



Chief Councillor Zaius,  
3085AD,  
Central City

## Planet of the Apes classic spacecraft

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I will preface this by saying that I am only going to focus on the full scale prop that was used in filming outdoors sequences for 1968 Planet of the Apes, and the sequels Beneath POTA and Escape from POTA, and then the opening episode of the TV series. I am not going to get into discussions of interiors and propulsion systems, etc.

**Just the full scale prop – its design and construction, history in filming and its eventual fate after being sold.**

If you want to get into interiors and model recreation, here is a reference you could start with:

<https://pota.goatley.com/magazines/scififantasy-38.pdf>

If you want to get into propulsion and the technical specifications of spacecraft, start here:

<https://www.goingfaster.com/icarus/background.html>

If you want to know more about delta wings and canard wings, Wikipedia has pages: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delta\\_wing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delta_wing) and [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canard\\_\(aeronautics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canard_(aeronautics))

**My sincere thanks to Hunter Goatley for his awe inspiring website and his time and effort to go and resurrect lost websites and articles, to archive them where we can all access them again.**

**Thanks also to whoever is still hosting the Going Faster website.**

**My thanks also go to numerous other people who provided historic or logistic support:**

John Oberhauser chased up historic photos,  
Escott Norton made phone calls to Kanab information sources,  
Tom Forsythe, owner of the “Little Hollywood Land” Museum in Kanab,  
the late Phil Broad and Rob MacFarlane, for their site photos and visit report from 1973/74,  
Walter Cotton and Bill Ritchie for photos of the ship at the motel,  
Russell MacLeod and Zach Scott provided behind the scenes photos,  
Jim Key provided technical info, his model drawings and the blueprint,  
Wayne Sylvester provided images from filmed scenes,  
Robert Violette identified the gull wing hatch on the motel installation,  
Les Hemstock for moral support and encouragement.

*Susan Cunningham*

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## Design and Construction

The design of the ANSA spacecraft is credited to Oscar winning art director and production designer, William J. Creber (July 26, 1931 – March 7, 2019).

Creber has been quoted as saying; “Having come off Lost In Space I’d had enough of saucers and wanted something more realistic ... We just tried to emulate what NASA was doing back then”

and also

“The back end was pretty vague because we always knew that area would be under water. It was never going to be seen so the rear became unimportant.”<sup>1</sup>

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Below are the original working drawings from the studio. It was designed to be 45 feet long (nose tip to jets) and 24 feet wide. It was also going to be 10 feet 8 inches high at the jet end, so a very thin but wide ‘glider’ style.

These images are all from Jim Key’s article in Sci-Fi and Fantasy Models, edition 38, pages 14-21, found here:

<https://pota.goatley.com/magazines/scififantasy-38.pdf>

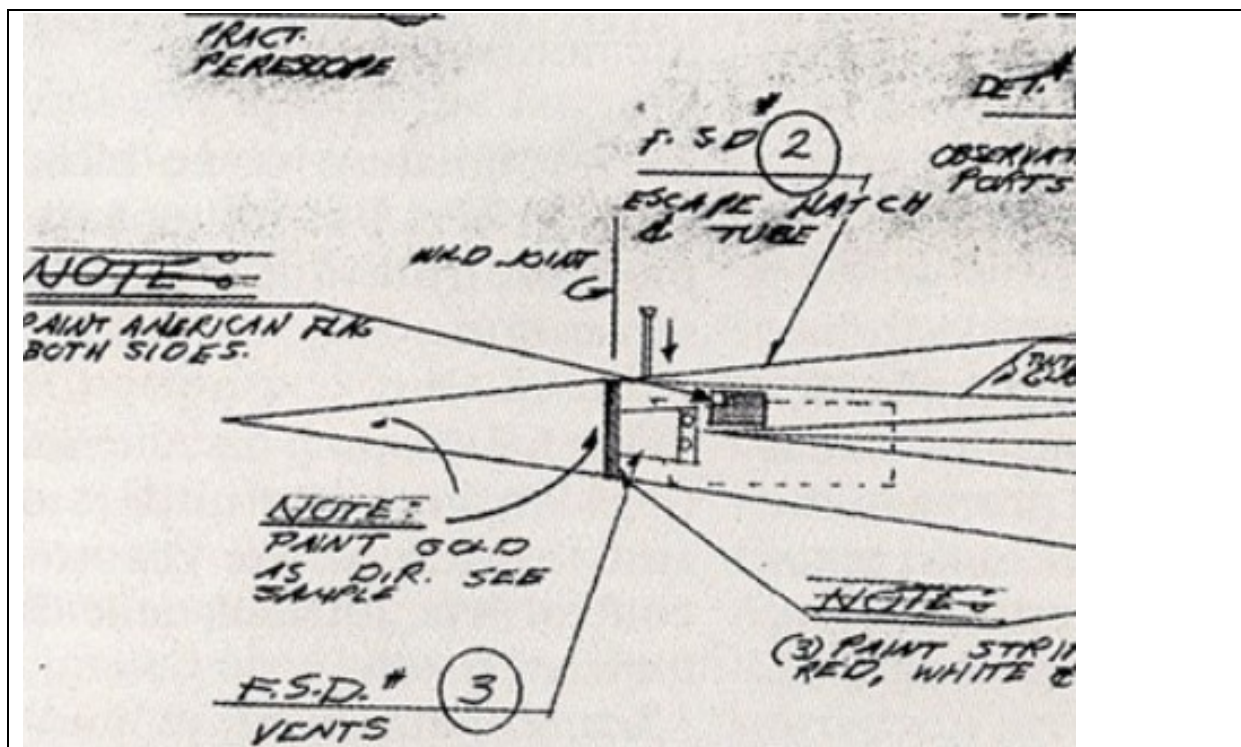
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<sup>1</sup> [https://pota.goatley.com/scrolls/simianscrolls\\_21.pdf](https://pota.goatley.com/scrolls/simianscrolls_21.pdf), The Road to Ruin, Dave Ballard

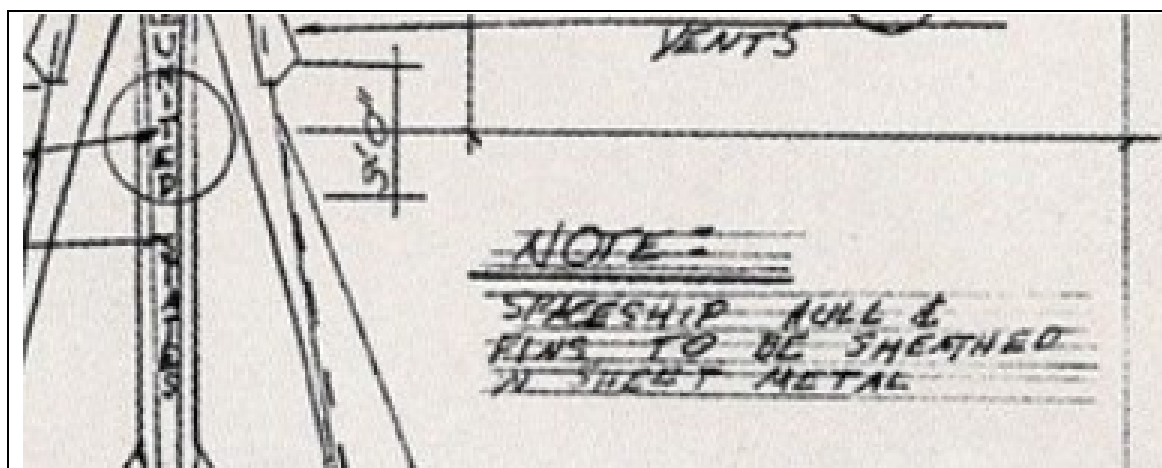








Note the escape hatch and tube to climb from the hold to the hatch, which is located forward of the windows towards the nose cone.



Also note the ship was designed to be covered in sheet metal.

I cleaned up and overwrote the construction notes on Revision 1 (12 April 1967) of the spaceship diagram for the construction crew. See next page.

1 There was a ballast tank inside the ship below the waterline (to hold water and weight it down) and ballast tanks in the delta wings (the wings were called fins) above the waterline (to hold air to enable it to pop it above the water as/when needed).

2 Overall it was to be 45 feet long, 24 feet wide and 10 feet 8 inches high. The delta wings were to be 25 feet long. However it had to be built in sections to be transported, and then it was assembled on site. This seems to have been the crux of Revision 1. For transport the maximum dimensions could only be 20 feet long, 8 feet wide and 10 feet 6 inches high. Thus the sections include the main body (20 feet), the nose cone (12 feet), the jet end (12 feet) and the delta wings.

3 The skin needed to be kept smooth for people to slide down. The 'wild' joints I understand to be a method for allowing stronger welds inside to assemble the ship while the outside weld was enamelled to provide a smooth sliding skin.

4 It appears that after Beneath and before Escape the body was reduced by removing the whole of the jet end to the rear wild joint (see image below), and adding the 'heat shield' to tidy up that exposed hollow end. This would leave a main body of about 20 feet plus the new heat shield of another maybe 2 feet. In Escape the ship didn't need to sink and the tanks in the delta wings would provide flotation for a buoyant ship.

The delta wings would have been reduced in length to match this new body length.

NOTE: spaceship to be built in sections as req for shipping.

NOTE: provide for hatch to blow open on cue & land in water to float  
Rig as req by mech effects

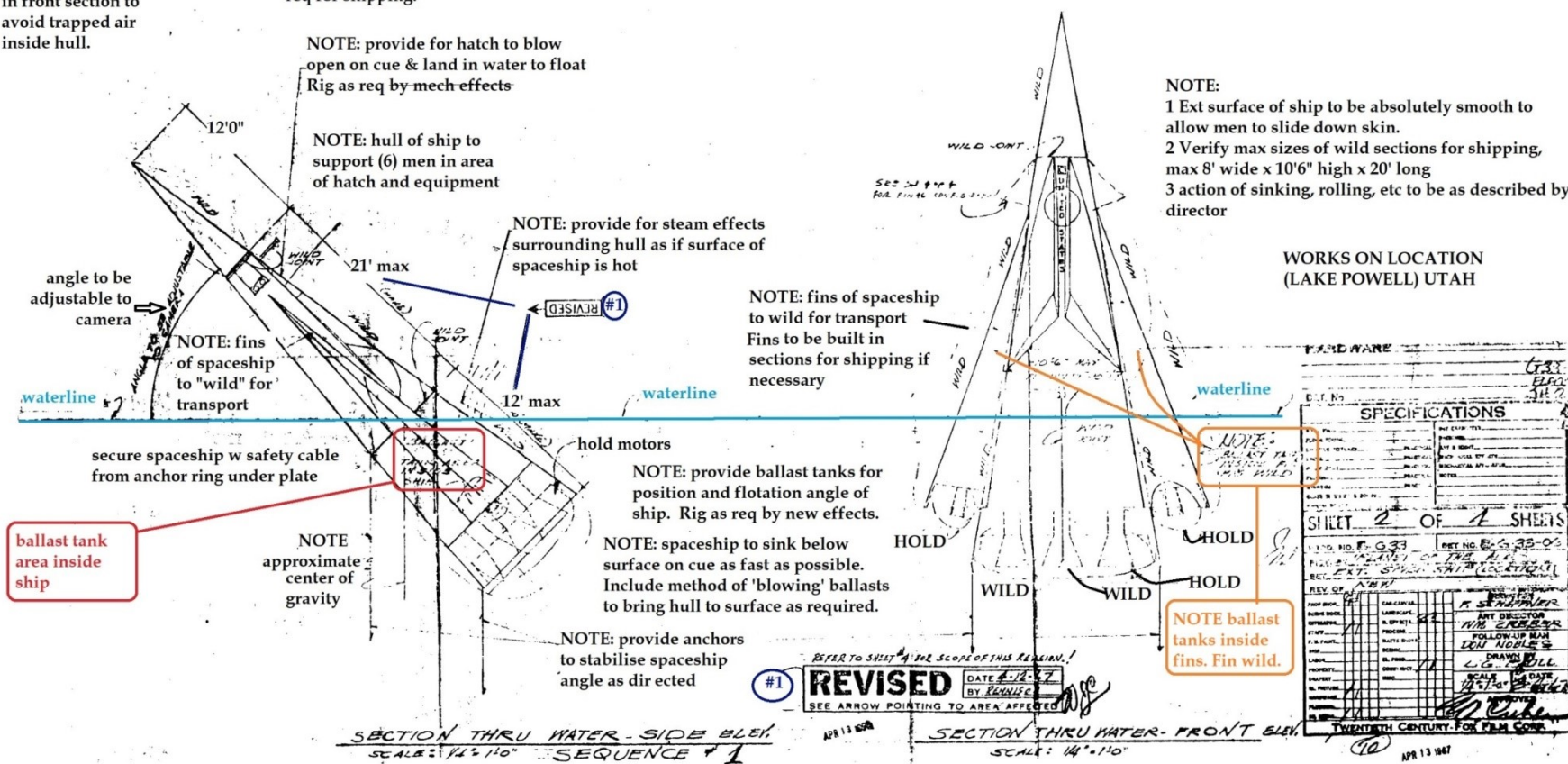
**NOTE:** hull of ship to support (6) men in area of hatch and equipment

NOTE: provide for steam effects surrounding hull as if surface of spaceship is hot

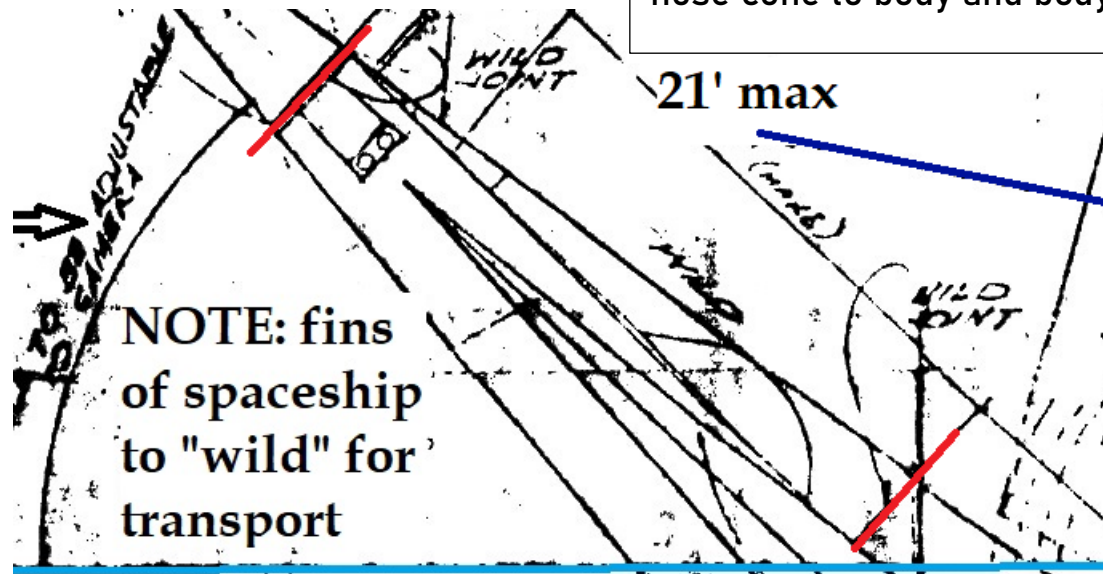
NOTE: fins of spaceship  
to wild for transport —  
Fins to be built in  
sections for shipping if  
necessary

**NOTE:**

- 1 Ext surface of ship to be absolutely smooth to allow men to slide down skin.
- 2 Verify max sizes of wild sections for shipping, max 8' wide x 10'6" high x 20' long
- 3 action of sinking, rolling, etc to be as described by director

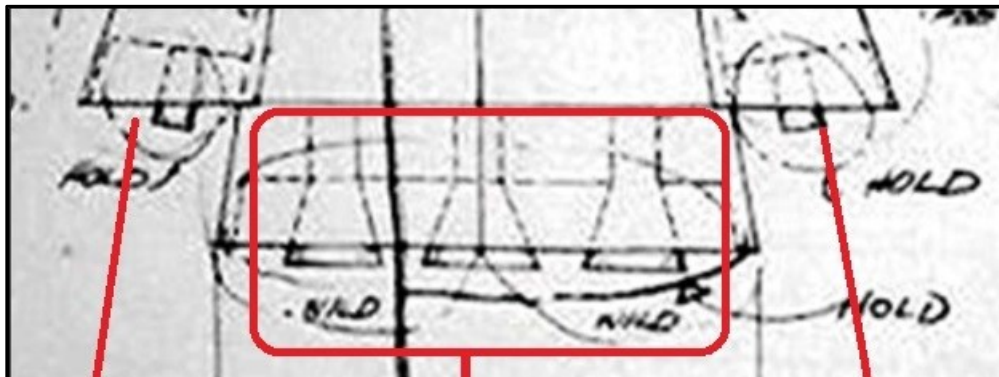
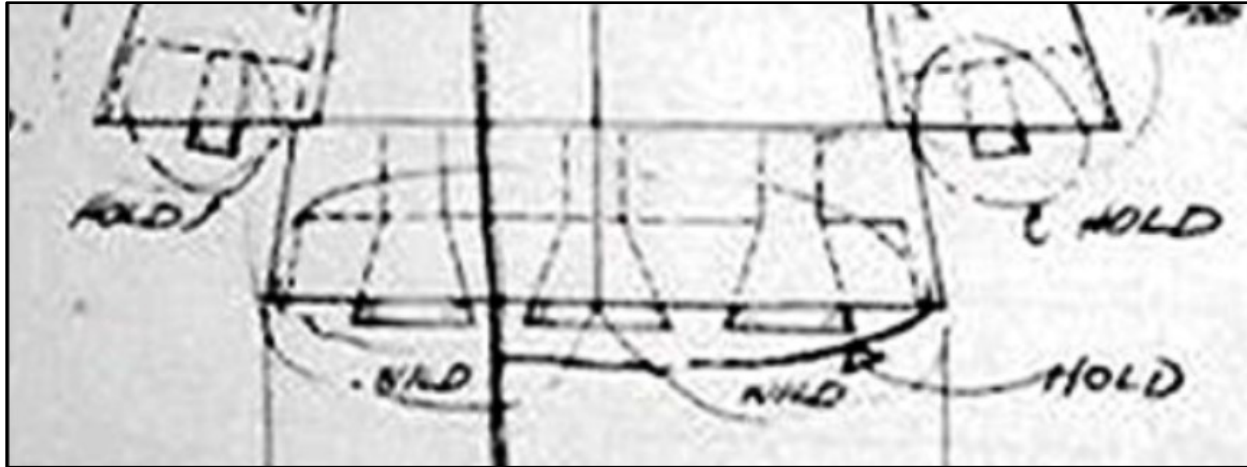
WORKS ON LOCATION  
(LAKE POWELL) UTAH

**\21' max**



*"the rear section is a complete plate of actually 4 engines (two on each side, two top and bottom - but appear as one on a plan drawing). The engines are an inset panel that is "wild" (removable). Each engine is "held" (hold) in place on the inset plate."*



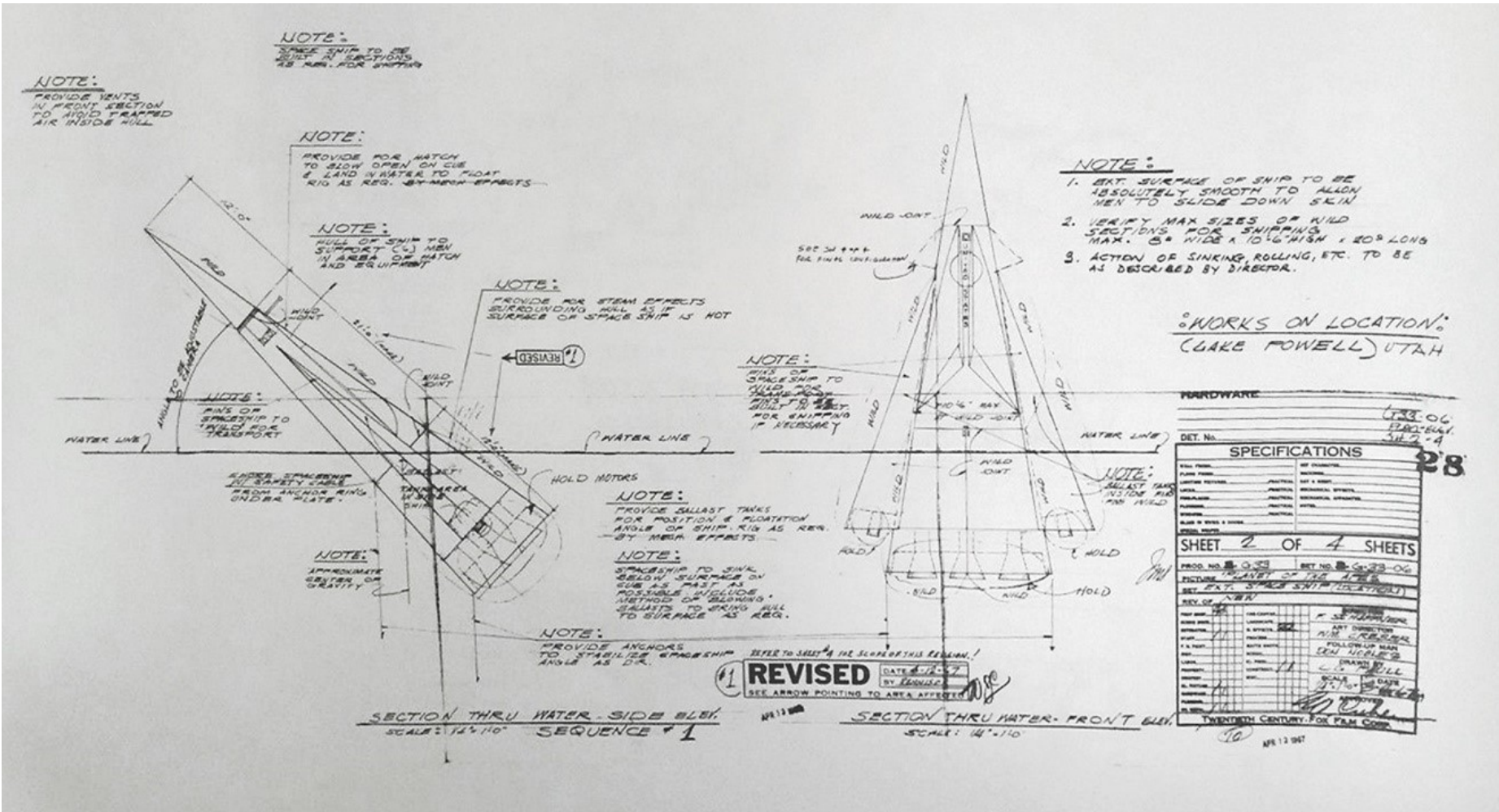


HOLD

**ALL four HOLD  
on the panel but  
the panel is WILD**

**HOLD**

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100005935639409>



William Creber designed and supervised the build of the prop. Jim Key spoke with him to gather extra info and William Creber advised:

**BC:** Yes, I did some initial sketches, then turned them over to another artist, Holdereed Maxy—a set designer. He drew it up, and then we made corrections. After which we built the maquette, then the four foot miniature. Franklin Schaffner felt it needed something in the front, like some little wings. So we added those little triangular winglets, with the excuse being that they were reaction control jets.

**BC:** We wanted something that wasn't just a capsule. So as I looked around, I noticed this sort of 'paraglider' idea, and that seemed a bit more futuristic. We hit on our initial design and just carried it through to completion. We did a couple of sketches of how it would look floating. Franklin liked it, and Arthur (Jacobs) bought it, so we just did it. We didn't spend a lot of time designing it. It didn't go through a lot of changes because there wasn't much time to get it thought out. We just tried to emulate what NASA was doing back then.

(Sci Fi and Fantasy Models, edition 38, page 20)

Jim Key being a modeller, then drew up his own model plans, based on the original blueprints plus what he and others had observed from the actual prop used in filming. The detailed methods he used are in the article referenced.

According to Jim Key's calculations at the time, it was 43 feet 6 inches long, 24 feet wide and 10 feet 8 inches high. Recently Jim has advised he believes it was constructed to the 45 feet length as designed.

The drawing below is that of Jim Key – I use it with his permission. It is from Sci Fi and Fantasy Models, edition 38, page 19

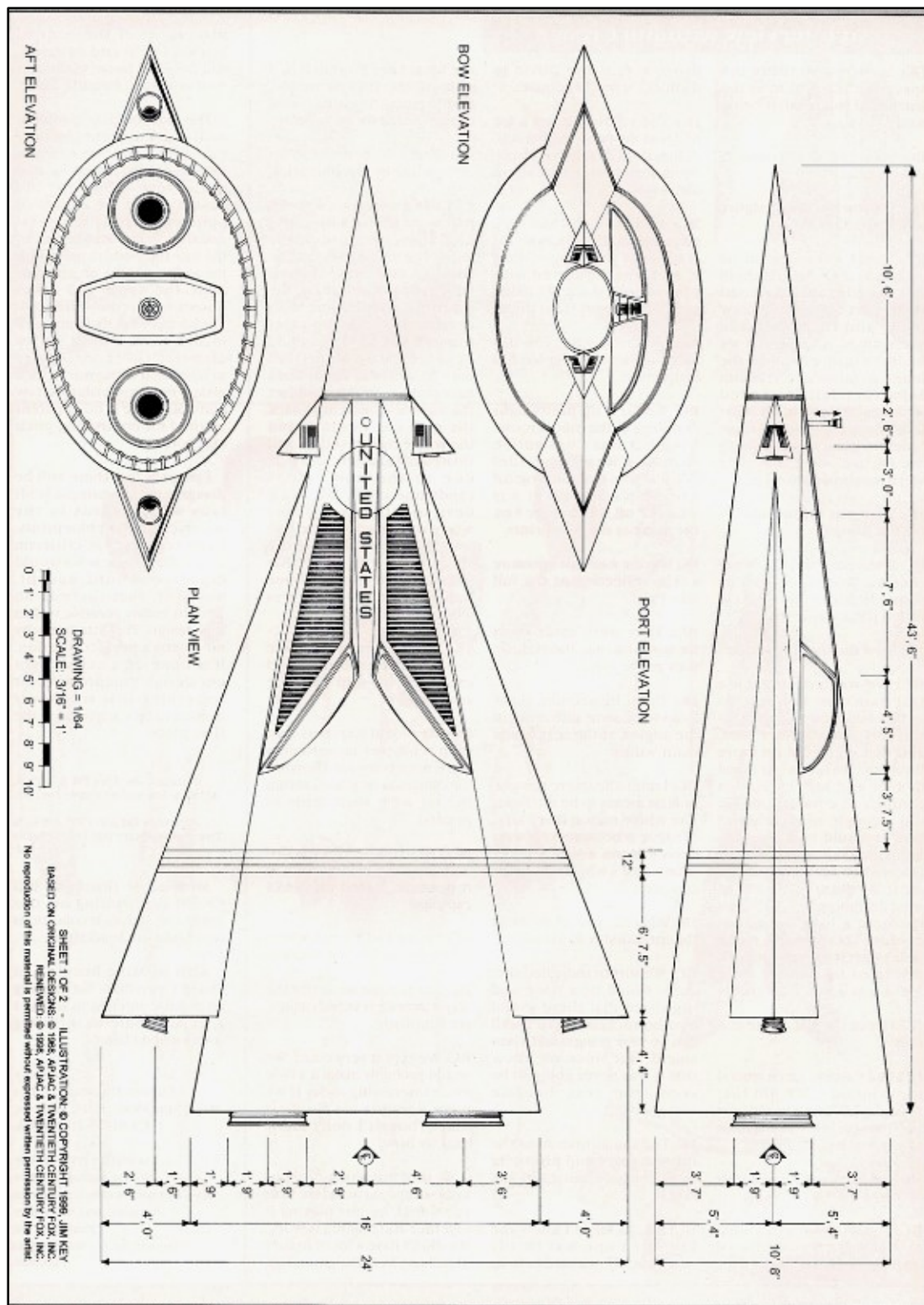
<https://pota.goatley.com/magazines/scififantasy-38.pdf>

Sincere thanks to Jim Key for allowing the use of his model diagram.

<https://modelermagic.com/category/a-to-m-directory/a-d/custom-replicas-jim-key/>

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100005935639409>





The prop was made of a mixture of materials, whereas most studio props were made entirely of plywood. In fact Phil Broad who saw it in 1973/4 reported it was

(<https://pota.goatley.com/ApesShip/Personal/PofAaccounts.html>)



*“welded steel with TWO layers of one sixteenth sheet steel for skin.”*

*“Inside it featured steel frames spaced about every 24 inches and they were at least 8 inches high. I never was told why it was built so heavily but I believe they were either planning to drop it into the lake or they intended it to sink and surface on command with some sort of ballast tank arrangement.”*

It also included a wooden frame inside, probably for supporting the mortar device which blew the hatch free in the first movie, and fairings (the delta wings) made of welded sheet metal assemblies over metal framing filled with urethane foam. The canard wings near the nose were simple shells.



Photo 1: Phil Broad, 1973-74, the aft of delta wings removed for Escape, showing the urethane foam filling.

**Note the location of the blue and red stripes of the livery in the movie photos – this will be important later. The original ship's livery (Planet) was a blue stripe in front of a red stripe i.e. blue, white and red.**

## Planet of the Apes, 1968



Photo 2: The escape hatch cover blows off after splashdown.



Photo 3: Sinking, escape hatch open for the astronauts to exit.



Photos 4 and 5: Astronauts exited through escape hatch near the nose.



## Beneath the Planet of the Apes, 1970



Photo 6: Beneath POTA – Brent emerging from the circular nose hatch.

Dave Ballard, in Simian Scrolls Issue 21, wrote

“The front end of the prop in ‘Beneath’ is identical to how we saw it in the original movie, but it has now been extended at the rear with charred wreckage to suggest what was once a tail end. This wreckage consisted of suitable existing parts that were scavenged from the Fox backlot including a landing strut from the "Jupiter 2", and an engine nozzle from a real missile.”



Photo 7: Beneath POTA

The important point for this article is that the rear end of the prop has been damaged. The rear four feet, from the trailing edge of the delta wings to the end of the jets is extensively damaged and at least the paint work forward of the trailing edge is discoloured.



Photo 8: compare to Jim Key's diagram, p. 12.



Photo 9: Livery aft of the portside window; blue, white and red striping.



Photo 10: Portside; trailing edge of the delta wing and aft jet housing.



## Escape from the Planet of the Apes, 1971



Photo 11: Escape from the Planet of the Apes, spaceship now with a side gull wing hatch.



Photo 12: Filming Escape from the Planet of the Apes, with nose cone missing and rock damage to the hull. Photo provided by Russell MacLeod.



Photo 13: Filming Escape from the Planet of the Apes, with nose cone missing and rock damage to the hull. Photo provided by Russell MacLeod.

Dave Ballard, in Simian Scrolls Issue 21, wrote

"This incarnation of the ship is notably shorter and I think that can be explained by the prop-masters having to tidy up the damage they had inflicted to its rear end for 'Beneath'. Rather than reinstate and clean up this portion of the ship it was quicker and no doubt cheaper to just amputate!"

Phil Broad and Rob MacFarlane visited the prop in late 1973 or 1974 and Phil Broad made the following observations

(<https://pota.goatley.com/ApesShip/Personal/PofAaccounts.html>):

"During filming the prop encountered some real-life trauma when the crew took it out to the beach to film it being dragged to shore for the pre credit sequence. The tow line snapped and the prop then tried to make an 'Escape' all of its' own, colliding with some rocks in the process! The brunt of the damage was to the underside and this can be clearly seen on screen during these sequences and during the main title credits where the ship is being transported on the back of an army truck."

Phil Broad and Rob MacFarlane's visit took place at the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Construction Department off Olympic Boulevard, Century City, some time after the '73 "Equicon" which was held April 19-22, 1973. Phil Broad also reported that he "did see it once after it had been moved to the Fox ranch in Malibu for the Apes TV pilot episode" which was filmed in mid 1974.

This dates Phil Broad's backlot photos to between late April 1973 and late June 1974.

Phil Broad also made the following comments:

"A testament to its heavy construction is the fact that it spent 3 hours banging around on the rocks when its anchor cable broke during the off shore filming of "Escape". It still went on to finish the film, only needing the nose cone replaced as it had been lost. In fact the bottom was still heavily dented from this misadventure.

I stepped on the nose cone and discovered it wasn't too well attached! Fortunately it didn't collapse and I quickly stepped off it.

The side hatch might as well have been welded shut because we could not even get it to wiggle, even with me laying on my back on the tanks inside and using my legs to push with. Later I would learn that it had been built with a *working* exterior pull type latch and the salt water had probably rusted it solid. We did try pulling the ring outside but we assumed it wasn't real because it didn't move at all, not to mention that standing on that slippery side fairing was a bit risky.

A plywood wall extended across the back, preventing us from seeing the interior of the heat shield assembly. The ship's "heat shield" was a metal outer ring assembly with a fiberglass shell for the actual shield portion and it looked pretty convincing even in real life."

The heat shield may have been to protect the command capsule from the rockets in the propulsion unit.

"Looking at the rear of the spacecraft shows two interesting concentric circles that make the vessel appear as if it were housed slightly within another, larger body or the drive section, a form fitting power/drive section."

Author unknown, <https://www.goingfaster.com/icarus/qvirdonwarp.htm>



Photo 14: Planet of the Apes, with longer tail section.





Photo 15: Escape from the Planet of the Apes, shorter tail section with heat shield. (<https://www.goingfaster.com/icarus/escapeship.html>)

Comparison of Photos 14 and 15 shows the ship has a shorter tail section with a heat shield in Escape. The body has been shortened to retain the original blue livery line and a new red line painted in front. The delta wings have been reduced in length with no livery. **The original ship's livery (Planet and Beneath) was blue/white/red striping but is now red/white/blue striping.**

The removed tail section appears to have reduced the length by about 12 feet, based on Jim Key's diagram, but with the addition of the heat shield adding about 2 feet back on. So the prop in Escape POTA appears to be about 35 feet long and a maximum of 6 feet high.



Photo 16: Phil Broad, 1973-74, heat shield after filming Escape, <https://pota.goatley.com/ApesShip/Personal/PofAccounts.html>





The spacecraft was damaged when it broke free from its cables and crashed into the rocks.

Photo 17: origin unknown



Photo 18: Phil Broad, 1973-74, the underside showing rock damage.





Photo 19: Phil Broad, 1973-74, closed gull wing and heat shield after filming Escape, <https://pota.goatley.com/ApesShip/Personal/PofAaccounts.html>



Photo 20: closed gull wing and heat shield about 6 feet diameter and 2 feet deep, cleaned for the TV episode, 1974, <https://www.goingfaster.com/icarus/virdonopening.html>

**POTA TV series, episode 1, Escape from Tomorrow, 1974**



Photo 21: Probe 6 landed in the TV series,  
<https://www.goingfaster.com/icarus/virdonopening.html>

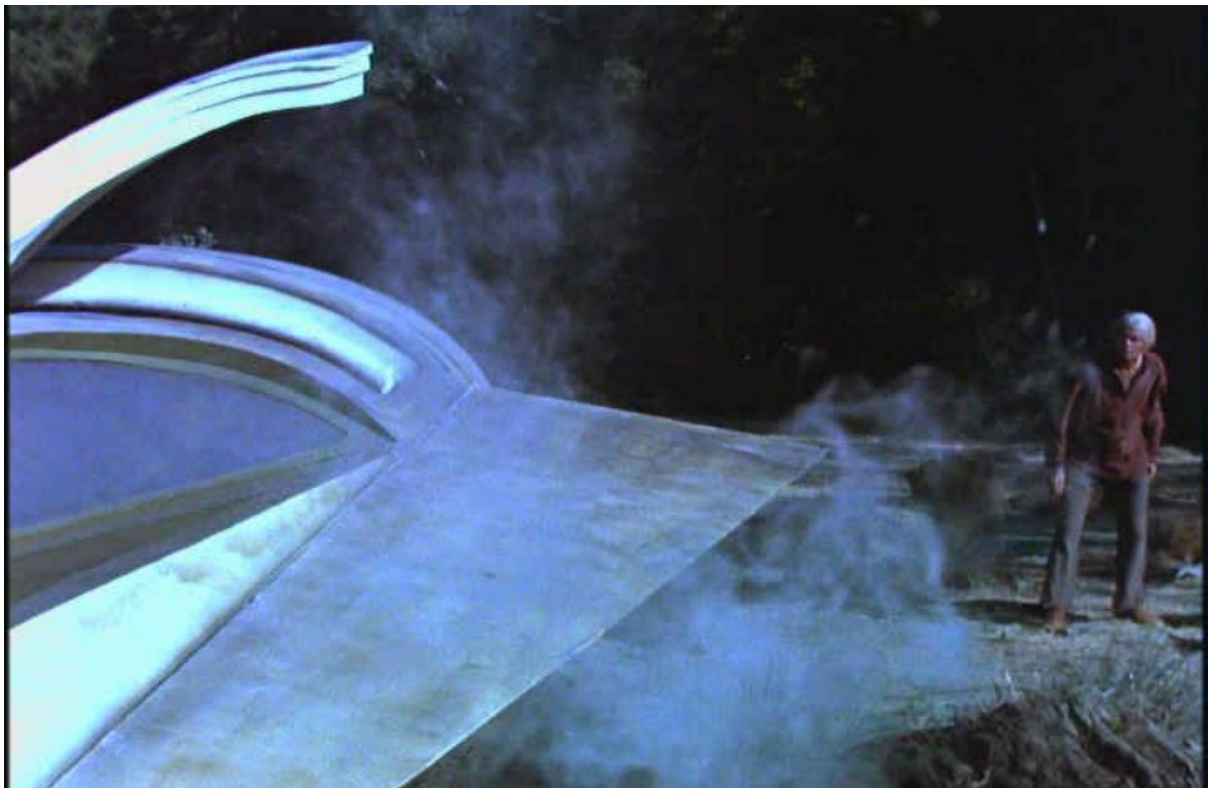


Photo 22: Farrow approaches Probe 6,  
<https://www.goingfaster.com/icarus/virdonopening.html>





Photo 23: Gorilla guards Probe 6, no circular nose hatch but gull wing hatch. <https://www.goingfaster.com/icarus/virdonanswers.html>



Photo 24: Virdon running across where the circular nose hatch would have been. <https://www.goingfaster.com/icarus/virdonescape.html>

Dave Ballard, in Simian Scrolls Issue 21, wrote

“The prop’s last on-screen appearance was for the first episode of the Apes TV show ‘Escape from Tomorrow’ where it again crash-

lands ... This time a dark grey dome has been added to round off the back of the ship (possibly supposed to be a heat shield – if so it re-entered the atmosphere the wrong way around?) and a small recessed control panel (to open the hatch) has been inset into one of the wings. It may be that after it's encounter with the rocks some additional repair work along with a fresh paint job was needed to make the prop screen-worthy or it might just be the poor definition of the TV broadcast quality image but it seems the words 'United States' and the circular escape hatch are no longer present. Otherwise it is clearly the same prop as previously seen in 'Escape.'"

Ron Harper recalled of filming the TV episode, "*The spaceship wasn't much of anything. It was a wooden, hollow shell. The scenes with us at the controls were shot on a soundstage. What looked impressive was the way they dug that burning burrow behind the spaceship to make it look like it took about half a mile to land.*"

### **Sale of Fox Ranch**

After having played its part in the TV show it appears it was abandoned and left to the mercy of the elements in an outside storage yard on the studio backlot. There it lay untouched until around late 1975 when it was 'rediscovered' by fans who were able to photograph it in a very sorry state. See next page.

Fox Ranch was purchased by the State of California in January 1974 and opened as public parkland, the Malibu Creek State Park, in July 1976.

<http://www.malibucreekstatepark.org/history.html>

The Fox ranch would have had to be cleared of any movie sets or props between when Fox sold the land to the state of California in '74 and when the park opened to the public in '76.



Photo 25: Late '75/Early 1976, Jim Aupperle and Stephen Czerkas and the full scale space ship from 'Planet of the Apes' at the Fox Ranch (now known as Malibu Creek State Park).

[https://planetoftheapes.fandom.com/wiki/Icarus/Liberty\\_1?file=Rustship2.jpg](https://planetoftheapes.fandom.com/wiki/Icarus/Liberty_1?file=Rustship2.jpg)

### **Four Seasons Inn, Kanab, Utah**

Dave Ballard reported in Simian Scrolls Issue 21 that in 2016, two photos emerged courtesy of Apes fan Bill Ritchie. They were taken around 1978 by photographer Walter Cotton and showed how the prop was being used as a Four Seasons Inn sign in Kanab, Utah. Although it had been repainted, all the familiar details, including the damage to the underside caused by its collision with the rocks and the 'heat shield' added for Escape from POTA are clearly visible.

On Facebook fan pages in 2023, two POTA fans separately reported seeing the ship in Kanab when they were children, travelling through with their parents. One reported it was there in the late 1970's.





Photo 26: Gull wing hatch, from POTA fan Robert Violette, 27 Nov 2023.



Photo 27: Looking north east, from the highway towards the Inn. Compare with Photo 28.



Photo 28: Looking south-south-west, from the Inn's parking lot. This is the underside showing damage from rocks, during filming Escape. Compare with Photos 12 and 18.

Four Seasons Inn was located at 30 N 300 W Kanab, UT 84741

Via email 26 Nov 2023 Tom Forsythe, owner of the **"Little Hollywood Land" Museum** in Kanab reported that

"in the 28 years I've been in Kanab ... I have never seen that spaceship or heard anything about where it might be."

Tom Forsythe suggested we phone Bob Riding at the Kane County Visitor Center. POTA fan Escott Norton did so and reported that he:

“talked to Bob Riding and he remembers the ship very well, Confirmed it was the original prop from the film, and confirmed what you already heard that it was sold to someone who ended up scrapping it. He also confirmed what I had figured, it was not at the Days Inn but one block south at what is now the Best Friends Roadhouse at 30 N 300 W Kanab, UT 84741.

So, case closed, sadly the ship did not survive.” 28 Nov 2023

If you enter the address 30 N 300 W Kanab, UT 84741 and go into Google Street View, you can line up the mountains in the back of the two photos with those visible in the distance, and confirm the site is correct.

## Kanab Junkyard

Anecdotally it was later ‘blown over in a storm’ and taken to Goodfellow’s junkyard in Johnson Canyon north east of Kanab.

An enquiry post on a Kanab Facebook page in November 2023 elicited this response.

Sean Crosby

Hello, That piece was hauled away by my father in law. It sat in his scrap yard for years....the scrap was actually on BLM land thru a land lease of some sort. The lease expired and the scrap had to be removed from the land. A scrap company came with equipment and it was cut into smaller pieces and hauled away. This was in the early 90's. she's gone



Susan Cunningham **Author**

**Sean Crosby** do you know what happened to it that it had to be taken to your FIL land? Mostly we hear it was 'blown over in a windstorm' though there's also one story that it was burnt in a fire.

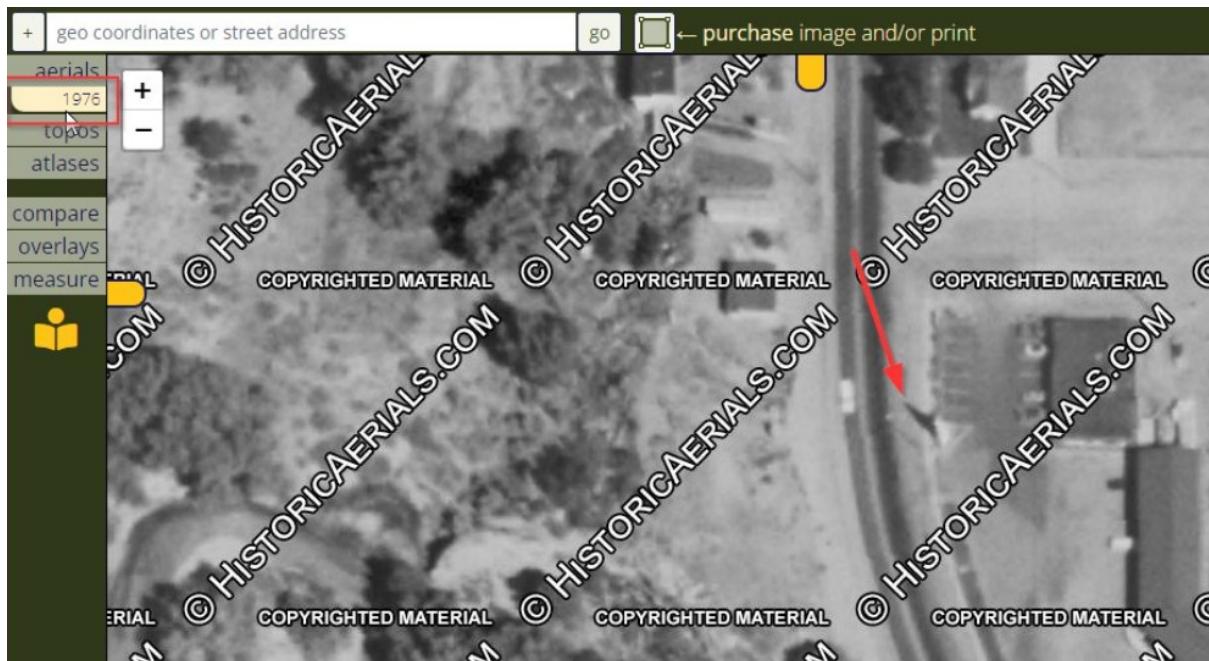
55m Like Reply Share



Sean Crosby

**Susan Cunningham** I don't remember what condition it was in when it was moved. Both the fire and the wind sounds familiar tho. The BLM sent lease bills for





1976 above



1983 above

**Photo 29: Panel of images:**

Compare the shadow of the building overhang (both b/w photos). With the shadow of the ship in the 1976 photo, you'd expect similar shadow in the 1983 photo. It's not there. Colour image from Google Maps of the current location.





Photo 30: The last known photo and last published record of the spaceship prop. Heat shield, gull wing hatch, window, delta wing and canard are visible. Southern Utah News, Thursday 7 July 1983, page 4.

### **Was there one or were there two large scale spaceships?**

All the evidence points to there being only one large scale prop. In the Mar 4, 2024 interview of William Creber from the Japanese DVD release, he states that

8:03 "we used the same spaceship three times, we used the original one and yes it existed on the Fox backlot it was in storage and it was on exhibition for some years at the front gate and so we would just take that and ... uh in Beneath the Planet of the Apes I think we had it up in the Red Rock Canyon, we hauled it up and had it be a wreck and then in

in Escape ... of the Planet of the Apes we had took it up to Malibu um and brought it in out of the surf, it was the same prop”<sup>2</sup> 8:55

The Phil Broad/Rob MacFarlane photos taken 1973-74 show the hull damage due to the rocks on the beach at Malibu. Phil Broad’s narrative supports the story that the hull-damaged, shortened Escape POTA spaceship was later moved to the ranch to be filmed for the TV episode “Escape from Tomorrow”.

I believe there was only one large scale prop constructed for filming.

### **Was the ship at the Kanab motel really the “full size” prop?**

In addition to the hull damage caused by rocks while filming Escape, the distance between the wild joint at the canards and the wild joint at the rear livery appears to be consistent across all four appearances.

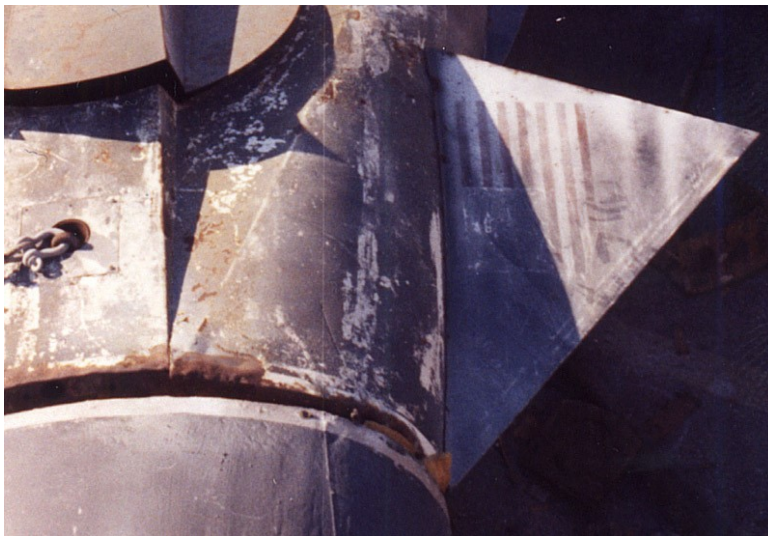


Photo 31: Wild joint is fore of the canard.

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<sup>2</sup> Planet of the Apes: William Creber interview from the Japanese DVD release





Photo 32: 1968 Planet of the Apes movie, note distance between the two sets of stripes in relation to the people.



Photo 33: Beneath POTA, note distance between front of canards (inserted red line) and rear set of stripes, and distance in relation to the person in shot (red circle).

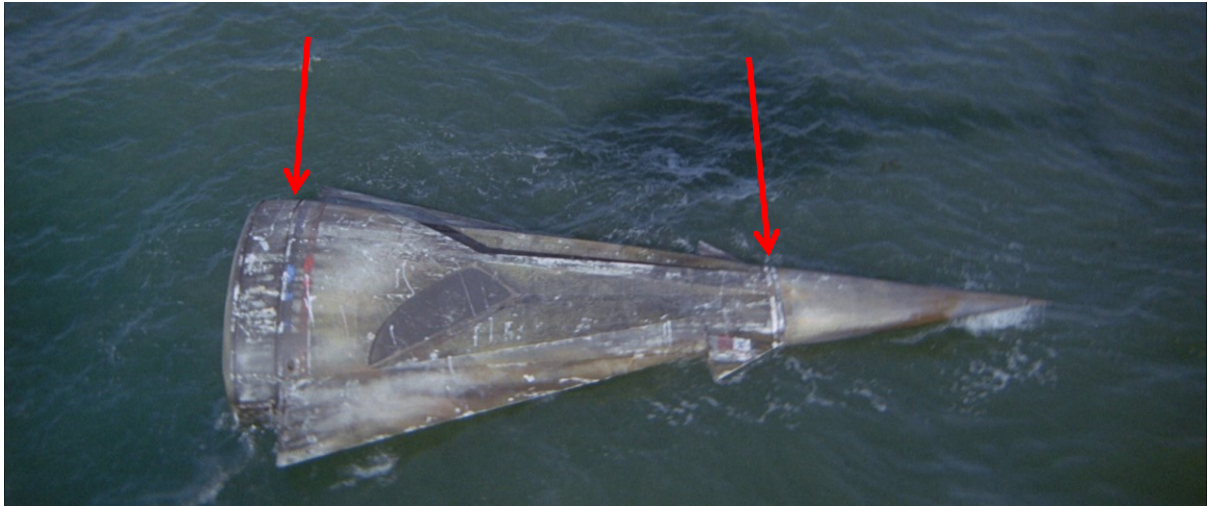


Photo 34: Escape POTA, note the distance between the original rear blue line (trailing edge of truncated delta wings) and the front of canard.



Photo 35: TV series opening episode. Note the distance between the front of canard and the trailing edge of truncated delta wings in relation to the person in the shot.



Photo 36: Note the distance between the front of the canard and the trailing edge of the truncated delta wings in relation to the person standing behind the installation.





Photo 37: Note the distance between the front of the canard and the trailing edge of the truncated delta wings in relation to the person in the shot.

In summary, I believe the advertising installation at the Kanab motel to be the body of the original large scale prop, *albeit* reduced in length to deal with damage done during filming Beneath the Planet of the Apes.

*Susan Cunningham*

Saturday, 23 March 2024