



The rugged little F4F Wildcat was the only fighter available to the Navy and Marine Corps in the early months of WW II, and though not as fast or maneuverable as its prime opponent, the Japanese Zero, its brute strength gave it a final 7 to 1 ratio battle record.

GRUMMAN F4F WILDCAT

By HARRY A. BAGLEY, JR.

● The tubby, awkward, frog-like appearing little F4F Wildcat built by the Grumman "Iron Works" was the only fighter available in production quantities to the U.S. Navy during the first eighteen months of World War II. The sleek Japanese fighters could outclimb, outmaneuver, and run away from this portly barrel of sheet metal and rivets. However, the Wildcat redeemed itself by being structurally rugged, difficult to shoot down because of armor and self-sealing fuel tanks, stable and easy to fly, and able to outdive the Japanese fighters. The F4F could sustain as much as fifteen minutes of gunfire from the Zero, but could blast the enemy fighter out of the sky generally within six seconds after opening up with the four (or six) .50 caliber machine guns.

During most of the year 1942 and the first half of 1943, the scrappy F4F Wildcat won its greatest glory. In December, 1941, over Wake Island, U.S. Marine pilots got the Wildcat's first kills of the war. In the Battle of the Coral Sea, in May of 1942, the Wildcats effectively shot down at least 21 opposing carrier based aircraft in two days of fighting. At Midway, F4F squadrons helped to defeat the Japanese forces. For almost a year after June 1942, Grumman Wildcats helped break the back of the Imperial Japanese Navy in the Solomons campaign by ripping their aircraft out of the sky. The Battle of Guadalcanal was won because of the effective air cover provided by F4F's, so that U.S. dive-bombers and attack aircraft could do their telling work on en-

emy troops and installations. All in all, by the time it was replaced by later model fighters, the gutsy, beer-barrel F4F had a kill ratio of seven enemy fighters shot down for every Wildcat. Not bad for a "second rate" aircraft that turned out to be an unsung hero!

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The model built and shown is one of the early production model F4F-3 Wildcats and does *not* have an external air scoop on top of the engine cowl. It also has only four machine guns in the fixed wings, and a long, straight type pitot tube in the left wing.

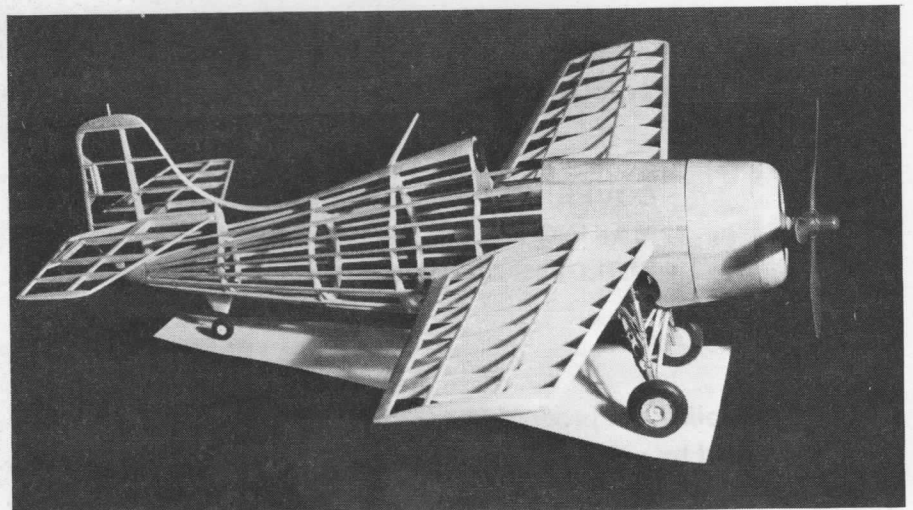
COLOR AND MARKINGS

This model depicts the specific aircraft of Commander James Thach of

VF-3, as well as the general style of markings used on production Navy fighter aircraft during late 1941 and early 1942. You can find various other markings and coloration contained in the Profile publication of "The Grumman F4F-3 Wildcat," and an excellent booklet written completely in Japanese with terrific color renderings and photos titled F4F "???", dated 1971. This Japanese booklet is called the KOKU-FAN and is the January '71, Vol. 20 No. 2 issue. It is published by Bunrin-Do Company, Ltd. and can be obtained from Beaumont Aviation Literature, 11 Bath St., London EC1.

WINGS

The wing for this model is made up



Even the framework of the Wildcat model seems more rugged than some of its contemporaries, however, with proper selection of materials, it need not be sluggish in performance.