

A prize-winning ship in 1/700 scale

1/700 Scale



Michael Sharp's Terrific *Tarawa*

Photos by Paul Boyer

Mike Sharp built his first ship model in 1978, and he quickly found that he liked the amount of detail he found he could add to his models. Since then, his collection of ship models has grown to 27, each more detailed than the last. His latest and new favorite is this 1/700 scale USS *Tarawa* LHA-1 amphibious assault ship. It was photographed at the 1999 IPMS Nationals in Orlando, Florida, where it won awards for best ship and most popular entry.

Starting with DML's kit, Mike added Gold Medal Models and Flagship Models photoetched railings, nets, and

antennas. He corrected several inaccuracies in the kit, including the hull lines, walkways, and bridge wings. Then, to add the final touch, he decided to scratchbuild a complete hangar bay. Including decals, Mike counts approximately 3,794 individual pieces to this model – and about 2,336 of them were scratchbuilt.

Mike feels that the model's most outstanding features are its depiction of action and interior detail. As for his methods, he has especially good luck with his technique for using stretched sprue. "When attaching stretched sprue, I put a small drop of super glue on a board, then touch the

end of the piece I'm attaching to the glue. I hold it in place on the model with tweezers until it sets."

His models are always a combination of scratchbuilding and conversion techniques. He finds that the secrets to his success is checking his references and test fitting the parts constantly. "I feel that historical accuracy is very important in modeling."

Mike's USS *Tarawa* has won many other contest awards, including best ship at the Niagara Frontier IPMS 1998 and best of show at the 1998 Three Rivers and the Chuck Yeager IPMS contests. FSM

ABOVE: This model of a US Navy amphibious assault ship has a lot to offer in its compact 1/700 scale. Michael F. Sharp of Garrettsville, Ohio, added a scratchbuilt interior and photoetched details, then hand-brushed the deck to get a realistic texture.

RIGHT TOP: Mike used after-market photoetched parts (including the radar and masts) to enhance the kit. The *Tarawa*-class ships have a special feature: an 18-foot section of the mast is hinged to allow passage under bridges.

RIGHT BOTTOM: The elevator holds an AV-8B Harrier as well as several personnel. Mike created the feeling of motion on the model when he meticulously posed the figures and vehicles.

