

Jim Wechsler is well known to *FSM* readers as an armor modeler. When he chose to build a helicopter, he realized it might be his first. "I'm not sure if I've ever built one," he says. "Maybe when I was a kid, flying them around in my basement."



# Helpful hints for a Huey

## Basic tips for the Academy/MRC UH-1C gunship

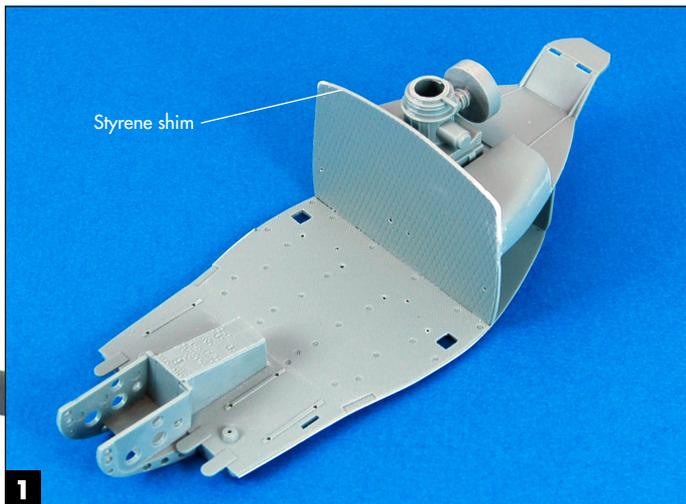
BY JIM WECHSLER

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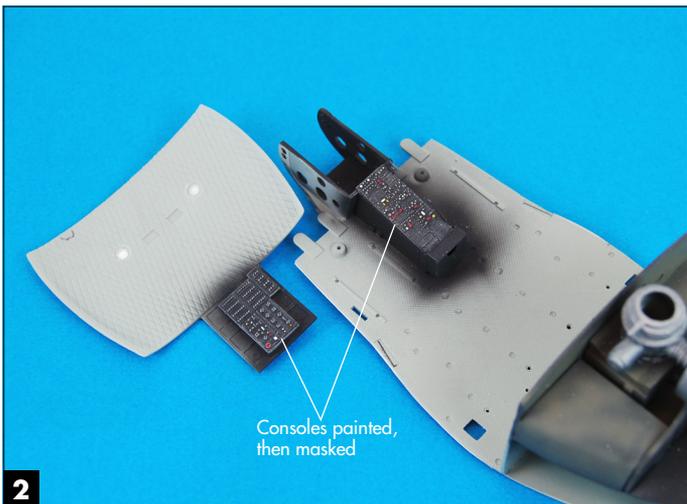
Visit our website for a guide to Jim's past articles and his book, *Building and Detailing Realistic Sherman Tanks*, available from Kalmbach Publishing.

**F**or someone who usually builds armor, the Academy/MRC 1/35 scale UH-1C Huey gunship (kit No. 12701) may seem like a strange choice. But I think of this famous Vietnam veteran as a flying armored personnel carrier packing some pretty potent ordnance.

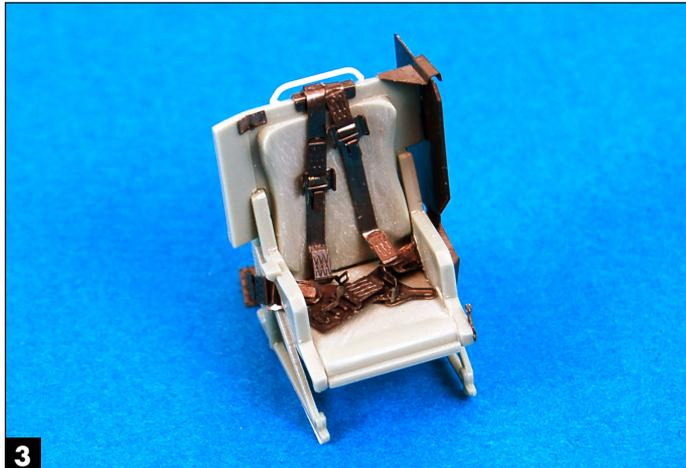
Unlike the pile of products you can add to most armor models, there is not a mountain of aftermarket goodies to augment Bell's famous chopper. However, Eduard's "Big Ed" set (No. BIG3209) provides interior and exterior details, enhancements for the armament, masks for the glass, and prepainted remove-before-flight tags. With that, I sallied forth to improve the kit.



**1** Inside, poor fits left some ugly gaps. But .010" sheet styrene served well enough for shims at the top corners of the bulkhead and along the left side of the floor. Sanding helped fit other pieces.



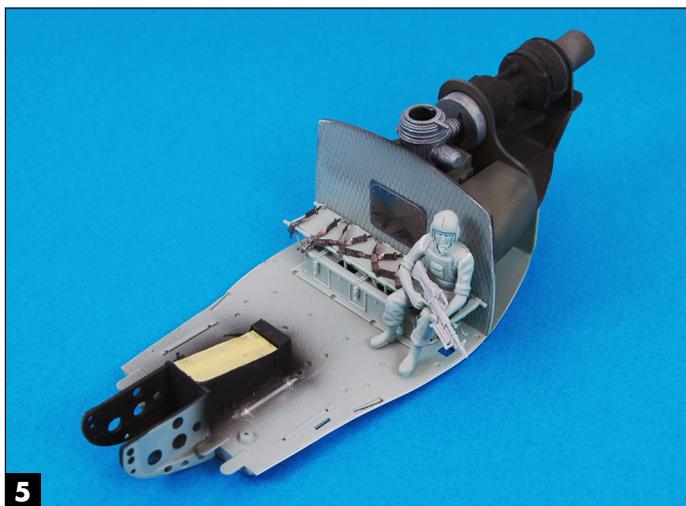
**2** Jim painted instrument consoles, but filling and sanding to fit meant much of the interior would have to be painted after it was mounted in the fuselage.



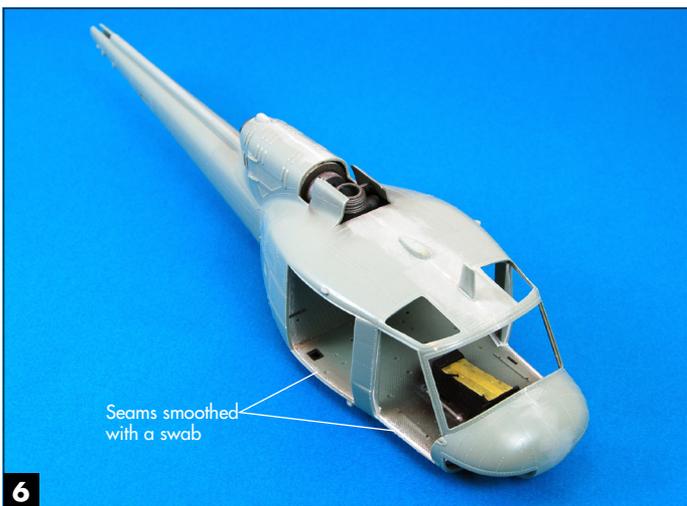
**3** Eduard provides photoetched metal inserts for the pilots' seat side panels, but Jim left them off. He did cut slots in the kit parts for the photoetched-metal belts, though — and each belt had six or more parts! "Next time, I'll add the metal buckles to masking tape," he says.



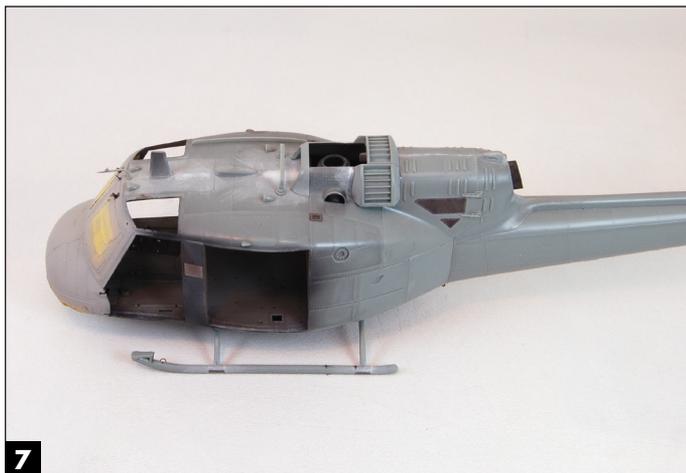
**4** Jim left the co-pilot's seat empty, but he seated the pilot figure, gluing the stick and collective in its hands to ensure a good fit at those points. The figure comes in the kit; its head is from a CMK set.



**5** The last major items before closing up the fuselage were the troop seat and ammo bins underneath it. Jim made sure the photoetched-metal seat belts were naturally mussed up. He slightly repositioned the kit figure's head and supplied an M60 from a Dragon set.



**6** Squadron white putty at the edges shows the floor's poor fit. Jim found he was better off gluing other interior elements to the fuselage rather than the floor as indicated in the instructions. He smoothed the putty while it was still wet using a cotton swab dipped in nail-polish remover.



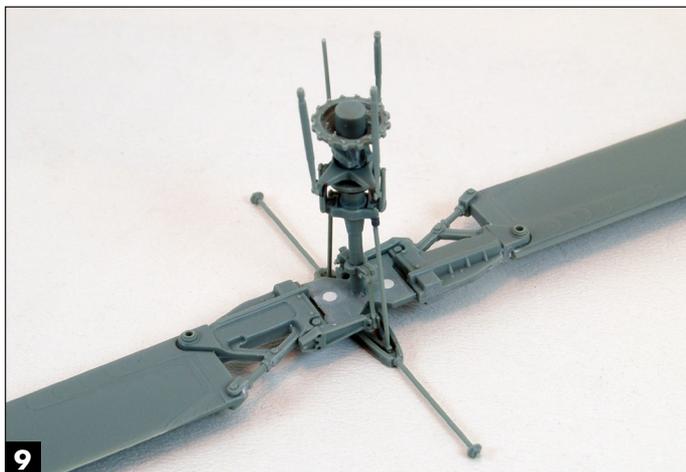
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Jim masked the instrument consoles, base-coated the interior flat black, then painted it dark gull gray.



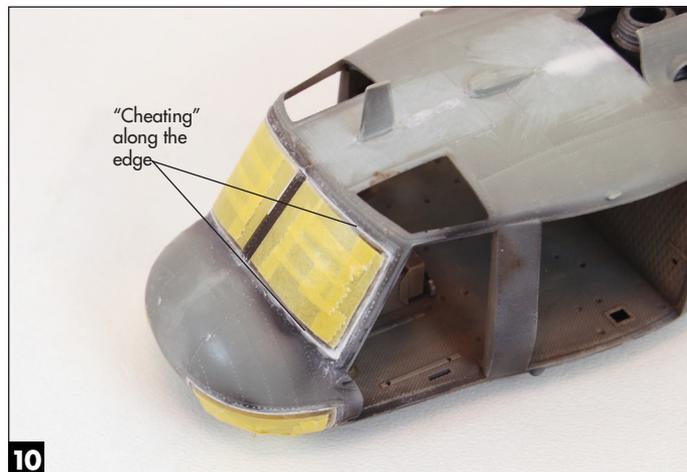
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After shaving molded details from the kit's main instrument panel, Jim glued Eduard's printed card to it and super glued the photoetched-metal plate over it. He dry-brushed with aluminum and detailed with other colors; a drop of 5-minute epoxy replicated glass on each instrument face.



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Rather than mounting the main rotor mast and linkages on the transmission according to instructions, Jim attached the assembly to the rotor blades. "The whole thing attaches to a ring on the transmission, so it's easy to mount at any time," he says. "It made sense to paint it all together and make sure it was all lined up."



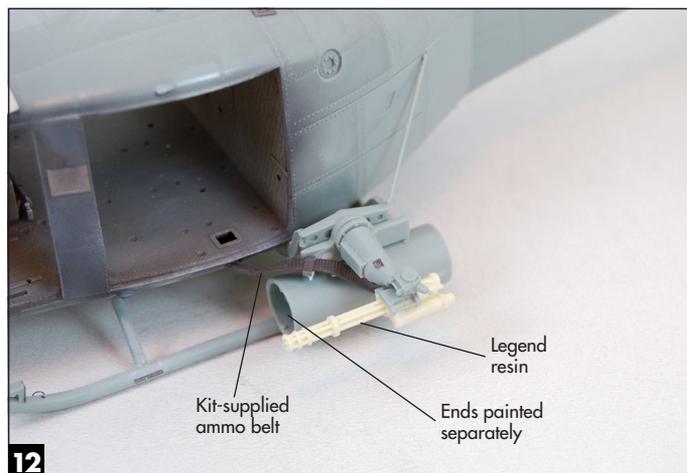
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Faced with poor-fitting glass with no molded frame on it, Jim fudged a little with the masking to "straighten" the edges. Doing so also covered bumpy blemishes left from thick sprue attachments. A bit of putty further smoothed the installation.



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Jim assembled the skids separately to ensure they were square, then mounted the fuselage on them and leveled the fit while the glue was still drying. Photoetched-metal details dot the underside — not really visible but, Jim says, "I paid for the metal, so I figured I'd use it."



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Mounting the weapons was a fiddly business; nothing aligned easily. Little of the Eduard set applied to this version's armament, and the Legend Productions resin parts presented their own set of challenges. Jim left off the ends of the rocket pods for easier painting.



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After a flat black base coat pre-shaded the exterior, Jim applied Testors Model Master olive drab (FS34087), post-shading with lightened shades. Dry-brushing with Model Master Afrika dunkelgrau picked out rivet heads and other raised details.



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Setting solution subdued the nose-art decal, but Jim couldn't get the decals at the end of the boom to behave. Instead, he painted those markings and the stripes on the tail rotor. He oversprayed a flat clear coat, then unified the finish with a wash of raw umber artist's oils and a final flat clear.



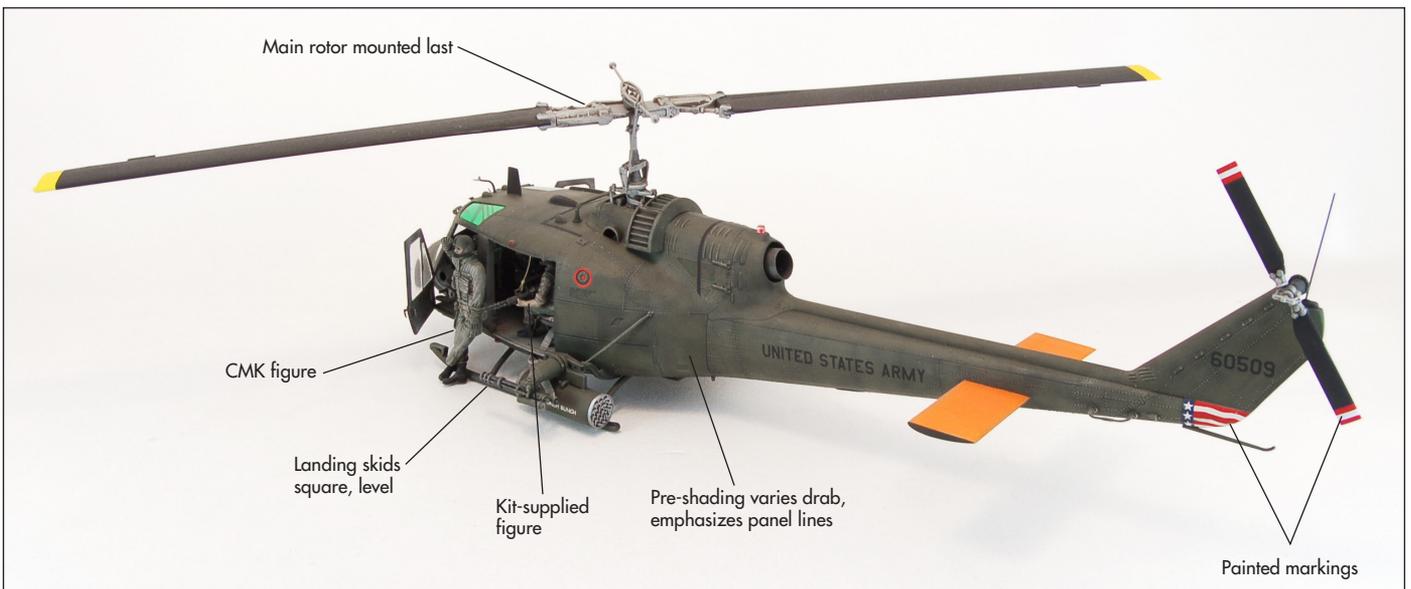
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Off came the window masks, in went the crew: The co-pilot comes from CMK; the seated door gunner comes with the kit. A segment of fine solder wire makes a good bungee cord for the gun.



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On the starboard side, a heavily modified Jaguar figure mounts his position as the other door gunner. Jim cut the figure's legs and arms to get him into this position. "I really wanted him to be climbing into the chopper, he says, "so it was worth the effort."



Jim has a friend who flew in the 240th Assault Helicopter Company, 3rd Platoon "Mad Dogs" for which this Huey is marked. His chopper was No. 30, numbers not available in the kit decals. But his friend says the color looks right to him — and that's good enough for Jim. **FSM**