

What!? — A Building Board Without Pins??

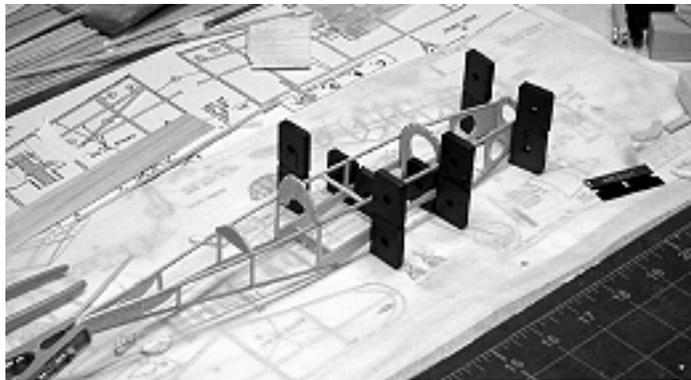
By George White

While doodling through various model related websites recently I came across an article by John Ernst, a prolific builder of beautiful models, describing his use of a metal building board. The boards, called Magna-Boards, are sold by Easy Built Models, a company just up the road a couple of hundred miles. The price is \$21.95. My interest was piqued, so I bought one. Boys and girls, it's confession time: This is a phenomenal invention whose time has come. The idea only had to wait on the development of very strong magnets which is the secret to making this kind of building board not only usable, but a delight to work with.

As a good friend remarked, "Yes, but how the heck can you stick pins in a piece of galvanized steel? Well friends, I just completed a little dime scale job and never picked up a pin!!

The building board consists of a very flat piece of 12"X24" galvanized steel and 20 very strong magnets. If you build fuselages longer than 24" or wings longer than 48", this may not be for you, although you probably could butt join two boards together on a good flat surface. The Easy Built website <http://www.easybuiltmodels.com> shows a photograph of a fuselage side being built with these magnets. The photos below show my experience with the board. Once I got over the impulse to reach for a pin every time I wanted to hold something in place, I found the magnets far more flexible to use and more precise than pins. One of the nicer things I found, as shown in the picture below, was the ability to align the fuselage sides vertically without problem and to hold the nose (and had I wanted, the tail) in place while cross pieces and formers were glued in. Building things flat is certainly no problem, and when building a wing, ribs can be kept vertical while the leading and trailing edges are held in place exactly over the plan.

Sure, you can do many of these things with pins and fixtures to keep things vertical, but this method is simplicity itself.



It was almost amusing to find that every time I dropped my razor blade, I'd find it zapped over to one of the magnets. Two things I've had to learn:

1. The polarity of these magnets is not subtle. If you try to

put two magnets together with the same polarity facing, they will shove apart smartly. Since they are all black, it isn't evident which polarity is which, and I haven't taken the trouble to find a way to mark them so that I always line them up so they attract to each other; and

2. The magnets are very hard and very brittle. If you drop one (or several) on concrete, they will break (ask me how I know). For an extra \$8.45 you can get an extra set of magnets, which seems like a good idea if you're as clumsy as I am.

