

History of Paper Modeling in the United States (H&B Precision Card Models)

By Peter Heesch / Matt Vance

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H&B Precision Card Modeling was conceived in Brussels in 1991 when Siegfried Wolter and Peter Heesch, Jr. represented their respective countries at a NATO conference. Both discovered over a beer one evening that they were getting ready to retire and were looking forward to the next chapter in their lives. They agreed to cooperate and participate at the 1992 Chicago Toy Show. During the preparation for the show Peter Heesch became aware of the fact that Siegfried Wolter was the owner of the Moewe Verlag and the “toys” were the prestigious line of Wilhelmshaven Modellbaubogen, or card models (typically referred to as paper models in the U.S.).

It really is unfair to call them “toys”. A much more accurate term would be art. Peter was impressed with the beauty of the unbuilt Wilhelmshaven card models and correspondingly, their assembled counterparts. To both encourage and entice interest in the models, Peter knew immediately he wanted to include color photos in any future advertising he produced.

Prior to the 1992 Chicago Toy show, having never made a card model, and beyond what Siegfried Wolter had shared with him, Peter was unaware of the diversity, beauty, and detail available in card models. At the show, he was excited by the interest shown by the general public and looked forward to being involved with Siegfried and his excellent selection of superb card models. Based on the public response in Chicago, Peter was eager to pursue supporting Wilhelmshaven in the U.S., fully aware of the fact that Lou Dausse of PMI (Paper Models International) also represented Wilhelmshaven in the U.S. Despite the intense interest in the fully assembled paper models at this and other shows Peter realized that large U.S. card model sales would be unlikely in a market dominated by the more well-established PMI and he decided that supporting Wilhelmshaven would have to be a “second” job taking a back seat to his primary work from which he needed to live.

Over the course of the next 25 years, the Wolters (Christa and Siegfried) and the Heeschs (Marcy and Peter) became very close friends, visiting each other often to enjoy each other’s company, visit local highlights and discuss the relationship between the two companies. Peter’s return to the U.S. was delayed until 1998 as he remained in Bonn while his wife continued to teach at the American school system in the American Embassy community. Consequently, it was necessary to solicit the assistance of Marcy’s brother Jim Byrne in Nashua, New Hampshire. As Jim started the work of registering a company in the U.S., he and Peter came up with the name H&B Precision Card Models which reflected the family names of the two, e.g., Heesch and Byrne. As they traveled to another show in the U.S., Peter Heesch and Siegfried Wolter visited Nashua to introduce Jim and his wife Maria to the ins and outs of the card model business. An inventory of Wilhelmshaven built-up models, as well as kits, was transferred to the U.S. to support show participation and fill orders.

While Peter remained in Germany until 1998, both he and Siegfried Wolter continued to participate in the Chicago and New York Toy Shows. Interest was always very high and although show sales were good, there was, in spite of the impressive nature of the Wilhelmshaven line of card models, only small interest from hobby shops in carrying card models. It appeared that with the vast size of the U.S. and the number of card model enthusiasts scattered around the country that another plan was needed in order to reach those interested in card models. Peter ultimately focused on two marketing strategies, the development of his mail-order catalog and an established presence at hobby shows.

Prior to returning to the U.S. permanently in 1998, Peter established contact with the Dutch Leon Schuijt Models, Polish JSC Models, the German firms of CFM, HMV, JF Schreiber and Waldmann GmbH, and the Australian firm of LJ Models. From Frau Waldmann, Peter also obtained a large selection of Maly Modelarz kits.

Upon his return to the U.S., Peter attempted once more to expose more hobbyists to card modeling by attending the East Coast Hobby Show (1998-2003), the Toronto Hobby Show (2000-2003), the National Model Railroad Show (1999), the Western Ship Model Convention and Exhibit on the Queen Mary (2002), and perhaps the most important event the 2nd International Paper Modelers' Convention (IPMC) in Dayton, Ohio in 1998. Peter was excited by the enthusiasm of the participants in the Dayton IPMC show – it gave him first hand exposure to hobbyists who were avid about making a three dimensional piece of art from a flat piece of paper.

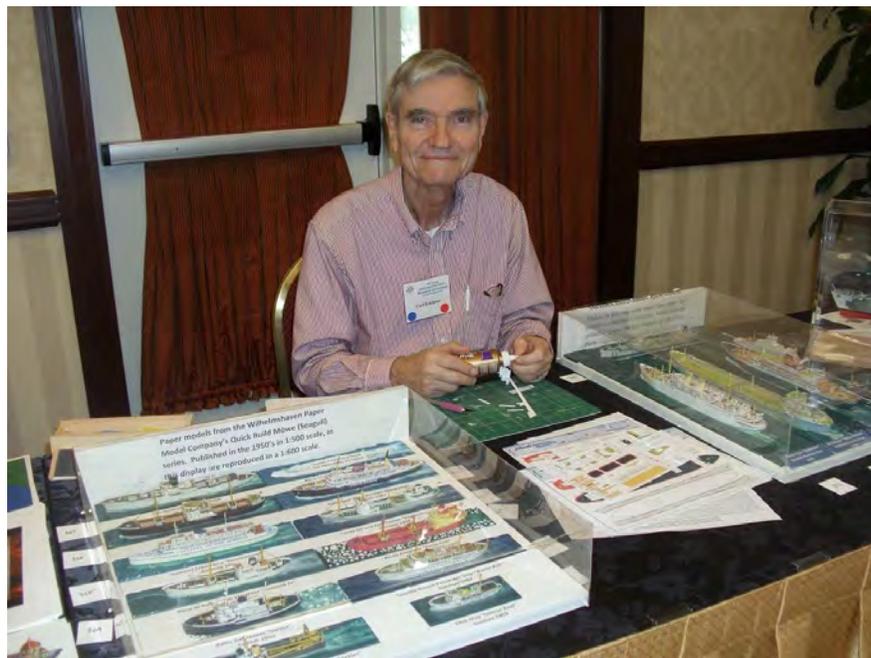


Figure 1. Carl Erickson and his well-organized fleet of exclusively Wilhelmshaven ships. Carl has been a stalwart displayer and dedicated “Make-And-Take” table facilitator at every East Coast IPMC helping numerous new card modelers with the basic construction techniques. Carl also does an outstanding job at modeling water and ship wakes, which significantly enhances his display.



Figure 2. Always popular with IPMC show attendees was Bill Evell's motorized GELI DC-3, 1/33 (approximately 3 ft / 1 m wingspan). He scratch-built a complete interior including the cockpit and passenger cabin. The adjacent yellow fuel bowser was the storage device for two D-cell batteries with powered the DC-3. Bill would let the aircraft run for the entire duration of a show, about 7-hours per day. Very impressive. In the background are engine components, nose wheels/strut, and air stair for Bill's next project – the GELI Caravelle, also 1/33; would have been huge!

Peter even participated in the “Make-And-Take” model offer that Jim Adams (Flying Fun models) produced and distributed to the attendees so that they could have fly-offs with the model airport that Jim brought to the show. Peter fondly recalls releasing his newly-crafted flying models from the second floor balcony of the hotel, aiming for a perfect landing on the (of course: paper) runway.



Figure 3. A happily engaged family, and a friend, at an IPMC “Make-And-Take” table.

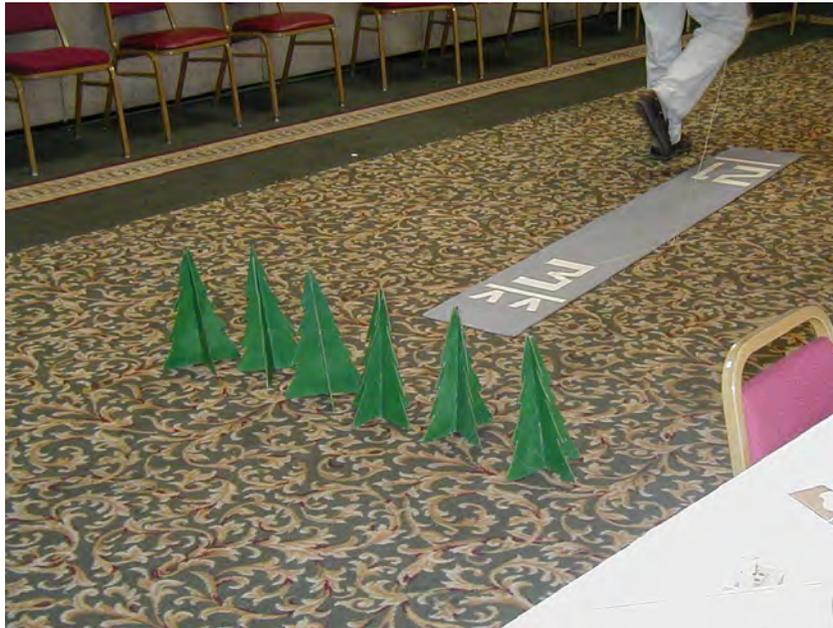


Figure 4. A paper runway, complete with accurate conifer obstructions, was the typical target for the annual “Make-And-Take” fly off competition held in the earlier years of the IPMC.

It became clear to Peter that his role would be supporting the annual meetings of these very special folks. When Myles Mandel (a prolific U.S. Micromodel collector and promoter) was no longer able to support the convention and it became obvious that there was greater interest than that which could come to Dayton, Peter supported the decision to move the convention to Washington, DC suburbs which was more centrally located and easily accessible. The move has been validated by a continuous IPMC presence for all but one (2007) of the last 18 years, in the same geographic location.

With the American card modeler icons John Hathaway (John Hathaway Imported Hobbies), Lou Dausse (PMI) and Myles Mandell as examples of devoted support of the hobby, Peter, as the owner of H&B Precision Card models, experimented with both traditional and unique ways to support the modelers focused on the medium of card (paper). The traditional methods used by both John Hathaway and Lou Dausse included advertising in hobby magazines such as Scale Modeler and Fine Scale Modeler magazine, and presenting an annually-updated catalog to current and prospective customers. H&B adopted both traditional methods for about 10 years. Peter methodically developed over the years, 1994 until 2004, a full-color, 60-page catalog of products available from H&B Precision Card Models.



Figure 5. Here is the entire run of nine H&B color catalogs starting with 1994 in the upper left and concluding with 2004 in the lower right corner. The catalog matured significantly from a modest black & white reprint of stock Wilhelmshaven promotional documentation to a collectable, color reference guide on the state of what was available in the card model hobby for that respective year – the inclusion of color was unique to H&B; PMI never produced a print color catalog.



Figure 6. This logo was designed for H&B by Thomas Pleiner in the 1990's, and continues as the company logo today.

In the H&B catalog development process, kits from Alcan (Spanish), Birdmobile (British), Flying Fun Models (American), Fly Models (Polish), GPM (Polish), Halinski (Polish), JSC (Polish), Kennilworth Press (American), MTP (German), Norbert Meier (German), Papmobil (German), Tru-Flite (American) and Wurlington Bros. Press (American) were added to the Wilhelmshaven products being offered.

H&B Precision Card Models produced its first catalog in 1994, while modest in length and predominately black & white typeset, Peter remained true to his conviction and featured four, full-page color photos of completed Wilhelmshaven card models. The business was incorporated in Vienna, VA in April 1995 and Peter convinced his sister to process the H&B orders from her Virginia home until Peter's permanent return to the U.S. in 1998. Over the next decade his catalog grew into a collector's booklet and was expanded far beyond the Wilhelmshaven line, it included full color photos, or icons, of nearly every offering, and the last catalog produced in 2004 included an advertisement for the now established, 2004 East Coast U.S. IPMC (International Paper Modeler's Convention). In 1995 Peter also started an H&B Precision Card Models exclusive – American Friends of Wilhelmshaven Newsletter.



Figure 7. This is the entire run of 45 “Friends of Wilhelmshaven Models” newsletters starting with Vol 1, Issue 1, 1995 shown in the upper left-hand corner, to the final issue Vol 12, Issue 1 in 2006. All issues from Vol 6, Issue 4 in 2000 included an increasing use of color photos and model cover sheet icons. The last three years included color photos/icons on every page.

In spite of the direct competition with Lou Dausse (PMI), both companies prospered and reinforced the other’s position in the marketplace. It is almost always beneficial to the consumer when a market is not monopolized by one vendor. Peter’s efforts complimented Lou’s and vice versa. By 1998 PMI was planning its market exit (which did not actually occur until 2008), so the 1994 market entry timing of H&B Precision Card Models appears to have been fortuitous and synergistic for both companies as a new U.S. distributor would carry the card modeling torch forward after PMI ceased operations.

Peter never considered Lou Dausse of PMI a competitor as PMI was much larger and well-established. Both companies sold Wilhelmshaven models which gave them a common bond in Siegfried Wolter. H&B was not a threat to PMI and Lou felt free to and generously offered Peter advice. Peter did advertise in some of the same magazines, but felt that the investment was not worth the return. Peter realized that spreading his reputation by word-of-mouth and delivering kits at reasonable prices would be the key to

any success – when Jon Murray (of Florissant, MO U.S.) stopped producing his “Cardformation” newsletter, Peter tried to step into the void left by his wonderful publication.

Peter’s unique contribution as a distributor was his club newsletter. His American “Friends of Wilhelmshaven Models”, quarterly newsletter, with an annual fee of \$10 provided subscribers’ updates on new models, build reports, show information and most generously, a 10% discount for all models sold by H&B Precision Card Models. This quarterly publication ran uninterrupted for 10 years and frequently included multiple “freebies”; examples include: Altes Rathaus-Munich/Isartor-Munich postcards; CFM 1/50 Heinkel He 178; Build-Your-Own-Chicago Water tower, Tribune Tower, Elevated Train, and Wrigley Field; Tru-Flight Models; Jack Armstrong/Wallis Rigby P-40 Christmas/Holiday card with envelope; Pleiner Models 1/160 Royal Bavarian Railroad Country Station, and Double-Decker (London) Bus. However, lacking the skills to make the models himself, Peter was also savvy enough to realize that in order to keep his newsletter relevant and vibrant he had to rely on input from those with card modeling experience. After 10 years, due to increasing demands from his primary/full-time job, Peter made the painful decision to stop publishing his newsletter. This was also about the time that an online presence developed for those enthusiasts who wanted to share their experiences, both in construction as well as design. One of the most developed, highly-trafficked, U.S.-based forums is moderated by Rick Steffers, “Paper Modelers – Paper Beats Rock Everytime”; available here: <http://www.papermodelers.com/>.



Figure 8. The selection of “Friends of Wilhelmshaven Models” newsletter freebies was diverse and purposefully did not follow a theme, nor constant scale. The choices were comprised of primarily publisher donations and were included to generate interest in the card model hobby and as a ‘thank you’ to loyal newsletter subscribers.

Peter settled on the non-traditional and unique marketing strategy of helping sponsor the International Paper Modelers' Conventions (IPMC) which started in 1998 in Dayton OH, moved to Fairfax County, VA in 2001, and in 2006 to adjoining Loudon County, VA where the show is still held annually in the fall (show website: <http://ipmc-info.org/>). Peter personally underwrote the costs of the show not covered by registrations to encourage participation, collegiality and interest in the card model hobby. The show has become not only, an impressive display of the hobby, and a face-to-face forum to compare techniques, trends, share and acquire unique models, but a social gathering of now close friends. This investment in the IPMC supplanted his hard copy catalog / newsletter publishing in preparation for the eventual, planned and inevitable transition to a digital H&B hobby presence. The following series of figures (9-14) illustrate the variety and quality of typical IPMC offerings.



Figure 9. Roman Detyna and his Digital Navy ships protected under custom Plexiglas cases are 100% museum-quality card models difficult to discern that they are made from card. There is never a seam or crease in a compound curve in Roman's models and this makes the ship hulls so impressively convincing. Roman won ~~one~~ the first People's Choice award at the 2008 IPMC with his Digital Navy U.S. Fletcher Class Destroyer, 1/200.



Figure 10. Siegfried Wolter (Wilhelmshaven Modellbaubogen) and Chip Fynn (Fiddler's Green) confer on the mechanics of digital card model design before Chip gave an outstanding, humorous, provocative presentation at the 2001 IPMC titled, "Creating Card Models".



Figure 11. Peter Heesch and his meticulously inventoried, always in publisher's numerical order, display of conventional and out-sized card models for sale at the 2006 IPMC. Each manufacturer/publisher is presented in their own oversized "milk crate". This show format

doubles as a storage mechanism and a handy method for customers to efficiently review Peter's for-sale inventory. He continues to make use of these dependable "milk crates" today.



Figure 12. Michael Scalingi's Orlik PBJ B-25, 1/33. This model unanimously won the 2010 IPMC People's Choice award and is an amazing display of craftsmanship. Not evident in this picture is the accurate crisscross pattern in the tread of all three tires. Note the accompanying Clark Tow Tractor – which was not included in this model. Mike scratch-built this as an add-on.



Figure 13. Michael Scalingi's scratch-built 1/33 Clark Tow Tractor. Representative of the WWII period U.S. aircraft ground handling equipment. Hard to believe it's really paper!



Figure 14. The 2013 IPMC People's Choice 1st Place award: Tomasz Kalato's incredible Komatsu Bulldozer. It was inconceivable that this was really a card model. The diorama and earth stained weathering was very convincing that you were viewing a full-size vehicle. Scale 1/20.

Over the course of the years, Peter Heesch worked with the other organizers of the IPMC including Myles Mandell, Peter Ansoff, Alan Wheeler, Steve Brown and Matt Vance to set a cadence for this show and bring major American and international players in the card modeling industry to the convention. These industry players, really card model luminaries, have included alphabetically, Jim Adams (Flying Fun models), Lou Dausse (Paper Models International), Robert Freidus (donator of over 4,000 kits to display at the British Victoria and Albert Museum), Bob Fudus (Tru-Flite models), Chip Fyn (Fiddler's Green), Thomas Pleiner (MTP Studios), Alan Rose (designer for Doubleday), A.G. Smith (designer for Dover Books), David Toor (Kennilworth Press), Peter Visser (icebergbauplatten), Siegfried Wolter (Moewe Verlag), and Peter Zorn (designer for Crown Publishing). Peter even worked with Bartek Czolczyriska of JSC and Thomas Pleiner (MTP Studios) to develop free card models that could be used by anyone visiting the conventions to construct at the "Make-And-Take" table supported by other participants in the convention. Matt Bergstrom of Wurlington Bros. Press (www.wurlington-bros.com) has generously designed a show-themed model for each show since 2010.



Figure 15. Lou Dausse (PMI) on the left, visits with Peter Visser (icebergbouwplaten.nl), on the right at the 2001 IPMC. This was the first IPMC visit for both card model publishers.

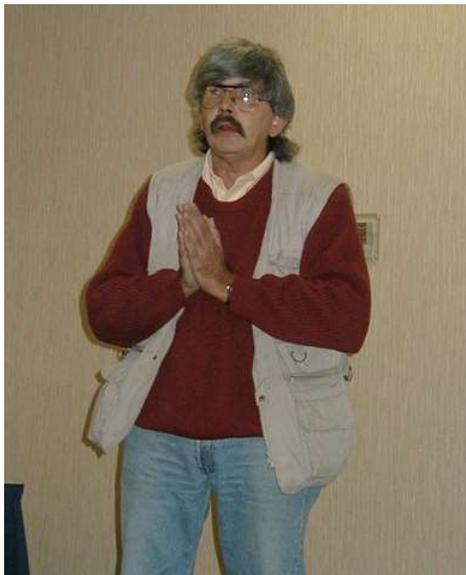


Figure 16. Peter Zorn was the guest speaker at the 2003 IPMC – his engaging discussion was titled, “A Personal Design History in Paper”, which included a completely credible Berretta 45 firearm card model replica.

Over the past nearly 25 years, Peter has watched the growth of the Internet and its effect on card modeling. In the 1990's the majority of kits came from established publishers. After the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Iron Curtain there was a major improvement paper/printing quality and availability of East European model kits. As the Internet grew and designer software became available, there was a tremendous increase in the number of individuals designing new kits and making them available to others over the Internet either for free or for inexpensive pricing. While this is a boon for the individual modeler, it has put significant pressure on the established publishers who must find new

ways to face this challenge. Card model kits are now much easier to obtain from manufacturers around the world although shipping costs rival the actual price of the kits. In light of these developments, H&B Precision Card Models is maturing an inventory system whereby it can offer the kits from major manufacturers as well as the thousands of kits it has acquired from estate sales to modelers over the Internet.

Some of the more interesting publishers included in this growing estate inventory are (alphabetically): A. Scholtz Verlag, AG Industries, Albatros, Alcan, Alphagraphix, Andrzej Halinski, Arcatura, Avia Verlag, B&G Wetherby Ltd, Balermann & Son, Bellerophon Books, Bilteezi, Brumtrams, Chenier Fighting Fleets, Crown Publishers, Deutsches Schiffahrtsmuseum, Dover Publications, Ediciones Merino, Editions Pascaline, Editions Serti, Editoriale Domus, Eduprint, English Village Designs, Fly Model, GELI Technischer Modellbogen, GPM, Hobby Model, Ingenia Constructions de precision, Jade Verlag, JFS Modelbaubogen, JFS-Modell, Schreiberbogen, Schreibers Technische Modellbaubogen, John Hathaway, JSC, KM Anderson, Kartonowa (Encyklopedia Lotnictwa, Kolekcja and Swiat), Keddig Druck u. Verlag, Ketty & Alexandre, Kraftwerk Union AG, La Ciutat de paper, Landarte Graphics, Lehrmittelinstitut, Leon Schuijt, LJ Models, Magyar Media, Maly Modelarz, Meta Model, Mini-Mansion Model, Model Card, Modelcraft Micromodels, Modelik, Monte Enterprises/Models, Muenchner Kartonmodelle, Paedagogischer Verlag, Paper Shipwright, Passat Verlag, Peregee Books, Port Daniel Press, Proacteam Hobby, Salvatella, Sjoerd Hekking Bouwplaten, Superquick, Tarquin Publications, Usborne Publishing LTD., and, of course, Wilhelmshaven.

In August of 2018, Peter Heesch published his first estate inventory, shared with the historical distribution list of IPMC show attendees and H&B customers (this list is obtainable by request) which featured 6,485 (!) inventoried card models – all of which were for sale. This is an amazing service to the hobby, as private collections, overstock, or currently published models can now be redistributed to eager and willing new card modelers. If you would like to have the current estate inventory offered by H&B Precision models, please contact Peter at hbprecisioncard@cs.com. Peter is also now actively selling his inventory on eBay. You can find his offerings from eBay seller [hbpreci_59](#).

As H&B Precision Card Models focuses forward, its primary market role will be the redistribution, of models to new, interested owners via electronic venues. This electronic connectivity will help perpetuate card models to the next generation and allow a much more fluid, accurate and up-to-date inventory system to be reviewed by prospective card modelers.