



Can you maintain a happy household and still finish a model? Kevin Kuster shows you how with Tamiya's 1/48 scale Hetzer and a three-day weekend!

Hetzer Holiday

The busy weekend diary of a husband/father/model builder

By Kevin Kuster

// "I don't have time to build."
"Somehow I never finish any model I start."
"Someday I'll get around to building that (insert kit name here)."

If you or any of your modeling pals have ever made statements like these, I have a suggestion for you. Take a look at Tamiya's new line of 1/48 scale armor models.

After purchasing the Hetzer (kit No. 32511), I wanted to side-step all of the little problems that seem to prevent so many of us from completing a model. I decided I would build and paint the entire kit in one

weekend. I picked the weekend of July 4th (So it was a three-day weekend, who's counting?) and set down some ground rules.

1. I would build the model straight out of the box.
2. I would keep a time line for all three days, as well as a model-building time line.
3. I wouldn't work on any other model projects until the Hetzer was completed.

And it went something like this ...

Saturday July 2, 2005**3:30 to 4:34 p.m.**

Drove to my local hobby store to purchase my tank and shop around. (As we all know, this isn't a hobby, it's an addiction. In addition to the Hetzer, I purchased a 1/72 scale Eduard Fokker, paints, primer, and sandpaper. Total bill: \$44.32)

5:35 to 6:14 p.m.

Construction of the Hetzer begins with the road wheels and suspension. The kit comes with a wonderful cast-metal lower hull that adds a great deal of weight and a feeling of quality to the model. The only reason this task took so long was that I had to fill three flash holes on the rear of all eight road wheels.

6:15 to 6:24 p.m.

Fed my 14-month-old son, Kaedin, and put him down for the night. (How does a guy so small pack away so much food?)

6:25 to 7:02 p.m.

Although I attached the tracks as shown in the instructions, I would later regret not having painted the road wheels and tracks before I attached them.

7:03 to 7:11 p.m.

Watched TV. (Beware, this activity is modeler's Kryptonite.)

7:12 to 8:07 p.m.

The parts for the upper hull went together easily and had so much detail I couldn't help wondering, "Tamiya has to recreate this in 1/35 scale ... don't they?"

8:08 to 9:41 p.m.

Ate dinner and chatted with the wife. (The entire time I was talking to her I tried not to think about what kind of camouflage scheme I was going to paint. Hmmmm ... three-color or two-color ambush scheme? "Of course I'm listening honey! I'm sorry, what did you say?")

9:42 to 10:50 p.m.

After test fitting the side skirts, and the upper and lower hull, I opted not to glue any of these in place to allow for easier painting. After building the machine gun, muffler, and tools, I decided not to attach them right away, either. Since I had never worked on a metal-and-plastic hull, I decided to prime the entire tank to make it all one color, **1**. Although I'm not a big believer in using primer on my models, I was worried that once I applied my overall base coat, there might be a color shift between the light-gray metal lower hull and the yellow-plastic upper hull.

10:51 to 11:22 p.m.

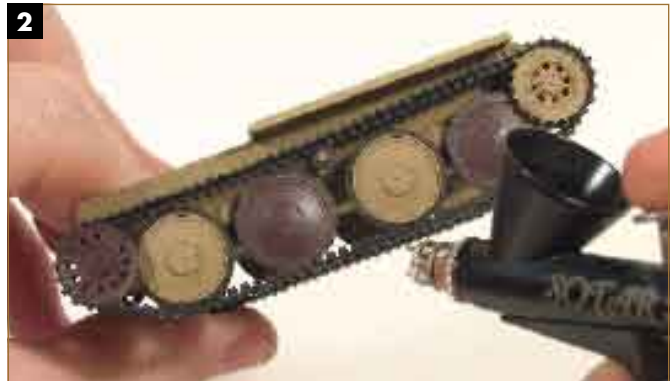
Watched the first half of the movie "Troy." (Is it just me, or do men look funny fighting in skirts? Somehow I couldn't see Patton or MacArthur commanding troops that way.)

11:23 p.m.

Went to sleep and dreamt of two- and three-color ambush schemes.

Sunday July 3, 2005**6:33 to 7:35 a.m.**

Fed my son his first bottle of the day, then played "Old McDonald" over and over again.

**7:36 to 9:00 a.m.**

Painted the entire lower hull and road wheels Tamiya dark yellow (XF-60). I sprayed every other wheel with Gunze Sangyo mahogany (No. 84), **2**.

9:01 to 10:20 a.m.

Ate breakfast, showered, and drove to Victoria's Secret. (Yep, that's right! I have bridged the impossible. Modeling and Victoria's Secret can be combined! You'll see in a minute.)

10:21 a.m. to 12:14 p.m.

After spraying the entire upper hull with Gunze Sangyo mahogany, I covered the tank with a fishnet stocking from Victoria's Secret, **3**, to create my camouflage pattern, **4**. I sprayed the stocking with a light coat of 3M Spray Mount so it would stick

4



5



to the tank and not move while I painted. (Although I don't have any historical reference for this particular camouflage scheme, I also don't believe the Germans ever produced and painted an entire tank in three days.)

12:15 to 1:14 p.m.

I decided to take a break from the workbench and tend to my garden. (I'm no Martha Stewart, but I know how to plant a flower.)

1:15 to 2:29 p.m.

Since I wanted to add a little texture to the muffler, I decided to use a product called Instant Rust. I slowly built up the texture and then added the rust color. Once I achieved the look I was going for, I brushed on a touch of Mig Weathering Powders' light-rust pigment powder. The powders help to create a dried-and-worn look.

6



2:30 to 3:01 p.m.

Lunch. (No MRE's for me. My wife is a great cook, and I have the waistline to prove it.)

3:02 to 3:25 p.m.

Painted all of the tools with Vallejo black (No. VC950) then dry-brushed them with SnJ polishing powder. When applied gently, SnJ polishing powder gives "metal" tools a wonderful worn-and-weathered look.

3:26 to 10:40 p.m.

Went to my parent's house to celebrate my mom's birthday. (To this day, my mother still claims she's "21 and never been kissed.")

10:41 p.m.

Fell asleep thinking, "Maybe I could start that Eduard Fokker kit tomorrow ... you know, like a little break ... No! Focus! Must finish this project! Must finish this project!"

Monday July 4, 2005

6:45 to 9:11 a.m.

Fed and played with my son. (Is anyone starting to see a pattern here?)

9:11 to 11:17 a.m.

Road wheels! I had to paint each wheel (and all of the tracks) by hand with Vallejo black. I highly recommend that you paint the wheels before you put the tracks on. I kept getting black paint where I didn't want it, and had to spray over my many mistakes.

11:17 a.m. to 2:04 p.m.

For my post-shading, I sprayed the outer edges of each panel line and groove with what I call a "dirty spray." This consists of a 50/50 mix of Tamiya red brown (XF-64) and Tamiya flat black (XF-1), sprayed at a ratio of 40/60 percent paint to thinner. Applying this "dirty spray" not only gives the tank a weathered look, it also adds dimension to the finish, **5**.

2:04 to 2:35 p.m.

Since overall oil washes tend to darken the entire finish, I decided that I would only add a small, concentrated "pin wash" to selected areas. I thinned Vandyke brown oil paint 80 percent with Turpinoid and applied it with a No. 0 brush, **6**.

2:35 to 3:00 p.m.

I lightly dry-brushed the highest areas on the tank. Following the dark wash with some dry-brushing really brings out all of the little details.

3:00 to 4:30 p.m.

I am interrupted by loud commotion in the other room.

Apparently the baby threw up on the dog, and from the look on my wife's face, it was somehow my fault.

4:40 to 6:30 p.m.

Applied Mig pigment powders and Hudson & Allen Studios mud to the road wheels and the underside of the hull. The crosses were applied with Tech Star masks and Tamiya flat black. Finally, I applied a light touch of SnJ polishing powder to the tracks.

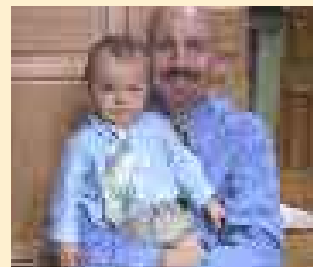
6:30 to 9:00 p.m.

Although I would like to think all of the fireworks erupting in my neighborhood are to honor me for finishing my project, I must admit I think the Fourth of July has something to do with it. Twenty or more years ago I might have put a Black Cat fire cracker in the Hetzer just to see it go up in flames, but nowadays I get a lot more satisfaction knowing that I've actually finished a model! Now where's that Fokker? **FSM**

The author would like to thank his wife and baby son for being so understanding and indulging him on his three-day building binge.

Meet Kevin Kuster

Kevin Kuster is a senior photography editor at Playboy magazine. He lives in Chicago with his wife, Kerri, and their 14-month-old son, Kaedin. This is his first piece for FineScale Modeler.



Not many armor-modeling projects involve a trip to Victoria's Secret. Clever building techniques made Kevin's knockout 1/48 scale Hetzer a fun weekend project.