

Sci-Fi & Fantasy

MODELS INTERNATIONAL



Buffy

Michael Park on Special Make-ups

Planet of the Apes

*Spaceship miniature retrospective
—plus blueprints*

"There were old astronauts and there were bold astronauts, but there were no 'old bold' astronauts," until:

The Flight of the Icarus

A special tribute to the spaceship from the Planet Of The Apes movie series

jim key



Icarus, master of the acquired gift of flight, increasingly confident of his father Daedalus' technology, soared ever closer towards the sun, only to lose his wings, fatally crashing down upon the Earth.

Similarly, this is the fate of the first *American National Space Administration (A.N.S.A.)* interstellar exploratory mission. Though its programmed destination was presumably somewhere in the Orion constellation, the misguided spacecraft finds its way back to Earth, splashing down in a decimated area known as *The Forbidden Zone*. Abandoned, the doomed recovery capsule sinks quietly into the aquamarine lake, marooning three 'old bold' astronauts on the **Planet Of The Apes**.

Gone, but not forgotten, this sleek, needle-shaped spaceship makes a reappearance in the sequel, **Beneath The Planet Of The Apes**, shown crashed on a desert embankment. Joining the ranks of the 'old bold' astronaut, *Brent*, the sole survivor of this second crew, finds he too is hopelessly marooned as he goes in search of first crew fellow astronaut *Taylor*.

Even after the apocalyptic ending to the second movie this spacecraft simply could not be 'kept down'. Though shortened somewhat, we see it being pulled from the southern California coastal water, where it delivers its third crew, occupants who **Escape From The Planet Of The Apes**. With the circle complete, the ship is now back where it started, on present day Earth.

As good as the 'Apes' movie series was, there was yet one more arena to conquer—prime time television. By the mid seventies, *Twentieth Century Fox Television* was ready to invest not only in a prime time live action series, but also in a Saturday morning cartoon series, simply called **Return To The Planet Of The Apes**. The prime time TV series, using the original movie title **Planet Of The Apes**, employed the spacecraft—for the last time—in the pilot episode, as a sort of good luck charm. Borrowing much of the original

movie story premise, the TV series did not have the staying power so richly established in the movie series. After a mere fourteen episodes it was canceled, leaving only one brief season of the cartoon series to finish out nearly a decade's worth of creative exploitation based on Pierre Boulle's original 1958 novel.

One fan, Larry Evans, took it upon himself to give a sense of destiny to the classic spaceship by naming it *Icarus*. Perhaps after everything it had been through, traversing the cosmos at light-speed, bending the fabric

of time, and ultimately always crashing back to Earth, it would seem that the name it has been given is apropos.

More accurately, the spacecraft was never named in the original movie. The only identifying reference can be found in the original gum collector cards as, '...*Air-Force One* on its journey to a distant star.' Moreover, it was usually referred to as the 'recovery capsule'.

Whichever name one chooses, including any of the above mentioned, part of that name would now be 'classic'. Technically,





after a minimum of twenty seven years, the term does apply. More importantly, its recognized stature amongst science fiction ships has raised this once sunken vessel to an unchallenged new height of popularity.

In view of the recognised populace, my definition of this genuinely classic space rocket would be more akin to the 'sleek space-cone'. But, in keeping with the earned familiarity, I too shall refer to this spacecraft as the *Icarus* for the remainder of this article.

Going to the source

So often we have seen or read various accounts of 'exact' details surrounding this ship and many of the various components from the original movie as well as the sequels. Rarely has there been an all out effort to hunt down the obvious and often times overlooked details that would serve as 'certain' guidelines for those who wish to undertake replication of this classic spaceship.

Opposite page—top: three stills from the crash landing sequence from the first *Planet of the Apes* movie and bottom: filming the aforementioned scene—Charlton Heston disembarks. (Private Collection). This page—top: though never named the ship was dubbed by one fan as the *Icarus*—artwork by Jim Key. Right: 'Sinking Spaceship' depicted in a contemporary collector's card (#2 of 44).

To accomplish this I set out to get as many of the facts as I could from the man who originally designed the ship—Mr. William Creber. As Production Designer for the original movie *Planet Of The Apes*, it was his responsibility to create a wealth of props and set layouts. Besides the spaceship, Bill also created *Ape City*, portions of the *Statue Of Liberty* overhead shot, and many of the miscellaneous details concerning the props. But perhaps his most dramatic contribution to the film is the dynamic crash scenario, shown subjectively, as if we the audience were the ship, fatally hurling through the atmosphere towards a watery 'brick wall'. According to Bill, it was merely a quick and cost saving solution to having to create a very complicated special effects laden series of scenes which, in his opinion, wouldn't have had the same impact. And for this 'nine year old at heart', I wholeheartedly agree—the opening sequence is the best part of the film.

Showing the ship

By now you will have no doubt noticed the scarcity of the normal plethora of photography that usually accompanies my articles. I must confess that I would have preferred to use some of the extraordinary images I have amassed in my private collection but, in keeping with the policies ordained by *Twentieth Century Fox*, the restrictions on use of photographic material is cost prohibited. To circumvent this disappointment, I chose to

undertake the arduous task of illustrating much of the necessary imagery needed to tell this story. In addition I was pleasantly surprised when Bill Creber gave me several in-depth 'phone calls to put the 'authentic touch' in place. Therefore, in conclusion, I hope that this readership will approve of the use of the illustrations as a viable means of showing off the many great details of this classic craft. It was my ultimate concern to illuminate many facts that have been, until now, simply speculated upon.

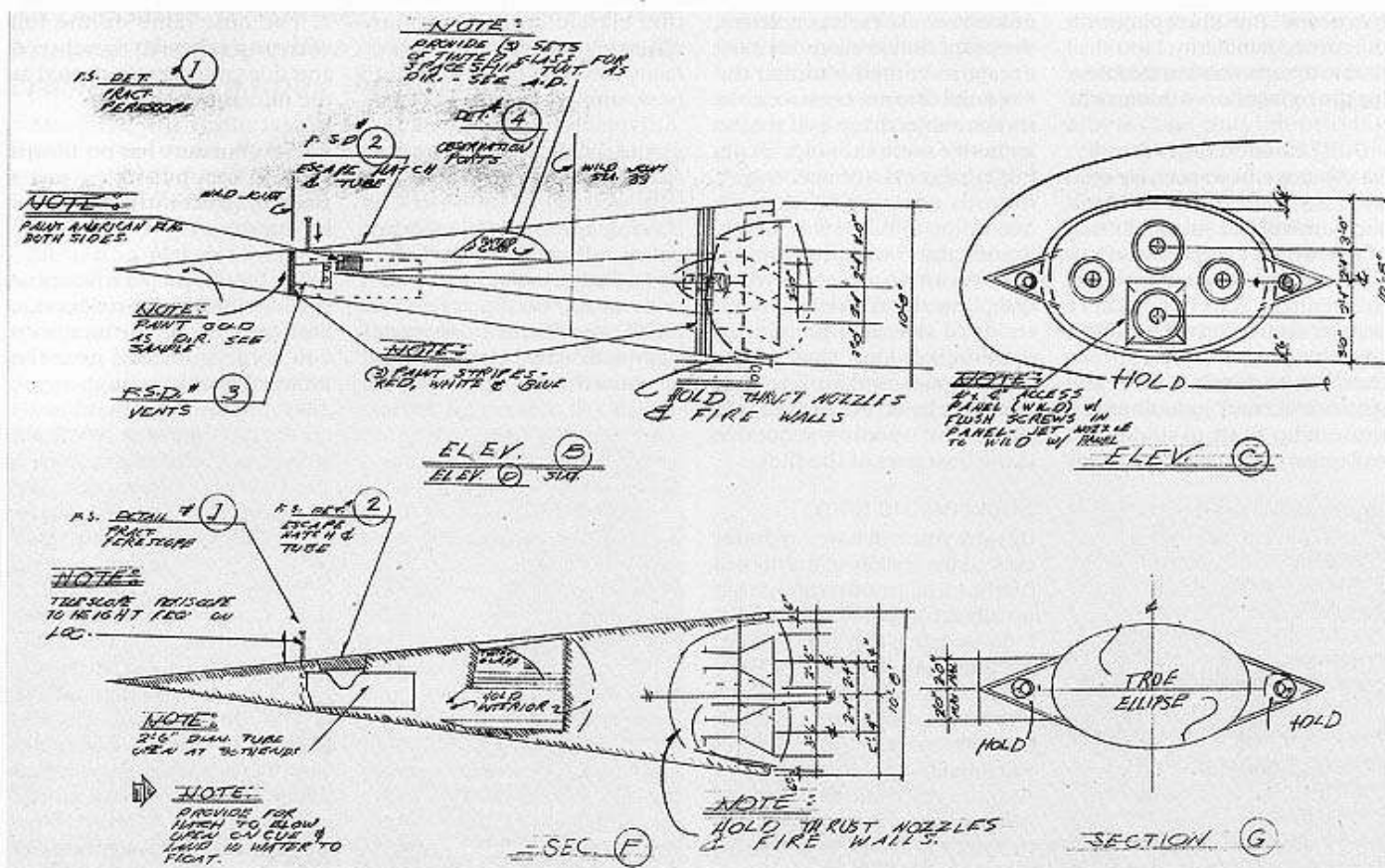
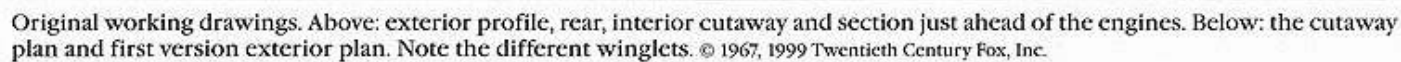
The full-size prop versus the four foot miniature

Having quizzed Bill Creber extensively about the similarities and differences contained within both the full sized prop and the four foot miniature, one comes away with a true appreciation of just how this ship is comprised.

So many times in movies the effort to stay true to one initial design is the up front goal, but rarely does this hold up in the end. With little time available to construct both the full-size prop and the miniature, discrepancies began to occur. From extensive study, the following is a comparison of differences between the two. For example:

1. The nose cone on the full size prop is heavily weathered and does not appear as gold as the miniature.
2. The miniature has no 'blown open' hatch, but rather just a painted line indicating the separation.
3. The full size prop has American flags on both the underside and topside of the reaction control jets, located near the forward hatch.





4. On the full size prop, as the hatch is exploded off, it blows loose the left louvred window sill, leaving an opening just behind the open portal.

5. The miniature sports tiny triangular inserts along the outer corners of each window. The full size prop has no such additions.

Though these few differences exist, the similarities between the full size prop and the four foot miniature are easily observed. As Bill Creber put it, "...they were constructed from the same drawing—theoretically they're the same."

The revised blueprints

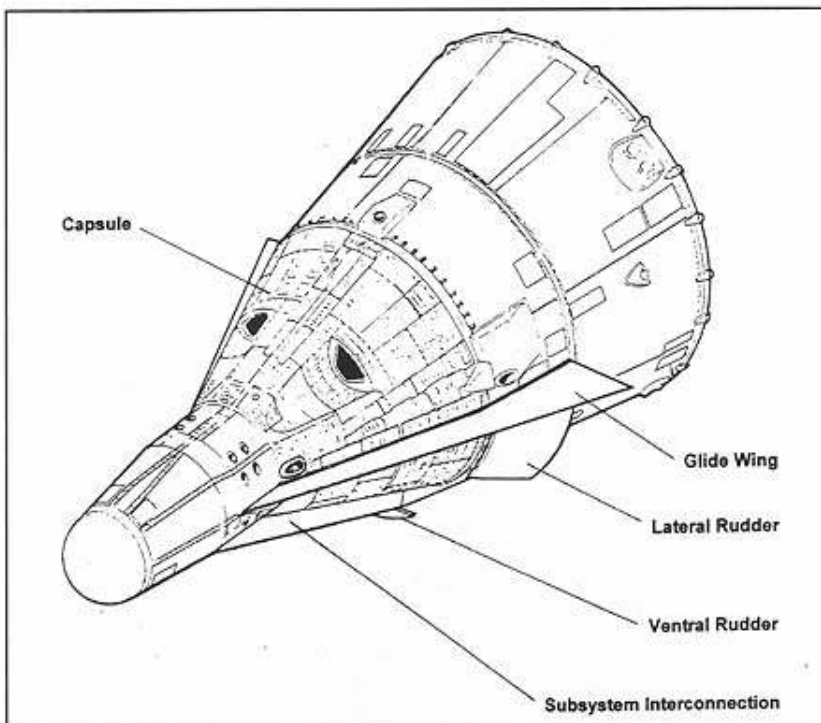
Part of the goal of compiling this special tribute was to include a very accurate set of revised blueprints. I have seen several versions of the exterior and interior of this ship over the years, which in many ways were as inventive as could be imagined, given the scale of a six foot man. In all honesty, none of them truly work. Several did, however, put forth a sense of reality, given the challenge of fitting the stage interior set into the confines of the full size spaceship exterior. It's the same unreality one faces when trying to imagine fitting the *Lost in Space* Jupiter 2's lower level within the confines of its outer hull dimensions. As crazy as that may be, fitting the interior of the *Icarus* within its hull is somewhat more believable.

Therefore, given the original blueprint dimensions of this ship, I chose to redraft another carefully scaled blueprint of the interior, while keeping the known dimensions of the full scale exterior. As you can imagine, this took some creative imagining to get everything to fit in.

My precedent for scaling the interior, besides the obvious influence of the studio stage layout, came from several pictures of Charlton Heston standing amidships. From this I was able to scale the height and width ratios to his respective 6' 2" stature.

What I thought was forced perspective turned out to be an illusion, corrected by Bill Creber. He was quick to point out that the interior simply follows the contours of its conical hull lines. Keep in mind that the interior scenes were shot with a wide angle lens, which further distorts the interior source photography.

Given all those distortions, I was able to come up with a

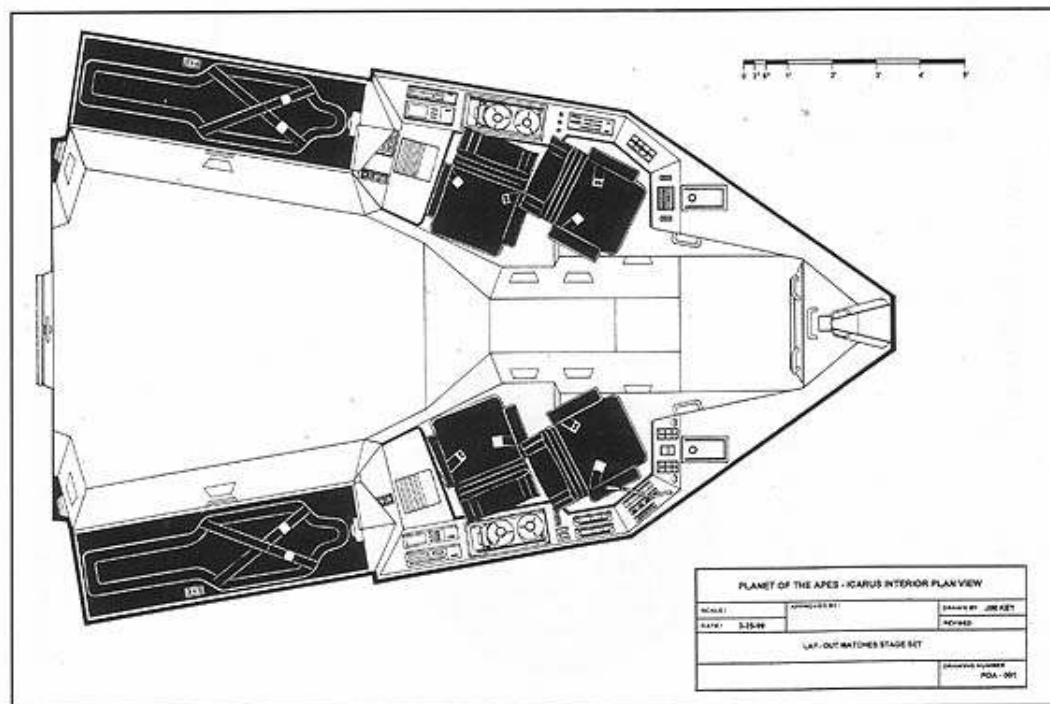


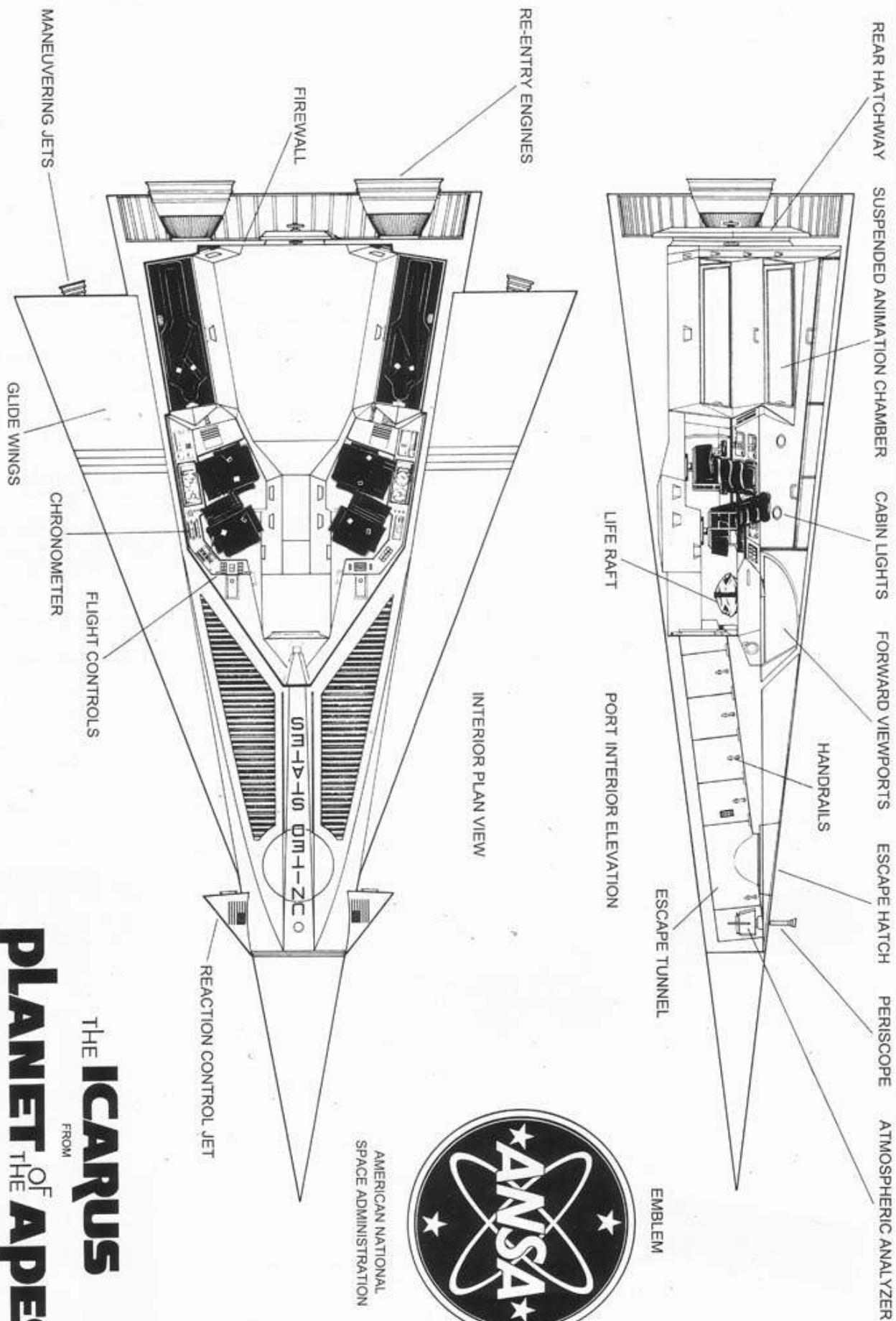
Above: McDonnell Douglas Winged Gemini—see interview with Bill Creber. Below: *Icarus* interior plan by Jim Key. Bottom right: $\frac{1}{8}$ close up of the *Icarus* miniature gives a good impression of its thin profile.

'scale ruler' using a 1:1.257 to correct for the wide angle lens, which amounts to nearly Panavision. In addition I was governed by the known width limits of the exterior hull. As a result, the featured blueprints reflect a 'plausible reality'.

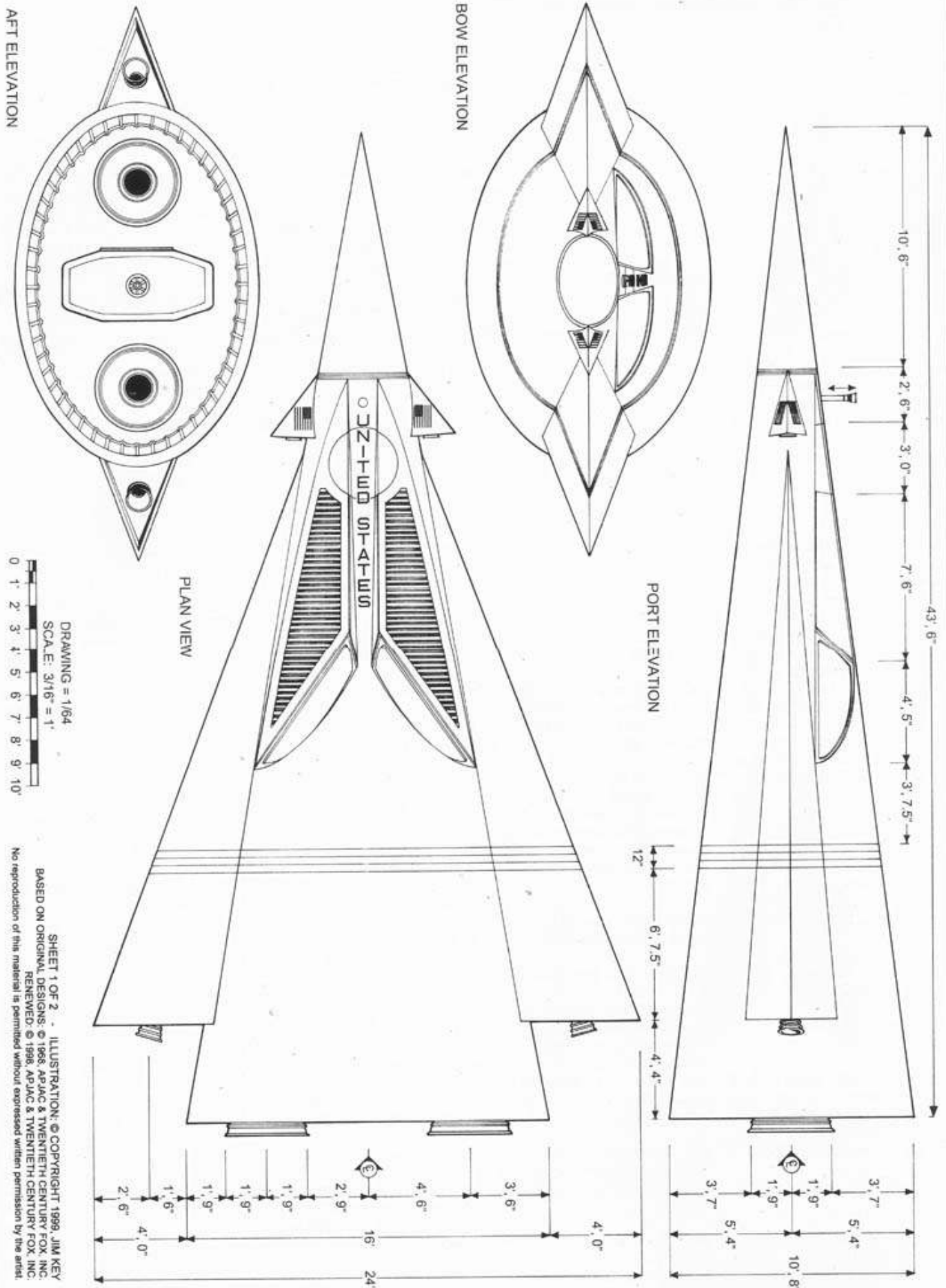
To establish the interior details, I undertook the task of freeze framing every scene relevant to showing the interior

from my widescreen release of the movie. In doing so, I was able to gain a complete photographic record of the essential elements, from the escape tunnel back to the rear door. As arduous a task as that was, it revealed everything necessary to getting an accurate representation of the interior details. Little things like how many handrails are in the escape tunnel to the exact





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An interview with Bill Creber

JK: So often we hear the spaceship referred to as the *Icarus*. Do you recall it being named as such?

BC: I don't recall any name in the original script.

JK: Are you the sole designer of the spaceship?

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.

JK: What was the inspiration for the design?

BC: It was either the *McDonnell Douglas Winged Gemini* or some such re-entry vehicle called the *Dyno-soar*.

JK: How did the ship evolve?

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.

JK: Hence the red, white and blue?

BC: And the olive green around the windows. We did that instead of black or it would have been too dark. It was a chance to get some color into it.

JK: And the nose-cone, is it truly gold?

BC: It was always intended to be gold. It's more weathered on the full size spaceship

prop, versus the obvious distinction on the miniature.

JK: The studio placed a lot of trust in your 'fast-track' design skills. Was there a large committee to convince along the way?

BC: Arthur Jacobs was very generous on that picture. He really felt I was 'tapped' into it. And Franklin agreed with what we were doing. We didn't get a lot of input from them.

JK: Describe what you did to create the original spaceship maquette?

BC: We drew up pretty tight drawings in the model room. I think it was Constantine Moros—a Russian model builder—who built the original spaceship maquette. It was about 12" tall, 1/2 inch to the foot, the same as the blueprints.

JK: Was the four foot miniature a true reflection of the full size ship?

BC: They were made from the same drawing. Theoretically, they're the same.

JK: Upon inspection, there looks to be some difference in the angles, at the rear of the main wings.

BC: I think they were straight, or least meant to be the same. The whole reason that's kind of vague is because we always knew that area would be under water. That's why it was never completed.

JK: What can you tell us about the intended rear details?

BC: We sort of indicated that there would be a door, and suggested that there would also be rockets. I can recall that we were going to add a heat shield. But since we knew that it was never going to be seen, the rear became unimportant.

JK: Did the miniature or the full size spaceship prop ever have rocket engines in the rear?

BC: No. As far as I know the full sized one was totally mechanically oriented as to its

use up at Lake Powell. It had a big counter balance weight, floatation devices, and compressed air for the bubbling.

JK: There is mention of an anchor line on the blueprint.

BC: There were four, actually, that were cabled off in four directions, because of the wind. The anchors were fifty-five gallon drums, crossed with railroad ties along the bottoms, then filled with cement. All of which was set from a NAVY LCV (Landing Craft Vehicle Personnel) left over from Tora, Tora, Tora stationed nearby. We would set the anchors then come back the next day to shoot, and the whole rig had shifted and floated off to a new location, due to the underwater sandstone cliffs. We had a devil of a time keeping it where we wanted it. In the end, we tied the cables off the shore lines with pins. That ship was filmed in over three hundred feet of water. It was a bit dangerous at times.

JK: Is it correct to assume that the interior stage set and exterior of the ship are in the same scale?

BC: We would start that way, then whatever adjustments were necessary for allowing the camera to be placed within the set were then made as needed.

JK: Did you design the interior with the story in mind, or was it generic, based on NASA capsules?

BC: No, we had a script, which led us into what was needed.

JK: One gets the sense that the ship's interior is very dynamic, yet simplistic.

BC: We kept it very clean. We would probably make it a little more interesting today if we were doing it for the first time. Though I don't know exactly how.

We used that acoustic rubber. In those days you would use what you found, by just putting it together and making it work. We didn't have a lot of luxury of building from the ground up.

placement of the control boards, knobs and switches, and the exact layout of the rear wall and intermodule door.

The most obvious problem with explaining the interior/exterior layout lies in the twin re-entry boosters located at the rear. Originally the design called for a quad of boosters, with the lateral nozzles being smaller than the top and bottom pair. With the addition of the intermodule door, the upper and lower boosters were eliminated. The laterals were then increased in size, from 3' 0" to 3' 6" in diameter. Other retros were to be located in the rear of each glide wing, presumably for yaw control. There is no apparent method for controlling pitch and rotate.

I suspect that there will be disagreement amongst sci-fi fans with regards to the accuracy of these blueprints. I can respect that criticism given that those who would disagree would accept, however, that there is no 'certain' reality possible within this design. This attempt is by no means a perfect solution. It is, however, a well thought out design compromise for something that was never needed to be completed in the first place.

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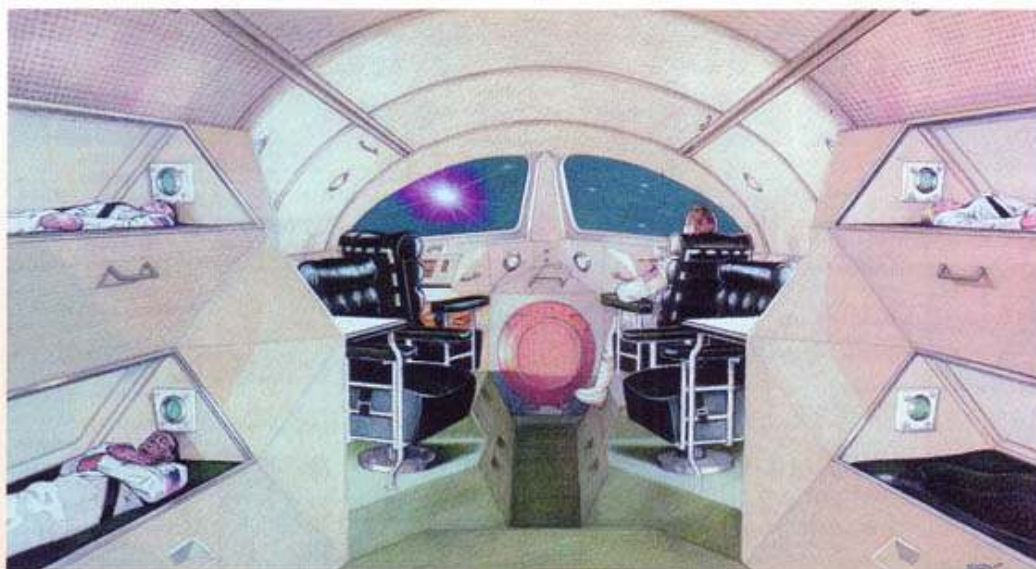
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My sincere thanks to Bill Creber for granting me this interview, and his recollections regarding the spaceship.

Also to Mike Reccia and David Openshaw for sharing an intense interest in doing a special tribute to this long over-looked classic.

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Top left: *Icarus* interior, illustrated by Jim Key.

Above: detail of *Icarus* markings.

Left: the crew, illustrated by Jim Key.

Below: the *Icarus*. Bob Burns' studio miniature.

