

# THE LITTLE AVIATION MUSEUM

## *Workbench notes*

### **BOEING PB-1W IN 1/72 BY HASEGAWA WITH UNCLE LES CONVERSION PARTS**

(September 2008)

One of the things I like about swap 'n' sells is that you never know what you are going to come away with. At one of the IPMS events we attended I thought I was buying a Hasegawa B-17 kit but found it came with additional resin parts for a PB-1W. This was alright with me because I think the US Navy made a big mistake when it went from spraying everything in their inventory dark sea blue in the mid 1950s. At that stage I had no idea what a PB-1W was so I had to go off and find out, and this is what I learned.

Towards the end of the Pacific War the US Navy was closing in on the Japanese home islands with a vast armada of ships which were vulnerable to Japanese air attack. To give the navy time to prepare its defenses against attack it stationed radar picket ships between the fleet and Japan but their losses were unacceptably high. To overcome this the navy decided to equip aeroplanes with airborne radar sets to give the radar picket ships some warning and chose the B-17 for this role because they could carry the radar and retain their existing heavy defensive armament. However, the war ended before any of these converted B-17Gs entered service. Even so, the resulting aeroplane turned out to be a good idea and led to the EC-121 Warning Star which led to the EP-3E.

Converting a standard B-17G to a PB-1W is not difficult and the Uncle Les's conversion set of resin bits has plugs to fill all the holes left by leaving off all the B-17 turrets. I could have made a PB-1W with all its defensive armament in place but the early ones were all left in bare metal finish, which missed the point of this conversion. The later PB-1Ws had their armament deleted but were painted deep sea blue, so I had no option but to make the later version. I thought it was a pity to lose the chin and mid-upper turrets which give the B-17G its distinctive appearance, but I reckoned a blue B-17 would be worth it.

There's nothing terribly challenging about making a Hasegawa kit, even an early one like their B-17G. No wonder some modellers have taken to adding resin engines and bomb bays and tiny brass bits and pieces, just to stop themselves from going to sleep. I made this project difficult for myself by making a couple of mistakes that turned something simple into a rather trying project.

Sometimes I confound myself by thinking I am a better and smarter modeller than I actually am. Because of this fault I thought I'd give this model a base coat of black rather than my usual light grey because, I reckoned at the time, black would be a good base for a top coat of dark sea blue. What I forgot was that the point of spraying on a coat of light grey is to see all the blemishes and rough spots on the model before going on to finish it. The result was that the model looked rather nice painted flat black but the gloss blue top coat showed off all the problems the flat black had hidden.

The other problem was ignorance rather than stupidity. To save myself some effort in the masking department, which gets very tedious with models like World War II bombers, I mail ordered

a set of masks. This turned out to be futile because most of the masks didn't seem to have much to do with the model I was making, so I still ended up doing most of the masking anyhow. However, when all the other problems had been overcome and it was time to do the final unmasking I discovered that the sticky stuff on the masks preferred to stay on the model rather than come away, leaving me with clogged up windows. I'm still gnashing my teeth about this problem.

The decals came from the spares box and the result is big and blue. What more could one possible want from a model?



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