



# Sabot Away!



Newsletter of the Austin Armor Builders Society

January 2025

## BIG BOB - The Bob Semple Tank

By Ted Paone

**Y**ou are on a small Pacific Island in the middle of a large war. Your enemy is ripping across the ocean; invading, conquering, and destroying seemingly everywhere, and you might be next. Your main defense is four Bren Gun Carriers, and there is no help coming from the outside for the foreseeable future. Your primary industries are agriculture and sheep. In fact, there are at least three sheep for each of the 1.68 million human population.

What are you going to do?

During 1940, war hysteria gripped most New Zealanders squawking like chickens under a hawk's shadow, grabbing their favorite sheep and heading and for the hills, Hobbit style. But Bob had a plan! Well, more of a concept of a plan.

Cue Māori haka...

*(Continued on page 4)*

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- ◆ **January 25 - WinterBlitz 2025**, Museum of the American G.I., College Station
- ◆ **February 12 - AABS Club Meeting**
- ◆ **March 12 - AABS Club Meeting**



### AABS Officers Feb 2023 – Jan 2025

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## Schedule of Upcoming Program Presentations and Newsletter Articles

Month	Program Presentation	Newsletter Article
January 2025	* OFFICER ELECTIONS *	Ted Paone
February	TBA	Eric Choy
March‡	TBA	Kevin Hutchison
April	TBA	TBA
May	TBA	TBA
June‡	Eric Choy	TBA
July	* KIT AUCTION *	TBA
August	TBA	TBA
September‡	TBA	TBA
October	AMPS Judging Review	TBA
November	* KIT-SWAP NITE *	TBA
December‡	TBA	TBA
January 2026	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 at 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. Ted Paone's article for January 2025 is due on the last Wednesday of December 2024).

‡ Quarterly contest month



## From the Turret

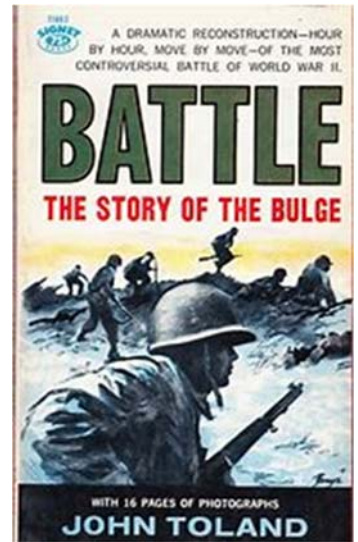
**H**APPY NEW YEAR! Since you are reading this after the first Wednesday of January, you are aware that our meeting will be held on the **second Wednesday** of this month. It will NOT be at our usual library location but at the **Spicewood Springs Branch** (8637 Spicewood Springs Road, Austin, TX 78759). Start time is the same at 6:30pm.

The program this month is **Officer elections!** If you are thinking about running for office, please let me know. The offices that are available are **President, Vice President, and Secretary.** I will also be checking the by-laws to see if there are any changes that need to be made.

We will also be picking volunteers/victims for our monthly presentations and newsletter articles. For show and tell, if you got something new as a holiday gift, bring it in. **Greg Beckman** will be defending his crown as Most Prolific Modeler (again), so bring your models to give him some competition. The Austin Scale Modelers Society (ASMS) has chosen “USMC

250<sup>th</sup> Birthday” as their 2025 show theme. This should give us armor modelers a big selection to choose from. Make it a Marine halftrack and you have both ASMS and AABS shows covered.

Last month I wrote about Battle of the Bulge books in the my article. I mentioned there was a picture of the children’s version of John Toland’s title on the battle. Looking at my bookcase next to my desk I see a paperback copy of *Battle: The Story of the Bulge*, his adult version. So now I have another book to read. A quick glance did show that it has the story of the American tankers and their German POWs singing Silent Night in it.



See you Wednesday!

**Chris Chany**  
President



It is club dues time again. Due to the library’s “no money exchange hands” policy, please send your dues (\$15) by **PayPal** to **payaabs@gmail.com**. Be sure to use the “Send Money to Friends/Family option” to avoid PayPal surcharge (or send \$16 if you can’t find that option.)

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

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

Please make your payment payable to “**AABS.**” DO NOT send cash through mail!

(Continued from page 1)

## What about Bob?



Robert "Bob" Semple was not a simple character. Born at Crudine Creek, New South Wales (Australia), he worked the gold fields before moving to New Zealand. He was a boxer, miner, industrialist, union leader, and champion of the working man. He was also an ex-jailbird imprisoned in 1916

for campaigning against any involvement in WW1. Firmly believed there was no place for his country to fight Britain's war, he resisted the induction of his son from military service, and he organized miners to force the government to abandon conscription.

After his release, he became the Minister for Public Works when the Labor Party returned to power. He was in this position when WW2 broke out. In 1940 he was given the portfolio of National Service, the de facto New Zealand Minister of War.

WW2 was different from the previous war he had protested. The threats were direct. He implemented conscription and with the hopeless supply situation, it was clear to him that none of the Allies could supply any armored vehicles for a while. New Zealand would have to stand alone against a potential invasion from Imperial Japanese forces.

Bob was just the man for this situation. The Department of Public Works had 81 D8 Caterpillar tractors and another 19 were available. Most were used for grinding out airfields and roads, but he also thought that they might be useful as tanks.



## Plans? We Don't Need No Stinkin' Plans

Inspired by a postcard of an American Disston "Six Ton Tractor Tank," a 1937 vehicle constructed by



mounting an armored box on a Cat Model 35 chassis for Afghanistan, he proceeded to Tekuma District Public Works Department (PWD) where he and T.G. Beck, a PWD engineer improvised a plan and constructed a prototype tank with mild steel. The armored cab would be produced and dispersed to strategic places and placed on the D8 tractors when the need arose. They built a giant steel box with multiple Bren guns sticking out of the front, back, and each side. The turret planned for a 37mm or 2-pounder to give it some anti-tank capability, but those weapons were never made available. Instead, another Bren gun was installed.

The vehicle had a crew of 6 to 8, depending on the number of men available. They were crammed in the box with one lying on a mattress on the engine to operate the central Bren gun. The only way in or out of the vehicle was through a hatch in back. The men knew they were on a one-way ride and would probably be roasted during the battle.



The New Zealand Army wanted the vehicle constructed with armored plates, but there weren't enough available. So a 1/2 inch corrugated manganese steel plate was applied

over some .3-inch armor platings. This was sufficient to stop small arms fire, machine gun rounds, and even 20mm anti-tank rifle bullets. However, it would not withstand the 47mm rounds from Japanese tanks.

One prototype and two armored tank boxes were built. In May 1941, they were paraded in Auckland to the shock, laughter, and awe of the public. They received the same reception and derision we see



even today, being considered the worst tank design of WW2.

## What The Heck Is That Thing?

The Bob Semple Tank, aka Big Bob, was almost 14 feet tall, 11 feet wide, and 12 feet long. It certainly did not look like a tank. During its trial, the military found it didn't act like a tank either. It was heavy and slow (5 to 6 MPH, or 8 to 10 KPH) having only 108 horsepower for a 25-ton vehicle. It was top heavy, unstable, and had to stop to change gears. The vibration from the engine made shooting from the tank difficult and inaccurate.

With no other vehicles available, the military had no choice but to take possession of the three tanks. One general thought they would be good for beach defense. There is a video on YouTube showing a Big Bob driving through fields looking like a mobile pillbox.

Luckily, Valentine tanks started arriving in October 1941. The Big Bobs were quickly phased out, although one may have participated in the war as a bulldozer.

In defense of the Big Bob, they were the only tanks available at the time against a looming threat. Major General Edward Puttick, Chief of New Zealand General Staff, wasn't a fan but noted "The arrangement of the turret and of the machine guns was ingenious and efficient." He also "was impressed with the skill and ingenuity displayed by those concerned in the tank's design and manufacture, adapting a civilian vehicle for military purposes."

Political opponents denounced Semple by attacking his tank, but Bob Semple defended his actions:

"When we came into office we had insufficient strength to protect a currant bun from the attack of a blowfly. But if the Japs could be killed with wheelbarrows we could have stousted them—we had plenty of barrows... two years before the war we quietly slipped machines to Fiji and Tonga and built aerodromes there secretly... it was plain as the day

that the Japs would strike south through the back door to Singapore... [island hopping]... to New Zealand... what stopped them this way?"

A retort from the floor mocked Semple saying: "Probably your tanks, Bob." To which he responded: "If that is a cheap sneer, you keep it. I had the vision to try and create something while a lot of others were just sniveling."

The PWD and Bob Semple laid down a line in the sand that New Zealand would defend itself no matter what. Bob, the fighter and anti-authoritarian, had a right to be proud.

## Big Bob, The Model



At the 2023 IPMS/USA Nationals in San Marcos, I came across a 3-D printed model company **Vargas Scale Models** who was doing early US armor models in 1/35<sup>th</sup> and 1/72<sup>nd</sup>

scales. There was a sale on 1/72<sup>nd</sup> kits if you bought four of their products. I saw three pre-war American tanks that I liked, and the cash I had was burning a hole in my pocket. I picked the 1/72<sup>nd</sup> Bob Semple tank as my fourth kit. It is also available in 1/35<sup>th</sup>, but I thought I'd try something I could barely see.

The kit is of Bob Semple #1 tank as the angled armor is different from the prototype and the #2 tank. The 3-D printed model consists of ten highly detailed parts: the chassis, the turret, two tracks, and six Bren guns. A 37mm cannon is also supplied if you wish to make a "what if." I removed the printing support with a knife and scissors. Check carefully as some are hidden.

The resin is fragile. One of my cats knocked the model off the bench, chipped one of the tracks, and broke off several guns. Luckily, the kit supplies extra machine guns, so I dodged a bullet.

I added two prominent lifting hooks to the turret and



the driver's viewing hood as the kit parts were poorly printed. The new hooks were brass eyebolts for wooden ships I got from Village Hobby many years ago. I finally found a use for them.

I primed the model with Mr. Surfacer 1500 Black as that is now my go-to primer. There are slight print marks on the front angle iron, so I brushed on Mr. Surfacer 500 Gray which effectively covered them. I decided to under paint, so I sprayed gray at a 45° angle and then drybrushed white.

Looking at a colored YouTube video, I chose Vallejo Olive Green as the base code. A thin coat was sprayed to let the underpainting show through. From the same video I got a good guess at the camouflage pattern and hand painted it with Reaper Terran Khaki.

After a pin-wash, I drybrushed lightened versions of the colors over everything, taking care to make sure the underpainting still showing through. The tracks

were painted black/gray with silver pencil highlights and a touch of rust.

Using photos of modern construction bulldozers as examples, I used tile grout as mud and then sprayed Poly S Earth to represent the dust kicked up in trials. I mounted the finished model on a figure plinth as it is so small. For groundwork, I ordered some sheep because, after all, this is New Zealand.

It was a simple build, and there is plenty of detail for a tank this size. It took me longer to research and write this article than to build and paint this model!

I've two other Vargas 3-D printed kits I'll be building shortly. I'm very pleased with my purchase and will be ordering more of their 1/35<sup>th</sup> products in the future.

## References:

- ◆ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCEwgbWySok>
- ◆ [https://tanks-encyclopedia.com/ww2/NewZealand/Bob\\_Semple\\_Tank.php](https://tanks-encyclopedia.com/ww2/NewZealand/Bob_Semple_Tank.php)
- ◆ <https://imgur.com/gallery/new-zealands-mighty-bob-semple-tank-from-ww2-never-defeated-battle-uRmqRzW>

**Ted**





## HAPPY NEW YEAR !!!

“Out with the New and In with the Old”

by Allan J Romer (aka The Rookie)



Well now Wilbur, I've now completed a full year of being a member of AABS since October of 2023. I was on the periphery of the AABS show, enjoyed two Christmas parties, participated in the quarterly build contest (once), and look forward to our monthly meetings and newsletter. I've attended five model shows, winning a couple of raffle kits, and buying a couple of others. Miraculously, I was even able to complete twelve builds in 2024, thus reducing my stash by about three. It has been a good year, and I am looking forward to a great 2025 as a member of AABS ☺.

So, without further ado, let's take a look at the past year and the year to come...

### Christmas and Model Building Go Together Like Oil and Water

I hope y'all had a great Christmas holiday. I think the last time I attempted to work on a kit was the week of our great Christmas Party. Since then, my workspace (i.e., the kitchen table) has been occupied by cookie ingredients, wrapping paper, ribbons, and all sorts of other Christmas paraphernalia. Also, every free day was spent looking for a Christmas tree, the just-right presents, and plumbing and electrical repairs, not to mention the tree needs decorating, garlands hung, outside lights strung, and a myriad of little things that need to be done in a short amount of time. Hey, but it all came together, and I wouldn't trade it for all the kit building time in the world. That silly howitzer can still be primed on another day.

### January Begins with a Bang

As my wife looked at the January 2025 calendar on the fridge, I thought I saw a small wry smile. Methinks she thinks that I am crazy, but she is fully supportive

of my modeling efforts. No matter how poorly I build or paint, she always says it looks great. Besides, what she saw on the calendar means I will out of her hair for a fair number of events:

- ♦ January 4<sup>th</sup>: **Modelfiesta** at New Braunfels.
- ♦ January 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>: Figure painting class at **LionHeart Hobby** in Kyle (taught by none other than our own Bob Bethea and Henry Nunez).
- ♦ January 25<sup>th</sup>: **WinterBlitz** at College Station.

I'm really looking forward to the figure painting class. That was on my bucket list for 2025 since some wag said that you would never be a good modeler unless you could paint figures. Go figure.

### \$\$\$ Alert

Better get to the Modelfiesta or WinterBlitz and put a few kits in your stash. A new administration is coming to town with potential tariffs on foreign imports. AFV modeling could get a bit more expensive this year.

### AFV Broad Categories

I've been thinking about the broad modeling categories always seen (pre-WWII, WWII Allies, WWII Axis, Cold War, Gulf War). I think we're missing a big category that has lots of opportunities for some neat builds:

#### **The Middle East 1947 to the Present**

The variety of AFVs supplied by numerous countries to the combatants (and often modified) opens a whole host of creative endeavors. Take the M48 family of tanks: they were supplied to Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Israel. The former Soviet Union was a major AFV supplier to Egypt and Syria (later

Iran and Iraq). And the plethora of IDF vehicles from tanks and APCs to bulldozers provides a large selection that by itself could be a separate category. The Middle East conflict has involved AFVs in actual combat operations. No motor pool beauties in this category.

### 2025 Is Gonna be a Great Year to be a Member of AABS

We've changed our meeting dates to the second Wednesday of the month but same Bat time and

same Bat location. There will be tips and tricks from fellow club members and monthly Build and Brag sessions. There will be monthly kit drawings, annual kit auction, and the big in-house competition to winter wash an AFV. We've got our big show coming up so y'all best be working on your halftracks. If you are really adventurous, you can winter wash your halftrack and kill two birds with one stone.

See you around the workbench and the meetings.

*Allan*

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# 2024 Fourth Quarterly Contest Winner

Allan Romer  
WWII German Panther G



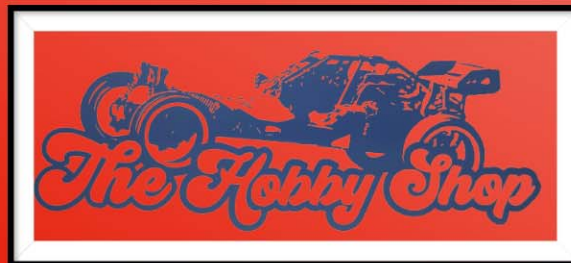
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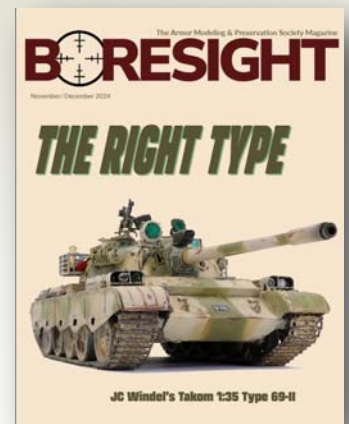
Saturday: 10:00am - 8:00pm

Sunday: 11:00am - 4:00pm

## AMPS Boresight (Volume 32, Issue 6)

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

- ♦ Iraqi Medium Tank Type 69-II by J.C. Windels
- ♦ American Heritage Museum - Spotlight on Preservation
- ♦ Taming A Braille Scale Object by Eric Choy



# WINTERBLITZ 2025

A fun laid back model show for armor and figure enthusiasts set amongst real historic artifacts



**Saturday January 25<sup>th</sup> 2025**  
Museum of the American G.I.  
College Station, Texas  
[www.winter-blitz.com](http://www.winter-blitz.com)

Please visit the website for rules, forms,  
details, sponsors and vending information!



## BEST OF AWARDS

Theme Award – Vietnam War	Best NOT Tracked
Tank of the Year – T-34 Tank	Best Camouflage/Creative Paint Job
Best of Show	Best Tamiya
Spirit of the American G.I. Award	Head Judge Award
Best Fully-Tracked	Silk Purse From a Cow's Ear
Best NOT Fully-Tracked	Her Majesty Award (Best British 1952-2022)

## MAIN CATEGORIES

100 Youth < 18 years old **	1100 Fully-Tracked Desert Shield to Present *
200 Classic Kits – (kits before 1979)	1200 Paper Panzer/Fictional **
300 Artillery **	1300 Halftracks **
350 All Things Towed (“tractor and trailer”) **	1400 Armored Cars **
400 1/48 <sup>th</sup> Scale (Allied)	1500 Soft Skins **
450 1/48 <sup>th</sup> scale (Axis)	1600 Motorcycles with or without sidecars **
500 1/72 <sup>nd</sup> and Smaller	1700 Misc. Military Vehicles **
600 Fully-Tracked Orgins to 1934 **	2000 Fully-Tracked Full Interior **
700 Fully-Tracked Self Propelled Vehicles*	3000 Larger than 1/32
800 Fully-Tracked WWII Axis*	4000 Self Propelled Flak Vehicles **
900 Fully-Tracked WWII Allied*	5000 Military Figures **
1000 Fully-Tracked Post WWII Thru 1990*	6000 Dioramas **
	7000 US Helicopters in Vietnam War

\* Denotes scale = 1/35 and 1/32    \*\* Denotes ALL scales and ALL eras

**Theme Award** – The 2025 theme is the **Vietnam War** and the commemoration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ending of United State’s involvement. We will pick **ONE** build that best depicts the Vietnam War – a figure, diorama or individual build – any scale and any nation (1965 – 1975).

In conjunction with the 2025 theme, we will add **ONE SPECIAL** main category: **7000 US HELICOPTERS IN VIETNAM WAR**. This category will be all scales and has a limit of **ONE entry per contestant**. Any helicopter that was flown by the United States during the Vietnam War is eligible (1965–1975). Hueys, Chinooks, Cayuse, Skycranes, etc. Show us your birds!!!!

**Tank of The Year** – We will recognize the BEST T-34 (or variant on T34 chassis). All scales, all eras and all countries. Special note: includes tanks based on the T34 chassis such as the SU-100 and SU-122. Let us know if you have questions.

# JOIN AMPS TODAY

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

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

**E-MAIL:**

<b>MEMBERSHIP TYPES</b>	<b>1 Year</b>	<b>2 Year</b>	<b>3 Year</b>
Regular U.S.	<input type="checkbox"/> (\$30)	<input type="checkbox"/> (\$55)	<input type="checkbox"/> (\$80)
Regular+All Printed Issues	<input type="checkbox"/> (\$55)	<input type="checkbox"/> (\$105)	<input type="checkbox"/> (\$155)
International	<input type="checkbox"/> (\$25)	<input type="checkbox"/> (\$45)	<input type="checkbox"/> (\$65)
Junior (17 or under)	<input type="checkbox"/> (\$15)	<input type="checkbox"/> (\$25)	<input type="checkbox"/> (\$35)
Family Membership	<input type="checkbox"/> ( \$5 )	<input type="checkbox"/> (\$10)	<input type="checkbox"/> (\$15)

Regular and Junior Memberships include a subscription to two printed issues *Boresight* magazine per year and all six online issues of *Boresight* magazine per year. Regular+All Printed Issues Membership includes a subscription to six printed issues of *Boresight* magazine per year as well as access to the same issues online. This is only available to members within the United States.

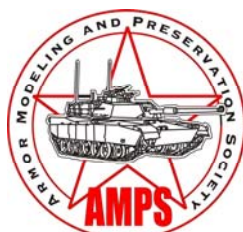
International Membership includes all benefits of a Regular membership except for printed issues of *Boresight*.

Family membership does not receive an individual printed copy of *Boresight*, but can enjoy the online version of *Boresight*.

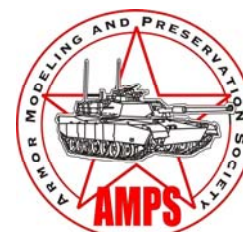
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## New On The Block



Tamiya continues to expand its quarterscale lineup with an M5A1 Stuart. This should keep 1/48<sup>th</sup> armor fans busy for a while!



Check out Thunder Models' 1/35<sup>th</sup> limited edition LRDG F30 Truck. It comes with extra weapons and two crew figures.



If 1/16<sup>th</sup> is your game, Jason's Studio has you covered for the latest M113 release. It's an accessory set that comes with upgrade details and common stowage items used in the Vietnam War.

Need an unique marine vehicle for ASMS' 2025 USMC show theme? Look no further. Gecko's 1/35<sup>th</sup> M76 Otter is here.

## 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 least one night talk tanks."

AABS is the first 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. Subjects of our interest range from WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Middle East, to the most recent war in Ukraine.



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

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.

For more info, please visit [www.ampscentex.org](http://www.ampscentex.org)