



SPARE PARTS

IPMS RICHMOND



December 2022 Edition

NEXT MEETING:

Monday, December 12

Time: 6:00 PM NOTE TIME CHANGE!

Program: Holiday dinner and chapter contest

Smoketree Community Building
11100 Smoketree Dr.,
Richmond, VA

VISIT US AT:

IPMSRICHMOND.blogspot.com

FACEBOOK: IPMS Richmond

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Warily scanning the desert wastes of North Africa, a German scout stands in Tom Dailey's 1/35 Tamiya Steyr 1500A truck. See more Show & Tell models inside.



Please note meeting time change to 6:00 PM. Contest Entrants: please help speed registration by bringing your completed entry forms with your models. See entry form on last page.

At our next meeting....

December IPMS-R Chapter Dinner and Contest

Monday, December 12, 6:00 PM, at Smoketree, will be our annual holiday dinner and model contest. It's a night for food, fun, fellowship and friendly competition; club business is strictly forbidden. Mike Lyons' brother will again cater our dinner. The menu will feature favorites from his Supper restaurant: chicken barbeque, pork barbeque, Brussels sprouts, green beans, macaroni and cheese and Krispy Kreme pudding. Members with an insatiable sweet tooth may bring additional desserts if they wish. The chapter will furnish soft drinks, ice, paper plates, napkins and utensils.

We will also have our annual chapter contest. The theme is "1972." A model of anything in use or existence in 1972 will work. Apollo spacecraft, Ford Mustang Mach 1's, Vietnam War Phantoms, Huey choppers and armored vehicles all come to mind. Our contest will have the usual categories with the "1972" theme models being specially designated (at the builder's request) and placed in a separate category. So...watch a "McCloud" episode, listen to some Three Dog Night, Chicago or CCR and get into whatever zone will help you finish that "1972" model. And if 1972 wasn't a golden year for you, skip the theme and enter whatever you like. It's your call.

For your convenience, a contest entry form is included with this issue of *Spare Parts*. Please download, print and complete as many copies as you need. Bring the completed entry forms with your models to the meeting. Taking care of this in advance will save you time and put less strain on the guys who will be registering the contest entries.

As in past years, we will have our special raffle/prize drawings with premium kits as prizes. Mike Lyons is again at work lining up some special prizes worthy of being an early delivery from Santa. One change for this year: only chapter members will receive a raffle ticket.

Spouses, "significant others" or "plus one's" are welcome. **However, please note that we are limiting the evening to IPMS-Richmond members and a guest.**

This is an evening strictly for fun and celebrating a successful year for IPMS Richmond. It's a time to meet, greet, eat and compete. We look forward to seeing you!



Upcoming Events and Announcements

HOBBY TOWN RICHMOND will hold a model contest Saturday, December 3, at their store, 9900 West Broad Street, Glen Allen, VA 23060. Registration is 10:00 AM (\$5.00 for up to 4 models, 2 categories per person). Categories are Vehicles (cars, trucks and bikes), Military (aircraft, armor and ships), Science Fiction, Gundam and Junior (17 and under). Judging begins at 1:00 PM with awards presented at 2:00 PM. Models winning Best of Show, Best Paint, Best Junior and Best Gundam will be eligible to compete in Hobby Town's National Model Contest. Visit store for additional information.

LOOKING TO PURCHASE MODEL KITS: IPMS Richmond member Tyler Turpin is seeking and wants to purchase the following kits: 1/72 Airfix A-7E Corsair; 1/72 Hasegawa F-100D Super Sabre (also an additional kit of it if you have it); 1/48 ESCI F-4E Phantom; 1/48 Monogram F-4C/D Phantom; 1/48 Revell F-4E/F Phantom (Kit No. H-289); 1/72 ESCI Northrop F-5A; any scale or manufacturer A-3 Skywarrior (built or unbuilt). E-mail: tylerturpin@verizon.net.

1/48 F-22 RAPTOR DECALS NEEDED: The Editor needs Virginia Air National Guard or USAF decals for a Langley based F-22 Raptor. E-mail E. L. Motley at motleysel@comcast.net.

KEEP UP WITH IPMS RICHMOND NEWS AND MEETING ANNOUNCEMENTS. Please be sure we have your current e-mail address, particularly if you have recently joined IPMS-R. We don't want you to miss receiving quarterly issues of *Spare Parts* and monthly meeting notices. Also, our E-Board is in the process of updating our membership roster and preparing our annual re-chartering with IPMS-USA. If you aren't receiving *Spare Parts* or the monthly bulletins, or if your e-mail address changes, please see E.L. Motley or Ashley Abernathy (E-Board directory is listed in every issue of *Spare Parts*).

IT WILL BE HERE BEFORE YOU KNOW IT.... Our Old Dominion Open will be at the Richmond Raceway Complex on Saturday, February 25, 2023. Everyone's help will be needed. It's the biggest and best one day show we know of. But it only stays that way with your support and participation.



MEETING MINUTES

Minutes from November
14, 2022 Meeting

November 14, 2022, Minutes of the IPMS Richmond Meeting

There were 37 members and guests present at our meeting at the Smoketree Community Center. The meeting was called to order by Glen Martin, our president. The first order of business was the election to fill our open Secretary position on the E-board. Nominations were called for with Bob Walls and Mark Elder being nominated and seconded. Each member was given a blank 3x5 card to indicate their choice. The cards were collected and counted by E.L. Motley and Mike Lyons. The outcome was announced later in the meeting with Bob Walls elected as Secretary.

Richard Leininger gave a report on the 2023 ODO planning and announced that the Richmond Raceway had finally signed our contract; he has sent them our \$500.00 deposit. Letters to kit manufactures/dealers will go out the first of December. The Special Awards have been ordered. Craig Norris updated the group on vendor table sales which are going as expected with almost 80 tables sold.

Bob Walls gave an update on our meeting location search and stated that the E-board visited the Deep Run Park Recreation Center. We are looking into Henrico County's requirements for using the facility, and we are in the process of completing our application to rent it for our January meeting. This will let members get an idea of what the facility is like and to consider if it is worth our moving to. Mark Groth explained that we do not have a contract with Smoketree for next year. He is having difficulty in contacting the replacement members of the Smoketree Recreation Association's board. Chapter members were encouraged to explore other possible locations and get details on renting them.

Our Treasurer, Ashley Abernathy, presented his financial report and noted that we have 37 paid members as of the meeting. He also stated we were in the process of rechartering the club and would have that completed before the January 1, 2023, deadline.

The Annual Chapter December Party was discussed. The membership agreed to keep the event open to IPMS Richmond Members and guests only. Mike Lyons gave a rundown of the meal plans for the December party. The meal will be provided at no cost to the club by Mike's brother, owner of the Lunch and Supper Restaurants. The menu will be pork and chicken BBQ, various vegetables and macaroni and cheese. Desert will be Krispy Kreme Doughnut bread pudding. Members are asked to bring a desert to share if they want. While drinks will be provided, members who want special (no sugar, no caffeine, etc.) beverages should bring those themselves. Only non-alcoholic beverages are allowed.

Mike Lyons requested that the club donate \$200.00 to the Ronald MacDonald House by purchasing a pig to decorate. We have done this several times before. The pig will be auctioned off with proceeds going to that charity. Motion was made, seconded, and passed by unanimous vote.

Mark Groth gave an update on the annual chapter contest to be held at our December 12 meeting and party. The special theme category is "1972" along with our normal categories. First, Second and Third place awards have been ordered by Richard Leininger and will resemble the ODO coin awards but of course without "ODO." The entry form will be in the December Spare parts and needs to be printed and completed prior to the party.

After the business part of the meeting, a demo of model building vision aids was presented by several members. Our regular Show & Tell of models brought in by the members consisted of 19 models presented by 16 modelers. This was a rather large turnout.

Meeting was adjourned around 9:00 PM.

Submitted by Bob Walls, Secretary

Kit Review Antonov AN-2M "Colt" by John Kimbriel

KIT REVIEWAuthor John KimbrielScale 1/48Model Type: (styrene, resin, etc.) Styrene (injection molded) Manufacturer KNIB (Russian)Model Subject Antonov AN-2M "Colt" (Soviet Air Force biplane transport)**Please score the following:**

Molding	Very Good
Detail	Poor
Fit	Poor
Accuracy	Average
Ease of Assembly	Poor

Please score the following:

Instructions	Poor
Decals	N/A
Clear Parts	N/A
Multi-media Parts	N/A
Value	Poor

Difficulties:

This kit took me a month to assemble. Some parts were missing. I spent hours filling and layering putty to get the wings to fit. Fit was terrible, no detail, no clear parts, no decals. It had paper paste-ons! I was able to use aftermarket decals from spares on hand. Plastic was very hard. As for accuracy--it looks right.

This is a cheap import. However, this particular plane interests me. Kits of this type are rare to non-existent, especially in this large scale.

Additional Comments:

E.L. Motley gave me this kit for free.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This An-2 biplane kit is a very crude molding and boxing (with Russian instructions and no clear parts or decals) from the Soviet Union in the 1960's. At first glimpse, it looks like a resin kit. It is, however, injection molded with very thick and hard beige plastic. This kit was given to me about 20 years ago by a fellow Lynchburg College alumnus who knew I enjoyed scale model building. He had worked as an analyst for the CIA at Langley, VA. For obvious reasons, this model remained unbuilt in my stash and made its way along with a number of kits to September's Swap & Sell event. If anyone in IPMS-R can make such a monstrosity of a biplane kit into a well finished model, it is John. I am grateful to John just for taking this kit off my hands!

Recommended? Yes No



Bloch 174 A-3 Kit Review by John Kimbriel

KIT REVIEWAuthor John KimbrielScale 1/72Model Type: (styrene, resin, etc.) Styrene (injection molded) Manufacturer HellerModel Subject Bloch 174 A-3**Please score the following:**

Molding	Excellent
Detail	Very Good
Fit	Very Good
Accuracy	Excellent
Ease of Assembly	Very Good

Please score the following:

Instructions	Very Good
Decals	Excellent
Clear Parts	Very Good
Multi-media Parts	N/A
Value	Excellent

Difficulties:

Clear parts: Nose bombardier's "glass greenhouse" is in two parts. The resulting seam is impossible to hide. Cockpit detail is limited by small scale.

Additional Comments:

Excellent kit--surface detail is precise. This is the "vintage" 1/72 Heller kit.

Editor's and reviewer's notes: The Bloch 174 A-3 was a later version of the twin-engine Bloch 170 light bomber--reconnaissance aircraft ordered by the French Air Ministry in 1936. This particular variant went into service in early 1940, but fewer than 50 were available at the time of the German invasion. Original three-color camouflage was repainted black for night operations, given the aircraft's vulnerability to German fighters. These were multi-role planes which could be used for attack and reconnaissance missions. Maximum speed: 248 mph at sea level. Compare with the Messerschmitt Me110.

Recommended? Yes No



EDITOR'S COLUMN

Building and Growing

Perhaps it is part of aging (many of us now carry both IPMS-USA and AARP membership cards), but time now seems to roar past faster than an F-15 with afterburners lit. As I write this, Christmas is just over a month away, and we will be setting up the hall for the 2023 Old Dominion Open in 14 weeks. It is hard to realize that most of 2022 is now in the rear view mirror.

2022 has been a good year for IPMS Richmond and our hobby. In February, we staged an excellent ODO after a year's hiatus for the Covid pandemic. After a long period of meeting virtually or just not at all, our chapter returned to live monthly meetings, regrouped and welcomed new members. Road trips to IPMS shows resumed and a number of our guys brought home trophies. We reconnected and were grateful for a return to normalcy in the modeling community.

Our enjoyment of the "Plastic Arts" was enhanced by the arrival of new and outstanding products. Although many of us are still furious over the demise of Model Master (my proposal for boycotting Rustoleum fell flat), 2022 saw many new paint lines and weathering mediums from Vallejo, Mission Models, Hataki, AK and other companies. Paint formulations shifted from the old choice between enamel and acrylic into the new category of acrylic lacquers.

Many new kits in all subjects and scales were released; and as usual, old favorites were re-boxed and reappeared. Airfix now enjoys a well-deserved renaissance (especially for new mold aircraft models) and that eclectic little Czech company called Eduard is now the gold standard for intricately detailed and accurate kits. Takom and Trumpeter continue to press Tamiya and Italeri for bragging rights in the armor genre. Meng produces innovative and high quality models of cars and aircraft (their P-51D, F-35A and Ford GT's in particular). U.S. based Atlantis Models has brought back a number of the classic Aurora and Revell kits we cut our model building teeth with. On the downside, new kit prices soared (north of \$100.00 on some) and supply chain delays persist.

In September, we elected a new E-Board with Glen Martin taking over as President. Glen is setting goals for chapter growth and membership retention. Look for more demos and special presentations at meetings. We're also looking to bolster our online communications and social media platforms. Given our still uncertain status with our Smoketree landlords and the major shortcomings of our current meeting place, we are seeking a new venue for chapter meetings with the Deep Run Park recreation building currently under consideration. At year's end, the E-Board is working to make IPMS-R the leading club in Region 2 by any measure.

IPMS Richmond wants to close out 2022 on a high note. We look forward to a nice evening together on December 12 for our annual holiday dinner and chapter contest (theme is "1972"). Mike Lyons' brother will provide our meal and Mike is currently coaxing Santa to part with some great kits for prizes. Be sure you're in on the fun.

I hope you'll enjoy this December *Spare Parts*. Included in this issue is a color gallery of some mighty good models. John Kimbriel and Chazz Klanian offer up several interesting kit reviews and a "History behind the Models" feature tells the troubled story of the Curtiss SB2C Helldiver. As always, your suggestions and contributions for *Spare Parts* are highly welcomed.

As 2022 winds down, best wishes to you and your family for a most Merry Christmas and a healthy and prosperous 2023. Let's make it a time for building great models and growing IPMS Richmond together.

E. L. Motley, Editor

Eduard's 1/72 Spitfire Mk. IXc by Chazz Klanian



Kit Review:

- Methodology: 1-10; with 10 being excellent and 1 as lacking.
- Scale: 1/72
- Manufacturer: Eduard.
- Material: Injected molded plastic.
- Molding: 10; crisp as can be.
- Detail: 10; abundant and to scale.
- Fit: 10; no problems.
- Accuracy: 10; based on these failing eyes, otherwise I am really not into rivet counting.
- Ease: 10; Simply follow the instructions. However, those tiny parts could go airborne.
- Instructions: 10; love the booklet format.
- Decals: 10; good registry and conforms easily.
- Clear Part: 10; Crystal Clear
- Value: 10; One can pick these kits up through “online” outlets for less than \$20.00
- **Cons: None!**
- **Pros: Should be part of everyone’s stash, regardless.**

Narrative:

Let me start by simply stating how fortunate many of you are when compared to us older modelers who wish we were at least 10 years younger. We would be able to enjoy a longer period of time with what now appears to be the new standard in 1/72 scale modeling. The 1/72 scale hobby has just exploded in the past couple of years

with one great kit after another, and there is no end in sight. Millennials and Gen Zs could not ask for a more exciting time than the present. You can thank the number of formerly eastern block countries and their manufacturers, most notably being the Czech Republic, Poland, Ukraine and Russia. And there are even more from the rest of the world that unfortunately escapes my failing memory, and for that I apologize.

However, there is a hidden rub relative to this scale and its increasing number of kits. That is the rising number of parts per kit. When those fuselage halves are finally brought together one can hear the gnashing and grinding of dentures and then these mumblings... “Where did all that beautiful work go? I know it was here just a second ago. I glued them into place. I painted them. I decaled them. I weathered them, and I know I put those “itsy, bitsy, teeny, weeny” pieces in there, somewhere, right?” And that my friends is the rub for this new wave of manufacturing.

So, these folks are in a conundrum...is more necessarily better, or just because they can, is it warranted especially in 1/72? Historically, we have one legacy company whose approach to design and manufacturing in this scale is based on quality in detail and engineering, but with a modest number of parts. Compared to the current avant-garde of manufacturers who believe kits need 20 high fidelity parts for just the cockpit alone, never mind another 70 parts for the rest of the build should be the way and the wave of the future. However, I suspect that over the next few years manufacturers will come to realize that more is not always better, especially when one cannot see the toil of their labor. So perhaps they will scale back on parts, and in doing so save time and engineering cost, passing those savings on to the modeler. That ultimately leads to a happier experience, while still preserving the “art of scale modeling.”

But for yours truly, I am afraid that 1/72 is going to leave me far behind in the years to come regardless how few parts may comprise a future release. But fear naught, for that is why we have 1/48, 1/32 and 1/24 to accommodate these trembling hands and struggling eyes of Father Time. Model on my friends. Model on indeed, for these

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are still outstanding times for the realm of “plastic modeling,” and all the new and old manufacturers should be applauded, regardless.

Cheers,

Chazz K.



SHOW & TELL MODELS FROM RECENT MEETINGS



Doug Hayes' 3-D print Lilith figure.



Scott Ratliff's 1/24 Monte Carlo Nascar racer.



Alex Valz's 1/35 Italeri Staghound I.



Chazz Klanian's 1/72 Tamiya F4D Skyray and test missile.



Adam South's 1/350 scale Very Fire model of the planned but never built U.S.S. Louisiana.



Ashley Abernathy's 1/48 M1A2 Abrams in progress.

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Tom Dailey's 1/35 Tamiya Steyr 1500A with German Army figure.



Mike Lyons' 1/12 Ford GT40 dwarfs Bob Walls' 1/35 M-8 Motor Carriage.



Fleet's in...Dieter Thomasson's U.S.S. America and Richard Leininger's Scharnhorst and U-boats.



Scott Oates' Apollo 17 recovery diorama in progress.



Alex Valz's 1/48 Airfix Hawker Sea Fury.



Chazz Klanian's 1/24 Tamiya Porsche racer.

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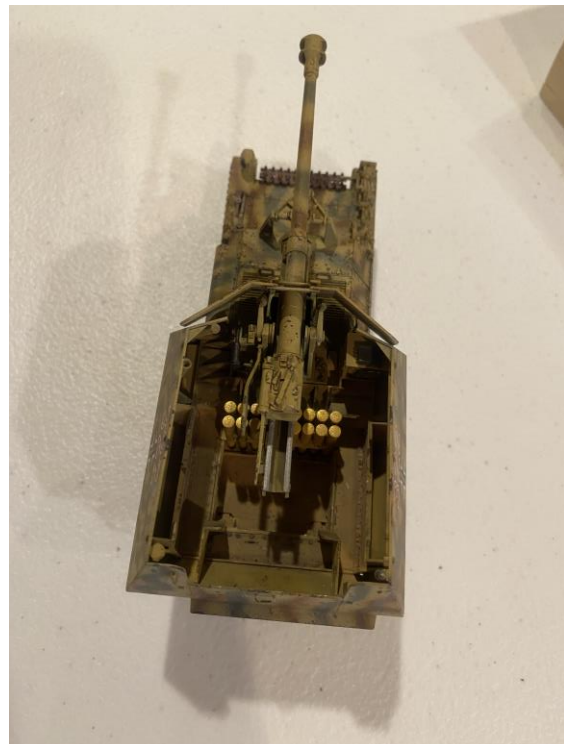
Adam South discusses his U.S.S. Louisiana, one of the proposed Montana class battleships. These ships would have been enlarged Iowa class with a fourth 16" gun turret. The Montana class ships were cancelled, and more aircraft carriers were built instead.



James Alvis' 1/72 Il-2M Shturmovik and 1/72 F-84F Thunderstreak.



Kimiyoshi Okabe's Bandai Masked Raider Kuuga.



Scott Holtz's 1/35 Tamiya Marder I ready for action.

THE HISTORY BEHIND THE MODELS

BEAST OF A BOMBER: THE CURTISS SB2C HELLDIVER

By E. L. Motley



Designed to be a world-beating naval dive bomber, the Curtiss SB2C Helldiver had a slow and troubled development, and the Pacific War was well in hand before it ever saw combat. The Helldiver never replaced the Douglas Dauntless, the plane it was supposed to succeed. The Helldiver was plagued with major problems, including mechanical unreliability, poor handling and instability. It was rushed into production and then forced upon a skeptical Navy. The men who flew the Helldiver swore at it rather than by it. Yet it became the most numerous Allied dive bomber produced. The recalcitrant Helldiver also racked up a distinguished war record from 1943-1945. Through several variants and many, many modifications the Helldiver finally evolved into an effective attacker just as hostilities ended.

In June, 1938, with international tensions rising in both Europe and the Pacific, the U.S. Navy's Bureau of Aeronautics (BuAer) issued a requirement for a new carrier-based scouting and dive bomber. The specifications were very advanced for that time: a stressed metal monoplane capable of carrying a 1,000 pound bomb load internally, range of 1,000 miles, speed of (hoped for) 300 mph, two crewmen, wing and cockpit mounted guns, and folding wings for hangar stowage. The specified engine was the Curtiss-Wright R-2600 Cyclone radial. This new plane would first replace Vought's SB2U Vindicator (already obsolete and dubbed

"Vibrator" by its crews) and later Douglas' then brand-new SBD Dauntless.

Curtiss and Brewster submitted designs and BuAer requested prototypes from both companies. Curtiss already had a biplane named Helldiver in USN service, so they carried that name over to their new bomber design.

The entire project started on the proverbial wrong foot. While the prototypes were still under construction, the Navy sent both Curtiss and Brewster additional specifications, including a powered dorsal gun turret (as would later appear on the Grumman Avenger), doubling the bomb load to 2,000 pounds, and even requiring that *two* planes be able to fit on any U.S. carrier's elevators. The outbreak of war in Europe in September, 1939, and President Roosevelt's request for rapid expansion of American air power added additional urgency at both companies. Before any prototypes flew, the Navy ordered 200 Helldivers. Allied nations were also interested, and following the great success of Germany's Ju 87 Stukas, the U.S. Army Air Corps considered buying land-based dive bombers.

When the competing Curtiss and Brewster prototypes emerged in 1940, it was clear that both aircraft fell far short of being top notch dive bombers. Given the Navy's ever changing design requirements, the Curtiss Helldiver and the Brewster Buccaneer looked

strikingly similar. To say both planes had many “issues” was an understatement. But the Navy viewed the Helldiver as the better airplane and sent Curtiss another large order. The Navy ordered so many Helldivers that Curtiss not only had to construct a new plant in Columbus, Ohio, but arranged to farm out production to Fairchild and Canadian Car & Foundry. Complicating matters further were ongoing problems with the R-2600 Cyclone engine.

The first (and at that time only) Helldiver prototype took to the air on December 18, 1940. It crashed on landing on February 8, 1941, when the plane’s Cyclone engine stalled on approach. The aircraft was hurriedly repaired with many corrections and modifications made. The rebuilt prototype returned to flying in May and promptly crashed again while landing. Nonetheless, with the sole flying example literally in pieces and no production lines underway, the Navy continued to place orders for Helldivers, and the Army now wanted 900 of its own version, the A-25 Shrike.

The Helldiver, or the SB2C as it was now designated, was still unfit for production, much less fleet service. Many of the problems stemmed from the plane’s troublesome Cyclone engine and the Curtiss Electric three bladed propeller. But the Helldiver also suffered from structural weakness. To keep weight down, aluminum and magnesium made up much of the airframe. The Helldiver’s truncated fuselage and undersized control surfaces, intended to accommodate carrier hangar space, caused dangerous lateral stability problems. Handling was sluggish. The Navy yielded on the Helldiver’s dimensions and the powered gun turret, but more changes to the fuselage to give the gunner a wider shooting arc added to the plane’s poor aerodynamics.

In hindsight, the Navy should have stopped the Helldiver in 1941. But Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor probably spared the entire Helldiver program from cancellation. Nonetheless, as unfilled production orders stacked up, the Helldiver’s gestation remained a tedious process of two steps forward and one step back. Just when it looked like Curtiss had the Helldiver ready for the all-important diving tests, one of the prototypes broke apart in mid-air. Amazingly, test pilot Baron T. Hulse parachuted to safety. The program again

ground to a halt and test flights stopped until late June, 1942.

Many, but not all, of the plane’s stability issues were remedied by making the tail and horizontal stabilizers larger. Steel replaced a number of the aluminum and magnesium fabrications, adding weight but giving the Helldiver sturdiness that would later pay off handsomely in combat. But the Navy also remained a culprit in hampering development, adding a requirement (dropped after still more lost time and money) that the Helldiver also be a torpedo bomber.

Carrier deck handling trials went well, and it finally looked like the Helldiver program would proceed. Then in October, 1942, the first production Helldiver disintegrated during recovery from a test dive, killing the pilot. An investigation determined that too steep of a dive angle caused the tailplane and both wings to separate from the fuselage. The program again slowed, with still more modifications ordered and all production Helldivers then completed needing retrofits.

At this point, the two worst things that can happen to any military aircraft program happened...politicians began complaining and some senior USN officers urged cancelling the Helldiver. The Douglas Dauntless dive bomber that the Helldiver was supposed to replace was performing yeoman service in the Pacific, was in full production and was popular with flight and deck crews. Also, after a shaky start (and finally receiving reliable torpedoes), the Grumman Avenger was becoming a formidable strike weapon in the Pacific.

But even the most controversial defense programs always have their advocates in high places. In late 1942, the U.S.S. *Essex*, lead ship in a class of war-winning aircraft carriers, began assembling Carrier Air Group 9 (CAG 9). Despite the Helldiver’s never-ending trail of woe, early-production Helldivers were assigned to CAG 9, forming Scouting Squadron VS-9 and Bombing Squadron VB-9 (scouting and bomber squadrons would later be merged into bombing squadrons only). In January, 1943, in Norfolk, Virginia, Bombing Squadron VB-17 began working up with Helldivers for deployment aboard the new

U.S.S. *Bunker Hill*. Ready or not, the Helldiver was now greenlighted for fleet service.

Predictably, trouble followed the Helldiver into its initial squadrons. VB-9 lost its first aircraft almost immediately, hydraulic and other mechanical problems kept mechanics busy, and VS-9's executive officer was killed when his plane never pulled out of a dive. The *Essex's* skipper risked insubordination charges by saying he would not take any Helldivers into combat and that the plane should be cancelled.

In Norfolk, things were not much better for VB-17. Two Helldivers collided in mid-air, killing one of the pilots. Carrier deck landings were a crapshoot. Regardless of the skills of the pilot and the landing signals officer, the Helldiver always came down on the deck fast, hard and heavy. On numerous occasions, contact with the deck snapped off the tailwheel or buried it inside the tail section. Worse, trapping the arrestor wire sometimes pulled off the entire rear fuselage while the pilot, gunner, and what remained of their airplane hurtled down the flight deck. One of VB-17's most experienced pilots amazingly survived his Helldiver's missing a wire, bouncing down the deck, failing to regain altitude and then dropping like an iron stove into Chesapeake Bay. Catapult shots helped in getting "The Beast" (one of the Helldiver's less profane nicknames) airborne, but given the moods of the stall-prone Cyclone engine, these launches were also risky adventures.



Although many of VB-17's Helldivers stayed in NAS Norfolk's repair shops, the orientation process plowed ahead. A suggestion that the squadron's Helldivers be swapped for some available Dauntlesses was quickly nixed. By November, 1943, VB-17's Helldivers were in the Pacific and ready for action.

Flying from the *Bunker Hill*, the Helldiver's first combat mission was on November 11, 1943. VB-17's Helldivers joined a force of Avenger torpedo bombers and Hellcat escorts attacking Japan's major naval base at Rabaul on New Britain Island in the Solomons. Rabaul was heavily defended with numerous anti-aircraft guns and as many as 150 airfield-based fighter planes. Rabaul was perfectly situated to stage and support Japanese attacks upon the American amphibious landings on Bougainville. The U.S. Navy accordingly planned a series of carrier air strikes to neutralize the huge enemy base. An initial raid by *Saratoga's* aircraft sank several Japanese warships, but it made the Japanese quickly beef up defenses and become more vigilant.

The November 11 Rabaul strike went well. While the Avengers pounced on Japanese warships in the harbor, some Helldivers attacked anti-aircraft batteries while others went after ships trying to escape. One Japanese cruiser and several destroyers were heavily damaged and another destroyer was sunk by a Helldiver's bomb. Amazingly, Helldiver gunners knocked down three A6M Zero fighters. At the end of the day, four Helldivers were lost, one of them ditching from mechanical failure. In the ongoing air assaults against Rabaul Helldiver losses were light and the new dive bombers and their crews performed well. Between the continuing U.S. air strikes and the ships of Task Force 58 keeping the Japanese Navy away from the landing beaches, Rabaul was not a factor in the Bougainville campaign.

Finally able to claim success, Helldivers attacked another important and well-defended Japanese naval base at Truk, sinking or damaging 176,000 tons of enemy shipping in 36 hours. Only one Helldiver was lost in the Truk raid despite heavy flak and Japanese fighters. The campaigns against Rabaul and Truk provided a degree of vindication for the Helldiver and proved the plane was capable of sustained carrier operations in the Pacific.



But tough times still lay ahead. The Helldiver's absolutely worst day of the war was June 20, 1944, during the multi-day Battle of the Philippine Sea. Out of 51 Helldivers taking part in a massive long-range strike against Vice-Admiral Ozawa's carrier force, 43 were lost: 7 shot down by AA fire or enemy fighters and 36 crashing while attempting nighttime carrier landings or ditching after running out of fuel. A footnote...of 27 Dauntlesses flying in that same operation, only one was shot down and three returned safely but were too badly damaged to fly again.

By the end of 1943, 977 Helldivers had been built and delivered to the Navy. The lessons learned from the early struggles of VB-9 and VB-17 eased the establishment of new squadrons and conversion of others from the Dauntless.

During the final two years of the war, the Helldiver moved from success to success in the Pacific. However, only the large fleet carriers *Enterprise*, *Saratoga* and *Essex* class ships operated Helldivers. The Helldiver's size and deck landing characteristics made them unsuitable for the *Independence* class light carriers. Also, much of what the Helldivers accomplished was due to the perseverance and bravery of their crews combined with Japan's declining strength in the Pacific.

Helldivers played an important role in the Pacific Theater's remaining air/sea battles. Helldivers attacked Japanese island outposts, bombed enemy shipping and supported amphibious landings. Two notable operations were the attacks which sank Japan's two "super" battleships, the *Musashi* and *Yamato*.

On October 24, 1944, in the Battle of Sibuyan Sea, waves of Helldivers and Avengers swarmed over the *Musashi*. Helldivers from the *Enterprise* and the *Essex* made at least 10 direct hits on the Japanese battleship with 1,000 lb. armor piercing bombs. These bombs penetrated *Musashi's* deck and upper works and exploded deep inside her. Avenger torpedo bombers also scored multiple hits, dooming the *Musashi*. The gigantic dreadnought later rolled over and sank. Helldivers also contributed to the destruction of the Japanese aircraft carriers *Zuikaku*, *Chiyoda*, and *Zuiho*.

During the Okinawa campaign, Helldivers again played a vital part in destroying what remained of Japan's surface fleet. The desperate Japanese commanders sent out the battleship *Yamato* with a light cruiser, eight destroyers and hardly any fighter cover on what was essentially a suicide mission. After U.S. submarines spotted the Japanese force on April 6, 1945, Admiral Mitscher sent ships and planes to intercept. Dozens of Helldivers and Avengers jumped the enemy ships, almost immediately sinking the destroyer *Asashimo* with all hands. The primary target, the *Yamato*, was then smothered with bombs and torpedoes. Once again, Avenger torpedoes scored the mortal hits, but Helldiver bombs wrecked the battleship's gun direction and fire control capabilities and caused massive damage deep inside the ship. Following two hours of relentless aerial bombardment, the *Yamato* exploded and sank.

The light cruiser *Yahagi* and four more destroyers were also sunk. Out of the entire enemy flotilla, only three destroyers escaped. The remnants of Japan's surface fleet holed up in home ports for the war's duration. Helldivers participated in shore attacks and ground support of U.S. forces until the war's end. However, kamikaze attacks led to American carriers swapping a number of their Helldivers for additional Hellcats and Corsairs during the summer of 1945.

Once regular production began, Curtiss continued improving the Helldiver with the SB2C-3 through SB2C-5 versions, including a four-bladed propeller, additional fuel capacity, a more powerful and reliable R-2600-20 engine, 20 mm wing guns, modified dive flaps, and ultimately, provision for underwing armament including rockets. Some Helldivers were fitted with radar and took on an anti-submarine mission capability. The "4" and "5" versions finally gave the Navy the powerful and sturdy dive bomber the original design promised. However, by this time these penultimate Helldivers arrived, the Japanese Navy had been largely defeated.

Although the Helldiver finally emerged as an effective bomber in 1944 and 1945, the plane never gained the affection and loyalty enjoyed by its predecessor, the SBD Dauntless. As noted, the Navy only operated the Helldiver from large aircraft carriers, although some landed on the smaller flattops during emergencies. Despite the seemingly endless modifications, tweaks, changes and upgrades, the SB2C Helldiver was always a handful to fly. Temperamental flight and landing characteristics earned the SB2C the derogatory nickname, "Son of a Bitch Second Class." Years later, Fritz Armstrong, one of the last surviving Helldiver pilots, said that he was always "very scared" flying the Helldiver and he never liked the plane. Armstrong also noted that he lost several friends in Helldiver training crashes.

Least flattering of all was a macabre little song that anonymously circulated among Helldiver squadrons:

*"Oh Mother, dear Mother, take down that blue star.
Replace it with one that is gold.*

Your son is a Helldiver driver; he'll never be 30 years old.

My body lies under the ocean; my body lies under the sea.

My body lies under the ocean, wrapped up in an SB2C."

The question is often asked why, given the Helldiver's tribulations, the plane wasn't cancelled in 1942 in favor of its rival, the Brewster Buccaneer. Part of the reason was the sense of emergency thrust upon the War Department, BuAer and the Navy by Pearl Harbor and the stunning Allied defeats in the Far East in early 1942. The main reason was that the Buccaneer was an even worse plane than the Helldiver. The Buccaneer was heavier than the Helldiver, lacked maneuverability and had equally disappointing flight performance.

Amazingly, during the rush to get new combat aircraft into service during the Allies' darkest days, the Buccaneer saw limited production. The Marines were able to adapt some Buccaneers into night fighters. A few ended up with the RAF via Lend Lease and were dubbed the "Bermuda." However, the RAF soon found them worthless for any role other than target towing. Also, when it was obvious the Helldiver program was floundering, Curtiss' competitors at Martin and Douglas went to work on their own naval attack plane projects. This would ultimately give the Navy (and later the Air Force) Ed Heinemann's legendary AD-1 Skyraider.

The Army's version of the Helldiver, the A-25 Shrike, was also a bust. The 1940 initial Army Air Corps order for 900 Shrikes steadily ballooned to 3,000, but the A-25 quickly bogged down with the rest of the Helldiver program. The Army first wanted essentially a Helldiver without folding wings or carrier equipment, but then requested many changes ranging from armor plating to different landing gear and a special gunsight. The Australians also wanted 150 Shrikes built to RAAF specifications. Since it had been agreed that the Navy's needs took priority in the Helldiver/Shrike project, all the Army and the Aussies could do was wait. Accordingly, the Army's first Shrikes weren't delivered until 1943.

By that time, the ground attack capabilities of the P-47 and other aircraft had been realized, and the Army's needs shifted

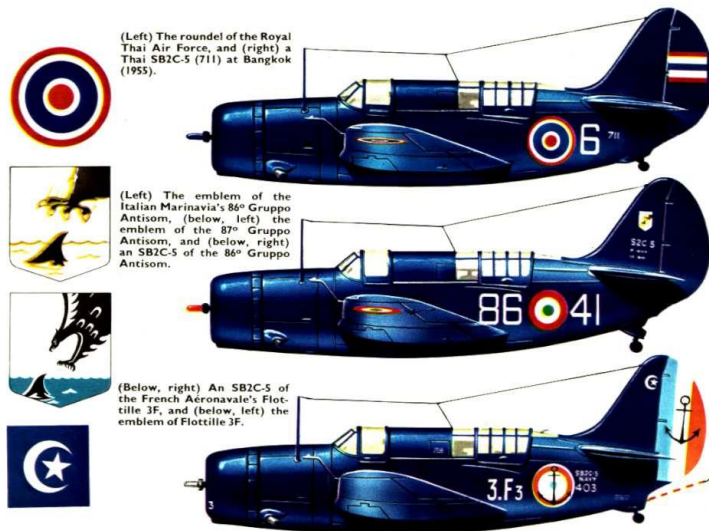
from dive bombers to more versatile fighter-bombers. Of the 900 A-25A Shrikes the USAAF received, 410 were turned over to the Marines. The Shrikes the Army kept were relegated to second-line duties. The Marines flew both Helldivers and Shrikes in combat. The Australians finally received only 10 Shrikes, which saw little flying for want of spare parts.

When the war ended in 1945, the Navy retained late-model Helldivers in their inventory, but steadily drew them down over the next several years. Some went to Reserve squadrons; others (as detailed hereafter) were passed on to American allies. The vastly superior Douglas AD-1 Skyraider was now available and would provide outstanding service over the next three decades. And naval dive bombing was fast becoming as archaic as the cavalry charge in land warfare. The Navy's last frontline Helldiver squadron, VA-54, stood down in June, 1949. Over 7,000 Helldivers were built, far more than were actually needed...or even wanted.

Despite all the Helldiver's troubles, the plane had a number of foreign users. Desperate for modern carrier aircraft, the British quickly placed an order. However, it became clear that the Helldiver wouldn't work for the Fleet Air Arm. Apart from all the Helldiver's mechanical and aerodynamic flaws, the plane was incompatible with the Royal Navy's aircraft carriers, all of which were smaller and shorter than their U.S. Navy counterparts. With wings folded, the Helldivers wouldn't fit inside the hangars of most British carriers. Only 26 Helldivers were delivered to the RN. These planes were lumped into Squadron No. 1820 in September, 1944. They stayed land based and saw no action.

After the war, five nations friendly to the U.S. took delivery of now surplus late-model Helldivers. The Greek Air Force acquired 42 Helldiver SB2C-5's which immediately fought Communist rebels in the Greek Civil War. Most were gone by 1953, but a few lingered in reconnaissance duties until 1957. Italy's 40 SB2C-5's began service in 1952 as part of the re-establishment of Italy's armed services. Most of the Italian Helldivers were modified for anti-submarine patrol and later allowed to participate in NATO exercises. Steadily replaced by Lockheed PV-2 Harpoons and Grumman S2F

Trackers, the last Italian Helldivers were retired in 1959.



The U.S. Military Assistance Program turned over 24 Helldiver SB2C-5's to Portugal's Navy in 1950. These aircraft were also adapted to fly anti-submarine patrols and were transferred to the Portuguese Air Force when the country's independent naval air arm was disestablished in 1952. PV-2 Harpoons replaced the last Portuguese Helldivers in 1958. The U.S. also supplied six SB2C-5's to Thailand in 1951. The Royal Thai Air Force flew these as light bombers against Communist guerrillas until retirement in 1957.

France became the principal postwar Helldiver user. The French purchased 110 SB2C-5's in 1949 as part of rebuilding their naval air arm. These Helldivers replaced worn out SBD Dauntlesses the French used in their war to maintain colonial rule in what

is now Vietnam. Three French Navy squadrons flew Helldivers against the Communist Viet Minh from 1950-1954, and a fourth squadron switched to Grumman Avengers after a year with Helldivers. The French made very successful use of the Helldiver. Carrying rockets and napalm, Helldivers proved very effective against Viet Minh supply columns. Ground support remained a constant role; some were lost to anti-aircraft fire. Shortly before the 1954 cease fire, Corsairs began replacing Helldivers. A few French Navy Helldivers remained in second-line roles until 1958.

THE SB2C HELLDIVER IN PLASTIC

This isn't by any means a complete listing of 1/72 and 1/48 Helldiver kits, but just a quick review of what may be available at the time this article is written. Would-be SB2C builders are advised to check online for what's out there and watch for any new kits or planned re-releases.

If you're looking to build a 1/48 scale Helldiver, your best bet is the (Revell-Monogram) Pro Modeler kit of the SB2C-4, which Scalemates shows as being last released in 2011. This molding dates from 1997 and has really made the rounds.

In 1997, it was a new tool, released by Revell-Monogram under their Pro Modeler series of kits that included photoetch. Shortly thereafter, the kit appeared in a Revell boxing (1998 with different decals), followed by three different boxings (each with different decals) under a Revell-Monogram-Hasegawa boxing. Apparently, for a time in the early 2000's Revell and Hasegawa had a joint venture where each other's moldings were sold under a combined label.

In 2006, this Revell-Monogram 1/48 SB2C-4 molding was released by Accurate Miniatures with additional new parts and

new decals (a VB-17 Rabaul raider). Around 2008, a second (same mold) Accurate Miniatures kit came out. This time, the Helldiver was on anti-submarine duty and in Atlantic gray and white camouflage. A final 2011 release, back under the Pro Modeler label, is of a very late war Helldiver with the decal choices of a USMC Philippines-based aircraft or a VB-84 bird aboard the *Bunker Hill*.

Released in 1961 and reissued a number of times thereafter, Monogram's 1/48 generic SB2C was "the" Helldiver model for many years. Like many 1960's model aircraft kits (particularly Monogram's), there is the fixation with moving and operating parts. Monogram's 1961 Helldiver featured folding wings, retractable landing gear, operating bomb bay doors and sliding canopy sections. The boxing and instructions never specified which version this Helldiver represented; any "rivet counter" worth his salt could probably recite a list of the kit's inaccuracies. Nonetheless, this 1961 Helldiver molding remained a staple in Monogram's catalog through the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's. Scalemates shows the most recent re-release in 1999. However, this vintage kit is frequently seen on vendor tables at hobby shows.

For 1/72 scale builders, Academy released a new-mold SB2C-4 in 2005. The Academy Helldiver has been around the block, too, with several reissues with different decal sheets and new boxings. The most recent re-release of this kit was in 2020 with decals for an Operation Iceberg aircraft. In 2017, this molding came out under the Sword label as an SB2C5 with

additional parts and decals for U.S. Navy, Italian, French and Greek aircraft.

Airfix also trots out from time to time a 1/72 "generic" SB2C Helldiver that was first released in 1967. Its most recent release was about 10 years ago and had USN and French Navy decals. As Airfix continues to replace a number of their old 1/72 and 1/48 kits with new (and far better) moldings, Helldiver fans can hope Airfix will view a new SB2C-4 or 5 to be a worthy release.

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John Kimbriel's labor intensive old 1/48 Monogram Helldiver.



Glen Martin's in progress Accurate Miniatures 1/48 Helldiver.



Box of pain: Monogram's 1/48 Helldiver kit.



Latest Academy 1/72 SB2C-4 boxing.



Accurate Miniatures (ex-Pro Modeler) 1/48 kit.



Airfix's 1/72 Helldiver (most recent re-release).



Another view of John Kimbriel's 1/48 Helldiver.

IPMS Richmond Chapter Information

The Richmond Chapter of the International Plastic Modelers Society (IPMS) was established in 1972 by five area model builders. Combining great talent and a passion for scale modeling, they formed IPMS Richmond with the expressed hope of spreading their enthusiasm for scale models with others in Central Virginia and beyond. IPMS Richmond is part of a national organization, IPMS-USA, with chapters serving modelers across the United States. The International Plastic Modelers Society is also worldwide with members in many countries, all united by their enthusiasm for scale modeling.

IPMS Richmond meets on the second Monday evening of each month at 6:30 PM in the Smoketree Community Center, 11100 Smoketree Drive, North Chesterfield, VA. Our meeting place is just off Courthouse Road, east of Midlothian Turnpike (U.S. Route 60). At our monthly meetings, we discuss and demonstrate model building, painting and detailing techniques and present our latest work during a "Show & Tell" segment. From time to time, we have guest speakers and other special programs. In December, we host a chapter contest and enjoy a catered holiday dinner. Our members also organize trips to public events, museums or places focusing on history, aviation, military vehicles or other facets of our hobby. Each year, we travel to model shows and contests sponsored by other IPMS chapters in the area. IPMS Richmond publishes *Spare Parts* quarterly, an online newsletter featuring chapter news and a variety of hobby articles written by our members.

Our annual model show and contest, the Old Dominion Open, is held the last Saturday in February at the Richmond Raceway. The Old Dominion Open (ODO) has grown over the years into the largest one day scale modeling event in the Mid-Atlantic region. Our show usually draws as many as 1,000 people and has approximately 1,000 scale models of everything from World War II fighter planes to Ferrari Formula One racers and movie monster figures in competition. All genres of our hobby, from model ships to science fiction spacecraft, are represented on the contest tables. Over 200 trophies are awarded, covering scores of categories. The Old Dominion Open also features an excellent variety of vendors with the latest and vintage model kits, books, tools and hobby supplies.

Our annual dues are \$10.00 per year. Regardless of your model building experience or your preferred subject, we welcome you and invite you to join us.

VISIT US AT: ipmsrichmond.blogspot.com

WE ARE ALSO ON FACEBOOK AND AT "FRIENDS OF IPMS RICHMOND."

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December 2022 Chapter Contest Entry Form

Print ALL information clearly... complete form prior to registration



ENTRY NUMBER (from registrar)

CATEGORY NUMBER (see below)

CATEGORIES:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Figures | 4. Maritime | 7. Dioramas/Vignettes |
| 2. Armor/Artillery/Softskins | 5. Aircraft | 8. Other Subjects |
| 3. Civilian Cars/Trucks | 6. Real Space/Sci-Fi | 9. Contest Theme: 1972 |

SUBJECT: _____

Model Name/Designation

KIT(S) USED: _____

SCALE: _____

Enter in the space below any modifications, techniques, or other information you wish to bring to the judges' attention. Place additional documentation with your entry, if desired. If this is a "1972" entry, please explain.

Fold under and place with Entry

NAME: _____

SUBJECT: _____