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Cover Comment: ***Mark Minnis took the best parts from several Sherman kits and aftermarket products to produce a very fine model of one of Canada'a postwar M4A2 tanks. See page 27 for the build article.***

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Editorial

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The IPMS/USA Nats in Omaha

Thanks to COVID-19 I missed the IPMS/USA National Convention (the Nats) in 2020 and 2021. So I was completely jazzed up to go to Omaha in 2022. The organizers were well-prepared for the crowds, the models were great and the

vendors were siren-like with their almost-irresistable song that constantly tempted us to crash our wallets upon their tables.

Nevertheless, the best part of the Nats for me is to reconnect in-person with friends and folks I know from across the modelling world, and even to meet new people and share some time and a frothy beverage with them... and, unfortunately, get the cooties.

(post-Nats edit) - Okay, so I managed to catch COVID in Omaha. I'm fully vaccinated up the wazoo and then decided to not mask up - much like those who don't wear seatbelts or bike helmets. Most times you're lucky and sometimes you're not. As I was writing this I was in domestic isolation, with limited access to the home office and model room. I took my chances and didn't mask up, and that's on me. The only upside to catching COVID at the Nats is that Mrs. RT Editor was more worried about the illness than how much I spent at the vendors!

No IPMS Canada Award for 2022

Well, we weren't able to muster enough volunteers to make a decent go of doing the IPMS Canada 'Best Canadian Subject' award at Omaha. As the local coordinator I recommended that we not proceed with it this year. That's just the facts of life for this process. It does take some sacrifice of valuable Nats time for the gang to spot, identify and then judge the various Canadian-content entries, and we just didn't have enough. Anyway, we're taking a hard look at how this type of award is conducted in the future.

Pimping our kits...

Seeing the vast range of aftermarket products at the Nats I got to thinking about how that, especially now, a basic kit is much like seeing the baseline model in the car dealer's showroom. Sure, it looks good and will do most of what you need it to do, but is that really going to make you happy? How about, for just a few dollars more we look at the wheel upgrade, a nice engine, high-end exhausts, fully-stocked instrument panel and cockpit, etc.? Then you'll really have something to be proud of, my friend. No matter what kit we buy these days, somebody is going to provide aftermarket products to make it look... more better... But on the other hand maybe this range of options and upgrades makes the basic kit more accessible to those who just want to build a model and don't care about the add-on bling, versus those who are willing to invest the time, money and effort needed to incorporate all the extras in there.

An ongoing thank-you to our contributors

I look at a lot of hobby stuff on the internet. I see incredible boons to the modelling experience and the way we can share our hobby with thousands of people around the world with the click of the mouse. So I want to take a very thankful pause to recognize those members who choose to contribute their modelling projects and their time to the pages of RT or **BT**. Whether it's my current "good earners" like Al Magnus (11 articles), Frank Cuden (22) and Barry Maddin (27), Gary Barling (28), to past big contributors like Randy Lutz (13), right on through to the other 100 multiple-article authors and those who submitted their first article for publication in RT - all of them deserve our collective thanks. These people have traded off the ease and simplicity of posting their photos and commentary online, and receiving near-instant feedback from the masses, and going through the much different and more-disciplined style needed for an article that doesn't get the same kind of ongoing feedback from the ether. Without all these members helping out there's no way that RT would have been published on time.

A Balkan Rats CF-18 Hornet, OPERATION ECHO, Italy, 1999

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A Brief History Lesson

It was 1998. Things weren't going well in the former Yugoslavia. The forces of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had been trying to suppress Albanian dissidents for some time. The result? The newly formed Kosovo Liberation Army initiated a guerrilla campaign against those Yugoslav forces. As a result of global concern over the escalating violence, the United Nations passed a resolution demanding a cessation of hostilities. Nothing changed. The UN passed another resolution in September demanding once again that hostilities end which was followed by the North Atlantic Council activating Operation Determined Force in October. In the face of global pressure, Yugoslav President Milosevik agreed to a cease fire. Despite that, violence escalated between the two forces. Further negotiations failed which caused NATO to end Operation Determined Force and initiate in March 1999 Operation Allied Force, an air campaign against military targets, from 24 March through 10 June, 1999. Canada's contribution was called Operation Echo and consisted initially of a six CF-18 aircraft strike force based out of Aviano, Italy. This contingent grew to 18 aircraft,t all of which flew some 684 sorties and dropped almost 500,000 pounds of conventional and GBU-10 and -12 'smart' bombs. Those aircraft were 'The Balkan Rats'. (**Photo a**)

The Model

As those who have read my previous articles (***RT*** 41-3 and 42-2) may recall, my interest has long been primarily large scale models and, being a pilot in the Canadian Forces and modeller, it was only natural that I built a model CF-18 shortly after it entered Canadian service. In the mid '80s, the only 1:32 scale model available was that from Hasegawa which was based on the Northrop YF-17. Despite that, I was able to build a reasonable replica (**Fig. 1**). That model sat in my display case for some 30 years before moving to a new home in order to give way for this latest project.

First let me say that the Academy kit is an amazing collection of plastic and a beautiful model of an F/A-18C that can be built straight out of the box. To make a CF-18 Balkan Rat requires, as a minimum, modelling the SJU-9/10 ejection seat, a slight modification to the vertical stabs and Canadian decals. The rest of the above listed items are really icing on the cake. Unfortunately, should you be interested in copying my build, the Cutting Edge seat, Eduard aftermarket items and Leading Edge stencils and decals are no longer produced. That is not to say they can't be had, as these items invariably resurface as people downsize their stash or exit this world. In my case, at the time of my build, I had the Leading Edge items, Eduard's photo etch was still available and I was able to purchase the Cutting Edge seat, long out of production, after a thorough search online. Finally, the Academy F/A-18 kit, though out of production at the time of writing, is currently listed as an "Add to watch" product by Hannants which would appear to indicate a forthcoming re-release of the kit. The exact same kit was also released under the Kinetic label and even includes Canadian decals (kineticmodel.com/index.php?route=product/product&path=59_69&product_id=112).

The Cockpit

Following the instructions, the first step is the ejection seat and cockpit. Since Canada acquired the CF-18 in the 1980s, the aircraft has received a number of upgrades including a change of ejection seats. In particular, with the implementation of the Incremental Modernization Program Phase II initiated in 2005, the upgraded Martin-Baker SJU-17 / Navy Aircrew Common Ejection Seat (NACES) replaced the earlier Martin-Baker SJU-9/10 ejection seat and that provided in the kit is appropriate for these post modernization aircraft. Unfortunately, for the builder of a 'Rat', it was the earlier SJU-9/10 seat with the full harness which was in use during OPERATION ECHO in 1999. The only aftermarket representation of the earlier seat in 1:32 scale was that offered by long-gone Cutting Edge. (**Fig. 2**).

The alternative is the harnessless seat provided in the Avionix F/A-18A Hornet Update Set which will require you to add the harness. Fortunately, for me, after an online search I was able to find the Cutting Edge example at Mister Kit, a retail outlet located in southern Italy.

I painted the seat in accordance with a photo I had on file and set it aside for installation in the cockpit after I had painted the model. The kit and Avionix seats were relegated to my spares bin.

The kit cockpit suffered a similar fate as the kit seat, as I had the Avionix resin F/A-18A Hornet Update Set (**Fig. 3**) and Eduard F/A-18 Interior etch set. My cockpit is a mix of the two. Paint used was Model Master FS36231 Dark Gull Grey with details picked out in black, red and yellow. Decals showing graphics were not placed on the three instrument panel displays as I was modelling a static, unpowered aircraft. (**Fig. 4, 5 and 6**).

The Nose

Like the cockpit and ejection seat, having the Aires resin nose gear wheel well, I skipped over the kit assembly for that item and tackled the nose landing gear. Here it was kit parts all the way which, when complete and along with the Aires nose gear wheel well, were painted flat white. Once dry, the nose gear assembly was epoxied in the Aires wheel well. It was then a simple matter of enclosing the nose well and cockpit assemblies in the forward fuselage halves.

Main Wheel Wells and Intakes

Here I jumped ahead to Step 7 which involved the main gear wells and the jet intakes. While the kit wheel wells are very good, those from Aires are great! As for the intakes, one of the few shortcomings of the Academy kit are the two engine intakes – they shrink in diameter as you move aft. Fortunately, DMold offers perfect replacements. If using the Aires wells, as I did, it requires removing the kit main gear wells from the lower fuselage and repeated removal of plastic from the fuselage sides, Parts A3 and A4, and from the resin well's outer surfaces. (**Fig. 7**).

Once satisfied a good fit could be had, I glued the fuselage sides to the fuselage bottom, painted the wheel wells, epoxied them to the lower fuselage and added the two DMold resin replacement engine intake lips. (**Fig. 8**).

So far so good, except….. the intake trunks didn't fit over the Aires wells. The result - more shaving of resin until some components were translucent and a perfect fit was eventually obtained. (**Fig. 9**).

Once the kit engine was epoxied to the DMold intakes (**Fig. 10**), I assembled the wings (Parts C1,2,3 and 4), attached them to the upper rear fuselage half (Part A1), added the four wing pylons and joined the upper and lower rear fuselage halves. (**Fig. 11**).

The Vertical Stab

Assembly of the rest of the aircraft was as per the kit instructions until I got to Step 18, the vertical stabilizers. Those in the kit are for the F-18C which differ slightly from those on the CF-18. I initially thought I had that obstacle beat when I purchased the Avionix F/A-18A Update set as it included replacement vertical stabilizers. Unfortunately, it would appear that the moulds used to create those parts lacked rigidity as both resin tail fins were noticeably 'fat'. Not willing to accept defeat I carefully removed the required parts from the resin fins and added them to the equivalent kit parts. (**Fig. 12**).

The Main Landing Gear

Again, those used initially by the CF-18 differed slightly from that offered in the kit. Specifically, the oleo for the trailing arm gear was essentially reversed. With no aftermarket option to facilitate this part of the build, I joined the oleo parts J48 and 49 and J50 and 51. Once the glue had set, I removed and discarded the centre section of each and made the equivalent CF-18 portion from Evergreen plastic tube. The remaining end pieces salvaged from the original oleos were attached to the new centre portion and the new assemblies were glued in place in each main strut. (**Fig. 13**).

Given the trailing arm design of the main gear, I had concerns about the gear's ability to not sag under the anticipated weight of the completed model. In an effort to allay my fears, I used a quality epoxy to attach the gear but still I had that nagging doubt. (**Fig. 14**). My solution? I drilled a tiny hole in the fuselage between the wheel wells immediately aft of where the centreline fuel tank would be and inserted a piece of piano wire just long enough to take most of the weight away from the main gear. Authentic? No! Is it easily seen by the viewer? Again, no! Am I happy? Yes!

The Rest of the Build

Pretty well everything else is as per the kit instructions. Whether you build yours with the flaps up or down, cockpit open or closed, which weapons are hung is your choice. One item worth mentioning is that the kit does provide the part for the identification light under the left side leading edge extension. So for a CF-18, use part J28 rather than J27. For the light/lens, I acquired an appropriately sized part from M.V. Products, another great product line but sometimes hard to source. I also used the Aires 'closed' jet exhaust nozzles and here is a word of caution. They look really, really good but….. they don't fit. They are slightly undersized (resin shrinkage?). Fortunately, a layer of plastic card carefully blended to the forward surface can fix the problem thereby overcoming a minor (?) frustration. How thick was that layer of card? While in all truth, I don't recall as it was more of a 'Mark 5 eyeball' modification rather than a measured adjustment but it was probably in the neighbourhood of .040". (**Fig. 15 and 16**). These were set aside until after painting and decaling were complete.

Paint and Decals

Before painting, I masked off the wheel wells and cockpit. For the latter I used Eduard's excellent pre-cut masks. If you've never tried them, do so as they are a time saver.

In keeping with my preference for Xtracolor paints, I used their enamels for the camouflage scheme. These included their FS35237 Medium Blue Grey for the upper surface, FS36375 Light Aircraft Grey for the lower fuselage and FS 36118 Dark Sea Grey for the false canopy under the nose and the walkways. Since I had the Leading Edge mask set for the CF-18, I opted to paint both the false canopy and walkways rather than use decals. The latter was oversprayed with the FS35237 to mute the starkness of the Dark Sea Grey. Since the Xtracolor paints already provide a high gloss finish once dry, there was no need to gloss coat the model prior to applying decals.

The decals used were those produced by Leading Edge. Typically, these were nothing short of perfect and went on with no fuss or silvering. After a day of rest, I gave the model a quick shot of Alclad II ALC-310 Klear Kote Gloss followed by some slight weathering then sealed everything up with a final coat of Alclad II Klear Kote Matte.

Weapons and Stores

Finally, we have all those bits and pieces that typically hang from combat aircraft. Here, I installed one AIM-7 Sparrow missile on the starboard fuselage mount, the AN/AAS-38 NITE Hawk FLIR (Forward Looking Infrared) laser designator & laser tracker on the port mount, a pair of AIM-9 Sidewinder missiles on the wing tips and gave myself the option of the BRU-33 Vertical Ejector Racks with Mk.82 'slicks' or GBU-12 Paveway smart bombs on the outer pylons. These are interchangeable, as I installed fine plastic tubing in the pylons and piano wire in the stores that slide into the tubing for a friction hold. (**Fig. 17 and 18**) Last but not least I added external fuel tanks on the centrelinw and inner wing pylons.

Conclusion

The Academy/Kinetic F/A-18 is not a new kit anymore but despite its almost 20-year age, it's on par if not better than most kits produced today. So, if interested in a large scale CF-18 or simply an F/A-18C straight out of the box, give it a try. You won't be sorry.

References and Resources

- documents.techno-science.ca/documents/CASM-Aircrafthistories-CF-18Hornet.pdf
- ipmscanada.com/2002/01/01/f-18a-c-to-cf-18-hornet-conversion/

About the author:

John Lumley believes that his first model was an Airfix polybag Gloster Gladiator which he 'sort of' assembled, minus the upper wing, and with no paint. In his youthful, less than critical eyes, it was his Spitfire. That was over 60 years ago in bonnie Scotland. Since then, he adopted Canada as home, served with the RCAF and CAF for some 41 years, logging almost 9500 hours in various cockpits and never strayed from building models. His subjects of choice are aircraft which usually have a Canadian connection but has also strayed and built the odd armour and naval subject for a change in pace.

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OP ECHO, Roto 3

A selection of 1999 Balkan Rats photos

The photos on these pages were kindly provided by Patrick Martin, who shot them at Aviano on 6 July, 1999. Pat publishes books on Canadian military and other aviation topics, which can be seen at: canmilair.square.site/s/shop. He had a previous Balkan Rats article in *RT* 26/4, including the individual aircraft histories during the operation. Pat also gives a comprehensive writeup of the CF-18's Balkan operations at: britmodeller.com/forums/index.php?/topic/235008389-cf-18a-balkan-rats/

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A Blitz Build Bust:

Queen Elizabeth II

in ATS Uniform:

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Over the May 2020 long weekend, IPMS Ottawa hosted a blitz build – a challenge to build a model from start to finish in one weekend. It was a resounding success, attracting over 30 participants not just from Ottawa, but also from Halifax, Toronto, Calgary, and even our sister club in Australia. It was also a great way for the club to stay connected in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic when we were unable to hold our regularly scheduled monthly meetings. For this challenge, I dug into my stash and found a 1:14 scale resin bust of the future Queen Elizabeth II in her Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) uniform from 9th Gate Miniatures.

The 9th Gate Miniatures Kit

At 1:14 scale, this bust is a little on the small side – most busts that I work with tend to be around 1:10 or 1:12. It comes in two pieces, the body and the head, though they include two options for the head, either with or without the hat. The cast on mine was very clean, with almost no mould lines to speak of, and little prep work outside of snipping off the remains of a couple resin gates strategically placed on the bottom of the bust and sanding that area smooth. If you look very closely on some sections of the hair, you can see some striations that indicate that the master was digitally sculpted and 3D printed. There is no need to worry, though, as these striations are so fine that they disappear with a coat of paint. Overall, I was impressed with the quality of this model. **Figs. 1 to 3**

Assembly

With the parts being digitally sculpted and cast to such a high quality, assembly is just a matter of checking for mould lines, picking your choice of head, and gluing it on top of the body. The keying at the neck joint is deep and precise, and the joint is strategically placed so that the seam is well-hidden by the collar, and the builder could easily paint the body and head separately.

For this build, I chose to go sans hat, as I felt the hair would be fun to paint and contribute to the likeness. I attached the head to a paper clip and the body to a brass rod so I could mount the parts on the pill bottles I use as handles, and for a

plinth, I dug up a simple black resin decorative cube from Dark Messiah Bases (**darkmessiahbases.com**) which was a good size. **Fig. 4**

Light Sources and Pre-shading

When painting a bust, my first step is to figure out my light source before I even put down the primer. This bust has a very straightforward pose – she is standing at attention, with her head facing straight forward. With a pose like this, it is generally more interesting to have the light source off to one side or the other – perhaps coming from the 1-2 o'clock or 10-11 o'clock direction – as straight-on at the 12 o'clock is kind of boring. Based on her hairstyle and where it was parted, I felt it would be more interesting to have the light source on her right, as it would leave more room for highlighting the skin on the forehead.

I started with doing what is called a "zenithal prime" on the figure using multiple shades of Stynylrez primer. Zenithal priming is a pre-shading technique that is meant to simulate how the model will interact with its "in-universe" light source and it allows the modeller to quickly lay out and pre-shade the shadows and highlights.

First, the entire model is primed overall in black, making sure to get in all the nooks and crannies and shadowed areas. Next, load up your airbrush with a grey primer. Then, from a distance of several inches, spray the grey onto the model from the direction of the light source that you are choosing to depict. Follow this up with a more focused highlight with white primer, again from the direction of the light source.

To illustrate this technique, think of a model of a person standing outside in the sun. After laying down a base coat of black primer, when you go to the grey and the white, you are essentially pretending that your airbrush is the sun and, as you pull the trigger, the lighter colours of primer coming out of the airbrush represent the sun's rays beating down on the model. The result is that areas that are being hit with direct sunlight are the same as the areas being hit with the white primer from the airbrush, while areas that are not in direct sunlight remain black as they are not in the line of fire of the lighter colours. While you can do this technique with black and white rattle cans as well, the airbrush gives better control, and for me, apartment living tends to make rattle cans a less attractive option.

What you end up with is a quick and dirty "value sketch" -- a rough black and white representation of the model. In addition to pre-shading the model with black in the shadows and white on the highlights, taking this step also just helps the painter understand where to place the shadows and the highlights so that the light source is consistent across different areas of the model. **Fig. 5**

With that basic step done, the zenithal was then tinted with some washes sprayed from below up unto the shadow areas (blue on the body, purple on the head), and ivory sprayed from above over the white, just to add a little variation in hue to the pre-shading and throw down some initial cool shadows and warm highlights. **Fig. 6**

Painting

I decided to start on the body first. The paints used here are water based acrylics -- a mix of Vallejo Model Colour, Reaper MSP, Privateer Press Formula P3, and Citadel, with Vallejo Metal Color and Scale75 being used for the metallic details like the buttons. My strategy would be to lay down a quick base coat with wet blending, using the zenithal as a guide for my shadows and highlights, then go over it with some airbrush glazing, and finish off with details and touch-ups.

Wet blending is basically a fancy word for throwing paint down on the model and pushing it around, still wet, to get transitions with a brush. A wet palette is greatly helpful with this technique as you want to keep your paints fresh, and liberal use of flow improver or drying retarder is often necessary to give you time to work with the paint and push it around on the model before it dries. While you have limited working time, if the paints start drying on you, you can simply let it dry (a hair dryer helps here) and do a second coat overtop. Also, using the biggest brush you can get away with here is good – I think I used a cheap size 8 round for my initial coat.

So, for the body, I put a few greens and browns on my palette, as well as some off-whites for the highlights and blue-black for the deepest shadows, and started pushing them around on the model, using the black and white of the primer as a guide for where to place my shadows. While I was trying to get close to the historical colours, I feel that anything in the right ballpark is good enough when you consider differences in lighting even on different areas of the model itself.
Figs. 7, 8, 24

After a couple wet-blended base coats, the next step was to pull out the airbrush smooth things out. By using thin glazes shot through a detail airbrush, I can not only adjust the colours but also make the blends buttery smooth. I started by making a thin blue-black glaze* by mixing some Payne's Grey (blue-black) artist inks with plenty of airbrush thinner, and sprayed that from the bottom up into the shadows, barely pulling the trigger back on the airbrush to spray the smallest amount at a time. The same technique was used for the midtones and the highlights, using heavily thinned paints and Citadel washes. Simply go over your wet-blended base coat and little by little, watch the brush strokes disappear. **Fig. 9**

The same technique was used for the face, going from deep blues and reds in the shadows, through pink and peach flesh tones, and with just a touch of P3 Frostbite – a light, desaturated blue that often finds its way onto my models – in the very highest highlights to represent the reflection of the blue sky. Note the depth of the shadows on the side of her head, representing the interaction of light and shadow with heavy use of contrast is key to making a bust really pop.
Figs. 11 to 15

Again, thin glazes airbrushed into the shadows, mid-tones and highlights smoothed out the rough wet blend that made up the initial base coat. **Fig. 16**

Details

With the flesh and the main colour of the uniform laid in, the rest was a matter of brush-painting the details. Blacklining and additional highlights on the top edges of folds in the cloth added a little depth to the coat, and I was able to use various blending and glazing techniques to do her shirt and tie. I gave the body a coat of AK Interactive Ultra Matte Varnish, just to ensure that I completely wiped out any shine and better represented the fabric of the uniform. **Fig. 10**

The hair was interesting because in addition to the general shape of the hair, there is also the secondary texture of each strand and lock of hair that was sculpted in. Again, I started with a quick wet blend, going from blue-black in the deepest shadows through a couple dark browns, to just highlight the general shape of the hair. After a quick dry brush, I went over the highlights with a fine brush, picking out the strands with light browns and more Frostbite. A quick wash of Citadel's Nuln Oil and Drakenhof Nightshade smoothed it all out and unified the blends.

Finally, there were some details on the face that needed to be done. I used my trusty 2/0 Raphael 8404 to paint the eyes and the eyebrows, then added a little tasteful eyeshadow with some thin glazes. The teeth were done with white and Frostbite again – by leaning towards cool blues rather than warm off-whites, it made the teeth look appropriately clean and white for royalty. Finally, a little burgundy lipstick was applied, with additional highlights on the lower lip where the sun might catch it. **Figs. 18 to 20**

Conclusion

This was the perfect project for a blitz build. Between the fineness of the cast and the strategic placement of the part separation, I actually finished early because I had budgeted some time to deal with issues that never manifested. Just about the entire surface of the model could be approached with the airbrush glazing technique without having to deal with any masking. As a result, once I got rolling, things went quickly, and the likeness really started to come out as I painted the face.

The blitz build was a resounding success, with 20 model kits being taken out of stashes and completed over the weekend, plus several more that didn't quite get finished by the deadline but were completed in the days that followed. More importantly, it was a great way for the club to have some activity and interaction in these difficult times when meetings have been cancelled.

About the author:

Brian Latour is a federal civil servant originally from Winnipeg who now lives and works in Ottawa. He built model airplanes in his childhood and teenage years, and briefly built 1:1 scale airliners for a living in the mid-2010's. He discovered figure painting in 2015; Brian mainly paints fantasy figures and busts in scales from 25 mm to 1:8, but been expanding into aircraft and Gundam modelling as of late. Brian also writes hobby and gaming content at iceaxeminiatures.wordpress.com/ does dabble in other areas.

One ‘H’ of a Mustang -
a postwar P-51H in USAF service

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Introduction

The P-51 Mustang series underwent a number of improvements during the war years and beyond, from the early A-36 to the B, C and the D, with the H-model being the epitome of the design. While it’s a toss-up for me, I favour the ‘B’ and ‘D’ models of the aircraft the most.

With the Mustang’s further development, the ‘H’ took on a look of its own with the slightly deeper and longer fuselage, taller vertical tail and re-shaped and narrowed landing gear leg doors. With its improvements, it could out-climb a P-51D and it saw post-war service with the United States Air Force and Air National Guard units.

The kit

After building many of the former models, I decided to have a go at the ‘H’ as a comparison study. Space limitations in my showcases caused me to opt for the 1:72 scale P-51H from RS Models kit, #92148. It actually took TWO kits to come up with one model and I’ll explain why. To get ahead of myself a bit, if you look carefully at **Fig. 7**, you will notice that the left fuselage half is darker than the right half, and that is the result of my having spilled most of a bottle of paint on the original lighter-coloured left kit fuselage half. As a result of the spill, its delicate engraved panel lines were ruined. I had originally bought the kit with Air National Guard markings, but the second time around I ordered the kit that contained U.S. Air Force markings, kit #92219. I subsequently used the decal sheet from that kit plus the left fuselage half when I found a scheme I liked better than my first choice.

The subject

The aircraft I modelled served with the 62nd Fighter Squadron, 56th Fighter Group, of the Alaska Air Command in 1948. For some reason, that kit’s plastic colour was darker than the ANG version.

The build starts

With the original kit in hand at that time, “pre-accident,” I began work by drilling out the exhaust stacks, **Fig. 1**. The slight indentations, as shown on the left fuselage half, allowed for easy drilling to deepen the individual stacks. **Fig. 2** shows the rasp that I used to remove the moulded-in stringer detail from the ill-fated left fuselage half, along with my additions to the cockpit tub.

Having ordered an aftermarket P-51 interior set, I used the seat and a side console to replace and add to the kit parts. I made a seat cushion, added tubular bracing behind the seat, rudder pedals, and seat side bracing, all from sheet plastic, .020” rod, and plastic strip. Adding more cockpit detail, **Fig. 3**, I sourced an etched cockpit placard from ReHeat’s, #RH 175, Aircraft Placard Holders & Clipboards aftermarket set, along with new stringers that I added to the left fuselage half. An oxygen hose and regulator were also added to the right fuselage half.

The wheel well insert is shown in place on the lower wing in **Fig. 4** and shows the clamping arrangement I made to secure a good fit. Dropped flaps would help detail the model and **Fig. 5** shows the process I used to remove them from the wings.

Several passes with a sharp X-Acto #11 blade and soft plastic made for easy removal. Eduard #72-004 lap and shoulder belts, visible in **Fig. 6**, completed the cockpit tub that fit well in the right fuselage half. I used my own mix of a dark interior green for the components, which was followed by hand-painting the details. Note the home-made throttle quadrant on the left fuselage half. At that point, the paint spilled, so the other kit was ordered to obtain a replacement. **Fig. 7** shows the new and darker grey part from the second kit along with four plastic strips that were added to the turtle deck behind the radio gear.

Painting

With seams filled and sanded, and wing attached, they received a hand-brushed coat of primer. Separate inner gear doors were glued in place and filled, **Fig. 8**, as they only cycled during the retraction and extension sequence, and didn't slowly bleed down as did other marks of the Mustang. After filling and sanding, the gear door shapes were later pencilled in as the doors didn't have a flush fit. Note the darker grey plastic of the replacement left fuselage half. The small circular depression just behind the left gear leg well would later accept a home-made landing light lens. At that point, I glued the landing gear legs in place and with all major construction completed, **Fig. 9**, I sprayed the entire model with a coat of Floquil Old Silver.

More painting

When I was sure the silver paint had sufficiently hardened it was time to add some colour to the model and **Fig. 10** shows those additions. I used Floquil Railbox Yellow for the wing and tail bands as the colour is a deep yellow and shows up well.

Fig. 11 shows that ScaleMaster's black striping sheet, #SS-2, provided the border edging on the tailfin tip, flaps, and wing bands, **Fig. 11** also shows that I thinned the inside trailing edges of the wings so they could later accept the dropped flaps.

A short break in painting

The landing flaps I had separated from the wing earlier were glued together. I added a piece of plastic rod to them on their leading edges and then filled and sanded the additions to provide a curved mounting surface which would later fit flush when they were glued in the "down" position.

Back to painting

Alclad II's Duralumin covered a good portion of the ventral radiator intake while their Dull Aluminum was masked and sprayed on the inner wing panel above and forward of the intake on the wing underside. That shade also covered the ailerons, elevators and rudder. I used Alclad II's Stainless Steel for the panel around the exhaust pipes and one of their new shades, High-Speed Silver, adorned the flaps.

A bit of weathering and parts thinning

Prior to continuing with painting, I went over all the indented panel lines with a soft lead pencil to make them stand out a bit. I then spent some time thinning the outer prop blade tips because as moulded, they're usually too thick for scale purposes.

Decals

After masking and spraying the anti-glare panel, using an old bottle of Floquil Coach Green, decal application was next and **Fig. 12** shows the work in progress.

Using the Railbox Yellow, I sprayed the spinner sections and the prop tips. In **Fig. 13**, the blades are ready for a coat of Floquil Engine Black. I drilled a hole in the prop boss from behind so that I could make a plinth to hold the prop while it was being sprayed. A piece of modelling clay mounted on the end of a toothpick and pressed into the hole secured the prop during spraying. In **Fig. 14**, an aftermarket sheet from IPMS/USA's Spruce Goose Chapter's prop logo sheet, issued in 1995, provided the tiny prop blade logos and small red circles were placed on the wing gas tank cap outlines. Using warm water along with a few drops of dishwashing detergent to aid with the flow, the RS decals performed well and after a coat of Solvaset, they snuggled down well.

Clearly - the hardest part...

Perhaps the hardest part of the build was fairing in the one-piece windshield/fuselage fairing, especially after I had vacuformed new replacements for the kit clear parts. At times, fairing it in was like trying to herd cats! Careful masking, filling and sanding produced good results.

Final painting and details

I painted the exhaust pipes with Floquil Antique Bronze. Having a good supply of the old and now, out of production Floquil paints has come in handy over the years. Their shelf-life is phenomenal and I have some bottles with a 75-cent price tag on them. That would have placed them in the late 60's when I bought them. Prior to adding the black trim film to the yellow flap sections, I masked and sprayed their leading edge travel areas using Alclad II's Polished Aluminum, all of which is visible in **Fig. 14**. I made the two small side-by-side blade antennas as seen in **Fig. 15**, using .010" sheet plastic. Three cuts per piece were all that was needed and the "hairy" part was securing them directly opposite each other. Thin super glue and a steady hand got them secured in place.

On the last page of this article are photos of the finished model that show:

- ☐ where I drilled out the gun barrels moulded to the wing and painted with acrylic Model Colour #179, Gunmetal.
- ☐ the pencilled-in inner landing gear door outlines.
- ☐ after filing out the front corners of the outer wing leading edges, a couple of applications of white glue provided the navigation lights, which were then coated them with Tamiya Clear Red (left) and Green (right) and a clear acrylic coating gave them a nice shine.
- ☐ the landing light can be seen on the bottom views of the model. Using a circle punch that was a bit bigger than the recessed hole, I punched through a piece of aluminum foil which was then embossed into the recess with the end of a round rod. A little dab of Gator Grip White glue placed in the depression beforehand which secured the foil. A coat of Clear acrylic gave me the "lens" and the result can be seen in the photo. It's a simple and economic process and produces a good representation of a recessed landing light.

Conclusion

I now have a "comparison" P-51H in my showcase but I must confess that I still prefer the lines of the P-51B's and D's as they seem to have a more streamlined look to them. Minus the A-36 and early P-51, the "Circle Of Mustangs" is just about complete in my shop.

About the author:
With the completion of his first model in the early 1950's, Frank Cuden has continued in the hobby over the years. 1:48, 1:72 and 1:144 are his scales of choice and he enjoys adding extra detail to each kit. He also enjoys e-correspondence with modellers world-wide, and enjoys improving his writing skills with each article he writes. Since retirement in 1999, he's enjoyed modelling at will, and becoming more fun as time goes by. Wife Marilyn, three children and six grandchildren complete the circle.

Canada's postwar Shermans:

M4A2 76 mm (Wet) HVSS

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Background

Having served in Canada's armed forces, I have seen many an M4A2 placed into dignified retirement service as gate guardians. As well, I had the pleasure as a young infantryman of shooting at a few of them as less-dignified 'hard targets' at military firing ranges, which I'm sure is much to the dismay of military vehicle enthusiasts today.

Inspiration for the build

For many years I wanted to build a model of an M4A2, but held off due to a lack of markings. **RT** Vol. 40, No. 4 got me thinking about it again when IPMS Canada provided an excellent set of decals and details to produce a distinct postwar Canadian Sherman paint scheme. In the spring of 2020, while holed-up during the COVID-19 pandemic I bit the bullet and purchased the Asuka M4A3E8 "Easy Eight" model kit and the needed Tiger Model Design (TMD) M4A2 conversion set for the Asuka kit and. Upon receiving them I looked it all over and added it to the stash while I was working on another build. Once that build was complete, a friend of mine challenged me to break out the M4A2 and get building it.

Challenge Accepted! Pressing on...

Tiger Model Design M4A2E8 Post-War, ''Canadian'' Conversion (TAS/ASU)

Upon first review I was a little disappointed with the TMD kit, as it was missing some parts and some of the resin casting was quite bad. (**Fig. 1**)I spent a considerable amount of time trying to remove the serious warping in the main upper hull and the pieces that made up the lower hull. I was not entirely successful in this, and the basic hull construction did not go together well. I was unable to build the TMD hull into a square structure that the upper hull would attach to without serious gaps. I contemplated throwing it all in the box and moving on to the next project, but decided to prevail. In the end I put the TMD hull aside and broke out the Asuka kit and built the hull.

Asuka (née Tasca) M4A3E8 "Easy Eight"; kit # 35-024

Hull Engine Deck. (**Fig. 2, 3, 4**) The first step was to modify the Asuka 'A3' upper hull. I took measurements from the TMD kit and modified the ASUKA upper rear hull to be the proper length (I used the TMD kit as a guide) and angled down at 12 degrees instead of 10. **Fig. 4**

I cut off the engine covers from the upper hull of the TMD kit and grafted it on to the Asuka kit. I added weld detail as needed using Archer Fine Transfers 3D welds **Fig. 3**.

The rear-most upper engine cover on the TMD kit was too narrow and I was fortunate to have a Dragon kit with the needed donor parts **Fig. 4**.

I cleaned up the engine hatch covers from the TMD kit and then had to use the turret race splash guard from the Dragon kit as well as one was not included in the TMD kit.

I removed the M4A3 engine hatch door stops on the Asuka main hull, **Fig. 3**, and did a bit of detailing on the engine hatches. I scratch built the grouser storage covers and modified the rear lights to fit.

There were not enough armoured filler caps in the Asuka kit to cover all the needed spots so I stole those from the Dragon kit. I modified the deck to make them work.

Fortunately the TMD exhaust diffusers were really nice and I was able to add them to the lower rear hull without any issues (**Fig. 2**).

I modified the rear vertical plate (**Fig. 2, 3**) on the back of the hull and removed the access hatch, even though it won't be seen. I had to modify the Asuka rear stowage shelf as it was angled wrong and had to be bent slightly down to be 90-degrees with the hull rear plate, and I added both bolt details and footman loops to it. I added some Bronco details to the rear shelf to add interest. The Asuka Pioneer tools are nicely moulded but needed to have the straps and footman loops added, and the top deck Idler wrench and sledge hammer needed some additional detail for welded-on equipment mounts. (**Fig. 4**)

Front Hull. On the front hull I added another tow cable mount on the driver's side (**Fig. 4**), some small details near the driver's hatch, and removed some of the casting marks as they would not be correct for Cdn Army vehicles.

I pretty much built the front glacis plate stock except that I modified the gun crutch, as the real version had a lock on it and it actually sat a little proud of the hull. M4A2's had welds joining the front hull to the sides and these were missing in the kit so I added them. I also added mirror mounts above the hull lifting loops. I found the Asuka photo-etch parts to be challenging so I used the styrene light and horn guards. I also added the photo-etch tow cable mounts from the Dragon kit.

Suspension and Tracks. The suspension (**Fig. 5**) went together very well, and is workable if one takes the time to assemble it that way. The tracks (**Fig. 6**) took a long time to assemble and are tricky, as you are adding styrene to the rubber bands and it takes a long time to get it all to fit right. There is also a considerable amount of fine flash on the rubber band portion of the tracks that needs to be cleaned off. I used my God Hand nippers to do this as nothing else would work.

Turret. The turret (**Fig. 7**) had fine seams on it from the moulding so I filed them off and used Mr. Surfacer to replace the cast detail; after filing or trimming the turret this was done by using an old brush and then stippling the product on to rough up the surface.

I replaced the antenna with one for a 'No. 19 A set' from the spares box, and I created a 'B set' antenna using a kit one. It is worth noting that many of the 'B set' antenna guards were missing later in the life of these tanks.

I had to add the smoke mortar opening and lug to the front upper glacis (**Fig. 8**) and I used the TMD canvas mantlet cover (**Fig. 7**) as they were prevalent early on in the vehicles' Canadian usage. Asuka provides a four-piece affair that could be used as well.

The gun barrel from the Asuka kit was warped and would have needed a lot of work to make it look good so I used the Dragon metal barrel and the kit muzzle brake. In doing this I lost some of the fine detail from the kit.

Painting

(**Fig. 8, 9**) Once the build was complete I primed the whole model. I used Tamiya Fine Surface Primer for the tracks as I was worried about paint adhesion with the rubber and I primed the hull, turret, and suspension with Tamiya Flat Black XF-1. Once dried I painted the whole kit Tamiya Olive Drab XF-62. I painted the tracks a 50:50 mix of German Grey XF-63 and Desert Yellow, I then dry-brushed the inner rubber pads of the tracks with German Grey. I also highlighted lightly the track guides with a Berol silver pencil. I attempted to lighten the paint on the hull and turret by using a mix of Olive Drab lightened with Tamiya Yellow Green XF-4. I was very happy with the results but once painted the semi-gloss coat most of the effect disappeared.

I used Testors Model Master Semi Gloss Clear Lacquer to coat the hull and turret, as a gloss paint was originally used on Canadian Army vehicles in this period. I did not apply it anywhere on the lower hull except the outer road wheel faces as most would be weathered anyways. If you are not used to using clear coats this is your warning - make sure that all your details are good as the semi-gloss will accentuate anything that you are trying to hide. As well if your paint is too thick you run the risk of orange peel which would look okay on the cast turret but horrible on the smooth hull armour. (Another reason I am glad to be an armour modeller!)

Markings

(**Fig. 10 - 14**) So by now you are probably wondering what happened to the Ontario Regiment snazzy three-colour scheme as provided in **RT** 40-4. I was very fortunate to be able to work with Chris Johnson who, on top of being a spectacular

modeller, is also very skilled at graphic arts as well. He and I worked together and created a decal sheet using a laser printer and white decal paper. The decals created had the markings that conformed to the 1947 Canadian Army directive on vehicle markings. I am a former member of the Prince Edward Island Regiment and so decided to do my markings and paint scheme like a Sherman held by my old Regiment in the early 1950's.

In order to create the white Canadian Army Registration (CAR) numbers (**Fig. 10**) I applied appropriate Woodland Scenics transfers to some clear decal paper. I coated these with Microscale Liquid Decal Film to ensure adhesion of the transfers and then painted those areas where the decals would be applied with clear gloss. I added all of the decals then covered them with another light coat of semi-gloss.

Weathering

I started the weathering process by applying a light coat of Vallejo Acrylic Earth Texture (Brown Earth) to the lower hull and suspension. (**Fig. 10**) This was a very light coat that I lightly stippled to add texture. The best way to do this is to lightly thin the paint with water and then use an old short-bristle paint brush and jab rather than brushing the product on. I then painted it with highly-thinned Tamiya Brown (JGSDF) XF-72, this had a nice brown colour with a hue of red to simulate the iron-rich soil of PEI. I also added a light dusting of this on the tracks as well. Once this was all dried I detail painted everything in preparation for the final washes.

Final Washes

(**Fig. 14 and 15**) I washed the entire vehicle using 502 Abteiling ABT003. Dust oil paint, with the semi-gloss paint I did little pieces at a time and ensured that there were no tide marks. The turret and rear deck also got a spot wash of Burnt Umber oil paint, and Tamiya Panel Line Accent Colour (Black). I also used a clean brush with thinner to try and create a streaked look on the hull. I also used Mig Oilbrusher A.MIG 3516 Dust to add some spots of dust to try and reduce the monotone look of the finish. I also used Vallejo 76.521 Oiled Earth model wash to add a few stains to the back deck.

Final Steps

Once this was complete I assembled everything. The suspension was very difficult to get together as the rubber band tracks are too tight. Even with the idlers at the loosest adjustment I still have the dreaded "smile" of the front and rear road wheels lifting (see **Fig. 16**), once the kit is mounted to the base this effect will be somewhat reduced but not completely. I would recommend anyone building this kit to use aftermarket tracks for any of the following types T-66, T-80, and T-84 as there is evidence of all three types being used. I also added some detail to the M2 .50" cal. machine gun as I wanted to portray the ammo can tray empty, and did this using spare photo etch.

The final step is to lightly spray the kit suspension and rear hull with heavily-thinned Buff to replicate dust from travelling. This will help blend all of the finishing steps together. I actually did less weathering than I normally do to try and let some of the semi gloss through and for display purposes I prefer a cleaner tank.

Conclusion

Once I got past the TMD kit it was a very enjoyable build and got me thinking about my next HVSS project with the new Ryefield M4A3 as a Cdn Army Sherman in Korea.

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About the author:

Mark Minnis resides in St. Andrews PEI. He served almost 25 years in the Canadian Army, both in the Regular Force and in the Reserves. He is now a System Support Specialist with the Government of PEI. He has been modelling off and on for 35 years and builds primarily Canadian postwar vehicles. He is also a member of AMPS.

A Short History of the M4A2 76mm(W) HVSS in Canadian service

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Background and History

In 1946 the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps (RCAC) was re-equipped with 294 M4A2 76 mm (W) HVSS Sherman tanks, which were purchased from the United States at a cost of $1,460 each. Official documents and technical manuals also refer to these vehicles being called M4A2E8 in Canadian Army service.

For the designation M4A2 76 mm (W) HVSS, the '(W)' referred to the tank having 'wet' ammunition stowage, which greatly reduced the fire risk for the stowed 76 mm main gun rounds. The 'HVSS' refers to Horizontal Volute Spring Suspension; the earlier Sherman models in Canadian service - like the Ram and Grizzly - had Vertical Volute Spring Suspension. For a Sherman the designation 'E8' refers to a vehicle fitted with HVSS suspension.

The Canadian Army's 'new' Shermans were manufactured by the Fisher Tank Arsenal in Michigan, USA. They were built during the war and were originally intended to be supplied to the USSR as part of the Lend-Lease agreement, but were never shipped due to the cessation of hostilities in 1945. They came right from the storage depot, and once they arrived the standard Canadian Army vehicle communication system was added, which was the No. 19 set communication suite. (you can easily find many references online, e.g., **mapleleafup net/forums/showthread php?t=24340**)

The Canadian Army's Active Force use of the Sherman

The Sherman was only in service with the Canadian Army Active Force (which in today's Canadian Armed Forces would be called the Regular Force) until 1952, after which the new British Centurions were coming into service. Canada received 274 Centurion Mark 5 tanks in 1952-53.

The first batch of new Shermans was sent to the Royal Canadian Armoured Corps School (RCACS), then located at Camp Borden, Ontario. The first Active Force regiment to bring them on strength was the Royal Canadian Dragoons (RCD), which was also located at Camp Borden. The other Active Force units were then allocated their Shermans as well. The first M4A2E8s arrived at the Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians) (LdSH(RC)) in March 1947, with 30 of them being sent to Camp Wainwright, Alberta. The units began their respective courses to train crews on the operation of these new vehicles.

Reserve Force use of the Sherman

In the postwar period the Canadian Army Reserve Force units were using Grizzlies, the Canadian-built version of the M4A1 Sherman. The new M4A2E8 Shermans started to arrive at Reserve Force *(which was informally referred to as the Militia)* Armoured units in late 1946 and they continued to arrive throughout 1947. These tanks were permanently assigned to the Reserve units, but this caused a problem as there was not enough room to store them at the units' armouries. The solution to this issue was to have them all moved onto Department of National Defence (DND) property at an Active Force location. In 1954 the Reserve Force was formally redesignated the Canadian Army (Militia).

The Royal Canadian Armoured Corps School, Camp Borden

The RCACS at this time was still located at Camp Borden, Ontario (it remained there until 1970 when it was moved to CFB Gagetown), and had been issued 50 tanks to run training courses for soldiers. These tanks were split up between Borden and Camp Meaford, Ontario. These tanks were used in vehicle pools to train Militia soldiers during the year and were also used for officer summer training courses. These training opportunities, as well as live-fire ranges, gave the

Militia Armoured unit soldiers excellent training opportunities. By 1962 there were pools of Shermans at several Militia training establishments, with ten vehicles each at Gagetown, Meaford & Wainwright used for live-fire training.

There were many more Shermans issued later to other Militia units as the Active Force (renamed in 1954 as Canadian Army (Regular)) took possession of their new Centurion tanks. This freed up their Shermans to be reallocated to the Militia Armoured units, which was a great thing in regards to training new tank crews.

Canadian Army reorganization, 1964

In 1964, some Militia units were taken off active strength and moved to the Supplementary Order of Battle, and reduced to zero manning. Others were converted to Reconnaissance units; their tanks were withdrawn and jeeps were then issued for training in the new role.

With the continuous courses and training imposed on these tanks, spare parts were becoming harder to get through the military supply system. By 1965, only around 218 tanks were still in serviceable *(i.e., they were in functional and operable)* condition. The earlier fleet reduction measures freed up some tanks for redistribution to the remaining Sherman-equipped Militia units for training, and for increasing the supply of available spare parts.

The end is in sight

The last Militia Armoured unit to still have Shermans on strength was the Ontario Regiment in Oshawa; these tanks were turned in by 1972 and the regiment joined the other jeep-equipped Reconnaissance units in this role. This ended the operational story of the M4A2 76mm (W) HVSS in Canadian military service.

On the final phaseout of service many of these Shermans would become hard targets on live-fire tank ranges. Some were cut up for scrap, with the engines and transmissions getting pulled out to demilitarize them against future use, and the diesel engines were re-purposed into electric generators. Many vehicles are still on display around the country, with close to 50 M4A2 76mm HVSS Shermans now acting as monuments and gate guardians. There are a handful of restored vehicles that are the few ‘runners’ across the country, with the Ontario Regiment Museum in Oshawa, Ontario and the LdSH(RC) historical vehicle troop in Edmonton, Alberta.

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