

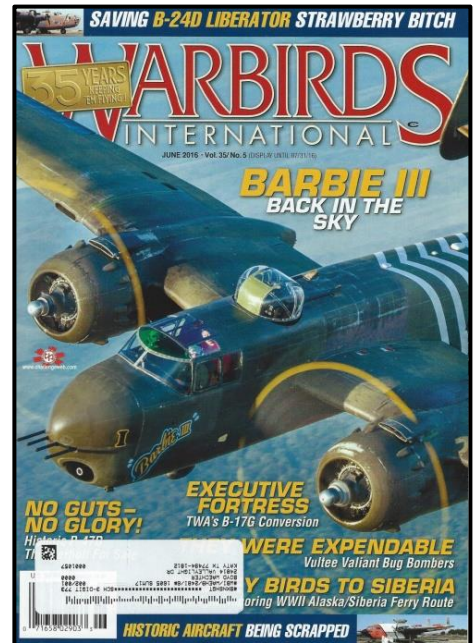
Saga of "Barbie III"

Every once in a while I will get really inspired to do a model based on a book or magazine article I have read. It was that way when I kept seeing photos and reading articles on the B-25H "Barbie III" warbird currently owned and flown by the Cavanaugh Flight Museum in Dallas. Doing a B-25H has been on my Top Ten list of models to build before I croak for many years. Now that I'm pushing 70 years old, I figured it had better be sooner than later!

Being the only B-25H currently flying in 2017 (of the 1000 built by North American during WWII), I decided to investigate the airplane even further than what was written about it in Air Classics and Warbird International magazines. She was the second B-25H off the production line, serial number 43-4106.

Here is a brief history of that airplane that I've recently written;

The B-25H warbird "Barbie III" that is currently flying the airshow circuit was the second B-25H-1-NA produced in August 1943, serial number 43-4106. She remained stateside during the war and was used as a test aircraft, Eglin Field in Florida for most of this time. The cannon nose common to B-25H's was removed and replaced with an eight gun nose (minus the guns). Her last assignment with the USAAF was at Wright Field from March 1944 until she was sent to storage in December 1945. For safety reasons, the aircraft was fitted with dual controls/rudder pedals and a co-pilot's seat during the time it was used in this test work. In May 1946, 43-4106 was released as surplus and purchased by the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College in Stillwater, OK. In June 1951, the airplane was sold to the Bendix Aviation Corporation in Detroit, Michigan who continued to use the airplane to do test work for the military, now registered N5548N.





On February 7, 1967, the B-25H was sold to Barber's Flying Service who eventually defaulted on payments, so the Union National Bank of Chicago took ownership of the airplane until a buyer could be found. In April 1971, 43-4106 was sold to Richard Lambert of Plainfield, Illinois for \$3500, a farmer and aviation enthusiast. The aircraft was flown from Michigan to Lambert Field, a private airport near Plainfield. For ten years, Mr. Lambert had it on display, occasionally taxied it around the airport, and flew it on short hops several times a year.

In August 1981, the Lambert family sold 43-4106 to the Weary Warriors Squadron of Chicago who are a private flying club that do restorations on WWII warbirds. It was here that a complete, ground up restoration of the airplane took place which lasted for 10 years. During the restoration, the WWS discovered that another warbird group in Kansas City had surplus a B-25H cannon nose section and a deal was struck in order to return the airplane to its true identity. It was during this restoration that the airplane was painted in "Barbie III" markings, a B-25H flown by Lt. Col. R.T. Smith (of AVG fame) in 1944 while serving with the 1st Air Commando Group in India. The airplane was named after his wife, Barbara Bradford, in which he flew 55 combat missions over Burma and was awarded the Air Medal, DFC, and Silver Star.



Photo taken shortly after the installation of the B-25H nose section.

In June 2009, the History Flight, Inc. in Florida bought 43-4106 as an attraction offering guests the opportunity to fly aboard "Barbie III" on the airshow circuit. History Flight, Inc. has a somewhat checkered past and ownership. In 2015, they elected to sell the airplane to the Cavanaugh Flight Museum in Dallas, TX. who continue to offer rides in the airplane (\$400 for 30 min ride) at various shows around the country.

To the model.....

Surprisingly, it is not a bad model for its age, though the cockpit is lacking a great deal. To that end, the first thing I did was grind off all of the molded on detail and completely scratch built the entire interior except for the instrument panel which I used as it came in the kit. This piece sits so far back underneath the coaming that it would be a waste of time trying to do anything other than use the kit panel. The B-25H flew without a co-pilot and had only a seat pan for the navigator to use when he loaded and reloaded the 75 mm cannon during an attack run. Using photos of a B-25H cockpit I found in the Detail & Scale book, I did my best to replicate this change and all of the other differences between the B-25J and B-25HB then make the necessary changes from a B-25J to an H model. Also, B-25H-1-NA's did NOT have the fuselage mounted gun packs on both sides of the fuselage, only the right side. It was not until later in the production run that an additional gun back of .50 cal machine guns were added to the left side fuselage.



Other than the cockpit, I built the rest of the model pretty much out of the box. Model Master paints were used for the OD and neutral gray. I preshaded the model with some flat black

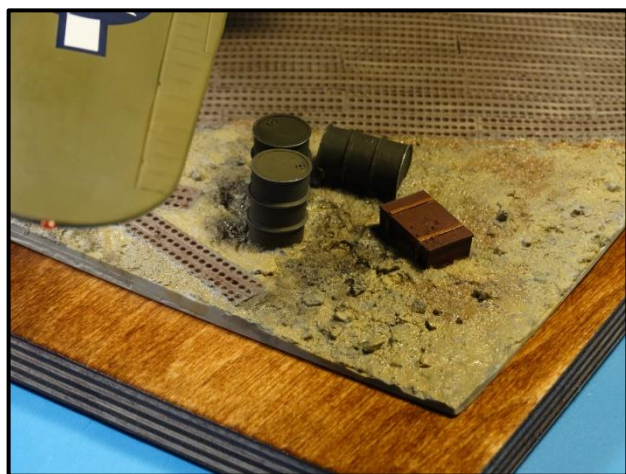
before applying the two colors, as well as using quite a bit of pastel chalk to do the post shading and exhausts. The white stripes on the fuselage were by CAM Decals (they make several sheets of colored stripes that are a real must for any modeler) which I buy from Sprue Brothers.



For an old kit on which I tried some new techniques I had not done before, I am pretty pleased with the way it turned out. Again, it was one of those models I had been wanting to do for many many years and I'm glad that I can now strike it off my bucket list.



The resin base is made and sold by Squadron (comes in all three scales) and it is excellent for the time period and location from which "Barbie III" flew.



I hope you have enjoyed this article. Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to you all.

Boyd Waechter
IPMS #1282, 1967