

NUNGESSER'S NI

Customizing of kits may be nothing new, but here is an
used for an authentic modification of VK's Nieuport 17 kit.

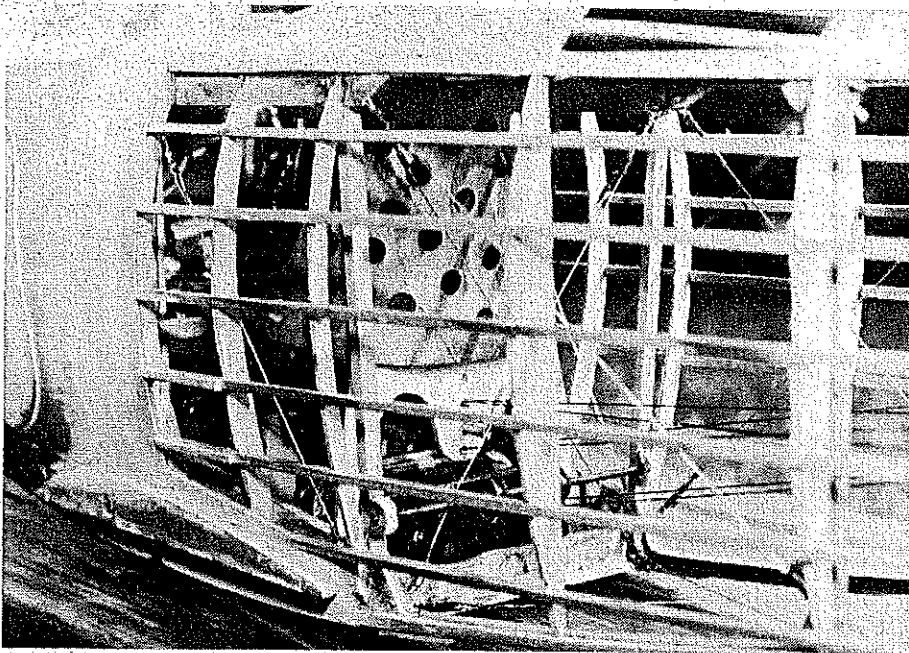


NEUPORT 24BIS

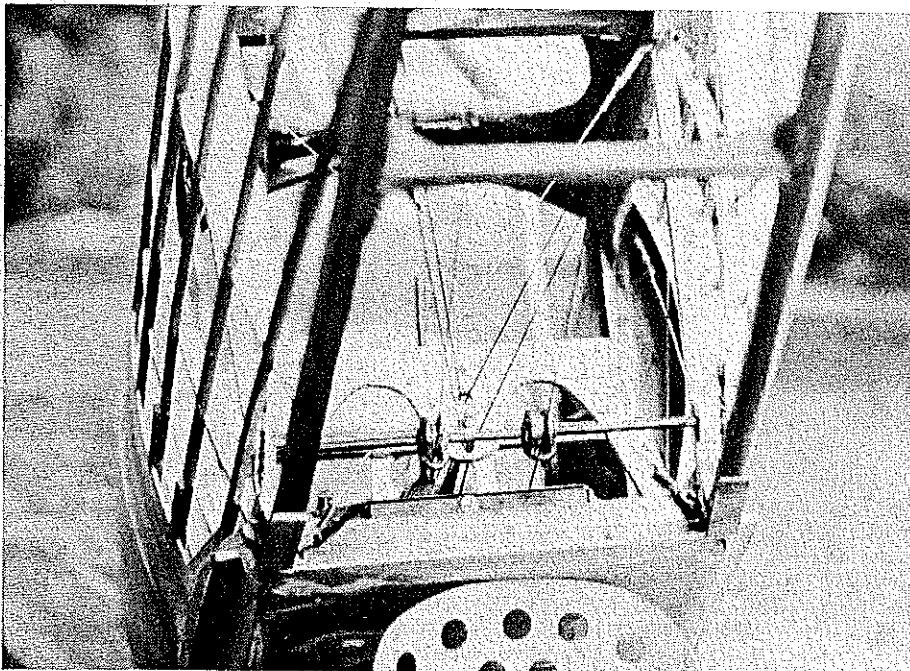
especially charming story of the discovery of a rare Nieuport type,
■ Frank P. Stanton and Edward C. Miller

Photographed in a grove resplendent in spring-time foliage by Edward Miller, Janice Stanton upstages the colorful and unique Nieuport Type 24bis, built by her father, Frank P. Stanton, who also has an Italian WW I Ansaldo fighter of equal appearance and performance.



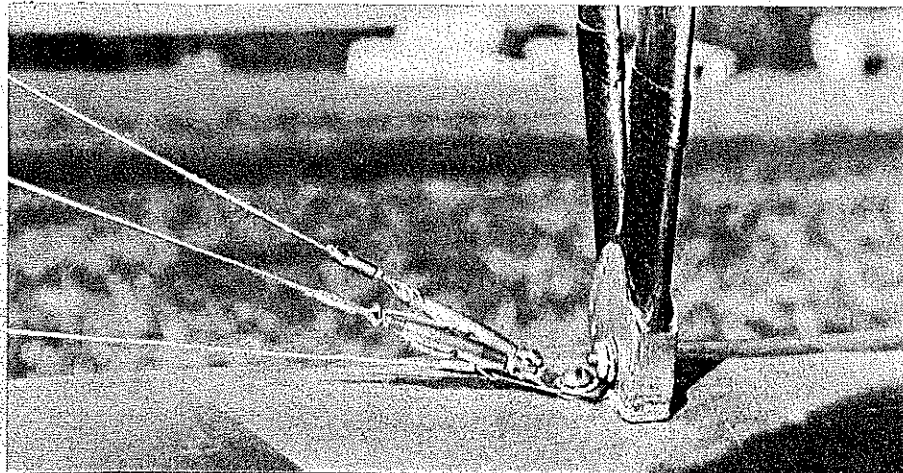


We suppose seeing is believing, but don't you get the feeling that this must have been a shot of the real ship uncovered? It isn't. Feast your eyes on those cable control wires, the wire fuselage bracing per full-scale, and that authentic seat.



Since a picture is worth a thousand words, a pedestrian caption does not do justice to a close-up like this. When the early Fokkers swept the skies in 1916, the French countered with the nimble "17," slightly larger and with a sturdier airframe than the famous "11." In the Nieuport 24bis, formers and stringers were added to the slab-sided fuselage to achieve a smoother airflow.

How's this for scale detail? Note the fitting to which the wire rigging turnbuckles attach, and how the wires are secured by being doubled back in crimped tubing.



ALL true scale nuts are always on the lookout for something different. One summer evening in 1975 George Keis (WB3FFK) called me with a hot tip about a Nieuport lurking in Hangar #1 at the Willow Grove Naval Air Station.

"Awww, come on, George," I protested, "there isn't any such thing around here. You just want to stop at the club, right?"

"No kidding?"

"There really is?"

"OK, George—"

Then it's zap up the batteries in the 35mm SLR and off to go look at George's mysterious apparition.

Arriving at the hangar, sure enough there was an authentic, full-scale Nieuport. Certainly any World War I vintage Nieuport is something to see today, but even more interesting was that this was an extremely rare Nieuport Type 24bis, replete with the macabre deaths-head insignia of the famous French Ace Charles Nungesser.

As George picked the appropriate angles, I snapped away with the 35. Using a strobe in a dimly lit hangar at night is hard on the eyeballs. After some 30 shots George looked like an owl!

After all this flashing in Hangar #1, an SP showed up muttering something about, "What the #?!%#\$ is going on?"

We explained to him about the 1917 Nieuport's historic importance.

His perceptive reply was, "Well, I guess it's OK, the machine must have been declassified by now."

Even though details concerning the Nieuport Type 24bis are indeed now declassified, certain features still remain shrouded in controversy. Two such points in question are the exact engine and specific markings actually used on Charles Nungesser's 24bis. With much apparently conflicting data and contradictory photographic documentation available, these arguments may never be resolved. Indeed, the true answer may be that they are all correct, merely representing various daily updates under the rigors of continuous combat operations, with no historian present to record each of the changes in their proper chronological sequence.

For it was during the early months of 1916, a rapid sequence of events occurred which would eventually lead to the birth of the Nieuport Type 24bis aeroplane. During those dark months German Fokkers completely dominated the skies over the Western Front. To counter this German ascendancy, the British rapidly deployed the deHavilland DH-2 pusher fighter, an effective if somewhat ungainly stop-gap aeroplane. The French, on the other hand, found a much more enduring solution to the German threat. The French solution was provided by their nimble Nieuport 17 series of aeroplanes.

Piloting this maneuverable little scout fighter, French aces, such as the formidable Nungesser, made a significant contribution to regaining Allied aerial superiority. Certainly the British Royal Flying Corps (RFC) was quick to recognize the obvious merits of this French design, and soon Nieuport fighters equipped numerous RFC squadrons.

Derived from the earlier Nieuport 11, the Type 17 featured a slightly larger and substantially stronger airframe. It was powered by the 110-hp LeRhône rotary engine. When subsequently fitted with the 130-hp Clerget engine, it was designated as the Nieuport Type 17bis.

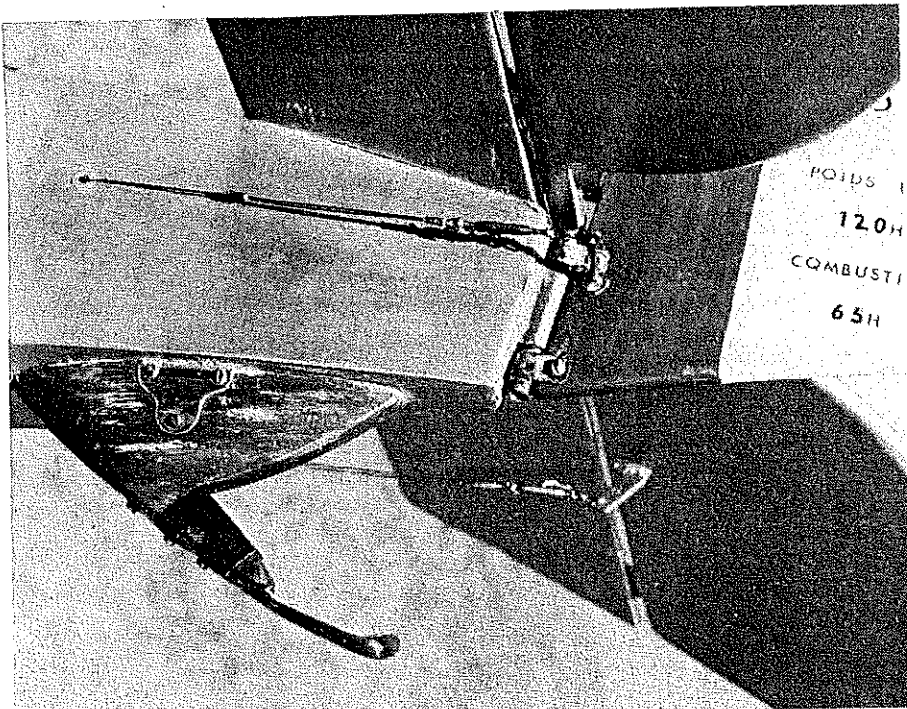
With the basic design superiority clearly established by their Type 17bis, the Nieuport design team, under the direction of Gustave Delage, next turned their attention to aerodynamic refinements. To achieve a smoother airflow, the slab-sided fuselage was given a face-lifting by the addition of a series of gently curving formers and

stringers. Thus was produced the Nieuport Type 24bis. With its streamlined fuselage, it was the last Nieuport to achieve any degree of notable success in the combat arena. It even eclipsed the Standard Type 24, which was plagued with structural problems from its totally new empenage design.

On the market today, VK has produced a beautiful RC kit of the Nieuport 17. With the modifications shown here, the rather boxy Type 17 can be readily converted into a unique model of the much more aesthetic Nieuport Type 24bis. Since the Type 24bis was operated by numerous Allied air arms, a wide variety of markings are available for use on this model. With its rare historic interest and extremely colorful insignia, I selected the Nieuport 24bis flown by Lt. Charles Nungesser for the prototype model seen in the photographs which accompany this article.

The primary reference source for this project is the 1/8-in. scale drawings of the Nieuport Type 24bis by Bergen Hardesty. They were published in *Model Airplane News*, December 1956. Start the modification program by fabrication of the new formers S2A, S2B, S2C, and S4 from 1/32 inch plywood. Make two of each. S4A, S5, S5A, S6 and S6A are made from 1/8-in. balsa, and again fab two each. The new top turtledeck formers, F4A, F4B, F5, F5A, F6, F6A and F7 are also made from 1/8-in. balsa. These components constitute our basic sub-kit package.

Begin by building the basic fuselage kit sides over the kit plans. Assemble the basic fuselage box frame assembly, and add all the standard formers from B2 forward. I added wire diagonal cross-bracing to the inside of the fuselage sides from S2 to S5 (note removal of the kit's 1/8 x 3/16 diagonal wood bracing between lower S4 and upper S5 to facilitate the installation of the wire diagonal braces). The only section that can be easily seen is in the cockpit area, so you should



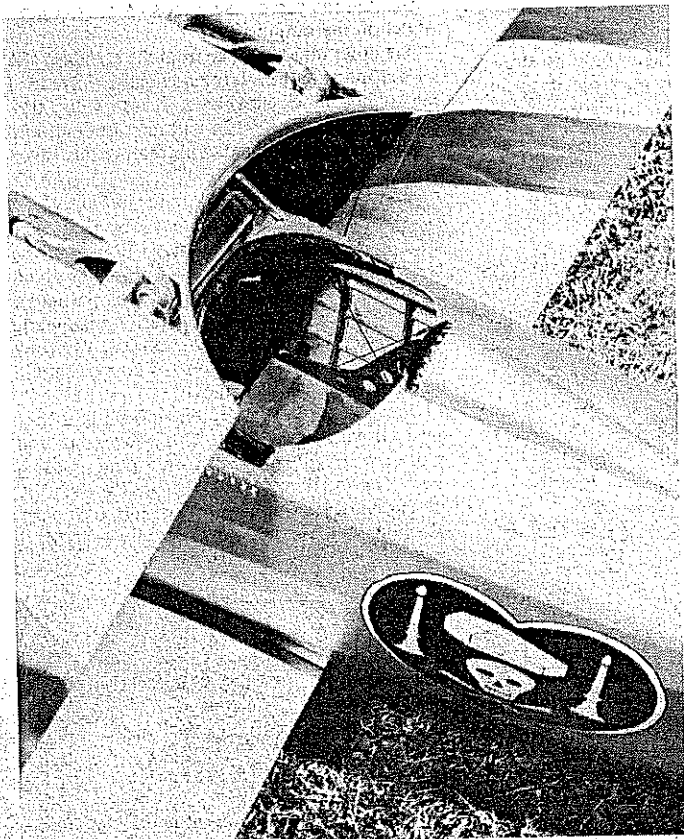
We defy you to say whether this is the model or the real ship, found lurking in Hangar No. 1 at the Willow Grove Naval Air Station near Philadelphia. The leafspring tail skid is attached as on the real thing—and do note the hinging, especially as to the attachment of the tubular rudder spar. Portions of the rudder markings on the white stripe appear clearly.

do this area to increase the stand-off scale static judging points.

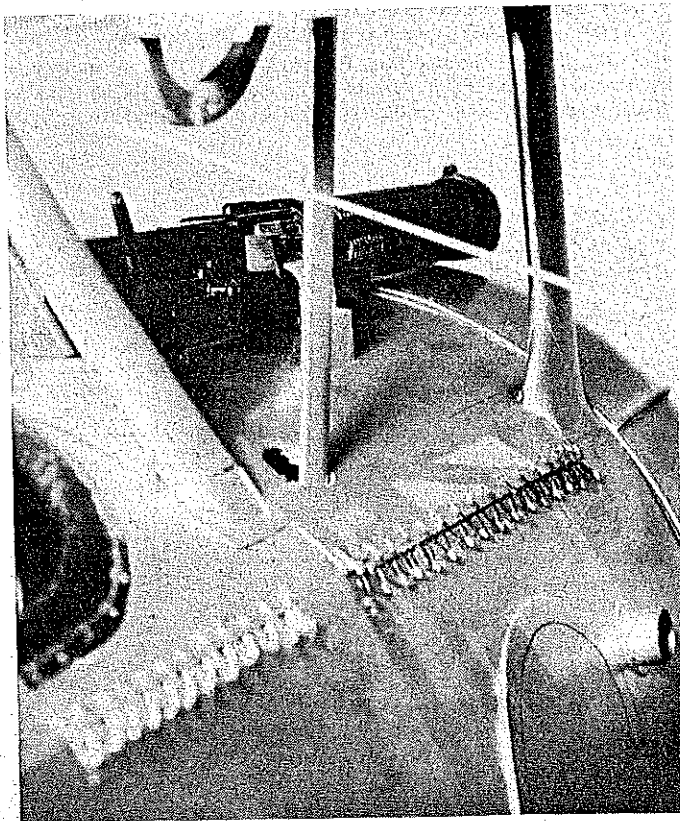
If you do elect to install wire diagonal braces, make from .014 control line cable and use Proctor turnbuckles. See sketch on plans.

With the internal fuse bracing installed, next add the four 1/32 in. plywood formers (S2A

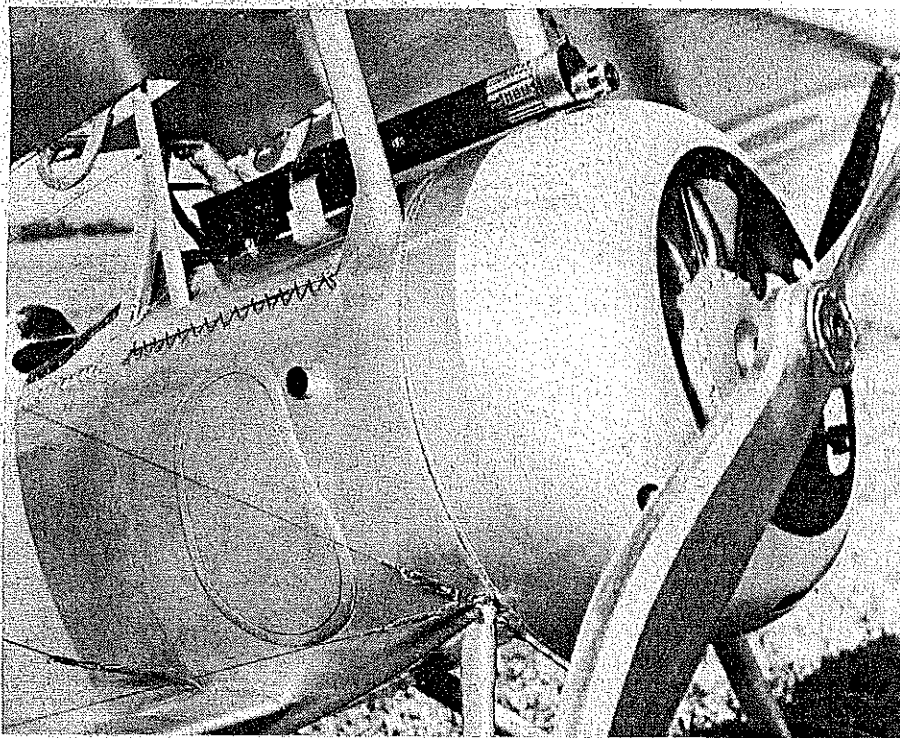
through S4) on each side. Finally, add the remaining side formers (S4A through S6) and the top turtledeck formers (F4A through F7). Note that the top turtledeck stringer locations are dictated by the notched insets in former F4A. Don't notch any other formers, as the stringers are positioned and glued on top of the formers. Add the fuselage



Famous among friend and foe, the Nungesser death's head insignia, with coffin and candles within a heart-shaped outline. Again, the pilot's seat may be seen—and the barebones cockpit just as the now-ghostly pilots saw it. For as long as models of real aircraft have been built, the graceful Nieuport has its special flair.



To an editor who has hacked models for 35 years—and how about you?—this thing just builds and builds, unbearable. Even the fabric stitching is done as the Frenchmen did it in the long ago. Grab that machine gun. The modification program is described in the text. Weight must be watched—5 to 5 1/4 pounds is the safe range—with any of the new lightweight systems, the author considers 5 pounds easily obtainable.



Close-up of the nose brings to life the laminated wooden prop and the Clerget 130-hp rotary—yes, the entire engine spun on a fixed crankshaft. Primary reference source was the plans by Bergen Hardesty in the December 1956 Model Airplane News. Incidentally, turnbuckles are by Proctor.

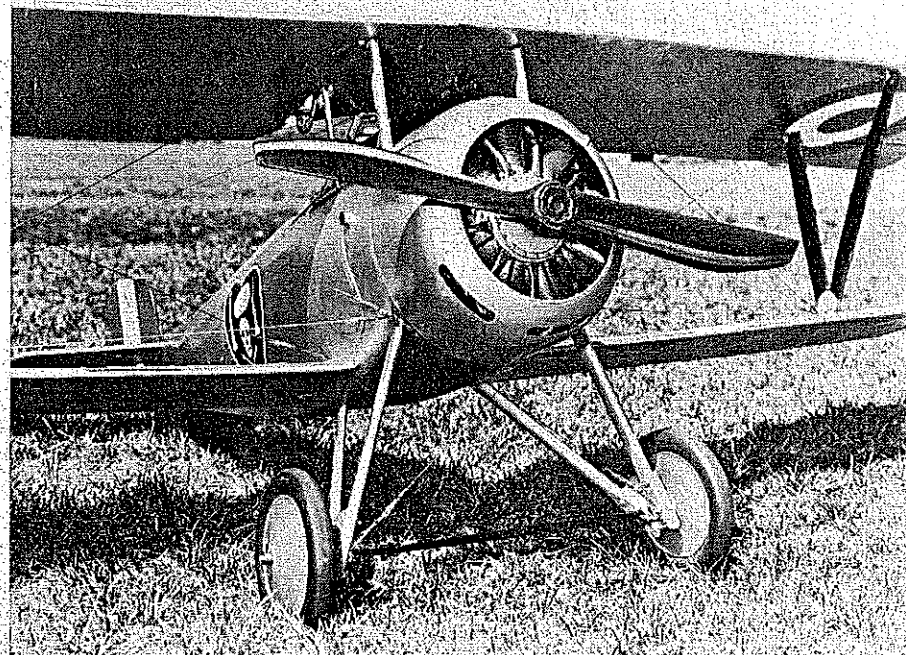
sheeting aft, consisting of 1/64 in. plywood panels added between S7 and the rudder post. The next step is to add the fuselage stringers (3/32 in. sq. spruce). Position them to run parallel to the fuselage centre-line, and use a fast-set glue.

With all the stringers in place, install the 1 1/4 X 1/32 plywood sheeting between S2 and S2B, and the 1/64 plywood sheeting from F4A to F4B behind the cockpit. This represents all the additional fuselage sheeting besides the normal kit

sheets from the firewall to F2 (and including the cockpit area). Finally, add the 1/16 X 3/16 balsa strips to the sides of both upper and lower longerons and sand to shape.

Complete building the remainder of the airframe as per the standard VK kit. A few other minor additions that builders might find of interest are as follows.

The seat and seat mounting frames are shown on the plans and should be no problem to any scale enthusiast of moderate experience. I finished



Backed off a bit, the camera shows us the tricolor roundels on the bottom of the top wing. Of special interest is the spreader bar shock absorbing at the landing gear vee, and spokes beneath the fabric-covered wheels. By the way, if you do find evidence of the model engine, you are a better man than we are.

the seat with a very thin coat of red oxide primer, as used in car body shops.

In the 24bis there was no actual instrument panel as such, so I cut down formers B2 and B3 to a 3/16 inch width and painted the inside a matte black.

Another minor touch to provide an authentic detail is the tail skid. Add the two side blocks to the tail skid mount and sand to shape. I made the skid itself from 3/16 in. clock-spring steel. This stuff is relatively easy to cut, but drilling the three mounting holes was another matter! Heat the area to be drilled a cherry-red and drill with a high-speed carbide bit. And push hard! Although this stuff is tough to drill, it does make a great skid when finally finished.

This particular model was covered with Super Coverite. Use a coat of Balsarite on the frame, then apply the Coverite with a good, hot iron, hot enough to make the Coverite smoke! Once applied, Super Coverite is like a monofilm and dope only tends to encase the stuff. I used one pint of Sig clear Butyrate dope which I then thinned out 100%, and also added 50 drops of castor oil. Mix well! The thinner will soften the adhesive backing and allow the dope to stick to it. Use at least a one-inch brush, pump two or three times to load the brush, and apply wet strokes. Apply a total of four coats, and sand with very worn-out 400-grit paper only when and where required. Just don't ever sand with a heavy hand. The castor oil in this mix will keep the doped finish pliable for years.

To save weight, the final color dopes were applied with an airbrush. Mix the pigmented dopes well and thin 150% with thinner. Open the airbrush up to apply one full, wet coat.

Scale control cables were used for the elevator control. The wires were run through the holes in the seat frame, and exited through the fuselage covering to give them a straight run to the control horns. On the servo, use a cross-arm or control wheel on the output shaft.

One other minor change from the standard VK kit was made in the interplane rigging. Instead of the rubber shock absorbers, I used solid .012 control cable. The .012s will give in flight and break cleanly on impact. This feature has saved me a lot of repair work!

In flight, the 24bis handles much like any of my standard VK kit Ni 17s. There was no noticeable change in handling or response. Weight is the main area to watch, with 5 to 5 3/4 pounds about the safe range in flying weight. This particular model was fitted with a home brew 4-channel rig (on 6 meters) using Orbit PS-3 servos. With any of the new lightweight systems, 5 pounds should be an easy weight to achieve.

I have flown many VK Nieuports, and they have all worked out well. This shows that you really cannot go wrong with VK's plan setup on the Nieuport. If you choose to modify your VK kit to the 24bis configuration and have any questions, please write to me care of MA. I certainly will be glad to help you.



A wide variety of color schemes may be used, since the 24bis was flown by numerous Allied air arms. The drawing shows the Nungesser motif, as seen in these two pix of the model at the "aerodrome." Covering is Super Coverite, over a coat of Balsarite on the frame. Be sure to follow author's instructions precisely.

