



Hi again, everybody.

We've had a pretty busy month since our last regular meeting. On 27 April, we held a special meeting to introduce guys to the AMPS show and judging systems. This was a great success, in my opinion. There were six members in attendance. Scott Amey gave us an up-date on his efforts at trophy sponsorships, and Jeff Nelson brought in some club banners and contest / show signage that he's been working on. Both of these guys are going "above and beyond" and deserve our thanks for the excellent work they're doing on behalf of the club. Most of that meeting was filled with a slide show briefing on the AMPS system from the model-builder's perspective, and I think we answered a lot of questions guys have concerning the rules, skill levels, and show / contest procedures. Hopefully we can follow up on this with another special meeting this month during which we can discuss in detail what AMPS judges will be looking for. We'll discuss the possibility of this next "special" meeting at our regular meeting this Wednesday.

In this month's newsletter, Tim Darrah gives us a review of [Empire City Decals](#). I've never seen or heard of these guys, but Tim's review has encouraged me to look 'em up and add them to my list of model, accessory, references, and tools suppliers.

(Looks like Tim might have some Soviet armor lined up in his future!)

This would also be a good time and place to put in the editor's perennial cry for contributions and material. You don't have to be a great writer to tell your fellow model builders what your experiences were with a particular kit, accessory, tool or reference book. You don't even have to type it all up. I'm happy to edit and type up anything you want to contribute. And, if you want to add some pictures but don't have a camera or scanner, I'll be happy to help you out with that too.

Last Meeting Minutes:

At our last regular meeting on 13 April, we followed our usual agenda. There were 10 members in attendance.

In addition to our normal routine, we discussed and got consensus on the categories for special awards for our contest, and Scott Amey filled us in on the status of trophy sponsors. We looked at examples of the gold, silver, and bronze medals that the AMPS national organization has sent us for our July contest. These are the standard AMPS Regional contest medals. The national organization has donated 175 total medals for our contest at no cost to us. These medals represent several hundreds of dollars of value and demonstrate the direct and real benefits that the national

organization provides to its members and chapters. I hope that this demonstrated generosity encourages every one of our members who has not done so to join the AMPS national organization.

I provided a report on the AMPS International Convention which Dave Varettoni and I attended. I earned silver and gold medals in advanced categories and won "Best Vignette." Between us, Dave and I volunteered about 14 man-hours of direct judging and ACJ support. The club added \$260 in sponsorships, \$20 for vendor tables, and \$26 for the raffle (won by Scott) bringing our treasury up to \$504. Photos of the models brought in and shown at the last meeting are posted on our website along with photos of the AMPS International Show.

Next Meeting Agenda:

Our next meeting will be at 6:00 pm, Wednesday, 11 May, 2011.

6:00 pm (1800): Meeting starts / Admin Business – This month's business: (1) Approval to purchase special awards for the July contest (2) Review and suggestions for Jeff Nelson's signage and banners (3) Up-date from Scott on the status of trophy sponsors (now at 34) and (4) Up-date from Tim Darrah on the status of vendor table sales (5) Discussion and vote on annual dues (read Tim's open letter in last month's "Wildcat" – V2 N4) (6) Desire to convene and special meeting for AMPS judging info.

6:10 pm (1810): Show & Tell: Builds and WIP's

6:50 pm (1850): Break / Shopping / Mixer

7:10 pm (1910): Reconvene / Continue: Show & Tell: Builds and WIP's

8:00 pm (2000): Meeting ends (officially – but we'll carry-on as long as the store will stay open)

Regular meetings are held on 2nd Wednesdays 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.

Classified Ads:

The classified ads portion of the newsletter will be omitted from next month's edition. Members who would like to post requests for spare-parts or research assistance can always contact the editor and ask for such requests to be included. However, this has been a very little used portion of the newsletter, and the space used clutters up the rest and makes reading cumbersome.

Up-coming Events:

May 11, 2011, 6:00 pm (1800): Our next meeting at the HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

May 25, 2011, 6:00 pm (1800): Tentative special meeting for AMPS rules and contest procedures. Hobbytown USA store on Two Notch Road.

May 14, 2011: IPMS Region 12 Convention, Raleigh, NC.

June 8, 2011, 6:00 pm (1800): Our next meeting at the HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

June 22, 2011, 6:00 pm (1800): Tentative special meeting for AMPS rules and contest procedures. Hobbytown USA store on Two Notch Road.

July 13, 2011, 6:00 pm (1800): Our next meeting at the HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

July 16, 2011: Our Inaugural Contest, jointly-hosted with the Midlands Chapter of the SCMA! Gymnasium, Ball Park Road Recreation Facility, 432 Ball Park Road, Lexington, SC 29072.

August 3-6, 2011: IPMS / USA National Convention, Omaha, Nebraska.

August 10, 2011, 6:00 pm (1800): Our next meeting at the HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road. **(Our one year anniversary!)**

September 14, 2011, 6:00 pm (1800): Our next meeting at the HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

October 12, 2011, 6:00 pm (1800): Our next meeting at the HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

November 9, 2011, 6:00 pm (1800): Our next meeting at the HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

December 14, 2011, 6:00 pm (1800): Our next meeting at the HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road. **(Christmas party anyone?!)**

April 26-28, 2012, AMPS International Show, WW2 Victory Museum, Auburn, IN. **(woo hoo!)**

Armor Modeling Forums where we “hang out:”

This is another section of the newsletter that will be omitted from next month's edition. There has been little interest expressed in this section, and the information has remained quite "static" month to month. If we decide to expand our website in the future, we might consider including this information on a page of useful internet links.

However, anyone who would like to include a new or particularly useful link in future newsletters shouldn't hesitate to contact the editor and ask that it be added for the benefit of everyone else.

Newsletter Feature Article:

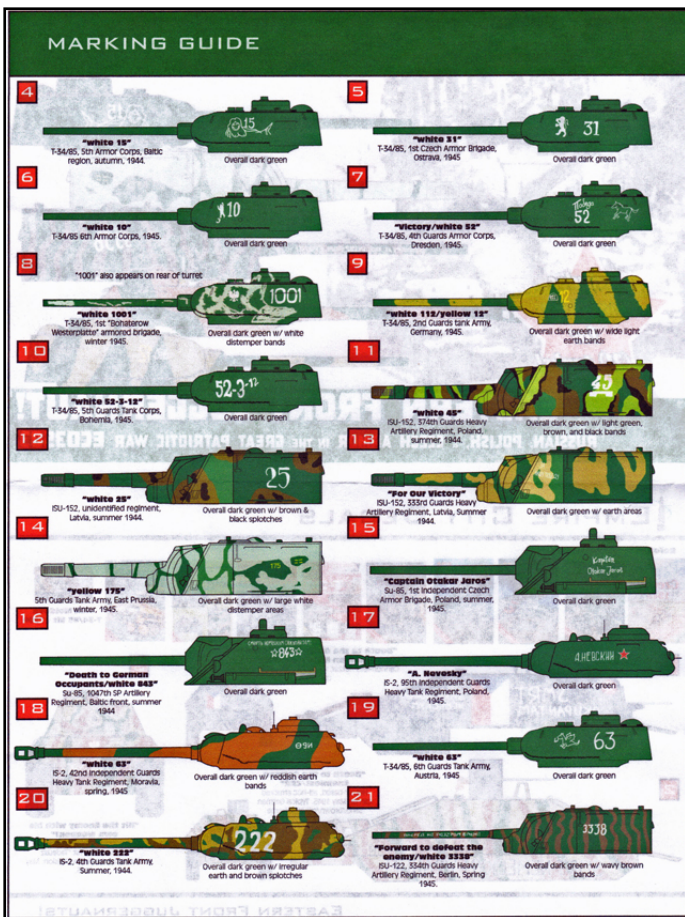
Quick Look Review

Empire City Decals
www.empirecitydecals.com

#ECD3503 "Eastern Front Juggernaut!"

\$15.00 (free shipping)

Here is a quick look review for Empire City Decals, this guy is up in Staunton, VA and does a very nice job with his decals. He does both aircraft & armor and this is his latest armor sheet.



You get markings for 21 AFVs as used in late-WW2 by Russians, Poles, and Czechs during the Great Patriotic War. The decals are printed by AviPrint and look nice & thin. As you can see by the instructions, you only get info on the turret markings, but with artistic license, you can fudge the rest of the camo schemes. This sheet covers 2 Hetzers, 1 Panther G, 8 T-34/85s, 4 ISU-152s, 2 SU-85s, 3 IS-2s, 1 SU-85 and 1 ISU-122, all in interesting markings (such as a T-34/85 with a white mermaid on the turret) or a wild 4-colour scheme on a ISU-152.

His other two sheets cover the T-34 (16 tanks on this sheet) and T-55 (24 tanks on this one). At \$15 a sheet, I feel that this is great value for the money. So look at his website and see if you'll like his stuff. I have all three sheets, but haven't used them yet.

Tim Darrah

AMPS #2545

“The Day Room”

In the US military, most company-level units have a “day room” in the barracks where the troops hang-out, relax, and BS. When you want to learn the latest in “rumor control,” you swing by the day room and chat-up the Joes and Janes hanging out there. They might not always get it right, but they’re always willing to tell ya just what they think!

Lately, there's been a lot of arguments and derisive chatter on one of the armor modeling forums that I visit and post on (Missing-Lynx) about after-market photo-etch, link-to-link track, and other accessories for armor kits.

One poster started a thread asking what the "best" PE sheet was for a particular project that he's working on, and a whole string of replies followed with guys debating whether the common use of PE to enhance or improve kit details is necessary or desirable. Many of the replies characterized the plethora of today's after-market PE (and other accessory) sets as "heavy and unnecessary" and decried their use as "quick-fix" solutions for "newbies" who were not developing the "traditional plastic-cutting" skills that take used to years to gain.

Interestingly, this is similar to an argument that I heard from a very accomplished model builder at the AMPS International show last month. This builder also decried what he perceived as a lack of the traditional scratch-building skills that once separated the "advanced" builders from other, more average skilled builders. I took his ultimate point to be that with the advent of multi-media model kits (plastic, PE, and turned and formed metal parts) and ready-made commercial finishing products (pigments, filters, etc), that only "average" skilled model builders are making models that are, in essence, too good for their skill level, and that these models are not real examples and demonstrations of advanced skills (no matter how good they look). He seemed to feel that since the builders didn't use "advanced" skills (according to his definition of what "advanced" is), that their models were being given too much credit by the judges. His opinion was that many (if not most) "advanced" model builders didn't deserve that "title" and neither did their work.

This kind of talk just leaves me shaking my head in wonder. Wow... really? Not only is talk like this pretty darned elitist and downright "snobby" (which makes it a threat to the health of the hobby by turning away and excluding new participants), but I think it's also pretty hypocritical.

I guess both of these guys, if they were true to their principles, should still be using Ambroid tube glue and those little ¼ ounce glass bottles of glossy Testors paint like you used to buy in the local drug store. This is, of course, ridiculous. Neither of these (again, very accomplished) "advanced" model builders would consider restricting their tool boxes to nail clippers and nail files or giving up their airbrushes to go back to hand painting. Time marches on, and so does technology and the techniques needed to master that technology.

The nature of the game has just changed in the last 20 years or so, and now the model builder's learning curve is much steeper. Before the advent of the internet, model-builders did indeed toil for years to develop "advanced" techniques in isolation from each other. Sharing and learning new skills was a slow process, and the ranks of the best model builders were very small.

In the 1970's, I can remember pouring over every article and picture in the old "Military Modeling" magazines and the epiphany of Shep Pain's diorama pamphlets included in the old Monogram kits. For years, I tried to glean every iota of knowledge about how those models were created from looking at those articles. Of course, there was no way to engage the authors in any kind of two-way

discussion to learn more than I could from their written words and photos. I can also clearly remember the very first photo-etched set that I ever used (an "On The Mark Models" PE set for the old Heller R-35). That model, along with the next one I made with PE on it, won first-place at the IPMS Nationals in Miami, FL, and those were my second and third national-level firsts. My first IPMS Nationals first-place was in Dayton, OH, 1988, and was a kit-bashed Leopard 1-A1A1 that didn't have a single PE or resin part. So, did I feel like I cheated when I won with the models that had PE in Miami? Heck no! Surprised? Yes! Like a cheat? No!

Today, we model-builders live in a golden age of information sharing and advanced manufacturing technology. A new builder can get on the internet and, after only a few models, he can learn and become pretty darned accomplished in many skills that, back in the "good ol' days," took a decade or more to learn and master. Add to that those new multi-media model accessories (after-market and in-the-box), and today's average model builder can indeed turn out scale models that rival the details of the best museum quality work of 20 or 30 years ago. I don't know about you, but I think this is a good thing.

And, in the end, with model building no amount of after-market accessories and Mig pigments can overcome poor basic craftsmanship. Simply knowing about a technique is not the same as mastering it, and even if the model-builder of today can develop his skills and knowledge quicker than in the past, he still has to develop those skills and show the results on the exhibition table.

I believe the source of the grouching from the "old school" model-building cadre is mostly just sour grapes coupled with more than a little bit of jealousy. Some of them feel that because it took them decades to advance their skills to get where they are today, that anyone else who gets there faster is somehow cheating and undeserving of the same accolades. Unfortunately, this is just the human condition.

Once upon a time, it was "Back in the day, sonny boy, we had to walk five miles barefoot through the snow to get to school..." Today it's, "Sonny boy, you don't know how good you got it. Back in the day, we didn't use no stinkin' photo-etch and Fruile tracks. No sirree! We built our tank models the old-fashioned way: by chipping them from stone..."

Happy modeling,
Mike Roof
Chapter Contact