



# The Grant McCune Boba Fett Helmet

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## Summary

In my last article, "First Sons" I introduced you to a new Boba Fett helmet casting and discussed its history. However, I didn't talk a great deal about the helmet itself or go into details about it. In this article I will share with you some of the incredibly cool details which separate this helmet from virtually any other (except for the Ken Tarallo plug, which is its "brother") as well as some of the areas where the helmet suffers clear differences from the Preproduction #2 Boba Fett helmet.



## Introduction

**F**or over 6 years it has been believed the Ken Tarallo Ultracal plug was the only casting to ever come out of the mold of the Preproduction #2 Boba Fett helmet. It was also believed that the Ken Tarallo Ultracal plug hadn't been cast prior to its ownership by a TDH member. However, there has always been a wrinkle in these beliefs because there are obvious "tells" pointing back to the Preproduction #2 helmet in a number of other helmets, including the Mystery helmets, the "Lava" helmet, and even the helmets officially produced by Don Post in the mid 90's. If the mold was ruined, the Ultracal plug pulled from it had never been cast, and the original Preproduction #2 Boba Fett helmet went into the hands of a private collector, from where did all of these other helmets originate? Up until recently, there has been a missing link, a broken chain, and an unfinished story.



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About 6 months ago, I was approached by a friend to verify and possibly purchase what was believed to be a production casting of the Boba Fett helmet. When photos arrived it was immediately obvious this wasn't a production piece, but instead, yet another casting of the Preproduction #2 Boba Fett helmet. As mentioned, there are literally dozens of castings that can trace their lineage in some way back to the Preproduction #2 helmet, but this one gave pause because unlike all but the Ken Tarallo Ultracal plug this helmet still had ALL of the physical scratches and paint impressions matching the original helmet, meaning this had to be a very early casting.

I was able to purchase this helmet for my private collection and once in hand, I was thrilled to see that not only did this appear to be a very early casting, but to my surprise, details (which will be discussed later in this article) on the helmet indicate it is the exact same generation as the Ken Tarallo Ultracal plug! Not only does this confirm that the Ken Tarallo Ultracal plug was not the only helmet to ever come out of its mold, but it also helps explain the lineage that eventually led to the Don Post helmets and tells us even more about the original casting of the Preproduction #2 Boba Fett helmet and its progeny.

So why are we calling this the "Grant McCune" helmet? Its history traces back to a former model maker at Grant McCune Studios. We are told this helmet sat "out back" at Grant McCune Studios for untold years. Sadly, we don't know how this helmet came into the possession of the Grant McCune Studios employee.



**B**efore going into the details, here are images of

the helmet from all angles, so you can get a clear idea of the good points as well as the areas that are a bit less than what one might hope for:

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## The Good

### Physical Weathering

Mentioned previously, this helmet was weathered and painted by Sandy Duhvetter. While the Boba Fett helmets were painted to have a worn and damaged look, there are a few key places where the helmets were physically scored, scratched, etched or otherwise physically damaged. There are literally dozens of light scratches and scrapes on the Grant McCune Boba Fett Helmet that match the original Preproduction #2. Some of the more telling scratches are on 1) the right side of the dome, 2) the right mandible, as well as the left mandible, 3) the cheek just in front of the rangefinder ear, and 4) the non-rangefinder cheek.



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## Painted Weathering

The physical weathering marks to the helmet are all very heavy and deep and traces of a few of them can be seen on much later generations of this line of helmets, such as the "Lava" helmet. However, something that is not generally see on later castings are the layers of paint from the layered method of painting that Sandy gave the original Preproduction #2 Boba Fett helmet. The "layer" or "reveal" method of painting refers to an approach in which a base layer of paint is applied to an object, then scratches are predetermined and masked off. A second layer of paint is applied over the base and the masked areas. Once the 2<sup>nd</sup> layer has dried the masked areas are peeled away, revealing the first layer of paint and adding instant "weathering!" This method was used to some degree on all of the Boba Fett helmets and the hairline thin edges of paint can be clearly seen on the Grant McCune helmet. You can see a number of these areas in the images below:



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### Rangefinder Ear / Microswitch

Years ago, Jeremy Bulloch, who played Boba Fett in the Empire Strikes Back and Return of the Jedi revealed that the lights on Boba Fett's rangefinder lit only when the rangefinder was in the down position, and while some costumers have recreated this functionality with a mercury switch, a momentary push button is seen peaking out of the Return of the Jedi Hero helmet which is on tour with the Star Wars: Magic of Myth Exhibit.

As the Preproduction #2 Boba Fett helmet was cast with the upper ear cap removed, the microswitch was cast into the mold and is very apparent in the Grant McCune Fiberglass Helmet as well as the Ken Tarallo Ultracal plug. Not only is the switch itself visible, but also the screws which hold it in to the helmet and the size and shape of the cutout in the ear which houses the assembly. For those who don't know, the switch is a Honeywell Microswitch.

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## The Dent

As many know, the dent in Boba Fett's helmet (for which this site is named) was not originally in the 6 helmets that were produced for the Empire Strikes Back. The dents were added after Boba Fett's costume was changed from a generic "Super Trooper" to a single unique character. One of the great aspects of the Preproduction #2 Boba Fett helmet is the clear marks around the dent where it is obvious a hole was drilled into the Super Trooper helmet and the Boba Fett dent was added. While there is a crack in this area on the Grant McCune fiberglass helmet, one can still clearly see the area around the dent that does not match up to the rest of the dome. This is where the dent was inset into the helmet.



## The Bad

If you have gotten this far in the article, the issues with the Grant McCune Boba Fett helmet should already be readily apparent and can be broken into two, somewhat fuzzy groups which have a bit of overlap; issues that are present on both the Grant McCune Helmet and the Ken Tarallo Ultracal plug and issues that appear to be unique to the Grant McCune helmet. There are issues that are also unique to the Ken Tarallo Ultracal plug, but since this article isn't focused on the plug, we won't sidetrack into those.

## Warps

The first and most striking issue with the Grant McCune helmet is that there are several areas that are warped out of shape or sunken. All the detail, including scratches and paint chips that can be matched to the original Preproduction #2 Boba Fett helmet remain in these areas, but the areas themselves are slightly warped. It is interesting to note that the Ken Tarallo has issues in many of the same areas but often the areas on the Ken Tarallo plug are less exaggerated or are actually inversed and where the Grant McCune helmet bows in, the Ken Tarallo bows out, neither matching identically to the original Preproduction #2 helmet. I would love to be able to give you a clear answer to why this is, but the truth is, we simply don't know. Was it bad spots in the original mold from which both helmets were cast? Was it a lack of support of the mold? Are these warps due to the Grant McCune helmet being cast from the mold years after the Ken Tarallo plug? Might it have something to do with the Ken Tarallo plug being made from UltraCal and the Grant McCune helmet being fiberglass? We just don't know. All we know for sure is that the issues are present in both helmet to some degree but are much more prominent in the Grant McCune helmet. This can be seen most clearly on the lower rangefinder ear and on the right side of the dome.



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### Seams

As we talked about in depth in the last article, both castings have two prominent seams up the back of the helmet with the left seam (from the original mold) being exactly the same while the right seam (from the second mold) being opposite of one another. The original seam has created a number of issues in both helmets in the exact same way which include, a drastic warp or dip in the band on the back of the helmet, a flat area where the seam was repaired and sanded, and a slight misalignment of the dome along the seam line.

While the second seam on the Ken Tarallo plug is simply a deeply etched line (where Ken forced the plug from the mold), the second seam on the Grant McCune is a bit more invasive, as the mold was taped from the inside and that tapeline can be clearly seen in the mold.



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### Texturing

On both the Grant McCune fiberglass helmet and the Ken Tarallo plug there is an odd texturing that is not present on the original Preproduction #2 Boba Fett helmet. While it is only speculation, it is believed that this may be from the use of a reinforcing loosely woven material like burlap or cheesecloth within the original mold. Burlap is a traditional reinforcement for plaster mother molds but is sometimes used with flexible molds for reinforcement. Just for the sake of clarity, we are not stating this as absolute fact, just as an educated deduction based on the evidence available. Whether the mold was supported with a woven material or not, it is clear that some type of imprint that appears to be woven in nature was left upon both the helmet and the plug.

### Crackle Texture

There is a crackle texture on both the Grant McCune fiberglass helmet and the Ken Tarallo plug, although it seems to be much more prominent on the Grant McCune helmet. What this texture comes from is unknown. On the Grant McCune helmet, it is most prominent on the rear dome of the helmet. This texturing is not present on the original Preproduction #2 Boba Fett helmet.



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### Cracks

There is only one crack worth noting and it is unique to the Grant McCune fiberglass helmet. It runs up from the dent toward the top of the dome. This is simply a gel coat crack from age and poor handling.



## The Restoration

It may have occurred to some of you that it is fairly uncommon for someone to share all the shortcomings of a piece they have purchased, and instead the good points are touted while the not so good is quietly whisked under the rug. I have shared both the good and bad of this helmet for two reasons; first because I didn't make this helmet, so any shortcomings in the helmet aren't a reflection upon me and I am not defined by it. Second, it is my continuing desire to have the best replica Boba Fett helmet possible and since the Grant McCune fiberglass helmets is one of the best bases for an accurate replica available, I would only be shortchanging myself to ignore its shortcomings.

When I purchased this helmet I knew that it had the above issues and knew I would be unwilling to modify the original helmet because I would rather preserve it for its intrinsic historical value. However, as I mentioned above, I still long for an accurate replica and this helmet is a great base. So I sought to commission the restoration of the helmet.

Clearly, this was a task for someone who was highly skilled, and would take great care in assuring that the original helmet would be treated with the utmost respect, while being able to effectively bring this helmet back to as close to it's original look and feel as possible. Fettpride, was the first to come to mind as he has handled the casting of a number of my more rare pieces in the past, including my original MQ-1 calculator and Nemrod Speargun holster. He is also the best fiberglass professional and Fett helmet maker I know so I asked if he'd be interested in taking on the task. He graciously agreed and I shipped the helmet to him to make a copy so that he could execute the corrections I desired. Since it is unlikely that there will ever be an earlier casting than the Grant McCune fiberglass helmet or Ken Tarallo Ultracal plug, this is my best chance to get what I have always wanted.

While I will let Chris go into more detail if he desires, he took the Grant McCune helmet, made a mold of it and then pulled a helmet to be his new master to correct. One of the things we wanted to focus on was not ADDING material to the helmet and where possible to retain as much of the original as possible. Chris discovered a very unique method for heating and massaging the warped areas back into shape. The results are nothing less than astounding as he was able to straighten the ear platforms, and dome, all without adding material to the helmet or covering details in the warped areas.

While the warpage was the primary issue with the helmet, there was also the texturing to deal with and while I hated to lose the original paint texture, which is extremely fine, I asked Chris to glaze the crackle texturing and very carefully sand the surface of the helmet in the areas where the woven texturing was the most prominent. I also asked him to correct the crack at the dent and clean up the two seam areas in the rear of the helmet.



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**The final result** of a considerable amount of work on Chris' (Fettpride) part is that I have the original Grant McCune fiberglass casting, completely intact and untouched, for my personal collection, and I also have a corrected casting to finish into what I believe will be my final Boba Fett helmet. Big thanks to Chris for taking the time and effort to do this for me and help me fulfill a ten year dream! While the corrected casting is still in transit at the time of this article and I will be sure to show more photos when it arrives, here is a sneak peak from Chris' workshop.

