.org>

Public Disclaimers, Information, and Appeals for Help

This is the official publication of the Seattle Chapter, IPMS-USA. As such, it serves as the voice for our Chapter, and depends largely upon the generous contributions of our members for articles, comments, club news, and anything else involving plastic scale modeling and associated subjects. Our meetings are generally held on the second Saturday of each month, (see below for actual meeting dates), at the **North Bellevue Community/Senior Center, 4063-148th Ave NE**, in Bellevue. See the back page for a map. Our meetings begin at 10:00 AM, except as noted, and usually last for two to three hours. Our meetings are very informal, and are open to any interested plastic modeler, regardless of interests. Modelers are encouraged to bring their models to the meetings. Subscriptions to the newsletter are included with the Chapter dues. Dues are \$24 a year, and may be paid to Norm Filer, our Treasurer. (See address above). We also highly recommend our members join and support IPMS-USA, the national organization. See below for form. Any of the members listed above will gladly assist you with further information about the Chapter or Society.

The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual writers, and do not constitute the official position of the Chapter or IPMS-USA. You are encouraged to submit any material for this newsletter to the editor. He will gladly work with you and see that your material is put into print and included in the newsletter, no matter your level of writing experience or computer expertise. The newsletter is currently being edited using a PC, and PageMaker 6.5. Any Word or WordPerfect document for the PC would be suitable for publication. Articles can also be submitted via e-mail, to the editor's address above. Deadline for submission of articles is generally twelve days prior to the next meeting - earlier would be appreciated! Please call me at 425-823-4658 if you have any questions.

If you use or reprint the material contained in the newsletter, we would appreciate attribution both to the author and the source document. Our newsletter is prepared with one thing in mind; this is information for our members, and all fellow modelers, and is prepared and printed in the newsletter in order to expand the skills and knowledge of those fellow modelers.

Upcoming Meeting Dates

The IPMS Seattle 2006 meeting schedule is as follows. All meetings are from **10 AM to 1 PM**, except as indicated. To avoid conflicts with other groups using our meeting facility, we must **NOT** be in the building before our scheduled start times, and **MUST** be finished and have the room restored to its proper layout by our scheduled finish time. We suggest that you keep this information in a readily accessible place.

January 14
March 11

February 11
April 8

IPMS/USA NEW MEMBER APPLICATION

IPMS No.: _____ Name: _____ M. _____ LAST _____
(leave blank)

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Signature (required by PO): _____

Adult: \$21 Junior (17 years old or younger): \$9
 Trade Member: \$21 Canada & Mexico: \$25 Other Foreign: \$28
 Family (Adult dues + \$5, one set magazines, # of membership cards required: _____)
 If recommended by an IPMS member, list his/her name and member number _____ (name) _____ (IPMS#)

IPMS/USA P.O. Box: 2475
North Canton, OH 44720

Check out our web page: www.ipmsusa.org

Alex Vraciu

by Bob LaBouy

Growing up in a Navy home and firmly believing that men who serve their country are the real heroes of our society, I am always awestruck by the stories of such men. One such gentleman is one of my many fraternity brothers who served our nation during World War II. Many years ago, I ran across a familiar name of a Delta Chi from our DePauw University Chapter who created quite a record during the Pacific campaigns, Alex Vraciu. I corresponded with Alex, exchanged phone calls and eventually had the opportunity to meet him and listen to some of his stories in person. He's quite a man and I also wrote a short article about him for our Fraternity's publication. I also played a very small role in researching and publishing an article on the F6F Hellcat in the *IPMS-USA Quarterly*, which featured Alex and one of his several aircraft. The following notes are most of what I have written about Alex. I hope many of you will have the opportunity to listen to Alex later this month when he will be at the MOF during a panel discussion about the famous "Marianas Turkey Shoot." (See more information on page 11). You won't be disappointed.

"Where did we get such men?"

This poignant question is asked by the Admiral in James A. Michener's *The Bridges at Toko-Ri*, an epic war story about the pilots and men of the U.S. Navy during the Korean War. While this quotation has come to remind many of us of the sacrifice and contributions many young Americans made for our country during that conflict, I have often remembered it as I review the numerous contributions of young Americans who have fought for and defended our country during World War II.

America's experience and the reactions of its young men during World War II has

been the source of numerous very popular books lately. The key ingredient of the generation of Americans who fought for our country is now seen as being made up of mysterious and hard to define qualities. These same qualities are being revisited and popularized on the "big screen" by such movies as *Saving Private Ryan*. You do not have to look to popular fiction to see such men and it constantly amazes me that so much fiction is written and filmed when the real exploits are so much better and awe inspiring.

I have long held those who serve in our Armed Forces in high regard and attempted to honor their service and dedication. It is the source of great pride as a Delta Chi to know the young Delta Chis who came before me in the Fraternity. Their sacrifices have figuratively given us the opportunity to enjoy our lives and much of the freedom we enjoy today. The war years issues of the *Delta Chi Quarterly* are literally filled with many stories about Delta Chis who left their undergraduate and post graduate college lives to serve our country. It provides a vivid and often sad commentary about their trials, heroism, and ultimate contributions in our country's struggle to defend itself during World War II. I would like to share some of those contributions with you. It is important to recall their efforts for our country and to remember their efforts to gain a better sense of the contribution which our Armed Forces have made in the life of our Nation's history.

One such Delta Chi was a young man from the DePauw Chapter, Alexander R. Vraciu. In case his name is new to you, it is because he is now retired and living quietly in the rolling hills east of the San Francisco bay area, following retirements as both a Navy fighter pilot and commercial banker. Life wasn't always quiet nor peaceful for Alex. Even as an undergraduate, Alex was often the center attraction at the DePauw Chapter. In one incident, which later may have seemed like a precursor to his Navy experiences, Alex was the center attraction in a prank during

one of Professor Fay's adolescent psychology classes. During a final exam, to the complete consternation of both the professor and his fellow class mates, Alex got up and jumped through an open window. An article in the *Quarterly* reported, "Vraciu 'cracked' under the strain of the final and leaped out a second story window. Coeds screamed and the shaken professor and the class rushed to the window. They found Vraciu sitting in a tarpaulin held by his Delta Chi fraternity brothers." While flying in the Navy, once during a training flight and twice during the Pacific campaign, he was to successfully jump from Navy aircraft.

Like many of his contemporaries, he saw the war coming and obtained his private pilot's license at the DePauw Flying Club under a government program during the summer of his junior year. Following his university graduation in 1941, this East Chicago, Indiana native entered the service as pilot candidate just before Pearl Harbor and our entry into the war. He proudly received his wings as a Naval Aviator on June 24, 1942. Various notes in the *Quarterly* pointed to his early World War II training as a Naval Aviator and he was to fly the premier fighter off Navy carriers in the Pacific, the F6F Hellcat. Alex finally got to the fleet and served in Fighting Squadron Six (VF-6) in early 1943 and was fortunate to have one of the Navy's legends as his squadron commanding officers, LCDR "Butch" O'Hare. Many of you will recognize the O'Hare name, both as one of the Navy's early Medal of Honor recipients during the WW II Pacific campaign and as the name of one of the world's business airports, O'Hare Field near Chicago. It was while flying with LCDR O'Hare on October 5, 1943, that Alex scored his first aerial victory over a Japanese "Zeke" near Wake Island. By mid February, 1944, his record of enemy aircraft shot down had climbed to nine. By any standards, his success as a naval aviator had earned him a well deserved rest and rotation to the States. However, characteristically for Lt. Vraciu, he requested reassignment to another carrier squadron,



VF-16 aboard the *USS Lexington*.

It was during this carrier duty with VF-16, in what was to later popularly proclaimed to be the “Marianas Turkey Shoot,” that his best known exploits were to occur. On earlier flights he had brought his total victories to 12 enemy aircraft. But on June 19, 1944, Alex achieved the almost unbelievable — he shot down six aircraft in a single mission. The next day brought his final confirmed 19th kill. His personal achievements that day became one of the most noteworthy victories in our war efforts in the Pacific. Alex became one of America’s leading “aces” and the Navy’s highest scoring pilot in the Pacific campaign over Japan and ended the war as the Navy’s fourth highest scoring ace. In addition to his 19 aerial victories, he had destroyed 21 enemy aircraft on the ground.

But his war effort did not just end at that point. While flying ground support on December 14, 1944 over Luzon Island in the Philippines, Alex’s aircraft was struck by anti-aircraft fire and forced to parachute safely from his damaged aircraft. He was subsequently reported as “missing in action.” Alex was neither “missing” nor

was he “not in action”. He succeeded in evading capture by Japanese ground forces, joined with a group of local guerrillas and spent the next five weeks as their leader fighting the Japanese on the ground. Though he had grown a beard and

let his normal well groomed Naval attire slip a bit, he was happy to eventually meet with a group of Army National Guard soldiers. When he was identified as a naval aviator and returned to the Navy off Luzon, he was armed with a Japanese pistol and sword as his only personal possessions.

Alex continued his career in the Navy and served as a test pilot at the Naval Aviation Test Center in Patuxent River, Maryland, with assignments at the Naval Post Graduate School and various shipboard and shore assignments. He was also rewarded with what he considered his most important assignments, that of command of his own fighter squadron, VF-51. It was during that tour of duty and his flying in the Navy’s 1957 Naval Air Weapons Meet, that his aerial gunnery was recognized as the top scoring in the entire Navy. In his congratulatory message, the Commander of Pacific Naval Forces commented “you are top gun in jets in peace as you were with Hellcats in war.”

For his services on behalf of our nation, Alex Vraciu was awarded the Navy Cross, the Distinguished Flying Cross and





Following his outstanding naval career and retirement as a Commander, Alex retired in the San Francisco Bay area and entered into a second career in commercial banking.

Throughout his life and careers, the qualities Alex Vraciu exemplifies are those of courage, dedication and leadership. While Alex Vraciu, DePauw University, Class of 1941, is quick to deny any special attributes, he definitely is one of those few men have more clearly demonstrated these qualities and is also clearly an example of the men of whom Michener wrote.

numerous other awards. One of the highest honors bestowed on Alex was his nomination for the Congressional Medal of Honor in June, 1944. His recommendation was totally unknown to Alex until his naval career had almost drawn to a conclusion in early '60s. It was later determined that this recognition was not granted simply because of an error and misunderstanding by a reviewing Navy admiral. In 1990 a strong effort was mounted by an Indiana businessman and a Congressman to see the Navy's earlier error corrected. The Navy decided it would not reopen such a recommendation after 46 years. It seems unfortunate that the Navy has chosen not to correct this error and grant the recognition which Alex and his actions clearly merited. Along the way, Alex Vraciu and his exploits have become a well known part of Naval aviation history and the stories of his action in the Pacific are in almost every book about World War II. A few years ago, it was determined that one of Alex's aircraft was located in England and is now being fully restored as a museum piece.



Minicraft 1/144th Scale Douglas DC-8-71

by Carl Kietzke



Precision fit and Minicraft are terms that I normally do not use in the same sentence; however the latest release from Minicraft of the Douglas DC-8-71 has just that. The box proclaims that not only is it the first model of the DC-8-71, but that it is the first kit to be totally engineered using CAD/CAM. This kit has better fit and detail than I have seen on many Hasegawa and Revell Germany airliners. All dimensions and features check out with various references. If this is an example of what the future holds as far as quality from Minicraft all I can say is Yahoo!

Upon opening the box you find two large white sprues and one small clear one that contains the flight deck upper section. Careful study of these sprues reveals all necessary components to build any Super Seventy Series DC-8. Separate wing tips provide for either the 71/73 or 72 wings. There are also two separate nose pieces for the Seventy Series or the earlier 10 through 60 series aircraft. Looking inside the fuselage halves reveals cut locations for shortening the fuselage for the series 72 and earlier marks of the DC-8. Do I sense a full DC-8 series ahead?

The low parts count allows for a quick build, and I was able to have the main

fuselage and wings together and ready for balancing within an hour. Three 1-1/8th inch sections of 3/16th guarantee a nose down attitude. First crisis - once I slid the wings in they were there and not coming back out without destroying something. Careful masking lies ahead. The Delta

scheme provided in the kit will make it easier, as the early fully painted wing can be done instead of Bright aluminum, light gray, coroguard, and dull aluminum. Wheel bays have delicate, but convincing detail - no using the inside of the top half as the bay ceiling.

The engine nacelles are a joy, as the design allows the two main halves to be assembled and painted before the fans, main body and nose piece are attached. The molding of the noses as separate parts eliminates my most hated seam, inside the inlet. The only gripe with the engines is

that the main fans are very generic and lack the distinctive CFM-56 pattern.

The landing gear is a delight, as it looks right, and is unquestionably strong enough to hold up the weighted model and allow the correct DC-8 stance.

Decals are Delta Airlines classic Widget, printed by Cartograf. 'Nuff said there.

Overall, it would appear that Minicraft has taken a lesson from Revell Germany in terms of fit and detail. They have then taken it two steps higher in the fit department. Now if RG, Hasegawa, and Airfix would take a lesson from Minicraft and lose the molded open windows that need glazing. Overall it earns a rating of 3.85 (A-).

Buy it, encourage Minicraft to complete the DC-8 series. Maybe we should ask them for a Boeing 757-300 using the same process and design features. Or maybe even a 767-400?



In-Box Review: Special Hobby 1/72nd Scale Vultee A-35B Vengeance "Armee de l'Air"

by Hal Marshman, Sr.

I ordered this one from the Squadron monthly sale catalog for the princely sum of \$22.99, a little overly much for a 1/72nd single-engined plane. In any event, it's a rather unique bird, and injected molded kits of this cranked-winged dive bomber are a little sparse on the ground. I believe there may be a vac kit in 1/48th, but that's all. As a kid, I built the Comet 50 cent stick and paper flying model version a couple of times, and there was an ancient kit in 1/72nd by Frog, eventually pressed by Novo. In comparison, the Frog/Novo kit is much cruder.



The kit is pressed in medium gray fairly firm plastic with engraved surface detail. The casting and engraving is crisp and petite, as are the parts themselves. A few small parts display some flash, but nothing that can't be handled in short order with a sharp no. 11 blade. There are two cowling fronts provided, with one of them probably advising us of a planned second version of this plane. It was flown by the British and Australians, and had been originally designed for and ordered by the French, but none flew before the French defeat in 1940. The French finally got to fly the aircraft when 67 were supplied to the Free French in North Africa in 1943. The US Army Air Force also ordered some.

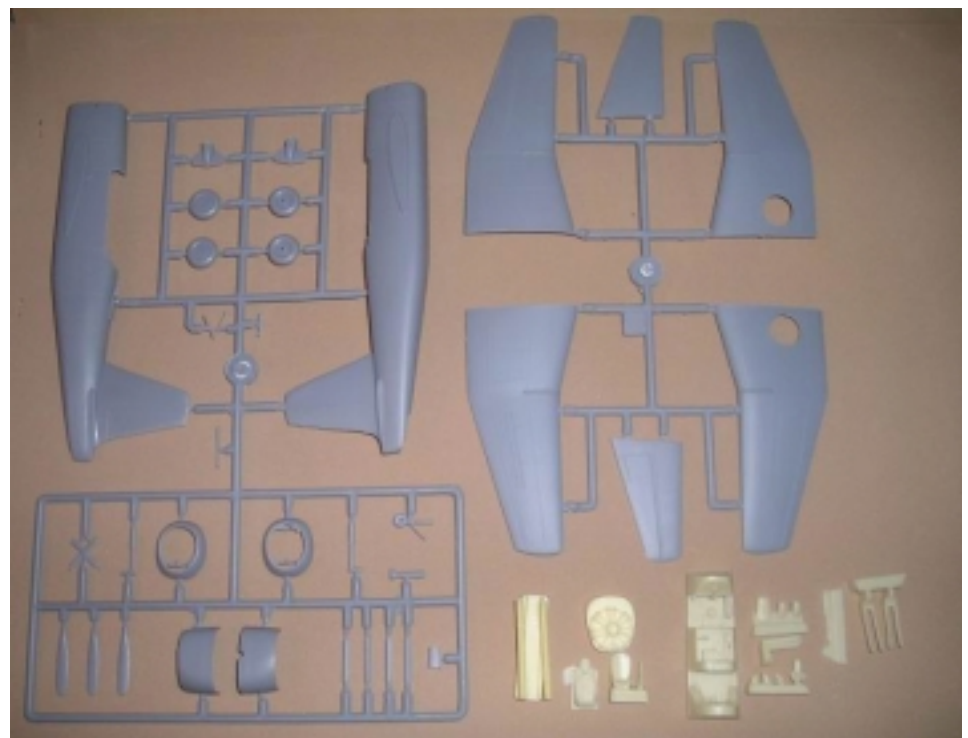
I digress, these nice castings lack locating pins, so assembly must be done carefully, making certain that parts are properly lined up before applying cement. Actually, no pins are better than misaligned ones. Gear legs, tires, and wheel covers are well done, but the wheel wells lack detail. The prop blades are separate, fitting into a resin hub, and this casting is a real jewel. The entire cockpit, seats, side walls, etc are all resin, and very nicely done. The gear leg wells are much like those of the P-40, and are individually cast in resin with separate curved doors. The engine is also resin, relief cast into a firewall. Again, this is a deeply cast item, and should paint up well, leaving much room for dark washes and dry brushing. If done properly, it should show up well in that big open cowling front. There's a very neat little .50 cal gun for the rear seat position, also resin. There are two different exhaust sets, one short, protruding just a little out of the cowling, and a long set, extending back to the cockpit.

The long glass greenhouse is provided as a clear vac unit, one piece. If you want it displayed open, you'll have to do it yourself. If like me, you have a tendency to

screw up these vac items, Special Hobby has provided a spare. A little hint: lots of folks are leery of using tiny amounts of CA glue to hold vac form canopies in place, lest the fumes cloud the clear. Okay, coat the inside of the canopy with Future, and this won't happen. Don't apply too much CA, as you can still cause problems.

Special Hobby has included a decal sheet with markings for two different French Vultee Model 87s (A-35 in US parlance) The two planes catered for are both Armee de l'Air, with O.D. uppers and Neutral Gray lowers, with medium green splotching on leading and rear edges of all flying surfaces. Special Hobby has included the decals, vac clear parts, and resin accessories in their own separate clear pouches, as well as the two main sprues in their own clear bag. The one thing I don't like is that the box is one of those damnable open-at-both-ends types.

I'm anxious to get going on this baby, and hope to provide pics when completed. Hopefully, the attached pic of the parts will serve to whet your appetite. I still think that's too many Yankee dollars for a single-engined kit.



“Can’t We All Just Get Along?” (With Apologies to Rodney King)

by Jacob Russell

“If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”

How many times have you heard this tired expression? Probably more times than you’d care to remember. But when these words are uttered in defense of IPMS/Seattle they have an added emphasis.

IPMS/Seattle has around 100 dues paying members. This number fluctuates each year as members leave the area, start families, and find other interests. But what about people who are unhappy with the club, decline to renew their membership, and simply stop coming to meetings? I know three modelers, all of them both prolific and talented, who have demonstrated their displeasure with the club by dropping out of it.

It is my impression that the number of active modelers within our club is declining each year, but I might be wrong. It may be a case of a static number of modelers building fewer models. I for one am building fewer than half of the models that I built only three years ago. But if I am correct then I don’t think that we can afford to lose members who are passionate about modeling.

Let me state emphatically that it’s not my intention to criticize, assign blame, or point fingers. I love this hobby, and I love you guys, too. I get a real thrill from coming to our meetings and seeing what people such as Bill Glinski, Bob LaBouy, John Frazier, and others are building.

I had an epiphany about the nature of work last year. I work for a printer in downtown Seattle and we are usually very busy. I am ambivalent at best about the work that I do, and one day when I was feeling especially sorry for myself I realized

that my perceptions about my job were flawed. My job, I realized, was neither fair nor unfair, neither good nor bad: it was just my job. And if I didn’t accept the realities of my job I either needed to find a way to change it, or I needed to find a new one. I am opting for the latter course. This moment of clarity was tardy, by any measure. I feel that this realization about the true nature of work - without attaching any beliefs or expectations to it - means that I have finally grown up.

I also experienced a similar moment of clarity about our club. It’s probably an understatement to say that my “Modest Proposal” (wherein I proposed that each member commit to building one model per year) of two years ago upset some people. One fellow wrote that he would quit the club if compelled to build a model as a prerequisite for membership, and another asked me if I “hated the old guys.” I was a bit taken aback by the firestorm of criticism that resulted from my proposition that perhaps the club had expectations of its members. I reacted to this criticism by lowering my profile, although some might say not nearly enough. I haven’t changed any of my opinions, not in the least. But I must concede that what other modelers do, or don’t do, is not my problem, and none of my business. I mentioned that I had changed my perceptions of the club. I did so primarily for my own benefit, because I had become one of the people who had simply stopped coming. I had become very negative about the club and I spent a lot of time talking behind people’s backs and bitching in general (just ask my girlfriend). I realized that this negativity was distorting my perceptions of IPMS, which prevented me from enjoying the club for what it was. Instead I lamented what it was not.

I feel now that IPMS/Seattle is really neither good nor bad. It is simply the club that I have chosen to belong to. Bashing the club because fewer people build than I might like hasn’t exactly been the recipe for winning friends and influencing people! I have noticed that a form of

Natural Selection happens at each meeting: I instinctively gravitate to the people in the room who are active builders. I usually have questions for these people, and hopefully I have brought something to show them as well. I also belong to a 12-Step fellowship, and one of our mottoes is “Take what you need and leave the rest.” That is exactly what I need to do: live and let live, which I assure you, does **not** come naturally to a controlling, recovering addict like me.

I will continue to push for change within IPMS when and where I think that change might be helpful, but I will try to do this in a more positive and less confrontational way. I don’t think that “taking my marbles and going home” is an effective approach, because I have found that in my absence from IPMS, I missed you guys and I needed to be here. I have been building models long enough that I have become reasonably adept at it, but I need your input and feedback. As they say in recovery circles, I’ll “keep coming back!”

Editor’s E-Mail Address Temporarily Changes

Unfortunately, I have been having recent problems with my usual e-mail address, **editor@ipms-seattle.org**. It seems that I have not received any incoming mail since December 22, and have no way of knowing if any messages have been sent to that address since that date.

If you’ve sent any articles to that address in the past few weeks, I may not have received them. Until I can rectify the situation, please send all correspondence to my alternate e-mail, **baclightning@yahoo.com**.

Thanks, and I apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.

- Robert

Hurricane Bookshelf: Christmas Loot

by Scott Kruize



Like the Hallmark trinket my friends Kathy and Dave gave me? It's the 2005 "Sky's The Limit #9", which you cognoscenti will recognize as a genuine 1931 Laird Super Solution. Truly "out of the box", as you see it, right onto my Christmas tree! And it's only the beginning of my "haul"!



Modern Land Combat by David Miller and Christopher F. Foss. Copyright 1987, by Salamander Books, Ltd.; printed in Belgium by Portland House of New York.

Hanging around with you guys inevitably leads to the realization that there's more to model than just airplanes. Bonus or detriment, I can't tell at this point...I will let you know after I've tackled some armor kits! But the fact is that I've become interested in the small arms, artillery, and especially the armored fighting vehicles used in conflicts around the world. I know very little about them and had been under the impression, till now, that there were only a handful of different main battle tanks, personnel carriers, self-propelled artillery, and armored cars, besides some specialized pieces of tracked machinery such as mine-flails and bridge-layers. Nothing, I thought, anything like the complex variety of, say, WW2 warbirds.

This Christmas present rolls right over and obliterates such ignorance. Its 208 pages contain an astonishing array of vehicles and weapons. I had no idea there were so many different MTBs (Main Battle Tanks) in service, or such a variety of other armored fighting and support vehicles, such as those used for recon, urban and

border patrol, anti-aircraft, or anti-tank duties. There are many smaller 'cars', for good terrain, built-up urban areas - anywhere in the military landscape where the enormous weight, armor, and firepower of the big tanks isn't required, or even appropriate. Yet this book, full though it is, shows only current AFVs and associated technology - no historic vehicles, at all. I see now that armor modeling can go on for a lifetime without exhausting the subject matter!

Specific fighting machines have their own pages here, with specifications and performance figures, brief developmental histories, and explanations of each design's purpose and function. Highly detailed, colored artist's conceptions show typical schemes and portray the ordnance the machines carry: missiles, ammunition for its main and secondary armaments, etc. There is also usually at least one full-color photograph of each vehicle type in action. Speaking of color: armor guys claim to assemble their kits, then paint them - quite the opposite of aircraft kit construction. But in fact, many AFV schemes are variegated, not just plain overall dark green, brown, or gray. See the sample below from the Middle East wars.



There are airplanes in this book: heavily armed attack helicopters like the AH-64 Apache, Mi-24 Hind, Mangusta, and Lynx. These machines are intimately and ferociously intertwined with their allies and enemies clanking over the ground of the modern battlefield.



Short chapters go beyond the machines themselves, to how the various equipment and arms co-ordinate on military operations: battlefield helicopter use, C3 (Command, Control, and Communications), electronic warfare, artillery and infantry deployment, low intensity/counterinsurgency warfare, river crossings. Not all the operations described are only drills or exercises: real battles like the 1973 Egyptian Suez Canal assault and final 'set-piece' skirmish of the Falklands War are described.

After this fine introduction, it's easy to see how these protagonists of the modern battlefield make good modeling subjects. Even more clearly, I see how much I don't want to be anywhere near them, when they're in action!

Fighter: The World's Finest Combat Aircraft 1914 to the Present Day, by Jim Winchester. Copyright 2004 by Paragon Publishing, of Bath in the United Kingdom.



The American Fighter Plane, text by Amy E. Williams, illustrations by Ted Williams. Copyright 2002 and 2004, by Barnes and Noble Publishing Inc.



My brother Chris sent me a gift card, from the latter publisher, for my birthday. Actually, it wasn't for my last birthday, or the one before that, but the one before that. I found it while digging through my stationery drawer to find tape and scissors to start wrapping Christmas presents, and was horrified by the purchase date on the card. But a quick call to the Customer Service line reassured me that its \$20 hadn't expired, so I dashed right down to B&N to buy myself something. I have, after all, a duty to support the economy, and I don't flinch from it!

The Tukwila B&N, by Southcenter, had a single copy of the first book in the Last

Chance cart. I had to have it, and not just because of the machine occupying pages 66 through 71. (Yes, as a matter of fact, it is...how'd you guess?) Paging through its 320 pages, I realized - surprise! - I was looking at mostly photographs I'd never seen before. (Hey, Prez! —Get a load of this shot from page 70! See: the one-off Hillman Hurri-bipe did get off the ground!)



Many are in color, always a boon to us. Even planes from before WW2 have color pictures. Like two Polikarpov I-16s, restored and flying today over New Zealand - here's a chance to pick authentic colors for them as models.

The color photographs of the World War One planes are mostly of replicas, although page 34 does explain that, "the Camel pictured is one of the few genuine ones still airworthy, and the only one built by Sopwith themselves".

I seem to have missed entirely the second-named book, but my stepdaughter and her husband found it for me, and were delighted when I said I'd never even seen it. Many selections are common to the first book, nothing obscure or insignificant: the Curtiss P-40 Hawk, Grumman F4F Wildcat, Lockheed P-38 Lightning, Vought F4U Corsair, Republic P-47 Thunderbolt, Northrop P-61 Black Widow, North American P-51 Mustang and F-86 Sabre, Chance-Vought Crusader, McDonnell F-4 Phantom, up to the modern F-14, -15, -16,

and finally the new F-22 Raptor. (The first book also has a bunch of airplanes from...you know...furrinerland...)

This second book's pictures are also remarkable, but for a slightly different reason. Surfing the World Wide Web regularly, laboriously digging through the archives of the MOF and the Air and Space Museum, even paging through every single book in the Jim Schubert Library, would not produce all these exceptional pictures.



Each aircraft has a fine presentation by artist Mr. Williams, but then is shown in photos, too. Not just in the usual parked or in-flight shots, but on test rigs and assembly lines on the factory floor. A lot of work must have been expended to find them, and I want to thank the Williamses. They're the very best large-format-camera industrial photographs, sharp and bright and abundantly detailed, where clarity of presentation of the subject matter, through full, carefully-graded tonal ranges, was the only goal. The publishers, too, need thanks. They must be proud that their high standards of lithography preserved so much of this detail we modelers revel in. The samples I submitted for the newsletter here can't begin to convey their high quality!

But in the spirit of Christmas, and expressing my gratitude to my stepdaughter and her husband for this fine gift, I'm willing to share. Catch me at an upcoming IPMS or NWSM meeting and I will let you 'Oooh!' and 'Ah!' over this book. The only requirement: you must wear a bib or hold a handkerchief under your mouth. No drooling on the pages! Save that for the after-holiday-clearance snack trays!



Upcoming Model Shows and Aviation Events

Saturday, January 21

Wong Tsu. William M. Allen Theater, Museum of Flight, Seattle. 2 pm. Key Donn, a senior systems administrator with The Boeing Company, will share the story of Wong Tsu, Boeing's first engineer and pioneer of the Chinese aerospace industry.

Saturday, January 28

Clash Of The Carriers Presentation And Book Signing. William M. Allen Theater, Museum of Flight, Seattle. 2 pm. Author Barrett Tillman will moderate a panel of World War II veterans who participated in the "Marianas Turkey Shoot" in June 1944. The panelists include Alex Vraciu, USN (Ret.), a U.S. Navy fighter ace with 19 victories; Warren Omark, USN (Ret.), a TBF Avenger pilot who contributed to the sinking of the Japanese carrier *Hiyo*; John Harper USN (Ret.), a landing signal officer aboard the *U.S.S. Bell*; and James E. Duffy, USN (Ret.), a fighter ace who scored each of his five aerial victories over a different type of Japanese aircraft. After the program, the speakers will sign copies of Tillman's book, *Clash of the Carriers: The True Story of the Marianas Turkey Shoot of World War II* (NAL, 2005). For more information on Alex Vraciu, see page 3.

Saturday-Sunday, February 18-19

2006 NorthWest Scale Modelers Show.

Museum of Flight, Seattle. Theme: "Manufactured By: Aircraft Constructors in Miniature". All other subjects are strongly encouraged: armor, ships, figures, sci-fi, etc. In addition to the model activities, aviation artist Jim Dietz will talk about his career and art in the Allen Theater at 2 PM on Saturday, Feb 18. See the October *Seattle Chapter News* for more details, or contact Tim Nelson at timndebn@comcast.net

Saturday, April 22

IPMS Seattle Spring Show. Renton Community Center. More details in upcoming issues.

Italeri 1/35th Scale US Navy LCVP Craft Vehicle Personnel

by Bob LaBouy

For those of us interested in “different” subjects, the modeling arena has been further enriched with Italeri’s recent release of this very important Naval small craft.



The LCVP is not unlike the LCM craft models recently released by both Italeri and Trumpeter, except for its dimensions and usage. This model probably represents the more common of the two craft, and while it was unable to do the “heavy lifting” attributed to the “Mike Boat” it was seen when and where ever the United States asserted its armed presence throughout the Pacific and European theaters of WW II, the Korean conflict, Lebanon and Viet Nam.

The Landing Craft – Background and History

A brief history may help you place the use of landing craft into your knowledge of WW II and allow an increased appreciation of the overall importance of these small craft.

Although the United States had discovered the usefulness and necessity of such small boats almost ninety years earlier during our Army’s invasion of Vera Cruz in the Mexican-American War of 1847, their usefulness had largely been forgotten until the early ‘30s when a few far-sighted Marine Corps and even fewer Army officers had witnessed the value of such shallow draft boats in delivering goods in the Gulf Coast areas of Florida and Louisiana. An even fewer of them foresaw that we might have to use such craft on a

larger scale to ferry men and supplies to Marines coming ashore in areas such as they had recently fought in Central America and possibly in the Far East. They quietly oversaw the development and improvement of these small craft. Marines were especially concerned about their anticipated need to put both men and supplies ashore from larger draft naval vessels, which because of both size and value could not be brought close to shore, and in locations where there was no ready access to the coast or beaches.

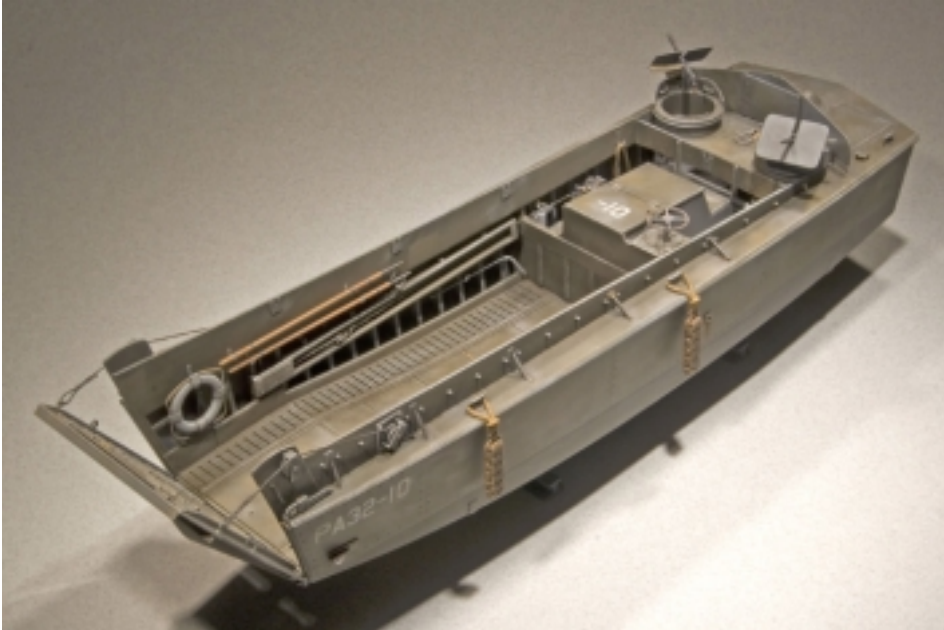
The key to solving this problem was a man named Andrew Higgins, who built several small intercoastal boats or barges in the New Orleans area. The most successful of these was the “Eureka,” which featured a very shallow draft hull, which sat higher in the front and could carry a reasonably heavy cargo right up to, and onto a beach,

where materials could be off- or on-loaded and the boat simply backed off into the water again with ease. These boats were also almost impervious to the normal destructive hurdles encountered by a small boat when “beaching” it against the shore and their propeller and rudder design were well protected as well due to a then ingenious tunnel design along the base of the stern.

The D-Day Museum’s description illustrates the design strengths:

“A deep vee hull forward led to a reverse-curve section amidships and two flat planing sections aft, flanking a semi-tunnel that protected the propeller and shaft. Aerated water flowing under the forefoot of the boat created less friction when the boat was moving and allowed for faster speeds and maneuverability. Because of the reverse curve, objects in the water would be pushed away from the boat at a point between the bow and amidships (including the aerated water - only solid water reached the propeller). This allowed continuous high-speed running and cut down on damage to the propeller, as floating objects seldom came near it. The flat sections aft, on either side of the shaft tunnel, actually had a catamaran/planing effect which added to the hull speed.”

These boats were adapted to the needs of the USMC and Navy during a series of trials and tests and ultimately the very recognizable feature we all see today (or have in countless WWII and Korean war films) – the movable bow ramp – was added in early 1941. This critical development allowed for both Marines and their light equipment or vehicles to be very quickly unloaded and as important, the landing craft to very quickly withdraw from the beach allowing for a quick recycling process of reloading the boat and again returning to the beach. Another value very quickly learned was that when the LCVPs were unloaded they could also be loaded with wounded to be taken back to the offshore ships for extensive medical treatment not available ashore. While not



attempting to minimize the sizeable development of such craft nor the engineering and management efforts which prevailed during and following the war, the rest as they say, is history.

Among the numerous designs and boats built by Andrew Higgins and his company, the LCVP, most often just called the "Higgins Boat" was the most numerous of all the landing craft built, with 23,358 boats constructed in the Louisiana bayou country around New Orleans. At only 36' in length, the Higgins Boat was rated to carry a full platoon of 36 troops and their immediate supplies. As the war progressed, it was ideally suited to carry a small vehicle, the quarter ton truck or JEEP as we now know them, along with 12 combat-loaded marines or soldiers.

Specifications for the "Higgins Boat" include:

Construction Material: Wood (oak, pine and mahogany)
 Displacement: 15,000 Pounds (light)
 Length: 36-Feet, 3-Inches
 Beam: 10-Feet, 10-Inches
 Draft: 3-Feet Aft and 2-Feet, 2-Inches Forward
 Speed: 12 Knots
 Armament: Two .30-Caliber Machine Guns
 Crew: Three - Coxswain, Engineer and

Crewman

Capacity: 36 Troops with gear and equipment, or 6,000-Pound vehicle, or 8,100-Pounds of Cargo
 Power Plant: Gray 225-HP Diesel Engine or 250hp Hall-Scott gasoline engines

While there were certainly many landing craft used throughout WW II and our combat invasions in North Africa, the Middle East, Asia, throughout the Pacific and European theaters, its most significant use was in the Pacific. Though the British saw the need for such craft to cross and breach the English Channel, for the most part the Army planners saw the land war in Europe as a repeat of the WW I experience and did not anticipate the need for such craft in large numbers. At war's end the USN's use was seen as 31,123 in the Pacific campaign, while only 2,493 were requested for Europe. In spite of this lopsided usage, General of the Army Dwight Eisenhower is often quoted as saying: "A. J. Higgins was the man who won the war for us...if Higgins had not designed and built those LCVPs, we never could have landed over an open beach. The whole strategy of the war would have been difficult." Even a summary of our Allied amphibious efforts during Operation Overlord support the proposition that ultimately our ability to continue to off

load troops and equipment was the real reason for our victory in Normandy.

Clearly, the Marine and Navy leadership more clearly and fully understood both the strategic and tactical advantage of these small, mobile landing craft. Even a shallow reading and understanding of our Pacific campaigns will quickly demonstrate the value of landing craft in the Allied amphibious operations. In several of these invasion battles, the advantage of the Marines and Navy was quickly established (even though very costly in terms of manpower and losses) allowing the U.S. to prevail only because of our ability to quickly and repeatedly reach the beachheads with troops and supplies. There are also numerous stories by those wounded during these invasions crediting their survival with the Navy and Coast Guard's amphibious evacuation to shipboard medical treatment. Remember, the ultimate air mobility lessons we perfected and learned in Viet Nam were a long way off in the future at this time.

It's not by mistake that the D-Day Museum in New Orleans features a Higgins Boat LCVP as one of its key pieces of history. This boat was hand constructed in the same manner as the originals for the Museum in the '90s and included a number of now retired employees of Higgins Industries. While the insured value of the newly constructed LCVP is set at over \$11.2 million dollars, the original cost of the Higgins boat ran from only \$12,000 to \$13,000 each. This new LCVP was constructed from existing drawings, workers memories and modeling done from a salvaged old Higgins boat retrieved from the Irish Bayou south of New Orleans.

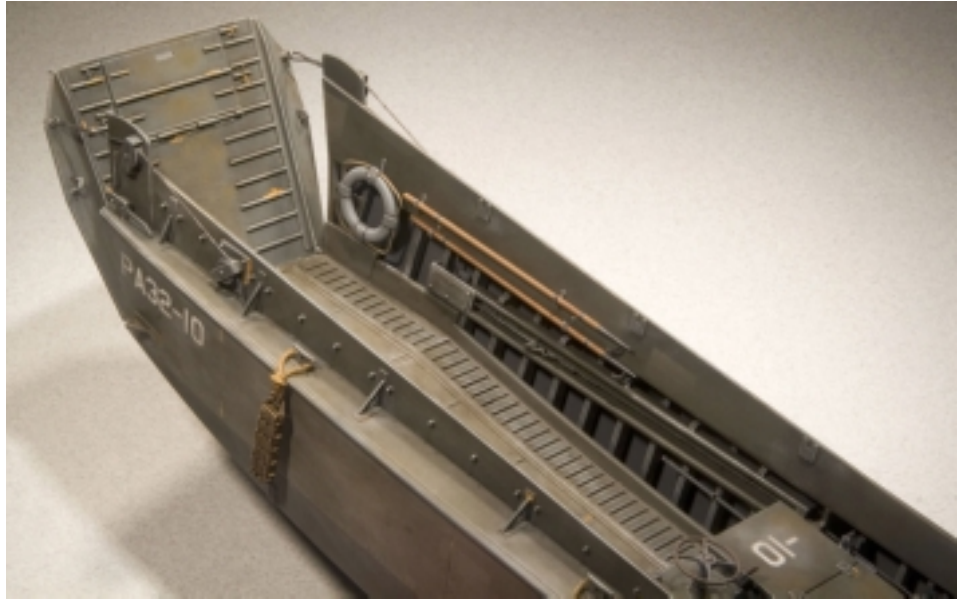
Each Higgins boat is built almost entirely of pine wood, with small amounts of metal armor installed around the front of the cargo area, bow ramp, (the actual bow bulge, called the "headlog," is constructed from a solid block of yellow pine wood) and gunwale areas as a protective measure. The LCM, on the other hand, is entirely made of metals, save for a few trim and finishing boards.

Higgins Industries was a major contributor to the Allied war effort; they designed and or built approximately 90% of all U.S. Navy ship resources by wars end) and approximately ten different models of landing craft. That's an astounding 9 of 10 of all the Navy's vessels during WW II by a single company!

LCVP - The Model

As for the model itself, I have nothing but praise for this neat Italeri model. The only negative comment I've encountered is the price. It's on the high end of our current kits selling at list around \$49 and from the discounters and Internet sources around \$37. When compared to some of the very high quality, highly detailed pieces coming from the Far East today, it's high for the relative amount of detail and quality in my opinion. However, when considering the scarcity of the subject matter and its importance to a well rounded modeler's WW II subjects, it is clearly worth both the cost and wait. When one considers it to the previously available Monogram kit, one can build either the earlier "toy like" version or a more accurate and detailed version which Italeri has now offered us. I'll gladly stick with the latter. My problem (probably more related to my often slipping memory) is that I can't get my mind off my Revell kits which I paid only 79¢ for and the highly detailed and high-cost Hasegawa kits which cost a whopping \$1.98. I only get (partially) over this aspect of my older age, when I go into a McDonalds (my gourmet restaurant of choice) and find it costs over \$6 just for lunch! Oh well, it all seems to be relative to today's economy and business greed.

I found the plastic to be easy to work with and saw no awkwardly connected parts. There are approximately 200 individual parts in the kit. There is almost no filling required, aside from a very few push or ejection marks on surfaces where they might be easily seen after construction. They are small and easily filled and sanded. Many of these little blemishes are on the backside of detail parts and can't be seen anyway. I have yet to see any



aftermarket detail sets for this kit and suspect they not be necessary for most of us with the kit details quite well defined already. I was pleased to see the engineering clearly had the modeler in mind, with none of the sprue attachment points on surface areas (except on a few pieces where it could not be avoided). A few manufacturers don't seem to have tumbled to this aspect of their kit and molding planning even in today's market.

I don't anticipate much in the way of aftermarket parts for this kit, since those included in the kit are well done, though knowing the propensity of the photo-etch cottage industry (who seem to feel the need to replicate any and all sort of parts and finish details in metal) will issue something to intrigue us as builders. I do, however, fully anticipate those who build targets, oops – armor that is, will begin to complete all manner of dioramas using both of these beautiful kits.

I mentioned that I had added about half dozen small brass pieces to simulate hooks or brackets along the inside of the hull. Many photos will further illustrate that most landing craft were highly detailed by their original crews to meet their needs and wants.

Decals and Instructions

The kit's instruction sheets are very good, accurate in detail and from my review, do not omit any parts or include any glaring errors. I found them to be thorough and logical for the most part. As usual, I leave one or two small parts (or steps) to the end of my building efforts, simply because of personal preference (and my usual habit of prematurely breaking something off my nearly/already completed model). In this instance, I "string up" the landing gate lines, but don't actually attach them to the landing ramp or even attach the ramp to the hull, until I almost totally finished. In building the earlier LCM kit, I learned the hard way that the ramp sticking way out front and being joined by a small amount of contact with the hull doesn't fare well as I move the entire model around for finishing touches. My native clumsiness allowed me to separate and rejoin the ramp at least 2-3 times.

I think the assembly sequence is well thought out and logical. I do urge some careful cleaning and detail finishing to the interior full stringers, as they will be almost entirely visible as the landing craft is finally assembled. I found more than one observer who was surprised at this detail showing, when I was first putting it together. In this model, a great deal of the

interior detail shows when fully assembled. For this reason I took some extra time to scrape and sand the finished surface interior ribs as I removed them and assembled them. The instruction detail clearly illustrates the sequence and numbers, which if not fully followed will lead one into a real mess as the interior hull is assembled to the outer hull. It has taken me a while to warm up to Italeri's instruction sheets, but I am more impressed with them each kit I build.

The decal sheet is well done and allows for a wide variety of markings for any number of USN vessels and a few British (they also used these indispensable craft at both Normandy and Mediterranean landing beaches). A cursory review of any WW II invasion photos will provide you with a wealth of assorted hull numbers and markings for US Navy landings. The vast number of these are the system markings allowing each craft to be related to its mother vessel (mostly LST, LSD, AKA and AP ships). These numbers seem at first to be a real mess, though they were invaluable to both the other landing craft coxswains and the men actually "running" the beach. It was in the all-important Beachmaster Groups that my Dad spent a good deal of his Pacific and Korean invasion experience. Unless you do some reading about the actual combat invasion experiences, one doesn't realize that the order, organization and actual implementation of the beachhead operations is absolutely critical to the success of any invasion. This organization and its impact on the success of any amphibious invasion can clearly be witnessed in two major invasions: Guadalcanal in 1942 and Inchon in 1950. The long term detrimental effect of a poorly organized and managed beach operation can be seen, as well as its long term negative impact on the men on the beach can be seen in many respects in our WW II invasion on Guadalcanal. The highly successful result of a well planned event was seen off the Korean port of Inchon – even with the extremely dramatic tidal effects encountered there. Again, I digress. The decals are very well done, set

down very well and can be easily "hidden" on the LCVP model.

Painting and Finishing

I finished my LCVP as I expected it would have been seen during either the Saipan or Tinian invasion, using the associated Attack Transport (AKA) number. Painted almost entirely with Model Master enamels, using the suggested base gray color, oversprayed with my clear coating of choice (Duracryl Clear finish (D 468) and lacquer thinner (DTL 876)) and weathered with washes of artist oils and highlighted detail picked out using both Humbrol and Model Master enamels blends (both darker and lighter than the surrounding details), oversprayed again with Dullcoat. These photos may not adequately demonstrate the very dirty, weathered effect I was attempting to achieve – it's supposed to look dirty and oily. Unless you've seen an amphibious landing or look at some beachhead photos, you may not fully realize how filthy these landing craft become very quickly. These working craft were used under very trying, dirty conditions, with the tidal areas covered with all sorts of oil, diesel, and lots of obstacles in the water. Their hulls and inside deck areas quickly became a mess. Since they were considered highly important and expendable, they were repeatedly used unless destroyed, sunk, or blown out of the water. They were tools of war and used as such. One aspect of my growing interest in the

use of "rust" is to avoid it except in some small detailed areas (and then only around equipment which was in fact metal). Remembering these were wooden craft and therefore not quite as subject to the various panel rust marks many military might display. I wondered about the multiple rust marks shown on the cover art around what I think the artist may have seen as metal panel lines?

Summary

This is great kit. Bare bones, few frills, bells or whistles, but straight out of the box, an accurate, highly detailed scaled model of a significant piece of military and naval history. It is reasonably easy to construct and paint, does not requiring demanding painting skill and offers a huge potential of color schemes and finishes – every thing from new, barely used condition to the resulting oil, fuel, and water washed look of craft used to ferry troops and supplies onto beaches across the Pacific.

I highly recommend this kit to any builder interested in modeling WW II history. It lends itself to the Pacific or European Theater operations and any number of diorama scenarios.



2006 IPMS Seattle Dues Renewal

2006 is here, ready or not. And of course it is dues payment time again. As is the normal practice, a renewal form is included below. If you have not renewed by the release of the current newsletter you will have received a final reminder with this newsletter. If you do not renew now, you will not get any more newsletters. You can renew by writing a check for \$24.00 to IPMS-Seattle and mailing it to the address below. Or you can bring the form and payment to the January meeting. Please be very careful when filling out the form. Many of our returned newsletters are the result of my poor interpretation of handwritten address information.

Our e-mail distribution of the Newsletter has been working very well. You get the Newsletter the day it goes to the printer, and it is in full color. It also saves us a considerable amount of printing and postage costs and I would really like to encourage you to consider this method of distribution.

Thanks,

Spencer and Norm

IPMS Seattle
ATTN: Spencer Tom
318 NE 81st Street
Seattle, WA 98115

IPMS Seattle 2006 Dues Form

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Meeting Reminder

January 14 **10 AM - 1 PM**

North Bellevue Community/Senior Center
4063-148th Ave NE, Bellevue

Directions: From Seattle or from I-405, take 520 East to the 148th Ave NE exit. Take the 148th Ave North exit (the second of the two 148th Ave. exits) and continue north on 148th until you reach the Senior Center. The Senior Center will be on your left. The Center itself is not easily visible from the road, but there is a signpost in the median.

