



An Unwelcome Intrusion

James H. Hillestad deploys his sense of humor to create a diorama depicting suffragettes disrupting a parade

TEXT AND PHOTOS: JAMES H. HILLESTAD

Inspiration to create dioramas is, wonderfully, never-ending and found in the most unexpected places. Twenty years ago at the Chicago Toy Soldier Show, I saw a parade of suffragettes created by William and Kay Speer of Atlanta, Ga.

In themselves, the female figures tell a story of life in the early 20th century. Among other attributes, the suffragettes were seriously disruptive as they sought to promote their cause.

This brought to mind one of my favorite movies: "Animal House." TS&MF readers might recall the 1978 film's chaotic final scene when character John Blutarsky's (John Belushi) Delta Tau Chi frat brothers propel a homemade tank disguised as a college float into a gala homecoming parade.

Holding that thought, I decided to juxtapose the two scenarios using the 54-mm women's voting rights activists to wreak havoc on a stately London procession. The street protest's setting is a visit by a colonial governor of

Australia as he and his family ride in a carriage traveling past St. James's Park in 1912.

Against a backdrop of elegant townhouses, the roadway is lined with patriotic bunting and banners. In the foreground are sculpted gardens with flower beds and walking paths. Children are at play, gardeners are at work and the gentry are enjoying an afternoon strolling in the park. Suddenly, suffragettes make a scene as a Royal Navy band turns a corner.

The diorama measures 5 feet long by 30 inches wide. Most of the figures in the parade are by The Toy Soldiers of Wm. Hocker, Proprietor. The building facades are by John Gittens of JG Miniatures.

The display was fun to do and to this day it makes me smile at all the hullabaloo! ■



Top: A procession passing by St. James's Park in London is depicted in Jim Hillestad's "Unwelcome Intrusion" diorama.

Above: Suffragettes make a scene as a Royal Navy band turns a corner.



ABOUT THE WRITER

James H. Hillestad is the proprietor of The Toy Soldier Museum in Cresco, Pa., USA.