



The P-61 Black Widow was designed purposely for the role of night fighter against enemy bomber formations. This WW-II fifteen ten fighter in later versions packed a powerful sting in it's eight 50 calibre machine guns which were sufficient to really disintegrate opponents. Before taking on it's duties of night fighting, the Black Widow was engaged in chasing and destroying the V-1 Buzz Bombs. After the Allies started their drive towards the German heartland, the P-61 was primarily used for daylight operations. The duties were now the destruction of railyards and such military targets.

I recall a friend of mine who was stationed in England during the war years telling about one night that was totally dark and the Germans had come over for a nightly terror raid. He said that the enemy aircraft was about overhead when he heard another aircraft approaching the area. Suddenly there was a stream of tracers which appeared out of the nighttime sky. At the receiving end of the tracers there came a tremendous explosion, the German bomber just blew apart sending debris in all directions.

When the P-61 first reached England they were all "A" models, painted in olive drab. The familiar totally black color scheme came about as the result of the British not having enough olive drab one day to paint a P-61 after maintenance. The American pilot who had gone to pick up the plane had discovered that it was not finished. He suggested to the British, that since they had enough gloss black, why not paint it black? From that day on the P-61 became known as the Black Widow.

I have always had a feeling for this aircraft and wanted a model of it for my own. Auther, a friend and fellow modeler was always coming to the field with some new project. When he showed up one day with a 1/2A twin-engined HS 129, it was time to counter with one of my own design. This was enough to stir me to action.

A little P-61 Black Widow

A not too difficult to build twin .049 powered Controline design. A wild sound at the end of the lines/**Mike Beaulieu**

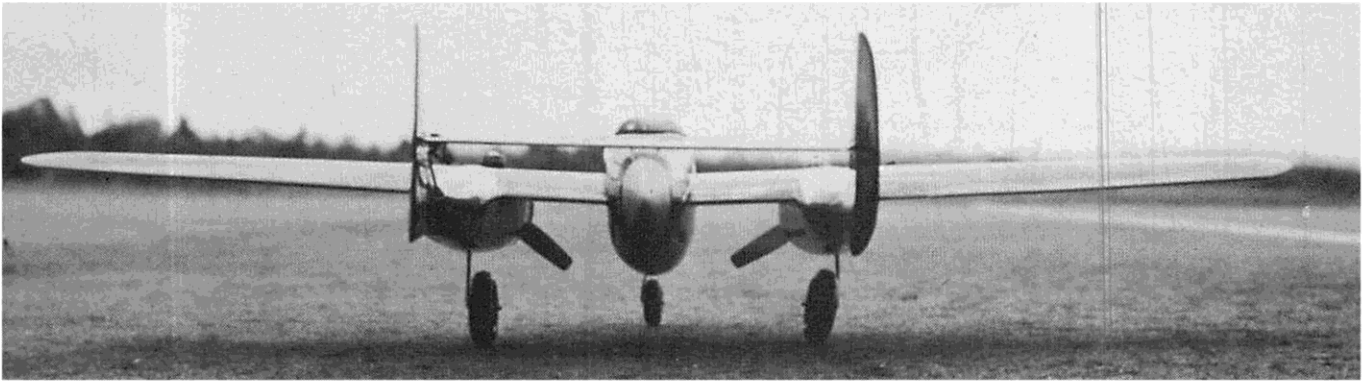
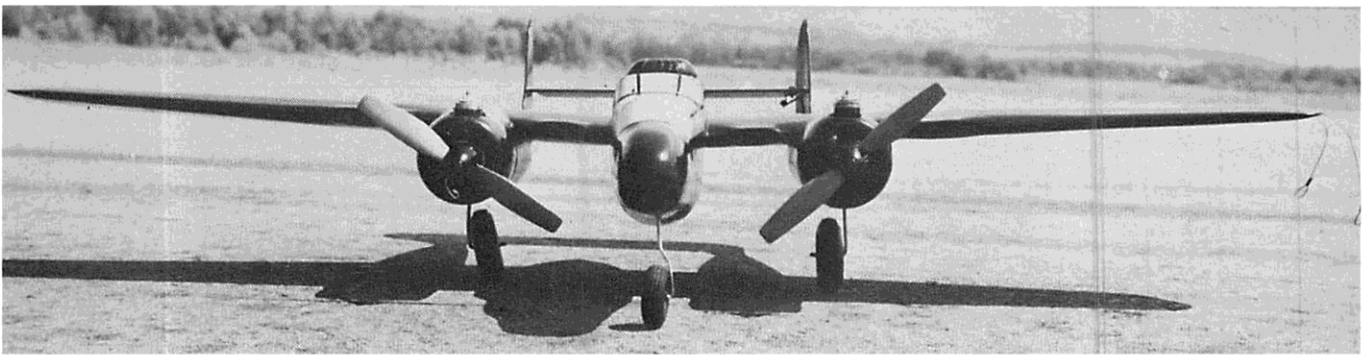
The Wing Construction

The structure begins with the wing. The main spar is cut from 1/8" balsa and it is reinforced by the 1/16" plywood spar. Prepare the leading edges by routing out the air intakes. Insert and glue the vanes in the air intakes, then put it aside and cut out all the ribs from 3/32" balsa. The ribs are now installed as shown on the plan. When this is dry check to see if all the ribs are in proper alignment, along both leading and trailing edges. Sheet in the entire bottom of the wing with 1/16" balsa stock. You should now

camber the trailing edge. Install a small Perfect bellcrank onto the plywood bellcrank mount, then attach the 1/2 ounce weight firmly to the outer wing tip. Make certain that the control rod and leadout wires are properly installed and soldered. Attach the leading edge and sheet the entire top of the wing. Also add the wing tips at this time, then sand the leading edge and wing tips to proper shape.

The Fuselage

Cut the center fuselage keel to shape and



A Night Fighter! It might be fitting to install a set of flying lights in this nocturnal machine. The closing years of World War II brought forth more sophisticated radar equipped platforms, something to be reckoned with in the dark of night. The montage of photos on these pages capture the essence of it all. Not a hard ship to build, distinctive in appearance. It's a small twin, for two roaring .049's.

mark off where the formers and wing are going to be attached. Cement the 1/4" x 1/2" x 13-3/8" center fuselage keel to the centerline of the bottom of the wing. Slice out all formers for the fuselage from 3/32" balsa, except former A, then add the 1/16" dia. music wire nose gear. Make sure that this assembly is well constructed before gluing it to the fuselage keel. The fuselage is now covered with 1/16" x 1/4" balsa planking. Add a hollowed out nose block and sand all to shape.

The boom keels are cut out of 3/32" hard balsa and cemented to the wing. The stab-

lizer is added next, glued in place between the two fins. Former K is cut out of 1/4" plywood, in one piece. This former is also the motor mount for your Cox engines. Use a good epoxy glue when mounting it to the boom's keel. Add formers L, N and P to the keels in their respective places.

Construct the main landing gear and attach to 1/8" plywood former M. When this assembly is complete, add to the boom keel. The booms can now be planked with 1/16" x 1/4" balsa. Both booms are now sanded to final shape. Chop out the 3/32" rudders and

cement them to the stabilizer with at least 1/4" right offset.

The cowls are formed from laminated blocks, lathed to shape and then hollowed with a Dremel tool. Mount two good Cox .049 engines, driving 5 1/2-4 props. 1" dia. spinners from Ace Mfg. do nicely. Check the aircraft at this point for proper balance. If your P-61 seems to need nose weight, this is a good time to add it to the nose block.

The entire model was coated with two coats of Hobbyoxo white Undercoater, sanded between each coat. I then sprayed on two coats of Perfect Paint #P-09 Glossy Black. This is quite a finish. The aircraft at this point takes on a dramatic look which made me really anxious. I have never had a finish as nice as this from a spray can.

The greenhouse on this model was simulated by masking off the area to be sprayed with Hobbyoxo Silver. The ship was then rubbed out with Dupont Red rubbing compound and then polished with Dupont White polishing compound. I found suitable decals in a Top Flite kit. It might be possible to write and order decal sheet #N-11.

Flying Notes

Finally the big day arrived. I packed up the flying box and headed for the field. My friend after seeing the P-61 Black Widow had only one comment to make. "Where did you ever get a plastic model of a P-61? Some friend! I used 40 foot lines, .008 dia. wire. This gives you plenty of airspace and it's a comfortable length to fly with.

When firing up your engines, start with the outboard engine first. When both are running, there is a sound as if an entire flight of P-61's are getting ready for a mission over Europe. In flight it is very realistic and a joy hanging out there on the lines. The Black Widow flies in a stable manner, even on one engine. Landings and takeoffs are quite smooth. I hope you'll enjoy your replica as much as I have mine. Fly it carefully, clear of powerlines. ☺