



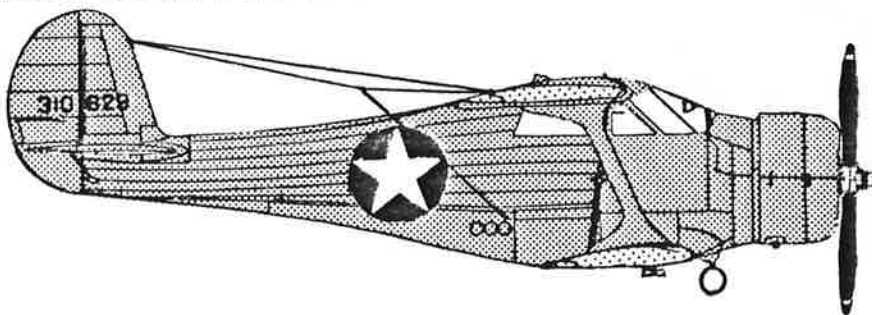
Meikraft Models

Beech D.17S Staggerwing

In April of 1932 Walter Beech bought back his old Travelair aircraft plant in Wichita, Kansas from Curtiss-Wright. The idea of bringing out a luxurious, high speed, long range, four passenger private aircraft during the depths of the Great Depression was a gamble, at best. The new Beech Model 17R featured an unusual biplane configuration where the upper wing was placed further aft on the fuselage than the lower wing, quickly earning the aircraft the title "Staggerwing Beech". A fixed undercarriage with full spats and pants distinguished the first aircraft which went through several engine changes and designations before the first of the retractable gear variants hit the market.

The D.17, with its lengthened fuselage, retractable undercarriage, modified tail surfaces and other changes, hit the market in 1937. With top speeds in the 200 mph range the Staggerwing was the Lear Jet of the 1930s and set several speed and altitude records in the hands of such great pilots as Jacqueline Cochran. Production of civilian variants continued until the start of W.W.II.

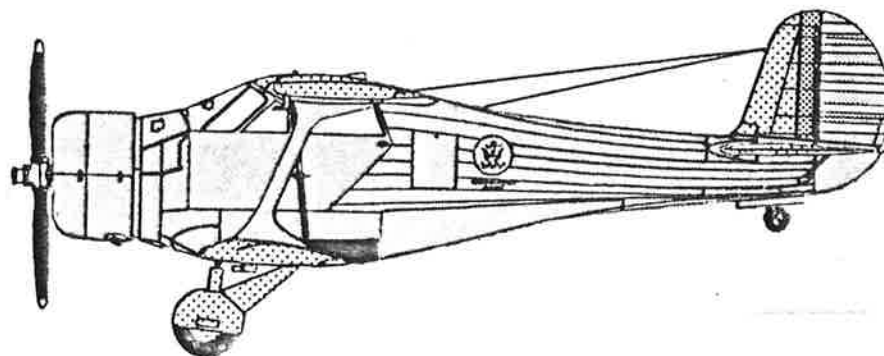
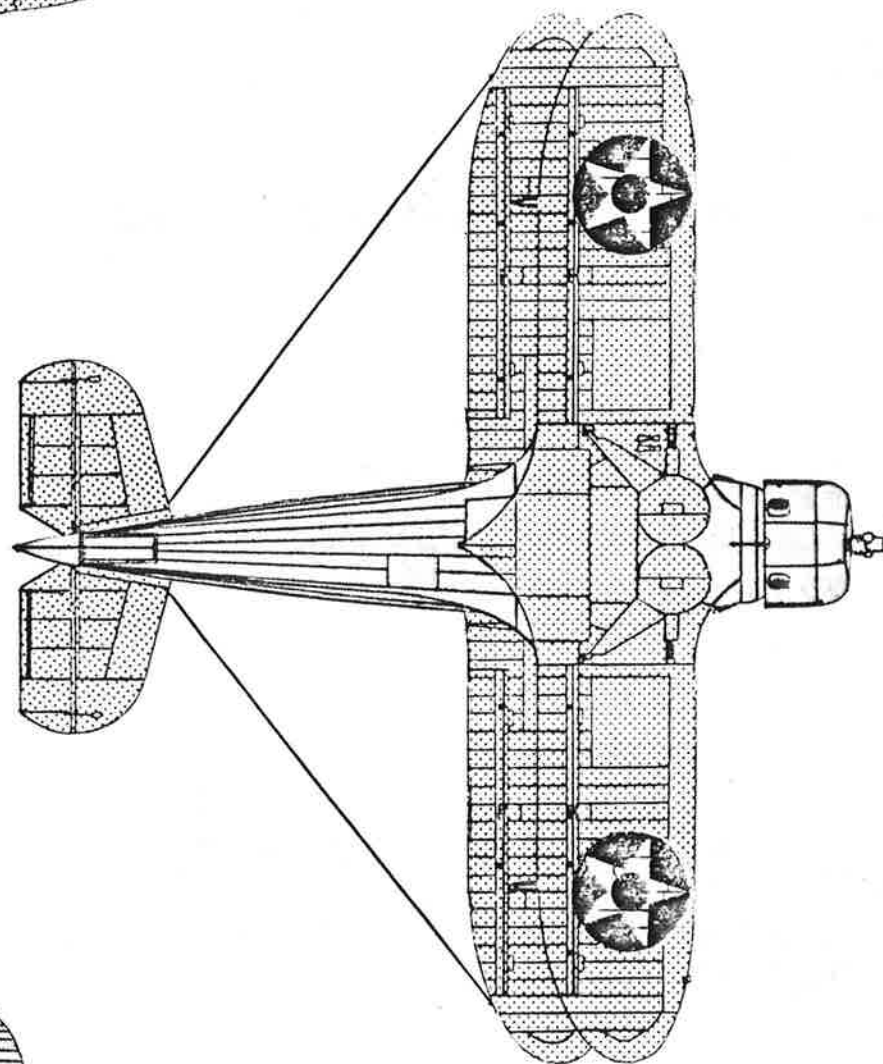
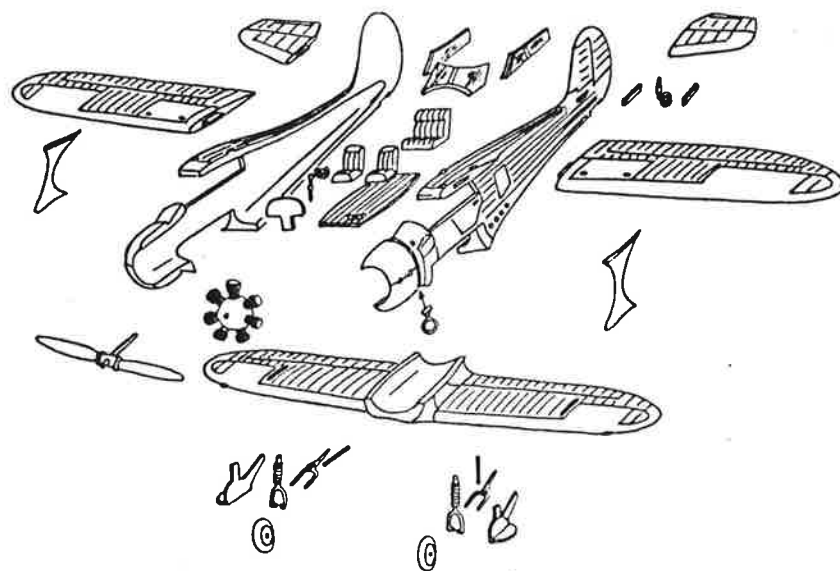
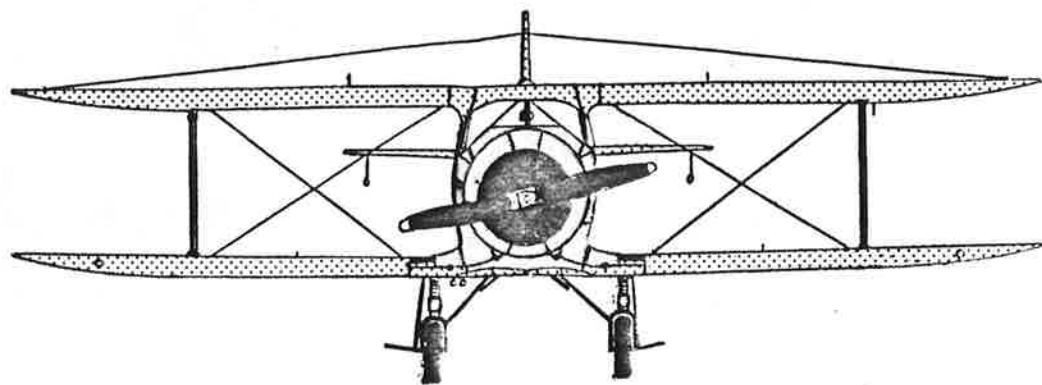
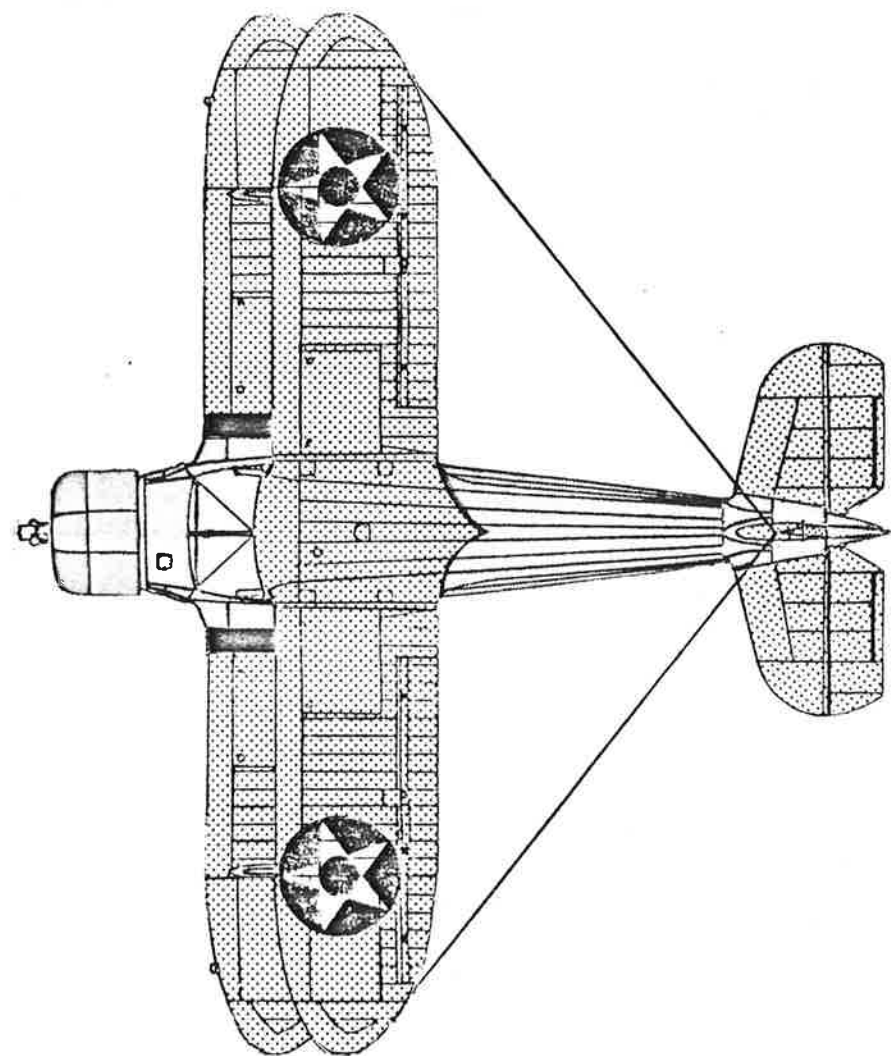
The Beech D.17S proved to be just right for use as a fast communications aircraft for the military, where it served as the UC-43 in the U.S. Army and the GB-1 and GB-2 in the U.S. Navy and Marines. Among the foreign air arms to use the Staggerwing were Great Britain, Australia, China, Spain, Brazil, Honduras and Uruguay. Most of the Staggerwings surviving today are from these military orders. A final variant, the G.17S, was produced in 1946, a total of 780 examples of all variants being produced when Beech ceased production of the type in 1949. Over 200 survive today.



BEECH UC-43 of the U.S.A.A.F., 1943. Olive drab upper surfaces and sides, grey under surfaces. National markings in six positions, black serial number 310829 on tail/rudder.

Whichever aircraft you choose to model, it would be best to work from photographs as many Staggerwings differed in detail. Several powerplants were used, usually Pratt & Whitneys and Jacobs. Later G.17S models had different shape to the main undercarriage doors, a longer chord engine cowling, enlarged vertical fin and most featured a large prop spinner. Location of the pitot heads and underwing venturi tubes could also differ and various antennae were carried by individual aircraft. Different Hamilton Standard props were also used, so check photos of the aircraft carefully before building the kit.

MEIKRAFT MODELS to date: Vought SB2U, Piper L-4, Albatros D.I / D.II, Seversky P-35 / P-35A, Hansa-Brandenburg W.29, B.E.2c, Douglas D.558-1 Skystreak, Grumman FF-1, Pfalz D.III / D.IIIa, Beech



BEECH YC-43, American Embassy, London, 1941. Insignia Blue fuselage, Chrome Yellow wings and tail surfaces. National markings in four wing positions, standard red/white/blue rudder stripes. Emblem with logo on both fuselage sides.

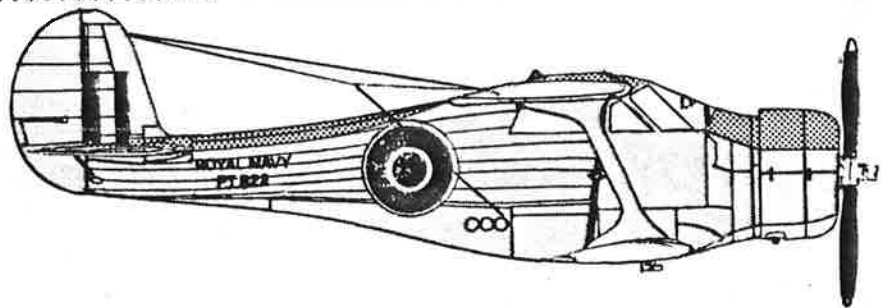
D.17S Staggerwing

B.E.2c, Douglas D.558-1 Skystreak, Grumman FF-1, Pfalz D.III / D.IIIa, Beech

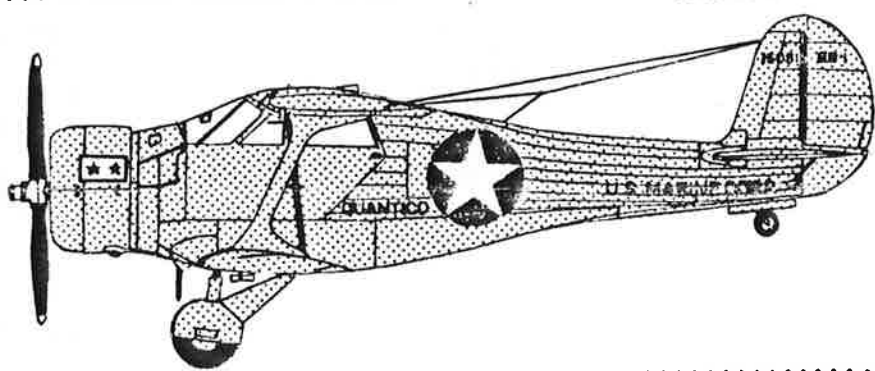
BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. MODEL AIRPLANE NEWS PRESENTS THE BEST OF WYLAM, Book 1. Contains fourteen pages of plans, detail sketches, blueprints and notes that would seem to make it possible to build the real aircraft, much less a model of it. All later plans and details published elsewhere seem to have been based on this wonderful work.
2. AIR PROGRESS, June/July, 1964. Six pages of plans and details taken from the Wylam works, but less cluttered.
3. SCALE MODELS, May, 1978. Good plans in 1/48 scale with details of cockpit interior and tail wheel. British and U.S.N. aircraft are illustrated.

BEECH TRAVELLER I of the Royal Navy, 1944. Non-specular Sea Blue upper surfaces, Intermediate Blue sides and tail, white under surfaces. Yellow outline to fuselage roundel, red/blue on upper wing, red/white/blue on lower wing. Black markings.



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4. AIR CLASSICS, Vol.2, No.1, March/April, 1965. Good Robert T.Smith article on history of the Staggerwing with several photos including cockpit interior.
 5. WINGS, Vol.9, No.5, October, 1979. Ed Phillips article on military use of the Staggerwing. Photos are great and include U.S. military and British use, the personal aircraft of the Prince of the Netherlands during the Occupation. Factory shot of the Chinese bird is only surpassed by photo of Chinese D-17S in all white color scheme with red crosses. Good article for detailing.



BEECH GB-1 of the U.S.M.C., 1943. Silver doped overall. National markings in six positions, black markings. General's emblem on both sides of cowling. No "S" on U.S.M.C. legend is unusual.

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6. AIR PROGRESS, November, 1969. Well written Pilot Report by Bill Askins contains cockpit photo.
 7. SCALE AIRCRAFT MODELLER, Vol.5, No.3, Fall, 1977. James M.Triggs plans from the 1964 AIR PROGRESS lifted unaltered and without credit. Easier to find than earlier publication.
 8. JANES'S ALL THE WORLD'S AIRCRAFT, 1941, pg.132c. Good photos of American Embassy YC-43 and U.S.Navy GB-1.
 9. AIR PROGRESS AVIATION REVIEW, Vol.3, No.1. Spring, 1979. Several photos and color photos of Bill McBride's D.17S painted up as the U.S. Embassy plane. Great cockpit and emblem photos.