

After sanding the surface smooth, two coats of Sig Lite Coat clear butyrate dope are brushed full-strength on the balsa surfaces. Dope dries quickly and can be easily sanded with open-coat 320-grit sandpaper. We use a Styrofoam sanding block because it gives slightly to conform to the shape of the surface. I also use two 3/4-inch pieces of plywood glued together to give a solid, straight, 1-1/2 inch thick surface for sanding. Sand off the balsa fuzz and insure that the surface is smooth.

Now you're ready for the next

with the same brand of thinner that you will use later in the paint. We use R&M Thinner PNT88. The bottom surfaces are covered first, then the top.

After the edges are dry, the surface is lightly spritzed with water to tighten the silkspan and remove wrinkles. When the water dries and the silkspan has shrunk, thinned Sig Lite Coat clear dope is brushed through the silkspan to attach it to the underlying surface. You may have to work out air bubbles with your fingers to insure that the silkspan is securely attached

to the balsa. Trapped air bubbles will expand when exposed to the sun and make your beautiful surface pucker with air bubble zits. Not a pretty sight!

When the dope has dried, you can remove

the overhanging silkspan by folding the extra back over itself and using 320-grit sandpaper to sand off the excess. Dope the edges down and when dry, sand off the fuzz.

#### FILLING THE SURFACE

The next step provides the smooth foundation upon which the quality of the final finish will depend.

Scented or unscented talc (baby powder) is poured into Sig Lite Coat dope that's been thinned 50 to 75% with the same lacquer thinner as previously used. The mixture is stirred to place the talc in suspension. The excess will fall to the bottom of the jar—don't worry,

this is normal.

Three coats are applied to all top surfaces and two coats to the bottom surfaces, allowing each coat a couple of hours drying time. Dry sand the dope and talc

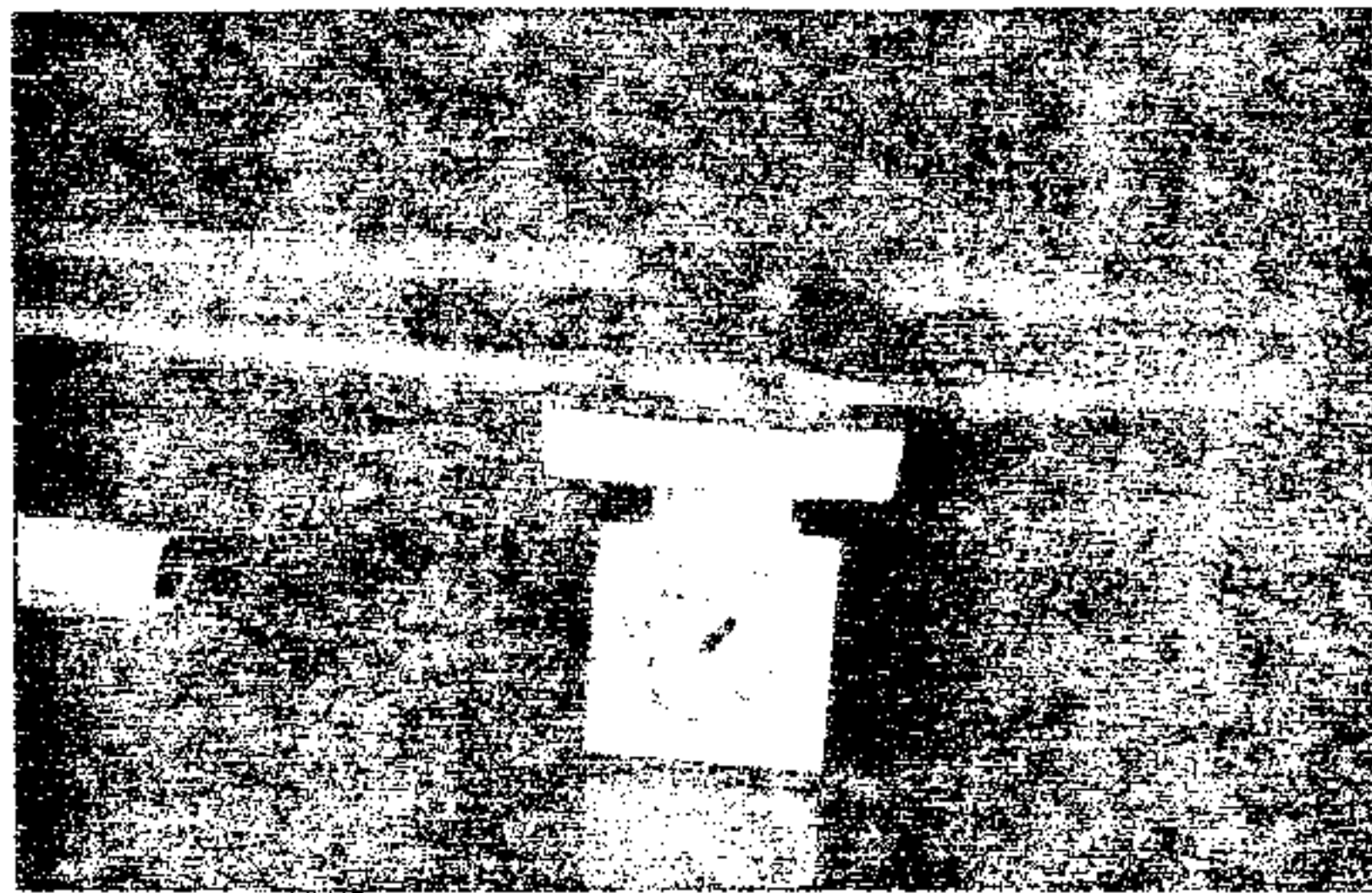
mixture between each coat with 320-grit open-coat sandpaper.

Let the base coats of this slurry mixture dry at least two days. You can use your attic (if you have one) in the summertime to force dry. If you don't use forced drying, several days of drying at room temperature are needed to gas off the solvents. Sanding the final coat prematurely will result in a very smooth finish initially but will show surface imperfections over time as the solvents gas off.

#### SANDING

Use 320-grit open-coat sandpaper with a block to sand the surface. The idea is to remove all of the excess filler without cutting into the silkspan fibers. If you do cut into the fiber, it will be necessary to apply more of the slurry mixture to the affected areas, let dry and resand. Experience has shown that about 1/2 ounce of weight (after sanding) is added per coat of the slurry mixture on an 800 square inch wing surface.

The surface should have a slight sheen to it after sanding. If it doesn't, add another coat of dope/talc slurry and allow to dry. Dry sanding, although dustier, is recommended over wet sanding, as wet sanding cuts so fast that you can



Author recommends using a gram scale such as this one to keep an accurate track of how much weight is added with each step.

easily cut into the silkspan fibers. Use a good-quality dust mask when sanding.

#### PRIMER

The next step is simple and fills all of the minor surface imperfections that remain.



To fill the grain of the balsa surfaces, the shaped and sanded parts are covered with 00 silkspan, doped in place.

step—applying the silkspan. Dope and silkspan over balsa isn't quite as bulletproof as a glass-covered surface, but it's the tradeoff you have to make to save five or six ounces of glass and epoxy. We are using 00 silkspan, much like the award-winning control line stunt finishers use.

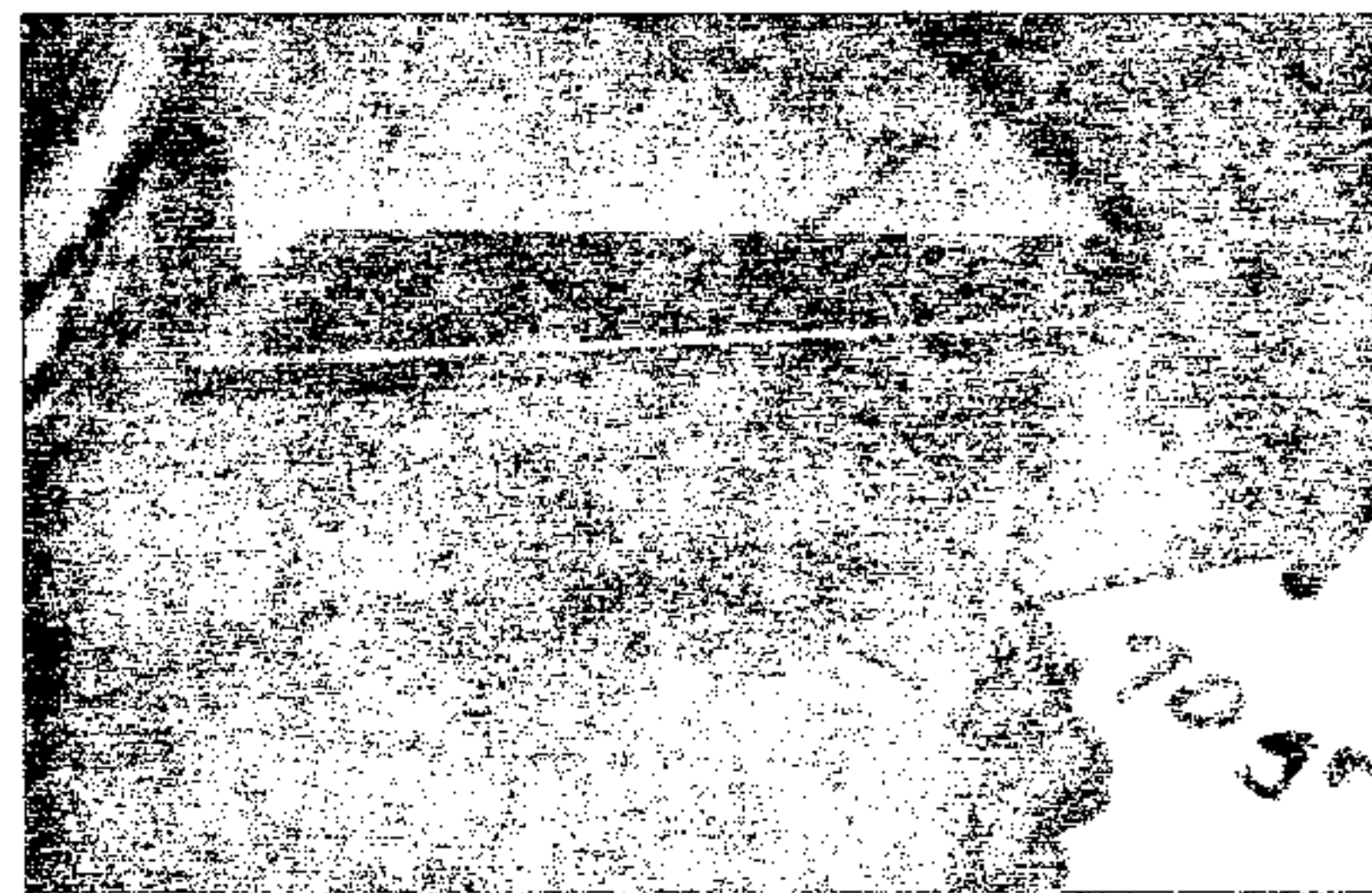
#### COVERING

The 00 silkspan is cut with



Overhanging silkspan is trimmed off with 320-grit sandpaper.

one to two inches of overlap around all edges. It is laid over the surface dry and attached around the edges with Sig Lite Coat butyrate dope, thinned 50 to 75%. The dope is thinned



To get the lightest possible finish, it's important that there be no overlapping colors, i.e., no multiple thicknesses of paint. For masking between colors, the very best results are obtained with Scotch brand Fine Line masking tape.

Shoot a light coat of Dupont or R&M gray lacquer primer thinned 50 to 75% with R&M Acrylic PNT88 lacquer thinner. Because the primer has a color base to it, wet sanding is preferred—you can see how fast



An example of graphics sprayed on through stencils. Materials and techniques for making your own stencils were described in the author's article, "The ABCs of Airbrushing," which appeared in the June '92 *Model Builder*.