

## How a toy started out as something much more?

By Thom Ivancso

In 2004 I was asked to restore two late 1940's diecast military vehicle toys for a display being built at the Hiller Aviation Museum in San Carlos, California <http://www.hiller.org/>. One of the toys was marked as a General Sherman M4 Medium Tank and the other was marked as a 105 MM Howitzer M7 Priest. The pictures show they were in very poor condition. The Sherman was missing the barrel of the main gun and one of the machine guns, and the paint was chipped and faded. The Priest was in even worse condition having part of its gun barrel broken off. The paint was worn off in places and the wheels were rusted solid.



My first task was to strip the paint, using a bucket of good old Castrol Super Clean and very hot water. After about six hours of soaking, the paint came off with just a little bit of rubbing with a brass brush and a wash in warm soapy water. After a good cleaning, I dried them for about an hour in the oven at 150 degrees to make sure all the internal areas were dry. I then took a wire wheeled brush attached to my Dremel and clean away as much of the rust as I could off the Priest's wheels and inside cavity. Unfortunately, the wheels on this toy will never roll again. Over time the rusted axles and the diecast have more or less welded themselves together.



After the cleaning was completed, I noticed the excellent detail in the molding of these toys. I also noticed that the scale was very close to 1/35 armour that I had built. Not having very much information on what the missing pieces looked like I decided to do some research on the web to see if any collectors might have information on these toys.

After a bit of searching I found some very good pictures of the toys and I also discovered some very interesting history as well. The toys were manufactured by the Dale Model Company of Chicago IL. The company had produced a series of diecast military land and sea toys including a DUKW. The company was closed in the late 1950's.

Further investigation revealed that the toys did not get there start at the Dale-Model Company. In 1942 the H.A. Framburg and Company Located in Chicago, IL, a manufacturer of lighting fixtures and other products was commissioned by the U.S. War Department to create land and sea vehicle I.D. Recognition Models.

I.D. Recognition Models were used to train Military and Civil Defense personnel on how to identify the difference between Allied and Axis land vehicles, ships and airplanes. This training helps to spot enemy threats more accurately and minimize on friendly fire casualties. Airplanes I.D. models were made from wood and a cellulose acetate material. Land vehicles and ships were made from diecast metals.

Here are the names of companies that produced I.D. Recognition Models.

H.A. Framburg and Company (Land vehicles and waterline ships) line later purchased by Dale and made into toys

South Salem Studios (Waterline ships) later purchased by Comet Metal Products 1943

Cruver Company of Chicago (Airplanes 1/72 from cellulose acetate)

Comet Model Airplane and Supply Co (Carved wooden airplanes)

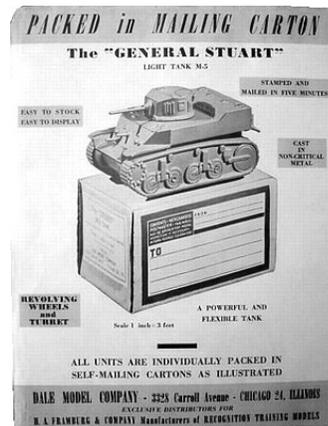
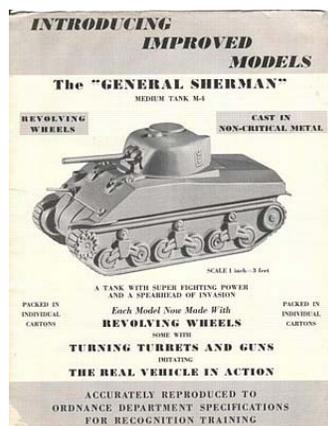
Comet Metal Products / Authenticast (Ships, planes, trucks)

Tremco from England

Wiking Models (Germany waterline ships of the Third Reich)

Framburg created I.D. models in the following scales: ships were built in (1:1200) and a larger scale (1:500), and land vehicle models were built in (1:36). All the models were cast as a single one-piece construction without any moving parts and the land vehicles were cast hollow with a large oval hole in the bottom.

At the end of WWII H.A. Framburg and Company decided that it wanted to return to the lighting business and stopped producing the models. An employee of the company named Mr. Dale made an offer to buy all the molds for the models and opened his own business. Mr. Dale made changes over the course of time to the one-piece models to include the wheels and making moveable turrets and guns. This allowed him to distribute them as toys instead of I.D. models. The toys I was restoring must have been between changes -- they had wheels added but the Sherman was still a one-piece casting. Even though Mr. Dale bought the rights to produce the models, the Dale Model brochures for the toys produced had to state that *Dale Model Company* was the "official distributor" for Framburg.



Here are two of the web sites that I found with information on both the Dale Model Company and H.A. Framburg and Company.

<http://www.jeep22.freemove.co.uk/Dale%20Jeep%20Model.htm>

<http://www.geocities.com/mikestanks/RecognitionModels.htm>

With all this information in hand, I began to restore the missing bits to the two toys. I added the main barrel of the Sherman by taking a 10-32 bolt and cutting the head off. I then tapped the opening in the toy to take the threaded end, cutting back the bolt back to match the pictures I found. After gluing this in place with CA, I then added the lower front machine gun barrel by using a 6-penny finishing nail trimmed to the right length and glued into place with CA.



The Priest restoration was a little harder. I first I needed to find a piece of material the same size as the broken off piece of the barrel. After measuring, I got a piece of brass rod that was about 5/32 in diameter, just a little bit bigger than the barrel but not much. I then took a diamond cutter in my Dremel and cut off the broken section of the old barrel and cut back into the gun an 1/8 inch to give me a area for the barrel to sit on. I then glued this into place with some more CA and hit it with accelerator to harden it up nicely. I also built a small .50 caliber machine gun from brass shapes and tube to replace the one that was missing from copula.



I then filed all the nicked up areas on both toys and gave them a wipe down with alcohol before painting.

I primed both toys by brush painting them using Floquil PollyS Zinc Chromate Primer TS-FLO 414293.



Once this had dried, I then painted them using Tamiya Acrylic XF-58 Olive Green thinned down to use in my airbrush. After letting two coats of paint dry completely, I over-sprayed them with a flat sealer to protect the paint.



They were delivered to the museum a week later and will be on display soon. My understanding is they will be rolling out of a transport plane in the display.

That is how a small toy started out as something more and had an important role in the history of WWII.