

-----The Question ?? -----
What got Me Started in Models

Updated Oct 17, 2017

From: James Schubert [mailto:razonjim@centurytel.net]

Dear modelers,

So far there have been over two dozen messages about the ‘Absence of Juniors’ initiated, quiet innocently, by Jacob Russell. The best suggestion, in my opinion, is for us modelers to be seen, with our models, modeling in public events such as the frequent FHCAM events, to which we are now regularly invited. I have participated in only one such, “off campus”, event and that was the Tank Fest earlier this year. I must say that I saw more traffic past the modelers’ tables and got more comments and questions than I have ever gotten at either of the yearly display events at The Museum of Flight.

Some of the younger, relatively speaking, modelers, Eric Christianson. Andrew Birkbeck, John Newcome and others have been regularly pushing this idea for quite sometime are doing all they reasonably can to encourage old sticks-in-the-mud like me to get out and participate; we should all go and do as they say. They preach the truth.

Sincerely, jim

PS Perhaps, another good subject to discuss in depth is, “What got me started in modeling”; I think there are myriad ways in which we all came to the hobby. So, what got you started; give us the whole who, what, when, where, why and how routine. I’ll throw mine in tomorrow; oops, it is already tomorrow, so I’ll do it later today while I’m doing my laundry.

I suspect there are connections between this proposed new subject and the “Juniors” subject.



From: Eric Christianson modelereric@comcast.net

Well I’m not proud, I’ll start.

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From the time I was born until I was 12 our family moved, about every two years, to a different country. Back in those days, when you did this (or maybe just because I was young) us kids used to have to get an array of big booster shots to ward off diseases and such (most of the places we went to were 'unimproved', so to speak).

My three sisters were managed through this process by my Mom, and Dad always took me. My earliest memory of building a model (Revell PB4-Y-1), was with my Dad, and we always bought a model to 'help with the hurt' after the shots. He would build the early ones, and I would cut the parts off the sprues. He would bring home models at other times as well, always to lift my spirits for one reason or another.

He travelled a lot in those days, so those modeling sessions really represented the only time I had alone with him that mattered, and now, so many years later, and with children of my own, the idea of that brings tears to my eyes. My lesson, learned – spend time with my kids.

One time he purchased the Revell 'box scale' Skyraider, but had to leave for a long trip the next morning, so we never got to start it. This was around 1965, and we lived in Glött, Germany, population ~400. Some time later, with him still gone, I got impatient and cut all the parts off the sprues 'to help Dad, when he got back'. Needless to say, we didn't finish that model! (I still have a lot of those parts in my spares box)



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Thanks!
Eric

From: Tim: jarucki@comcast.net

I was about 5 when my older cousin came to visit and he had a Airfix model. I thought that was the best thing ever. My mom took me to the 5 and dime and it all started there with the 1/72 scale Revell kits. I think you could get them for 50 cents. Back then we didn't let them collect dust for long. They usually made a last flight with a firecracker stuffed in the cockpit.

Tim

From: Morgan Girling raventalk@comcast.net

I'd "helped" dad build some models when I was little (Kindergarten or earlier), and the smell of Humbrol gloss enamel still brings those memories

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back, and finding the tiny jelly capsules of unusable glue still bring a smile to my face. I recall we worked on a destroyer or frigate in box scale (probably a Lindberg), and the Airfix HMS Victorious. However, one night that we had company over for dinner, I excused myself from the table after dessert because the adults had sunk into *talking* endlessly with each other, and slipped into the bedroom.

Dad and I had bought the Revell tugboat earlier that day and between Dad's efforts and the loose packaging of the day, most of the larger parts were off the sprue. (I may have helped a couple of loose parts on their way to freedom.) By the time I had the hull and most of the superstructure dry-fitted, Dad came in to see why things were so quiet.

"Did you do this," he asked?

Expecting the worst I averred that I had.

Instead of an ass-chewing, he simply gave a short "Hmm" and left the room muttering something about his kid showing talent.

Two of my greatest pastimes are reading and building models. Dad introduced me to them both when I was very young, and then spent the rest of my childhood trying to get me out of the house to "go play" (like normal kids).

Morgan Girling



From: Russell Bucy russellbucy@yahoo.com

My Brother-in-law was a Surgeon and lived in West Seattle. He built stick-and-tissue kits in the 30s when he was a kid. He continued to build models while he practiced medicine in the 40s and 50s, until he opened his own practice in the mid 60s, when he didn't have the time anymore.

He especially liked the "new" Aurora and Revell plastic kits of the 50s and 60s, building all the Aurora WWI fighter plane series, and Revell ship kits, which required a lot of intricate rigging. This gave him practice in suturing skills (that's what he said anyway). In those days, silk sutures came in a

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foiled package with about six feet of suture material attached to a curved needle which he used exclusively to "rig" with.

He gave me my first model kit, a Monogram Jeep and 37mm gun kit for Christmas 1959. I still have it today with its original box. That started a "chain" of modeling with my Dad through the early 60s. I think dramatic box art was the biggest draw to models in those days. We built many kits on a card table set up in the living room, starting from that first Monogram kit. Most were Revell, Monogram, Aurora, Renwal and ITC kits of ships, cars, tanks and planes.

When I got to High School in 1968, a group of us formed an after school sponsored modeling club-- and the school gave us a display case for finished works-- we were pretty darn good in those days, and a few of us even had our own air-brushes! But our club came to a crashing halt one day when Marvin Langdahl dropped his new Xacto "hot blade cutting tool" onto his left forearm, severing an artery and two tendons (but everything was cauterized so there wasn't much blood!).

Between Marvin's parents and the school administration, that was the end of our club. We had about 15 club members, and would frequently pool allowances and lawn mowing money to place orders with Polk's Hobby supply in NY (also where Marvin got his hot knife cutting tool). It took a couple of months to get mail orders from back east in those days. I remember the wait for a box was excruciating. My Brother-in-Law had "retired" from modeling by 1969, and I "inherited" all his unbuilt kits, tools, and "suturing materials". I still have many of his tools.

I was working on one of his "hand-me-down" models on a folding tray in front of the TV when Neil Armstrong stepped onto the surface of the Moon in 1969. I gave up plastic modeling when I went away to SU in 1972, but continued to paint figures off and on. When I graduated from college and was commissioned in the Army, I concentrated on Pat Bird's fabulous "Series 77 Miniatures" line, because they were easier to move around the country. By 1988 I'd even given that up in favor of model trains because my girls were interested in trains.

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But in 1998, my wife asked if I could build some model aircraft for her 5th grade classroom-- and I was "re-bitten by the plastic bug". Between 1998 and 2006 I built 37 historic aircraft form the Wright Flyer to the Space Shuttle for her classroom. When she retired last year, we gave a few to deserving students.

The rest went to a teacher friend of ours in Port Angeles. My wife's classroom theme was "where learning takes flight".

I only had 2 parents ask about model building during that entire time period, but the kids loved the models. I'm not not sure if any of them ever took up the hobby though. I think one of the reasons kids don't take it up anymore is because in my day, you could buy a model in many drug stores or "five and dimes", but today, you can only find them in a Hobby or craft store for the most part.

VR, Russ



From: DeRosia, John john.derosia@boeing.com

I have to side with Eric..... that is about moving so often during childhood. My dad was in the military and we moved every 2-3 years. Friends? Ha! Never made lifelong friends until I was older due to moving all the time. I do however recall when we lived in Massachusetts close to Boston. I think I was in elementary school – like about the age ‘Level 1’ category when our class went to one of the Boston natural history museums.

When the tour was through, we got to go into their gift shop and they had these animal models / snap kits. I bought a German Sheppard. It came with a few tubs of oil paints and a brush. I was so proud of that when I had it built and painted. That model stayed with me a long time. It may even be in the basement with my other models from so long ago.

Somewhere in my early years, I also remember my dad bought a model kit of a military plane with yellow wings and silver body. Not sure which kit it

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was back then. However, when he painted it (by brush back then)- it just came to life. Wow- this miniature thing just seemed so real.

I think shortly after that- he saw I was interested and I got me a kit or two. So it kept going. Being a U.S. Army dependent- the tank models were the best. I was a 'loner' of sorts through most of my younger schooling due to moving all the time and very few close friends. But the models became my reality in many ways. They stayed with me no matter where we moved. I could escape the pressures of my life by being in my room doing models.

Later in my teens, we lived in Jacksonville Florida (another move!) – I was nearing the end of High School and finally got my drivers license at 18. I could not wait to go visiting the hobby shops around the area. That was in the early / mid-70's. I was working part time cleaning real Cessna 'for rent' airplanes. I went to one local hobby shop and I saw a \$40.00 model of a Cessna. It was a 1/20 kit by Nichimo. Something like that.

But I had to have it. It took weeks to save that kind of money – a \$40.00 kit back then was insanity – but I finally got it. I remember hiding it from the family. A \$40.00 kit- holy cow!! I wonder if 'hiding' models to this day started back then....?



I believe the local IPMS Jacksonville chapter always advertised in the local hobby shops. I had never in my life heard of model clubs. I thought everyone just built models alone and never shared.

Well- I got brave and committed to going to one of their meetings. I will never forget the warm friendly modelers that welcomed me. It was the first

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time I met Loren Perry (he was a Navy recruiter and was also active with his ship models.) Later, he founded Gold Metal models – PE etc....). Here I am 50++++++ years later- and still find the great folks and modelers some of the greatest and most humble kind people I know!

John



From: John Kaylor john.kaylor@gmail.com

I first became interested in modeling in 1915 when I was 5. You see, styrene models wouldn't be developed for another 30 years, so we used what was on hand at our ranch in Montana - buffalo poo. My best model for a number of years was the Titanic, post iceberg.

When I was 12, in 1922, I successfully modeled a Lockheed Starfighter, clearly decades before the actual plane would be developed. Before injection molding was developed I experimented with many forms of poo, my favorite being chicken poo, mainly because you didn't stand the risk of being trampled by an enormous buffalo.

Tom Cruise and I grew up on different farms together, and I used to take huge handfuls of buffalo poo and throw them at him. One day a movie executive saw this happen, and saw Tom cry, and new that he had something if he could cry on film that well. So that's where Tom got his start in movies.

I served in the US Army Air Corps in WWII, and we dropped literally tons of Lindberg kits on Germany. Not for the kids to build or for propaganda, but because they were crap kits, and we just wanted them out of our hair. With things being tight in Germany, and the only playthings that kids had back then being land-minds, rocket launchers, and hand grenades, the parents were just happy as hell to have something a little less dangerous for their kids to play with, so they gave their kids toluene and other poisonous substances to put the crappy Lindberg kits together with.

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It is a little-known fact that that was the REAL reason for victory over the Krauts - the soldiers were all spending inordinate amounts of time trying to get ill-fitting models together, so Hitler took his ball and went home, and then started playing with his Walther PPK when nobody asked him to come out and play.

So then I just built lots of models, years before the actual vehicles were ever developed: in 1949 I built the Saturn V, and the entire Apollo mission - but my LEM looked better than theirs. Go figure. In 1951 I built the space shuttle, Hubble telescope, the Goodyear blimp Columbia, and the 1972 DeTomaso Pantera. It was a productive year.

Too bad I suck now.



From: Scott Kruise scotkruise@yahoo.com

We may or may not make any progress at solving, among ourselves, the 'Junior Problem'. But our stories of how we got started in modeling are at least of interest to our fellows, as Jim Schubert suggests.

I suggest we polish these up and authorize our esteemed Seattle Chapter IPMS Newsletter Editor, Mr. Robert Allen, to print them as and when space permits. I'm sending him, by separate email, my composition, with a couple of supporting pics. Here's an excerpt, for now:

On my 10th birthday, I got lots of loot from friends at my party, among which was one model kit: Monogram's 'box scale' B-58 'Hustler' bomber...

After a long 'Dark Ages', along about September 2000, Emil Minerich's at Skyway Model Shop urged me to come to meetings of the NorthWest Scale Modelers and the Seattle Chapter of the IPMS... both clubs' members only encouraged, so I hung around. The Fates made it clear I'm supposed to: at the first Contest & Show I attended, the first vendor booth I went to had

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that old Monogram B-58 kit! Of course I had to build it, my first NABBROKE. (I had to come up with a name for such, later... Nostalgic Aging Baby Boomer Real Old Kit Experience!)

Regards to all, --Scott Kruize



From: Neil Makar neilmakar@mac.com

So, I guess i ought to get in on this too.

For my 8th birthday, my parents gave me three model kits. The

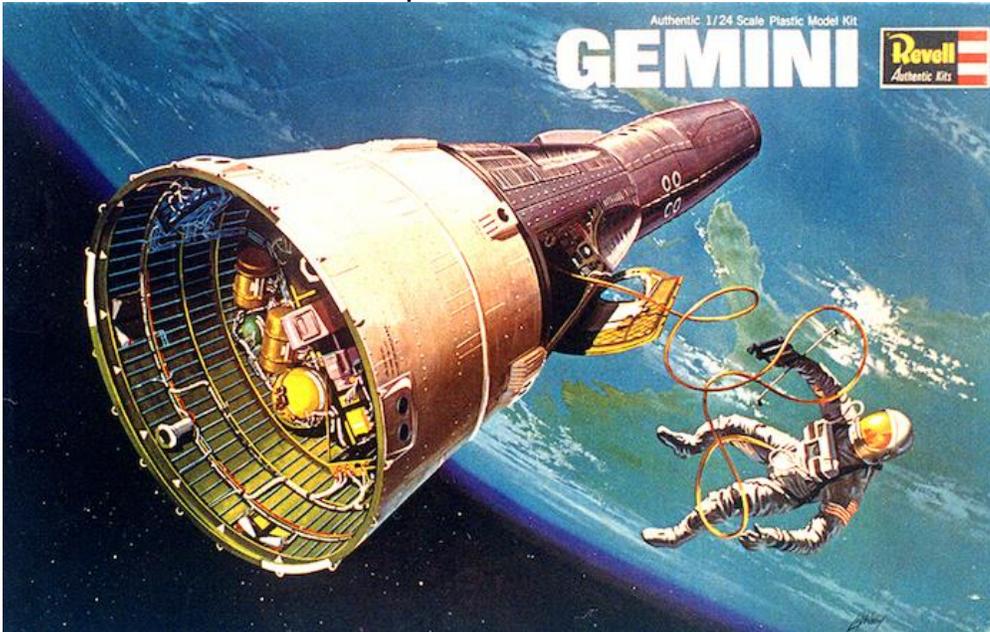
- Revell Boeing SST,



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- Revell 1/24th Gemini Capsule,



- and the ENTEX 1/100 Boeing 727 WhisperJet, "Stretch Job" in American Airlines livery.



My father pretty much built the SSTs, and did a great job with rattle cans. I built the Gemini and the 727. All are long ago discarded, but I have since rebuilt the SSTs, using automobile colors for the two yellows (my dad only used a single yellow color. It was 1966.) I have 2 of the Gemini's in my

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stash, one in the classic box and the other in a smaller, modern boxing (guess which one I'll build,) and I saw the ENTEX 727 at Emil's once, and lusted after it, but remembering that it was not a particularly spectacular kit, didn't want to pay his price. That's ok. It was pretty big.

After that I went on to build jet after jet after jet. F-8s, F-4s, F-84s, 104s, etc, until one day while at the store, I asked my Mom to buy me a kit, and when she said yes, I ran and grabbed another jet. She took one look and said, "Nope. Go find one with a propeller."

I came back with a Revell 1/32 Spitfire MkI, and have never looked back. Daddy likee me some propellers!

The one that got away...

For years my Dad had a car model in a box in a cabinet out in his garage. It was light blue, probably a Monogram or AMT, and I think it was a Thunderbird. I always wanted to build it and he said no. Then, when he and my Mom moved to Deming, he threw it out along with a bunch of "junk" he didn't feel was worth shipping. He never asked if I wanted it. I lost a few other things, years of bound editions of "Automobile Quarterly", and two photographs my Grandfather took of the Hindenburg - the day BEFORE it exploded.

AAARRRRRRRRGGGGG!

Oh well. I keep going through the model car sections hoping to find that box I remember. I don't have any real hope, but I look nonetheless.

Neil Makar



From: John Newcome

I'll chime in on this thread as well. I started building models in 1966 when my dad got hired at Boeing. My mom took me to the Bon Marche hobby

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store in Seattle where I told the sales person I wanted a model of a Boeing aircraft. I went home with a Revell 1/72 Boeing B-17 Memphis Belle. This was the kit with the movable control surfaces and opening bomb bay doors. I also got a tube of glue, a paint brush and bottle of Testors olive drab and light gray. Even though the paint job was uneven with glue on the windscreen, I was very pleased with the result. I even got the bomb bay doors to open and close a couple of times before they broke off.

One thing I liked about the kit was the history of the plane in the instructions. Those instructions got me interested in history and aviation history as well.

Unfortunately, the B-17 was lost when we moved. I still have fond memories of building it and hanging it in my room.

Cheers,

John N.

From: James Schubert

Dear all,

Recently, when I was about six, my uncle Charles and a friend took me to an air show at the Purdue Airport in West Lafayette, Indiana. Charlie and his friend were Civil Engineering students at Purdue and Charlie lived with us to save money. On the way home from the show he bought me a Comet Dime-Model; a Stick and Tissue kit of the Curtiss Robin. It got built with help from Mom, see first two attachments, and was destroyed when it crashed on its first test flight. Ever since then I have been modeling – no breaks for girls, cars, college, maturity (?), marriage, house, kid, divorce, remarriage, career change and now retirement. About 10 years ago I bought a re-pop of that Dime Model from an ad in the KAPA Collector (Kits And Plans Antiqueous) newsletter. This time the dime kit cost \$10.00 plus shipping; everything is identical with the original save the box. When I left college for Boeing I gave up flying models of all sorts: Hand-Launched,

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Tow-Line, Rubber, Gas and Semi-Diesel because they all, ultimately, still crashed. See third attachment. Static Scale Models are much less apt to crash and when they do it's usually because the builder was fumble-fingered - not because a miscreant wind drove it into grandma's kitchen window. In grade and high school and college I also built boats, cars and railroad models; I didn't do any armor until much later when Terry Moore invented the Decathlon Contest and I had to have an armor entry to qualify.

I'm 84 now* and still modeling but not as much and bit more slowly because I've become a nitpicker in my building as well as in my criticisms. I still enjoy modeling and the company of others. who also model.

Cheers, jim



From: STom Seanet

Jim:

Nice job on picking this subject line. I think we're going to get a lot of interesting stories in addition to what's already been posted.

Here's mine story:

Part 1 – The Beginning

When I was a kid I had a fascination with the Navy. I remember watching Navy Log pretty religiously when I was very young. My Father would take me to Armed Forces Day at Hickam AFB, and there were at least a couple of times when I managed to visit Pearl Harbor. At the time, I was heavily interested in capital ships.

I did build a few models at the time, including an Airfix Scharnhorst that I got for Christmas, the customary Arizona, a couple of the Monogram 1:48 kits with folding wing, a Yak-25 and B-58, both in box scale. There was no sanding, no airbrush, no paint, and no knife – We didn't have very much

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back then, and everything my parents made went into piano lessons and Iolani School. I do remember my Mom stopping our trips to Dairy Queen for a chocolate dipped cone when the price went up to 10 cents, so the modeling interest could only go so far.

Part 2 – The Return

I came to Seattle in 1976 and after some fun years as a poor college student and one as a part-time lost soul, I entered my first full-time job at a management consulting firm. We had three weeks of time off a year – including sick leave. So, in addition to the usual working hours (I once calculated that 80% of our consultants at the time didn't make it past 18 months), we also worked when we were sick.

This habit carried over when to my next job in the business office at the UW School of Medicine, and I would sound pretty bad for about two weeks every three months. This was not a good thing to have around the Dean's Office, so one day my boss called me in and sent me home. By that time, I had discovered American Eagles, so I used the opportunity to build a 1:200 Hasegawa 767 – one of those Japanese kits that was revolutionizing the hobby at the time. I picked up an interest in WW2 fighters and started to collect the major types. One could argue that this was kind out of necessity, since every time I went to American Eagles, the prices of everything I was looking had gone up by \$1.

Mike Edwards treated me pretty well, showed me a few things, eventually sold me my first airbrush, and finally introduced me to some folks who met regularly in the back room. Brian Cahill was kind enough to introduce himself (I am not the most outgoing guy with strangers). Jack Matthews was building some amazing propellers using superglue and paper bags, and Ted Holowchuk was the grand master.

Around this time, I discovered an annual RC trade show at the Puyallup Fairgrounds where I could have a couple of huge elephant ears for lunch; buy pre-owned plastic models for a lot less than at American Eagles; and watch videos of RC bombers crashing into houses and RC warships firing

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bb's into each other. This is where I met a vendor who worked had a day job at Ernst, and Andrew Birkbeck, who was helping him. Andrew convinced me to head in to my first IPMS-Seattle meeting, which was followed soon after by that great National Convention at the SeaTac Red Lion.

Thanks for the chance to hang out with you folks – It's a great bunch. I especially like that people know a lot about a lot of things, and best modelers don't talk about how great they are. It kind of reminds me of after hours time at the academic medical centers.

Cheers, Spencer



From: Herman Moore

(IPMS Cape Town South Africa friend)

Super recollections from everyone who contributed to this interesting subject. Nice of see everyone had really happy memories. This proves that modelling has enriched many peoples lives. I definitely believe it is one of the few Hobbies that has no age restriction or longevity ! Thanks again to John for keeping these memories alive on this forum.

A truly great read. A big thanks to all who contributed to this discussion and Kudus to John's effort for setting it out to preserve this for all to read.

