



Vol. 1, No. 2

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August-September, 2010

Welcome everybody to the second issue of our newsletter. The club is shaping up rather nicely, and I think you'll find this reflected in what we have going on...

Last Meeting Minutes:

We had a very good meeting last month, August 11, 2010, and even though a couple of our regulars couldn't make it, we had a nice crowd with two guests. Scott brought his father, Buck, and my wife, Sheila, came along to help me with the logistics. All total, we had 9 folks in attendance.

We handled quite a bit of chapter business: passed out membership cards; discussed up-coming events of interest; and Jeff gave us a detailed report on the SC State Military Museum. Most importantly, everybody decided that we would undertake a "group build project" and the subject was chosen: the DML "Smart Kit:" #6520, StuG IV "Early Production."

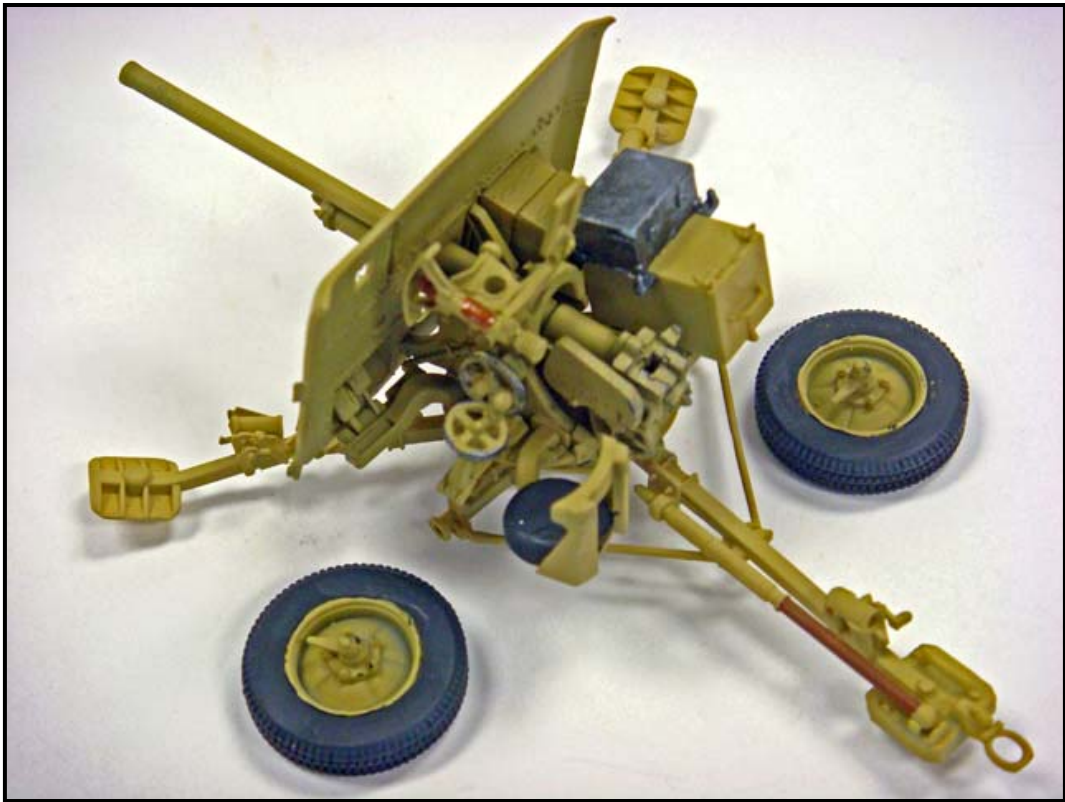
We had a great Show & Tell of finished builds with a couple of WIP's thrown in for good measure. See the next section for some pictures. Fantastic work everybody!

Finally, I gave an abbreviated presentation and demo on weathering pigments. For those of you who were keeping an eye on the clock – I'm sorry for running things over a bit! I'll try and do a better job with time-management next time, and we'll get Chris out of the store on time!

(Actually, Chris has said that it was no problem and if we need to run a bit over again, it's OK. So, thanks for your indulgence Chris! We do appreciate your patience and understanding.)

Photos of Models at the Last Meeting:

At the last meeting, members brought in 10 models for Show & Tell, and the quality of craftsmanship was overall excellent! So, in more or less alphabetical (by first names) order, here're a few photos to highlight the models:



Bob Spagnola's British, 2 Pounder AT Gun and Sherman II.





Although Jeff Nelson didn't bring in the whole project, here're some of the details he's working on for his 1/72 scale (!) M1 Abrams. Note the parts in the middle are clear road wheel hubs made from a "squash" casting of melted clear sprue in epoxy putty molds! Below are the new shock absorbers for the front road wheel stations made with telescoping metal tube and Grant Line eye-bolts!





This is Mike Roof's Tasca Sherman Mk Vc Firefly and figures. Below is Scott



Amey's diorama "Last Defense." It's a large figure vignette showing a German unit making a final stand against Soviet attackers.





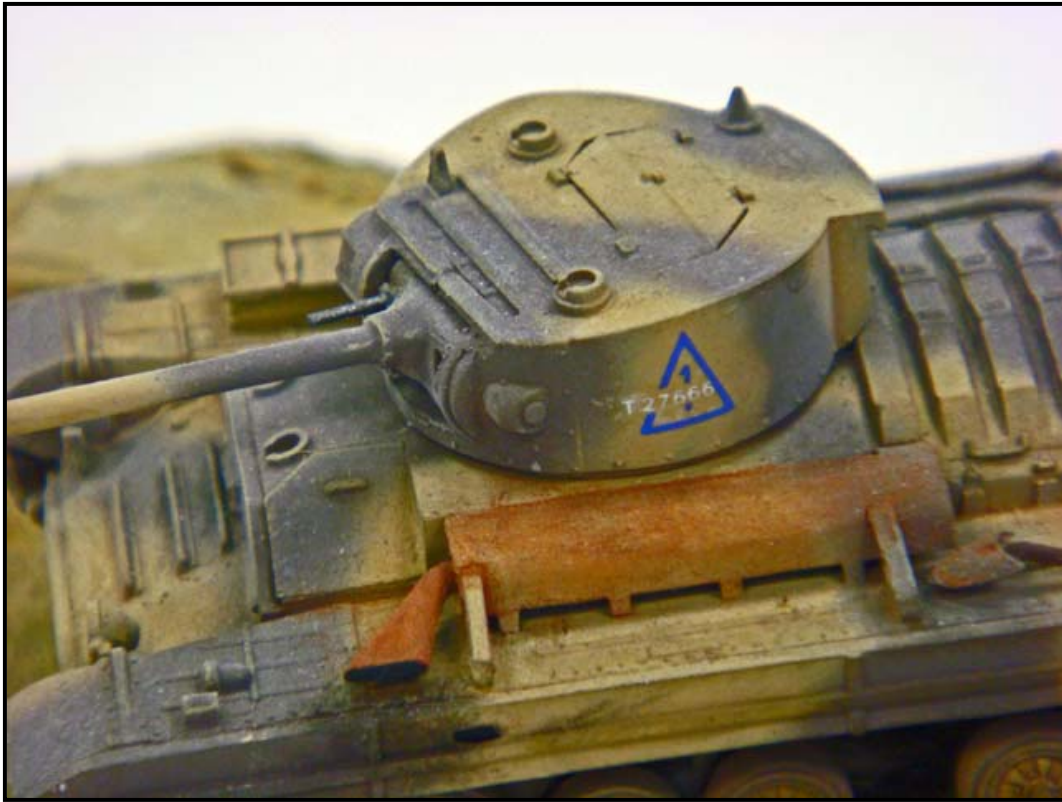
This is Tim Darrah's Ardennes diorama.



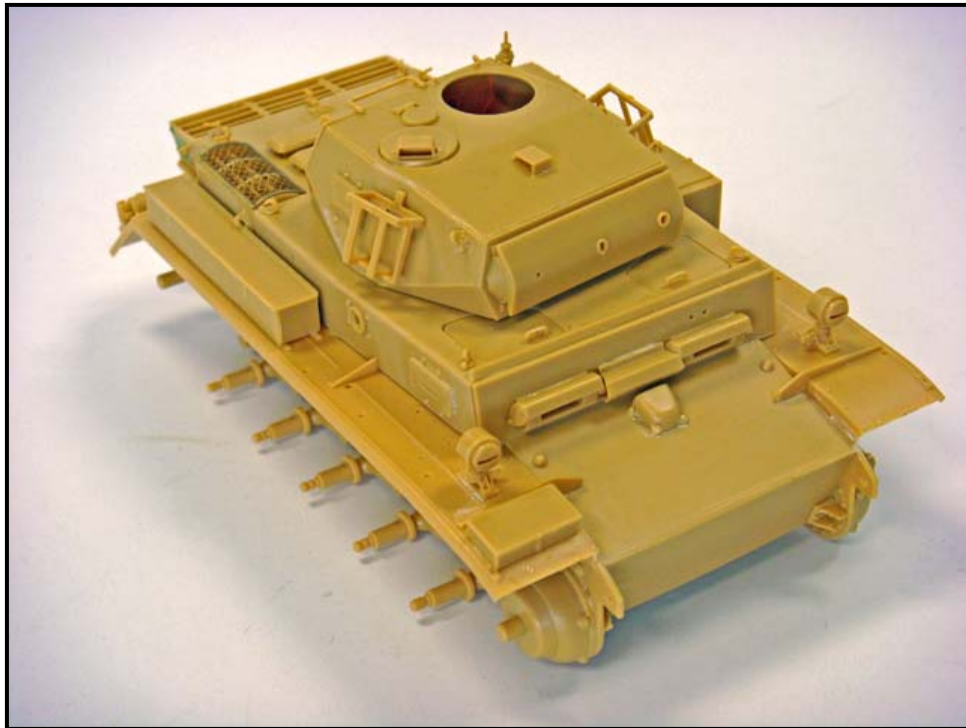
Tim also brought in this SdKfz 250 in Battle of the Bulge “Otto Skorzeny, Operation Grief – Pz Bde 150” markings.



Tony Abbot brought in this 1/72 scale British Valentine, an amazing bit of work. Here's a close-up of Tony's "Braille scale" Valentine:



Tony Kelly brought in this Tasca "Luchs" still in progress. It's obviously a great kit and one that I'm looking forward to seeing finished.





Tony also brought this M2A2 Bradley IFV with aftermarket resin reactive armor and this Merkava I.



Next Meeting Agenda:

Regular meetings are held on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 6:00 pm (1800) at the HobbyTown USA store, 10120 Two Notch Road, Suite 5, Columbia, SC 29223, (803) 736-0959.

Our next meeting will be on September 8, 2010. The tentative agenda is:

5:30 pm (1730): Arrival / Set-up / Modeling DVDs

6:00 pm (1800): Meeting starts / Admin Business: Raffle tickets; Tim Darrah reports his findings on chapter T-shirts; Report on SCMA Midlands contest category sponsorship.

6:10 pm (1810): Discussion: Group-build subject historical lay-down (with references), after-market options and tentative build schedule. Tim has the Atak resin Zimmerit from Jadar for everyone to examine.

6:50 pm (1850): Break / Shopping / Mixer / Photograph Show & Tell Models

7:10 pm (1910): Reconvene

7:30 pm (1930): Show & Tell: Builds and WIP's

8:00 pm (2000): Draw for the raffle prize / Meeting ends (officially – but we'll carry-on if we need to)

Highlights: Tim has found out how much chapter tee-shirts will cost. He has a couple of options for us, and if we can reach a consensus, we can order up some.

The HobbyTown USA store has donated a very nice Bronco, T17E2 Staghound AA kit to the club. We will be holding a small raffle for this kit and then determine what we should do with the proceeds. (I recently built the Bronco T17 Staghound and can say that they do a fantastic job on these. Outstanding detail!)

(Thanks again, Chris! We really do appreciate you guys sponsoring us.)

With donations from several members last month, we (The Central SC Chapter of AMPS) sponsored one of the local SCMA Midland Chapter's contest categories. I requested that we be given credit for the armor category.

Classified Ads:

Send your requests for assistance with references, help or advice resolving building and finishing problems, or needed "bits and bobs" for your latest project to the editor for inclusion in the next newsletter.

If you can help out your fellow club members, please bring what you have to the next meeting. If you think that you could present your method or technique to solve a problem or accomplish a building or finishing task to the entire group, let the editor know. Maybe we can organize your info into a demo for general presentation and add it to the following meeting's agenda (or as an extemporaneous on-the-spot presentation).

Research Assistance / Info Needs:

Mike Roof: Trying to collect information on the British "Rotatrailer" (aka "Rota Trailer" or "Roto Trailer") which was towed behind some Churchill and Valentine tanks in Tunisia. I have the new David Doyle Ampersand Churchill book which has a tiny photo of the trailer on page 55, but that's all I can find in my library. I'd like to get enough info to scratch-build one for my AFV Club Churchill III. I know that Bovington has one on display, and the placard for it has a stowage diagram from the T.O. on it. Also, Accurate Armour has one in resin, but if I can get the info, I'd like to build my own.

Tony Kelly: Needs help researching the AFV crewman helmets used by Israeli forces during the time frame when the Merkava I was first fielded. He would like to add some figures to the Merkava I (see photo above) and needs to know if the helmets worn were the Vietnam-era US AFV crewman type or the indigenous Israeli produced type.

Construction / Building / Finishing Problems that Need Help / Advice: None.

Parts-Swap Needs: None.

Up-coming Events of Interest:

September 18, 2010: "ScaleModel Fest," Piedmont Scale Modelers, IPMS, Byrnes High School, 150 East Main Street, Duncan, SC.

September 25, 2010: "1st Annual Model Contest," Midlands Chapter, SCMA, Redbank Community Center, Lexington, SC. The IPMS / Mid-Carolina Swamp Fox chapter will be judging all of the non-automotive categories.

October 13, 2010, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS Central SC Meeting, HobbyTown USA, Two Notch Road.

October 16, 2010: "12th Annual Fall Model Contest and Show," Charleston Chapter, SCMA, Cokesbury United Methodist Church Gym, 4990 Dorchester Road, North Charleston, SC.

November 10, 2010, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS Central SC Meeting, HobbyTown USA, Two Notch Road.

December 8, 2010, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS Central SC Meeting, HobbyTown USA, Two Notch Road.

February 18-20, 2011: "AMPS Atlanta 2011" in conjunction with "34th Annual Model Figure Show," Jointly hosted by AMPS Atlanta and The Atlanta Military Figure Society, Atlanta Marriott Century Center, 2000 Century Blvd, Atlanta, GA.

April 6-11, 2011: "17th AMPS International Convention," Fredericksburg, VA

Armor Modeling Forums where we "hang out:"

Look for and join other club members on these websites. Send new sites and your user name to the editor for inclusion in the next newsletter.

AMPS Homepage: <http://www.amps-armor.org/>

Real Names Used

Armorama: <http://www.armorama.com/>

Keith Frape – "Keef1648" (see Keith's Accurate Armour "Coyote" build log at: http://www.armorama.com/modules.php?op=modload&name=SquawkBox&file=index&req=viewtopic&topic_id=157836&ord=&page=1)

Jeff Nelson Nelson – "majjanelson"

Mike Roof Roof – "SdAufKla" (see Mike's Tasca "Firefly Vc" build log at: http://www.armorama.com/modules.php?op=modload&name=SquawkBox&file=index&req=viewtopic&topic_id=158659&page=1)

Historicus Forma: <http://www.hfmodeling.com/>

Mike Roof Roof – "SdAufKla"

Missing-Lynx: <http://www.missing-lynx.com/>

Real Names Used

Track-Link: <http://www.track-link.net/>

Real Names Used

Tanks & Things: <http://tanksandthings.com/>

Mike Roof Roof - "SdAufKla"

David Bridges– “DBridges” See David’s Accurate Armour “A39 Tortoise” finished build:

http://tanksandthings.com/index.php?option=com_kunena&Itemid=53&func=view&id=33503&catid=16#33503 and some painting in-progress shots:
http://tanksandthings.com/index.php?option=com_kunena&Itemid=53&func=view&catid=12&id=28222&limit=20&limitstart=20#32108

Reconnaissance / Trip Reports:

Recon Report: AAA Hobby, Marietta, GA and an AMPS Atlanta Chapter Meeting

Date of visit: 06-07 August, 2010

By: Mike Roof, AMPS #1632

Location: AAA Hobby, 1508 Roswell Road, Marietta, GA 30062, (770) 973-5666, Owner: James Corley. The Atlanta AMPS meetings are held at same location at 10:00 am (1000) on the second Saturday of each month.



AAA Hobby is an independent, “old school” hobby shop devoted exclusively to plastic models. Approximately 50% of the retail space is devoted to finishing and building supplies and products. The remainder is plastic kits: armor, aircraft, automotive, ships, and a larger than average selection of sci-fi and movie subjects. Armor selection is modest. Special orders are accepted and turn around time is said by patrons to be generally good. The shop offers discounts to AMPS, IPMS, and Atlanta Model Figure Society members.

Near full lines of Tamiya, Mr. Color, Model Master, Floquil Railroad, and Vallejo paints and products are carried (including Mr. Surfacer 500 and 1000, bottles and aerosol, and some MIG Pigments). There is a fair selection of soft cover references and magazines. The store has well stocked floor-sized Evergreen and Plastruct displays along with K&S brass rod and stock. A good selection of tools is available. The store also has some resin, PE and aftermarket decals on hand.

The shop has a large meeting room used by local AMPS, IPMS, and Model Figure clubs for meetings. This room has a wall mounted flat screen TV with DVD and VCR players. There are CO2 tanks for airbrushing, display cases with models and figures built by patrons, and drink and snack vending machines.



The clerk (Roger) and owner (James) were both friendly and obviously model building enthusiasts themselves. The shopping atmosphere was relaxed and congenial.

Patronage on Saturday morning, 07 August was very high. Lots of patrons were bringing in finished and WIP models and holding informal meetings with each other. This activity was in addition to the following:

I attended meeting of Atlanta AMPS chapter on 07 August from 1000-1200. The meeting began with a few executive board notes. (The executive board meets separately at a local restaurant before the regular meeting.) There were about 18 members in attendance (several had to depart early and several showed up after the meeting opened). Including WIP club projects, there were about 25 models brought in for display and discussion. One club member brought doughnuts for snacks.

The next agenda item was the club project moderator's presentation. (The club project is the DML JagdPanther.) The scheduled steps were covered; problem areas in these steps were noted; building options were discussed (to include using link-to-link Fruil tracks assembled using a home-made jig and possible aftermarket PE additions). Potential problem areas for the next scheduled steps were discussed. Club members interacted in a free-form discussion with the moderator, asking questions and making observations on their building experience. Earlier building steps included adding an aftermarket Zimmerit texture to the kits, suspension assembly, etc.

This was followed by Show&Tell. Each member discussed the status of his club project JagdPanther first, then the personal projects he brought (WIPs and finished models), and a few also discussed new items of interest. Show&Tell proceeded in a round-table fashion until each member had an opportunity, in turn, for discussion.

There was a short report by two members who attended the Artist Preservation Group (APG) show in Gettysburg, Virginia (an historical fine arts and model figure show). One very interesting point made about that show was that all of the special events (tours and lectures) were scheduled outside of the regular show times in order to allow show attendees to patronize the vendors and regular show displays. This also allowed the vendors, if they wanted to, to attend the special events without missing sales opportunities. APG's website: <http://www.artistpreservationgroup.com/index.htm>

The meeting concluded with a short discussion about the new AMPS Central SC chapter. The Atlanta AMPS chapter extended an open invitation to all the AMPS Central SC members to attend their regular meetings, and they extended a

special invitation to attend the Atlanta show in February, 2011 and become involved in the AMPS-style judging there.

At the end of the meeting, the models present were photographed for inclusion on the club's web-site and news letter.

Several club members then adjourned to a local restaurant for lunch together and more informal discussion.

Overall impressions: A great bunch of guys and an interesting shop that's definitely worth looking up if you're in the Atlanta area!

Recon Report: Southeastern Toy Soldier Show, State Museum, Columbia, SC

Date of event: 14 August, 2010

By: Mike Roof, AMPS #1632

Location: SC State Museum, 301 Gervais Street, Columbia, SC

The Southeastern Toy Soldier Show is an annual event hosted by The South Carolina Military Miniatures Society. In addition to the displays put on by the SCMMS, there are living history displays put on by Roman Legion, US Civil War (North and South), US and German WWII, US Vietnam, and Modern US Army reenactor groups.



The show is divided between the outside areas (near the main museum entrance) for the living history displays, the museum lobby and gift shop areas (where the SCMMS club members display dioramas composed with their collections), the stairway balcony area on the second floor for vendors, and a separate room, adjacent to the museum's café, also holding vendors. Vendors carried a wide range of pre-painted toy soldiers and accessories from all eras



and numerous manufacturers. In addition, several vendors had reference books and diorama supplies for sale.

Entry is free for all the displays outside and in the lobby area next to the museum's gift shop. However, museum general admission (\$7 for adults / \$6 with military ID) is required for the vendor areas on the second floor.

During my visit, I spoke to a member of the SCMMS about the show and asked about the cost of vendor tables. Tables at this show were \$50 each. The SCMMS member also told me that, in the past, the club has tried to establish ties and a show-hosting relationship with the plastic model clubs in the area, but without any success. He seemed to believe that given the many areas of interests that overlap between the military miniature collecting and plastic model building genres that such cooperation in the future would be to everyone's benefit.

Points of contact for the SCMMS chapter in Columbia are: Denis Fontana, (803) 419-6747 president; Geoff Walker, (803) 356-2674 for membership information; and Duan Sinclair, (803) 798-5566 for museum show coordination.

During my visit, I purchased several soft-cover reference books in new condition at very good prices. Among these were two Squadron Signal books for \$5 each and an Osprey New Vanguard for \$15.



Overall impressions: This is a good venue that's certainly worth visiting and shopping. Additionally, I think that for the 2011 show, the AMPS chapter (possibly together with the IPMS chapter) should consider renting a vendor table and setting up a recruitment display. The show was very well patronized by a large number of people, both visitors who obviously were there specifically for the show and others who were there for the museum and chanced onto the event.

Recon Report: HobbyTown USA, Augusta, GA

Date of Visit: 17 August, 2010

By: Mike Roof, AMPS #1632 and Bob Spagnola

Location: HobbyTown USA, 592 Bobby Jones Expressway, Augusta, GA 30907, (706) 855-5003 (on the right about 2 minutes drive north of I-20 after taking exit 196)



Although you might expect the usual "franchise" layout and offerings, here at the Augusta HobbyTown, you'd be surprised and wrong! This store is another "old school" kind of hobby shop that puts its emphasis on the plastic modeler and his (or her) needs. Our first impression was: "Kits, Kits, and more Kits!" (Imagine

Homer Simpson's "Mmmm... dough...nuuuutssss....." Only with us, it was "Mmmm.... armor kiiiiitsssss.....")

For the armor modeler, the store has about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an entire isle devoted to "Braille Scale" in 1/48 and 1/72-76 scales (more than many hobby shops have for all their plastic kits). In 1/35 scale, the store has about 1 and $\frac{1}{2}$ isles (!) of armor covering all the genres from WWII German to modern US and everything in between. As if this wasn't enough, there is over a $\frac{1}{2}$ isle of armor-related references and periodicals. This reference section included an extensive line of Osprey titles.



What struck us, besides the sheer numbers of armor kits, was that the prices for many of the kits seemed more than just reasonable. In fact, many prices were on the down-right low side of things. After pondering the situation and examining the particularly low-priced kits, our theory is that the proprietor is simply not going back over his older stock and raising the prices to reflect the latest price

increases. So, if there's an older kit you're looking for, if you find it here, chances are good the price will reflect the wholesale price when the kit was released or last ordered and stocked. Good deals were plentiful!

(We're deliberately keeping things "armor-oriented" here, but just in case you're one of those model builders that swings both – or even several - ways, the plastic kit offerings for aircraft, ships, and automotive genres was just as good.)



The store also carried complete lines of Model Master enamel and acrylic paints and Tamiya acrylics along with some Mr. Color products, like Mr. Surfacer 1000 and 500.

On checking out, we chatted a bit with the proprietor, Dave C, a very nice guy who was obviously on-top of what was going on with the hobby. After learning that we were members of an IPMS chapter, he gave us a 10% model club discount.

Overall Impressions: This is a shop that's definitely worth a visit if you're driving toward Atlanta, Augusta, or Aiken, SC. It's also worth a special road trip if you're looking for an excuse to get out of the house and spend some of your hobby budget, or if you're looking for an older, OOP kit. Highly recommended!

Recon Report: Arsenal Games and Hobbies, Augusta, GA

Date of Visit: 17 August, 2010

By: Mike Roof, AMPS #1632 and Bob Spagnola

Location: 198-C South Belaire Road, Augusta, GA 30907, (706) 364-2772 (on the right about 5 minutes drive north of I-20 after taking exit 194) www.arsenal-games.com and arsenalgames73@yahoo.com .



A relative new-comer in the area, Arsenal has opened a store and gaming center after serving the needs of soldiers and dependents while located at the AAFES / PX on Ft. Gordon. The store is still expanding its inventory, but seems to have made a good start and offers figures, rule books and accessories for many of the more popular 15-28mm table-top gaming systems. These include Games Workshop's Warhammer, WH40K, and LOTR, as well as Flames of War: WWII, Axis & Allies: WWII, and many others.

The shop also has a fairly large area with numerous tables and chairs for gaming events and is open until 9-10 pm on several nights for late, open gaming.

We were mostly interested in the products available for figure and model finishing and were very pleased to find a large offering of Games Workshop's Citadel paints and inks. However, what we were most happy to find was a small (but we were assured, expanding) line of the Flames of War paint sets for WWII figures and vehicles. These sets come boxed for British, US, German, and Soviet figures and vehicles. If you're not familiar with these, they are the exact same paints sold by Vallejo, who, in fact, manufactures the paints for Flames of War. The bottles are the same Vallejo "eye-dropper" ones, the color names are the same, and the color code numbers match the last three digits of Vallejo's system. In all respects, these are the exact same products as the Vallejo's with different labels. Prices are about \$.25 per bottle cheaper than the regular Vallejo's (without shipping!), but you must buy them in six-bottle sets. (BTW, the store also had a few of the Vallejo fantasy miniature paints in stock.)

The store proprietor, Mike, was a very nice guy who made us welcome, introducing us to several of the other people in the store. After just a few minutes, we felt like part of the family. A very congenial atmosphere for shopping, and I imagine it would be just as nice if we had been there for a "family night" gaming event!

Arsenal Games and Hobbies gives patrons with military ID (active duty, dependents, and retirees) a 10% discount.

Overall Impressions: This is a stop that's certainly worth it, especially if you're gonna be in the area. If you're Jonesing for a Vallejo paint fix, it's definitely worth the drive. If you're also into table-top gaming, this is a place you need to add to your GPS waypoints and checkout anytime you're nearby. Recommended with the understanding that it's primarily a gaming store that also has some really hard to find finishing products.

Newsletter Feature Article:

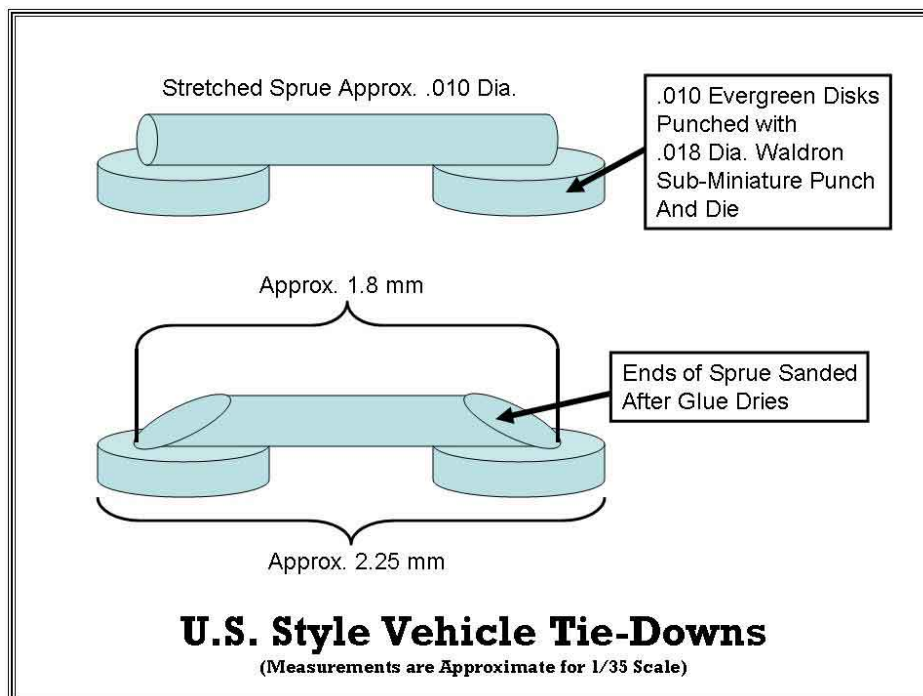
(See next page.)

Scratch Building US-Type Equipment Tie Downs (Footman Loops)

A common and reoccurring task that modelers must face when building US manufactured vehicles (and some other nationalities, too) is the need to make the tie downs that hold tools, fuel cans, and other items to the vehicle. The modeler is confronted with two different items really – the tie downs (more correctly called “footman loops”) and the straps and buckles that hold the item to the tie downs.

The following is an explanation of the techniques that I use to model these common items. As with most (if not all) of the techniques I employ, I’ve learned these methods from other modelers either in print, in discussions, or by observing their work at shows, etc. This technique for making the footman loops has been published by at least two authors that I have in my library. The earliest of these published instructions is in Shep Pain’s *How to Build Dioramas and Modeling Tanks and Armored Vehicles* (both books have much of their material shared). The second, and more contemporary, description is in any of several of Steve Zaloga’s Osprey modeling books that cover US subjects. So, to give at least some of the credit where it’s due, my thanks go to both of these gentlemen for sharing their techniques, methods and craft.

Functional footman loops are easiest made by using two small disks punched from .010 - .015 thick plastic card using a Waldron Punch & Die Set. These disks are then glued to the model an appropriate distance apart. They are then bridged using a short piece of stretched sprue or .010 - .015 plastic rod. (Evergreen’s thinnest rod is .020, but Plastruct makes styrene rod in both .010 and .015 diameter.) Once the glue has dried, the ends of the rod can be beveled



using a sanding block or Flexi-file to replicate the slightly angled ends of the prototype.

Finally, make sure to check your references for the number and exact placement of the loops.

Most US tool mounts only use a single loop positioned so that the strap pulls the tool into the mounts. It might seem counter-intuitive, but adding two loops for tool mounts is usually inaccurate.



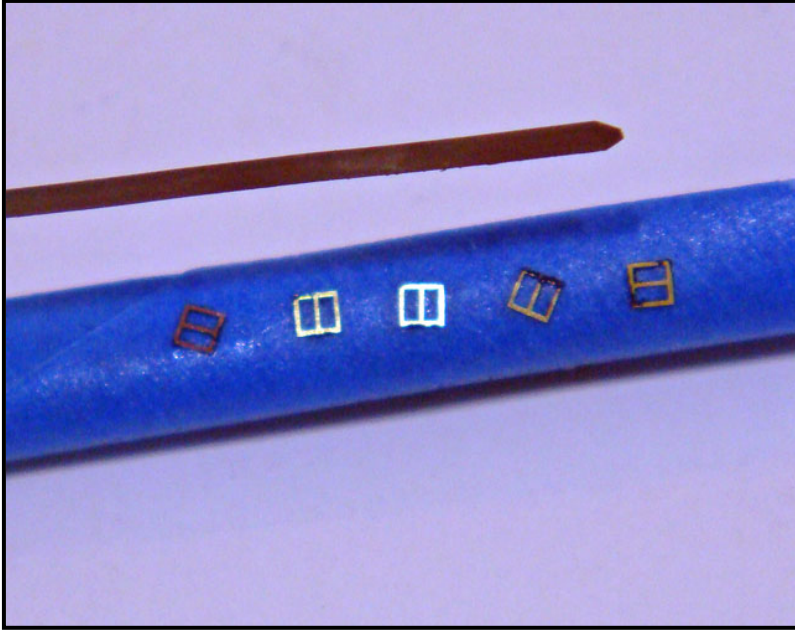
Here is a photo of several footman loops on a Sherman V turret. Note that these loops are formed using stretched sprue. The heavy foil strap illustrates how these loops can be used to actually attach items per the prototype.

I use heavy aluminum foil from old wine bottle tops, but there are other materials which will make suitable straps. One thing you should check, though, is how thick the strap material that you will use is. Some heavy, lead foils are relatively thick, and you must punch your supporting plastic disks out of correspondingly thick plastic (.020 - .025 for example).

The actual straps on US vehicles during WWII were made from both leather and woven cotton. They also had both roller buckles (with the pins that fit into holes) and friction buckles. As the war progressed, the cotton straps with friction buckles became the most common type. These cotton straps were dyed in both khaki and OD colors. Modern US equipment straps are almost universally made from OD colored nylon with friction, cinch-type buckles. These fabric straps also have metal reinforced tips vice the pointed tips of the leather straps.

To start, I cut a strip of foil the appropriate width and usually long enough to cut several straps from. I then paint this a dark shade of the selected color which allows me to add highlights later after the straps are in place. I also pre-paint the

photo-etch buckles, usually painting one side then the other, most often using a black undercoat. Here's a photo of the pre-painted strap (here leather colored) and one side of the buckles (the other side has already been painted). Note also that I've trimmed the end of the strap while it's still as long as possible.



As I get ready to cut each successive strap from the long piece, I'll trim the end and punch the roller buckle holes using a pin before I cut the strap to length. This makes fabricating the shorter straps easier.

To put the PE buckles on the straps, I've found that the easiest thing to do is to fold the strap into a "V" shape, slip both ends through the buckle, then flatten the strap out. This is much easier than trying to thread the strap through the buckle like a prototype belt, first through one side then the other. Here's a photo of what I mean.

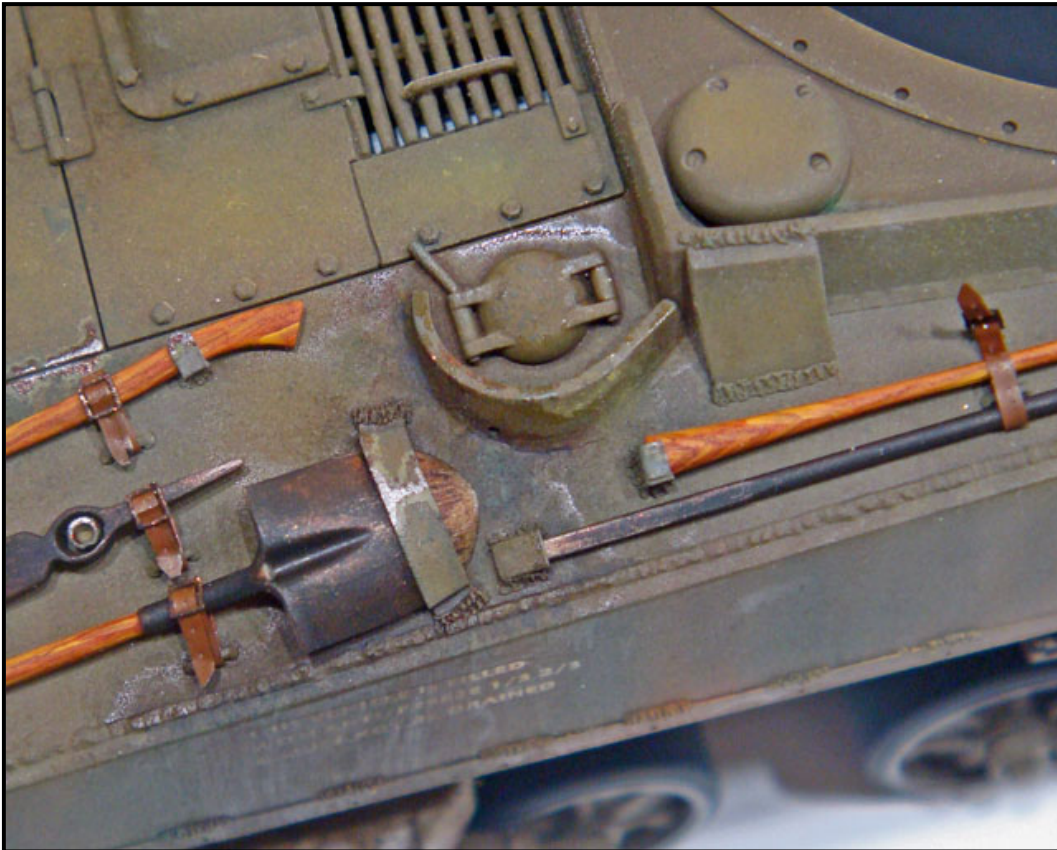


Note the holes and trimmed ends. I've also added a bit of bronze color on the faces of the buckles to replicate worn finish.

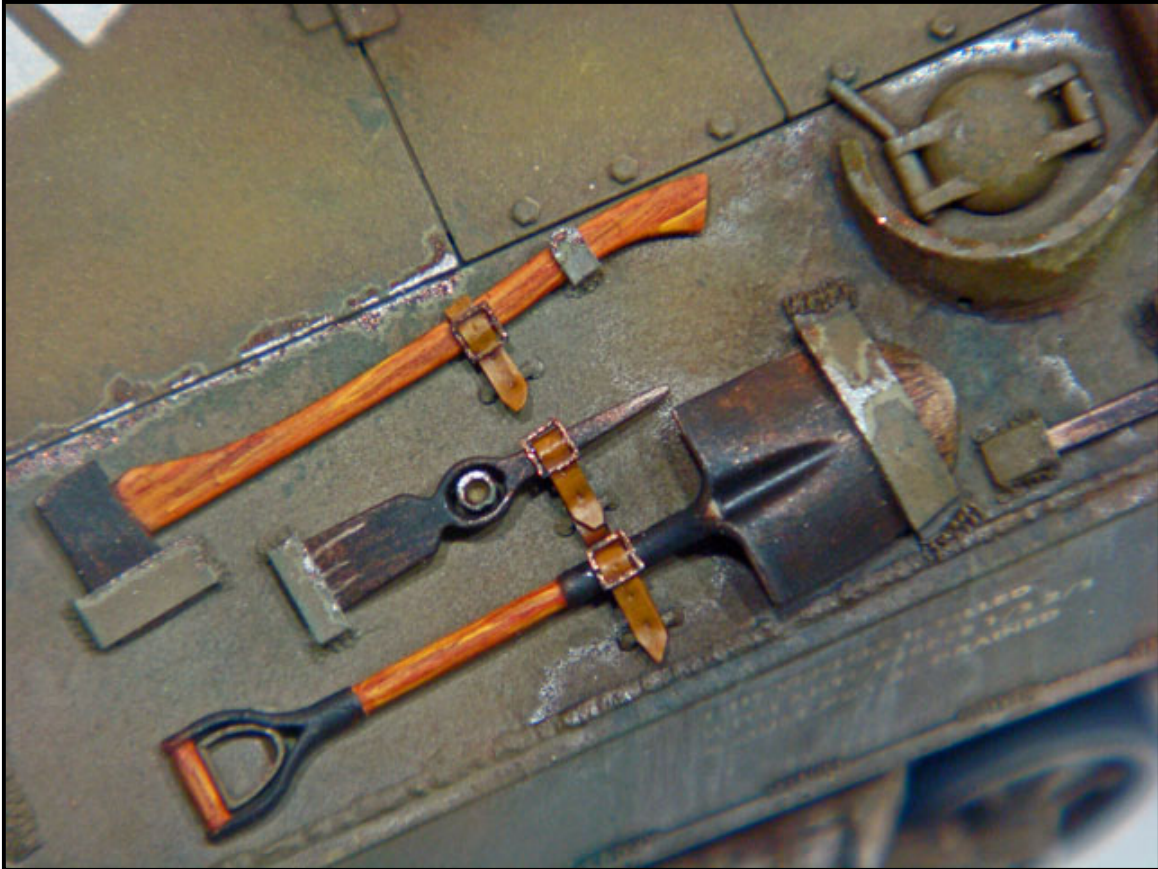


The next step is to fit the straps into the footman loops and trim the exact length to get the buckles positioned on the tools or other items where you want them. In this photo, the long strap wraps around two tools and I wasn't sure exactly how long to initially trim it.

To get the exact length, the tools are positioned, the straps are measured against them, the buckles positioned, and then the straps are trimmed to final length.



The final step is to add a small drop of supper glue on the “tail” of the strap under the point where the buckle will be, then hold the buckle end down (using a toothpick to avoid scratching the paint). After the glue sets, the strap paint can be touched up using a lighter shade of the base color for highlights.



All in all, I find scratch-building the footman loops and straps much easier than using some of the ultra-small PE parts and brass straps. The tiny loops are hard to get accurately spaced and lined up, they’re hard to glue on, and they’re prone to breaking off. As for the brass PE straps, even with annealing they’re hard to form, generally stay “springy,” and never seem to lay down naturally.

These straps and loops add a considerable amount of detail to US vehicles and can be used to give a bit of color to otherwise drab, monotone finishes. By using styrene plastic components, the glue-up and accurate positioning is much easier than trying to do the same thing with PE parts and isn’t as hard as you might think.

Mike Roof
AMPS #1632

“The Day Room”

Well, that’s about all for this issue. The last thing that I wanted to discuss, though, is the group-build.

First, I want to reemphasize what the project is and isn’t all about. It’s not an effort to get us all to build the same model because the selected subject is somehow particularly special or the selected kit is in some way the “best kit ever,” etc. Even if you’ve built a kit of this subject before, the object of the exercise isn’t just to add another model to your shelf.

No, the object of the exercise is to give us all a common frame of reference around which we can share our building methods and techniques – learning from each other how we each approach the problem-solving aspects of our hobby. By all of us building the same kit and more or less following the same schedule, we have a very precise and exact context for our discussions and information sharing. It’s one thing to ask someone how he or she gets a particular result (say, for example, building link-to-link track) and then trying to apply his description of his technique to your own next project which likely has completely different parts and requires different applications of those building techniques. It’s quite another thing, though, to ask that same question while looking at your own work on exactly the same parts and to see how the answer relates precisely to what you’re doing.

So, while we discussed and achieved consensus on what our first subject would be, the goal there wasn’t to pick out the next, greatest kit that “everyone just has to have on their shelf” and then force everyone to build it. If what we’re going to build this time doesn’t particularly excite you, well, maybe next time, we’ll pick something that’s more near and dear to your interests. In the mean time, look at the exercise as an opportunity to learn, share, and become a more skilled model builder. We’ll take as much time as we need with the project to give everyone a chance to absorb the techniques we discuss and to also give everyone time to work on their own individual projects.

I’ll moderate this first project to get us going (unless someone else steps up and wants to pick it up – volunteers anyone?). And, since this is the first one that we will do, the format is a work in-progress, but I think the following will work:

This first month (the meeting next week), we’ll go over some history and available references for the project; identify the building options, and look at some after-market accessories (like Tim’s Atak resin Zimmerit set, track sets, metal turned gun barrels, figures, etc.).

The first month’s project goal will be for everyone to do some research, establish the operational time-frame for their individual models, select paint and markings, and decide on any after-market accessories that you want to use. No actual

construction will be needed for the first month. However, the end result of most well done armor modeling projects is usually selected up-front. So, that's what the first month will be all about – hitting the books and making some decisions about the actual subject you want to build.

AMPS puts a great deal of emphasis on historical accuracy and correctness in its judging, even going so far as to award extra points for demonstrating that accuracy (by documenting your research as part of your presentation on the show table). These extra points do contribute to a model's overall standing in the judging, so, to start things off right, this is what we'll do too – start with the research.

At the following meeting (the one in October), I'll bring in the model with the first few steps completed along with a tentative build schedule (i.e. which steps we'll try to do each month). I'll explain the particular final subject that I'm planning to build – what references I went to and the results of my research. I'll also go over the first few steps, pointing out the problems I encountered (instructions, fit, options to chose from, any deviations from the instructions that I made and why, etc). I'll also give everyone a copy of some brief build notes for these first steps along with the tentative build schedule.

At the October meeting, everyone participating in the build should be ready to discuss their own research and intended finished subject based on that research. Now, some of you might want to just build the model out-of-the box using the kit painting instructions and provided markings. There's nothing wrong with that, if that's what you want to do. Others, however, might want to deviate quite a bit from what comes in the box. Again, there's nothing wrong with that. The point, though, of the first month is to determine the final outcome at the start, to know (or at least have a very strong idea) of the final paint scheme, markings, and modifications you want to incorporate before actually commencing the build. In this way, as you're progressing with your build, you won't have to go back and re-do or undo any work or find that you've built a version that's incorrect for the camouflage and markings that you wanted.

So, as a final request for our September meeting, if you have some references on hand for the StuG IV, please bring them so that everyone else can see what we have as a group. Also, at our next meeting, we might discuss making a group purchase on-line of any after-market accessories that several of us might want. For instance, Tim already has the Atak resin Zimmerit from Jadar in Poland. If you usually replace or use the same kinds of after-market accessories on your builds, take a few minutes to look up what parts you might want for this one. Bring in those notes and if enough other folks want the same accessories, we could make a larger purchase together.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the next meeting. Happy modeling!
Mike