1/72 Fujimi Nakajima Ki-43-I (64th Sentai, Tateo Katou)

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Country: Australia, Sydney

Model Scale: 1/72

Kit Maker: Fujimi

Greetings all,

A brief introduction, I'm Alex Tran from Sydney Australia. My history of plastic kit modelling began when I was a kid in early 2000s, building planes for fun and leaving them unpainted. I picked up the hobby again over 10 years later, slowly collecting and building niche kits of planes/ships from the Japanese arcade games that I liked following and playing. I was still an amateur and barely used any paint or other basics like putty and wanted to improve my skills, especially for the small stash of limited edition kits that I had accumulated. It was 2 years ago when I started to take this seriously. After realising that information about fundamentals was lacking in the field of kits that I had, I decided to venture into conventional kits, learning and practicing more techniques from the plethora of knowledge there. At the same time, I had developed a great interest in the Imperial Japanese Navy and its rich history after having an interest in the anthropomorphic web game Kantai Collection. From there, I decided to focus on building Imperial Japanese war birds that I grew to like a lot.

Up to this point, the following build is my 12th legitimate and completed build since starting the hobby again and I thought it was time to have it posted up somewhere on the net. The airframe to be built is from the 64th Sentai, piloted by the Imperial Japanese Army ace Tateo Katou. The build was started late last year, left on a short hiatus and finally completed for this competition with two days to spare.

Work in Progress:

Figure **1.** (26/12/2016) I picked up this preowned kit during my research stay in Japan a few months earlier. The kit was started on Boxing Day primarily with an interest in the box art's yellow drop tanks (which I soon sadly realised to be erroneous).

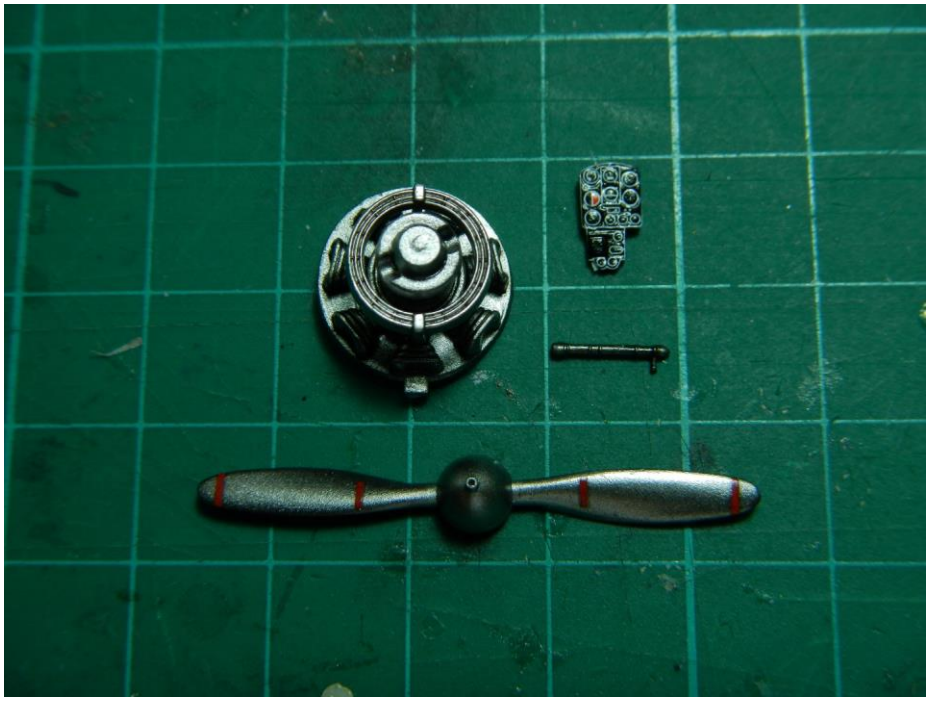

Figure 2. (26/12/2016) The engine, cockpit dashboard, telescopic gunsight and propeller were first completed. A small hole was drilled into the centre of the propeller starter for more realism. All metallic parts were first sprayed with Alclad gloss black primer before spraying metallic pigments (Tamiya gunmetal acrylic for engine and gunsight and Alclad polished aluminium lacquer for the rest). Kit decals, printed by Cartograf, were used for the dashboard and propeller markings. A flat

black-brown enamel wash (Humbrol 85 and 186) was applied over the engine pieces to bring out their details. All parts from here on were sealed with Pascoe's Long Life floor acrylic which works brilliantly in my opinion.

Figure 3. (27/12/2016) After some more research, I realised that Fujimi's paint scheme was most likely inaccurate and decided to follow those of same plane produced by Hasegawa in 1/48 scale. This also gave me the opportunity to try using Humbrol liquid mask for paint chipping. This was brushed onto a few areas of the spinner cap and back plate before masking the blades, starter and engine and spraying with Tamiya matte white acrylic. The liquid mask was finally removed using masking tape.

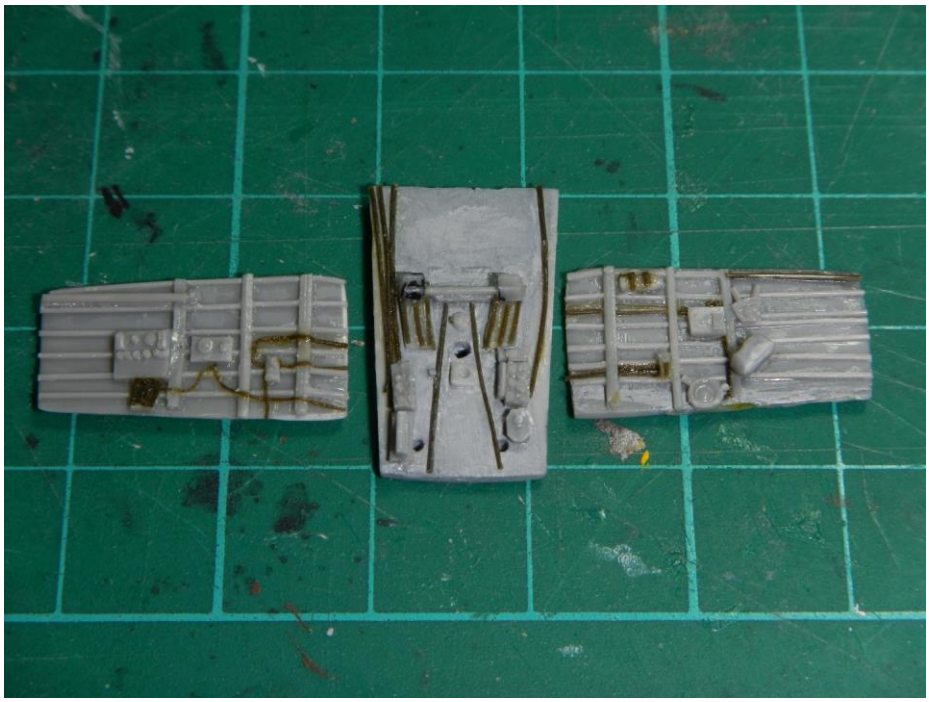

Figure 4. (30/12/2016) As the cockpit of this kit is plain without detail or equipment along with a lack of readily available aftermarket resin or photo etch detail sets for a 1/72 Ki-43, I decided to scratch build my own based on the cockpit of the highly detailed 1/48 Ki-43 kit from Hasegawa and photo references of the real plane. At this point, I was unfamiliar with scratch building and was not aware of the use of styrene. Hence, I used spare sprue from previous kits, the original cockpit base and stretched sprue, carved, shaped and cemented into places for the 3 pieces. Each piece took approximately 4 hours to build. The next step is to resin cast these pieces, replicating more for future use.

Figure 5. (01/01/2017) Finished in an hour, just before the New Year fireworks, scratch built machine gun bodies (upper rectangles) and some sort of equipment (lower rectangles) which I believe was present on late war Ki-43 planes based on a diagram from a book. These were made from spare sprue, basic machine gun bodies from a previous Zero kit and stretched sprue and could be cut off later for the Ki-43-I.

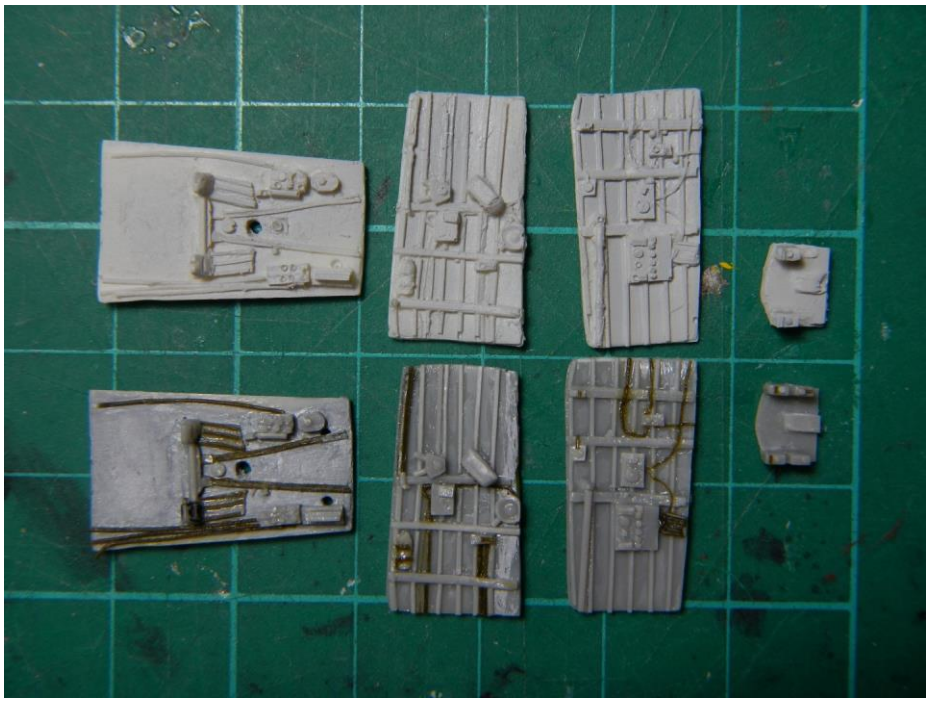

Figure 6. (01/01/2017) The pieces were casted and the results are indeed worth it for myself. Left are the original parts, right are resin casted parts sprayed with grey primer. The machine gun bodies unfortunately could not be casted properly and so were made from spare parts once again. Overall, not perfect but good enough for personal use.

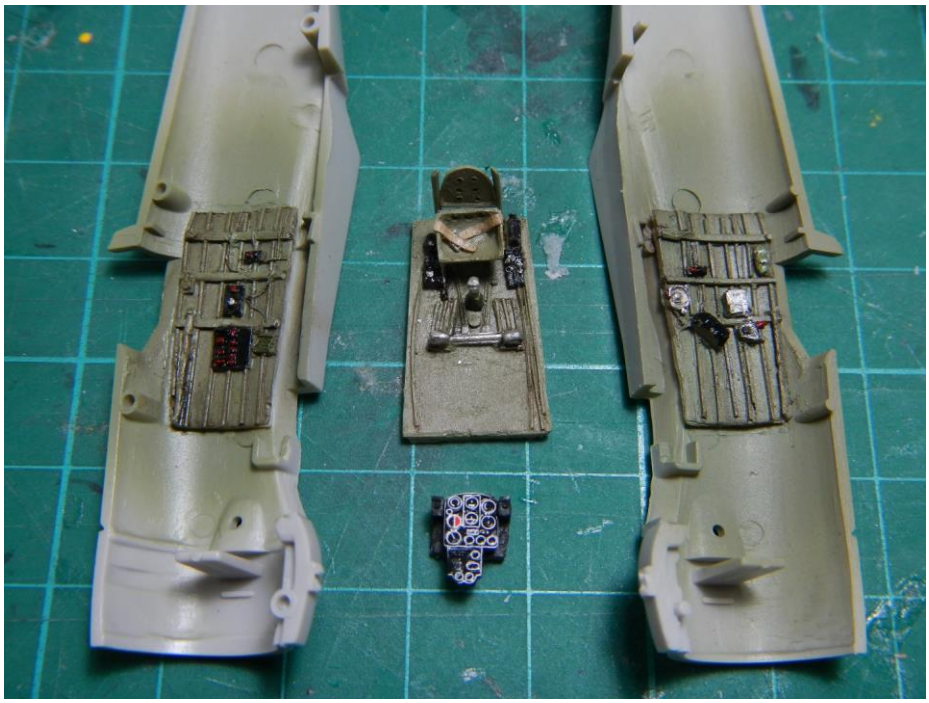

Figure 7. (01/01/2017) All cockpit parts are finally completed Parts were sprayed with a blend of Tamiya grey-green and tan acrylics to create a cockpit colour similar Nakajima's cockpit. Equipment were hand painted with acrylics and sealed before going over everything with a dark brown wash to enhance detail and weather it. The kit's seat and joystick was used. Holes were drilled in the seats just like the real ones. Seat belts were scratch built from masking tape and stretched sprue for the buckle. It was a bit sad to see that majority of this will be out of view once the fuselage was put

together, especially with the canopy on. From here, I took a little break and continued writing my PhD thesis and field work.

A quick tip I've recently learned for those unaware, when resin casting opaque pieces, dust your silicon moulds with baby/talcum powder before casting, this will help the resin flow into gaps more easily, hence minimising the presence of air bubbles.

Figure 8. (28/01/2017) Back into it and after looking at more reference photos and Hasegawa's 1/48 Ki-43-I paint scheme, I realised that the engine's oil cooler was inaccurate. Therefore, I repainted it with copper and added 4 extra brackets made from masking tape painted with Alclad polished aluminium lacquer which were also secured from the back with PVA glue. A black-brown enamel wash was finally brushed over and sealed to bring out the details.

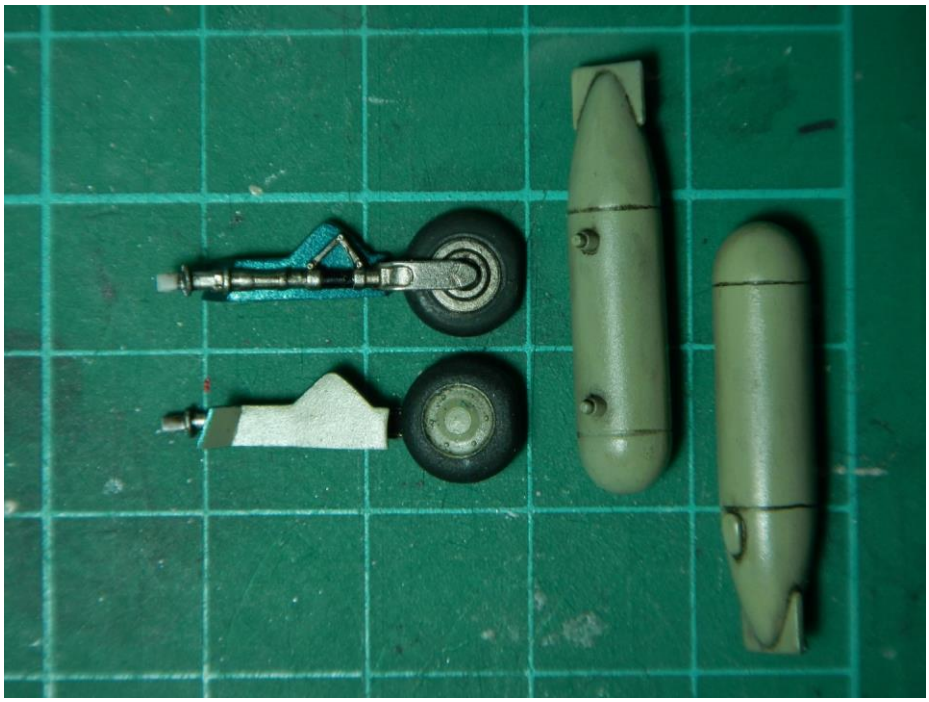

Figure 9. (28/01/2017) Landing gears and fuel drop tanks completed following Hasegawa's paint scheme once again. The inner side of the landing gear covers of the were painted with a mixture of Tamiya metallic blue and clear green acrylics to create an Aotake colour. The outer surfaces and fuel tanks were painted in Tamiya grey-green acrylic and metallic parts were painted with Alclad polished aluminium lacquer. All parts were weathered with a black-brown enamel wash.

Figure 10. (29/01/2017) Majority of the airframe was glued together with seams puttied and some panel lines were re-scribed. Additional lines were also scribed on the both the top and underside of the airframe. Note that the left-wing lamp was covered up for this airframe. At this point, I was contemplating on riveting the model but decided not to as it could be inaccurate and overdone. Hypothetically speaking, based on a piece of an A6M3 that I own, if riveting were to be similar for

this plane and done accurately at 1/72 scale, then the distance between rivets in a single line would be 0.21 mm with each rivet being 0.07 mm large.

Figure 11. (29/01/2017) The underside. Leftover black primer was used to paint one wheel well before I ran out. Afterwards, the canopy interior was painted and the canopy was cemented on. However, the fit was poor and so I made the mistake of applying some pressure onto it (bad choice), resulting in some cracking on the rear window and sink lines in the fuselage. This was quickly removed and fuselage was cleaned up. Hence, the hiatus began (along with lots of lab work). This tragedy may have been a godsend as I learnt about the existence of vacuform canopies shortly after and their possibility of saving my scratch built cockpit from eternal darkness. I then proceeded to obtain a pair made by Tasman Model Products.

Figure 12. (07/05/2017) Rebuilding finally commences again 3 months later.
Here, Alclad black primer was applied and reapplied after remaining seams were puttied and sanded. The airframe's engine, cockpit and canopy interior was masked and sprayed with Tamiya flat aluminium acrylic and sealed with 3 layers of Pascoe's. This will be the basis for the hair spray chipping method that I had recently learnt about as well.

Figure 13. (07/05/2017) Before spraying colours, the plane was sprayed with a thin layer of decanted Schwarzkopf hair spray. White was then sprayed for the fuselage stripe and masked before spraying the top with Mr Hobby Aqueous dark green acrylic. At this point, the model was left unsealed.

Figure 14. (07/05/2017) Wheel wells were primed with black primer, painted with the same Aotake mixture, sealed and masked. Holes were also drilled for installing a brake hose made from metal

wire. The underside of the aircraft was randomly pre-shaded with Tamiya red brown acrylic and painted in Tamiya grey green acrylic. The underside was also left unsealed.

Figure 15. (07/05/2017) Using a stiff wet paint brush, certain areas were brushed to dissolve the underlying hairspray layer, resulting in the removal of paint to reveal the underlying metallic layer to simulate paint chipping. This was lightly repeated below as well.
Here, I realised that this effect appeared to be more difficult to achieve with Tamiya acrylics compared to Mr Hobby Aqueous acrylics. To achieve the effect in Tamiya's case, water was applied to the area first before scraping it carefully with a toothpick and following with a wet brush. Based on an airframe diagram of the exact plane that I saw in a book from a fellow modeller I visited a few days earlier (forgot what it was called…), I tried replicating chipping in the same areas.

Figure 16. (09/05/2017) Roundels were sprayed on using the hair spray method and weathered. Decaling was then commenced with this airframe's distinctive wing stripe. The decals I found were slightly difficult to work with due to stiffness but were excellent in the end, setting well and giving a paint-like appearance. After applying these, a sharp blade was carefully used to create chipping effects.

Figure 17. (07/05/2017) Roundels were similarly painted on the underside and chipped.

Figure 17. (11/05/2017) Decal applications are finally finished, following Hasegawa's instructions again.

Figure 18. (11/05/2017) Close-up of wing root. The decal for the stripe was divided into halves and overlapping was quite noticeable. Hence, parts of the decal were scraped away at their overlapping point which also contributed to the chipping effect.

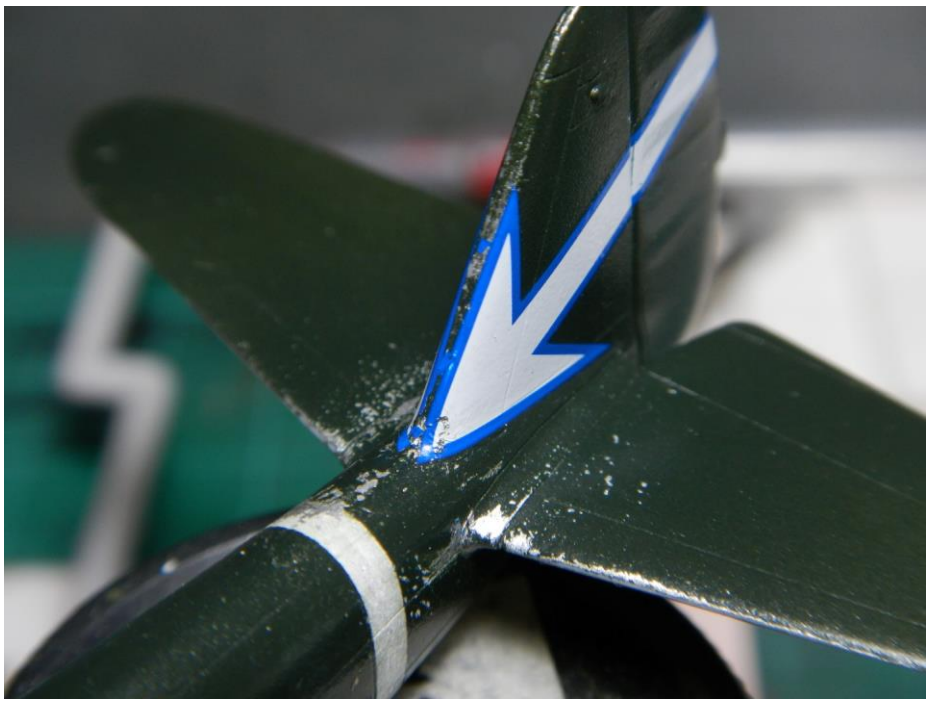

Figure 19. (11/05/2017) The tail with the 64th Sentai's distinctive arrow scheme. Some white was dry brushed on the tail stripe to reduce dulling because of washed paint from the earlier chipping. Parts of the decals were also scraped to simulate chipping. Leftover blue scrapings were also recycled and placed over a few areas to simulate multilayer chipping.

Figure 20. (11/05/2017) Close-up of the wing edge and its chipping.

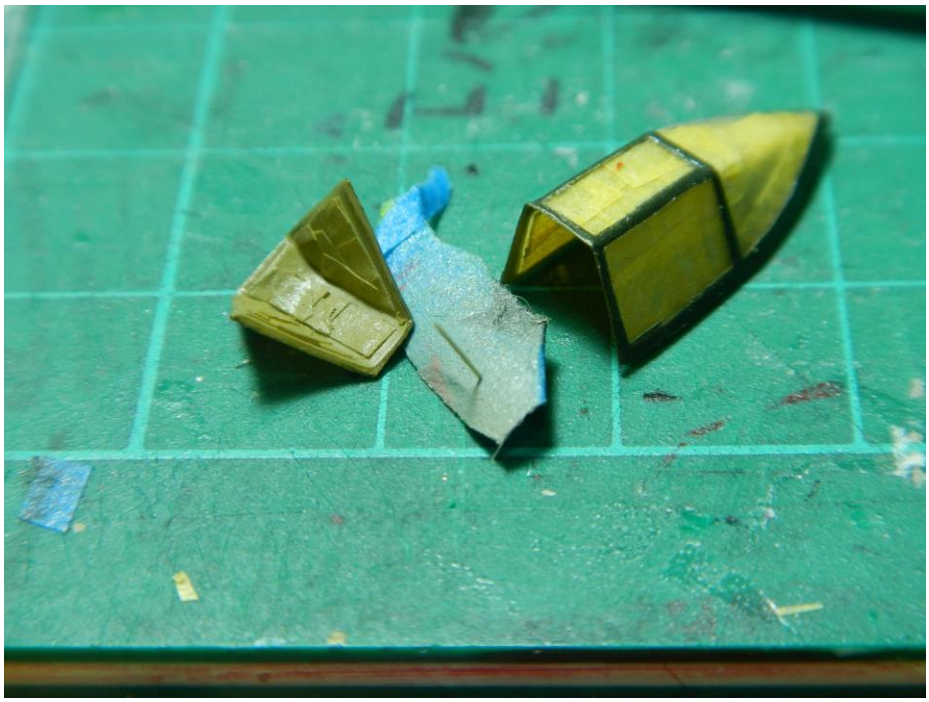

Figure 21. (12/05/2017) The vacuform canopy was carefully cut out and dipped in Pascoe's to enhance clarity and provide a suitable painting surface. The canopy was masked externally and internally for painting. The hair spray method was repeated on the canopy exterior for weathering. An additional canopy handle was also made from stretched sprue and painted. Once all weathering was completed, the canopy was dipped into Pascoe's again to seal.

Figure 22. (13/05/2017) Canopy completed with handle and teloscopic gunsight installed. With separate pieces, the canopy will be left open to view the remaining visible cockpit details.

Figure 23. (13/05/2017) Like a lot of older kits, the rear wheel was moulded onto the fuselage rather than having it as a separate part. Ultimately, it would be prone to breaking which was the case here. A small hole (~0.4 mm) was first drilled in both wheel and fuselage before a metal support was inserted and superglued into place.

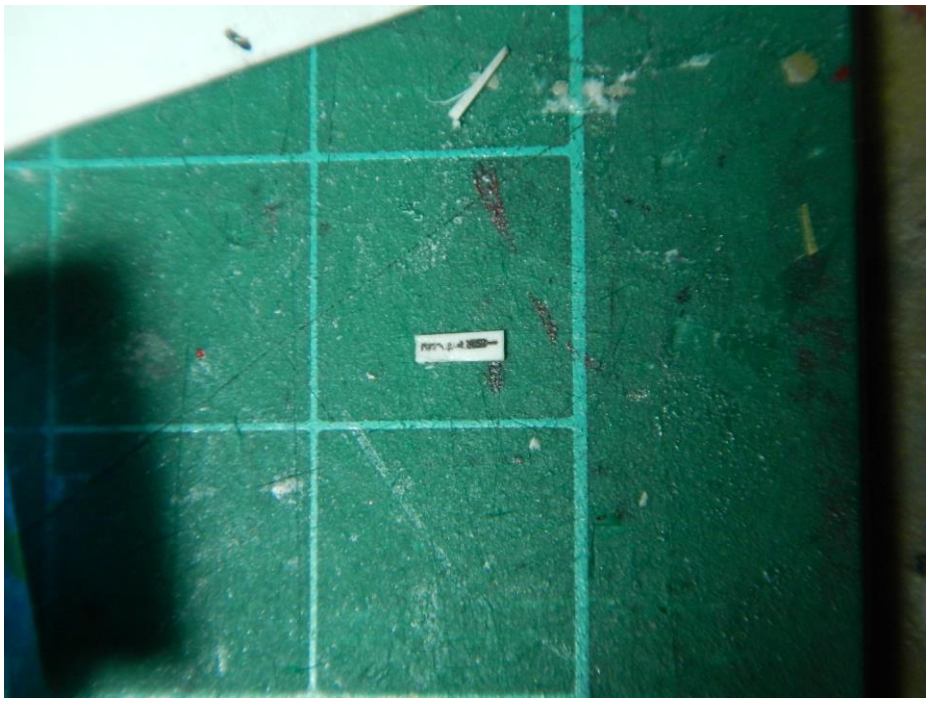

Figure 24. (13/05/2017) An additional feature which was left out of this kit but present in Hasegawa's scheme was a small set of warning signs (I think) towards the tail. Therefore, I printed my own set which I had photoshopped earlier onto decal paper, sealed and applied.

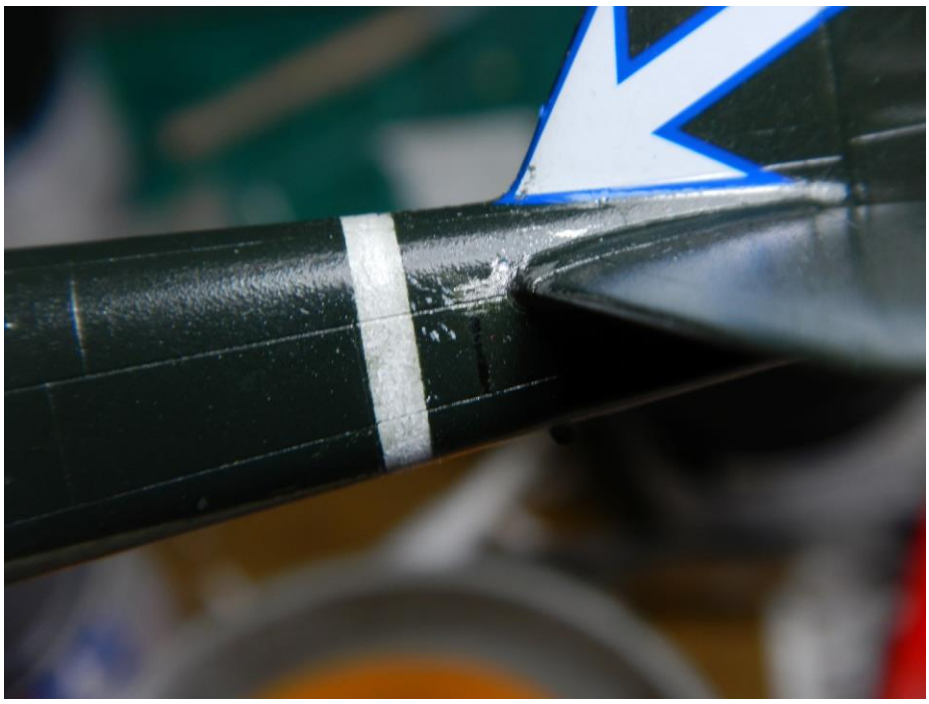

Figure 25. (13/05/2017) It's barely visible on a dark coloured scheme but they're there.

Figure 26. (13/05/2017) Onto more weathering. The whole model was sealed with Pascoe's before applying a black-brown enamel wash. A considerable amount was applied.

Figure 27. (13/05/2017) Weathering on the underside. The wash was wiped away carefully using cotton swabs with low odour turpentine. After it has been wiped off, black exhaust lines were lightly dry brushed on with Humbrol 85 enamel before the whole model was sprayed with Tamiya smoke acrylic to dull down the gloss.

Figure 28. (13/05/2017) Weathering completed. In the end, I decided to use the kit's decal for the rear fuselage stripe which also received a similar chipping treatment as the middle stripe.

Figure 29. (13/05/2017) Completed weathering on the underside. From here on, all external pieces were installed using PVA glue. Rigging was made using stretched sprue. This process took nearly an hour to finish... Working with thin stretched sprue was difficult even when using controlled incense smoke flow for tension.

Post-Build Photos:

Figure 30. (13/05/2017) Completed after over 48 hours of work! Tateo Katou's Nakajima Ki-43-I of the 64th Sentai. The following are post build photos.

Figure 31. (13/05/2017) Close-up of the front. The kit's antenna was replaced with a cut needle.

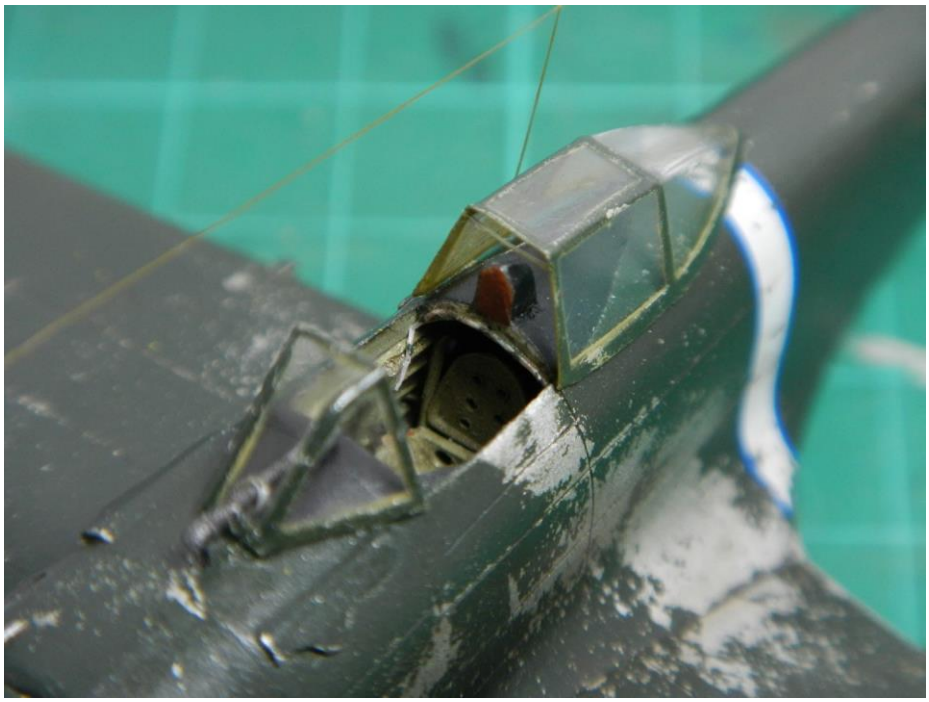

Figure 32. (13/05/2017) Canopy close-up. Vacuform canopies are very worth it. The headrest was made from Tamiya masking and hand painted with Tamiya red brown acrylic. An additional pipe made from stretched sprue was added just above the pilot's seat with green brackets painted on. Not sure what the function of this was but it can be seen from some reference photos that I've found.

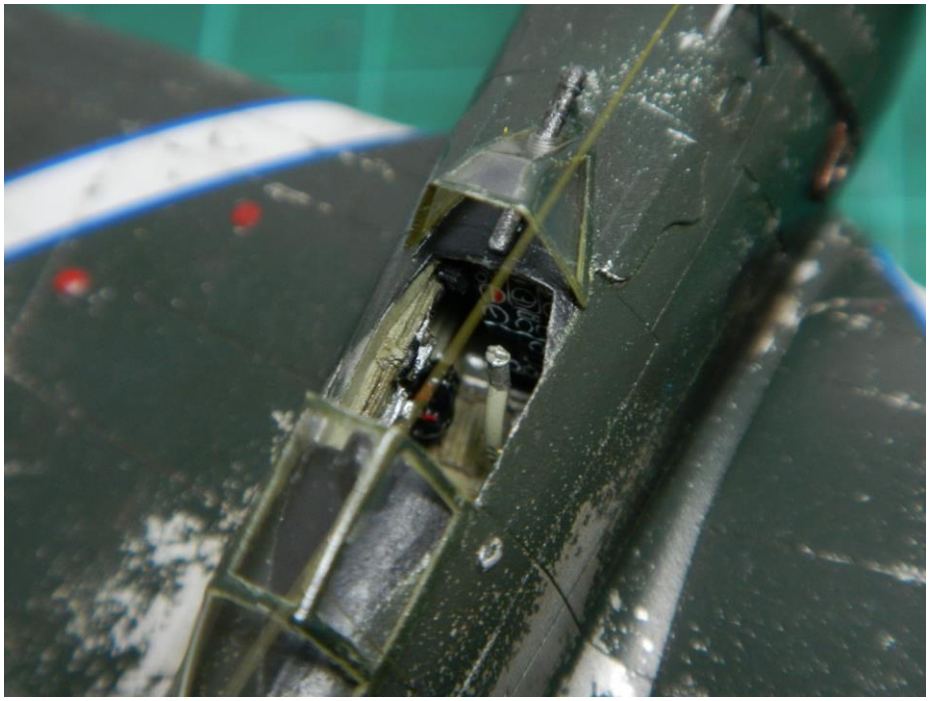

Figure 33. (13/05/2017) The cockpit. Very relieved and happy to still see it clearly!

Figure 34. (13/05/2017) Wing root.

Figure 35. (13/05/2017) Underside.

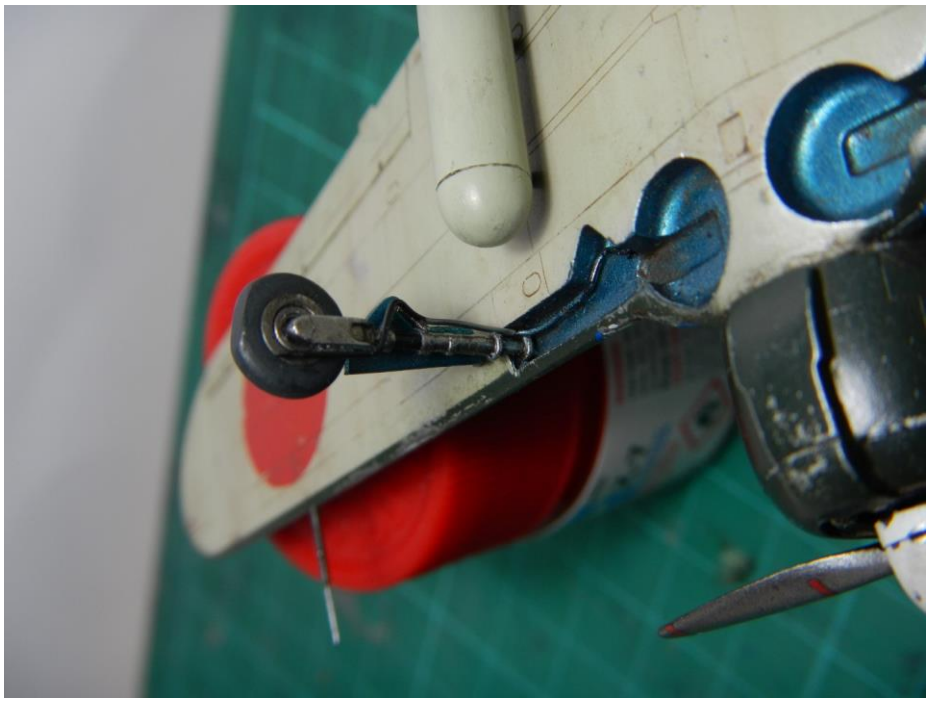

Figure 36. (13/05/2017) Wheel interior and wheel well. The brake hose was made from wire, masked along certain areas and painted.

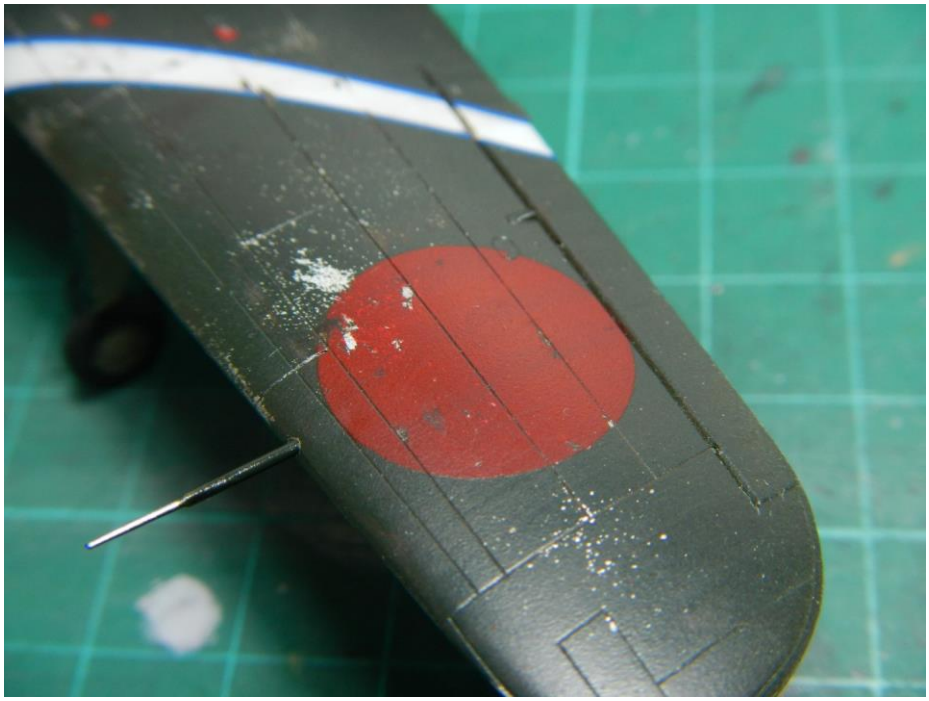

Figure 37. (13/05/2017) Left wing Hinomaru and pitot tube.

Figure 38. (13/05/2017) Second close-up.

And finally, sourced from Wikipedia for those who don't know, the ace pilot himself.
Major Tateo Katou, the "God of War", credited with at least 18 aerial victories.

Overall, although not perfect, this build has personally been the most fun, rewarding and satisfying in my career thus far. There are some amazing builds out there and submitted here for this competition and I hope to get to their level someday.

Enjoy!

Regards,

Alex.