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The NAVIGATOR

ALAMO SQUADRON'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER • SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

MAY 2026 Edition | *Region 06 Newsletter of the Year for 2025!*



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PANTHER AUSF. D TANK

By Juan Noltenius



1995 TOYOTA SERVICE TRUCK

By David Auth

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The President's Corner

By Jim Norton



I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support and trust as I take on the position of President of this historic IPMS chapter.

I started my modeling journey at a young age. Airplanes were my original passion—and still are—but I dabbled in whatever I had available to me. I grew up in Massachusetts, and by the time I reached high school, most of my time was spent working part-time at a local hardware store and playing baseball.

I later enlisted in the Air Force and began working on the FB-111A at Pease AFB, New Hampshire. While on active duty, I attended school at night and completed two years of college before separating to join ROTC for another two years. After being commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant, I attended USAF pilot training at Laughlin AFB, Texas, where I flew the T-37 and T-38.

I received my number-one heavy aircraft choice—the EC-135—and flew the A, G, and L models. When the EC-135 was retired, I transitioned to the KC-135, flying the A, R, T, and R/T variants. Following a tour in Okinawa, Japan, I completed my career at Randolph AFB, Texas, with the 559th “Billy Goats,” teaching pilots how to teach pilots how to fly. (Yes, that last sentence is correct!)



During my active-duty years, I didn't have many opportunities to build models, but I never lost interest. I attended many Model Fiestas at the Live Oak Civic Center. At my best, my models were what you might call “three-footers”—they looked good from a distance, but don't get too close!

Then one day—I'm not sure why—I decided to look up the Alamo Chapter of IPMS. At the time, meetings were held at Jordan Ford, and the first person I met was Herb Scranton. As you all know, Herb was such a quiet guy—I learned everything about the club in the 20 minutes before the meeting even started!



Jim gives the club a presentation on the KC-135.

I thoroughly enjoyed that first meeting. The monthly demos have challenged me to “up my game,” and being exposed to the incredible quality of your work has pushed me to improve. That inspiration led me to enter an F4U-1 Corsair in Model Fiesta 43—and it took gold. I credit that growth in my skills to all of you.

This club is more than just a monthly meeting—it's a place where friendships form quickly among like-minded people. As we move forward together, I hope to continue earning the trust you have placed in me.

Work hard and have fun doing it, Jim!

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Club Leadership Elections Results

By Julio A. Caro

Following nominations and a vote by the members of Alamo Squadron at our April 2nd, 2026 monthly meeting, the club has selected its officers for the coming year. The results reflect both continuity and fresh leadership within the organization. Here are Alamo Squadron's Officers elected to serve for the year to come:



Jim Norton
President

Jim Norton, formerly serving as Treasurer, has been elected as the new Club President.



David Auth
Vice President

David Auth, the current Vice President, was re-nominated and unanimously elected to serve a second term.



Brandon Porter
Treasurer

Brandon Porter has been elected as Club Treasurer, stepping into the position previously held by Jim.

With this blend of experience and new energy, Alamo Squadron looks forward to another successful year ahead in very capable hands.

Congratulations gentlemen!

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My First Model Kit Build

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I still remember the very first time I built a scale model kit. I was a young, dream-filled boy of ten, completely captivated by anything that flew—or in this case, blasted its way into space.

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If memory serves me correctly, my first model was the **Apollo Lunar Spacecraft**, a kit produced by Revell in 1967. It was in the summer of 1969, a time when the NASA Apollo program was in full swing and the entire world seemed to be looking skyward.



Like so many others, I was caught up in the excitement and wonder of it all. Back then, my goal wasn't to create a finely detailed, contest-worthy model. Not even close. My mission was simple: get it built as quickly as possible so I could proudly show it off to my friends and family—and, of course, play with it. The idea of weathering, seam filling, or airbrushing hadn't even entered my world yet. Those were techniques for seasoned modelers, not a ten-year-old kid fueled by excitement and imagination.

My tools were as basic as they come. I used the familiar little square bottles of Testors enamel paints—those iconic jars that, amazingly, are still around today. The smell of those paints alone can still take me right back to that moment in time.

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And then there was the glue...

Like most modelers of that era, I used the classic tube cement—thick, stringy, and powerful stuff. Brands like Testors and Ambroid made these glues, and they came in metal tubes that seemed to have a personality of their own. They worked well enough, but they also produced fumes that were...memorable, to say the least. Spend too much time around them, and you'd definitely start to feel it! It's a wonder any of us survived our early modeling years.

Of course, building the model was only part of the story—what came after was often just as memorable. In my excitement to get back to playing with my newly completed masterpiece, I didn't always do the best job of cleaning up after myself.

Paint bottles, brushes, bits of plastic, and glue tubes were often left scattered in my wake. It didn't take long before my mother and grandmother would step in, making it very clear that my modeling sessions also came with the responsibility of cleaning up properly. Let's just say they were not shy about reminding me!



As time went on, my interests expanded beyond rockets. I built many other models, especially aircraft, which quickly became my true passion. Among them were iconic warbirds like the P-51 Mustang and the legendary F-4E Phantom II. Each new kit fueled my imagination and deepened my appreciation for aviation.

Like many young people, my interests eventually shifted. By fourteen, I had stepped away from the hobby as friends, sports, and—of course—girls took priority, and model building faded into the background.

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Some 35 years later, I rediscovered my passion and picked up where I left off. Joining Alamo Squadron in 2017 proved to be a turning point for me, providing both inspiration and encouragement from a group of talented modelers.



At the same time, I embraced what I like to call the “YouTube University,” where tutorials and demonstrations helped me refine my techniques and expand my skills far beyond what I could have imagined as a kid.

Today, while aircraft still hold a special place in my heart, I now also enjoy building not only aircraft, but also armor and other related vehicles, appreciating the different challenges and techniques each brings.

Looking back now, I can see just how far I’ve come. I now understand and apply many of the advanced methods that once seemed so out of reach that transforms a simple kit into something truly special.

But if I’m being honest, a part of me still builds models the way that ten-year-old boy did. There’s still that same excitement when opening a new kit. There’s still that quiet satisfaction in watching something take shape piece by piece. And there’s still that sense of pride in sharing the finished work with others—whether it’s fellow modelers, friends, or family.

In many ways, that first model didn’t just start a hobby—it started a lifelong journey.



As I continue to build, write, and contribute to this great hobby and community, I’m reminded that every modeler—no matter how experienced—started somewhere. For me, it started in the summer of 1969, with an Apollo Lunar Spacecraft model, a few bottles of paint, a tube of glue, and a whole lot of imagination.

And that, perhaps, is the most important part of all.

Keep on building, y’all!

Julio

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Make Mud Not War: WC-130A Build

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Photo of WC-130A t/n 56-0522 taken by Tom Robison at Andersen AFB, Guam in 1970



For many years, Air Force weather reconnaissance operations remained largely out of the public eye—until *The Weather Channel* brought the Hurricane Hunters into the spotlight. Less well known, however, was their now-deactivated sister unit, the 54th Weather Reconnaissance Squadron (WRS), which operated a wide range of aircraft, including several versions of the C-130. Among the rarest of these were just three WC-130A aircraft.

Originally built as standard cargo transports, these aircraft were transferred from Tactical Air Command (TAC) in late 1966 for a unique and highly secretive mission: Operation *Popeye*. This Southeast Asia operation aimed to extend the monsoon season and create persistent rainfall, turning the Ho Chi Minh Trail into a muddy, nearly impassable lifeline.

After initial testing in the western United States and over Laos in 1966, full-scale operations began in March 1967 from Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base (RTAFB), Thailand. Crews from the 54th WRS rotated in from Guam to fly these demanding missions, while also supporting other tropical weather reconnaissance and regional taskings as needed.

To support their new role, the WC-130As were fitted with the AN/AMR-1 weather reconnaissance system. Unlike later B-model variants, however, they lacked dedicated atmospheric sampling equipment. Typically, two aircraft remained forward-deployed at Udorn, while the third cycled between Guam and Thailand for maintenance, repair, and crew rotation from mid-1967 through late 1970. When not in transit, this aircraft continued routine weather reconnaissance operations out of Guam.

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Though overshadowed by later and more advanced platforms, the WC-130As and their crews played a quiet but fascinating role in one of the most unusual aerial missions of the era.

In 1970, the WC-130A aircraft were replaced by three WC-130B models, allowing the rain-making mission to continue through mid-1972 using available B- and E-model aircraft from the 54th Weather Reconnaissance Squadron. Unlike their A-model predecessors, these later variants did not receive the distinctive three-tone Southeast Asia (SEA) camouflage, instead retaining the standard gray paint scheme common across the WC-130 fleet.

Following their specialized service, the WC-130As were returned to their original transport configuration and transferred to Air Force Reserve units. Despite their relatively short time in the rain-making role, the three aircraft flew an impressive 1,435 combat sorties. One aircraft sustained significant battle damage during operations, earning its crew Distinguished Flying Crosses for their actions.

All three A-models wore standard SEA camouflage and markings during their operational period, but notably lacked unit designations—consistent with Military Airlift Command (MAC) C-130s, which carried only national insignia.

So what became of these unique aircraft?

Aircraft 56-0519 was transferred to the South Vietnamese Air Force and ultimately became a relic of war following the fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975. It

remained derelict at Tan Son Nhut Airport in Ho Chi Minh City for years before being restored and placed on display in a local war museum.

Aircraft 56-0522 was assigned to Kelly Air Force Base, where it served as a load trainer before being scrapped in 2007.

Aircraft 56-0537 met its end earlier, being scrapped in 1999.

Though their numbers were few, the WC-130As left behind a distinctive legacy—bridging conventional airlift and one of the most unusual weather-modification missions ever undertaken.

The Build Process

For this project, I used the Italeri 1/72 scale C-130 kit as my starting point. With COVID in full swing, I found myself returning to modeling as a way to stay occupied—and out of trouble. The Italeri kit, originally released in 1983 and reissued multiple times with various updates, is very much a product of its era. The cockpit is sparse, and the cargo area consists of little more than a flat floor.

With this build, I decided to push myself by trying several new techniques, including working with resin and photo-etched parts, as well as scratch-building details and creating my own decals.

After settling on a specific aircraft version and gathering reference material online, it was time to begin assembling the necessary components.

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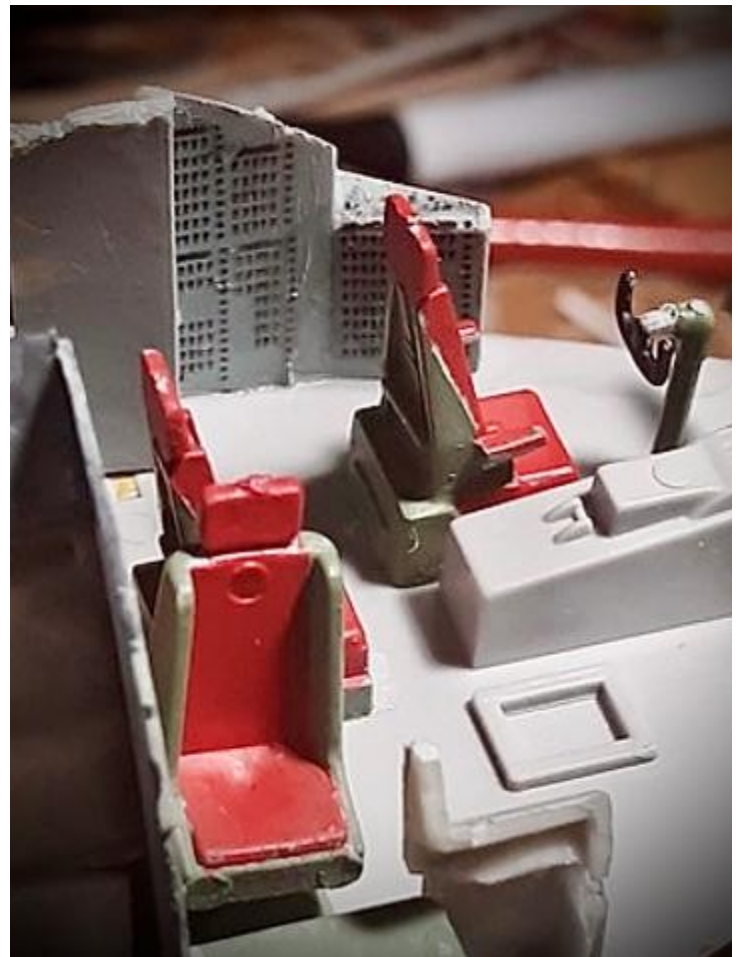
At the time, the Italeri kit was my only option, as the newer Zvezda C-130 had yet to become available.

One of the first issues to address was the engines, which are inaccurate for virtually any C-130 variant. To correct this, I sourced a replacement set from OzMods in Australia, which also included new propellers and external fuel tanks. For the cargo area, I added photo-etched seating, while my son contributed by 3D-printing the internal Benson tank. I supplemented this with additional crew seating cast in resin and fabricated insulation panels for the cargo compartment.

I wasn't entirely satisfied with the exhaust openings on the OzMods engines, so I enhanced them further by adding resin exhaust components from Black Dog. To round things out, I picked up a mask set from AeroMasks to assist with painting.

Construction began in the cockpit, where I focused on upgrading the interior by adding the ARWO (Airborne Reconnaissance Weather Officer) station and modifying the navigator's position.

I then added sidewall detail to the cockpit alongside the pilot's seats, using custom decals to replicate the circuit breaker panels and enhance the overall realism.



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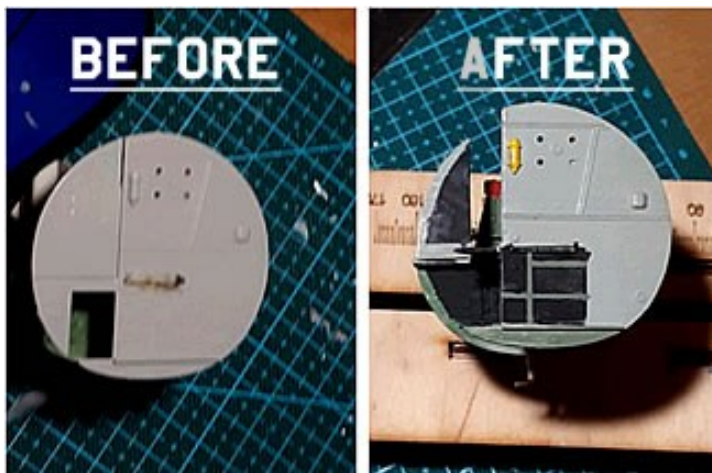
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The A-model C-130 featured an additional window and a small “porthole” near the wing’s leading edge, so I drilled these out to match the configuration. I also addressed inaccuracies at Station 245—the bulkhead at the rear of the cockpit—by modifying the kit part. This involved trimming it to a more accurate shape and adding an additional wall along the crew entry area to better represent the actual structure.



This modification created my first real construction challenge. The kit part was originally designed to attach directly to the left fuselage half—most of which I had just removed. To work around this, I attached the bulkhead to the cargo floor first, then carefully aligned and secured the assembly to the left fuselage side.

With that hurdle cleared, I moved on to the cargo seating. I began by building and installing the photo-etched seats along the left fuselage wall and down the centerline of the cargo compartment. The wall-mounted seats were relatively straightforward—requiring only careful bending, assembly, and

attachment to the floor and sidewall.

The centerline seats, however, were more involved. I first had to construct the support framework (stanchions) before attaching the seats themselves. To add a bit more realism and reflect actual crew practices, I also included a field-expedient bunk—a litter suspended in the cargo area. For accuracy, I visited the AMEDD Museum at Fort Sam Houston, where a curator kindly allowed me to take measurements from a display example.



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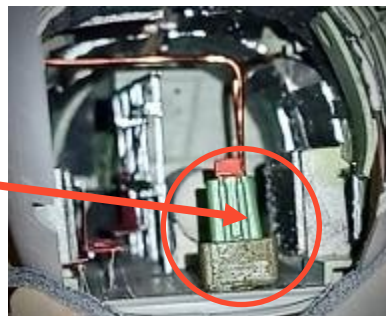
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The next major addition was the auxiliary fuel tank—commonly referred to as the Benson tank. My son 3D-printed both the tank and its supporting stand, providing a solid foundation for this feature. I then enhanced the assembly by adding copper wire to represent the fuel lines running from the tank into the wing, bringing an extra level of detail and realism to the build.



Next, I added the Dropsonde System Operator (DSO) station, further enhancing the specialized mission equipment within the aircraft.



With the interior work complete, I closed up the fuselage and turned my attention to the wings.

I began by addressing the exhausts, replacing the inaccurate kit parts with resin exhaust pipes from Black Dog. The wing halves were then assembled, after which I modified the engine mounts to accommodate the OzMods replacement engines. I also built and installed the external fuel tanks—on the A-model, these are mounted outboard of the engines rather than between them, as seen on later variants.

Once the wing assemblies were complete, they were attached to the fuselage. The entire model was then carefully sanded—requiring a generous amount of filler—before moving on to painting and decaling.

In the end, the model spans an impressive three feet and represents a significant learning experience. It marked my first time working with photo-etched parts, my first use of resin components, and my first venture into scratch-building.

Here's a photo of the finished model:



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Apollo Program History

January 27, 1967. Apollo 1

At 1:00 PM, Gus Grissom, Ed White, and Roger Chaffee climbed into their Block I Apollo Command Module, perched atop the Saturn I B. The launch was still about a month away, but this was another in a long series of preflight tests designed to ensure everything worked as expected.

This particular test was the “plugs-out” test—fully stacked rocket, umbilicals removed, and systems running as if for launch. The rocket itself was not fueled.

From the beginning, the test was plagued with technical issues. Communications were poor, and the crew grew increasingly frustrated trying to talk with the ground. Then, disaster struck.

A short in the wiring beneath the commander’s seat sparked. In a cabin filled with pure oxygen, that was all it took. Fire spread instantly.

Ed White managed to reach the hatch handle and turn it about half a turn before being overcome by flames. The fire eventually burned through his oxygen hose. Within moments, all three astronauts were lost.

The Aftermath and Investigation

The tragedy halted the Apollo program for nearly 22 months.

A full investigation followed. A sister command module was dissected, and multiple root causes were identified:

- **Pure oxygen atmosphere:** Used in earlier spaceflight to save weight, but highly flammable under cabin conditions.
- **Combustible materials:** The cabin contained many flammable components.
- **Poor manufacturing discipline:** The rush to beat the Soviets meant documentation and process control were lacking. Capsules often contained debris—

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loose wiring, bits of material—left over from construction.

- **Hatch design:** A complex, inward-opening, multi-piece hatch secured by over 70 bolts made rapid escape nearly impossible.

Grissom and the Hatch

By tradition, astronauts had significant input into the construction of their spacecraft. They frequently visited contractors like North American Aviation to inspect progress and request changes.

Grissom's insistence on a robust hatch design stemmed from his earlier flight aboard Liberty Bell 7. After splashdown, the hatch blew prematurely, causing the capsule to sink and nearly costing him his life. Though he denied triggering it, rumors persisted for years until he was eventually proven correct.

Determined to prevent a similar incident in space, Grissom pushed for a more secure hatch—ironically one that proved fatal in the Apollo 1 fire.

So dissatisfied was he with the condition of the Command Module that he famously hung a lemon on the simulator—a symbolic protest of its poor quality.

Redesign and Return to Flight

Following the investigation, the Command Module was completely redesigned.

- Apollo 1, 2, and 3 were canceled due to their use of the flawed Block I design.
- Apollo 4 became the first unmanned flight of the Saturn V.
- Apollo 5 tested the Lunar Module in low Earth orbit using a Saturn I B (with the first stage originally intended for Apollo 1).
- Apollo 6 tested the Block II Command Module. Despite severe pogo oscillations and engine issues, it reached orbit and was deemed a success.

Apollo 7: Back in Space

After 22 months without a crewed mission, NASA was ready.



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On October 11, 1968, Apollo 7 launched atop a Saturn I B with Wally Schirra, Donn Eisele, and Walt Cunningham aboard.

Even this mission wasn't without issues. Cracks were discovered in the rocket's fins due to long storage, requiring replacement before launch.

The spacecraft itself, though Block II, was not in final configuration:

- No docking mechanism
- No rendezvous radar
- Not provisioned for long-duration missions

Despite this, the mission was a complete success. The spacecraft handled well in orbit and splashed down safely after 11 days. The space race was back on.

Wernher von Braun and the Saturn Rockets

Wernher von Braun was the driving force behind the Saturn rocket family.

Before World War II, he studied engineering at the University of Berlin and was involved with Germany's early rocket societies. He later joined the Nazi program and worked at Peenemünde developing the V-2 rocket.

On June 20, 1944, a V-2 became the first man-made object to cross the Kármán line and enter space.

At the end of the war, von Braun and his team surrendered to U.S. forces, bringing with them thousands of personnel and nearly 200 rockets.

Under Operation Paperclip, they were brought to the United States.

He initially worked at Fort Bliss and White Sands, later moving to Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama. There, he developed early ballistic missiles such as Redstone and Jupiter.

After the Soviet launch of Sputnik 1 in 1957—and the failed U.S. Vanguard attempt—President Dwight D. Eisenhower turned to von Braun.

His response: he could be ready in a month.

On January 31, 1958, he successfully launched Explorer 1 aboard a Juno I rocket.

Later, tasked with building more powerful launch vehicles, he improvised using existing components—clustering eight Rocketdyne H-1 engines to produce unprecedented thrust. Though he rated the first launch as a 50/50 chance, it worked perfectly.

Modeling Notes

Because astronauts had input into their spacecraft and missions varied, every Apollo vehicle was slightly different—sometimes in subtle ways.

Apollo 7, for example, featured unique paint patterns and structural differences compared to later missions. While capturing every nuance isn't necessary, a reasonable level of accuracy goes a long way.

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References

To achieve an accurate model, I relied on several key resources:

- Technical drawings by David Weeks (available at Real Space Models)
 - Reference materials by Michael Mackowski, a former NASA engineer, available at Space in Miniature
 - *Apollo 7 in Photographs* (Amazon)
- Online resources including YouTube documentaries, Google, and Pinterest for visual references

Here are some of the reference materials used:



Apollo 7 Model Build

There are several injection-molded kits out there, all with varying degrees of accuracy. Airfix offers one that I've built before, but it has some accuracy issues. Since I wanted to do a proper tribute to Apollo 1, I felt it fell a bit short. Also, 1/144 scale is on the small side.



Airfix 1/144 Scale Saturn 1B rocket with detail set from New Ware for Apollo 1.

To help address some of these issues, I picked up an aftermarket detail set from New Ware. Tomas Klaviva, based in the Czech Republic, produces an impressive range of kits and detail sets that really improve accuracy. He's also very responsive—usually getting back to you within a day or two. Orders are handled directly via email, and he'll send a PayPal link once you've requested what you need.

That said, I still wasn't completely satisfied with the smaller scale. I wanted something that would really show off more detail.

After some searching, I came across a designer on Cults3D who goes by *theamphioxus*. He has created an entire lineup of space vehicles—from Mercury-Redstone all the way to the SLS—all in 1/60 scale.

I downloaded the file for less than \$10... and as it turns out, I got exactly what I was looking for. *LOL*.

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Construction

3D Printing

Wow... this is a big topic, so I won't get too far into the weeds.

I printed most of this on an Elegoo Saturn 4 Ultra 16K using Elegoo ABS-Like Resin 3.0 Pro. The model itself was originally designed for filament printers, so I had to reorient many of the parts and add my own supports.

That led to *a lot* of print failures—especially since I'm still pretty new to this and, apparently, learn best the hard way!

While resin printers are known for their incredible surface detail, they're not always dimensionally accurate. Square parts don't always come out square—they can sag or end up slightly misshapen. The best approach I found was to print parts at different orientations, see which one came out best, and then sand like crazy.

Curved parts can also be tricky. Sometimes they don't quite match the intended shape, which makes fitting them a challenge. A heat gun can help soften the resin enough to coax parts into place, and in a couple of cases, a good, tight zip tie held things where they needed to be until the glue set.

The downloaded model included an assembly guide. I believe the designer is French—the instructions are entirely visual, but they're broken down into small, clear steps, so they're actually pretty easy to follow.

First Stage

The first stage is by far the most complex part of the build.

There are eight engines, and the designer included all the associated plumbing from the nine tanks feeding them. Because of their size, the tanks are split into three sections each, so they have to be glued together and sanded smooth before anything else.

I chose to paint these components separately before final assembly—trying to do all of that once everything was together would have been a nightmare.



Figures 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9: Stages of assembly of Stage 1

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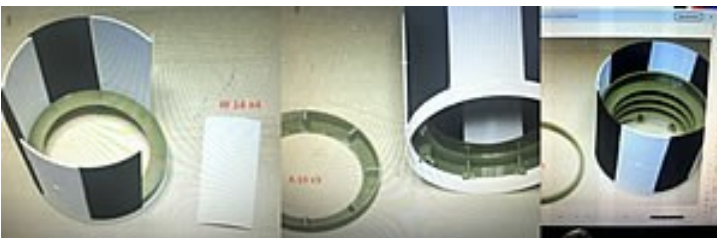
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Figures 10, 11 and 12: Completed Stage 1

The second stage is separated by an interstage ring. You'd think this would be easy, but he divided it into individual colored panels and then glued them together. He did provide inner baffles to act as a structure, but since none of the panels had the correct curvature, I had to wrench them together with a zip tie—and still ended up with a few small gaps



Figures 13 and 14: Interstage Assembly

The second stage was divided into the forward and aft skirts and the tank walls. Per his instructions, I left it open so you can see into the tank, though it would

probably fit better if everything were glued together. There's some nice detailing on the aft skirt. I also found that women's gel nail polish makes a great chrome finish (it just needs a UV light).



Figures 15, 16 and 17: Second Stage Components

The Instrument Unit (IU) was assembled and placed on top of the second stage.

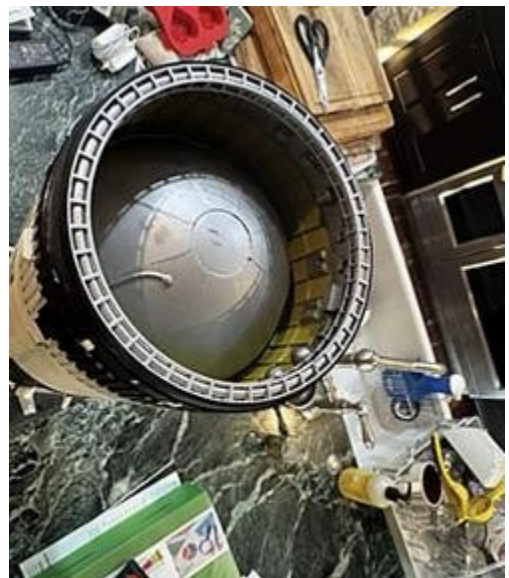


Figure 18: Instrument Unit Installed

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The Space Launch Adapter (SLA) was a pain. The panels are hinged and all printed separately, and of course the curvature is off. After a few print attempts, I was able to get an acceptable fit. I did have to add tabs to help the pieces line up properly—the alternative would have been to just glue them together.

Apollo 7 did not fly with a LM (Lunar Module), but one of the exercises was to see if they could attempt a rendezvous. When the CM/CSM turned around, they discovered that the four panels did not open properly, potentially making extraction of the LM from the top of the second stage difficult. After this, the panels were redesigned to blow off with explosive bolts. So I kind of wanted to keep mine movable.

The CSM was next and had many components, but it fit together reasonably well. I just had to hold the round portions of the body in the correct shape to fit onto the forward bulkhead, since it wasn't perfectly round.

The CM was mostly detail painting for accuracy.

The Boost Protective Cover and Launch Escape System were then assembled, painted, and fitted.

There were several omissions in the kit, which I added using reference drawings. These included access doors on the base of the first stage, the interstage, and the SLA, as well as corrections to the ullage rockets on the second stage. I also added access panels at the base of the first stage and interstage, along with interface panels for the launch tower. The LOX and LH₂ vents on the second stage—both propulsive and non-propulsive—were missing, as were conduits in several locations. All of these were scratch-built from strip or sheet styrene and either attached in the correct locations or scribed on.

Decals

He provided two options for labeling both the first and second stages. You can either print, paint, and glue on raised letters in the embossed areas of the model, or print the parts plain and add decals. I chose to print them plain and make my own decals.

First, I had to design the decals. Only a few were non-text, along with several geometric shapes. The only unusual graphic was the targeting markings on the interstage. I did get a set of third-party decals—The Ultimate Saturn IB Decals from Space Model Systems, designed by Rick Sternbach in 1/72 scale—from CultTVMan. I scanned the sheet and scaled it up to 1/60, which matched my model's scale. The enlarged scan was a bit grainy; the targeting markings were acceptable, but the text was uneven.



Figures 19 and 20: SLA, CM, and CSR

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Apollo 7: History and Kit Build

By Greg Harmon | Page 8 of 8

I recreated everything in Adobe Illustrator and printed test copies, adjusting font and image sizes until they matched the model using plain paper. For the CM/CSM markings, I found the labels in Tom Macowski's manual and recreated those as well. To keep them readable, I was able to reduce them to about 1/16 inch.

I then printed the final versions on decal paper purchased from HobbyTown (also available directly from Bare-Metal Foil Co.). The paper comes in both clear and white, since standard printers cannot print white.

Figures 21, 22 and 23 below show the completed model.



Figure 21: Completed Model



Figure 22: Completed Model

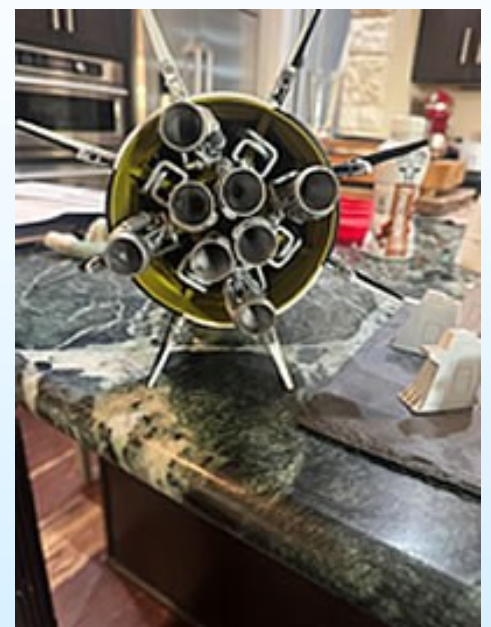


Figure 23: Completed Model

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Render Before You Build

By David Auth | Page 1 of 2



One of my favorite parts of building models is dreaming up the look—paint, graphics, modifications, stance, wheels, and tires. The top car builders on TV—Chip Foose, Joe Martin, and Dave Kindig—start their full-scale builds with

beautifully rendered sketches using Prismacolor markers. The ideas seem to flow straight from mind to paper on the first pass. With permanent markers, there's no turning back—they're putting down the vision as they see it.

But what about the rest of us who don't start with a clear picture—and couldn't sketch it if we did? That's where artificial intelligence (AI) comes in. There are several platforms to choose from, and the results can be impressive. A quick note for the budget-minded: the best results usually require a paid subscription, as free versions are limited. Upgraded ChatGPT runs about \$20 a month.

Here's my 2005 Corvette from Model Summit:



At twenty years old, it's starting to lose some of its punch next to newer cars. Now, let's see what it takes to turn it into a modern supercar using ChatGPT.

1. **Front ¾ view of a coupe with the top removed and painted Tamiya TS87 Titanium Gold.** Here's the result:



2. **Add HRE S101 wheels.** Here's the result:



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Render Before You Build

By David Auth | Page 2 of 2

3. **Add carbon fiber hood.** Here's the result:



4. **Add red inserts to center section of seats.** Here's the result:



5. **Make the side mirrors black.** Here's the result:



6. **Add two parallel red stripes below the grill on the car's chin.** Here's the result:



AI doesn't always follow your instructions exactly. For example,

- AI painted the car a richer, more traditional gold instead of the silvery tone I asked for—but I liked it, so I rolled with it.
- Next came the HRE S101 wheels. I probably would've gone with black, but again, the AI's shiny choice won me over.
- From there, AI it added a carbon fiber hood, red seat accents, and black mirrors.
- Finally, I asked for twin parallel red stripes—but instead got a horizontal stripe on the spoiler. Once again, the AI's take worked. It even echoes the look of modern Chargers and Challengers with their signature accent stripes.

So there you have it, folks! Sketch out your own ideas, or let AI dream a few up for you!

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How to Set Decals Using Future/Pledge Floor Wax

By Lee Forbes, IPMS # 2297 | Page 1 of 2

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I first learned this technique years ago while serving on active duty in the Air Force, stationed at Headquarters Strategic Air

Command at Offutt AFB, Nebraska. At the time, I was a member of the IPMS Ft. Crook Scale Modelers Chapter.



During one meeting, I noticed how realistic the decals looked on a fellow member's aircraft model. Curious, I asked how he achieved such a convincing "painted-on" appearance. He explained that he used "Future" Floor Wax as a

setting solution—a method I'll describe in this article.

Before getting into the process, a bit of context helps explain why this impressed me so much. This was the mid-1980s, when decal manufacturing had not yet reached today's standards. Most decals were silk-screened, often thick, occasionally out of register, and limited in subject matter. "Decal silvering" was a frequent problem that could ruin an otherwise well-built model. While products like SOLVASET were commonly used, they didn't always solve the issue.

At the time, many modelers were also unaware that decals adhere best to a glossy surface rather than a flat one. Ironically, many paints marketed then emphasized a flat finish, which contributed to silvering. This combination of factors made achieving realistic decals much more difficult than it is today.

Fortunately, modern decals are vastly improved, and silvering is now rare. The technique described here is simply another option—not a replacement for your preferred methods. If you're satisfied with your current approach, stick with it.

Materials Needed

- "Future" / "Pledge" Floor Wax
- Small container
- Cotton swabs (Q-Tips, preferably with paper shafts)
- Modeling tweezers
- Small scissors or No. 11 hobby knife
- Water and a container for soaking decals
- Paper towels or double-layer toilet tissue
- Portable hair dryer

Note: I prefer using Q-Tips rather than a brush for applying the floor finish.

Procedure

Step 1: Prepare your workspace with good lighting and paper towels or tissue. Secure your container of "Future" / "Pledge" to the work surface to prevent spills (speaking from experience!).

Step 2: Cut out the desired decal and place it in water. Remove it when ready, keeping it on the backing paper until application. Be cautious with very thin decals, as they may curl tightly upon release—sometimes beyond recovery.

How to Set Decals Using Future/Pledge Floor Wax

By Lee Forbes, IPMS # 2297 | Page 2 of 2

Step 3: Dip a Q-Tip into the floor finish, blot off the excess, and apply it to the model surface using a gentle rolling motion where the decal will be placed.

Step 4: Slide the decal onto the prepared area and position it carefully. You may use a damp Q-Tip and tweezers for fine adjustments. Once in place, gently roll another Q-Tip lightly moistened with “Future” / “Pledge” over the decal.

Step 5: Use a hair dryer on high heat, holding it about two inches from the surface, to set the decal. The heat appears to promote a reaction that helps the decal conform tightly to surface details and panel lines.

Once dry, the decal should be well integrated and ready for a final top coat to unify the finish.

Preferred Top Coat:

A mixture of 25% flat, 25% gloss, and 50% thinner works well with either enamel or acrylic paints.

Postscript 1

S.C. Johnson originally introduced “Future” Floor Wax in 1993, later reformulating and renaming it “Pledge” in 2008. Some modelers have criticized newer versions as being different from the original formula. However, I recently tested “Pledge Revive It Floor Gloss” and found it performed very similarly to the original product.

It worked well for enhancing clear aircraft canopies and as a decal setting solution. In fact, it appears slightly thinner and can be airbrushed without additional thinning. In my experience, it is a suitable substitute for the original “Future.”

As with any modeling technique, results improve with practice. Consider this another useful tool to add to your modeling “bag of tricks.”

Postscript 2

As noted in earlier versions of this article, S.C. Johnson discontinued both “Future” and “Pledge” floor finishes in January 2022. While these products can still be found on

the secondary market—including partially used bottles—the prices have risen significantly.

Some modelers suggest that “Holloway House Quick Shine Multi-Surface Floor Finish” may be a viable alternative. It’s more readily available and reasonably priced, although I have not personally tested it. If you have experience with it, your feedback would be valuable to your fellow club members.



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I Really Want These Models

By Michael Buckley | Page 1 of 2

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LOCKHEED MARTIN X-59



CESSNA 310



L3 HARRIS OA-1K Skyraider II



The latest issue of **Aviation Week & Space Technology** highlights a previously undisclosed supersonic aircraft. The publication often showcases cutting-edge developments—sometimes as

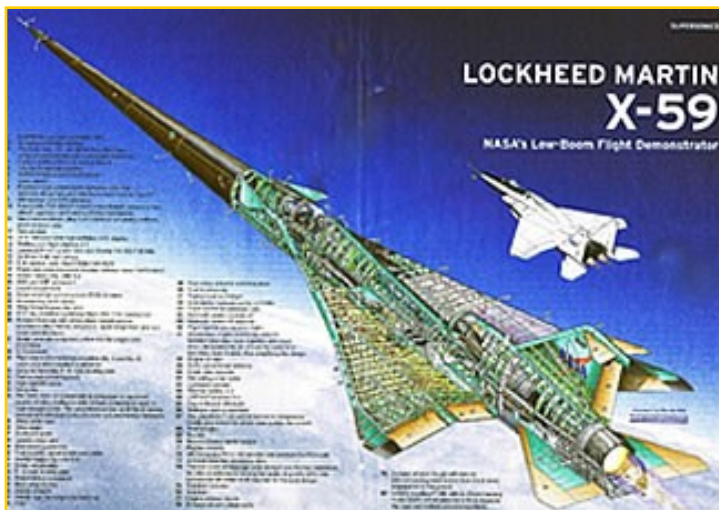
much a signal to allies as to adversaries—and this feature is given special prominence through a gatefold, double-page center spread. At its heart is a detailed cutaway of the Lockheed Martin X-59.

The X-59's extraordinarily long, slender, tapered nose is designed to disrupt supersonic shockwaves, reducing the sonic boom. Its scale is emphasized by the inclusion of an F-15 Eagle chase plane in the background.

For me, the Lockheed **Martin X-59** belongs on a short list of intrinsically elegant, purpose-driven aircraft. Others on that list include the **Air Tractor AT-802**—particularly in its L3Harris OA-1K Skyraider II counter-insurgency configuration—and the **Cessna 310**, with its clean, flowing lines. Reference the photos above.

Each represents a distinct kind of function-first design—highly specialized machines whose capabilities are matched by a striking, unmistakable aesthetic.

To my knowledge, none are currently available in kit form. Still, they remain high on my personal wish list.



Sources:

- <https://xswallpapershd.blogspot.com/2012/05/cessna-310-aircraft.html>
- <https://techxplore.com/news/2022-12-supersonic-sonic-boom.html>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L3Harris_OA-1K_Skyraider_II

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April 2, 2026 Club Model Contest Results

By Julio A. Caro

Entry #	MODEL NAME	PARTICIPANT	SCORE	AWARD	PLACE
593	M142 HIMARS Vehicle	Brandon Porter	106	GOLD	1ST
NA	KA-52M Russian Helicopter	Brandon Porter	101	GOLD	2ND
598	M1130 Stryker	Juan Noltenius	98	GOLD	3RD
NA	USS Lexington	Robert Stiegel	96	GOLD	
596	Mecha Figure	Mike Gallegos	90	SILVER	
597	Jose Reyes	EBR-11 Vehicle	90	SILVER	
594	NASA Skylab	Greg Hamon	77	BRONZE	
608	Abrams Tank	Michael Buckley	25	HM	

The members of Alamo Squadron once again demonstrated exceptional craftsmanship in our April 2, 2026 Club Model Contest. Here are the results:

TOTAL PARTICIPANTS: 8

- 4** (50%) received **GOLD**
- 2** (25%) received **SILVER**
- 1** (12.5%) received **BRONZE**
- 1** (12.5%) received an Honorable Mention

AWARD POINTS



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April 2nd, 2026 Club Model Contest Winners

By Julio A. Caro



BRANDON PORTER
M142 HIMARS Vehicle

**Congratulations to all our
April 2nd, 2026 Club Contest
winners!**

The competition as always was fierce,
but these three outstanding modelers
truly stood out.



BRANDON PORTER
KA-52M Helicopter



JUAN NOLTENIUS
M1130 Stryker

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April 2nd, 2026 Meeting Photos

By Julio A. Caro | Page 1 of 4

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Our **April 2nd, 2026** meeting brought many of our members together once again for an evening filled with creativity, craftsmanship, and camaraderie. Whether you were presenting, learning, or simply enjoying the atmosphere, the meeting was a great reminder of what makes our club so special. Enjoy the highlights Below.



Jim Norton assumes office of Club President on 4/2/26.



Dana Mathes talks about judging standard.



Alan Larrumbide discusses the Model Summit Award Program.



John Kress discusses the upcoming 3rd Annual Club Picnic.



Gabriel Lee gives club an update on the Venezuelan Air Force F-16A his building.



Gene Botkins talks about the cool 1937 Ford car he's currently working on.



Devon McCollough tells club all about his Seafire MK XV and Gloster Meteor F8 Fighters he's working on.



Mike Gallegos building a special project mini tank and shares details with club.

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Dana Mathes tells club about his PACV Hover Craft he built.



Dana Mathes talks about his MBT-70 Hypothetical tank.



Robert Stiegel discusses the progress of the De Havilland Venom aircraft he currently working on.



Rob Booth is currently working on several projects, including a '69 Mustang, 3D Figure and a fantasy tank.



Vendor coordinator briefs club on the various model kits for sale on the table.



Greg Hamon's outstanding NASA SKYLAB model on the contest table.



Devon McCullough's Seafire Mk. XV and Gloster Meteor F8 British Fighters on the Work in Progress table.



Brando Porter's 1/72nd scale M142 HIMARS on the contest table. This model won 1st Place at the night's Club Model Contest.

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Mike Gallego's MECHA Robot proudly sits on the contest table.



Dana Mathe's PACV Hover Craft sits on the Work in Progress table.



M1130 Stryker by Juan Noltenius on the contest table. Model won 3rd place.



Member's look through a stack of free model magazines on a floor table.



Club members help set up kits on the tables for the Model Summit Awards.



An Abrams tank by Michael Buckley proudly sits on the contest table.



Brandon Porter's KA-52M Russian Helicopter on the contest table. This model won 2nd Place at our contest.



Gabriel Lee's Venezuelan Air Force F-16A on the Work in Progress table.



USS Lexington by Robert Stiegel proudly sits on the contest table.

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1/72nd scale Bishop Self-propelled Gun by **Mike Gallegos**.



Robert Stiegel's De Havilland Venom on the Work in Progress table.



1937 Ford Street Rod built by **Gene Botkins** on the Work in Progress Table.



Rob Booth's several projects, including a '69 Mustang, 3D Figure and a fantasy tank.



EB-11 Vehicle by **Jose Alvarez** on the contest table.



Dana Mathes announces the Top 3 Winners of the night's Club Model Contest.



Bat Mobile in progress by **Stacy Gaddis** on the Work in Progress table.



Stacy Gaddis briefs the club on the progress of the ultra cool Bat Mobile he's currently working on.

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Alamo Squadron's Third Annual Picnic

By Julio A. Caro | Page 1 of 2

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The Alamo Squadron's third annual picnic, held Sunday, April 26, 2026, at O. P. Schnabel Park, was another outstanding gathering that brought members together for an afternoon of great food, camaraderie, and a shared enthusiasm for the hobby.

Attendees enjoyed a generous spread with something for every appetite, while the relaxed outdoor setting provided the perfect backdrop for catching up, swapping stories, and strengthening friendships.

Highlights of the afternoon included the always-popular model kit raffle and the table model build, which offered a fun, hands-on opportunity for participants to sit down, relax, and work on a kit together while exchanging tips and techniques.

All in all, the event was a great success and a reminder that the Alamo Squadron is about more than just modeling—it's about community. We look forward to next year's picnic.

For those who were unable to attend, here are some photos from the event:



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A special note of thanks goes to **John Kress** for his outstanding work in organizing and coordinating this year's Alamo Squadron picnic. Events like this don't come together by accident—they require time, planning, and a genuine commitment to the club—and John delivered on all fronts.

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PIGMENT
MINIATURES SHOW
INAUGURAL YEAR 2026

AUSTIN, TEXAS
JULY 10-12, 2026

PIGMENT
MINIATURES SHOW
INAUGURAL YEAR 2026

PIGMENT MINIATURES SHOW 2026

The Pigment Show is an art-first conversation, dedicated to showcasing the creativity and skill of miniature artists of all disciplines, bringing together artists from around the world to connect, compete, learn and celebrate our shared passion.

EXHIBITION

The Pigment Miniature Art Exhibitionist works submitted by show Attendees. Entries of all genres may be entered. This juried exhibition uses the Open System of Judging to recognize the artistic achievement of submitted works by panels of judges. It is an inclusive system which recognizes artists based on achievement with no fixed number of awards.

[Exhibition Guidelines 2026](#)

VENUE

Courtyard by Marriott Austin Pflugerville and
Pflugerville Conference Center

**16100 Impact Way,
Pflugerville, TX 78660, USA**

Visit the [Pigment Miniatures Show Website](#) for complete details

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Upcoming Shows and Events

Mark your calendars and get ready to be inspired by the creativity and craftsmanship on display at these upcoming IPMS Region 06 model shows.



EVENT DATE	NAME	LOCATION	ADDRESS
05/16/2026	CALMEX 2026	Sulphur, LA	West-Cal Arena & Events Center 401 Arena Road Sulphur, LA 70665
July 10-12, 2026	PIGMENT Miniatures Show	Austin, TX	Courtyard by Marriott Austin Pflugerville and Pflugerville Conference Center 16100 Impact way, Pflugerville, TX 78660
August 5-8, 2026	2026 IPMS NATIONALS	Fort Wayne, IN	Grand Wayne Convention Center 120 W. Jefferson Blvd. Fort Wayne, Indiana 46802
08/22/2026	Space City Shootout Model Car Show	Stafford, TX	The Stafford Center 10505 Cash Rd, Stafford, TX 77477
09/12/2026	SuperCon 2026	Arlington, TX	Bob Duncan Community Center 2800 S. Center Street, Arlington, TX 76014
11/14/2026	Capitol Classic	Taylor, TX	Williamson County Expo Center 5350 Bill Pickett Trail, Taylor, TX 76574
02/20/2027	MODELFiesta 45	New Braunfels, TX	New Braunfels Civic Center 375 S Castell Ave New Braunfels, TX 78130

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Monthly Club Meeting Information

Alamo Squadron monthly club meetings are the perfect place to connect with fellow modelers to exchange ideas and learn new techniques to enhance your craft. Come share your latest projects, gain valuable insights, and enjoy the company of like-minded individuals who share your love for scale modeling.



Our monthly meetings are held on the **first Thursday of the month** starting at **6:30 PM** at

ABIDING PRESENCE LUTHERAN CHURCH

14700 San Pedro Ave.
San Antonio, TX 78232



*Our next meeting will take place on **June 4th, 2026.***

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IPMS Membership Information

Joining IPMS/USA is a great idea because it connects you with a dedicated community of scale modelers who share your passion. The society offers valuable resources, including detailed magazines, access to national and regional events, and opportunities for learning and improvement through workshops and contests. Membership also provides a platform to share your work, receive constructive feedback, and stay updated with the latest trends and techniques in scale modeling.



International Plastic Modelers' Society/USA Membership Application / Renewal Form

New Renewal IPMS#: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

Chapter Affiliation, if any: _____

Junior (17 years or younger)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$17.00	Date of Birth _____
Adult One year	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30.00	
Two years	<input type="checkbox"/> \$58.00	
Three years	<input type="checkbox"/> \$86.00	
Canada & Mexico	<input type="checkbox"/> \$35.00	
Foreign <small>Surface</small>	<input type="checkbox"/> \$38.00	
Family	<input type="checkbox"/> Adult fee + \$5.00	
	# of cards? _____	

Your Signature: _____

If recommended by an IPMS member, please provide his/her:

Name: _____ IPMS #: _____

PAYMENT OPTIONS:

Cash Amount: _____
Check Check #: _____ Amount: _____

Where did you hear about IPMS/USA? Please check all that apply:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Local model club | <input type="checkbox"/> Internet search |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend | <input type="checkbox"/> IPMS web site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ad in IPMS Journal | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm a former member rejoining |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facebook | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ad in other magazine | |

Applications should be printed and mailed to:

IPMS/USA
P. O. Box 452350
Omaha, Nebraska 68145-0235

Interested in joining IPMS?

Here is a copy of an IPMS Membership Application/Renewal Form. You can download the actual form from the IPMS/USA website at:

https://ipmsusa.org/sites/default/files/membership_application_0.pdf



<https://ipmsusa.org/>

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Hobby Stores and Other Links

Support hobby stores that support our club!

DIBBLES HOBBIES

1029 Donaldson Ave,
San Antonio, TX 78228
(210) 735-7221

<http://dibbleshobbies.com>

OPEN: Tuesday - Saturday, 10:00 am to 6:00 PM

CLOSED: Sundays and Mondays

HOBBY TOWN

1309 N. Loop 1604 W.,
Vineyard Shopping Center, Suite 101
San Antonio, TX 78259-4769
(210) 236-5527

<https://www.hobbytown.com/sanantonio-tx/1196>

OPEN: Monday-Saturday, 10:00 am to 8:00 PM

OPEN: Sunday, 12:00 PM to 5:00 PM

HILL COUNTRY HOBBY

9355 Bandera Road, Suite 118
San Antonio, TX 78250
(210) 681-2007

<http://www.hillcountryhobby.com>

OPEN: Tuesday - Saturday, 10:00 am to 6:00 PM

CLOSED: Sundays and Mondays

HOBBY LOBBY

Visit the Hobby Lobby website to find the nearest store to your location.

<http://www.hobbylobby.com>

LIONHEART HOBBY

5500 FM 2770, Suite 103,
Kyle, TX 78640
(512) 504-3404

<https://lionhearthobby.com>

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK

Monday - Thursday, 10:00 AM - 9:00 PM

Friday 10:00 AM - 10:00 PM

Saturday 10:00 AM - 10:00 PM

Sunday 12:00 PM - 5:00 PM

KING'S HOBBY

7801 N. Lamar Blvd., Unit E188
Austin, TX 78752
(512) 836-7388

<http://kingshobby.com>

OPEN: Monday to Friday, 10:00 am - 6:00 PM

CLOSED: Saturday and Sunday

THE MODEL BOX

1022 N. Main St.
Boerne, TX 78006
Office: (830)-331-9144
Cell: (714) 323-4710

<https://themodelbox.co/>



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Assistant Editor
The Navigator



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<https://www.facebook.com/groups/114044928625406>



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Navigator Contributors Wanted!

By Your Navigator Editing Staff | Page 1 of 2



Writing for the Newsletter Writing for the Navigator newsletter is more than just putting words on a page— it's a chance to shape the voice of our Alamo Squadron community and beyond. Each submission brings fresh perspective, whether it's a humorous anecdote, a detailed build report, or a reflective piece on modeling or camaraderie. These stories not only entertain, they inform and inspire, showcasing the diversity of skills, styles, and personalities within our chapter.

When members take part, the newsletter transforms into something truly special: a collective showcase of creativity and shared passion. It becomes a publication we all own, reflecting the spirit and heart of our group. This sense of ownership builds stronger connections and invites new members to feel welcomed and engaged.

Varied writing styles and topics add texture and interest, turning each issue into a lively mix rather than a monotonous read. It's not just informative—it's inviting. Submissions also lighten the load for editors and help keep content fresh and dynamic. In short, writing for the Navigator isn't just helpful—it's powerful. It turns readers into contributors, and contributors into community builders. Let your voice be part of the journey.

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We can use several types of content. Here are a few suggestions:

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Navigator Contributors Wanted!

By Your Navigator Editing Staff | Page 2 of 2

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Short Teases

Short teases—about **300 words or less**—are perfect for sharing anecdotes, humorous

incidents, or brief stories from the hobby. Feel free to include a photo or illustration if it adds to the piece. These short entries are an excellent starting point for **first-time contributors**: they're quick to write and a fun way to get involved.

Full-Length Articles

Full-length articles typically range from **500 to 1,500 words**. While longer pieces are welcome, keep in mind that a newsletter exceeding **40 pages** can become overwhelming for readers. This is a hobby publication—not a scientific journal or technical manual—so **clarity and brevity are always appreciated**.

Visuals and Illustrations

Including **5–10 images per article** works well in most cases. Please **attach photos and artwork as separate files rather than embedding them in the document**; this allows us to properly size and position them during layout. You're welcome to include captions, or we can add them for you—if needed.

Image Placement

If your article includes photos or illustrations, please indicate roughly where you would like them to appear in the text. The easiest way to do this is to insert a short note at the appropriate spot, such as:

“[Insert Photo 1 here]” or “[Insert Figure 1 here]”

This helps us match each image with the correct section of your article, especially when multiple photos are submitted. Don't worry about exact placement—we'll handle the final layout—but your notes help ensure the images appear in the right spot.

Photo Tips

Please submit **the highest-quality images available**. Files can be shared using free services such as **Google Drive or WeTransfer** if they are too large to email.

File Format

Whenever possible, please submit your article in **Microsoft Word format (.doc or .docx)**, or in another program that can be easily opened and saved as a Word file.

For New and Seasoned Writers Alike

If you've never written an article before but would like to give it a try, we're happy to help you get started. And for those with publishing experience—yes, our editing team will still give your work a careful once-over (it's a publishing thing!). That said, we appreciate it if you review your work before submission.