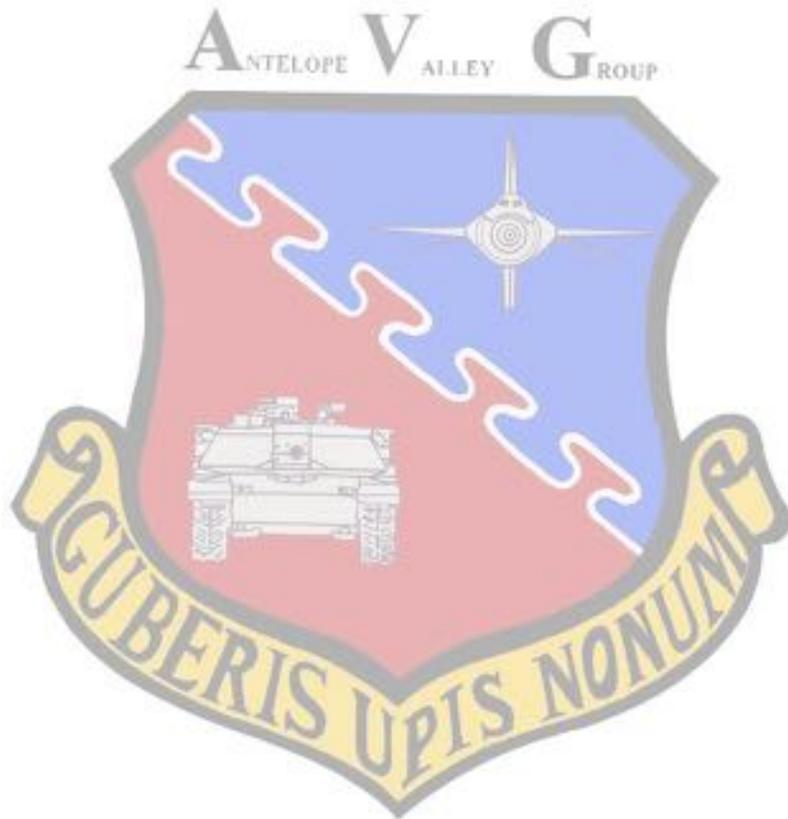


# The Smoking Hole

A Publication of the Antelope Valley Group IPMS

**Volume 25, Number 9**



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## **Club News and Business**

### **SEPTEMBER MEETING IS CANCELLED**

#### August Meeting General Meeting Notes:

Same same. The August meeting was canceled , due to the closure of the Kern County Library system

#### Latest Club Status.

In the first hopeful sign in some time, the Kern County Library System has announced limited re-opening at 25% capacity. Activities are limited to browsing for materials, computer use, copying, faxing, printing and research services, and you MUST HAVE AN APPOINTMENT to enter the library. So no meetings as of yet, but perhaps in the not-to-distant future.

#### West Coast Contests Cancelled, Postponed or Rescheduled

IPMS Silicon Valley has now officially canceled the Silicon Valley Classic scheduled for this month and re-scheduled for March 2021. The USS Hornet has cancelled their Open Cockpit day, so they also will not be hosting their concurrent model expo.

Th...Th...That's all folks! No West Coast contests for the remainder of 2020.

## 2020 Meeting Schedule

Primary	Activities	Refreshments	Demo	Review
18 Jan	Member Dues Collected	Steve/Mike -Main Jim- Drinks Jay - Chips		
15 Feb		Bill, Mike O.		
21 Mar		<b>CANCELED</b>		
18 Apr		<b>CANCELED</b>		
16 May		<b>CANCELED</b>		
20 June		<b>CANCELED</b>		
18 July		<b>CANCELED</b>		
15 Aug		<b>CANCELED</b>		
19 Sept		<b>CANCELED</b>		
17 Oct (TBD)		Steve		
31 Oct	2020 Desert Classic (CANCELED)			
21 Nov (TBD)	2021 Club Officer Nominations	Dwight		
19 Dec (TBD)	Gift Exchange, In-House Contest "Your Personal or Professional Experience" (POSTPONED)	Everyone!		

## The Tool Crib

Marathon Micromotor System



While recently looking for a way to drill a number of holes in tight spaces for an upcoming project, I came upon this unit.

Sourced from China, it is intended to be a low-cost dental office tool, used for drilling and polishing. Honestly, if I encountered one of these in a dentist's office, I would get out of there as fast as I could, but it does seem to offer some benefits to the hobbyist.

The system is modular, consisting of a control box and an interchangeable remote motor handpiece assembly. It also comes with a foot control switch. There are 2 types of remote handpieces, one with a fixed collet and one that accepts interchangeable ends, either straight or 'contra-angle' (about 120°). I bought the interchangeable one, along with the contra-angle attachment. The handpieces take standard 2.53 mm shank dental or drill bits.

The unit is infinitely variable in speed, between 0 and 35,000 rpm. The control box has the master power switch, a switch for forward and reverse, a red LED power light, the connection for the motor and the speed control rheostat knob. On the back is a fuse and the connection for the foot switch.

Build quality is about what one would expect from low-end Chinese electronics. The label on the front of mine has a number of bubbles, and the foot switch on my unit doesn't actually work (I suspect wiring issues). There is always the faint apprehension that the unit might catch fire at any time. On the other hand, the interchangeable handpiece end (I bought a different brand) has a very nice finish and appears quite well made.



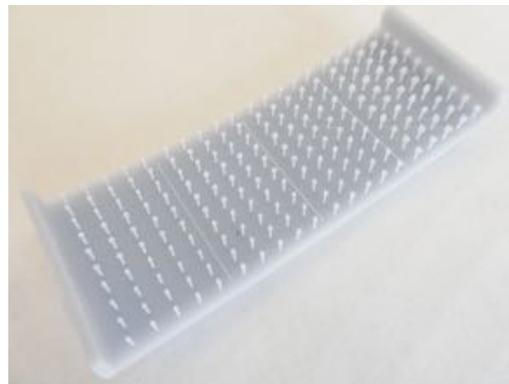
Does it actually work? Yes it does (foot switch not withstanding). You simply insert a bit into the handpiece turn the unit on and adjust to the speed you want. My handpiece has a bit locking feature, but this requires specialized bits with a groove in the shank, which are hard to locate. It works fine with standard bits, they are just a little less secure. You can also obtain an adjustable collet to allow the use of micro drill bits of other than 2.53mm shank size.

These units are available from a number of sources, online dental equipment shops (they are much more expensive here), Amazon and eBay. You can get an entire set (controller, switch, handpiece, straight and contra-angle attachments and 10 bits for around \$120, but they are cheaper on the 'Bay. I got mine with the contra-angle attachment for about \$80. But beware – I initially ordered from the US import arm of the Chinese company that makes these (they are the cheapest source), only to be told they didn't have any in stock (despite having multiple listings). I found another source that had them for a couple bucks more. The original company did offer me a refund. As soon as I accepted, they cancelled the eBay order, depriving me of the ability to leave negative feedback to warn others. But they did give me my refund.

## Anyz Cockpit details



Anyz is a new detail producer from Europe that has created a line of 3D printed detail parts. Their current line consists mainly of cockpit detail parts, hose unions and aircraft ignition components. They also have a number of colors of braided line, and some generic cockpit detailing decals.



I purchased several of the cockpit sets. There are 2 sets of universal knobs, a set of WW2 oriented knobs, a set of T-handles and toggle switches. I got the 2 knob sets and the toggle switches in 1/32 (they are also available in 1/48). These are seriously tiny! For us 'mature' modelers, they will likely require a magnifying visor to work with. I can't even imagine working with the 1/48<sup>th</sup> sets. There are 200 knobs of several types, between 25 and 50 of each type (to allow you to lose several!). Anyz has a tutorial on their site showing the parts used on an Aires cockpit to great effect. I can see these as a great enhancement to add relief to Eduard color etch sets.

These sets are not terribly cheap, probably due to the 3D printing. Most are about 16 Euro (about \$19 at the moment) directly from Anyz. They normally offer free shipping to the US, but due to the pandemic, they are not able to, and the shipping charge is 32 Euro! Michael Belokin of HobbyZone is carrying the line in the US. His prices are a bit higher, but he offers free shipping. For smaller orders (a couple of sets), this is the way to go.

## Club Demos

Little bit hard to do demos during “social distancing”, though suppose you could do a YouTube demo or Zoom session.

Anyway, hope to see some demos when we all get back together.

## Kit Review

*Meng (Wingnut Wings) 1/32<sup>nd</sup> Fokker Dr.1 Triplane*



There was great wailing and gnashing of teeth in the modelling community to Wingnut Wings’ surprise announcement that they were ceasing operations due to the economic fallout of the COVID pandemic. What would happen to the announced but yet unreleased kits of the Handley Page O/400, Lancaster and Fokker Dr.1?

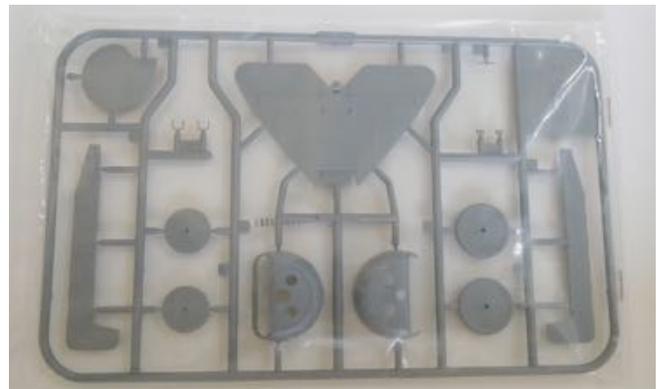
Despite the generally decent (perhaps very good) 1/32 Roden Dr.1, many Great War modelers were anxiously awaiting the Wingnut state-of-the-art treatment. Well, the Wingnut Wings Dr.1 lives, just from an unexpected source, Meng. It seems Meng’s parent company, Rui Ye Century (Shenzhen) Hobby Co., Ltd was contracted by Wingnut to produce the molds for, at least, the Dr.1. The details surrounding the release are somewhat murky, whether Wingnut authorized Meng to release the kit under their label or Wingnut never paid for the mold and they remained the property of the Chinese company is unclear.

However, comparison of the kit sprues with published photos of the test shots make clear that this is, indeed, the Wingnut Dr.1.

The kit comes in a mid-size box with middling artwork of the “Red Baron” dispatching one of his victims. I’m sure many will miss Steve Anderson’s evocative Wingnuts box art, but I rarely by a kit for the box art. I

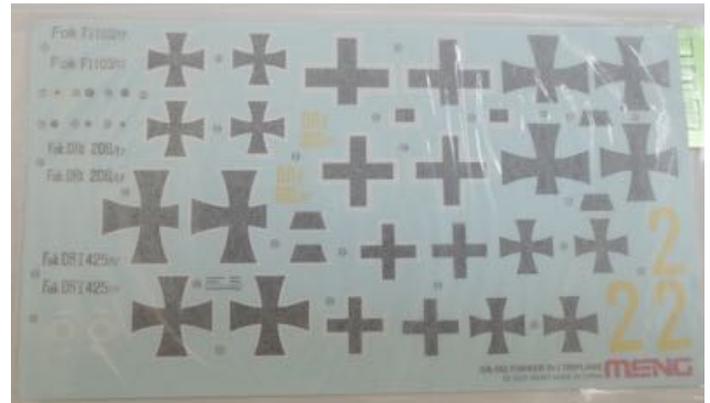
have seen some griping from the internet 'experts' that the painting depicts the prop as spinning but the rotary engine as static!

Opening the box reveals 5 medium gray sprues. Examination of the sprues should leave no doubt that this was intended to be a Wingnut kit. Molding is crisp with sharp fine detail. Other than the substitution of "Meng" label tabs for "Wingnut Wings" on the sprues, this is a Wingnut kit. Like other Wingnut kits, the engine (a LeRhône/Oberursal) is a separate sprue. Meng likely didn't have access to the original engine molds, and probably retooled the engine, as the parts layout is slightly different than the Wingnut engine sprue, but is otherwise indistinguishable from the Wingnut parts.



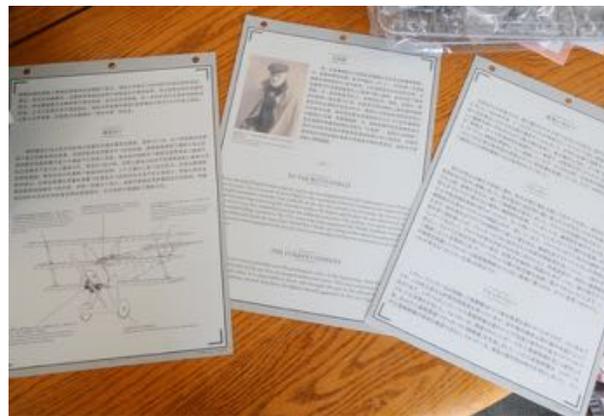
Also included is a small clear sprue and a photo etch sheet, containing seat harnesses, access panels and optional cooling jackets for the Spandau guns. The etch sheet has the typical satin brass finish common to kits originating in China.





The instruction sheet is also reminiscent of Wingnut sheets, with colored CAD-derived assembly drawings, although I'm sure many will miss the reference photos and associated notes that were included in Wingnut's instructions.

The decals are the weakest aspect of this kit. Options are included for 4 aircraft, Manfred von Richthofen's all red Dr.1 '425', Werner Voss' F.1, and 2 other streaked-linen finish Dr.1's. The sheet seems to lack the finesse of Wingnut sheets, and there are no decals included to simulate the streaked linen, so you are on your own to try to duplicate this. I'm sure Aviaticc, Phenom and others will soon have sheets available, and there are sheets for the Roden kit that could be perhaps be adapted.



One great feature of this kit is that Meng has included all the parts to build an F.1, and early or late Dr.1, which Wingnut intended to release as separate boxings.

The price is quite good, also. There are 2 versions of this kit, a standard kit and a Special Edition that includes a resin bust of von Richthofen. Retail of the standard kit is \$88. While Wingnut had not announced pricing on this kit, based on similar kits, it likely would have been \$11 more for a single variant, while the Meng release include all 3. The kit is available for considerably less. I got mine for \$69 from Sprue Brothers, and it is available for as little as \$39 from some Chinese sellers, such as Lucky Model (about \$59 total shipped).

I, like many, am very glad this kit got released. Now, wonder what's going to happen with the Lancaster?

## Member Show and Tell, 7<sup>th</sup> COVID Edition

The membership has been prolific this past month. Here's the collection of the builds from the e-mail thread.

First up are a couple of builds from our emeritus members:

Prez Emeritus and 'master of rust' Mike. B has a beautiful '31 Ford Model A station wagon. Despite the outstanding workmanship, I didn't recognize it as one of Mike's builds - I don't think he's ever built a shiny car before.



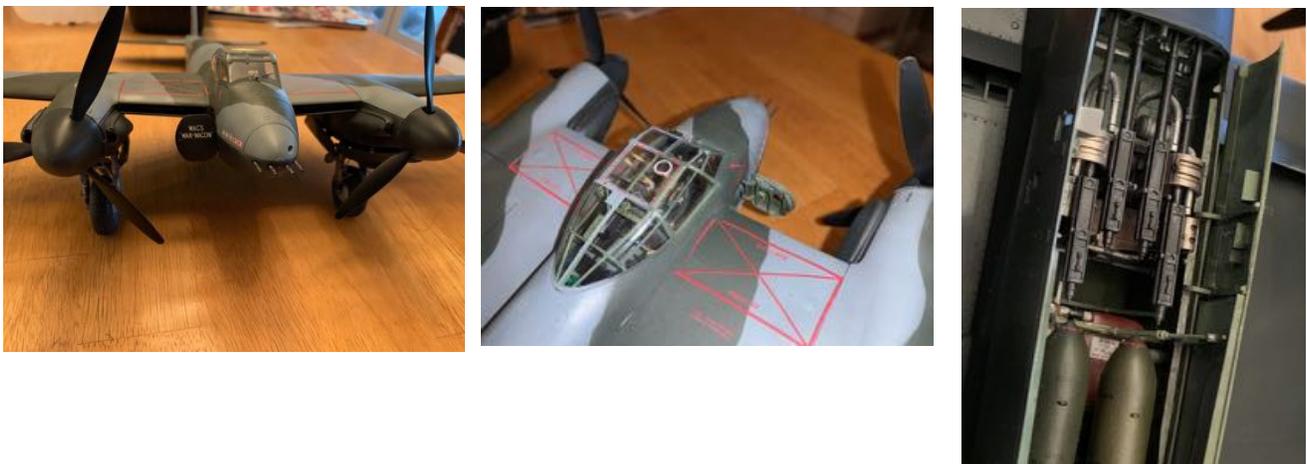
Here's what Mike has to say about his build:

"Not my usual rust bucket, it must be COVID kicking in. lol Wood grain is HUM 94 linen (WWI A/C vintage) base with different thicknesses of oil brushed burnt umber for light/dark grain and knots. Top coat is either TAM orange or yellow clear applied outside vs. inside. Other paints, the now extinct Model Master enamels of red and black airbrushed with a Badger Crescendo 175 wide spray that finally can produce the gloss I've always sought after. No clear coats. Molotow pen touch-up on kit chromed parts of cleaned sprue cuts and a re-spray of the radiator grill. Airbrushed straight from the squeeze bottle. I didn't realize this product is an alcohol base. I'm still perfecting the spraying of it. I didn't have decals for the Ford logos, so I just printed and cut them out of paper. Enjoy!"

Our second emeritus member and now East Coast resident Rick R. Rick has two of his outstanding 1/32 builds for us. First is a Wingnut Wings Roland D.VI. Love the colors on this one.



Second is the Tamiya FB.VI. Rick did a great job on this complex kit.



Nick has built something in 1/48<sup>th</sup> this time, the Mauve P-40N. Mauve was a company started by ex-Hasegawa employees. The only kits they produced were 2 P-40's before the company was wiped out in the 1995 Kobe earthquake.



Nick used a True details cockpit, Ultracast wheels, metal pitot, guns and ring / bead sight. He said it was not an easy build, with a number of fit issues.

Jim P. has finished a 1/35<sup>th</sup> Italeri HEMTT wrecker. This is another kit that has a reputation as a tough build. Jim started with the Gun Truck version and added a Hobby Fan M984 wrecker conversion.



John S. has taken a break from light planes and has built a jet, the 1/48<sup>th</sup> Hasegawa Saab Draken. John thought the kit seat was too plain, so replaced it with a resin seat, but that is the only aftermarket used. The painting and weathering is masterful on this one



Barry has been working on a Hobby Boss M3 Scout Car. He was disappointed that the kit didn't include any radios! Scratchbuilding and the spares box to the rescue. He also shared a few pics of his upgraded work area.



Our Jurassic Kit Game Warden Rich R. has been prolific, as ever. Here are his latest wonderful creations.

**Builder:** Rich Ribaldo

**Kit:** Atlantis (Aurora/Helicopters for Industry) Piasescki H-25/HUP-2 "Army Mule"

**Construction Time:** 9 hours

**Finish:** Model master enamels. Kit decals.

**Aftermarket:** None.

### ***Wikipedia tells us...***

**The Piasescki HUP Retriever/H-25 Army Mule** was a compact single radial engine, twin overlapping tandem rotor utility helicopter developed by the Piasescki Helicopter Corporation of Morton, Pennsylvania. Designed to a United States Navy specification, the helicopter was produced from 1949 to 1954, and was also used by the United States Army and foreign navies. The HUP/H-25 was the first helicopter to perform a loop, albeit unintentionally and be produced with an autopilot.

The design was a product of a competition by the U.S. Navy in 1945 for a compact utility/rescue helicopter to operate from ships including aircraft carriers, battleships, and cruisers. Piasescki won the competition, and with the introduction of the aircraft configuration letter "U" for Utility in the 1950s, the aircraft was ordered for production as the **HUP-1**. The design featured two three-bladed, 35-foot-diameter (11 m) rotors in tandem in which blades could be folded for storage; the relatively small rotor diameter allowed the aircraft to use aircraft carrier elevators with its blades fully extended. The tandem overlapping rotor configuration was a development by Piasescki and was used in future helicopter designs by the company and successors. The original HUP-1 was powered by a single Continental R-975-34 radial engine, with a take-off rating of 525 hp (391 kW), while later versions used the uprated R-975-42 or R-975-46A with 550 hp. To aid search and rescue (SAR) operations, the aircraft was equipped with an overhead winch capable of lifting 400 lb., which could lower a rescue sling through an electrically-operated door available after the copilot's seat was folded forward.

An upgraded version of the HUP-2 was built for the US Army and designated as the **H-25A Army Mule**, but most were quickly withdrawn from Army service and converted for naval use under the designation **HUP-3**. The US Army **H-25** designation was adopted by the US Navy in 1962 on introduction of the 1962 United States Tri-Service aircraft designation system. The final units were withdrawn from US service in 1964.

A total of 339 aircraft were delivered during the 6-year production run. A large number of surplus US Navy aircraft later appeared on the US civil registry, and at least 7 were transferred to the French Navy.

## General characteristics

- **Crew:** two
- **Capacity:** four passengers
- **Length:** 56 ft 11 in
- **Height:** 13 ft 2 in
- **Empty weight:** 4,132 lb.
- **Gross weight:** 5,750 lb.
- **Max takeoff weight:** 6,100 lb.
- **Powerplant:** 1 × [Continental R-975-46A](#) 9-cylinder air-cooled radial piston engine, 550 hp

## Performance

- **Maximum speed:** 105 mph
- **Cruise speed:** 80 mph
- **Range:** 340 mi
- **Service ceiling:** 10,000 ft
- **Rate of climb:** 1,000 ft/min



**Atlantis Model Company** was founded in 2009 by the former owners of Megahobby.com, Peter Vetri and Rick DeFavero.

This blurb from their website summarizes their Mission Statement.

*“LONG ISLAND, NY, August 29th, 2018 – Atlantis Model Co., manufacturer of plastic models and toys has purchased the tooling for many plastic model kits from the new owners of Revell, Revell Inc. USA-Blitz Partners. These molds were from the tooling banks of Monogram, Revell, Aurora and Renwal, some dating back to the early 1950's. They were stored in Revell's Elk Grove facility in the great state of Illinois and represent Automotive, Aircraft, Ships, Military, Figures, Space and many other interesting subjects. Peter Vetri, President of Atlantis, states, “It's a lifelong dream to own this historic tooling and archive material related to these molds; to be able to preserve the tooling is a real honor. We look forward to reissuing many classics that have not been available in quite some time. All of the model kits will be made here in the USA and all the tooling and the Archive have been moved from Elk Grove to our facilities in Deer Park, NY.”*

#### **THE BUILD:**

Atlantis has released a crude kit (by today's standards) from the early 1950s. It is molded of about a dozen pieces of heavy, thick plastic with out-of-scale rivets. The nose glazing is a terrible, poorly fitting clear part with a large ejector pin on the inside and there are no clear parts for the other windows. There is no real cockpit to speak of aside from a pipe-like cyclic stick and the “suggestion” of an instrument panel. **WHAT'S NOT TO LOVE ABOUT THIS KIT?!** This kit is so rudimentary that anything you do will make it better. Even with just tube glue and a can of spray paint you'll have improved it way beyond what you thought it could ever be.

I decided early on (after looking at the clear part) that I would paint the nose glazing and try to get the model to represent a wooden desk model. Sure, there are the usual seam and step alignment issues you would expect to have with a near 60-year-old kit. But the only seam is around the two-piece fuselage. There is no rotor head detail and two of the three blades are molded to the hub, so a little filling and polishing is needed there. The landing gear is a simple affair that fits well.

Once the seams were addressed, I attached the nose glazing and spent a few minutes with a flat file shaping the edges to meet the fuselage. A good portion of filler putty was needed to close the gaps but in the end, it looked presentable

**PAINT AND FINISHING:** I primed the model with Tamiya White Primer which revealed a few touch ups needed on the seams and gaps. I then addressed the sections to be painted red. The white primer acted as a good base for the red stripes which were masked off. Model Master FSxxxxx green was used as the overall color and Insignia Red FSxxxxx was then applied for the red trim stripes. After all the painting was done, I went back to the nose. I painted the clear part silver and then gradually applied several coats of Tamiya Clear Blue to give the transparency a tinted effect like those found on solid mahogany desk model canopies. All that was left was to mask and paint the frames on the glass.

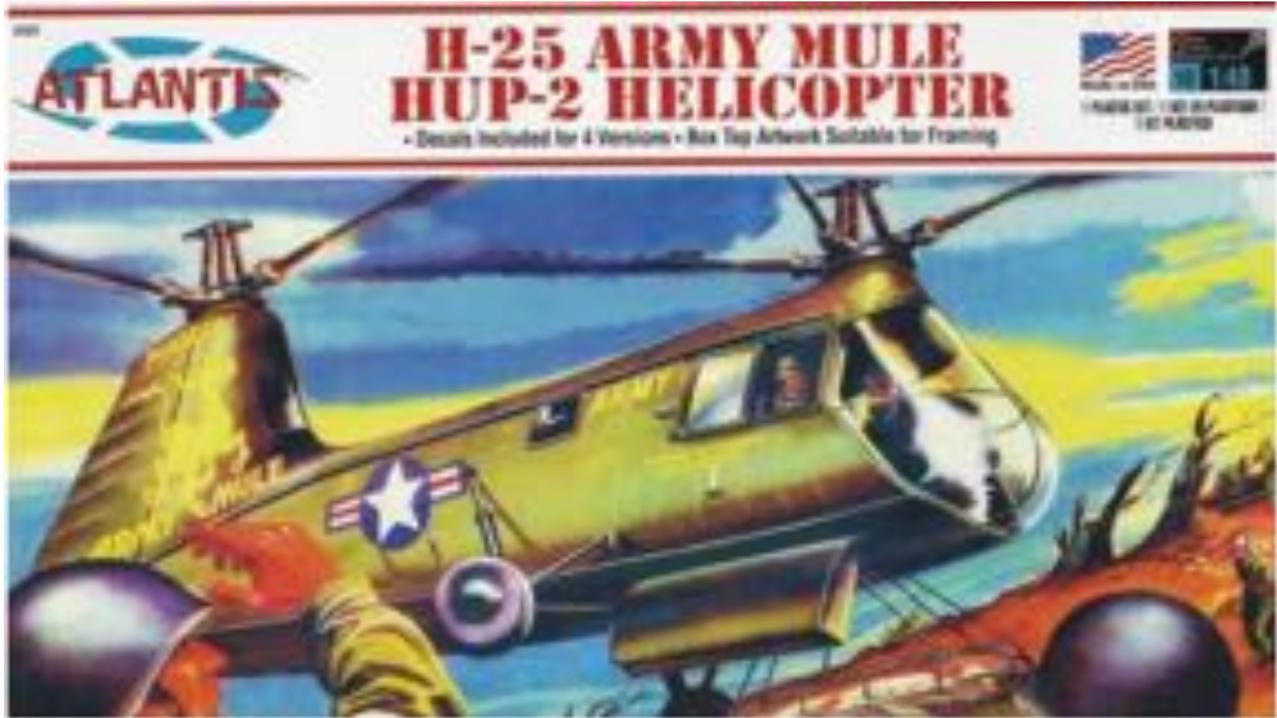
The Kit decals were beautiful and offer options for US Army, US Marines and US Navy machines. I chose the Navy HUP-2 of the U.S.S. Enterprise in 1962. They behaved perfectly during application and responded well to Micro Sol/Micro Set solutions. I applied a Humbrol semi-gloss clear coat over the entire model after the decals were set. The last thing to do was to slip the completed rotors in place.

**CONCLUSION:** I built this kit within a month of buying it and for me that's very unusual. I was attracted to the low parts count and interesting markings. I gave up dreading ancient kits a long time ago and, as the old saying goes, *"once you give up all hope you feel a lot better"*. I had fun and anyone who puts a little effort into this kit and takes it half-way seriously is bound to enjoy it, too. I recommend this model to even first-time builders because of its ease of build, ease of part handling, low parts count and quick assembly time. Kids can assemble this little beastie right from the box and have a cool helicopter in little time at all.

From this modelers' perspective, Atlantis is performing a great service to the model building community. Not only are kits that were hard or impossible to find for many decades becoming available again, but now we don't have to pay collectors prices at swap meets or eBay to get them. New plastic from the same "ancient" molds is fine with most people who want to actually **build** these kits and not feel guilty about "ruining an ancient artifact". I'm a builder, not a collector. That make me one of those "heretics" who will actually build those rare kits everyone holds in high reverence. If the mold maker was stuck down by lightning after making just a few dozen kits, or the molds were lost on a tramp steamer and now reside at the bottom of the Amazon making the kits worth their weight in platinum is of no concern to me. I'll build it and suffer the wrath and judgement of the collector crowd. Maybe Atlantis is saving me from judgement in the afterlife from the plastic god Stryrenicus.

The fresh sheet of decals makes them very buildable and with most subjects priced at around \$20 they make great entry level kits for beginners and kids. You'll do even better with the 40% discount coupon in Hobby Lobby. Your *Jurassic Game Warden* recommends visiting the Atlantis Models website and getting on the mailing list for announcements about new releases and special discounts. <https://atlantis-models.com/>

# Kit Box Art



## Markings Options

### UH-25A HUP-2







**Builder:** Rich Ribaud

**Kit:** 1/72 Williams Brothers: Northrop Gamma 2A- Frank Hawks' "Texaco Special"

**Construction Time:** 25 – 30 hours

**Finish:** Floquill Bright Silver and Platinum Mist

**Aftermarket:** Hauler Photo Etched Reflectors and Backlights Part # HLH 72028.  
Brengun Fire Extinguisher Part# BRL72012

**THE NORTHROP GAMMA** was a single-engine all-metal monoplane cargo aircraft used in the 1930s. Towards the end of its service life, it was developed into the A-17 light bomber. The Gamma was a further development of the successful Northrop Alpha and shared its predecessor's aerodynamic innovations with wing fillets and multicellular stressed-skin wing construction. Like late Alphas, the fixed landing gear was covered in distinctive aerodynamic spats, and the aircraft introduced a fully enclosed cockpit. The Gamma saw fairly limited civilian service as mail planes with Trans World Airlines but had an illustrious career as a flying laboratory and record-breaking aircraft. The US military found the design sufficiently interesting to encourage Northrop to develop it into what eventually became the Northrop A-17 light attack aircraft. Military versions of the Gamma saw combat with Chinese and Spanish Republican air forces. Twenty Five Gamma 2Es were assembled in China from components provided by Northrop.

The most famous Gamma was the Polar Star. The aircraft was carried via ship and offloaded onto the pack ice in the Ross Sea during Lincoln Ellsworth's 1934 expedition to Antarctica. The Gamma was almost lost when the ice underneath it broke and had to be returned to the United States for repairs. Polar Star's second assignment to Antarctica in September 1934 was also futile. But on January 3, 1935, Ellsworth and pilot Brent Balchen finally flew over Antarctica.

On November 23, 1935, Ellsworth and Canadian pilot Herbert Hollick-Kenyon attempted the world's first trans-Antarctic flight from Dundee Island in the Weddell Sea to Little America. The crew made four stops during their journey, in the process becoming the first people ever to visit Western Antarctica. During one stop, a blizzard completely packed the fuselage with snow which took a day to clear out. On December 5, after traveling over 2,400 miles the aircraft ran out of fuel just 25 miles short of the goal. The intrepid crew took six days to travel the remainder of the journey and stayed in the abandoned Richard E. Byrd camp until being found by the Discovery II research vessel on January 15, 1936. Polar Star was later recovered and donated to the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum. *"Wikipedia"*

#### General characteristics

- Crew: One
- Length: 31 ft 2 in
- Wingspan: 47 ft 9 1/2 in
- Height: 9 ft 0 in
- Empty weight: 4,119 lb.
- Gross weight: 7,350 lb.
- Powerplant: 1 × Wright R-1820 Cyclone 9-cylinder Radial, 710 hp

### Performance

- Maximum speed: 223 mph at 6,300 ft
- Cruise speed: 204 mph
- Range: 1,970 mi
- Service ceiling: 23,400 ft
- Rate of climb: 1,390 ft/min

FRANK MONROE HAWKS (March 28, 1897 - August 23, 1938) was a pilot in the United States Army Air Service during World War I and was known during the 1920s and 1930s as a record breaking aviator, using a series of Texaco-sponsored aircraft, setting 214 point-to-point records in the United States and Europe. Prolific in the media and continually in the "public eye", in the 1937 "The Mysterious Pilot" movie serial, Hawks was billed as the "fastest airman in the world." A popular saying from the time was, "Don't send it by mail ... send it by Hawks." On June 2, 1933 Frank Hawks flew his Gamma 2A "Sky Chief" from Los Angeles to New York in a record 13 hours, 26 minutes, and 15 seconds. In 1935, Howard Hughes improved on this time in his modified Gamma 2G making the west-east transcontinental run in 9 hours, 26 minutes, and 10 seconds. After retiring from a career as an air racer, he died in 1938, flying an experimental aircraft.

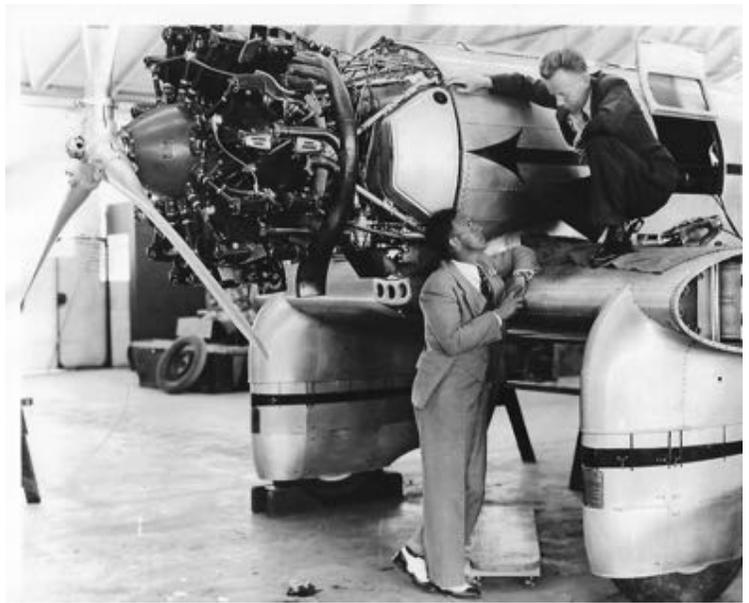
## **Captain Frank Hawks and his "Sky Chief" Gamma 2A**



**Frank Hawks in a Travel Air Mystery Ship**



**Frank Hawks in a Travel Air Mystery Ship**



**Frank Hawks (killer shoes!) and Gamma Designer Jack Northrop**

### **THE BUILD:**

Williams Brothers' kits, most of which were created in the 1970s, are similar to what we today call limited production models. The Gamma was released around 1974. Few location pins are provided, and you can expect to do a fair amount of parts cleanup and fitting. That being said the subjects that these kits depict are important, famous aircraft that are ignored by most mainstream manufacturers. With a little extra work, a beautiful model can be made from them.

The first order of business is deciding which Gamma variant you want to build. Some minor surgery and different part choices have to be made. After all the parts were cleaned up and the flash removed, I decided to do a full re-scribe and polish of the airframe. Nothing but straight lines to deal with here so it only took a couple of hours to do the entire job. The wings and landing gear were the first to be assembled and the gear pants needed some extra care and carving to fit against the leading edge properly. Although little can be seen in the cockpit, I knew I would be replacing the canopy so I "busied it up" a bit. I added internal stringers to the cockpit walls and a paper harness to the seat. A new canopy was vacuum formed since the kit part was yellow from age and very thick. Super Scale 1/64" silver stripe decals were applied, one by one, to represent the frames after which the entire canopy got a coat of Future Floor Polish. The results yielded a canopy clear enough that I was glad to have paid attention to adding some extra detail to the cockpit.

I added 3 fuel caps on each inboard wing panel using thin sheet styrene and a Waldron punch and die set. The kit gives you the option of making no less than six versions of the Gamma. For Hawk's Texaco Special, I shortened the vertical tail as shown on the instructions. The correct choice of engine, cowl and ailerons are included in the kit. Except for some extra filing, filling and sanding the rest of the kit went together with little trouble.

The kit landing lights were unusable, so I made my own. A pair of photo etched reflectors from Hauler were added to each wing leading edge. A drop of future on each one was used to represent lenses. Then I used clear packing tape for the leading-edge light covers. A slightly oversized piece of tape was applied over the leading edges and cut to size using a fresh scalpel blade. This technique is very convincing as long as the tape used is free of dust and fingerprints.

### PAINT AND FINISHING:

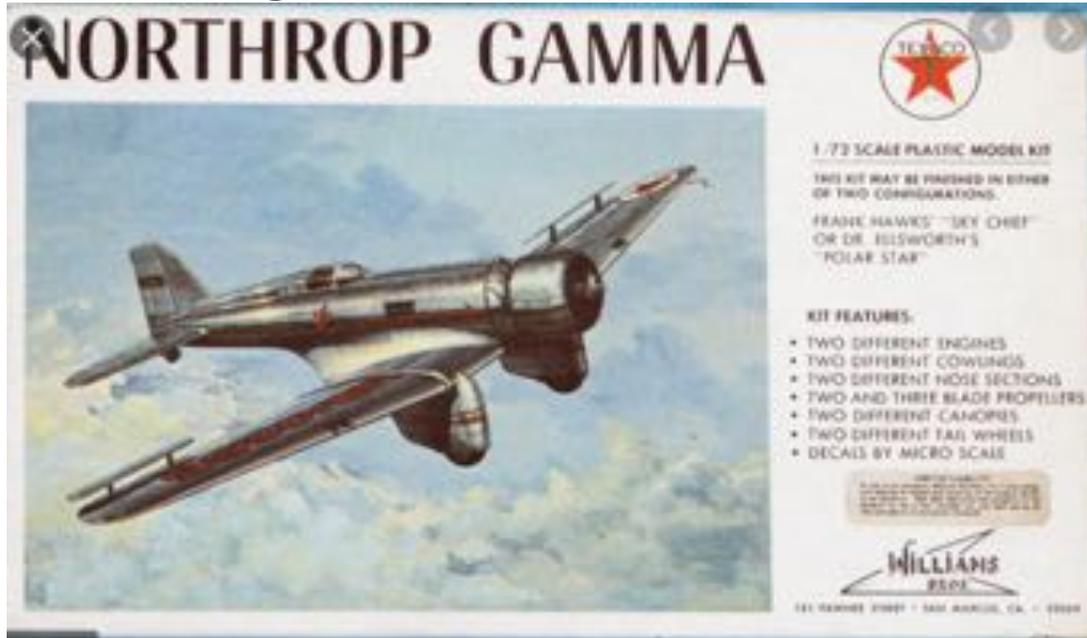
Taking a lesson from my Northrop Alpha build last year, I painted the Gamma with Floquill Old Silver and Platinum Mist. I first tried a few shades of Alclad, but it just didn't give the correct appearance in this scale. Since I was building a 40-year-old kit I had no hopes of the decals being usable. But since Williams Brothers re-released the Gamma a few years ago, I was able to use fresh decals from a newly purchased Gamma kit. These decals were crisp, in perfect register and behaved perfectly. The new kit, labeled "*A Flash of Gamma*", has markings for even *more* versions of the Gamma than the original release. The instructions are also expanded to provide data and drawings for all versions that can be made from the kit.

I recycled an old wooden display base made from a craft store plaque. A section of a printed Verlinden hardstand was cut to shape and glued to the plaque and a Brengun resin and photo etched fire extinguisher was added for interest. In the "days of radio" Frank Hawks, along with other celebrities and athletes were often spokespersons for products. Post Cereals had Captain Hawks on their team and if you were a young air-minded kid back then you could send away (with Post Cereal box tops of course) for an official Frank Hawks Post Cereal set of pilot's wings. That offer is long expired, so I found one on eBay for 10 bucks and placed it on the base as a relic from the time in history the model represents. It's just *cool!*

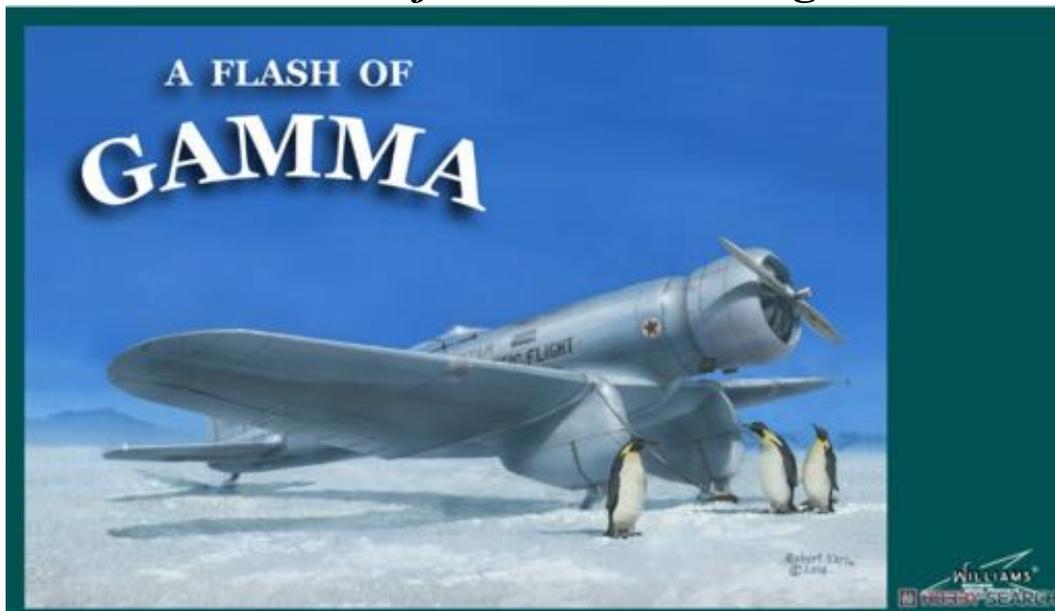
### CONCLUSION

Until someone makes a Gamma in another scale the Williams Brothers offering is the only game in town. It's not a kit for beginners, but with a little extra effort put into parts cleanup and fitting a nice model of the Gamma can be made. The options for all the different versions and the beautiful decals make this little kit a good value. I recommend getting the later "Flash of Gamma" boxing to avoid the crispy decals and yellow clear parts the original releases have. I have a half dozen Gamma kits in the stash and I have plans to make a bunch more versions of this beautiful airplane. **Williams Brothers** The original Williams brothers started making model parts during World War II and incorporated under the name Williams Brothers in 1960. After their passing in 2000, Daniel Brett stepped up in early 2005 and took over- moving the company from California to Texas and are now listed under the legal name of Brett Industries, Inc.; however, still doing business as Williams Brothers Model Products. They have not produced any new subjects since 2005 but have upgraded the decals and instructions on the old product line keeping these "classics" available and more buildable than the originals. With so many other important and famous airplanes of the "Golden Age of Aviation" one can only hope Williams Brothers will fire up some new molds and release more subjects so long neglected by the other manufacturers.

## The original 1970s “Hard Box” Gamma



## The new “Flash of Gamma” boxing (get *this* one!)



## The Kit Contents (original 1974 issue)



**Hauler's 1/72 Reflectors and Backlights**



**Brengun's 1/72 Fire Extinguisher**

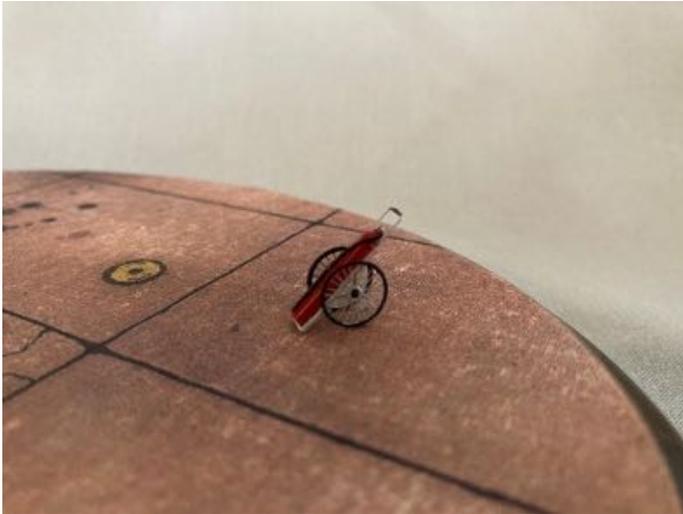












**Did you know that Frank Hawks gave  
Amelia Earhart her first ride in an airplane?!**



**Builder:** Rich Ribaudo  
**Kit:** 1/144 RealSpace Models Little Joe 1  
**Construction Time:** 15 hours  
**Finish:** Testors and Alclad. Kit decals.  
**Aftermarket:** None.

### **Wikipedia tells us...**

Little Joe, built by North American Aviation, was an unmanned United States solid-fueled booster rocket used for eight launches from 1959-1960 from Wallops Island, Virginia. Its purpose was to test the launch escape system and heat shield for Project Mercury capsules, as well as the name given to the test program using the booster. It was the first rocket designed solely for manned spacecraft qualifications and was also one of the pioneer operational launch vehicles using the rocket cluster principle.

The Little Joe name has been attributed to Maxime Faget at NASA's Langley Research Center in Hampton, Virginia. Faget was the designer of the Mercury spacecraft and a contributing designer to the Gemini and Apollo spacecraft. He based the name on four large fins which reminded him of a slang term for a roll of four in craps. A successor, Little Joe II, was used for flight testing of the Apollo launch escape system from 1963-1966.

**THE KIT:** I believe this kit was first issued in the mid-1990s, but I'm not really sure. As such, it shows some of the shortcomings of early, limited run resin kits and early photo etched parts. I had the kit in the stash for about 20 years. It got several false starts since then, only to fall back into the *"that looks like an easy one, I'll get to it soon"* category. It wasn't easy, and it wasn't soon, either!

**THE BUILD:** Several configurations of Little Joe rockets were built and flown. I chose to render my model (as closely as I could) to the LJ-1b vehicle. This being a mostly resin kit from a time when resin was a new medium in the hobby, I knew I was in for a little work. Most of the parts had some "flash" and pinholes that required cleaning up. The underside of the main rocket body required about 30 minutes of Dremel grinding and shaping in order to allow the rocket boosters to fit. I also "dished" the top of the rocket booster with the Dremel to allow the capsule to sit properly. After cleanup, the four fins were attached to the body with Gorilla Super Glue Gel and everything got a coat of Tamiya White primer. The kit allows you use either a Boiler Plate or Mission configured Mercury Spacecraft and both are included. I chose the Boilerplate test article as it looked a bit different than the Mercury Spacecraft we're used to seeing. The escape tower is rendered in photo etched metal. It was very thick and difficult to bend, even with a P.E. bending tool. If anyone remembers the P.E. that came in the early Verlinden upgrade kits you will know what I mean.

**PAINT AND FINISHING:** After polishing everything, I applied a coat of rattle can Tamiya Fine Gray Primer. This was followed by Alclad Aluminum and White Aluminum. The fins had been masked to preserve the white primer so they would have a bright under base for the fluorescent orange. Here's where the trouble began. I used Testors fluorescent Orange # 1173 from a brand new little square bottle. The stuff was very difficult to stir in the bottle and acted like Nickelodeon Slime! When I finally got it stirred, I added paint thinner (a departure from my usual lacquer thinner) and got ready to spray it through my airbrush. To my horror the paint exited my airbrush in wild spider web strands. I had masked the body tube well and it was a good thing I did, because

the webs, probably guided by static electricity, went everywhere I didn't want them to go. What a mess! After I was sure it was all dry, I removed the orange mess from the fins with Paint Killer (thanks Jim A.!) which worked great. For my second attempt I thinned the nasty orange with lacquer thinner. This time the paint behaved well, and I was able to paint the fins with no trouble. I was concerned the lacquer thinner would be too hot for that wacky, slimy orange paint. As it turns out, I was wrong and lacquer thinner was exactly what it needed to behave.

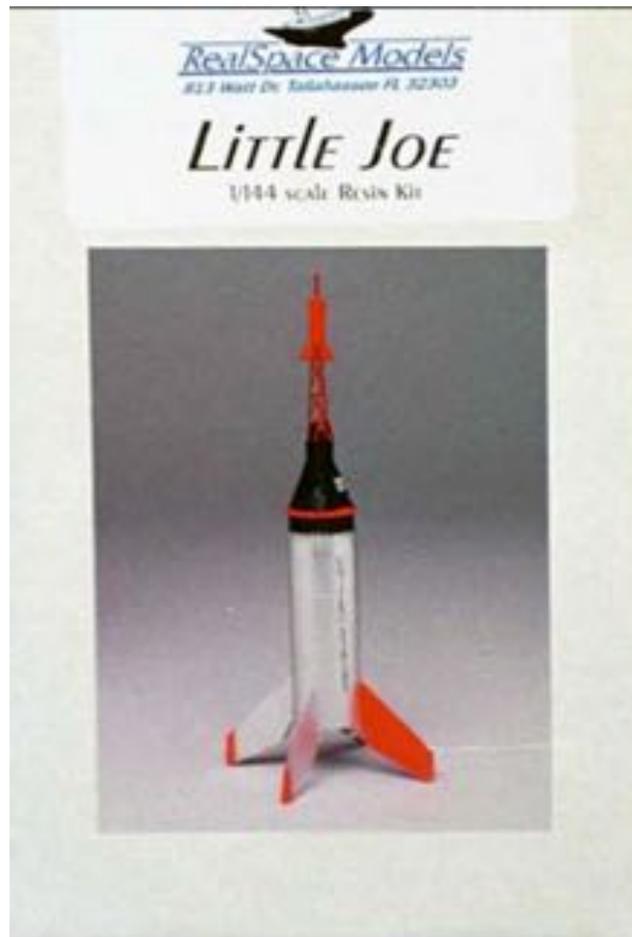
Moving on to the spacecraft, I again used the same two shades of Alclad as a base color. Learning my lesson from the spider web incident, I masked and sprayed the orange areas first white, then with lacquer thinner reduced orange. After applying some black paint to the tower, escape rocket and nozzles, the tower was attached to the top of the boiler plate capsule. I was never really satisfied with the final fit of the tower, but it looks convincing enough. The booster rockets were slipped into the main body and secured with super glue.

The decals were a nightmare. The entire sheet had a single clear carrier film so cutting close to the markings was necessary. Even with using Future as an under and over coating the decals curled up like Pringles potato chips. I spent about 10 minutes each massaging them down with a wide paintbrush wet with Future until they finally laid down on the model. As a result, they tore in a few spots and needed careful repositioning. I'm sure the age of these decals contributed to their unruliness.

The base is a simple piece of Alder covered in Famowood bar top resin. I didn't find any Little Joe program logos on Google Images, so I placed a Mercury Program insignia on the base before I poured the resin.

**CONCLUSION:** I had this kit in the stash for at least couple of decades. I thought it would be a quick and easy build being of so few parts, but I was very wrong about that! I'm more pleased that I'm done with it than I am about the results. It took a fair amount of effort to get to the finish line. I would have liked to recommend this kit to modelers as a first resin kit but the extensive cleanup and Dremel work, along with a hard to form escape tower and cranky decals push this little beastie into the range of a more experienced modeler. Anyone having completed a few simpler resin/multimedia kits will not have any more trouble than I did building this model. Just be prepared to spend some time cleaning up parts and dealing with a cantankerous, hard to bend escape tower. I'd LOVE to see a mainstream kit of this rocket someday.

## Kit Box Art



**The kit's "box art"; a 3x5 glossy photo of the completed model. The photo is also the instructions and the painting guide!**

The launch of the [Little Joe](#) booster for the [LJ1B](#) mission on the launch pad from the [Wallops Flight Facility, Wallops Island, Virginia](#), on January 21, 1960. This mission achieved the suborbital Mercury capsule test, testing of the escape system, and biomedical tests by using a [monkey](#), named Miss Sam.



**Little Joe on launcher at Wallops Island.**













## Calendar

Postponed. Date to be announced	50 Years of Modeling Excellence	Fresno EAA Chapter, Hangar 379 4344 W. Spaatz Ave. Fresno, CA
Postponed. until 2021	San Diego Model Expo & Swap Meet	San Diego Air and Space Museum Annex 335 Kenny St. El Cajon, CA
Cancelled	IPMS/USA National Convention	Embassy Suites and San Marcos Conference Center 1011 E McCarty Ln. San Marcos, TX
Cancelled	Best of the West	East Side Cannery Resort & Casino 5255 Boulder Hwy. Las Vegas, NV
Postponed. until 2021	Silicon Valley Classic VII	Napredak Hall 770 Montague Expressway San Jose, CA
Cancelled	IPMS Reno "High Rollers" 21 <sup>st</sup> Invitational Contest & Swap Meet	BPOE Lodge 597 597 Kumle Ln. Reno, NV
Cancelled	OrangeCon 2020	Hotel Fullerton Anaheim 1500 South Raymond Ave. Fullerton, CA
Postponed. until 2021	Desert Classic XXIV	Antelope Valley College Cafeteria 3041 W Ave. K, Lancaster, CA

## **Air Tanker Ops in the Antelope Valley**

None of us here in Southern California need to be reminded what a horrendous fire season we are having this year – all you need to do is go outside or look out the window. The pall of smoke the past several weeks has made it seem the Apocalypse is approaching. As I write this, I can't even see the hills 5 miles from my house and there have been days I've been on the valley floor where the visibility was less than 2 miles. A powerful tool in the wildland firefighting arsenal is the air tanker, or "firebomber".

The history of aerial firefighting dates back to the 1920's, with experiments dropping water-filled bags and kicking barrels of water out of cargo aircraft. By the late '40's, these techniques had been discontinued as unsafe.

A series of major fires in Southern California lead the Federal Civil Defense Administration to launch a program to explore methods of airborne firefighting. The mid 1950's saw the appearance of the first aircraft with integral tanks, a technology still used today. The aircraft used were World War 2 surplus, mainly Boeing Stearmans and Grumman TBF's, but later in the decade larger aircraft, Consolidated PB4Y-2's were introduced.

For many years, the airtanker fleet consisted mostly of obsolete piston airliners (mostly Douglas products) and retired military aircraft, primarily patrol planes and transports. A series of fatal accidents in the 2000's led to the grounding of the entire federal Forest Service (FS) contract fleet and a reassessment that led the retirement of most of the older airframes. California is unique in that it operates its own fleet of tankers and lead planes, consisting of Grumman S-2s and OV-10's

I've long had an interest in airtankers and have been involved with them to varying degrees. Jim French, the WW2 Navy ace and owner of TBM, Inc. one of the pioneering air tanker companies, was a friend of the family, and when I was in college, I worked one summer as a loader for California Department of Forestry (CDF, now Cal Fire), loading S-2's. CDF and the Forest Service maintain separate bases, but that year we had the large Big Sur fire and the FS aircraft would occasionally arrive at our base, where I had the pleasure of loading the last operation B-17 tanker. And in the mid 2000's, I volunteered at the Fox Field Tanker Base, where I loaded P-2's and P-3's.

I've also been involved with tankers in my engineering capacity at NASA. After the fleet grounding, the FS asked NASA to conduct an airworthiness evaluation of all the tanker operators. A quality assurance specialist and I visited the operators to evaluate their maintenance practices and their airframe structural assurance program. Some of what we found was horrifying – one well-known operator (who had experienced 2 accidents) basically ran their tanker program like a crop-dusting operation. They were soon out of business. On the other hand, we were extremely impressed by one operator, who had contracted with retired Lockheed engineers, installed structural loads instrumentation on one of their aircraft and collected representative data on the load spectrum experienced during fire operations so they could refine their structural assurance maintenance program. At the end of our evaluation, only 3 operators were awarded FS contracts. The other interesting tanker project I worked was the request by the FS that NASA evaluate whether they could safely operate the new Very Large Air Tankers (VLATs). These are the DC-10 and 747 tankers with tremendous capacity. The FS was concerned whether such large aircraft could be safely operated in rugged terrain. I drafted the evaluation flight test plan (which was flown in the NASA 747-400 simulator) and also conducted the technical evaluation of the tank and drop systems and the operators ground operations strategies. We determined the VLAT's were indeed safe to operate and the FS did let a contract to 10 Tanker to provide services.

On to some pictures. There have been major changes in the airtanker in the past few years. All the old reciprocating engine aircraft have been retired (the last, the P-2 Neptunes, were retired at the end of the 2017 season). The tanker fleet is entirely turbine now, mainly consisting of 2<sup>nd</sup>-generation airliners that have recently been retired. The higher speeds of the jets has improved efficiency by shortening transit times from the tanker base to the fire and the newer airframes have decreased maintenance requirements. We had a couple of small fires here in Tehachapi that were threatening structures which they put airtankers on to quickly control.



The BAe-146 (and later Avro RJ) had become extremely popular tanker due to its high maneuverability (it was originally designed as a STOL aircraft). This is Tanker 15 of Neptune Inc., a BAe-146-200. Neptune once had a large fleet of P-2's but now exclusively operates the 146. This aircraft was once operated by American Airlines.



Another 146 (actually an RJ85), Tanker 160 of Aeroflite from Spokane, WA. This aircraft flew for Lufthansa. Aeroflite also operates CI-415 "Super Scooper" amphibians, one of the few purpose-built air tankers.



Tanker 131, an EC-130Q of Coulson Aviation. EC-130Q's were used to communicate with submerged submarines using VLF radio, trailing a one-mile long antenna. They were replaced by the 707-based E-6A. This aircraft was previously used as a support aircraft by the NASA Airborne Science program at Wallops Flight Facility. Coulson is a Canadian company long involved in aerial firefighting. They were famous for operating the giant Martin Mars flying boats (now retired). Coulson is now converting EC-130's and Boeing 737-300's, which they call the Coulson Fireliner.



Cal Fire has long operated a fleet of S-2's. The original airframes were reciprocating engine TS-2A's, but the current fleet are all Marsh Turbo Tracker conversions. This is Tanker 76, an S2F-3AT. It was originally a Navy S-2G and was later operated by the Royal Australian Navy. It is based at Porterville.



Tanker 23, a P-3A of Airstrike, Anchorage AK. The registration and paint scheme show this was once an Aero Union P-3. Aero Union was one of the operators that didn't survive the airworthiness review. P-3 air tankers were grounded for some time, due to severe stress corrosion problems with the wing (a common problem with 1950's designs that used 7075 aluminum alloy). This affected Navy P-3's, and the Navy developed an expensive re-winging program. The operating P-3 tankers have all been re-winged. Airstrike has picked up most of the Aero Union aircraft, although one has gone to Buffalo Airways, of "Ice Pilots" fame.



P-3 dropping retardant near my house. Retardant consists of water, clay, an phosphate-based fertilizers, a guar gum binder and red dye.



There were several helicopters working the Tehachapi fires. This is Cal Fire's UH-1H N488DF. Kern County Fire also had one of their UH-1H's, N408KC working .

Helicopters have become a major firefighting tool. Their maneuverability make them able to drop water or retardant in areas fixed wing tankers can't get to, they can pick up water from any nearby source (like a lake, pond or even a water tank), and with the use of night vision goggles, can be used for suppression at night. For many years, the primary fire helicopter was the venerable Bell Huey, but the availability of other larger surplus military airframes has led to an expansion of the types in service.

Runway work at Fox Field has made the Forest Service tanker base inaccessible to fixed wing tankers, so it is temporarily a rotary-wing only facility. (The fixed-wings have been re-located to Mojave).

There were a large number of helicopters operating out of Fox recently fighting the Lake Fire near Lake Hughes.

The Huey is still a very popular firefighting platform. There were several at Fox.



C-FHQB is a 205A-1 (basically, an FAA certified Normal Category UH-1H) of Canadian operator Heli-Qwest. I was impressed by its ability to hover out-of-ground-effect on an 104-degree day, so it must have been re-fitted with the 2000 hp T-53L-703 engine from an AH-1 Cobra (a common civil Huey mod)



This is a very fancy Huey. It's got the high gear, Bell 212 dynamic systems, a fixed tank with a snorkel and the BLR Aerospace Fast Fin mod. Probably has a -703 engine, too. This is N205TK, Coastal Helicopters 205A-1. Looks like it has all the “++” mods, so is probably a “205A-1++”



Another 205A-1 of TVPX Aircraft Solutions

With the military releasing older UH-60 Blackhawks as surplus, it has become a popular utility airframe, both with commercial operators and civil government users. As Sikorsky never obtained civil certification for the S-70, however, the commercial operators can only use them for certain restricted operations, mainly external loads and firefighting (the government users, such as LA County and Cal Fire, operating under public use, can carry personnel, like fire crews). All the commercial operators are currently using external “Bambi Buckets” as the fixed tanks used on many of the government Blackhawks are very expensive (over \$1M). Simplex has been developing a lower cost system that can be installed in the aircraft cabin. The UH-60 can carry a 660-gallon capacity bucket vs. 325 gallons for a Huey



Brainerd Helicopters of Florida is the oldest and largest commercial operator of the Blackhawk, and the first to use them for fire operations. Brainerd owns the only purely civilian Blackhawk ever built (Sikorsky’s S-70C civil demonstrator) and the former VIP aircraft of the Sultan of Brunei. This airframe, N135BH is a quasi-civil S-70A, formerly of the Hong Kong Civil Defense Agency.



PJ Helicopters of Red Bluff, CA operates a number of UH-60A's. They have upgraded them with larger - 701D versions of the T700 engine and call them "Utility Hawks". They also have the coolest paint schemes. N804PJ is a very early UH-60A, the 55<sup>th</sup> built. They seemed to be having tail rotor gearbox problems (probably chip lights). They were doing a gearbox flush on Friday, did a maintenance test flight Saturday, and were changing the gearbox Sunday.

Columbia Helicopters of Oregon has long operated the Vertol 107, originally starting with the former New York Airways passenger 107's



Columbia calls N191CH a V107-II, but it is a former Marine Corps CH-46A. It was retired in 1968 and was an instructional airframe for a number of years before Columbia acquired it. The 107 can carry an 1,100-gallon bucket.

The “Big Dog” of firefighting helicopters is the Skycrane. When the National Guard retired the last CH-54’s in the early 1990’s, they were eagerly acquired by commercial operators. The largest operator was Erickson Helicopters of Oregon, who set about modifying the aircraft to better suit civilian use. Erickson has made over 1300 modifications to the design. The Skycrane has proved so popular for fire operations that Erickson purchased the type certificate from Sikorsky is building brand new airframes. The latest version will incorporate modern engines, composite main rotor blades and an night-vision compatible glass cockpit for night fire operations. S-64’s (the civil model number of the CH-54) have fixed tanks of 2,560 capacity (as large as some fixed wings) with a computerized drop system and a hydraulically driven pump and snorkel to fill the tank from external water sources.



N4037S of Siller Brothers, Yuba City, CA. Originally a CH-54A Heli-Tanker 37S has been modded to Erickson S-64E standards and appears to have most, if not all the Erickson mods, such as the main transmission offset by several degrees to improve hover performance, updated hydraulics, and the rotor work platform above the engines and armored shield between the engines. The dangling hose is the tank snorkel.



N720HT of Helicopter Transport Service, Aurora, Oregon. OHT is a CH-54B, appears to be a standard aircraft without the Erickson mods. The CH-54B (S-64F) was an upgraded version of the CH-54A with more powerful engines, updated systems, an external fuel capability and dual-wheel main gear.

The 'new dog' on the block is the Chinook. The Army has released a number of relatively new CH-47D's as surplus and they are very popular for external load work, as it can lift even more than a CH-54. The Chinook can carry a 2600-gallon bucket, and Simplex has developed a 3000 gallon internal tank that has been installed in several aircraft.

There were several Chinooks at Fox, including Colombia's purely civilian Boeing 234.



Couslon's CH-47D N49CH. You can see the 2600-gallon 'Bambi Bucket' in front of the helicopter



Another CH-47D, Columbia's N948CH. It was operating with the bucket, but is scheduled to have the Simplex internal system installed

Lastly, helicopter fire ops use rotary wing spotters and directors, in addition to the normal fixed wing assets.



This is N555AS, a Bell 407 of Shasta Helicopters. Note the large bubble observation windows

From a modeling standpoint, firefighting aircraft can make an interesting change of pace. They are colorful and unusual additions to a collection. There are a number of conversions available, including the Marsh Turbo Tracker. Lone Star Models (I know...) makes a number of external tanks and is working on a S-64 conversion. Lone Star and Draw Decals have a number of decal sets. Draw has an extensive selection, including many of the CDF and Cal Fire aircraft and helicopters, the P-3's, 10-Tanker's DC-10's and Kern 408. V-1 Decals has the Coulson C-130's

## **From the Oval Office – Notes From the Prez**

### Assessing the Work of Others as a Way to Improve Your Work

When I first thought of this topic, we were still meeting in person, and this was to be the month before our big model show. Even though a lot has changed, the topic is still a valid one. Ever since I became involved in club contests, by attending them and later judging and entering projects, I have learned much about improving my techniques. When it comes time to judge the hard work of someone else, having a single basic set of rules and expectations for craftsmanship clears the mind and sets one up for having a solid basic structure. That solid structure becomes the basis for our interpretation of an historic or literary subject. The simplest things can become lost in all the attention and time spent on small details, to the detriment of the project as a whole. On the other hand, taking the time to ensure symmetry and clean seams, jutting surfaces at correct angles, and the like make adding weathering and other details much easier, their application more accurate.

Judging models gives ample opportunity to inspect projects and evaluate how well the builder paid attention to the basics of its class. I come away every time that much more committed to taking care with the application of glues and fillers, and inspired to create and use more jigs to get alignment, especially of opposite-side assemblies. Seeing how seams have been filled, sanded, polished--eliminated--and then the lost detail of panel lines and fasteners is replaced gets me thinking ahead to my next project.

Sometimes, I find understanding a particular technique for applying paint hard to follow when just reading about it in a book or a magazine. Getting up close to those projects at the show table can bring to my full attention the desired effect of both the paint application, and its later alteration through distressing, staining, and fading. All of these inspire further effort on future projects.

Another thing I sometimes find challenging is visualizing how flat photoetched brass parts are to be folded into details that actually look like the prototype and its different knobs, switches, levers, toolboxes, seats, and so forth. Seeing someone else's work often helps me a lot more than a blurred period photograph from a scratched negative might otherwise. Sometimes what I see shows me that, really, a resin part or a detail made in a 3D printer might be more appropriate.

Finally, the greatest gift I get from judging others' work is a sense of camaraderie and shared effort, and admiration for the confidence they have in showing what they have created, coaxed to life from simple bits of plastic and other materials. I come away thinking not just, "I can do that," but "I need to do that." And that's what keeps this hobby so stimulating to me, even through setbacks of joint pain and job change.

Stay healthy and keep on modeling!

*Oops. Glued my knife to the workbench again.*