



# Sabot Away!



Newsletter of the Austin Armor Builders Society

January 2017



## The Making of a Micro Armor Diorama

By John Talley

### The Inspiration

I'm a sucker for a good story behind a model, particularly if the story is non-fiction. I've been wanting to create a diorama around this particular story for

quite a while, and I thought this article might just be the right time for me to attempt it.

In January of 1943, the Germans were hard pressed across the front and had to fall back to very thinly held defensive positions backed by mobile fire brigades when attacked in force by the Russians. Hans Bolter's First Company, Tiger Battalion 502, was one of these fire brigades in the area

south of Leningrad.

On January 12<sup>th</sup>, the Russian 122<sup>nd</sup> Tank Brigade launched an attack against what amounted to a skirmish line of infantry positions, and Hans Bolter's fire brigade of two tigers and three PzKw III's was called on to halt the advance. Deep fresh snow hindered the motion toward the endangered

*(Continued on page 4)*

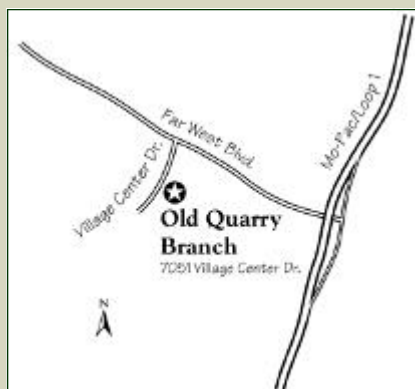
### Inside this issue:

CALENDAR OF EVENTS	2
UPCOMING PROGRAM PRESENTATIONS AND NEWSLETTER ARTICLES	2
FROM THE TURRET	3
ODDBALL ARMOR	8
BORESIGHT PREVIEW	8
2016 WHITE ELEPHANT CONTEST WINNERS	9
KEEP CALM AND PAY YOUR DUES	10
REVIEW OF MENG'S 1/35 <sup>TH</sup> "CREW & ORDERLY"	10
AMPS 2017 INT'L CONVENTION	12
JOIN AMPS TODAY	13
ABOUT US	14
MEMBERS' GALLERY	14

Austin Armor Builders Society (AABS) meets at 7PM each month at the **Austin Public Library**. Our next meeting is on

**January 4, 2017**

Annual dues for full membership are USD \$12 to be collected at each January meeting. Upon receipt of payment, a membership card will be issued. This card is valid for one year, and it entitles holder to discounts at various local hobby shops in the Central Texas and San Antonio areas.



**Sabot Away!** is the official newsletter of AABS and is published twelve times a year on/before each monthly meeting. Any inquiry on subscription issues or assistance on article contribution please contact editor Eric Choy via email [aabsco@gmail.com](mailto:aabsco@gmail.com).

The views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of AABS.



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- ◆ **January 4, 2017 - AABS Club Meeting**
- ◆ **January 28 - CALMEX XXXI** Recreation District 1, Westlake, LA
- ◆ **February 1 - AABS Club Meeting**
- ◆ **February 18 - Modelfiesta 36** San Antonio Event Center, San Antonio, TX
- ◆ **March 1 - AABS Club Meeting**
- ◆ **March 11 - KCCON 2017** First Church of Nazarene, Kansas City, MO



### AABS Officers May 2016 – Apr 2018

**John Talley**, President  
(512) 388-3473, johnwtalley@hotmail.com

**Ted Andreas, Jr.**, Vice-President  
tedandreas1@yahoo.com

**Eric Choy**, Treasurer  
(512) 554-9595, aabsco@gmail.com

**Ted Paone**, Secretary  
(512) 635-9516, theopaone@att.net

**Eric Choy**, Newsletter Editor  
(512) 554-9595, aabsco@gmail.com



## Upcoming Program Presentations and Newsletter Articles

Month	Program Presentation	Newsletter Article
January 2017	Worth Haggerton	John Talley
February	TBA	TBA
March*	TBA	TBA
April	TBA	TBA
May	TBA	TBA
June*	TBA	TBA
July	TBA	TBA
August	TBA	TBA
September*	AMPS Judging Review	TBA
October	Kit Auction	TBA
November	TBA	TBA
December*	TBA	TBA
January 2018	TBA	TBA

Here is a list of members who are responsible for providing articles for the newsletter and program presentation at our monthly meetings.

Please note any member may contribute as many articles as he wants any time. The purpose of this schedule is to ensure we have at least one article in the newsletter each month.

Prompt submission of your article is much appreciated. The deadline is always **11:59PM on the last Wednesday of the previous month** (e.g. Rick Herrington's article for January was due on the last Wednesday of December).

\* Quarterly contest month



## From the Turret

The White Elephant Contest last month reminded me once again of just how consistent this club is in creating great work. Congratulations goes out to the winners, but everyone participating deserves recognition and a pat on the back.

I'm rarely short on finding something historical to offer for inspiration, but this January we find more than



*Russian T34's knocked out inside German positions during an attack in January 1942.*



*DAK making use of a captured lorry during the January 1942 counter offensive*

is possible to cover here just in the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of armor in action during World War II. The Soviets were counter attacking across nearly the entire front, Operation Crusader was still in progress, although winding down in North Africa, while Rommel was secretly preparing and then launching his counter offensive with new armor and supplies being shipped in regularly through Tunisia.

Meanwhile, the Japanese were using armor in the Malayan jungles as they worked their way toward capturing Singapore, and in the Philippines as they drove the American army to retreat into the Bataan Peninsula.



*Japanese Type 89 tanks in a column during the invasion of the Philippines, January 1942.*

It will be great to see you all with your latest modeling projects at the meeting on Wednesday night. Don't forget the location is back to the usual **Austin Public Library Old Quarry Branch** meeting room.

**John Talley**  
President





(Continued from page 1)

sector, but Hans arrived “In the Nick of Time” and quickly engaged the massive Russian tank column. The power of the Tiger and Hans’ ace gunnery skill prevailed, destroying dozens of Russian T-34 and KV tanks, and breaking the back of the 122<sup>nd</sup> Tank Brigade.

## Terrain

### The Base

I typically begin a diorama with the terrain, and of course the terrain starts with the land on which everything will be sitting. I find the best base material for most micro scale (1/285<sup>th</sup> or 1/300<sup>th</sup> scale) dioramas to be Styrofoam because it is both strong enough to hold its shape and highly formable through heating, cutting, scrapping, and sanding.

I started this project with a one-inch thick Styrofoam sheet and tools for shaping as shown in the image below. A warning about working with Styrofoam: There are many hobby products that will melt Styrofoam, including glues, putties, primers and paints. So make sure you test each product with a scrap piece of Styrofoam before attempting to use it on your final work piece... a lesson hard learned.



The base Styrofoam and shaping tools



The base after shaping with heated cutter, knife, scrapping and sanding

I wanted several points of interest to lead the viewer’s eye toward the Tiger on top of the hill, so I created a cliff by scrapping and pulling at the hillside with tweezers, and left room upslope for a tree, and downslope for the infantry foxholes.

After shaping the base I covered it with *Plaster of Paris* to both fill in the cracks of the Styrofoam and to provide a medium for making tracks and rock surface structure around the cliff. I used a micro scale Tiger model to create the correct tank tracks on the hill top and an actual rock to create the texture of the rock surface on the cliff.

For interest, I decided to elaborate on the Hans Bolter story and added an infantry officer running up to meet Hans and give him the lay of the land (it likely did happen). So I used a toothpick to create the tracks in the snow made by the officer as he ran up the hill. Since snow will be covering most of the base, after priming with white acrylic primer I only had to paint the rock and the dirt at the bottom of the foxholes.

To provide texture and simulated lighting (although the lighting on a snowy day is rather diffuse) I used a base color, and thinned down darker shadow color, and then a lighter color was dry-brushed from the top down over the rock ledges.



*The plastered and painted base, including tracks difficult to see at this point*

After creating the branches, the tree trunk and larger branches were covered with Tamiya modeling putty to provide the final shape.

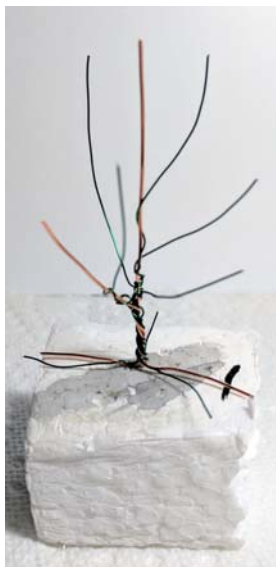


*Fine branches and shaping putty applied*

The final steps in creating the tree were priming with a white spray primer, dry-brushing light brown on the wintry cold branches, and painting the hallmark dark stripes of the birch tree on the trunk. Once the paint had dried, I used the core wires of the “roots” to poke into the base of the terrain and glued the tree in place.

## A Tree

Northern Russia has many Stone Birch trees, and I thought one of these trees would be a great point of interest for a wintry scene. Of course, I had to create this tree from scratch, so I started with two fine gauge wires, clipping two 5-inch lengths from the larger, and five 5-inch lengths from the smaller. I twisted the wires together to form the trunk of the tree, then spread out the upper loose wires to form the primary branches and the lower loose wires to form the roots.



*The core of the tree*

The next step was in creating the myriad of smaller branches around those primary branches. I used twine for these branches, unraveling the twine to individual strings and then wrapping those strings around the primary branches and gluing them together. The twine strings were then pulled apart at varying lengths and degrees to make a full spread of branches.



*A planted tree*

## Snow

Now that the base was completely shaped and points of interest were in place, I was ready to cover the scene in snow, which was important since a heavy new snowfall was a big factor in the Hans Bolter story and certainly made for good drama in the scene I had created in my mind.

The problem was I had never attempted to make snow cover for micro armor models, and finding the right material proved difficult. I tried using dry



plaster dust, white chalk dust, sanded Styrofoam dust, and even considered microbeads. I could not find a way to make any of these things work as well as I liked, and in the end I settled for using shakable Soft Flake Snow from Woodland Scenics. I really like this product quite a bit, and it looks quite good in the diorama. But the snow is not quite right for the micro-scale scene, and I'm still in the search for a smaller scale alternative.

I used Woodland Scenics brush/spray glue to apply the layer of snow in two passes. First I brushed on glue to the areas I wanted covered in snow and sprinkled on snow flakes, shaking off the excess. Then I sprayed glue onto the first layer of snow, or dripped glue near areas I didn't want covered in snow, and sprinkled a second layer of snow flakes, once again shaking off the excess. I also had to use a toothpick to re-open the tracks in the snow from the Tiger and the infantry officer after applying the snowflakes.



*The final snow-covered terrain*

## The Tiger and Figures Trimming

The Micro Armor and figures I used in this diorama

are made of pewter and come from GHQ, which has a full line of WWII and modern models. The infantry comes on sprues and typically needs to be cut from the sprue and trimmed of excess pewter. The vehicles are not on sprues, but they do need to be looked over for mold seam lines and vent pewter lines that should be cut or shaved off carefully with an X-Acto knife. I also like to remove barrel supports and punch holes in supports that would in reality represent empty space, like between an arm and the ground. But this must be done carefully, and the small models become more delicate and susceptible to bending.



## The Hatch & Hauptman Bolter

As can be seen from the image of the raw pewter models, the Tiger comes with all hatches closed. Since the Tiger commander, Hans Bolter, plays a primary role in our story, I needed to make some modifications to open the hatch and get him visible. Of course, with all hatches closed, GHQ doesn't need to provide tank crew models either, so I also needed to create Hauptman Bolter.

To create the hatch, I used stock styrene sheets and piping. I first trimmed off a thin piece of styrene pipe and glued a thin piece of sheet trimmed to the same shape as a cover. I then cut very small slivers of styrene for handles and hinges and glued them to the hatch. At that point I carefully set this aside for the moment and hoped not to lose it as the hatch is approximately a millimeter in diameter at this scale.

To open the hatch up, I took a fine pointed Dremel bit and turned it by rolling the bit between my finger and thumb. I avoided using the Dremel tool because the slightest mistake can ruin a Micro Armor model when the bit is turning at high RPM. The slow turning Dremel bit did a wonderful job of creating a very controlled hole where the original hatch had been. I then glued the hatch I created in an open position, replacing the previously closed hatch.

To create Hauptman Bolter, I took an infantry officer figure, and using an X-Acto knife, trimmed off the



legs, removed the MP40, and cut one arm, which had been molded attached to his body, free to be moved.



*The trimmed figures and modified vehicle*

I then bent the arms to be placed on the open hatch and pointing as if gesturing in discussion with the infantry officer and glued Hauptman Bolter in place in the hatch opening.

## Painting

I prefer acrylics, and painted the figure and vehicle models primarily with Tamiya paints. Most of the painting was done with a very fine pointed sable brush under a bright light and multi-level magnifying glass. The primary tip in painting micro scale models is that, while physical size of model details like guns and ropes need to be exaggerated, colors need to be muted because high-contrast and bright colors stick out and look unnatural at this small scale.

The figures were primed with a white primer, then painted with their base color "from the inside out," meaning areas that are harder to reach are painted first to avoid accidentally touching an already painted easier to reach area with paint while trying to apply paint to a hard to reach area.

After applying the base colors to the figures, a mixed medium-light grey paint was thinned and applied to shadow cracks, crevices, and other closed in areas. Finally, a light grey or white paint was drybrushed on for highlights. This needs to be conservative on the figures to avoid highlighting everywhere and negating the entire affect.



**Figures mounted on nails with Blu-Tack while being painted**

The Tiger was primed with a black spray primer, then covered in a base coat of German-Grey/white mix. The exposed surface areas were then painted with a very-very thin white paint, which was dabbed off the surfaces immediately with a paper towel to give it a mottled appearance.

For the wheels and tracks, a light-charcoal-grey was used to paint the wheel rubber, while the tracks were first painted with a thin rust mix, dry-brushed lightly with metallic silver, and then painted in sporadic deep areas with white to simulate snow in the treads. White was also dry-brushed on the wheels to simulate snow covering some areas there as well.

Details such as handles, axes, shovels, etc, were painted with a base coat and some weak rust mix. Finally, a wash of thinned dark-medium-grey mix was used to show exhaust and engine intake heated areas, as well as gun exhaust and light dirt on the underside.



*The Tiger painted with snow camo and snow-cover FX*

## Wrapping it up

The final step was assembling the scene by placing the figures and the Tiger on the terrain base. The images below show the final results from a few angles.

I hope you all enjoyed this walk through of a micro-diorama in the creation, and maybe a few of you will be swayed to give it a go yourselves. Either way, you can like my work, or not, but I love the fact that I can tell this much story in four inches by four inches. If you have ideas on how I can improve on any of these techniques, I'd love to hear about it.

**John**



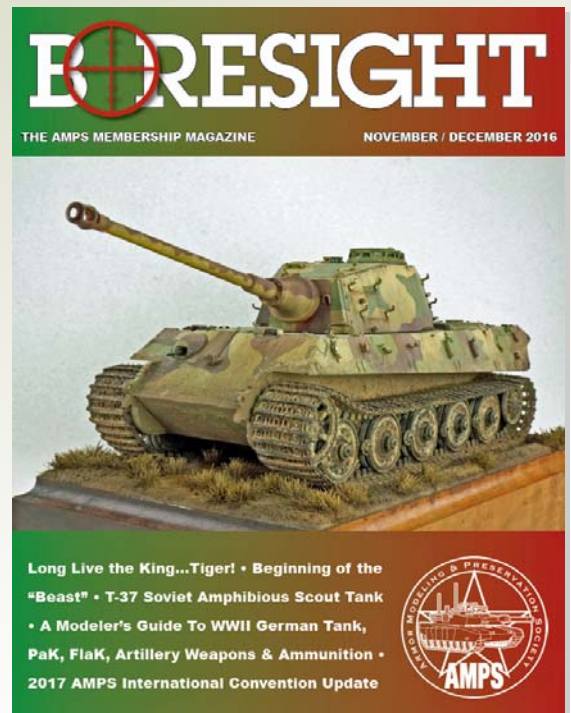
## ODDBALL ARMOR

**AMPS CENTEX ARMOR EXPO MMXVII**  
**SEPTEMBER 16, 2017**

### AMPS Boresight (Volume 24, Issue 6)

The latest issue of *Boresight* is out. Here is a quick look inside:

- ◆ **Long Live the King...Tiger** by Anders Heintz  
What a figure modeler builds on his off-days.
- ◆ **Beginning of the "Beast"** by John Kirkpatrick  
Converting the DML M103A1 kit to the T43 prototype.
- ◆ **2017 AMPS International Convention Update**  
by Mike DeVecchio.
- ◆ **T-37 Soviet Amphibious Scout Tank** by Danny Egan  
Building Hobbyboss' latest swim tank.
- ◆ **A Modeler's Guide To WWII German Tank, PaK, FlaK, Artillery Weapons & Ammunition** by Dan Mouritzsen
- ◆ **Local Chapter News**  
What's going on in the AMPS community.







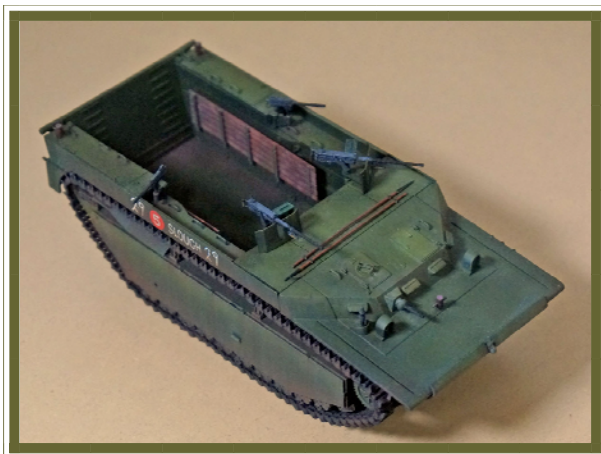
## 2016 White Elephant Contest Winners



**1st Place:**

**Bob Bethea**

*1/35<sup>th</sup> Kleine Panzerbefehlswagen I*



**2nd Place:**  
**Ian Candler**

*1/35<sup>th</sup> LVT-4  
Water Buffalo*

**3rd Place:**  
**Rick Herrington**

*1/35<sup>th</sup> StuG IV*





  
**KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
PAY YOUR  
DUES**

It is that time of the year again. Please have your club dues (\$12) ready at the January meeting. We accept cash, check, or bit coins (no, not really!).

For those who prefer to make a mail-in payment, our treasurer's address is:

**Eric Choy  
13213 Marrero Drive  
Austin TX 78729**

Please DO NOT send cash by mail. Be sure your check or money order is made payable to "AABS."

Some members may notice his dues are slightly higher than usual. That may be a result of the incurrance of last year's White Elephant (WE) contest penalty. As we all aware there is a \$10 mandatory

"donation" to the club treasury if one fails to build his WE kit. In case anyone needs a reminder, here is a pictorial evidence of your presence at the 2015 Xmas party:



If you are interested in joining **AMPS**, our national organization, we are still offering a **50% dues sharing** to each paid local member. Simply bring **\$15** to sign up and AABS will pick up the rest of the tab. Hurry! This limited time offer will expire on **March 1<sup>st</sup>**!

## Review of Meng's 1/35<sup>th</sup> "Crew and Orderly"

by Bob Bethea

What a surprise, Meng is doing figures, and WWI French tanker figures at that. Their latest 1/35<sup>th</sup> scale kit can be considered



an accessory to their previous FT-17 tank kits. In fact the box art includes a "ghost" FT-17 as a prop. That is not to say that the items in the kit are useless without the tank. They can be used with other WWI French vehicles as well.

Another surprise is that there are two identical sprues that include three figures each. One smaller sprue carries the parts for the motorbike. That is somewhat surprising in that one of the figures is a motorcyclist astride the bike! However, parts are parts, and this can be used by inventive modelers for other purposes.

The kit is all plastic and does NOT include photo-etched spokes for the bike. Nor does it include "empty" wheels in which spokes can be added. The spokes that are cast are severely out of scale, and that is the one drawback to the kit.

The motorcycle builds easily IF you look ahead to the next step on the instructions to see where some of the parts are to be placed. All parts, except the spokes, are well cast, well detailed and suitably in scale.

# Sabot Away!

The Newsletter of The Austin Armor Builders

January 2017



Page 11

There are no wiring instructions. However, the box art shows a beautiful rendition of the bike with all the wiring in place. Note the off-white tires in the artwork are a forgotten detail of the period when strengthening carbon was not always included in the rubber when the tires were produced.



There are three figures. One free standing tanker with a leather coat and beret is in a terrific balanced pose and can stand alone with one hand on his hip. However, he also has an optional left arm and hand that allow him to lean against a vehicle. What a nice touch. Anatomy and folds are first rate, as is the oversized flat beret of the time.

The face is no Hornet but is highly acceptable, and I'll paint mine as is. Details such as pistol

holster and dagger are well represented to complete the figure.

The second figure is another tanker in leather coat sitting on the open turret hatch of an FT-17 and reaching out to receive a message from someone on the ground. Folds and anatomy are good, but the Adrian helmet is very misshapen, and the face is less acceptable than the previous figure.



In my opinion I recommend a Hornet replacement head wearing an Adrian helmet or beret. Detail is acceptable, but the pose makes him difficult to use elsewhere except on an FT-17.

The last figure is the messenger astride the bike. He is perfectly posed gripping the left handlebar and stretching out his upraised right arm to deliver his paper instructions to the tanker. Again, you get options. One head is speaking/shouting and is encased in a leather flyer's/biker's helmet. The other is a head onto which you add a kepi. The helmeted head is the most logical and also the best sculpted. The kepi is misshapen and too low.



The face on that head is not as good. Details, such as holster, dagger, shoe laces, puttees, etc., abound and are handled well.

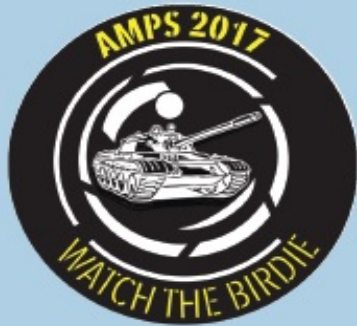
Please note that the figures are all multipart with separate torsos, heads, right and left arms and right and left legs. There are few precise attachment points, so I would highly recommend building them all at one time and adjusting the attachment points to mate with the vehicles with which they interact. In other words, build the bike first, and THEN the rider. Have an FT-17 ready before the commander's left arm is attached. That will save you much grief and readjustment.

The box art is not only inspiring but is a great resource for the painting of the uniforms and their details.

All in all, this is a very nice kit of a much needed subject, in plastic, with extra figures, and alternative poses. Very useful for WWI modelers. The bike looks great, albeit with over-scale spokes, making this a "vignette in a box." I plan to use the extra figure parts to crew some of my other WWI French tanks. You get a lot for your money on this one.

Highly recommended. Kit is courtesy of Chris Mrosko.

**Bob**



# AMPS 2017

## International Convention

April 20 to 22, 2017

Hosted by:



**Danbury Crown Plaza Hotel**  
18 Ridgebury Rd, Danbury, CT 06810

Show Theme: *Smile for the Birdie!*

For more information, contact:

**Michael DelVecchio** (Show Chair), [redleg12@aol.com](mailto:redleg12@aol.com)

**Mike Reaves** (Vendor Coordinator), [semperfi03732@msn.com](mailto:semperfi03732@msn.com)

or visit us online at [www.amps-armor.org](http://www.amps-armor.org)





# JOIN *AMPS* TODAY

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CITY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**STATE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **POSTAL CODE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**COUNTRY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-MAIL:** \_\_\_\_\_

1 Year US (\$30)    2 Year US (\$55)    3 Year US (\$80)

**IF PAYING BY CHECK OR MONEY ORDER SEND YOUR  
MEMBERSHIP DUES AND COMPLETED FORM BELOW TO:**



***AMPS***  
**MEMBERSHIP DEPT.**  
**P.O. BOX 543**  
**ELKTON, MD 21922**



Membership Rates for a One-Year Period:  
\$30.00 USA, \$35.00 Canada/Mexico, \$40.00 Rest of the World

All payments must be made in U.S. funds.

*Amps* accepts payments by check and money order, as well as PayPal.

To join using PayPal, just visit the *amps* website and click on "join *amps*."

If paying by check or money order, send dues and completed form to the address on the form.

[www.amps-armor.org](http://www.amps-armor.org)



## About Us

The Austin Armor Builders Society (AABS) started in 1999 when Don Jones, a member of the local IPMS chapter, decided "what a good idea to get out two nights a month, and on at least one night talk tanks."



At each monthly meeting, we talk tanks, swap kits, and share our building techniques and tricks. We also hold regular in-house model contests and organize out-of-town field trips to museums and modeling events. Every odd-numbered year AABS hosts the biggest scale armor modeling show in Texas that attracts some of the best armor modelers in the Lone Star as well as neighboring states.

AABS is the only scale model club in Central Texas devoted solely to armor modeling. We don't build planes because they are just plain! Our passion is armored fighting vehicles and military figures. Subject of our interest ranges from WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Middle East, to the most recent Gulf War Conflicts.

Since inception AABS is a local chapter of Armor Modeling and Preservation Society (AMPS), a national organization dedicated to the promotion of scale modeling and armored vehicle preservation.

To find out more about AABS, please visit our website or pick up a club flyer at your local hobby shop.

19990424

## We are on the web @ [AustinArmorBuilders.com](http://AustinArmorBuilders.com)

**Greg Beckman's latest 1/35<sup>th</sup> diorama is based on images of the Syrian Civil War found on the Internet. The scene depicts two tankers from a ZSU-57-2 decide to get a selfie in front of the last Coke Machine in Aleppo that has not been blown up!**

