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Hi, everybody. Hope you've had some productive model building time since our last meeting. This has been one of those rare periods where we've had almost five full weeks between meetings, and I know that I'm about ready for some "armor-talk!"

I've been working this last month on our Group Project StuG IV, and I believe that I have some good info on it for everyone. I've been able to make contact with a couple of very generous fellow enthusiasts (Craig Ellis – *8wheels good* – and Anthony Sowards) who have shared some of their own research and photo collections with us. The internet was finally kind, as well, so I think we now have what amounts to more photos, both in-action and walk-around, on the StuG IV than any other single reference published. Hopefully, with this info you guys are going to be able to build some great examples of an important, but little recognized, AFV that played a key role in the *Wehrmacht's* last 17 months.

Every major manufacturer – Monogram, Tamiya, Italeri, DML, and ICM – has released a 1/35th scale version (or two or three) of the StuG IV, but this plethora of kits has been more a factor of having the basic Pz IV part molds already cut than any recognition of the importance and contribution of the StuG IV to the combat power of the Panzer and Panzer Grenadier Divisions and independent Sturmgeschutz Abteilungen. I mean, face it, there were almost as many StuG IV's produced as Tiger I's, but where're the reference books and photo collections for the StuG IV? Even the Germans couldn't give the StuG IV any love. References to the StuG IV as the StuG IV (and not just another "Sturmgeschutz") seem to be pretty rare in contemporary WW II German sources, too.

But we're gonna change all that... We're doing right by the humble StuG IV!

Last Meeting Minutes:

Our September 8 meeting was a good one! We had one new member, John Sherrer, join us. For those who don't know John, he's a long-time armor model builder who has worked for (the now defunct) *MB Models*, and who has also been published in *Fine Scale Modeler*. Welcome, John.

We also held our first "monthly raffle," with the HobbyTown USA donated Bronco, T17E2 Staghound AA kit going first. Thanks to all of you who were so generous in buying tickets. This first raffle raised \$63! David Bridges and Keith Frape also donated (between them) 16 armor kits to the club, so we now have enough kits to hold a raffle each month for well over a year (counting last month, the same time as the production run of the StuG IV!).

Tim Darrah brought in all the info for club tee-shirts, and everybody in attendance ordered shirts. Tim placed our order right away, and the shirts have been made up. Tim will have them at the next meeting along with a small refund for each shirt ordered (the estimated cost was a bit over for each). I think everybody should have gotten the e-mail with the photo of one of the shirts, and I can say that I think they look great! Thanks to Tim for all his leg-work on this.

(Tim and Jeff Nelson have been working the issue of the digitalized logo for embroidered polo shirts and other items and can tell us what's up with that at the next meeting.)

I gave a small presentation on my research for the Group Build StuG IV, and we discussed research in general as it applies to the building process. Tim also showed the Atak Zimmerit set for the DML kit.

During the break / shopping / mixer, everybody that still had StuG IV kits at the store made their purchases. Thanks again to the guys at the HobbyTown USA for giving us a break on the costs and making the project a reality.

Show & Tell had eleven models. I think David's Accurate Armour A39 Tortoise was the show-stopper. All of that fantastic weathering was painted on – no pastels or pigments – great "old school" finishing techniques on that one!

Finally, at the end of the meeting, Jeff Nelson won the raffle for the Bronco kit. Enjoy it Jeff. It might not be "Braille scale," but I think you'll find plenty of detail to keep you happy with that one!

Photos of Models at Last Meeting:

With apologies to Tim Darrah for missing his StuG III Ausf G in Pz Abt 150 markings! - Sorry, Tim. I don't know how I did that, but I suspect that once I photographed Bob's StuG III, I had a "senior moment" and passed over yours...

(Photos start on next page.)



Bob Spagnola's Tamiya KV II (above) and LVTP (below)





Bob's DML Sherman II.

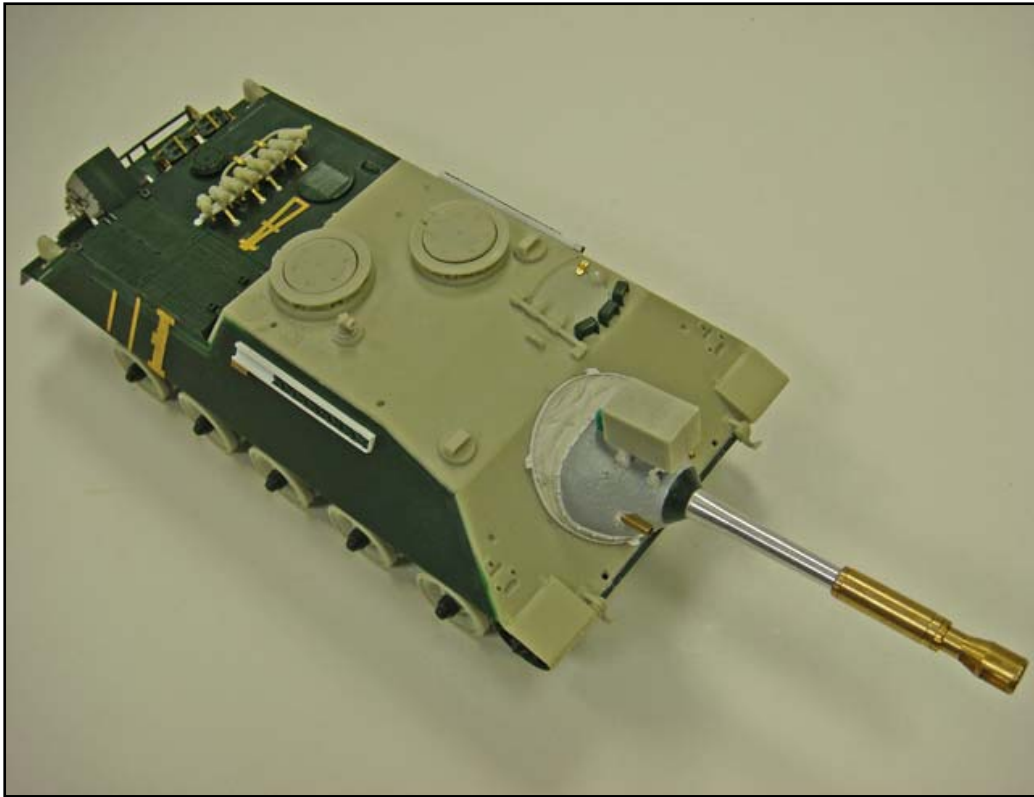




Bob's DML StuG III F8

David Bridge's Accurate Armour A39 Tortoise

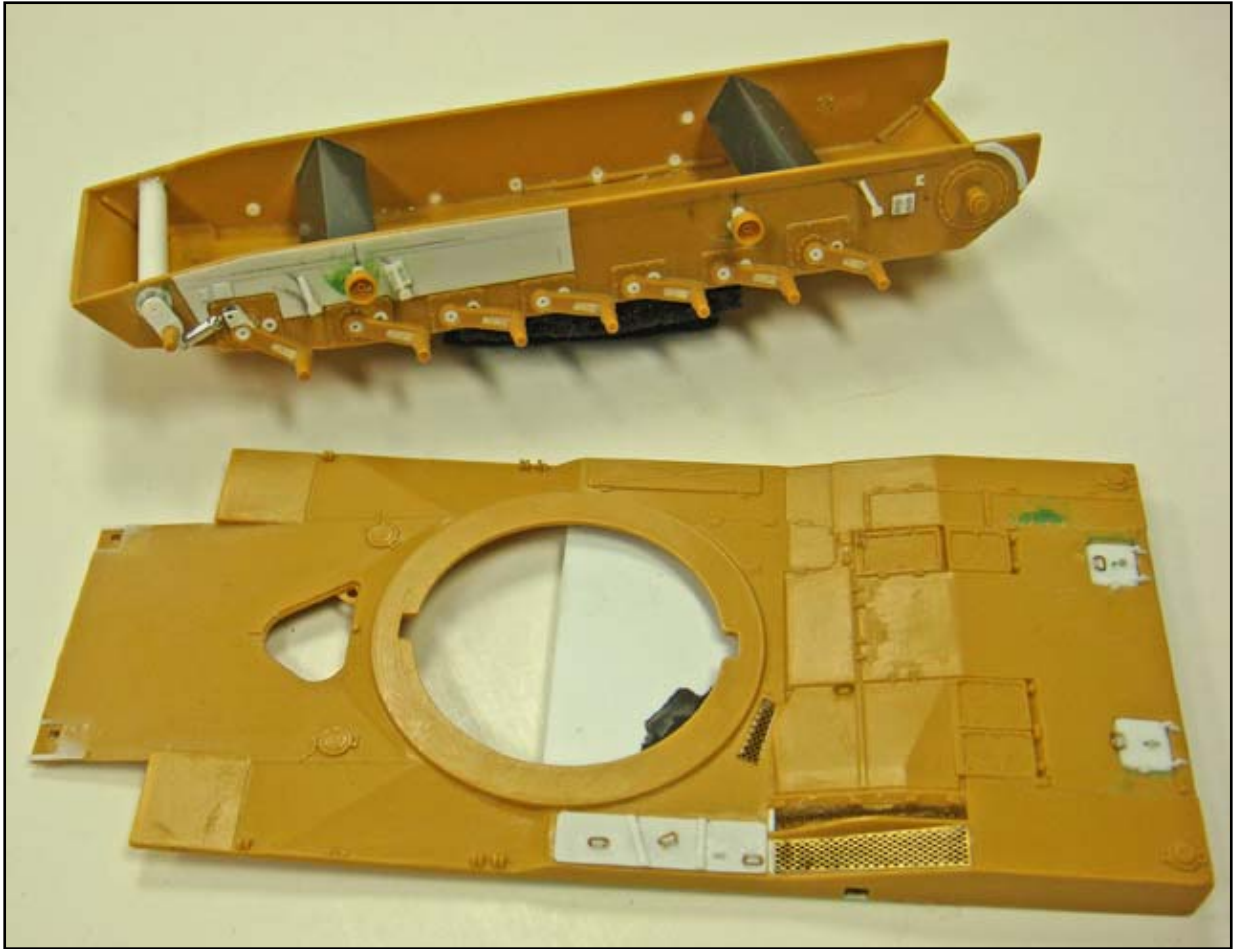




David's Revell BW JagdPz Kannonen Wagen (above) and Waffentraeger 88 Pak 43 (below)



Jeff Nelson's 1/76 scale M1 Abrams





Mike Roof's Tasca Canadian Firefly Mk Vc



Mike's Tamiya Panther G with IR



Tim Darrah's M7 Priest, 761st Tnk Bn, "Black Panthers"

Next Meeting Agenda:

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.

Our next meeting will be 6:00 pm on Wednesday, October 13, 2010. The tentative agenda is:

6:00 pm (1800): Meeting starts / Admin Business:

Welcome new members and visitors.

Raffle ticket sales.

Tee-shirt delivery and discussion about the digitalized polo shirt logos. Note that Tim will have refunds for everyone who ordered shirts.

6:30 pm (1830): Group Build Presentation – Steps 1 through 4.

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

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

Along with your individual projects, please bring your Group Build StuG IV's or references, so during Show & Tell, you can share your plans and tell us how you want to build your StuG IV.

Also, if you have any after-market accessories that you've ordered or purchased for your StuG, bring those to share.

7:50 pm (1950): Draw for raffle prize.

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

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 an extemporaneous presentation at the next meeting).

Research Assistance / Info Needs:

Tony Kelly:

a. 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.

b. Looking for information on the "final days" Pz IV FlaK 36/37 combination. Have the Cyber-Hobbies kit and want to know more about the location(s) where this was employed, which unit(s) used it, dates, etc.

John Sherrer: Looking for information on the M44 Armored Personnel Carrier (aka: M44 Armored Utility Carrier). A post-WWII / late 1940's development vehicle. Possibly as many as six prototypes were made, of which, maybe one (or two) were later used by the USAF in some unknown capacity. (One reference says that an M44 was used by USAF TACP's during the Korean War.) John is looking for enough information to scratch-build an M44, so any data, photos, drawings, or textual information will be welcome.

Construction / Building / Finishing Problems that Need Help / Advice:

Parts-Swap Needs:

Up-coming Events of Interest:

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 to the editor for inclusion in the next newsletter.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Model Armour: (A new, to me, site. They have a very nice photo spread on the AMPS East / IPMS show September 23, in Connecticut.)

http://www.modelarmour.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=57&Itemid=77

Reconnaissance / Trip Reports:

Recon Report: SCMA "First Annual" Model Contest and Show, Lexington, SC

Date of Event: September 25, 2010

By: Mike Roof, AMPS #1632

Location: Gymnasium, Ball Park Road Recreation Facility, 432 Ball Park Road, Lexington, SC 29072.

This show and contest was hosted by the Midlands Chapter, South Carolina Modelers' Association, and for a first-time event, I have to say, I was pleasantly surprised and suitably impressed by it. Being an SCMA show, the focus was on automotive subjects. There were only 5 "non-automotive" categories (armor, airplanes, ships, dioramas, and miscellaneous – and the misc. category actually

turned out to be the catch-all for any cars that didn't fit the regular automotive cats.) The AMPS Central SC Chapter sponsored the "Armor" category trophy.

The venue was a well-lit basketball gymnasium that has the "classical" gym layout. The lighting and air conditioning, however, was very nice – good lighting and cool inside temps. The hosting club also made good use of the small kitchen / concession area located inside the venue, and offered hotdogs, drinks and other snacks for modest, reasonable prices.

The display area was located in the court and was set-up nicely. The display tables all had white (reflective) table cloths, the categories were well marked (hand written signs and crape paper dividers), and all of the tables were elevated for better viewing (PVC pipe sections on the feet of the table legs). There was ample seating on the bleachers, and the vendors were located along the opposite long side. The restroom facilities were clean.



For a new, first time show, the vendors were still a bit "thin on the ground," only a couple (one concentrating on car models and the other on 1/72 scale aircraft) were present, but both appeared to do good business.



The raffle was modest, but still had many nice prizes. It was also well run. The trophies were displayed on a separate table during the show, giving the attendees and opportunity to view and admire them.

Although I had thought that the local IPMS chapter was going to conduct the judging of all of the non-automotive categories, this didn't happen. I'm still unclear as to why not. In the end, all the judging was conducted using the "NNL-type voting system," with each model builder entered receiving a ballot and voting for the best model in each category (called "classes" in SCMA shows). The voting was tabulated, and winners were the models with the most votes in each category.



During the vote count, the raffle was held to keep the restless natives complacent.



The winner of the "Armor" class was Tom Wingate, a member of the local IPMS chapter. During the show, Tom was "recruited" heavily by a couple of the AMPS members in attendance, so maybe we'll get lucky and add him to our membership rolls.

Tom's winning entry was a Tiger II, with Porsche turret and a partially scratch-built interior. It also had a very nice airbrushed ambush paint scheme and was a worthy winner!

Compared to many such small model contests, this was a very well run show, and one that I look forward to attending next year. The venue has a lot of room to grow. This year, less than half of the available display room was used, so many more categories could be added and many more models could be displayed in the future.



While in attendance, I did speak to a couple of the SCMA local chapter members about the possibility of the AMPS chapter participating in the next show. These SCMA guys were receptive to the idea, so I submit that we should consider taking a more active roll next year. At the very least, we could purchase a vendor table and put on a "recruiting" display, but if we're ambitious, I think we could easily become "co-hosts" and take on all of the armor, diorama, and figure modeling genres for award sponsorship and judging according to the AMPS open-system.

Something to think about for the future!

Newsletter Feature Article:

This month, the newsletter feature is published separately on a CD to be passed out at the October 13 meeting. This CD contains a two-part build article outlining our Group Build kit's construction, step-by-step, and also discussing the various building options. This article is over 40 pages long and contains lots of good info which is keyed to DML's instruction steps and part numbers. Added to this are a couple of research studies discussing the production changes in the StuG IV. So, all totaled, there're about fifty pages of hard-core StuG info on the disk!

There are also folders containing dozens of reference photos. We have over 30 "in-action" and period photos of the StuG IV. We also have about 140 photos of the two StuG IV's recovered in Poland. These show the recovery, restoration, and display of these two vehicles, inside and out. I don't know of any other published sources for internal StuG IV photos.

And finally, we have some rare, un-published original research information on the (until now!) unknown configuration of the late model, final version StuG IV's *Schurtzen*. Hitherto now, all published sources have assumed that the late model StuG IV received the famous Pz IV Ausf J type *von Thoma* wire-mesh *Schurtzen*. Well, up to now, they were all wrong! This last info is a combination of my own photo interpretation work coupled with, and independently confirmed by, information shared with me by Craig Ellis (aka "8wheels good" and the author of several books on the Pz IV).

“The Day Room”

Well, my friends, that's about all for this month's newsletter. One important event that is coming up is the AMPS "Regional" show in Atlanta in February 18-20, 2011:

http://www.ampsatlanta.org/Atlanta_Show_Information_9C.html

I'd like to take this opportunity to encourage all of you to make plans to attend and, if possible, to get there on the opening Friday. The guys in Atlanta are

planning to host the AMPS national chief judge's "judging certification" seminar on that day.

For those of you not too familiar with it, AMPS uses an "open" judging system that evaluates and judges each model at the show *independently* of every other model there. That is, the show is not so much a competition as it is an opportunity for each entrant to show off his or her best work and receive feedback on his or her skill level, with specific notes on areas that need improvement. This feedback is a significant difference even from those IPMS events billed as "open judging" and awarding gold, silver, and bronze medals.

Although, the AMPS show will award "best of's," and in this way, recognize the top builders in each general category at that show, every model entered will be judged on its own according to a set of specific criteria that address the "craftsmanship" aspects of armor modeling. Each model is then awarded a numerical score based on these criteria, and awards, bronze, silver, or gold, recognizing the model builder's skills are the result.

AMPS' judging addresses the "intangible" or "subjective" aspects of difficulty (either with the subject, the kit, finishing methods, etc) by breaking the show down into general modeler skill levels. That is, each participant self-declares that he or she is either a "junior," "basic", "intermediate," or "advanced" builder. (There is a final skill level, "masters," which is decided differently.) And for each skill level, the scoring breakdown for an award (bronze, silver, or gold) is different, *even though the judging criteria remain the same.*

As model builders advance their craftsmanship and earn gold medals at each skill level (basic or intermediate), they advance their showing into the next level up. Advance level builders access into the ranks of "masters" only by winning a "judges best of show" at the AMPS national convention. (Occasionally, masters have been declared by "judges acclaim" based on the totality of their entire body of work, but this has been rare.)

This means that model builders need not be intimidated by the "competition," since the only competition is one's own skill. However, it also means that model builders receive feedback from the judges that is "skill level" appropriate and which should help them to improve their craft. Basic level model builders are not expected to demonstrate the same levels of craftsmanship as advance level builders, and when the judges critique the work of a basic level builder, that critique is targeted towards more basic skills. Conversely, advance level builders are expected to have mastered the basics, and to receive recognition for their work, they must demonstrate nearly flawless basic skills.

In some ways, an AMPS show might be considered several shows, each for a different skill level, all being run in parallel. The overall objective is to promote

the hobby and enjoyment of armor modeling by improving the skills of all of the participants – no matter how their skills compare to others.

Needless to say, this type of judging is unfamiliar to most of us who have cut our contest teeth on IPMS' more traditional contest structure. The AMPS judging system is part of a whole that also encompasses different ways to carry out registration, judging team organization, and other administrative functions. To the attendees of an AMPS show, most of these differences are transparent, but for the judges, they are integral to accomplishing the overall goals of the show.

So, the practical execution of the "AMPS style" judging is covered in the certification seminar. Once a person has completed the seminar, he or she then must conduct two judging shifts while under the supervision of a qualified table captain before he or she is considered "fully qualified" to judge at AMPS sanctioned events. (AMPS judges usually work in four-person teams with one of those people designated as the "table captain.")

This "certification requirement" helps to ensure that the judging standards are applied more consistently between all the judges at any given show, and that that same judging consistency is found from one AMPS sanctioned event to the next. It also helps to ensure that the emphasis of the judging is on providing skills-based feedback to all of the participants and not on judging comparisons between their models. That is, not only does AMPS have written "national judging standard" and contest "SOP's." but the organization is taking an active position in ensuring that those standards and procedures are followed at all levels. I don't know about you, but I think that's a worthy goal and one that I fully support.

I've made my reservations at the Atlanta convention hotel (the room rates are pretty reasonable) and plan on attending the judges' certification seminar on Friday, February 18. I hope that some of you can make it, too!

Happy modeling,
Mike