

September 1993

Meeting: Sept. 4 1993, Bellevue Public Library, 10am

Now before you say it, yes, the meeting this month is on the Labor Day Weekend. However, given the weather we have been having this "summer" I doubt if it will be worth going anywhere other than the Chapter Meeting!

And for those of you who do turn up for the meeting, please note there WILL be a slide show covering the 1993 National Convention in Atlanta, being a joint Andrew Birkbeck/Terry Moore misadventure.

Also at the September meeting, and better a little late than never, ribbons will be handed out for those who took part in the last two Club Projects: B-17's and Luftwaffe Fighters. The B-17's took First Place, and the Luftwaffe Fighters, Second Place, at last April's Recon VII Show. Those who participated will each be awarded a First or Second Place Ribbon. So please turn up to collect.

A reminder to those who ran off with Formula One racing cars at last month's meeting: They MUST be finished in time for the October 2nd IPMS Vancouver Show. Failure to meet the deadline will result in a firm request to pay for the model you took. This is the same "incentive" provided to the Luftwaffe and B-17 Projects. Please note two members still owe for not completing their models for the Luftwaffe project, and it would be appreciated if you paid up at the September meeting.

OCTOBER MEETING

As things stand at the moment, the October meeting is set for Saturday, October 30th. Yes, turns out what looked to be a positive move for our club has turned out to be a disaster, meeting space wise. The library is promoting itself as a place to meet, and looks like things have taken off. Your Executive committee is currently looking at one sight in the Ballard area (NOT American Eagles), but it is now obviously critical that we find new accommodations, or risk totally disruptive meeting times: First Saturday of the month one time, third the next, second following that. SO FELLOW MEMBERS: Now is the time to get off your duffs and put your thinking caps on: find us a place to meet where we can: 1/ book for a length of time the second Saturday of each month; 2/ has room for at least 60 people; 3/ has tables and chairs for same 60 people plus models; 4/ has facilities for slide presentations; 5/ has no trouble accepting the odd vendor or three each month; 6/ is FREE or at least cheap. This is YOUR Club, so please, make an effort to find us a regular place to meet. Churches would be a good start, as most have meeting facilities, but tend to let their parishioners have first choice. Clubs like Rotary, Elks, American Legion all have facilities, again requiring inside contacts. So get to it chaps, time is short.

Finally this month, a word from your humble scribe, the Editor. Working away at life is becoming a bit of a chore, and add to this the frustration of trying to build two models per month (not as easy as I had thought), something has had to give. You will be pleased to hear that starting as of the next newsletter, you will have a new Editor. Kevin Callahan, software guru and general Republican complainer, is taking over the Editor's desk. This DOESN'T mean you are through with hearing from me, as I have promised Kevin I will help lighten his load by contributing at least bi-monthly reviews etc. It has been my pleasure to serve these past few years as Editor, and wish Kevin all the best in his new task.

Building Tamiya's SdKfz 250/3 Half-track in 1:35 Scale
By Rocky Rockwell

The SdKfz 250-series *leichte schutzenpanzerwagen*, or light half-tracks, was built by the Germans in huge numbers, with variants for nearly every conceivable use. The 250/3 was a specialized version designed to be used as a mobile command post, artillery observation unit, ground control unit for the Luftwaffe, and general-purpose command vehicle for battalion and company sized units. The 250/3 is most widely recognized among modelers as the "Greif", the preferred mount of the Desert Fox, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel. The 250/3 served in large numbers with almost all Wehrmacht and SS panzer and panzergrenadier divisions, as well as with Luftwaffe and field artillery regiments. Although the 250-series vehicles did not offer the cross-country mobility of the big 8-wheeled scout cars or the larger SdKfz 251-series half-tracks, they were far superior to the SdKfz 221/222-series of 4-wheeled cars, and were among the most widely used vehicles of their type, serving on all fronts throughout the war.

The Tamiya kit has been around for some time, and because of its age, does not represent their best molding efforts. It's not bad, mind you, but neither is it up to the standards of some of their newer armor kits. The molding is clean enough, with little if any flash, and the mold marks aren't hard to clean up, but the detail just isn't as crisp and sharp as in the kits from newer molds. The kit can be built as either the famous "Greif" or as a standard command unit of the Wehrmacht, depending on the modeler's preference.

The interior of the vehicle is well-detailed, with driver and radio operator's seats in front and a third seat for the command net radio operator in the back. The large radio set in the rear compartment is reasonably well done, but benefits from some added detail, such as headsets and/or microphones and cables, and perhaps a few added knobs or switches. The dash offers raised detail in the form of gauges and a couple of switches, and the right seat has a small radio set of its own. There are shift levers and a transmission housing that has a large padded cushion on top, presumably for additional seating. Miscellaneous interior details include a rifle rack with 3 Kar-98 Mausers, an MP40 machine pistol with ammo pouch, spare prism blocks for the vision ports, a flare pistol, and two saddle drum magazines for the MG34's molded into a wall rack. There are two MG34's for defensive armament.

The kit has an engine, and if desired you can build the kit with the engine access panels open. Engine detail is mediocre, though, so you might be better off leaving the hood panels shut and using the engine in another kit where it's not apt to be closely scrutinized. The front suspension offers wheels that can be turned.

Exterior details include pioneer tools, some molded-in detail items on the mudguard that, with careful painting, can be made to look at least reasonably decent, and a tripod for mounting an MG34 as an anti-aircraft gun off the vehicle. There is a multi-piece assembly to represent the rack of 6 fuel cans carried by Rommel's half-track on the rear armor plate, and a sledge hammer and bolt cutters for the front fenders. There's a molded piece intended to represent a canvas tarp cover folded back along the rear hull top, but you'd be better off to make your own if you want one. The plastic piece is just too rigid to depict the "drape" of canvas properly. The forward vision ports can be built either open or closed, but for the side ports this isn't practical, and you'll be better off leaving them shut.

The rear door is a separate piece, but if you use the kit supplied tarp over the rear hull, it may be hard to build the kit with door open (if you so desire). I wanted to leave the rear door open to further show the interior of the vehicle, so I left the tarp off. I also elected to leave off the distinctive gas can rack that the kit provides for the "Greif" version, choosing instead to mount a single gas can in a rack on the right side.

The frame antenna commonly found on SdKfz 250/251 half-tracks used as command vehicles is well represented, and there is a second mount for the whip antenna often carried for the company radio net. Both need the addition of the cable that typically ran from the radio set to the base of the antenna mount - photos show these clearly, especially where the cable joins the frame antenna. The frame antenna consists of 5 pieces, and careful alignment during assembly is important if you want the finished product to look right.

The tracks are accurate enough, but they are hard plastic, of multiple-piece design, and are tricky to assemble on the vehicle. If you follow the kit instructions, it will be difficult to paint and weather the insides of the tracks or the suspension. I found that the best method was to assemble the suspension, paint and weather it, then use it as a template to shape the tracks while the glue holding the links together dries. This needs to be done *before* the mudguards are put on, or you will not be able to install the tracks properly. The tracks should be assembled into top and bottom halves using the suspension as a jig. Then, when they are thoroughly dry, they can be painted and weathered, and finally put onto the vehicle using super glue to connect the ends. Last, the pre-painted mudguards can be assembled to the hull sides. If you do it in this manner, the tracks come out looking good, an accurate simulation of the high-profile rubber block track used on the 250-series. This process also allows you to simulate the natural sag of the track on the vehicle, although I found that my kit needed some adjustment in the position of the front sprocket to allow the tracks to fit right. The tracks were either half a link too short, or half a link too long, and a little repositioning of the sprockets was needed to make ends meet, so to speak. As a result, I now have a couple of spare track links stowed on the vehicle, which is fine since none come with the kit.

The only other real problem area is the exhaust shroud. The piece that represents the sheet metal cover over the muffler doesn't fit worth beans, and the exhaust pipe itself isn't even there. You'll need to do a little cutting and shimming to make the shroud fit right - it should fit all but seamlessly into the recess between the front fender and the track mudguard on the left side. (Similar work may be necessary to make the cargo box fit properly into the corresponding spot on the right side...) I used a piece of 1/16" diameter aluminum tubing cut to about 1/4" long, and reamed out the end till the walls were paper-thin, to represent the exhaust pipe itself. The extra work was worth it, and the completed job looks really nice.

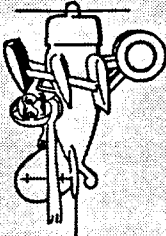
I built my kit as a "generic" Wehrmacht command vehicle, rather than the all-too-commonly seen Afrika Korps version, using Humbrol Neutral Gray as a base coat and weathering it with lighter grays and Armor Sand to give it a faded, dusty look. The decals provided are a little on the thick side, but as with most Tamiya decals, they responded well to Solvaset, and I had no trouble getting them to go on properly.

All in all, while some work is needed to make the kit fit properly in some areas, and the molding is not as clean and crisp as some of Tamiya's more recent offerings, I like the results. Considering the wide usage and numerous varieties of the 250-series half-tracks, no collection of WWII German vehicles should be without an example of this important vehicle.

FALL Model Swap

October 16th 1993

10:00 to 4:00



Collectable
Plastic Kits

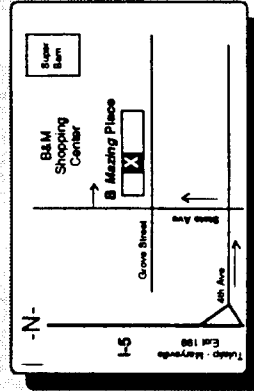
Collectable Plastic Kits New & Old

DEALERS:

5 foot tables available for \$15.00

Set up time 9:00

Doors Open 10:00 • Admission \$1.00

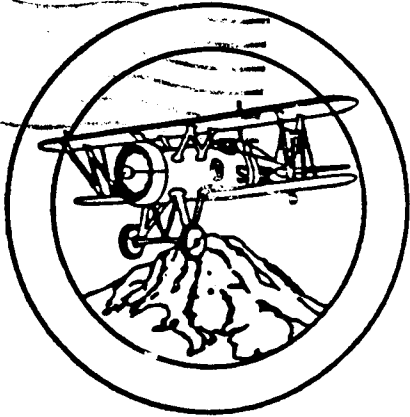


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