

# Remembering Lou (Colonel) and Barb Dausse



For several years I lived just across the street and down one house from "Barb and the Colonel", a very kind and well liked retired couple. A few years ago they sold their home and moved into a retirement community not far away. Sadly, not too long after we lost Barb (Nov. 7, 2018) and just this year Louis as well (Jan. 30, 2020). It has only been recently that I have learned more about them that I would like to record here. Much of the information that appears below has been gathered from other sources across the internet and internet archives.

## **Louis (Colonel)**

Louis Dausse Jr. was born on March 15th, 1934 in Oakland, CA to Louis and Renee Dausse. He resided many years in San Anselmo and attended Tamalpais High School before graduating from Drake High School in 1952. Shortly after Louis served in the army then attended the College of Marin, University of Freiburg in Germany and University of California, Berkeley. Lou met and married Barbara Bruckner in 1956. Their daughter, Tina, was born in 1960. Lou worked as a traveling hobby salesman in California and Oregon, where they moved in 1964.

After the tragic loss of their daughter in 1982, Lou and Barbara set their life in a new direction as they founded Paper Models International (PMI) in 1983. They imported and sold models to hobby shops in the Pacific Northwest. The business flourished with mail order services and publishing for paper model designers. He and Barbara traveled to model shows across the U.S. and provided top-notch service to loyal customers around the world. Thanks to his methodical, diligent approach, by the time Lou retired in 2009 his catalog included 75 publishers and over 1,000 models.

## **Barbara (Barb)**

Barb was born January 12, 1936 in Hermannstadt (Sibiu), Romania to Josef and Marth Bruckner. As a girl, she was called "wunschkind" - wished-for child - by her parents and two dotting aunts, who taught her about flora and fauna and were impressed that Barbara easily remembered the plants' Latin names. She became a tough, resourceful older sister after her twin brothers, Helge and Hagen, were born in 1940. With her family, Barbara moved to Krefeld, Germany, in 1947 after her father died in 1944. She attended a fashion institute where she became an expert seamstress and eye-catching model with classic, elegant beauty.

In 1955 her family moved to Marin County, Calif., where she met and married Louis (Colonel) Dausse in 1956. Their daughter, Tina, was born in 1960. Barbara worked in luxury department stores in California and Beaverton, Ore., where they moved in 1964. Barbara's intelligence, creativity and talent came to life in many realms. A master gardener for decades, she devoted countless hours to maintaining lush gardens of flowers, vegetables, fruits and herbs. Her fine cooking and engaging conversation over meals delighted and nourished her friends and family members.

She partnered with her husband to run their business, Paper Models International, from 1989 until 2009. Barbara was a mountain hiker and skier; a connoisseur of opera, classical music and theater; an English tutor; a skilled woodworker and knitter; and a faithful correspondent with many friends and relatives around the world.



## **Paper Models International (PMI)**

What I didn't know for many years was that Barb and the Colonel had ran a successful paper model company from their home in the years before I moved into the neighborhood. They sold the company just before we moved in so I had no idea it had been here and they never mentioned it. It is the history of that company that I wish to focus on now as it had a positive impact on many people over the years. Most of what follows is from [a document written by Lou and Matt Vance in early 2016](#).

It was while in Germany attending University in the late 1950s that Lou discovered paper models which were popular and commonly available there. Lou became a traveling salesman of hobby items to hobby shops in California and Oregon and in the 1960s it suddenly occurred to him that the paper models that he had enjoyed in Germany were virtually unheard of in the U.S. This prompted him to travel back to Germany to speak to the leading paper model publishers and reached agreements to have them supply him with their models for resale in the U.S. For a few years he carried German paper models around with him and dropped them off with his regular customers, always with a built-up model. Lou quickly observed that the built-up paper models that he provided were the key to, and directly responsible for, sales. By putting on demonstrations and exhibitions at shops and shopping centers, the word was spread locally. The potential began to look very interesting.

To proceed further and to gather ideas and support, in 1972, Lou went to see the only other person in the U.S. selling paper models, a retired Northrop aeronautics engineer, John Hathaway of John Hathaway Imported Hobbies, San Pedro, California. John was the real pioneer in the U.S. paper model market. His established business had been selling German (Wilhelmshaven and J.F. Schreiber) paper models by mail-order since the early 1960s. Lou was awed by John's knowledge and ideas, and didn't want to interfere in John's efforts so Lou kept his activities local, in the Oregon region. In the early 1980s, John became very ill and couldn't continue his paper model mail-order business. After his death, John's widow asked Lou to take care of John's customers. Lou honored John Hathaway's widow's request by corresponding with John's customers, and immediately, John's customers became Lou's customers. These events occurred in 1983, the year that Paper Models International (PMI) was founded by Lou and Barb.

Encouraged, PMI went into the wholesale and retail business all over the U.S. and beyond. Sales were extended into the mail-order market nation-wide and new publishing sources were researched. PMI successfully mirrored and built upon John Hathaway's strong, customer-focused business ethic and carried forward the U.S. paper model hobby for a new generation of U.S. paper modelers to enjoy for the next 25 years. PMI's first formal catalog, patterned directly after John Hathaway's last (1978) catalog, was published in 1984. It had 32 pages, 20 different publishers and about 400 models. Over the years, PMI's catalog steadily

grew and starting in 1989 each summer through the year 2000 every customer would receive a multi-page, printed catalog supplement highlighting new releases and specials. PMI's last catalog (2007/2008) was printed and distributed in late 2006, it had grown to 64 pages, 75 publishers and carried over 1,000 models.

There have always been a small selection of paper models available in the U.S., mostly distributed by the large American publishing houses, who placed them in book stores where they were largely ignored. The idea of selling paper models to the hobby trade was evidently not seriously considered and/or was under-valued. Hobby shops were surprised when approached by PMI with the suggestion to sell paper models and quite cooperative. Searching out small publishers and following leads in Europe, PMI's paper model offerings steadily increased. Lou found that the best way to advertise a new product to hobbyist's attention was traveling to hobby and craft shows all over the U.S. with big exhibits, heavy on built-ups, and giving away hundreds of PMI catalogs. As his business grew, finding new models became easier because the people who designed their own models began to seek out PMI.

A significant development for PMI in the early 1990s was discovering the large and diverse supply of models produced in Poland. At that time, these were virtually the only type of models available to the Polish public. The designs were good but the paper and the printing quality were inferior to what is enjoyed today. And, disappointingly up to that time, the Polish authorities discouraged the printing of past and current western aircraft or tanks. PMI took some of the Polish models on consignment and waited to see how well they would be received in the U.S. market. Because they were new and different, sales were adequate, but not as impressive as had been anticipated. Then in 1989 the Polish government changed dramatically as did the quality of Polish paper models. In a short time, the paper quality was up to western standards, the printing quality was first class, detail and parts count increased significantly and the companies began to publish the very popular WWII planes. These newer Polish models sold very successfully for PMI.

The Polish publishers were turning out new models at a terrific pace but often neglected to reprint them when needed. Many of the new, popular, models disappeared after a short time. They were eventually reprinted but PMI could not determine when. This situation presented PMI a classic business challenge - the balancing of demand with stock. Since PMI had an excellent laser printer and paper models are very easy to copy, PMI came up with a workable solution; PMI would locally print high-quality color copies of the models that were out of stock in Poland. When a model went back into printing in Poland, PMI would stop printing it in the U.S. and order the model in the traditional manner. The beauty of this business approach was that the Polish companies did not have to do anything except wait for a check from PMI every time a previously agreed-to number of their models had been sold. This was, of course, all done on trust and PMI had that built that trust with the Polish publishers.

Another significant investment PMI made to help minimize the sporadic Polish model availability was letting a contract with a Polish paper model draughtsman, Andrzej Krasnicki, for a series of six American WWII fighter planes in 1/32 scale. PMI received the original six designs, did the color work and layouts and had the models professionally offset printed in Beaverton, Oregon. In the late 1990s, PMI was quite proud of their new self-published ("house line") of paper models' quality, and with reason - the customer response was so positive that the "PMI house line" was carried in the short-lived PastTimes hobby catalog for a couple of holiday

seasons. Four additional WWII planes were added to the line, followed by a series of five 1930s U.S. light, civil, single engine aircraft. The final four WWII PMI models (PMI 107: F-4-F3 Wildcat, PMI: 108 SBD-3 Dauntless, PMI 109: P-39M Aircobra, and PMI 110: P-47D 'bubble canopy' Thunderbolt) were computer-drafted; eventually the entire line was reprinted with computer enhancement. The "PMI house line" models remained popular offerings for the remainder of PMI's company life.

The final computer-enhanced versions of the PMI house line are comparable in quality to the JF Schreiber 1/50 scale models. Fit and coloring are vibrant and accurate for each aircraft. The original six, hand-drawn models, while accurate in color, presented some challenges to builders as occasionally pieces did not fit properly. This was most noticeable in the engine cowlings. Even to an inexperienced modeler, this situation was easy to remedy by simply fashioning a small splice where necessary. All known inconsistencies were addressed with the computer enhancements.

Instructions for each 1/32nd WWII "PMI house line" model were written by Lou Dausse and offered only in English. The instructions for the 1/24th "PMI house line" models were written by their designer, Robert Kaelin, also offered only in English. Lou and his wife Barbara translated a number of Geli, Möwe-Verlag Wilhelmshaven and a few other publishers' German instructions into English, affixed a PMI logo to those translated instructions, duplicated them with their home office printer and included these with each sale of a respective model.

PMI was running smoothly with business growing at a comfortable pace each year. It began to look like paper models in the U.S. could become a big business. So much so that in the early 2000s it seemed PMI would grow beyond the capabilities of the three people running and managing the company. It became very likely that a warehouse and an increase in the number of employees would be required shortly. The owners (Lou and Barbara Dausse), now being 15 years over retirement age, began looking for a younger person to take over the company who could build further on the business foundation they had so methodically and patiently built. There was a fellow from California who was very enthusiastic about taking over PMI. He was an experienced paper modeler and seemed very capable of handling the growing business. A proper deal was struck in 2009 and Paper Models International was sold with all assets, inventory and customer databases intact. Very unfortunately; however, since the sale, nothing has been heard from the new company.

The combined influence that John Hathaway and Lou Dausse have had on the U.S. paper model market can only accurately be described as profound. This pair of businessmen established a hobby industry in the U.S. where there really was none. U.S. paper modelers are indebted to John's and Lou's tenacity and enthusiastic willingness to endorse a different hobby medium.



In 2009 Lou gave a brief interview, to Alexis of the now defunct [papermodelkiosk.com](http://papermodelkiosk.com), regarding his history and the end of his ownership of PMI.

*"I saw all these paper models in Europe, and when I got back to the States, it*

*wasn't something you found here. I thought they would do well, so I started to import paper models and sell them to hobby shops in the Pacific Northwest. I traveled a lot.*

*I realized that a finished model would help sell a kit. So I would build up an airplane, say, and give it to the shop. That's when I got hooked.*

*Then I got into mail order, and the business grew, and grew, and grew. About fifteen years ago I quit my job as a salesman to devote all my time to our paper model business. But now it's getting to be too much; gotten beyond me; I can't keep up with it - Barbara and I can't do it justice.*

*Ten years ago, for example, I knew almost every paper model there was. The computer has changed all that: now, anybody who can run a cad program can design a paper model. And Eastern Europe has opened up, and there's a flood of quality models coming in from there as well.*

*The paper model market is growing. I don't think many young people build models anymore, they've got other electronic distractions. Our market is men who built models as children, got away from it, and have come back to it.*

*But the paper model market is shifting. Even shows aren't what they used to be anymore. It's all about the Internet, now. And kids are into their electronic games, not paper models. There are companies that only sell downloads, or models on CDs or DVDs. That is probably the future of this business. At the moment, there are enough people who are model builders and don't want to fiddle with computers and printers - they want printed sheets, and that's what we provide.*

*We're also the publishers for a number of designers, because we can print an item one-at-a-time, as needed. No longer do you need a press-run of 5,000 impressions.*

*The beauty of paper model is you can make an airplane, then you can turn around and make a bird, built a ship, erect a cathedral - create a beautiful nativity. I'm always amazed, because there's something new all the time. In thirty-five years I thought I had seen every possible way you can put paper together. But there are so many clever new designers, creating wonderful new models.*

*I still build models all the time. Right now, I'm making an old German battleship, the Grosse Deutschland, and I can hardly wait to get it finished - so I can start on the next thing I want to build - a Danish castle.*

*For years, we needed assembled models to go to shows, and now I've got storage rooms full of them: I was always building the latest thing and taking it along. Barbara and I have spent twenty years going to hobby shows all over the country. We'd rent a booth, and hang our airplanes, set up our castles, display our dragons and our other models. That's how we promoted our business - when people saw all these models assembled, they went wild about them.*

*We don't do shows any more, but I still enjoy modeling so much. You don't need fancy tools - an X-acto knife, a pair of scissors, a pair of tweezers, a felt pen for coloring edges - that's the joy of this hobby. I will probably go on and on, until I finally fall over putting paper models together.*

*"There's a theory that in hard times hobbies are good, because they're such cheap entertainment. If that's the case, paper models are the cheapest entertainment of*

*all - you get more fun time per-dollar than any other form of hobby I know.*

*What PMI needs is for someone to take it over and make a big business out of it. We've shared our business plan, but banks aren't parting with their money easily these days."*



2 July 2020