

Cape Gibson - T-AK 5051

Conversion of P 61x Mariner Class Cargo Ship casting by Terry Holtham 2013



As a photo of Cape Gibson T-AK 5051 started it all off when the models arrived she was the first conversion that I did.

Cape Gibson was a Marad C5-S-75a design Break Bulk Cargo Ship originally built for American Mail Line by Newport News Shipbuilding & Drydock Co in 1968 as the Indian Mail (MARAD Hull No 216). In 1979 she was renamed President Jackson when she and her sister ships Alaskan Mail, American Mail, Korean Mail and Hong Kong Mail were acquired by American President Lines after the takeover of American Mail Line.

In 1988 President Jackson (ex Indian Mail) and her sister ship President Adams (ex Alaskan Mail) were traded in to MARAD and assigned to the Ready Reserve Fleet (RRF) as Cape Gibson (T-AK 5051) and Cape Girardeau (T-AK 2039) respectively. President Taylor (ex Korean Mail) was also traded in to MARAD and was to have become Cape Grieg but appears instead to have been transferred to Lykes Lines as Stella Lykes (VI) and scrapped at Alang, India in 1995.

In 1990/91 Cape Gibson and Cape Girardeau were fitted with the Modular Cargo Delivery System (MCDS) which allows them to supplement the US Navy Combat Logistics Force by conducting limited (connected) underway replenishment (UNREP) operations using the Standard Tensioned Replenishment Alongside Method (STREAM) to transfer stores to all US naval ships equipped with a dry cargo UNREP receiving station. Both ships were also fitted with "hover only" flight decks at the stern allowing them to conduct vertical replenishment (VERTREP) operations utilising helicopters from the ships being re-supplied.

As noted in the article introducing my models a little imagination and some artistic license is required when converting the Mariner Class castings. In this case Cape Gibson is about 40 ft longer and 6 ft wider than the C4-S-1a ships which at 1:1200 scale means the model is about 0.4 in (10 mm) too short and about 0.06 in (1.5 mm) too narrow but nonetheless I think it looks the part.

Preparations:

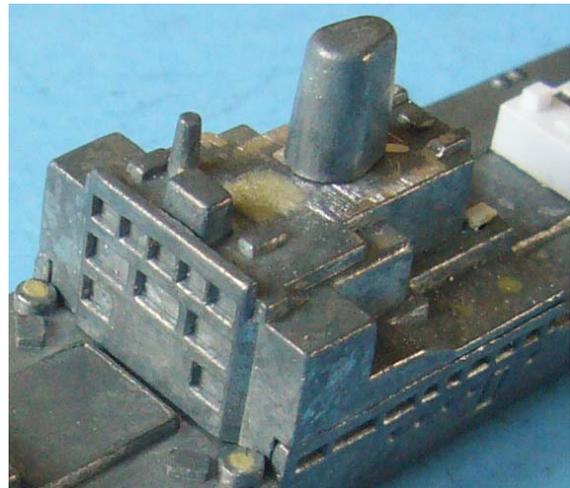
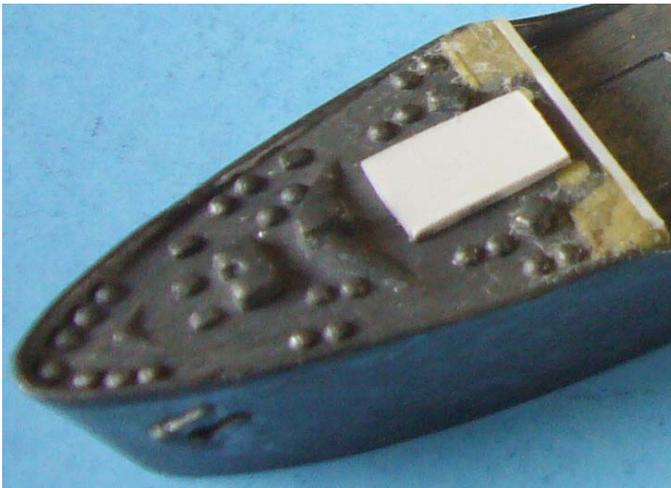
The model chosen was a Matson livery P611 because the funnel is the correct shape. First I removed the metal lifeboats and plastic masts then unscrewed the superstructure and put the screw aside in a safe place. As the funnel is set further back on the Cape Gibson I then set about drilling and filing with a needle file to remove the metal funnel from its housing which took a little effort but was worth doing. With the model disassembled the hull, superstructure and funnel were given a bath in paint remover - I was pleasantly surprised at how easily the paint came off. After rinsing, scrubbing with an old toothbrush and polishing up with a copper wire brush the three parts were set aside whilst I sourced and prepared the fittings.

The reason I had chosen Cape Gibson was that I had a set of spare "A" frame masts in white metal from a Len Jordan model (Manapouri - M105) and a bag of mixed white metal lifeboats in davits, which I think were from Hansa, that fortunately included a 'handed' pair of totally enclosed lifeboats of the correct size. The sat-com dome was also sourced from the spares box although it could also be made from the top of a hat pin from the local haberdashery - £1 for 50 items.

Modifications & Additions:

Apart from removing and modifying the funnel this conversion required minimal filing. The small radar / mast post and other two deck projections at the back of the superstructure were filed off to allow the funnel to be re-positioned; the top of the forward mast on the superstructure was flattened off ready for a radar to be fitted; and the projections on the top of the aft housing (docking bridge), which goes right across the ship just forward of the poop, were filed off to enable the flight deck to be installed.

I noted from the photographs that the cargo "A" frames were mounted outboard of the mast houses – an American thing apparently – and this included the mast fitted on the fore deck. So the next task was to modify the foredeck to cater for this by gluing a thin piece of plasticard against the forward main deck bulkhead and then, when set, filling in the gaps with Milliput. At the same time I also used Milliput to fill in all the mast mounting holes in the mast houses and decks as well as filling in the mounting holes for the lifeboats and the hole where the funnel had been fitted.

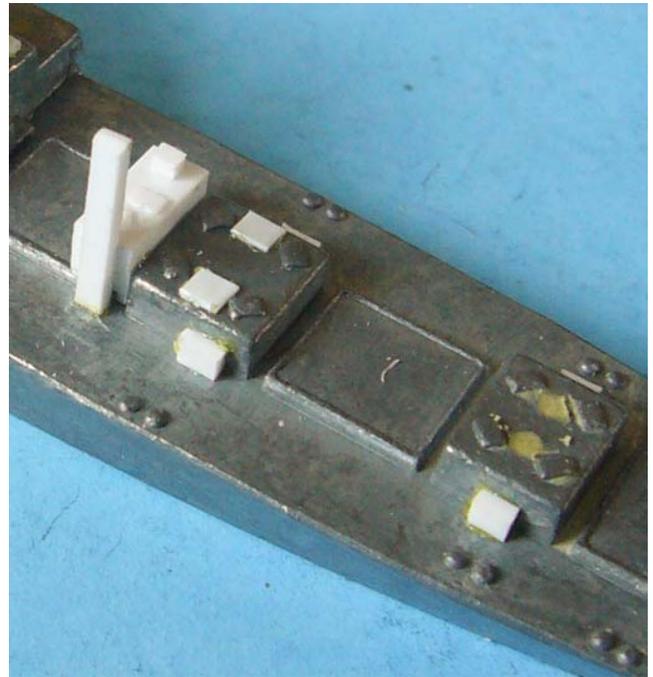
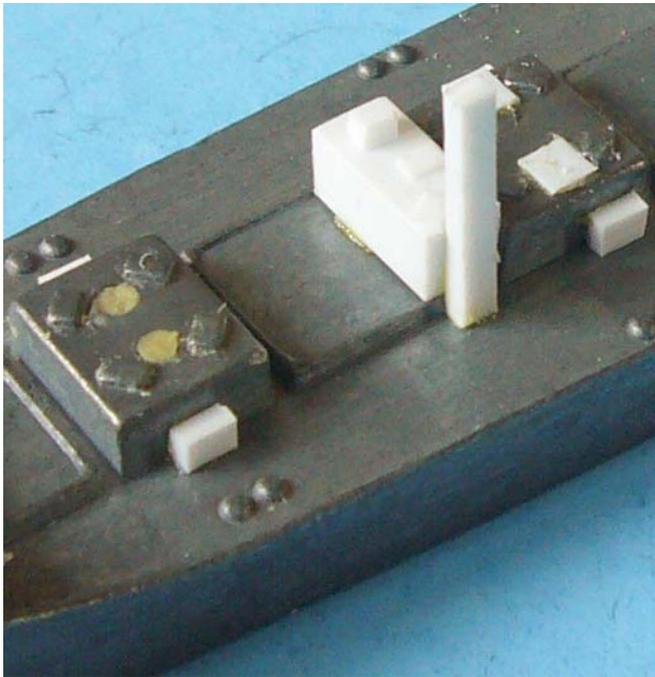


With all the filing and filling complete I then -

- created a cargo hatch for the foredeck from 0.5mm thick plasticard cut to shape (5mm wide and 6mm in length) and glued to the deck
- glued small lengths of 1.0mm x 1.5mm plasticard section to the outboard side of the mast housings in all four locations to provide mounts for the "A" frame masts
- covered up the holes on the mast houses next to the replenishment rigs with small bits of plasticard to simulate additional winches similar to those fitted on the model
- created the flight deck, which overhangs the stern, from 0.5mm thick plasticard measured up by reference to the photographs

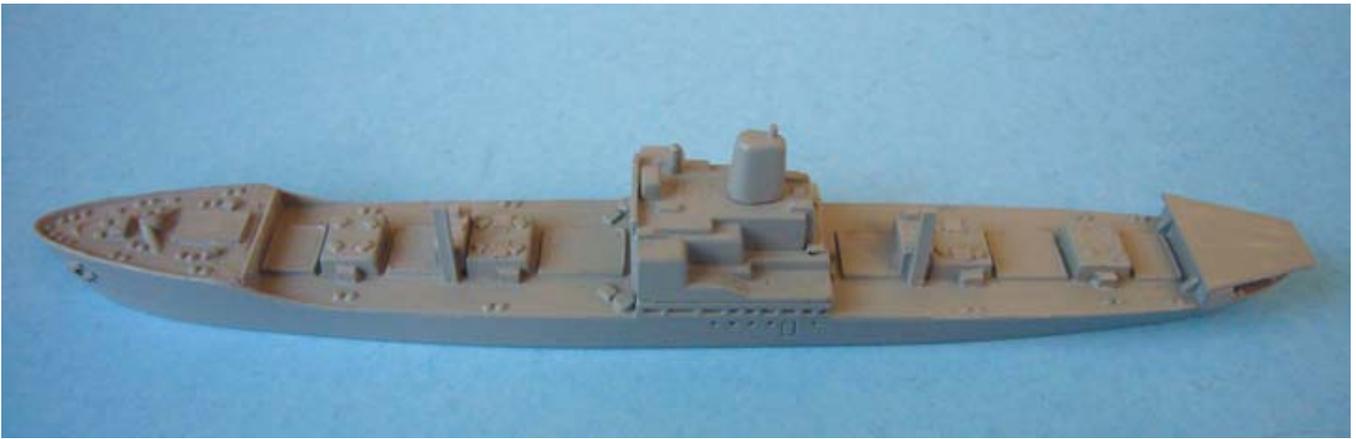
I then created the MCDS replenishment rigs fitted in front of the second and third mast houses. First a very thin piece of plasticard was glued in the gap between the hatch coaming and mast house so that it was flush with the hatch coaming top and then a length of 3.0mm x 3.0mm plasticard section was glued on top to form the rig machinery housing. Three bits of thin plasticard were glued on top of the "machinery housing" block to create the inhaul, outhaul and tension winches that are required. The replenishment rig itself is a moving high point system, which is basically a square mast

with a groove in it, that was created from a piece of plasticard 1.0mm x 1.5mm section glued to the deck and against the machinery housing – the details to give effect were added later.



In the photos above the Milliput filling is visible in yellow and the plasticard additions in white. Please note the flight deck, superstructure and funnel are LOOSE - just placed in position for the photo.

Probably the most difficult modification is filing the lug and pin off the bottom of the funnel so that it will fit flush on the deck in the new position - a very fiddly job that was achieved with a hack saw and needle file - a small piece of plasticard rod was glued to the top of the funnel to finish it off.



Once all the fittings were set in place the separate parts of the model were brush coated with a good coating of Humbrol 128 (US Compass Grey), which actually dries with a flat finish, and then left to dry for several hours before continuing. The flight deck part and new "A" frame masts were also painted up and measurements made for the cargo derricks which were cut from 0.45mm dia brass rod.

The main decks, the decks around the superstructure and the flight deck were all given two coats of Humbrol 125 (US Dark Grey) and allowed to dry off completely. Once Ok I gave the superstructure, mast housings, underside of the flight deck and funnel another coat of Humbrol 128 and when that was dry finished the hull with another two coats of the Humbrol 128 which gives a satin finish.



When thoroughly dry the waterline was added in Humbrol 33 (Matt Black), two thin white lines were applied to the flight deck using reference photos for location, and the funnel cap was painted Humbrol 33 (Matt Black). I used sellotape to mask the hull and flight deck as is my standard practice.

Next I prepared -

- the main mast fabricated from a length of 0.8mm diameter brass rod with plasticard for the platform / base painted Humbrol 128
- the foremast from a short length of 0.8mm diameter brass rod painted Humbrol 128
- the lifeboats painted Humbrol 82 (Matt Orange Lining)
- the radar for the top of the superstructure made from a small piece of thin plasticard painted white
- the ramp which runs from the flight deck to the main deck made from 0.5mm plasticard and painted to match the flight deck
- the crane "gantries" to be fitted immediately in front of and behind the superstructure fabricated from 1mm x 1.5mm plasticard rod (Plastruct 90743) and painted Humbrol 128

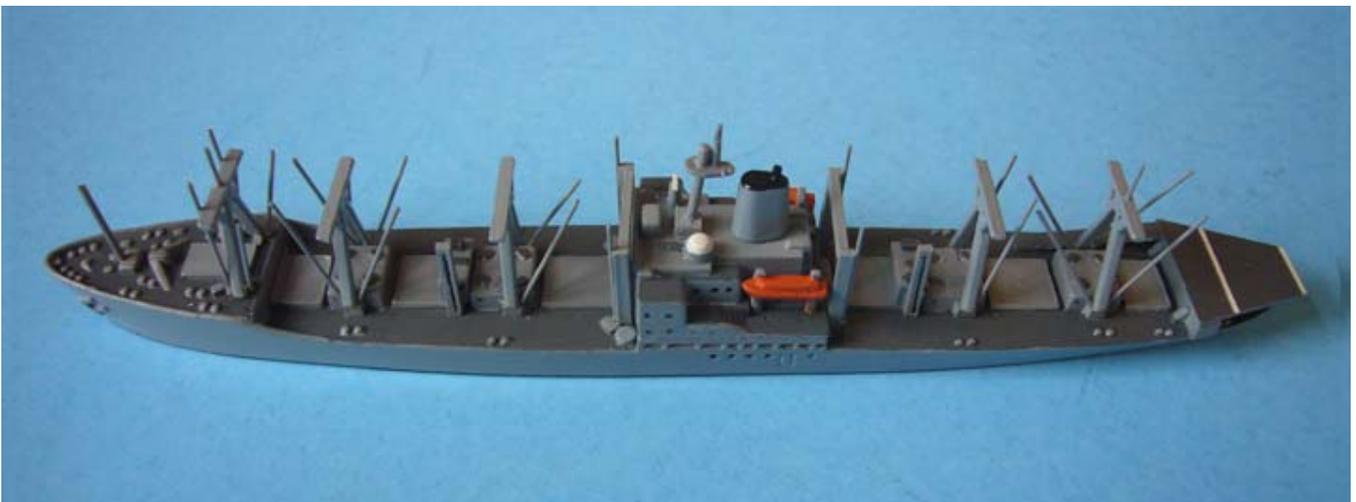
I then finished assembling the superstructure and screwed it firmly back in place. A fine black ink pen was used to fill in the window recesses, create the additional portholes/windows around the superstructure and mark a thin black vertical line on the replenishment rigs to simulate a groove.

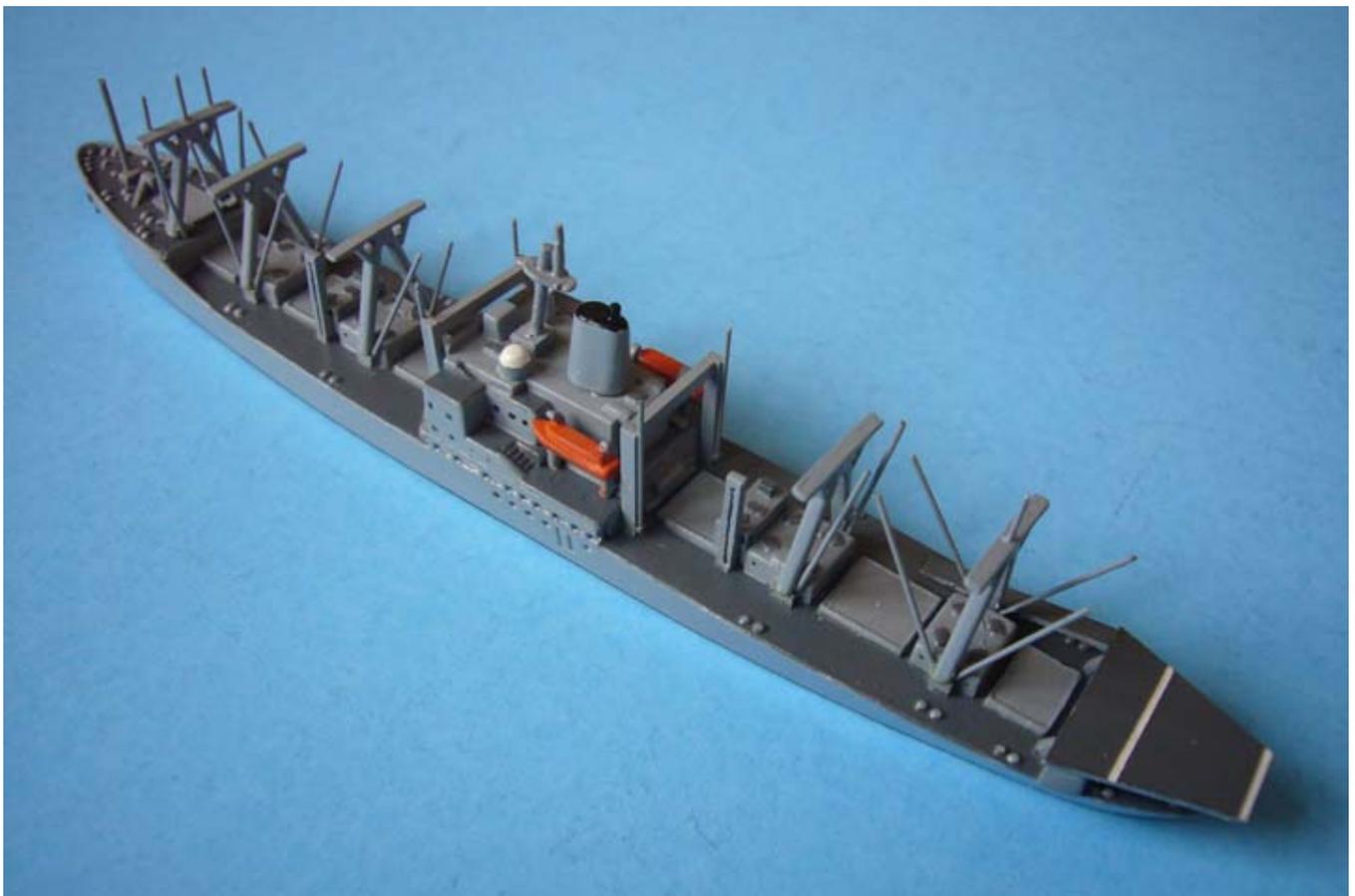
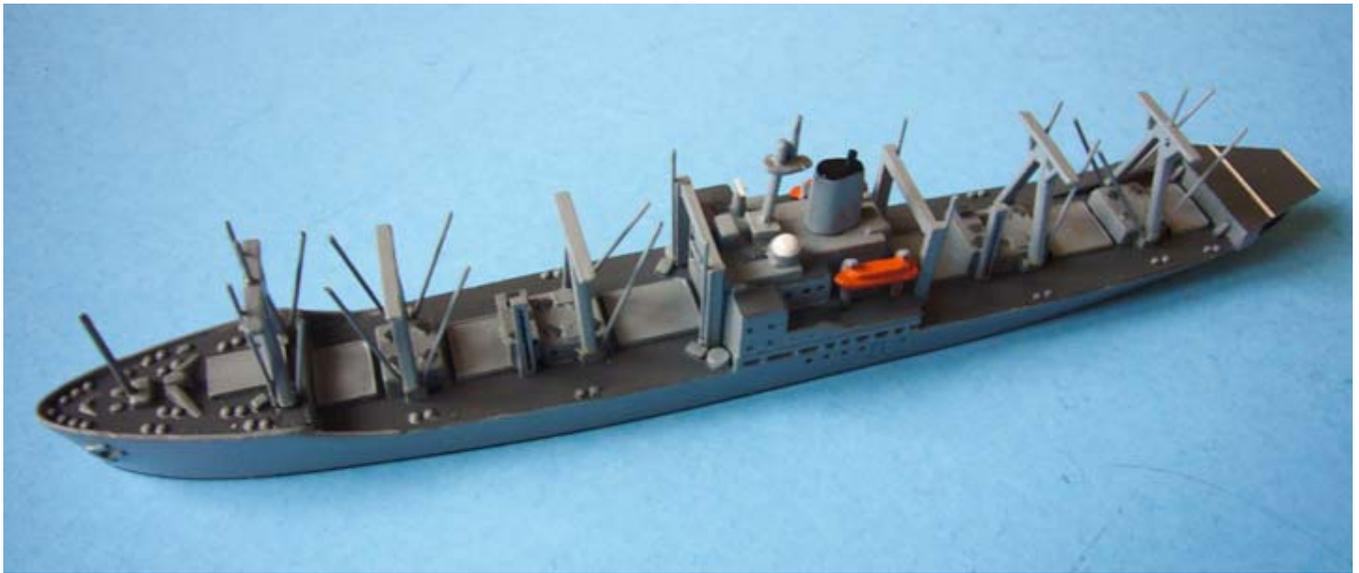


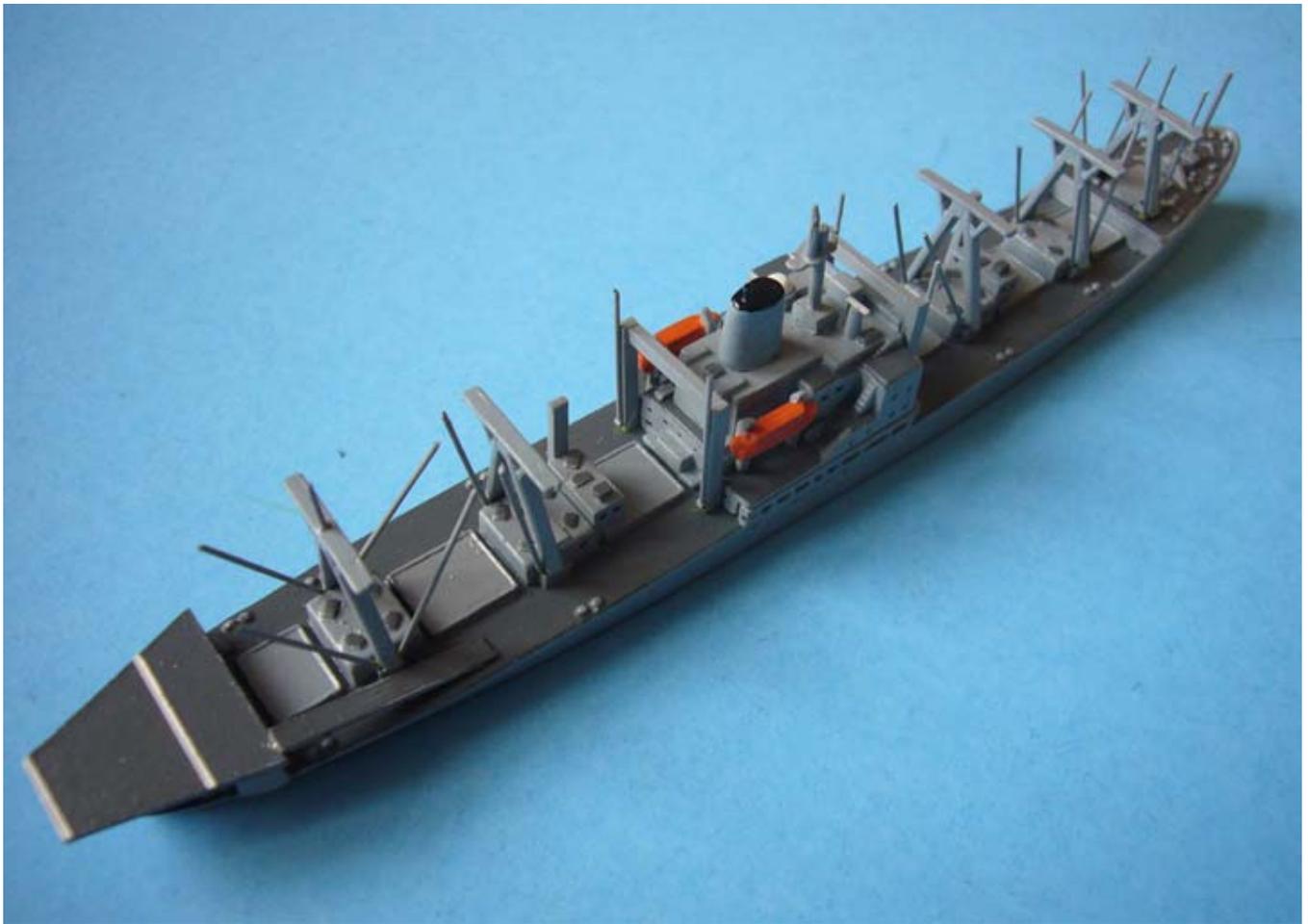
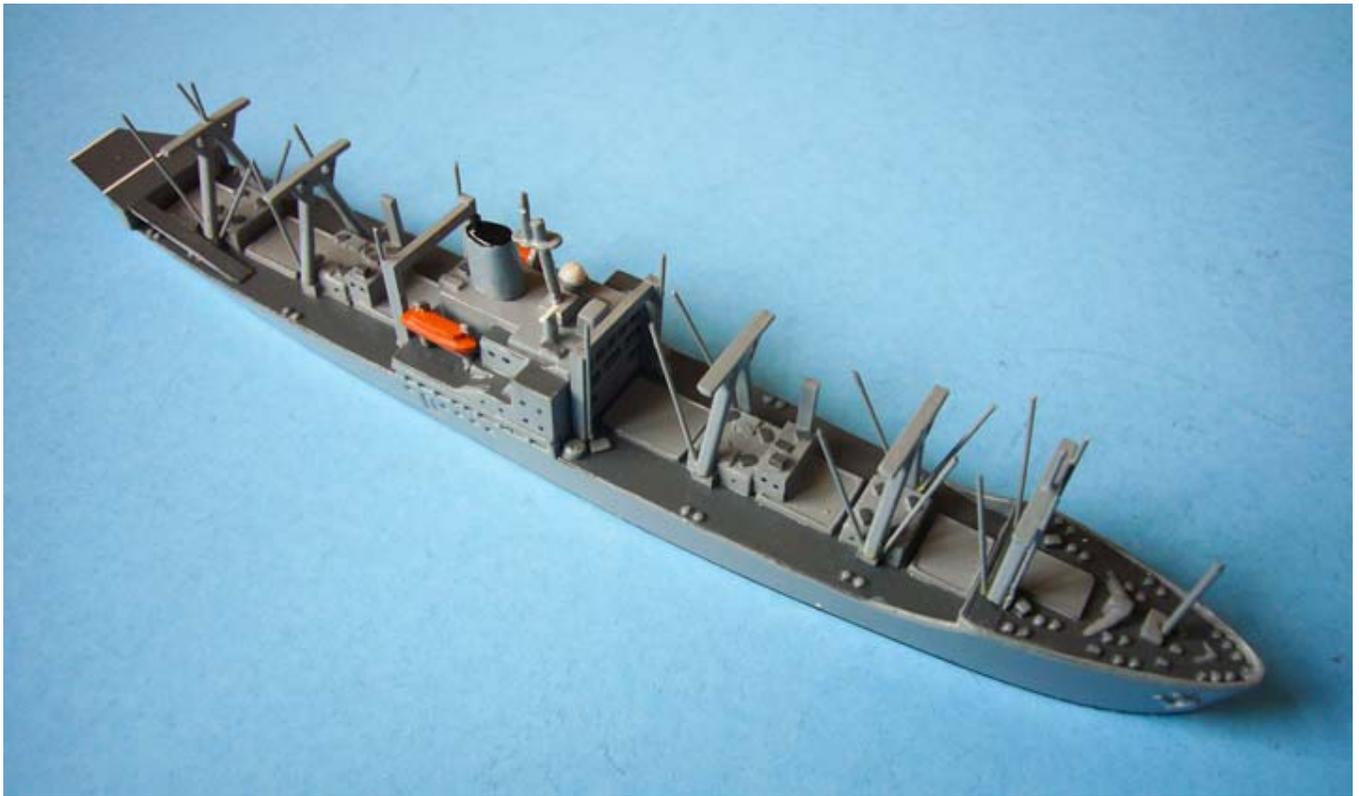
The next step was to fit the crane "gantries" against the forward and aft bulkheads of the superstructure and the main deck (One point from experience is that the two mountings on the Triang model for the masts in the forward of bridge location would have been better removed – something I did in the remainder of my conversions). When satisfied that the plastruct masts were firm I then glued all the pre-painted "A" frame masts in position onto the lugs that had been prepared against the outboard sides of the mast houses. Once everything was firm in position I touched up the glue points with Humbrol 128 paint.

With all dry and hardened up the whole model was given a good coat of Humbrol Satin Cote varnish and left to dry off overnight. The only thing then to do was fit all the derricks. These had been prepared, cut, painted and varnished before fixing. Similarly the ramp to the flight deck was finished off and varnished.

It is not really important, but I started from forward and fitted a pair of derricks in position using Evostik and placed a small lump of plasticard block across the hatch to allow the glue to set in an angled position. Allowing a certain period between applying each pair, it gives a good working look to the model. With all the derricks in place the flight deck ramp was fitted in place (to have fitted it earlier would have meant not being able to put a block across the rear hatches for fitting the derricks). A few minor touch ups with Humbrol 128 and the model was finished.







Paints	Colour	Description
Humbrol 128 "US Compass Grey" (Satin)	"Haze Grey"	Hull / Vertical Surfaces / Cranes / Masts etc
Humbrol 125 "US Gull Grey" (Satin)	Dark Grey	Deck Surfaces
Humbrol 33 Black (Matt)	Black	Waterline / Boot Topping, Funnel Cap, Highlights
Humbrol 82 "Orange Lining" (Matt)	Orange	Lifeboats
Humbrol 22 White (Gloss)	White	Radar "Golfball" Dome
Humbrol Satin Cote	Varnish	Overall finish
Pilot DR Ink Pen (Size 0.1 & 0.2)	Black Ink	Windows and other markings

(For comparative paint colours please have a look at the "[Paints / Colours](#)" page)

Material	Description
Paint Stripper	Blackfriars Paint & Varnish Remover (but Nitromors or Polycell should work as well)
Filler	Milliput Epoxy Putty
Plastic Sheet / Section / Rod	Plasticard / Styrene - 0.25mm & 0.5mm - Sheet 3.0mm / 4.0mm - Square Section 1.0mm x 1.5mm - Rectangular Section
Metal Rod	0.45mm & 0.8mm diameter brass wire

T-AK 2039 Cape Girardeau



(Photograph courtesy of the US Navy)

Specifications

Name:	SS Indian Mail - IMO 6821614 / Cape Gibson (T-AK 5051)	
Sister Ships:	SS Alaskan Mail - IMO 6815512 / Cape Girardeau (T-AK 2039) SS American Mail - IMO 6916873 SS Korean Mail - IMO 6901804 (was to have become Cape Greig) SS Hong Kong Mail - IMO 6909911	
Owner:	American Mail Line	
Builders:	Newport News Shipbuilding & Drydock Co., Newport News, Virginia - Yard No. 588	
Design:	C5-S-75a - MARAD Hull No. 216	
Launched:	1969	
Displacement:	15,949 tons / 22,564 deadweight tons	
Length (OA):	605 ft (184.4 m)	
Beam:	82 ft 4 ins (25.1 m)	
Draft:	35 ft 1 in (10.7 m)	
Propulsion:	Two (2) Babcock & Wilcox WT boilers operating at 875 PSI (Wet Pressure), two (2) General Electric (GE) geared steam turbines , single shaft / screw, 24,000 HP	
Maximum Speed:	20.8 knots	
Cargo Capacity:	1,082,200 Cubic Feet / 30,648 Cubic Metres / 400+ teu	
Crew:	32 Civilian Mariners (Full Operational Status) 9 Civilian Mariners (Reduced Operational Status)	
History:	1979	renamed President Jackson when APL acquired American Mail Line
	1988	returned to MARAD - assigned to the Ready Reserve Fleet at Alameda, California on 5 days readiness
	1990	activated for Operation Desert Storm - operated by APL
	2009	renamed TS Texas Clipper IV - transferred to Texas A&M University as training ship
Status / Disposal:	TS Texas Clipper VI - Texas A&M University training ship	

Further details can be obtained from the following links -

The Navsource Web Site

<http://www.navsource.org/archives/09/13/135051.htm>

Navysite.de (Unofficial US Navy Site)

<http://navysite.de/ak/ak2039.htm>