An exclusive interview with Clint Groves,

President of ATP, Inc.

PF: Why don't you give us a quick version of how you started ATP?

Groves: ATP started out not with decals and models, but the name meant Air Transport Photography, primarily because we sold duplicate slides of airliners and later, photos. While a supervisor at TWA, I was looking over the shoulders of two employees and saw them exchanging slides of airliners, and said to myself, my God, I didn't think anyone else knew did that. Two months later I was in the airliner slide duplicating business. The color slide business was a rather poor return for the amount of time put in. I wanted models. I wanted decals, and I found, well, I could have my own produced. The first was the Capital Constellation. I wanted a Capital Constellation for myself, and ran the project for myself, but had to run a thousand decals minimum. Then I found out I could sell those, and that's what really got me started. From the Constellation project on, there has been an average at least a new ATP decals project every 90 days. This all started about 1974.

PF: What sort of things, in 1984, seem to be popular among your customers, and what stimulates interest?

Groves: The most popular thing right now seems to be the new airlines. Bright colors, new schemes, new images. Older carriers with new color schemes are just as popular. Anything that is new and colorful is hot. I get a lot of requests for decals of liveries as soon as the preliminary drawings appear in the trade publications.

PF: Do you have in addition to those wanting new schemes a number of customers wanting older schemes for nostalgic reasons?

Groves: Correct. The Texas International scheme was wanted for years, but requests shot up as soon as that airline became Continental and the livery started to disappear. Although Microscale did this livery, it didn't include much more than the logos and lettering, and my customers want the stripes to avoid all the painting and masking. Older schemes on the average, by the way, sell somewhat less easier than the new ones. I only run 2000 of the American Overseas Stratocruiser, where I would normally run 5000 of a new airline scheme. A strange exception to the old vs. new color scheme buyers are the collectors. I found that quite a few of my customers actually buy the decals with no intention of ever using them. Some of them even put them in plastic page binders such as postcard collectors. Will decals be traded as old kits are now having traded? These customers will buy any decal, regardless of the scheme. Some of them buy all my decals, but don't build models.

PF: How are your customers divided up as far as collectors, serious modelers, and casual modelers?

Groves: Well, certainly the average isn't good modelers. I'm basing this on what people think of my own models. I like my own models, but there have been criticisms. Most people say my models are middle of the road. If this is true, then quite a few of my customers are below this based on what I've seen at displays and photos. However, nothing can discourage a modeler more than criticism. I don't like to say anything to the fellow who has just done his first attempt, as he will probably never build another model. Percentage wise, I would say we only have 3 or 4 percent of our customers who are really good modelers, we have that vast 90% who are middle of the road, and the 5 or 6% leftover are real disasters who are mainly enthusiasts who really can't model. But there is always hope for that last guy. To waste something you told me once, as long as your last model is better than the previous one, you're doing okay.