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Hi gang!

Well, it's turkey-time again. It's amazing how fast the time goes by. Only two more meetings left for 2013 – wow...

It seems like it's been a quite time for the club since our last meeting in October, but actually, there's been more going on than meets the eye. Since our last meeting, our new club forum, the "Wildcat Chat," has gone "live" and is now up and running. Our moderator is Keith Frape ("The RSM") who will attempt to ride herd. In this newsletter are some posting rules and "tips." Our forum set-up is very basic, but still, there's a lot that you can do with it – post up photos of your latest projects, put up links and URLs to various other good to know stuff on the internet, and, most importantly, stay connected with each other without having to use email.

Please keep in mind that while posting privileges are restricted to club members in good standing (i.e. dues paid and current), anyone can go to the forums and read the messages posted. So... don't post anything you wouldn't want your mother to read. Hopefully you'll all find the "Wildcat Chat" forum useful and entertaining.

This month we also used our forum to organize a club special order of AK-Interactive products through our local HobbyTown USA store. Thanks to Keith for doing the leg-work on the order and to Ryan for being willing to put in the order without requiring us to pay in advance. Hopefully, this order helped to demonstrate the collective buying power of the club members and will provide some useful information to the store for the kinds of products that are in demand. Remember, the guys running the store can't read our minds. If we don't let them what we want and need, they can only guess. Also, we all have to be willing to "put our money where our collective mouths are." If you ask for the store to order or stock something, then be sure that you reach into your pocket and make the purchase.

Also this last month, Tim has been busy organizing the intra-club contests / group-builds. Hopefully we'll see some good participation with these. I think Tim's come up with a really good idea that will give everybody a fair chance to have their individual preferences for subjects and themes selected. This is a group activity, and the more of you who participate, the more fun it will be!

Finally, it's not too early to start making your plans for the Atlanta AMPS Show in February and the AMPS International Show in April. The Atlanta show is always a great event, and this year the AMPS International Show will be back in Fredericksburg, VA. If I understand correctly, the venue for that show has been renovated since the show in 2011. Both venues, the Atlanta Marriott Century Center and the Fredericksburg Hospitality House, offer AMPS show attendees special convention rates, and both are taking reservations now.

Last Meeting's Minutes:

Our last meeting was held at 6:00 pm, October 09, 2013. We had 11 members in attendance, and those members brought in 9 models to show and tell. Scott Amey won the raffle prize, a very nice DML 75mm PaK.

During the meeting: We discussed and approved by vote four proposals for club activities in 2014. 1) An intra-club contest to be held three times (every 4 months) and to be moderated by Tim Darrah (see separate article below). 2) A club cook-out (with possible swap-meet) to be held on a Saturday sometime in the Jun-Jul timeframe tentatively at the North Springs Park on Clemson Rd. 3) Some series of demos / club displays presented in the Hobby Town USA store, most likely on different Saturdays. Depending on how the initial events are received by the public, we will consider inviting the IPMS and SCMA clubs to participate in later iterations to broaden the kinds of model subjects presented. 4) Club "road-trips" to various regional locations of interest. (One tentative destination discussed was the SC State Military Museum on Bluff Road.)

We also discussed and solicited ideas for the categories (forums) on our new "Wildcat Chat" club forum. Several ideas were made and all of these have been implemented by Keith, forum moderator ("The RSM"). See the separate article below on our new forum.

Ralph Nardone presented his seminar on modeler's safety issues and best safe practices. This presentation was well received by everyone present. Thanks, again, Ralph!

Next Meeting's Agenda:

Our next meeting will be at 6:00 pm, Wednesday, 13 November, 2013 at the HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road, Columbia.

6:00 pm (1800): Meeting starts / Admin Business – 1) Organize the club-build / intra-club contests. Tim has a subject / theme selection matrix that we will fill out and use a lottery method to select the contest themes. Using a four-month window, the first event will tentatively be scheduled for our March 2014 meeting. 2) Organize our 2013 Christmas party to be held at our December 11 meeting.

Please read through the information on the intra-club contests below and have your ideas for subjects or themes ready for the meeting.

REMINDER: The HobbyTown USA store will close at 7:00 pm (1900). This means that all purchases at the store must be made before then so that the cash registers can be closed.

6:15 pm (1810): Show & Tell: Builds and WIPs.

6:50 pm (1850): Break: Shopping & Social Mixer. Cash registers close at 7:00 pm.

7:10 pm (1910): Reconvene: Continue Show & Tell: Builds and WIPs

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.

Up-coming Events of Interest:

Nov 13, 2013, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS meeting at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

Dec 11, 2013, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS Christmas Party at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

Jan 08, 2014, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS meeting at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

Feb 12, 2014, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS meeting at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

Feb 14-16, 2014: AMPS Atlanta show in cooperation with the Atlanta Military Figure Society. The 2014 show theme is "People Movers" (combat troop carriers, wheeled or tracked, any era). The Atlanta Marriott Century Center, Atlanta, GA.

Mar 12, 2014, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS meeting at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road. Our first Intra-Club Contest / Group Build!

Apr 3-5, 2014: AMPS International Convention, Fredericksburg Hospitality House (Convention Center), Fredericksburg, VA. Convention theme: "Hollywood Tanks."

Apr 09, 2014, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS meeting at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

May 14, 2014, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS meeting at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

Jun 11, 2014, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS meeting at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

Jul 09, 2014, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS meeting at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road. Intra-club contest / group build.

Aug 13, 2014, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS meeting at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

Sep 10, 2014, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS meeting at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

Oct 08, 2014, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS meeting at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

Nov 12, 2014, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS meeting at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road. Intra-club contest / group-build.

Dec 10, 2014, 6:00 pm (1800): AMPS Christmas Party at HobbyTown USA store on Two Notch Road.

"Wildcat Chat" Club Forum Information

Over this last month, we've gone "live" with the "Wildcat Chat" club forum. You can find the forum here:

<http://wildcatchat.ampscentralsouthcarolina.org/user/categories.aspx>

You can also use the "hot button" on the navigation bar located on the left side of any page on our club website. This will open a new page with the club forum.

Keith Frape is our volunteer moderator / admin on the new forum. His user name in that capacity is "The RSM." If you have any ideas, suggestions, or complaints about the forum, please contact Keith. Of course, you can also contact me.

Since the club forum is something entirely new for us, it's best to be clear and up-front about the rules of conduct and use. We only have a few posting rules, but everybody needs to understand them.

First, posting is a privilege reserved for local club members in good standing. This means that your dues must be paid up for the current year. If you have any questions about that, please contact Scott Amey who can tell you your dues status.

Second, you must request membership in the forum. You do this by following the links and prompts the first time you try to log in. You'll be asked to create a user name and password and when you click submit, your request will go to Keith for action. If he has any questions about your club membership status, he will resolve that before granting you membership to the forum.

Exceptions to this rule MAY be granted for those former club members, who were members in good standing, but because of circumstances can no longer attend meetings. So far, we've granted two such exceptions: one to David Bridges (a charter member) and one to Dave Neumann. Both have had to move away from our area and cannot attend meetings, but requiring these guys to pay dues just to stay-in touch with us seems a bit unreasonable. If anyone else has suggestions for other exceptions, please don't hesitate to bring them up to our attention.

It's not our intention to unreasonably limit membership to the forums – we're not "military censors" - , but it's also not fair to the club members who pay their dues and support the club to allow just anyone to have posting privileges. Having said that, though, we can make other exceptions on a case-by-case basis.

Third, forum membership may be revoked at any time. I don't anticipate problems, but if for some reason anyone abuses his forum membership by posting things that we, your club leaders, feel are inappropriate, we'll delete the posts, and contact you about it. If, after reasonable warnings, the behavior continues, we'll revoke your forum membership.

Remember, although posting privileges are restricted to club members, **ACCESS to the forum is open to the public**. This means that anyone can read what you've written, not just other club members. We've done this so that the forum can work as an AMPS promotion and recruiting tool. However, everything posted there is a reflection of AMPS and our local chapter. If someone starts posting things that reflect poorly on us, that is crossing the line and will not be tolerated.

Also, be respectful of and tactful towards your fellow club-mates: think twice about making comments that might be misunderstood or misinterpreted. What you might think is just poking fun or making a small joke might not be perceived that way by the recipient of your comments. Even if you and the other person have a good relationship, and you believe that person's skin is thick enough to take it, others in the public reading your comments might get the idea that our club tolerates or encourages bullying or rude behavior. Since this could be construed as a poor reflection on AMPS and our club, it will not be tolerated (even if it was totally unintentional).

This is not to say "don't have fun and don't be comradely:" just don't be abusive and think about how others might interpret your posts.

Your forum membership may also be revoked if you fail to pay your club dues in a reasonable amount of time. Again, I don't foresee issues, but if there's a problem, this could be the final option. Remember that our dues are paid annually each January. New members only pay dues prorated from the time they join to the end of that year. Junior members, under 17yo, do not have to pay any dues.

Finally, please post your real name in all messages. You can do this by either: 1) Making your user name your real name; 2) Going to your account settings and adding an automatic signature with your real name; or, 3) Simply typing in your real name at the end of each post.

Here are a few posting tips that might help you get the most out of what we have available.

Posting photos on the forum is very easy. However, you will have to have some sort of photo hosting account established. I use Photobucket, but Flickr, Snapfish, and others will work just as well. When you make your post, you will need to copy and paste the link to your photo. Choose the link option provided by your host that uses HTML code and starts with "<a href=" and not "[URL=". You can use the link options for either thumbnails or the full-sized photos. Your photo will appear in the body of your post.

Keep in mind that the horizontal size of your photos shouldn't exceed about 1000-1100 pixels. Any larger and they will run off the screen. I haven't experimented to find the max size that can be posted, yet. If anyone else figures this out before I do, please let either Keith or me know, so we can put the word out.

If you want to post a live link in your message or reply, you will have to use the HTLM prefix and suffix, manually typing them onto either end of your link (URL). You will also have to give your link a name.

Here's an example:

`"Wildcat Chat" Forum`

You would type in the parts highlighted in yellow, copy and paste the actual URL, and type in the link name (here "Wildcat Chat" Forum). (Don't highlight!) When posted, your link will show as its "name" which will be a hotlink that can be clicked on.

If you want to make any part of your post's text **BOLD**, you would add this: `text` Again, type in the parts highlighted in yellow.

For *ITAL/CS*, add this: `<I>text</I>`

To UNDERLINE, add this: `<U>text</U>`

Of course, if you have any questions, problems, or concerns, don't hesitate to contact either Keith or me.

I hope to see you on "Wildcat Chat" soon!

Intra-Club Contests / Group-Builds

Last month, you, the membership, voted to hold a series of intra-club contests / group-builds. We will hold these events every four months. This interval is to give everyone time to collect up kits and supplies and do the actual builds. The first of these events will be held at our March, 2014 regular meeting.

Tim Darrah will be the moderator / event honcho. This month, November, 2013, we will use a lottery method to select the first 3 subjects / themes (i.e. for 2014). Tim has created a selection matrix that will be filled in with subjects / themes that you, the membership, will provide.

At our November meeting, each member present will be asked to write down two subjects or themes. One will be your first choice and the other will be your alternate choice. All of the first choices will be put into a hat and pulled one at a time and entered onto Tim's matrix. Tim will keep the location on his matrix of each choice a secret. Depending on the number of members in attendance, once all of the first choices are selected, if the matrix still has empty spaces, we will do the same with the alternate choices.

You may write down any subject or theme that you want. These can be as narrow or broad as you wish. For example, you might choose a particular AFV or kit as a subject or you might choose a broad theme that covers a large period of history, a particular battle or campaign, or an entire class of AFV's. An example of a particular AFV subject might be "Any Panzer IV" or "Any M26-M60 family vehicle." An example of a particular kit might be "DML Panzer IV Ausf. J." A theme might be something like "Any Battle of the Bulge Subject" or "Any Arab-Israeli War Subject" or "Engineering Vehicles" or "Anti-Aircraft Vehicles." Other examples of themes could be something like "Any Figure" or "Any Soft-Skin Wheeled Vehicle." You can also make your first and second choices the same.

Any subjects or themes that are duplicates between members will be entered as they're pulled from the hat. If two (or more) people write down the same theme, and both of those choices are pulled from the hat, they will both be written down. This way, the desires of the entire membership will be reflected and weighted.

Once Tim's matrix is filled in, we will each then each write down two numbers, one number each on a slip of paper. The range of numbers (from-to) will be given by Tim to correspond to the rows and columns in his matrix. These numbers will be placed in the hat and pulled in pairs to match numbered rows and columns on Tim's matrix. Which ever subject or theme is in that box, that's what we'll do. We'll pull numbers for three subjects and / or themes for the March, July and November, 2014 events.

(Maybe we'll incorporate the July intra-club contest into the planned club cookout next summer?)

Sounds complicated, but this should give everyone an equal chance to have his or her subjects and themes selected. The more people who put any particular subject or theme into the hat, the greater the odds are of that subject or theme being put on the matrix and being selected in the lottery.

Finally, although you can choose any subject or theme you desire, consider that **the broader your choice is, the more club members there will be who can pick a project that interests them** and who will participate in the build. More club members will be able to find a project that interests them with a theme like "Any Half-tracked Vehicle" than a subject like "SdKfz 251/22." If you pick a particularly narrow subject, and that's what selected by the lottery, you might wind up being the only person who takes on the project! On the other hand, if you have a broad theme, you're likely to get more club members to play along with you...

In March, at our regular meeting, we'll have an "AMPS-style" contest where all the projects built for that subject or theme will be judged by AMPS rules. We'll set up a couple of judging stations and use the regular AMPS judging forms and scoring. One thing that Tim has on his list of final details is the question of what we want to do for awards, etc. We can do regular G-S-B medals or plaques or even no awards if that's what the membership wants to do.

So, put your "thinking caps" on, and let's see what subject and theme ideas you can come up with!

See ya Wednesday!

P.S. If you know that you can't make the meeting on Wednesday, you can send me or Tim your two subject / theme choices, and we'll make sure they get put into the hat.

"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! So, welcome to "the Day Room..."

Alright gang, that's about all for this month.

If you haven't already checked out the new "Wildcat Chat" forum, take a few minutes and surf on over to it. Remember, it's there for you guys to make it what you will.

Finally, give some thought to demos and / or info seminars that you'd like to have presented at the club meetings and let me know what you want or need. If you have an idea for a seminar or demo that you would like to present, please don't be shy. We have windows open for demos at the January and February meetings if you guys want something particular.

Mike Roof

Chapter Contact

AMPS Central SC "Wildcats"