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Corsair stunter



71896-47506



F4U Corsair stunter

Time to be daring and deviate a bit from the accepted stunt controline platform. The inverted gull Chance Vought Corsair inspired this one, turns in an able performance/**Jack Sheeks**



PHOTOGRAPHY: JACK SHEEKS



A Stunt ship with flavor of the Chance Vought Corsair. Design has proved to be a good competitive machine, able to perform at a contest level. Jack has been a very active Stunt flyer for many years.

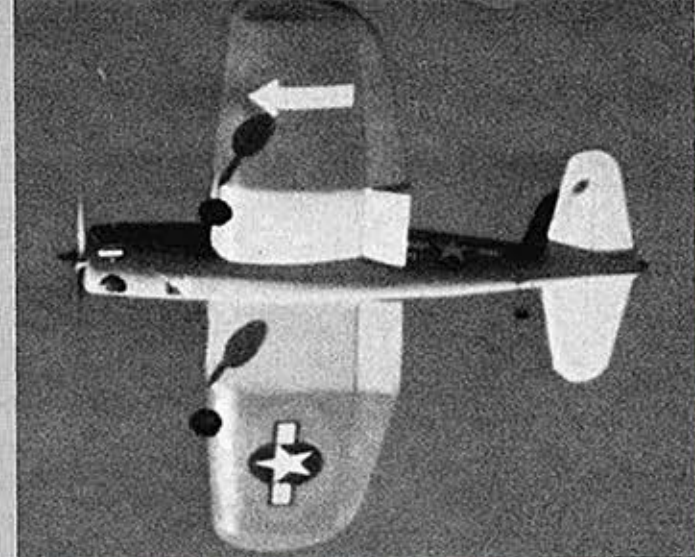
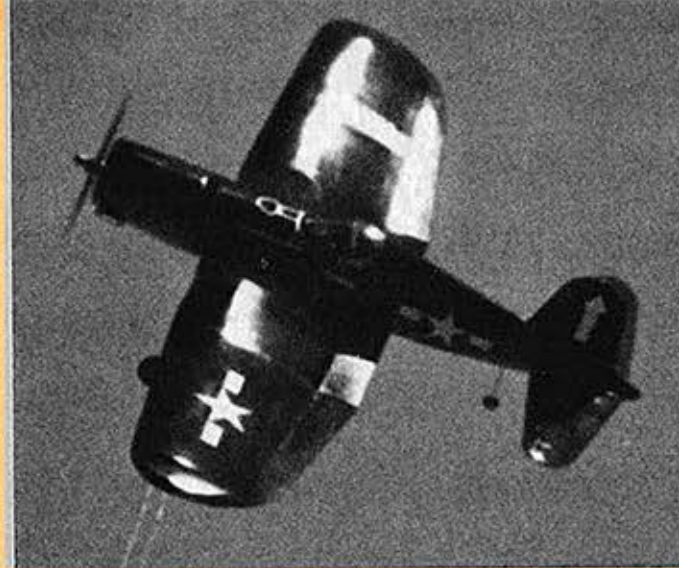
The model that you see here was inspired by Pappy Boyington and his Black Sheep Squadron, and also by a bent-wing Stuka of a few years ago.

The real aircraft, the Chance Vought F4U-1 Corsair, remained in production for 13 years, even though it was deemed a failure early in its career. The prototype first flew on the 29th of March, 1940 and attained the impressive speed of 405 mph. The distinctive bent-wing (inverted gull) feature of the aircraft came about due to the marriage of the most powerful piston engine (2,000 hp.) ever installed in a fighter, and the world's largest fighter plane prop (14 feet in dia.). The wing had to be gulled or bent in order to allow for a short, sturdy landing gear deemed necessary for the rigors of carrier operations. On the earlier models, the landing gear strut shock was too stiff, and gave the aircraft a built in kick or bounce on landings. This was the failure we spoke of as it kept the F4U from operating off carriers for quite some time. It gave the Marine Corps an extra fine fighter however. The Corsair fared badly on its first combat mission due to the inexperience of its pilots, but they soon learned and attained an advantage over their Japanese counterparts which they never relinquished again.

About six months later the first land-based Navy fighter squadron was formed with Tommy Blackburn in command. Within 79 days they had destroyed 154 Japanese aircraft and was called "the greatest Navy squadron ever." It was VF-17 and it contained 12 Aces. Aces are pilots with five or more kills to their credit.

Of course there is a story that is told of the flyers who took their Corsairs down the main streets of San Francisco buzzing the trollies, cars and people. One was rumored to have taken a ladies clothesline with him. (Could this have been the Black Sheep?) We think their endeavors were rewarded by being sent straight overseas. We're not sure if this story is true or not, but they sound like my kind of people!

By war's end, Corsairs had destroyed 2,140 enemy aircraft with a loss of only 189. That is a kill rate of 11.3 to 1. In comparison trials between a captured Zero, the Corsair proved definitely superior and gave favorable results between a P-51, a P-47, P-38 and a P-39. Above 12,000 feet the Corsair out-fought the Mustang and at lower altitudes



outpointed the F-6F Hellcat. One pilot stated that "this craft was a workhorse, could do anything, have parts shot off it and still perform." He felt it was the best fighter we had.

It became known as "Whistling Death" among the Japanese pilots, while the Marines came to call it the "Sweetheart of Okinawa." It turned out to be a very fine aircraft even though it did fail early in the carrier trials which it was initially intended for.

As for this model, a Stunt Controline inspired by the prototype, old Pappy would be pleased with it as it will still fly with the best of them. The ship is a bit large and bulky, in keeping with this designer's frame, yet it has a distinctive character all its own and the more you see it the more you'll like it. Since this ship has come into existence it has fired up a few furnaces and proven once again that Stunt ships are like Stunt flyers, they are not all shaped alike and don't have to be machines.

The fuselage is somewhat close to scale as we took pictures of a set of 3-views, set up the drawing board in the family room, trotted to the kitchen to show our labor. Of course some smart aleck put some slides in that were not in keeping with the theme, but those beach shots can surely take minds off building models for a while.

Once the lines were on the paper to indicate where the moment arms would be, we aligned the picture and drew in the intended outlines of the aircraft. After getting all the various sections of the ship drawn, we started figuring in the actual structure and changes necessary to have a good Stunter. The stab and elevator was extended 2" and the wing had to be moved back. The wing was also too small and the gull bend had to be moved slightly in order to end up with more usable flap area and also to help keep the leadouts straight. This also increased the stability of the aircraft. The construction of the ship was made as easy as possible as I am not known for expending energy on difficult woodwork, shiny finishes or ugly women. I do however like to mangle my balsa though, if it can proceed along at a rapid rate. Seems to soothe the savage beast and keeps me out of other trouble.

After the working drawing was complete, we began bartering for the lightest wood in the fair city. By the time we gathered all the

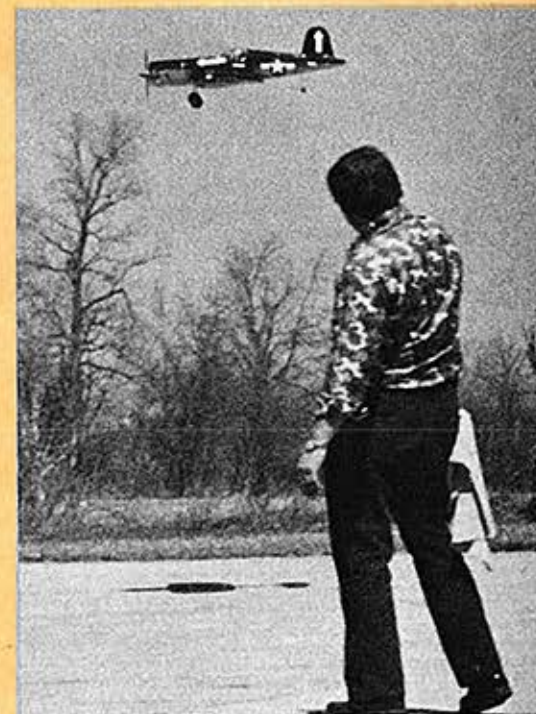
balsa needed we'd also used up the gas credit card and a set of tires, but the search paid off as the finished ship weighed in at only 64 ounces ready to fly. Not bad for this size model. We suggest you look hard and don't settle for packing crate wood as a light model is the way to go when it comes to competitive performance.

Once you have your list of working materials all together, cut the wing spars and the body siding from 1/4" balsa, adding the 1/16" ply doublers to the spars to hold them together. The wing jigs are now cut from 1/8" and 1/4" balsa, and the leading and trailing edges are set up on them along with the wing spar. Be sure this is done on a flat surface.

The wing panels are equal in length and are counterbalanced after the installation in the fuselage is complete. Brace all the joints in the wing with 1/8" balsa scrap. Next, cut the body formers from 1/8" balsa and plywood as marked and install them between the body sides. Centerline the fuselage where the wing fits, along with the leading and trailing edges. Now install the wing into the fuselage along with the bellerank, floor and leadouts.

While all this is drying, cut out the stabilizer, elevators, rudder and flaps from soft 3/8" balsa. Shape and hinge these parts where necessary.

Bend and install the 1/8" dia. landing gears on the 1/8" plywood mounts and attach them in the wing with epoxy. Next, the flap con-



The camera snaps the F4U Stunter in a variety of flight attitudes, straight and level, on through wingovers and the like. It hangs out on the lines quite nicely, flies with the spirit of a fighter. A scale-like appearance seldom seen in a Stunter.

