

ONE OF THE TINKERS

M-32 Armored Recovery Vehicle

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Traveling repairmen called tinkers were a feature of life in the United States during the great depression. These men pushed a repair cart from town-to-town, retrieved pots, pans, the simple appliances of the day and did repairs for cash. Wars leave a great deal of hardware, junk and debris on the battlefields. When that debris can be restored to service, especially if it's a tank, armored car or other useful vehicle, the side most efficient in making repairs often controls its own destiny. Early in WWII, the Germans were the most efficient and much of the success of the Afrika Korps in particular, rested on the ability to restore damaged vehicles in the desert to useful storage and to use captured equipment. The United States got a late start in producing "tinkers" who could rove the battlefield and retrieve or repair lost vehicles. The M-32 ARV, based on the Sherman tank, was one of these vehicles. Earlier ARV's were based on the M-3 Lee and many survived the duration of the war.

The limited number of M-3 Medium tank chassis produced led to the development of the M-32 on all of the production types of the Sherman tank starting in March 1943. All of the pilots, T5, T5E1, T5E2, etc. were completed by August of 1943 and the vehicle was accepted into service as the M-32, M-32B1, M32B2, and M32B3 depending upon the Sherman variant converted.

Italeri kit number 203 is the only available molded plastic, 1/35th scale version of the M-32B1 (indeed of any M-32 variant). With care, it can be built into an excellent representation of this traveling repair shop and as a "tinker" it stayed in the military inventory well into the 1950's.



Construction followed the kit plans. There is a choice of early or late driving wheels and, because the bogie wheels are the open-spoked earlier type, I chose the early wheel. There are no hidden pitfalls in construction. All seams were closed, puttied and sanded. The Eduard

photoetched brass set was used for hatch latches, brush guards for the headlamps, spare wheel brackets and taillights. There is an excellent web-site available for the interior placement of the Gar Wood Special 6M 814 winch. Those interested should see [www.Kithobbyist.com/AFV Interiors](http://www.Kithobbyist.com/AFVInteriors) . Because this cannot be seen, I did not install a winch replica but did add additional mortar shell containers in the non-rotating turret and also added the two interior radio-connection boxes for the commander and the machine-gunner in the turret. I substituted an Academy .50 caliber M-2 machine gun for the kit gun and detailed it with the etched-brass cooling sleeve and barrel-changing handle. The headlights and spotlight received MV-lenses. The kit tow-cable was replaced with a cord cable first coated with white glue to reduce fuzz and with the kit cable tow loops added with CNN glue and lead-foil connectors. This was then painted steel, then rusted with Modelmaster enamel rust. The interior floor was done in steel, weathered with black enamel wash and then highlighted by dry-brushing. The turret seats were covered with tissue and liquid cement and then painted with semi-gloss black to match the prototypical black leatherette. Helmets, a Thompson sub-machine gun, packs and Armtec chain were added as stowage.



Olive-Drab, FS 34087 was used for external painting. The kit-tracks were replaced by those from the Tamiya “Jumbo” kit MM 139 because extended end-connectors were often used according to photos and references. Other types of track may also be used. The Italeri kit does not supply the rigging for the A-frame crane and its supports. This was added using monofilament line and a support cable and cable clamp were added to the right A-frame using

reference photos as a guide. An excellent figure from Ultracast of Canada sculpted by Kevin McLaughlin, #35026 and visible on the web at www.ultracast.ca.

was painted with primer, enamel undercoating and oil finish and mounted on the glaciis plate. A base from a picture frame with Styrofoam covered with Celluclay, Kitty Litter and Woodland Scenics foliage was produced and painted. Track marks were added using the kit tracks and painted appropriately. Those interested in “Tinkers” will find



this and other kits such as the BergPanther, BergTiger and conversion kits for the U.S. M-3 variants as well as more modern vehicles both unusual and fun to build.

REFERENCES

Hunnicut, R.P. Sherman: A History of the American Medium Tank, 1978; Presidio Press, pps 472