

AVENGER
by Jim Griffiths

Every modeler has his favorite airplane or airplanes, and one that ranks right up at the top for me is the Grumman TBF (General Motors TBM) Avenger. The beginning for the Avenger was in 1939 when the Navy Department sent out an invitation to all U.S. aircraft companies to submit proposals for a new torpedo bomber design replacing the aging Douglas TBD-1. The Navy Dept. supplied all interested companies with a list of very concise specifications for this new plane. Although many proposals were received, those of the Chance Vought Co. and the Grumman Co. were the most promising. Prototype aircraft were built by both companies and rigorously put to the test.


With the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, the Navy Dept. very quickly chose a contractor for the new plane. Grumman got the nod; not so much for its design, as the chief competitor for the contract, Chance Vought, had an aircraft very similar to the Avenger. Rather Chance Vought was too occupied with the production of their F4U fighter to start immediate assembly on their proposal airplane, the TBU-1 Sea Wolf. On December 23, 1941, Grumman received an order for 286 TBF-1 aircraft, and the rest is history.


The Avenger served in both war theaters admirably carrying out the many varied tasks and roles assigned to her. Today, the Avenger is 41 years old and after 14 years of service with the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, she can still be found lumbering through the skies; this time in a different capacity from her original intent. Now she can be found as an occasional water-tanked fire bomber, or as a rare testbed experimental vehicle, or if she has been very lucky, as a restored plane, brought back to full life by the work and determination of a few men unwilling to let her fade away. No one knows for sure when the last Avenger will depart from the skies, but until that day arrives one can still feel this magnificent old bird has served her country well, in war and in peace.

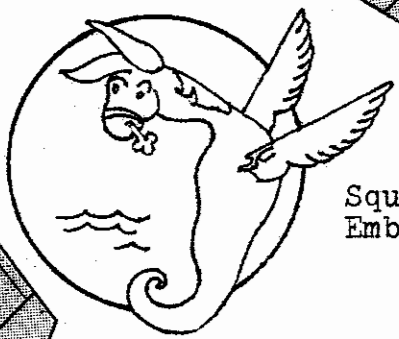
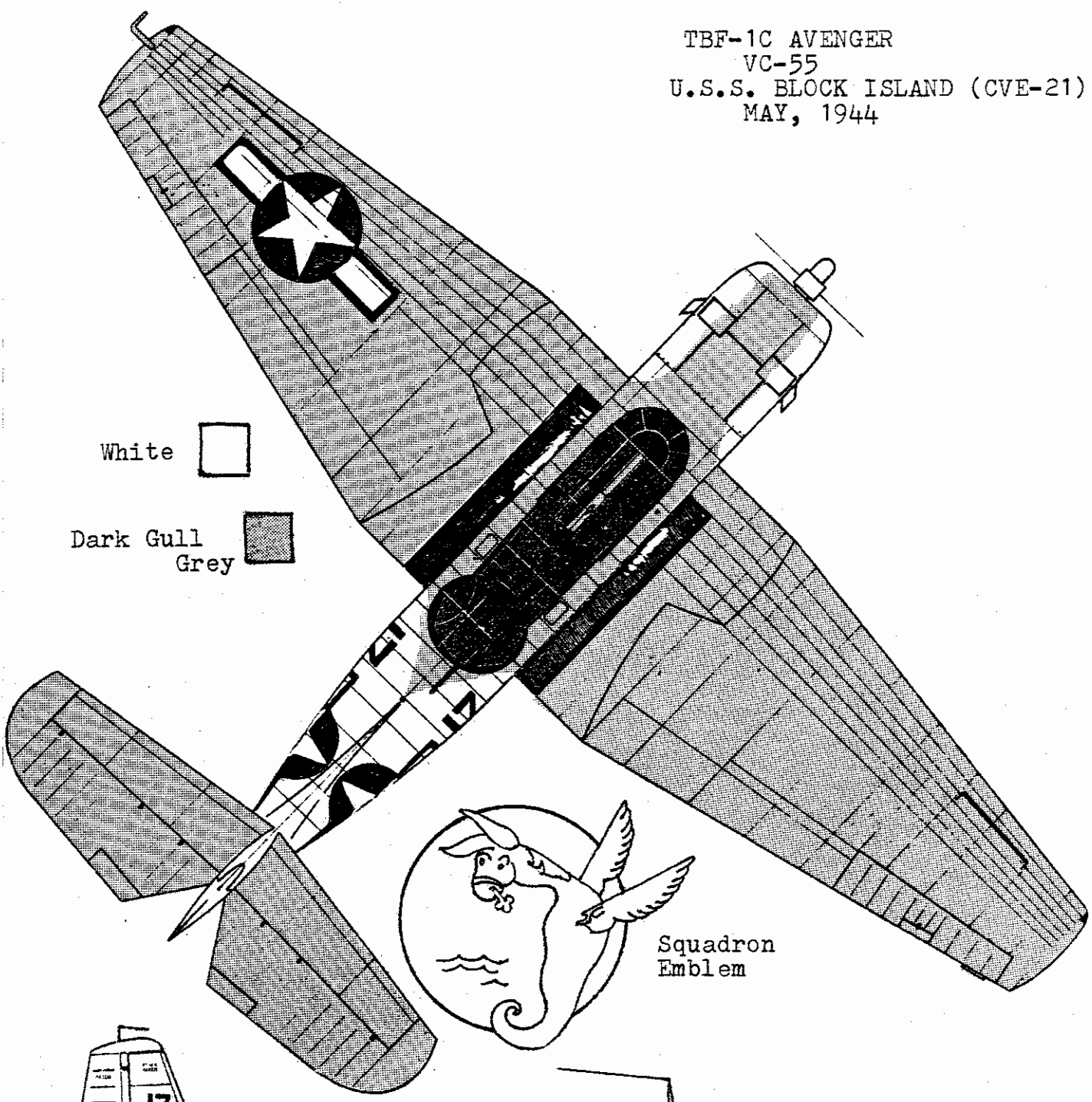
For those of us who want to model the Avenger, the available kits are few. 1/72nd builders are slightly better off than those 1/48th scale aficionados...three kits of the Avenger were made, but only two are available. Airfix turned out a fairly accurate TBM: not a lot of detail, and it's typical Airfix quality. I believe this kit is still available under the MPC label. Then there was the old Frog kit of the TBF. It's next to impossible to find one of these guys around, although the Russian company, NOVO, bought the moulds and produced it for a while, and that has now become a collectors' item. Lastly, there's the Lindberg TBM-3 kit: Lindberg calls it 1/72nd, but it's one of those early kits of theirs in a strange odd-ball scale. In 1/48th scale the choice is simple: Monogram is the only company making the plane, and it's a TBF-1. In 1/32nd, there's the Combat Models vac-u-form kit and plan on spending a great deal of time working on this one.

Profile: TBF-1C, VC-55, May, 1944. A/c is in the Atlantic scheme of drk. gull grey and white. Black wing walks (weathered). All numbers and stencilling-black. prop hub and blade (out to edge of fuselage diameter): white; rest of blade is black, w/ yellow tips. No personal markings were carried on any of the squad. a/c, though there is a slight possibility that some of the planes carried the squad insignia on the left side of the fuselage on the forward cowling.

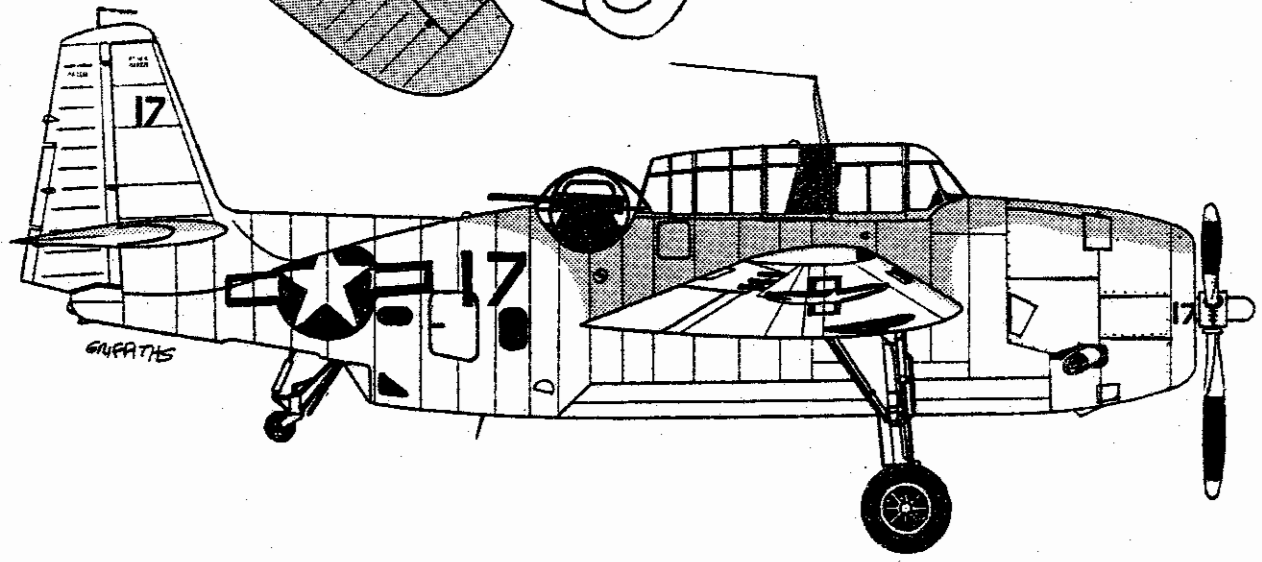
TBF-1C AVENGER
VC-55
U.S.S. BLOCK ISLAND (CVE-21)
MAY, 1944

White 

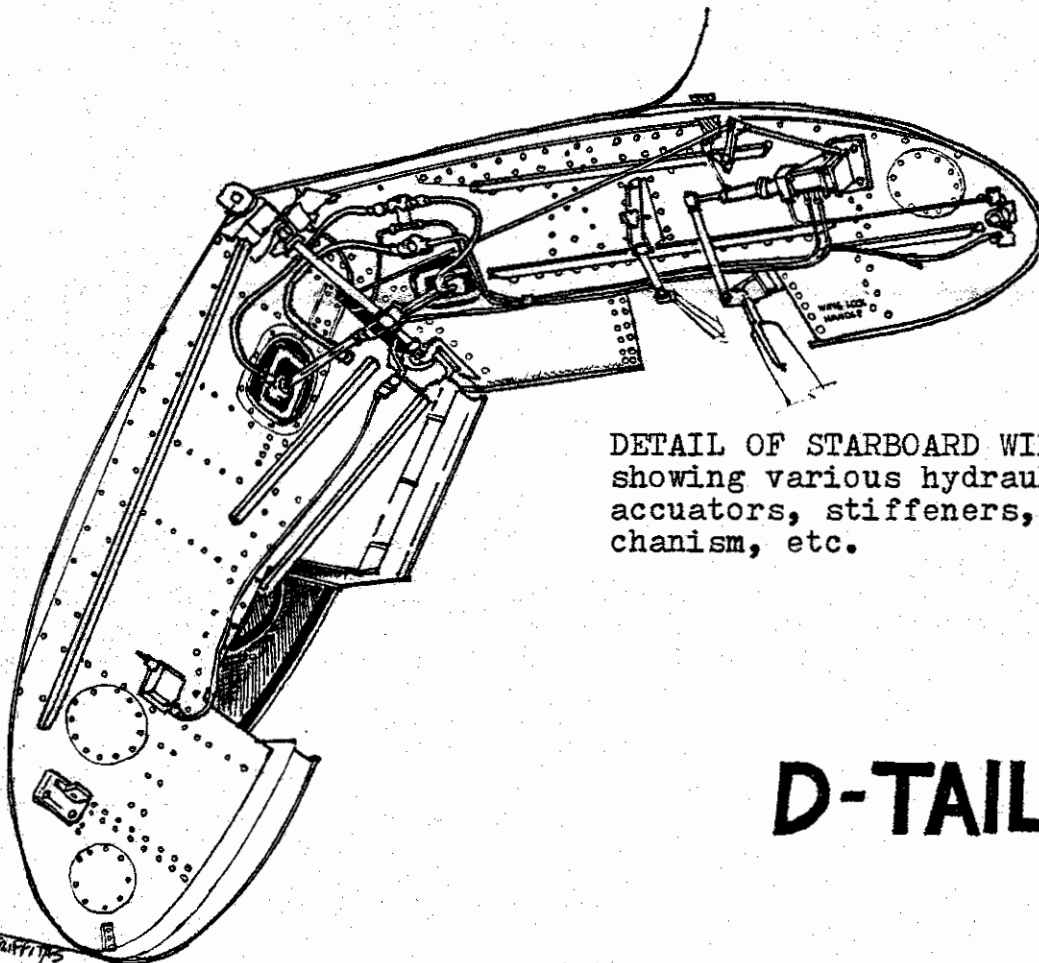
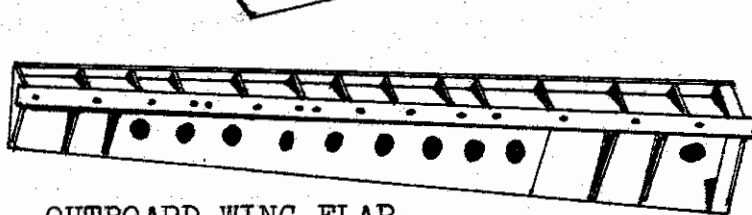
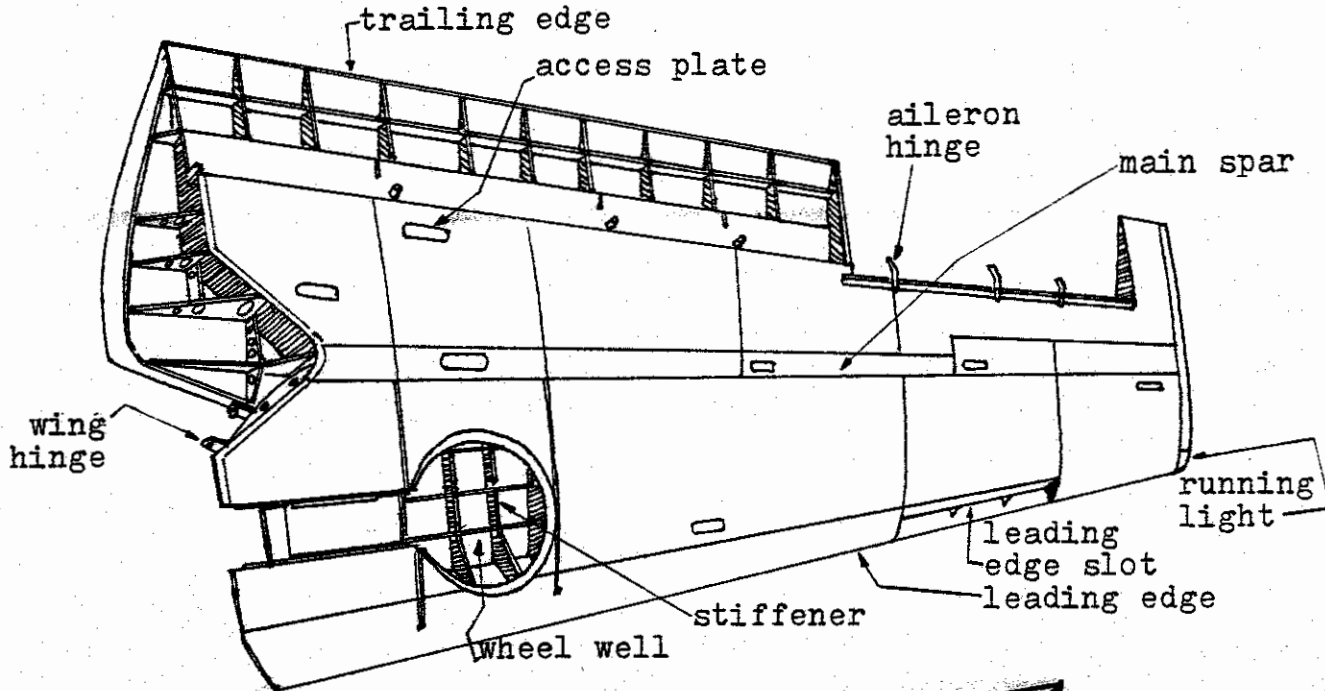
Dark Gull
Grey 



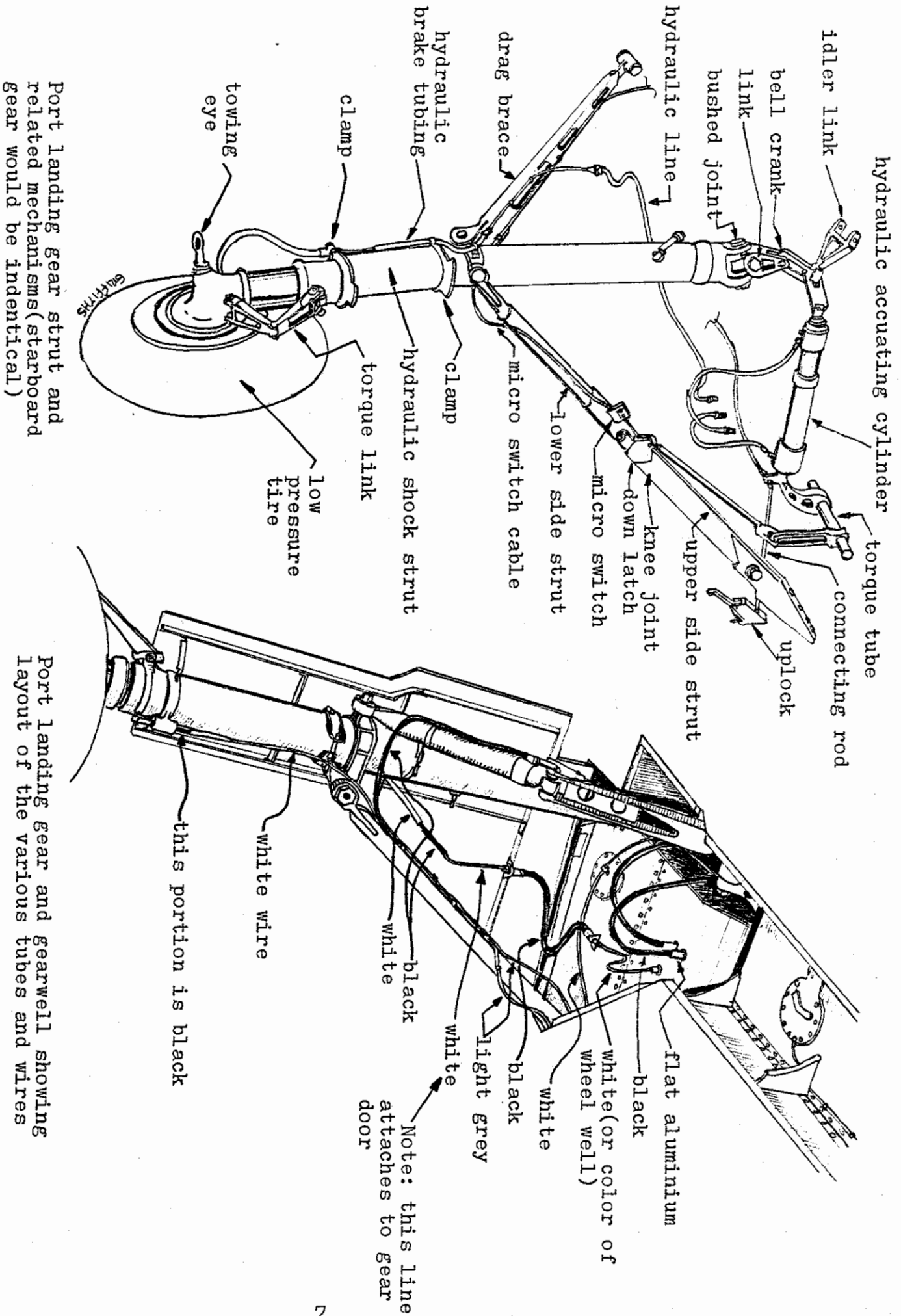
Squadron
Emblem

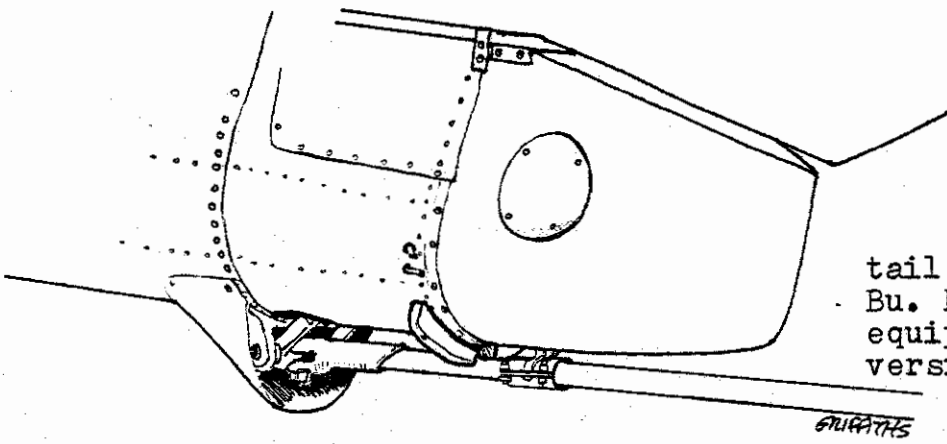


UNDERSIDE VIEW OF OUTER WING PANEL



D-TAILS

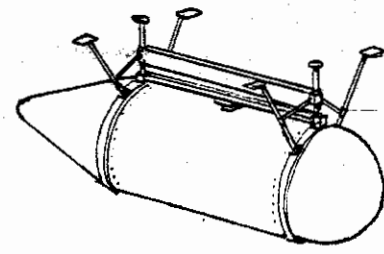
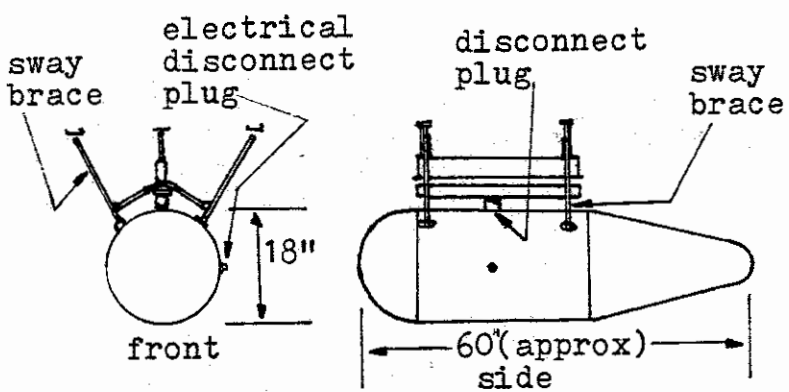




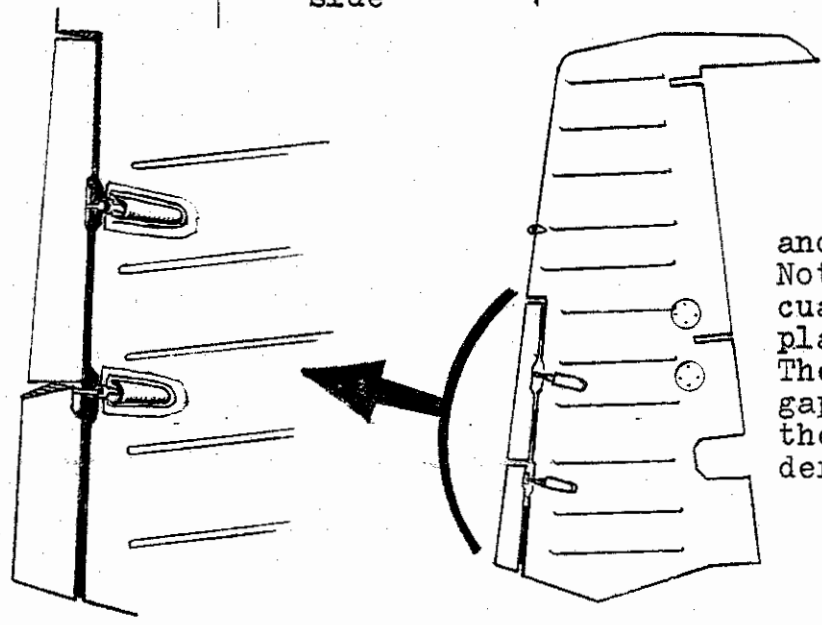
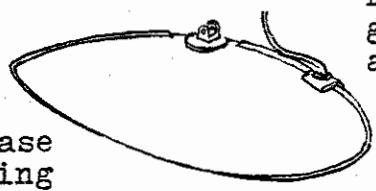
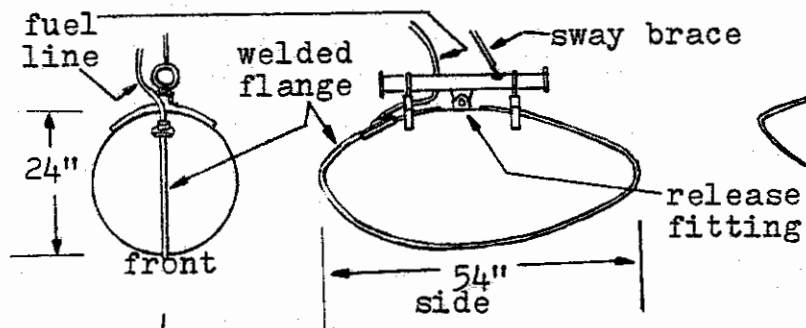
Detail of the external tail hook. All Avengers from Bu. No. 85566 onward were equipped with this external version.

GURRATHS

Details of the RT-5/APS-4 centimetric radar pod



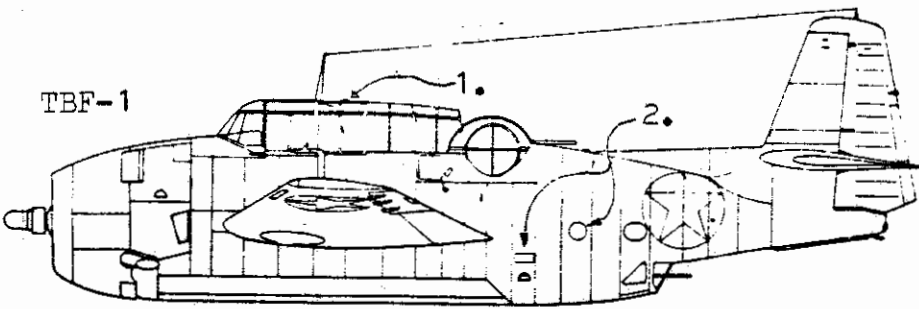
Details of the 58 gal.(U.S.) jettisonable fuel tank



Details of the rudder and the rudder trimtabs. Note that the trimtab actuator arm housings are placed at a downward angle. There is a very noticeable gap between the trim tabs and the top & bottom of the rudder where the tabs are fitted.

VIVA LA DIFFERENCE

Here are some differences between the various models of the Avenger:



TBF-1

1. White recognition light on canopy top of TBF-1 and early model TBM-1 only

2. Early model TBF-1 bomber compartment windows were different from all later models.

3. Antenna mast relocated on TBM-1C and all later models.

4. Antenna lead-in relocated on TBM-1C and all later models

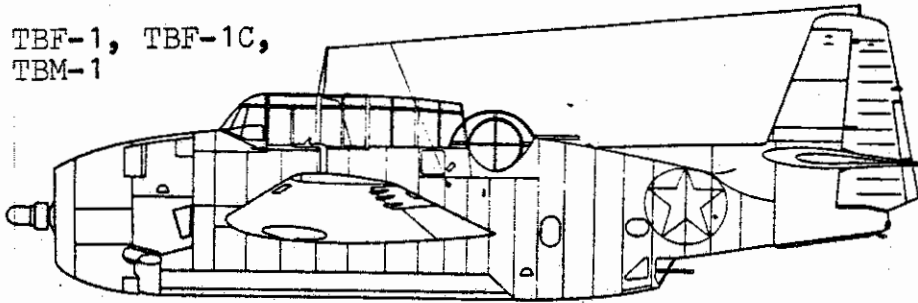
5. Multiple cowl flaps on TBM-3 models. Early -3S with trailing edge of two lower flaps indented.

6. Late model TBM-3 and -3E with all cowl flaps of constant width.

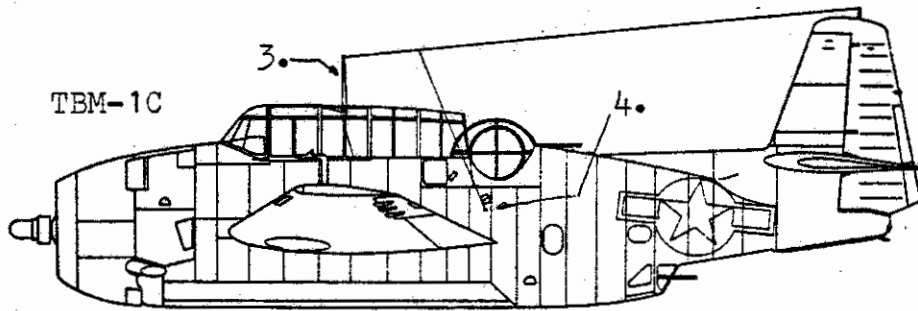
7. External tailhook on a/c Bu. No. 85566 and all later a/c.

8. Ventral gun omitted on late model TBM-3 and -3E.

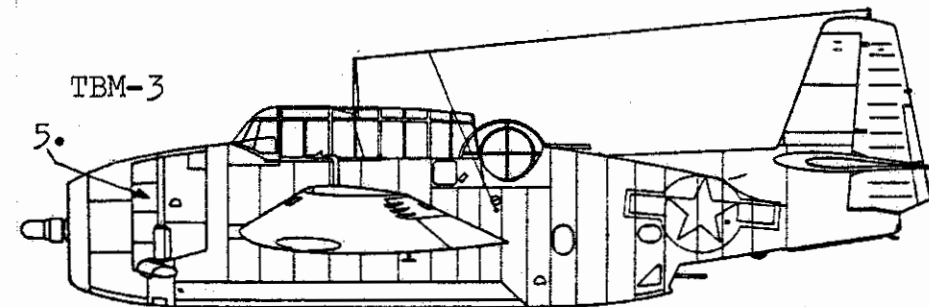
9. Small triangular window omitted from the ventral position on late model TBM-3 and -3E.



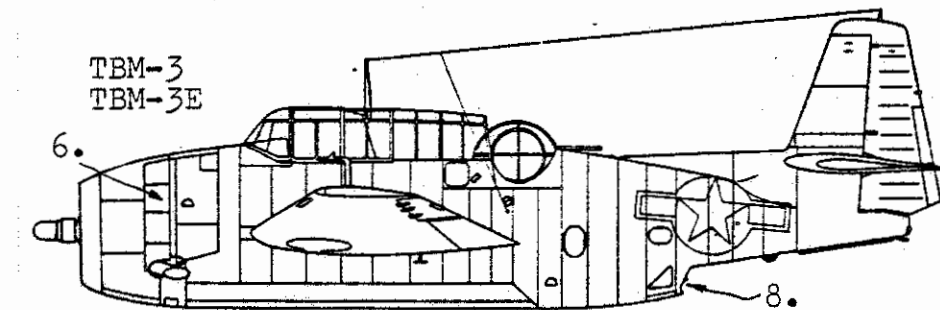
TBF-1, TBF-1C,
TBM-1



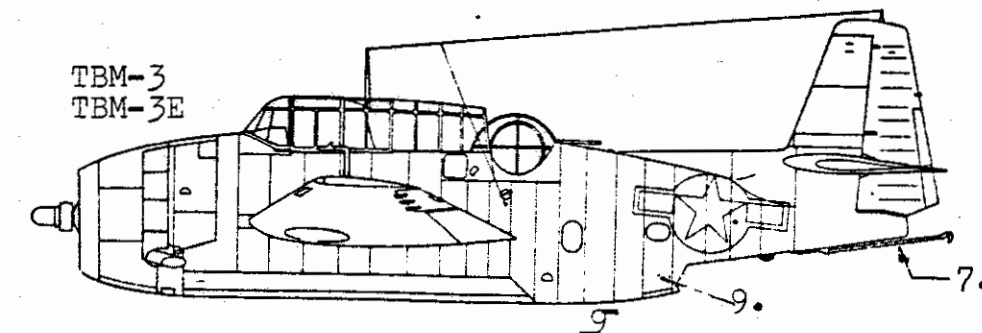
TBM-1C



TBM-3



TBM-3
TBM-3E



TBM-3
TBM-3E

Information and drawings are from an article by R. Hill that appeared in the WINGMAN, a newsletter of the Richard Bong, IPMS Milwaukee, chapter.