

# Falco Builders Letter



Marcel Morriën in Falco PH-IAO, the 96th Sequoia Falco to fly.

## Dutch Master Falco

by Marcel Morriën

When I started way back in 1989 I couldn't foresee it would take to 2013 for my Falco project to make her first flight!

I started my flying career on old beaten club Cessnas and Pipers and after some while thought there should be more than that. What I was looking for was a fast travelling machine with nice aerobatic qualities.

Pondering through *Jane's Pocket Book on Light Aircraft* the Falco seemed just that what I was looking for. Speed, range, aerobatics and to that very good looking. The Belle of the air!

Flying with Falco Series IV owner Jaap Havekotte in his plane convinced me this was the way to fly!

It seemed as if it was controlled by mind steering. Think left and she would go left. Light and direct controls makes her do what you think she should do. A slight touch of input is enough.

Visiting builder (Bert van Steijn), who just finished the fuselage, gave me the impres-

sion that this project should be do-able. I must admit he made it look more easy than it proved to be.

Because of the size and shape of my work area (a two-car garage 10x30') I decided to build the fuselage first and do the wing after separating the fuselage halves.

At first the tail kit was ordered, which proved to be fun to build. I like working with wood and with the kit, very soon aircraft parts took form. The decision was made to continue and more and more kits were ordered.

The project was on its way. Friends and relatives reacted with surprise and sheer disbelief seeing what took form in the garage. Always asking how long will it take you, I answered (until a year ago) three years to go.

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Work and family claimed some time too, so progress was irregular and I do have to admit that there were also several periods of inactivity due to more or less difficult steps in the building process. Looking back I can hardly remember them but gluing wing spars to the fuselage and wingtip skins on the wing were among them. You just have to find a secure way to get things in the right position and hold them there while gluing or drilling holes.

The end result seems to be fairly straight, measurement of symmetry gave excellent results which were confirmed by behaviour during the first flight.

During the building process I had to move the project two times, first when my

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neighbour's garage became available and I combined both, secondly when the family and the project moved to another house, with a larger and heated workspace (we are talking 2002 and the nose wing ribs were just glued on).

A good thing for progress was the offer of a friend (Henk Teuling) to help with the project on a regular basis, once a week an evening. Practically we never reached once a week, but it came close and was it stimulating me to keep going on and good to have someone around to discuss possible problems and solutions.

Preparing the airplane for painting started in 2010. The plywood was glassed over and a micro balloons/epoxy was used as filler. After working hours and days on the wing I decided to have that job done by a professional. I kept filling and sanding. The wing skin is thin enough to be pushed inwards while sanding, so you remove filler at the spot of the ribs while in between filler stays. Clearly that was not for me.

It took a special transport to get the Falco to the paint shop, where they did a very nice job using high solid base paint followed by a clear polyurethane coating, which gives a very high gloss.

In the mean time the instrument panel was prepared. In 2009 I visited Oshkosh where I met with people from Aerotronics Inc. They do general aviation and experimental panels. Together we decided on the components and layout. The electrical kit supplied by Sequoia Aircraft was used as a basis for the installation. Upon arrival it was really plug and play ready!

Engine installation proved to be an art in itself. It took a bit of a struggle to convinced engine and dynafocal engine frame that they were really made for each other.

Fitting the cowling was nice and rewarding work, October 2012 the Falco was again on special transport, this time to the airport for final installation. Unfortunately it took quite some time to get the engine running correctly.

This Falco is equipped with the 180 hp IO-360 engine and according to the Falco plans the injector body has to be modified from push-pull to pull-push operation. This means the shaft of the air valve has to be replaced.

Apparently the replacement was misaligned and therefore the coupled mixture regulation orifice could not work over the full rpm range.



Thanks to Martien van Dijk, chief mechanic at Vliegwerk Holland and his co-workers we got this problem out of the way. He was also the one who did the final inspection before the first flight.

To my great pleasure Martien van Dijk was willing to do the first flight with me as observer, and on June 18 we flew the Falco for the first time.

Slight easterly winds, temp 30 degrees Celsius, clear sky, Rotterdam The Hague Airport (EHRD) runway 06, 2200 meters, long enough to make three touch and gos in a row.

After three high-speed taxi runs we took off, lift off 65 kts, climbed out at 85 kts, raised flaps at 1500' climbed further at 105 kts, If I remember well at about 800'/min. Upon reaching 3000' (top of the control zone) we raised the gear (I had all gear doors installed) and saw 160 kts plus with 25/25.

The aircraft performed flawlessly and was well balanced.

Slow flight gave no sign of a stall at 60 kts (landing configuration) so we took her back in after 40 minutes for landing, 75 kts short final and slowly decreasing above the runway to touch down very smoothly with approximate 65 kts.

Flying your homebuilt for the first time is really exciting and very rewarding, certainly if she behaves perfectly and no corrections are to be done. The next flight I took building buddy Henk Teuling with me and he was as proud as I was. The smile after landing seems contagious.

My next passenger was one of my daughters who found it awesome and cool to be in this plane her father built and was for so many years part of the scenery around our house.

My wife Ada, who never complained when I was away in my workshop, will accompany me to the Old Timer and Frati designs Fly In weekend at Schaffen Diest.

The Falco is a very nice airplane to fly, sensitive, stable, very clean, responsive and very good looking. As preparation for flying the Falco I have been flying the General Avia F22C, a younger design by Frati, including aerobatics (i.e. unusual attitudes). Comparing the two I prefer (of course) the Falco, she is a bit lighter and more responsive. Headroom is better in the F22.

Thanks to all at Sequoia Aircraft and co-builders for great support.









## A Falco Pilgrimage, Oshkosh to Chino

by George Richards

### Day 1: Oshkosh to Stillwater, MN

Oshkosh itself is different things to different people. To me it was people, shopping and static displays. I can honestly say I didn't watch the air display.

What made it a little strange for me was the small amount of celebrity status I seemed to earn which I was a little uncomfortable with. I found myself being interviewed several times. I even had a short slot on EAA radio. It's not something I would normally volunteer for but I enjoyed it this time. The highlight was meeting Budd Davisson. All through my training I had read articles by Budd so to be interviewed by him was a real honour for me. He did the process justice by publishing a fun article of my trip in *EAA Experimenter* magazine.

By Thursday, Darryn and I had seen enough crowds and had enough of the 40° C heat so we decided to leave. By mid-morning we had the Falco fueled and ready to go. We dragged it down to the flight line, fired it up and taxied out for departure excited about our Westbound vacation. The flying to date was mainly to get the machine to Oshkosh but the return journey was to be slightly more leisurely to enjoy the sights.

We got lined up next to a Zenair which would lead us out. If you've never flown the Oshkosh departure before, it calls for an immediate right turn of about 150° to a heading at 500' AGL to remain below the inbound aircraft until clear of the Class D then they cut you loose. When you have a Zenair immediately in front of you it's not long until you blow by it. It's so much fun it's probably illegal. The problem is that the class D is quite small and once you're clear they don't want to know. We got spat out of the system heading 150° but needing to go pretty much on a reciprocal to get to our first overnight stop at Lake Elmo. The OSH arrival ensures there is a string of traffic above you stretching way to the south. We figured the safest option for us was to stay at 500' AGL and under fly the inbound daisy chain of aircraft until the fun wore off then we expedited a climb through to 2500'. It seemed to work great and we still had the smile on our faces late into the night.

The lower altitude we selected for head-wind avoidance gave us a great view of the pretty little lakes as we tracked North West on our short 1:30 flight.

Lake Elmo itself is an immaculately groomed and cared for airport. Gatus, the



Top: Refuel at Oshkosh prior to departure. Center: Parked at Lake Elmo airport at Stillwater. Above: In hangar at Lake Elmo airport.





Top: Stillwater trolley bus Above: Stillwater tour.

owner of the Valters Aviation, the local FBO couldn't believe it. He'd never seen a Falco there before but here was the second one in two days. (Duane and Mary had been there the day previous)

The welcome extended by Gatus was second to none. He offered us a parking spot in his hangar and instructed his staff not to accept payment. He told us to put our bags in the car outside and then he drove us into our hotel in Stillwater. It's not an inconsiderable distance in to Stillwater and even along the way he was offering to stop for ice cream. He didn't want payment but when we discovered that he had hijacked the instructor's car for the ride, Darryn insisted on passing on a few bucks for gas for the owner at the very least. We all know what it's like climbing the aviation ladder.

After a brief rest in our our hotel, which was a replica of George Washington's house, we went for a walk for some lunch then toured the town on a guided trolley bus tour. What a lovely town. Rich in history. A logging town that eventually went broke as nobody thought replanting would be necessary. The mansions are beautiful and the town is very quaint sitting on a river that separates Wisconsin from Minnesota.

We really enjoyed our stay in Stillwater although the hotel we chose was probably preferable to share with your significant other especially since the bathroom door, well the whole wall actually, was just a curtain that was a touch too short to fill the gap.

The next morning we did our usual early thing and woke up to a fairly low overcast. We kept moving anyway with usual morning preparations but before calling the taxi we walked back into the little town in search of caffeine. We found a fun little cafe and got our morning fix before wandering back and checking out.

Back at the Valters Aviation, the plane was waiting for us in the hangar. The owner again refused to let us pay for the night in the hangar then left to go to the doctor.

### Day 2: Stillwater to Pierre, SD

We were planning on flying to Alexandria before continuing on to Pierre but the weather at Alexandria was reporting quite low and not forecast to improve for about four more hours so we decided to ditch it. I wanted to visit the certificate holder for the Bellanca Viking aircraft, but I didn't want it to hold us up. So we sat around a little while chatting with the very friendly staff at the FBO while we waited for the cloud to lift slightly.

Around 09:30 we'd had enough waiting so we jumped in and headed West. Since the wind was favourable down low



we stayed under the cloud at around 1000' AGL for a lot of the flight. It made for a busy flight. Across Minnesota are many very high radio masts the tallest of which we estimated to be around 2000' high, well above us as we passed by. Fortunately the masts are lit and my GPS points them out along with an "Obstacle" annunciation and a mast symbol of the PFD but it isn't the kind of thing I would want to test so we kept a good lookout.

Added to the mast problem was masses of birds. It seemed about every three or four minutes we were pointing out birds. Some in very large flocks, some solo but most around our height or higher. It meant that at least one of us had to be heads-up the entire trip. We managed it by clearly indicating who was doing what. It made for a bit of a high stakes obstacle course.

Later in the flight we'd had enough and since it was getting a bit lumpy we climbed to 4500'. This gave us a slight headwind but it was a lot smoother. It didn't last long however as the cloud started climbing with us so after 10 minutes break from the obstacles we popped back down to finish the flight at around 3000'.

All in all an interesting flight. Busy but a lot of fun and a learning experience.

Once we arrived in Pierre the line guy from Mustang Aviation, the local FBO was there to marshal us in to our park. We unloaded, parked the plane, gassed it up and put it to bed.

The receptionist at Mustang was very helpful sorting us transport, offering us dining advice and got us a couple of bottles of water. The FBO offices are obviously new and are very comfortable indeed. We feel very spoiled with this FBO system. They make everyone feel important. Boy, New Zealand aviation has a long way to go and unfortunately it's currently going backwards. It seems in the USA that the local municipalities see a value in having an airport so do a lot to support it. The airports are all very well cared for. As opposed to NZ where people buy cheap houses near airports then try to get them closed down while CAA try to legislate aviation out of existence. The USA really is the place to fly, no doubt about it.

We caught a taxi/bus thing into town.

After a catch up on email we went searching for lunch. We were shocked at how little there was of anything in Pierre especially being the state Capitol. I'm sure there must be something, but we couldn't find it. We did ask someone to point us in a direction of food, but I think she thought she was on candid camera so it was hard to get much sense out of her.

After about an hour of walking around we found a nice place to get a great sand-



Top and Center: Historic Stillwater. Above: Lunch at Stillwater.





*Top: Pierre capitol building. Center: Approaching Spearfish. Above: Lunch at Spearfish.*

wich and a cold drink. Then we went back to the hotel to do some washing and blog.

That night a huge electrical storm passed through which gave Darryn plenty of entertainment trying to photograph a lightning bolt. I just worried about our trusty Falco sitting outside in it.

The night at Pierre was interesting in that we got to see the other side of America. Everyone seemed to be on a low. We went into Subway for dinner since there wasn't a lot of choice. I've never seen such a collection of depression.

### **Day 3: Pierre to Spearfish, SD**

The following morning we got up around seven and headed out to Mustang Aviation to fly to Spearfish. It's a one-hour flight and has a one-hour time change so we arrived about when we left. The terrain along the way was flat and parched with not even a lot of farming. The winds were fairly strong at our selected cruising altitude of 4500' but it was smooth contrary to the forecast.

The wind kicked up a bit of dust haze, but as we approached Spearfish the haze cleared to reveal a lovely rolling terrain covered with Pine trees.

Spearfish (Black Hills airfield actually) is in a small basin and is very pretty. It's a small airport but in keeping with most places we've already seen, the airport is extremely well kept.

We taxied in to be met, as is common, by a marshaller. This time the marshaller was a young girl called Maddy.

Maddy expertly directed us to our overnight parking spot. As we shut down she greeted us with a big smile offering any assistance we might need. Fuel, tie downs, etc. I didn't even get the phone out to close the plan and a car drove up behind the aircraft. "Are you George?" ... It was Laura bringing out our rental car. Wow, what service. She even opened the trunk so we could transfer our bags directly into the car.

Maddy raced off to get the fuel truck, and I rang up to close the flight plan.

As I mentioned our registration to the briefer, he said "Wow, I've spoken to you guys three times now. Once on the radio and twice on the phone." He was super friendly. He said he used to live in Spearfish so proceeded to give me a great rundown on activities in the area. He was great.

I swear America is the friendliest place on the planet by far.

Once we got the plane tied down we went into the office to sign for the car. Laura then handed us several maps and showed us the best way to see what we wanted and suggested several eating spots. More great service.

We headed off to check into our hotel and get some food.



As per Laura's recommendation we headed to the Green Bean and enjoyed a great breakfast in a lovely setting.

After breakfast we had some time to kill so we decided to head about 45min South to Ellsworth Air Force Base to the museum. It's an active Bone (B1) base. While we were looking around the lady there asked us if we had our passports. On investigation it was to allow us on to the base to tour a training ICBM missile silo. Quite an experience, and one I'll never forget.

A fairly broken sleep was all we managed that night. There was a motorcycle convention just down the road at Sturgis and the Hells Angels picked the same hotel as us. They were actually fine with a couple of exceptions at around 02:30 which left us a bit tired.

We left around 7:15 and went for coffee again at the green bean. After coffee we set off on our drive through the Black Hills in search of Crazy Horse and Mt Rushmore.

The drive through the hills was very pleasant although we both agreed, it was a lot like home. We could easily have been driving down through Kiangaroo State forest in New Zealand's North Island or even parts of Old North Road in Auckland for that matter.

We did pass a couple of lovely lakes though that would be a great stop if you had a boat in tow.

What I liked best about the drive were the little towns. They seemed like they hadn't changed a lot from the old cowboy days. You could just picture the dusty streets with horses at the hitching post outside the Tavern. Or perhaps the sheriff sitting outside the jail with a couple of six shooters strapped on.

Our first stop was Crazy Horse. What an incredible achievement. I won't go into too much detail, I would recommend looking at [www.crazyhorsememorial.org](http://www.crazyhorsememorial.org) but the basic facts are these.

The monument is the tallest in the world at 563' high, starting at around 6000' elevation. It was taken on by one solitary person with no assistance.

I confess that prior to going, I wasn't fussed about going to Crazy Horse. I'm pleased I did. I found it fascinating that one person, followed by one family could think so big that they could take on such a massive project alone and in the knowledge that they would never see it completed. Even I won't see it completed.

I found it actually a bit emotional and moving. It's definitely a must see. The whole display is very well set up.

Next stop, Mt Rushmore.

This too is a very impressive monument. Not to the same scale as Crazy Horse, and it's now complete I guess, but



Top: Great service at Spearfish. Center: Ellsworth AFB. Above: Black Hills.





*Top and Above: Crazy Horse, future and now.*

is impressive nonetheless. It's one of those things, as a New Zealander, that you see on TV or in movies but don't really appreciate it until you are standing underneath it.

As a more complete display there is a really nice trail to follow for various vantage points and other displays. It's marked as a strenuous trail. If it was at sea level it wouldn't be such a big deal but you do notice the difference up at 6000' odd.

It was great to see both monuments, and they are both attractions that are not to be missed but if I could pick only one I think I'd go with Crazy Horse. Again, moving! I love the catch phrase too. 'Dreams and Dynamite'. That decision would understandably be different if you are a USA citizen with more ties to the patriotic angle of Mt Rushmore.

The following day was time to move on again with another early start. We always seemed to beat the alarm clock so it wasn't as bad as it sounds.

#### **Day 4: Spearfish to Lander WY**

We didn't have internet at our hotel due to an ongoing fault but I managed to get a radar weather picture over 3G on my phone. It showed a bit of weather along our track so we made haste and went to the airport to head for Lander, Wyoming lickety split.

As it worked out we had an uneventful flight down to Lander. The terrain is absolutely not what we expected. I guess flying into Christchurch regularly makes you expect terrain to jump up out from flat land, but it was nothing like that. The hills were higher than us (8500') but kind of rolled their way up. Quite a surprise. Very scenic nonetheless. The colours of the soil were quite remarkable. The US of A sure is a big continent with vast areas of not much interspersed with beauty of many kinds. The further we travelled, the more we appreciated it.

After landing at Lander we noted our cell phones didn't work. AT&T have zero coverage there, which was both a surprise and a problem. We needed to close our plan before someone came looking.

Darryn shuffled off to the 'Terminal' in search of a phone. He came back with a closed plan, the location of the fuel pump, which had eluded us, and a crew car for the night. Good work!

I still don't fully understand this FBO thing. I've tried asking but never really got a full answer. I feel like we are getting too much for nothing so I try not to use them until I fully understand. However for Lander, driving away with the full use of a car without any paperwork filled in or anything, seemed too good to be true. At the very least the level of trust is unbelievable but does restore one's faith in society.



We fueled, packed up and drove to town in search of a hotel. Easy work, we found a suitable room at the Best Western and checked in. Duane was going to have us walk in to town but this system seemed so much better.

Once we had settled in we drove 10 miles up the road to Sinks Canyon. What a beautiful place. We spent about an hour looking around and taking photos before we were driven out by torrential rain coming from a lightning storm that brewed overhead. In amongst the nature discovery and photo taking, Darryn heard a rattle snake so we moved on. That may have had something to do with him losing his lens hood for his camera.

The afternoon had us drinking some very fine iced coffee followed by chores in the form of washing.

We also spent some time trying to find accommodations in Jackson Hole. Being a tourist hot spot, like Alexandria, it was fairly full. After eventually finding something we went down to the Cowfish, a local restaurant recommended by Duane. While we hate to admit it, we had the best food we've had all trip at the Cowfish. And the beers from the local micro brewery were very tasty too, meaning we probably had one or two too many against my will while we chatted at the bar with some interesting people we met going to Sturgis on their motorcycle. It seems beer does have a tendency to go to your head a bit when you are at 6000'. That's my story anyway.

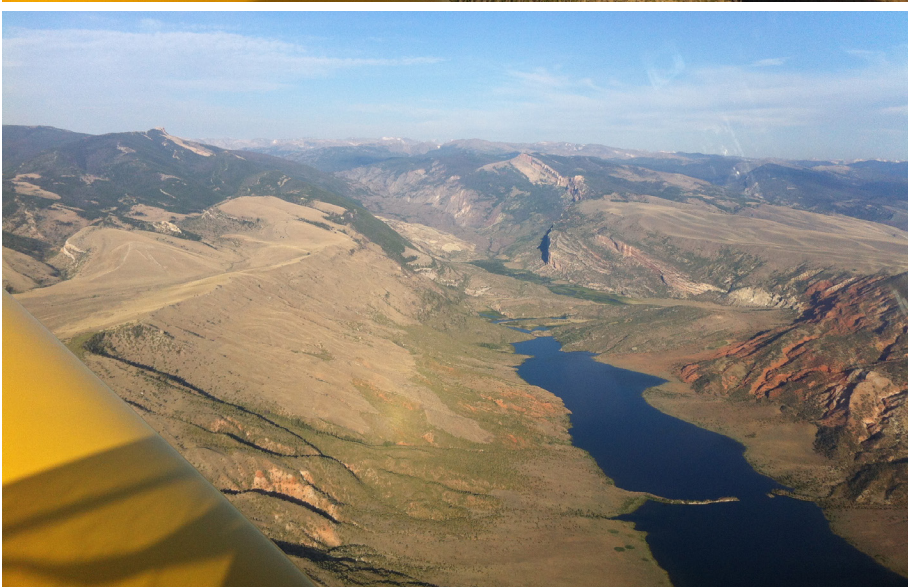
I could easily have spent longer at Lander but the following day we had another early start for a high altitude flight into Jackson Hole the only change being that we filed the plan from our room since our cell phones didn't work. The whole point of going to Lander was to give us both an early start and a few options in the mountainous high altitude work around Jackson Hole. Wind also is not fun in the mountains if New Zealand is anything to go by so the early start helped there too.

We gassed up the mighty Buick crew car and returned to preflight the plane. I needed to get rid of some rubbish and make a pit stop so I went into the tiny terminal. The door had a sign saying to enter the Tarmac the code was 3522. As I entered I tried the handle ... it was free so I didn't take too much notice. Oops. So obviously when I went to leave I was stuck. Hmm ... Er 6722 ... No ... Er ... Bugger. Forgot! So I frantically waved out to Darryn in the hope he would look over. Fortunately it didn't take long before he did so he came and rescued me. What a dufus! Needless to say Darryn thought it highly amusing.



*Top: Me and the presidents. Above: Lander crew car overlooking Sinks Canyon.*





Top: Sinks Canyon. Center and Above: On the climb to Jackson WY.

### Day 5: Lander to Jackson WY

At 7:30 we were rolling down Lander's runway 03. Another high altitude takeoff so I just gently let SMR lift itself off and climb very slowly while it gathered energy. The density altitude was 7000'. Interesting stuff for us sea levelers.

Anyhow, in moments we were heading West again and making a slow climb to 10500. Another issue we are noticing are highish cylinder head temperatures though our tour of the USA. I like to climb it very slowly with an indicated airspeed of about 120 knots. It keeps the temps down and you make reasonable forward progress while having a good visibility over the snout. It seems to work out well. The climb rate isn't high like that but we don't need it either.

The flight up the valley toward Dubois was very pretty with some terrific colours in the rocks and soils.

We slowly climbed the little machine up to 10500', the highest it had ever been. The granite was stretching skyward so ten five was about as low as we could get over the rock. The top of the saddles we flew over were quite remarkable in that while it was high, it looked like fairly flat land with trees, grass and streams.

No sooner than we got to 10500' and we were on our way back down again in order to join the circuit at 7600' without being at warp factor 10. The controller at Jackson seemed perplexed that the foreign registered aircraft was so small. I guess he's used to a lot of executive jet traffic.

After touch-down we were guided into a park with all the big money. Obviously Jackson Hole is popular with the rich. We can always pretend I guess.

The FBO staff were great but since we weren't really used to the idea, and I still don't really understand it, we did most of the 'putting the aircraft to bed' ourselves. The staff just chatted and gave us a lift to the FBO building.

We signed up with the FBO and walked up to the terminal to get our car.

The bartender from the night before had given us a great tip for a breakfast spot so we headed that way. What a great spot. A stunning view of the Tetons, the mountain range peaks that enclose the western edges of the valley, while eating pancakes. Nice!

We went for a bit of a drive after breakfast to find our hotel, even though it was too early to check in then went for a look at Jackson town.

What a cool little town. It is very much cowboy country with wooden sidewalks and all the old style buildings. The more modern buildings are more of an alpine style of log and stone. It's a shame they



let cars through as it really would be awesome if they closed it out for vehicles and set more of a cowboy theme in the town center. Still, despite the opportunity lost, it's fun.

The scenery is certainly very beautiful. What I say next is not meant in any way to detract from this but is more of a description for NZ readers. The feel is a lot like the Southern Alps of New Zealand. One of the peaks of the Tetons could easily be Mt. Aspiring. While they are obviously taller, the basin elevation is higher also so it appears similar in height to Mt. Aspiring. One river running through the valley could easily be the Kawarau River. The area is a lot bigger and has a more wide open feel to it. It is also a lot hotter than anywhere in the southern Alps would achieve.

I think we were both getting a bit punch drunk with all the sights and scenery that we had seen. It had been a great primer for future holidays, but I think we wouldn't truly understand it all until we've had a chance to reflect.

The rest of the day was spent wandering the street taking in the atmosphere before a few drinks with Alfred's daughter Sara and her family. It was fun meeting her daughter Elizabeth. She obviously keeps Sara, Stephen and probably Alfred entertained and on their toes.

We were both looking forward to a great sleep in our fancy separate rooms. Big comfy beds, flat screen TV, you name it. But did it happen? Nope. I had a fairly broken sleep and Darryn reported similar. I was awake at 05:00 so I had a look at the weather. I was ready to go by 06:20 so I rang Darryn, and he was ready to go, too. We headed for the airport. It was a touch chilly at eight degrees at that time of the morning. Typical alpine weather.

The rental car girl said it was beautiful at the airport at 5 AM as there was a big thunderstorm brewing West of the Tetons with the lightning adding to the beauty. I wasn't that impressed as I could see the storm moving closer so we were keen to split ASAP yet again.

#### Day 6: Jackson to Cedar City UT

Back at the FBO Darryn had everything all set so we walked along the line of business jets to our ride and got it ready for departure. At 7:30 local Darryn was pushing the throttle in as it was just starting to hail lightly at the arrival end of the runway. We rolled clear of the weather on the takeoff roll and climbed into beautiful clear skies.

At our selected cruising altitude of 8500' we were below the tops of the terrain but it was fairly easy navigation through some fairly mild and wide valleys. The scenery as we headed south from Wyoming



Top: 10,500 into Jackson. Center: The Tetons. Above: With the big boys in Jackson.





Top: Breakfast in Jackson. Center: Central Jackson. Above: Sara and Hurricane Elizabeth.

into Utah was absolutely beautiful in the morning light with nature showing us all the colours of the rainbow in the terrain as it slipped on by.

Our destination had changed. Initially I had planned Provo but everyone we told about it could only respond with 'Oh'. That did it for us. We changed the day's destination to Cedar City, Utah, which was initially only an alternate. This particular flight was bound for a tech stop in a little town called Nephi. I had chosen this as a tech stop earlier since Provo was charging around \$6.70 a gallon for 100LL but Nephi, just 10 minutes further on was down at around \$5.25 provided you pump it yourself. That was good enough for me. I mean the gas at any price is cheaper than home, but there is no point in throwing money away. And anyhow, we prefer the smaller town to stop at anyhow.

As we approached Provo from the East we had the mountains to contend with. There is a very beautiful canyon just East of Provo, aptly named Provo Canyon that we headed for. The weather was great and the wind light. The majesty of this area has to be seen. Certainly an iPhone camera doesn't do it justice.

We flew through the canyon at 8500' with peaks 3500' above us on either side. Unbelievable and indescribable. Darryn did a great job at not smiling but I couldn't help it. It was nature at its best and seeing the terrain open out to Provo City and the lake beyond was stunning. It was a highlight of the whole trip.

From the exit of the canyon we hugged the edge of the cliffs to avoid Provo class D. We were above it but we wanted to be sure and anyway it was fun, but don't tell anyone.

Within minutes we were on descent into Nephi for a well earned leg stretch. We gassed up and chatted to the pilot of an executive jet who was waiting for his customers to return from their business.

One hour had passed all too soon so we jumped in and headed for Cedar City just an hour down the line. A fairly uneventful flight with terrain having a desert feel despite many hills.

The night stop was fairly routine. Again we did washing, email and blogs. We were a bit far from any activity so it was a quiet night and to be honest we were starting to become travel weary.

We had originally planned the next day to be a flight to Lake Havasu. It was a really bad idea to plan it for the middle of summer and when we saw the forecast for 43° it was a simple mutual decision to decide to continue to Chino to complete the flying part of the adventure.





### Cedar City to Chino CA

The following day, Darryn woke me up. I'd had a really solid sleep that last night. It was a good time to wake up though.

The weather for our trip looked good. There was an airmet for IFR weather in the Chino basin but it hadn't eventuated. We decided to indulge in the hotel 'food' for a bit of a breakfast. Chino is on a different time zone so we wanted to wait until 8:00 local so we would get a METAR from Chino produced by a person, not a machine, at 7:00 Chino time.

Darryn dug up a taxi for us and he duly turned up in his Toyota capable of 7000 RPM (ask me how I know) playing Magic Carpet Ride. 'A little bit of rock on roll on' he advised. A nice guy, down to earth.

By 8:30 we were away with a positive weather outlook ahead. The briefer told me he wanted to visit NZ. I hope some of these guys do. And I hope I get to help them out one day, even just a little bit.

The flight headed south initially. Level at 8500' I was keen to avoid the Las Vegas Class B so we tracked to fly around it. The



*Top and Center: Provo Canyon. Above: Downwind Nephi for gas.*





*Top: Enroute to Cedar City. Center: Northern Utah is like New Zealand. Above: Nevada Desert*

terrain slowly changed from high hills, desert in style, to desert proper.

We flew along taking in the amazing colours of the land below as we flew to the South of Las Vegas.

Then, out of the blue, “TRAFFIC” came through our headsets. The box showed something slightly higher and close on the right. A quick scan and we had a Southwest 737 along side on a right base for the Las Vegas 26 ILS. What a cool sight. This happened again a little while later. While we were clear of airspace I can only assume we were probably giving the controller something to do. With the speed the second Southwest Jet flew by I’m sure he was just as interested in us as we were of him.

Shortly after that we spotted a Twin Otter heading for the grand canyon on a sightseeing tour.

We turned right at our track intersection to head more toward Chino. The land changed to a vast sandpit. Lots of nothing with the occasional road and railway.

I confess to not enjoying the desert flying. We both were certainly more on edge. Duane had told us that rather than water, you’re better off with a .45 when flying over the desert. “Just how long to you want to prolong it?” (paraphrased—expletive deleted!).

As we approached the LA basin we shuffled for a frequency to get a clearance into the Class C. We got shunted around a few frequencies until we finally ended up being directed back to our first choice. They are busy. I can only assume the controller didn’t hear me and thought we were somewhere else. Anyhow, someone finally acknowledged us which, unlike New Zealand’s procedures, is the equivalent of a clearance into the C. In reality a clearance



isn't required, but you do need to have two-way comms. So if a controller doesn't want you, he just ignores you. They are extremely helpful for the level of traffic they have to deal with.

Before we knew it we were cleared to land on Chino's runway 26L and just like that, the adventure was over.

After parking I found myself slightly emotional again but I was keen to move on. I was off to find my FedEx box of clothes. I sure was sick of the ones I had!

I returned home with the aeroplane still sitting abandoned (only by me) in Chino awaiting its return ride from Chino. Early indications were not good for a smooth recovery but that would play out in the weeks to follow. So I found I used my idle time reflecting on my adventure of a lifetime.

The trip we made to OSH in 2010 had always felt like a missed opportunity. I really had no idea what to expect so I mismanaged my time. I really met nobody. Even the Falco folk who were there remained largely a mystery. I really wanted to change things this time. I wanted to make the Oshkosh experience more socially focused and about people.

I think people who know me well would say that I'm not really a hugely social person. They would probably be right. I don't enjoy small talk, I can't see the point, and I don't do it well. I don't have a wide selection of friends. I prefer a couple of good friends rather than a lot of fake ones but with all that said, it doesn't mean I don't enjoy meeting people, particularly if they have similar interests.

This trip for me was to meet people interested in aeroplanes as well as getting more of a feel for the American people along the way.

Being a flying trip it was, of course, always going to provide experiences that are rare for a New Zealand aviation enthusiast. Aviation was certainly a large part of the focus too, along with all the things that go with it. Anyone who flies light planes will tell you that you will see things flying small planes that you will never see any other way. It's the nature of the beast, and it's part of why we love doing what we do so much. Only an aviator can understand it.

The experience was everything we hoped and more. As I now settle back into normal life I consider how I could match it. I don't know that I can.

Certainly when I first saw the advert of the Falco in *Kitplanes* all those years ago I never thought it would be set to take me on such a life's adventure.

Thanks to Alfred and the whole Falco family for making this possible.





## Pipistrel Panthera



Over many years we have supplied Falco components to other aircraft. There was a Schweizer motoglider that was built for the Air Force Academy with a Falco canopy, firewall forward Piper Tomahawk, wings and fuselage assembled from their 2-33 glider components. A Falco canopy for the Mooney Military design. And of course for Frati's various designs as well. The latest is the Pipistrel Panthera, a four-seat composite design with a Lycoming IO-390 engine and Falco landing gear retraction system, engine mounts and nose gear. Pipistrel is located in Slovenia.



## Dominique Francois



*Dominique Francois is an airline pilot in Fresse sur Moselle, France. He built the Falco over a period of three years working from kits. He flew the Falco in January 2013 and thus became the 95th Sequoia Falco to fly. He reports that "the aircraft is flying very well without correction on the flight controls."*







## A Falco Story

Colin Ferns and David Mottram tell the story of how Ralph Moore's plans-built Falco F.8L makes her way from Florida to the UK and ends up keeping some rather high class company. The story begins with David:

Love is a strange thing, isn't it? It defies rationale and logic and for time immemorial has defied human understanding. So it was for me the first time I saw a photograph of a Falco; it was 1991 and I was looking for the best way to get started in flying. I knew almost nothing about the mechanics of flying or acquiring an aircraft and least of all, building one. I didn't even have a flying licence.

One day, I found myself reading a PFA (The UK homebuilder's regulating authority, now the LAA) magazine that came with a supplement about homebuilt aircraft, a sort of homebuilt aircraft directory you might say. I scanned through the various photographs and saw a few aircraft that looked interesting. Inside was an article about G-BYLL, which I believe was the first Falco to be built in the UK. I read the article, saw the photos and that was it—love affair starts. I toyed with the idea of buying plans and building one but my life situation did not really suit that and I also realised that it would be a case of five years hard labour in a darkened room. This was not attractive to me. Some people have that kind of personality, others don't and I definitely fall into the second category!

At some point I acquired a fridge magnet with a photo of a red Falco and in spite of living in locations around the world that fridge magnet somehow stayed with me. It was some 17 years later that I was finally able to scratch that particular itch. I guess whatever is meant to be somehow stays with you, you know?

I'm sure many of you will understand that during those 17 years I trod the well worn path in search of domestic bliss only to find the words "domestic" and "bliss" mutually incompatible. I'm a slow learner.

After I acquired my PPL in 2004 I started to look at various syndicates, but I couldn't see anything that really interested or excited me. As with most other PPL students I had done all of my training in "spam-cans" of various kinds and just wanted to fly something a bit more inspirational. The Cirrus range of aircraft was beginning to get established in the UK and a Cirrus flying group was offering a member pilot rental scheme with minimal capital outlay. Although the group itself was not a happy



Top: Ralph Moore. Above: David Mottram with the Falco after the ferry flight.

place to be it gave me a good introduction into the world of complex and fast aircraft.

### The Bug Finally Takes Hold

And so it was that one day in October 2007 I logged on to the seair website and saw various Falcos for sale. I began to investigate the mechanics of international aircraft purchasing and shipping when I realised something else: although I had admired the aircraft from afar I had only ever seen one in real-life, and I had never even been inside one!

I contacted David Thomas who lived in Lincolnshire and had purchased a partial-

ly-built Falco that he had then completed in about 4 ½ years. That darkened room again? I told him that I was thinking of buying one and he kindly invited me to go visit and try it. David would probably be the first to admit that he was pretty obsessive whilst building it and it was evident in the attention to detail that he had applied. For me, as a semi-casual observer I could see why that attitude had produced the most beautiful result. A Falco in yellow is not the most common of colours but the sheer attention to detail made it work. David talked endlessly about his project, the information seemed to pour out of him like a running tap.





**Center: Colin Ferns straps in.**

At one point I realised that all the emotions that he had gone through during that period had found a release mechanism. I don't think I'm being unkind when I say that it was a kind of therapy for him. I also saw how the Falco has such an extraordinary effect on people. When I first saw a picture of one some 16 years previously it was a definite "Wow, I like that" kind of experience. Now here I was on the brink of owning one and

I realised everyone who gets close to one seems to have the same feelings.

So, that day I experienced my first ever flight in a Falco as we flew over the beautiful Lincolnshire countryside in the Autumn sunshine. We even managed a few simple aerobatics! I guess I wasn't really paying too much attention to facts and figures, just wallowing in the experience.

N290 was not my first choice of aircraft. That was another Falco which I did get to fly but another buyer got there first. I had looked at N290 some two years previously and I had even spoken to the owner/builder, Ralph Moore, a man of impressive credentials but decided to keep looking. It was two years later when my attempt to buy the other Falco failed that I looked again at N290.

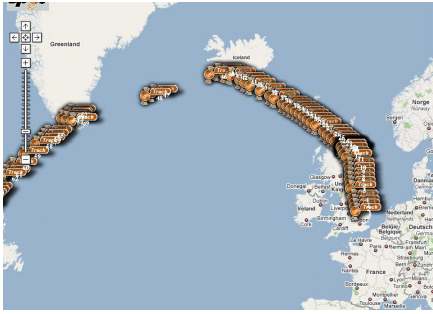
That afternoon I caught a flight from Huntsville to Orlando and by Saturday evening I was in the home of Ralph Moore and his wife who kindly allowed me to stay with them. Ralph had worked on the space program from 1968 until he retired and his home was filled with memorabilia. There were photos of him with various Shuttle astronauts, memorabilia autographed by many of the astronauts, a collection of shoulder patches given to the ground engineers by the astronauts after each mission.

It was like looking at a living history of one of the most exciting periods of man's exploration into the unknown region of space. Sunday morning came and I found myself in the right-hand seat flying down the Indian River looking at Cape Kennedy from 2000 feet. So, let me pinch myself... after years of waiting and only one flight in a Falco in the UK a few weeks previously I had now racked up two trips in the USA in my dream aircraft. It was probably worth the journey just for both flying trips!

I knew that N290 was by no means an award-winning example of a Falco, but I decided that all the major lumps were OK, the aircraft was very low-time and it had been stored in a closed hangar in Florida. I decided that the rest of the shortcomings could be dealt with once it was in England and the purchase was agreed and so it was that on December 26th 2007 I finally owned a Falco! Merry Christmas Dave!

I had already investigated the option of putting the aircraft in a crate but quickly dismissed it. Somehow there seemed to be something about tearing apart a working aircraft which went against the grain and I settled on the idea that a ferry-flight was the better option. There was almost no difference in cost. I also felt that there was another plus to this option. The UK inspectors have to determine an aircraft's airworthiness before authorising it to fly and having flown across the Atlantic one would imagine that this would be a given! (I'm still a slow learner!)





### The Ferry Flight

Preparing N290 for the flight was no easy task and there were various delays while minor technical issues were sorted out and paperwork put in place.

I had been informing friends of her imminent arrival but after giving everyone various expected dates of arrival that came and went I finally had to face the fact that it would arrive when it was ready. I had been doing all in my power to ensure that I was in the country so that I could meet the aircraft but once again the fickle finger of fate decided that was not to be the case. The day before I was leaving for a week-long trip to Eastern Europe an email arrived in my inbox to tell me that our ferry pilot Bill Scott had left Wimauma Air Park that morning in the Falco.

We'd installed a tracking device so I could monitor her progress and I was in Ukraine glued to my laptop watching every tracking point and having a virtual heart attack every time one was missed.

On the second day a clamp came loose that allowed the port side exhaust to rotate and direct hot exhaust gasses straight at the wing root. Luckily the damage was minor and only one day was lost to rectify it in Goose Bay. After that it was on to Reykjavik in one day then from Reykjavik to Spanhoe via Wick.

Bill Scott had been enthusiastic about delivering my Falco. He has several home-builts himself. Looking back it seems that fate conspired to make that happen and I'm pleased that it did. He was one of the few pilots that would fit in the aircraft with the Nustrini canopy!

Flight time Florida to Spanhoe was 29 hours and distance covered was 3,600 nautical miles

Until now I haven't mentioned that N290 wasn't exactly the prettiest or lightest Falco you've ever seen but my plan was to embark on a mission to upgrade her in terms of fit-out, paint and weight. I mentioned earlier that Ralph, the original builder,



had worked for NASA on the space programme so it was something of a puzzle to work out how he'd managed to build such a heavy aeroplane. I figured a couple of years of flying/upgrading should see her transformed.

Now, what I hadn't anticipated is that the UK authorities apply a different weight limit to the Falco than is applied over in the USA, that being 854kg. When she arrived at Spanhoe but after she'd had her ferry tanks removed she weighed in at 750kg! As it turned out, this was unacceptable by UK standards, and she was refused a permit to fly!

So, rather than enjoying her and improving her over a few years I was now forced into starting the work immediately. Spanhoe had been chosen as it was where my LAA inspector was based and he was duly charged with getting her on a diet.

Whilst all this was going on I was trying to find like-minded individuals who might like to buy a share in her, enjoy this journey with me and of course share the costs! There was lots of interest but only one person had the stomach for such a project and so started the co-operation with Colin Ferns and he takes up the story from here.

*Colin Ferns writes:*

After I achieved my PPL back in 2003 I, like David and most other newly qualified pilots, started to cast my eye around to see what aeroplane was going to suit me. I learnt on PA28s and so naturally gravitated to the Arrow with its retractable gear but a very brief relationship with a group that owned one soon had me looking elsewhere. Like most who have flown one, I developed a soft-spot for a Chipmunk but that's another shared ownership story for another time.





Eventually I was put in touch with David who was looking to buy a Falco that needed a cosmetic overhaul and he had found one in the USA at a reasonable price. David's idea was to start a group and for the share holders to embark on a journey together, the goal being to own one of the best Falcos around whilst keeping within a limited budget. As it turned out I was the only one interested, probably because I am very much used to taking on projects as I restore classic Mercedes cars for a living!

The aircraft David had found was built by a retired NASA engineer so he thought that was a good basis to start with.

By the time David and I were introduced he had already bought N290 and was arranging to have it ferry-flown to the UK. I admit to being very surprised that someone was willing to fly a wooden homebuilt

single-engine aircraft across the North Atlantic!

As David has already stated, she was a bit on the plump side but luckily she was equipped with a full IFR avionics suite (experimentals can fly IFR in the USA) and the removal of all of this ancient kit shed enough weight for her to be given a temporary permit in order that she could be re-located to my home airfield.

David and I were negotiating for me to buy a half share in her and during one of our many lengthy telephone conversations David was getting despondent due to the amount of delays and hurdles he was encountering. I told him that he should relax and let fate take its course. Can you see where this is going? A little light bulb glowed dimly in the darker recesses of my puny mind and I asked David if he had applied for a UK registration yet, to which

the answer was "No, I've had too much else to worry about!" As I am firmly in touch with my "yoof" I realised that "F8" is text speak for "Fate" and since we were relying on fate to ensure that we got a permit for our fat F8 we should see if that registration was available. You, the intelligent reader, can guess the rest!

So G-FATE was allowed her aerial liberty once again and was re-located to Denham, my home base, where I could take charge of her calorie intake.

I set about taking her apart again to see where she might further shed some energy storing matter and the first thing I found was a void under the forward passenger floor that was full of water! A simple drain hole drilled in the underside immediately shed more than 1Kg in weight! As it happens, the original builder, in applying enormous amounts of epoxy to every surface with no regard for weight, had ensured that this water had not penetrated the wood at all.

Detailed examination of her construction also revealed that not only had the builder used excessive epoxy in her construction, but he had over-engineered every single piece of hardware by a magnitude of two! We decided that our NASA engineer must have built the launch gantries!

So, what I thought was going to take me a few months took me two years but did include a new panel fit with the excellent AFS4500.

As a result I haven't done nearly as much flying as I'd have liked and any flying that I have done has been a snagging flight of some sort. Recently however, our newly slim-lined little baby has finally been declared good to go anywhere, and I was excited to start flying her in earnest.

Co-incidentally at this time I was presented with a once-in-lifetime opportunity to take the co-pilot's in the Boulton Academy Spitfire from Duxford, a famous WW2 airfield, to Goodwood, a famous WW2 airfield.

As it happens a good friend of mine was the chief engineer at the company that





built G-ILDA over the last 10 years or so and I was privy to her resurrection but didn't manage to get a flight in her before she was sold to the Boulton Academy shortly after her completion. This gave an extra dimension to my being able to take a flight in her, a fitting chapter you might say.

Now, I live in leafy Buckinghamshire which is roughly mid-way between the two airfields so I enlisted my LAA inspector Nigel, a man with some serious flying credentials, to come with me to fly the Falco from Duxford to Goodwood.

I had quietly harboured thoughts that we might get to fly in formation with each other but I didn't mention it to either Matt (Spitfire P1) or Nigel for fear of being seen to take the pee out of this opportunity. As it turned out both Matt and Nigel had the same idea which naturally I claimed was a very good idea of theirs and was delighted to go along with!

The Falco, if you didn't already know, is a little hot-ship that cruises at 150 kt and can happily sit at 170 kt if required so slowing the Mk9 Spitfire down to match her wasn't going to be an issue and two rendezvous were planned, one over the Thames Estuary and one over Beachy Head on the south coast.

So, I get strapped in at Duxford and am allowed to taxi the Spitfire in front of waving crowds! Whilst taxiing we pass a BOAC VC10. This is especially poignant for me as my father was a steward for BOAC and as a child I went to Australia on a VC10, possibly this very one.

Everyone knows that you have to weave a Spitfire whilst taxiing don't they? The technique is to pull the brake lever that is mounted vertically on the spade grip whilst applying rudder. The lever is not spring-loaded and so it takes a little while to get used to pushing it away when you don't require braking any more; if you don't, you come to a stop, which is embarrassing in front of waving crowds.



As Duxford is a popular aviation museum there were plenty of spectators lining the apron, and it was lovely to see dads with their little kids jumping and waving.

Matt took control for the departure and we made a tight circuit for a beat-up and victory roll over the airfield before he uttered the moderately pleasing words, "you have control." This is my second time in this aircraft but the first was all a bit of a blur as I was so excited so this time I endeavoured to savour the feeling a little more. And what a feeling it is! The reports of how delightful the Spitfire is to fly are commonly heard at the bars of most flying clubs but those words are meaningless until you experience it for yourself.

The controls are beautifully harmonised and the best word I can think of to describe the sensation is *symbiotic*—you really do feel part of the machine and with the slightest finger pressure in the spade grip she'll go wherever you ask. I'm not a particularly experienced aerobatic pilot, I've had a couple of lessons, but the Spitfire embraces you like a maternal arm around the shoulder and says, "go on, you can do it, you'll be fine and I'm here if you need me." Can one be in love with an aeroplane? Oops, perhaps I shouldn't say that as my Falco might get jealous!

Out over the Thames estuary we began to close up on G-FATE. This was a bit of a paradox for me as I didn't know which to be more excited about, flying the Spitfire or forming on my own aeroplane!

The whole thing was quite surreal and all too soon it was time to depart on our separate routes. Our route took us over the Battle of Britain Memorial on top of the iconic white cliffs of Dover and the visitors

there were evidently delighted to see us do another victory roll over them.

There followed a gentle meander along the south coast, (well apart from a couple of half-cubans) playing with clouds along the way, and then a run and break at Goodwood. Again the landing drew attention from a small crowd and once we parked up and exited a spectator asked me, a no-one from no-where, if he could enter the apron through the gate and take some pictures. Again all quite surreal but indicative of the awe that the Spitfire inspires. I told him that I didn't have the authority to grant such a request but as far as I could tell there was no-one around in authority anyway so I wouldn't tell if he didn't.

All in all it has to be the best day in my flying life so far, but hopefully I'll be able to top it somehow. A great day in the company of a couple of great aeroplanes and a couple of great people, Matt and Nigel.

Now I intend to spend the summer flying G-FATE instead of fixing her but come the winter David and I will have to start on the "cosmetic" overhaul that was supposed to have happened in 2009 and David might actually get to fly her!

#### Footnote:

A week after this G-FATE suffered a prop-strike at Denham and the engine had to be stripped.

Once stripped it was found that there was excessive corrosion, probably as a result of her spending so much of her life sitting on the ground. She'd only done 150 hours since first flight!

So, here we are in August and I haven't flown for some two months!



## Coast to Coast with Susan

April of this year marked my fifth anniversary of joining Sequoia Aircraft and the Falco family. Little did I know that I would become part of a select group of impassioned and talented people. I have had plenty of opportunities to add to my “First Time” list of experiences. When I came aboard, I had no idea what this was all about! Think I understand now.

A lot can happen within five years. All of us have had ups and downs in our lives. Some of us have had extraordinary events occur. We have had the joy of seeing a few of you take your first flights with your Falco after hundreds of hours with your project. We have felt your sense of accomplishment with you!

Some of us have had more personal thrills come to be. Alfred became a grandfather for the first and second time. He now has two beautiful granddaughters: Elizabeth and Margaret. Shawn (our warehouse wizard) became a father for the first time. We now have the delight of his little girl, Kimani, visiting us at the office. Vic and I saw two more grand babies join our clan: Annabel and Emmeline. Our two little darlings were number six and seven for us. We had to tell our children that “production” had to come to an end—that our birthday gift and Christmas gift lists could possibly bankrupt us at this point!

Sadly, some of us have also experienced loss within our families. Life will bring us occasions of great happiness but will also bring us times of grief. Most notable loss within the Falco family was the death of the genius behind our Falco, Stelio Frati.



Car advertisement with George Richards' Falco.

But, what a gift of beauty he left behind.

I am sharing a photo of one of our greyhounds that we lost last fall. I wanted to share his story with you. I hope you will find it a happy story. Of course, we felt deep sorrow when he became ill and died. Those of you who are dog lovers understand the bond. But, there was something just a little different about him.

When we decided to rescue and adopt Eggplant, we knew his registered racing name was just that, Eggplant. How does this happen? Who in the world would name a dog Eggplant? Well, his owner named the entire litter after vegetables. There was Green Onion, Produce, Red Beet, Green Pea and Broccoli. Perhaps he thought it novel, or just ran out of ideas.

In my wisdom, I thought Eggplant should have a *real* dog name. If you do not already know, racing greyhounds rarely have a pet name, since they are not pets. They are usually just called dog or “hey you.” After looking at his registration papers, I noticed that his sire's name was Trojan Cruze. So, I decided we would call him Cruze. For the first several months in our home, we attempted to teach him his new name. He ignored us at all attempts. We even went as far as to have his hearing tested. “Cruze, come.” He would look at us, turn around and walk away. Nothing!

Then, it happened. One weekend morning I wanted to change the linens on a bed. There he was on the middle of the bed. Nothing would move him. I am embarrassed to admit that I lost my temper and yelled at him, “You are nothing but a big lazy Eggplant!” This dog jumped up, wagged his tail, jumped off the bed and ran

around the house with great enthusiasm. I swear he was smiling. All I thought was “Oh no.”

I quickly told my husband what had happened and asked him to say “Eggplant come.” Yes, he did and he did. The game was over. We had to accept that he knew his name was Eggplant and there was no changing it. I made a call to the kennel where he had trained in Florida. I was told that he had always been called Eggplant because he always responded to the name and would work hard when called by his name.

Eggplant loved meeting new people, especially pretty girls and small children. So it was a given that we would take him to public events supporting greyhound rescue and adoption. I confess that I had to practice my smile for quite a while, because inevitably someone would comment on what a handsome dog he was and ask his name. As naturally as possible I just smiled and said Eggplant. You can only imagine the responses. Most were kind, some just polite. There was a period of time that I would feign responsibility and try to explain how his name had happened, but then I decided that was wrong of me.

It was wrong of me because Eggplant knew he was probably the only dog in the world with his name, and he carried it with grace and honor. It was *his* name. He certainly did not look like an eggplant, but a regal and beautiful greyhound. You see, I learned a lesson from him. People will often think what they think you should be, but when you always know your name, you know who you really are. He was a wonderful greyhound, and he knew who he was.—Susan Arruda



## Mailbox

I flew my first Falco two weeks ago. After 20 years building, both my family and friends in the flying club asked "What if you don't like it?"

As a vintage flyer, I confess that I associate flying with having my head out of the cockpit, so being warm and able to talk to the other pilot was a strange experience. However, a good strange!

The aircraft seemed rather small. Not the big beast that I manoeuvre around the workshop!

*Angus Buchanan  
Biddenden, Kent, England*

During our four-week trip in a hired motorhome (RV) we managed to contact and visit Cecil & Karen Rives at their country property, very nice big log home, in Burton west of Houston, Texas. Cecil also had Bill Russell come over from Houston as well to meet us. It was good to catch up with them after a number of years.

Much further on we also met with Per and Lena Burholm, in La Jolla, San Diego, California. Again a great opportunity to meet them again after 12 years ago at Oshkosh.

All in all we covered a lot of country from Dallas down to the Gulf then across to the West Coast and home from LAX. Approximately 2800 miles.

I write this as we endure a sub-tropical near hurricane, in South East Queensland. 60 mph winds and rain fall up to 25 inches in 24 hrs. It does happen occasionally during our summer months!

Our Falco is well, approximately 350 hours, not big hours but I generally fly it weekly.

*Neil & Gwyn Aitkenhead  
Main Beach, Queensland, Australia*

Life is (as expected) going on, thank God I still (and hopefully always will) love flying as it is the driving passion of my life. The Falco is in good shape, and I'm always working to make it faster. I've just received the new battery (some years ago I started using Dryfit from Sonnenschein) as they are sealed. I do not know if anyone else is using but it has been a good experience, just sometimes I think to the thickness of the battery compartment compared to the weight of the battery, and I get somewhat scared.

Anyway once again thank you for all your work in creating for all of us Sequoia Aircraft, without your vision we would have missed flying this wind sculptured jewel.



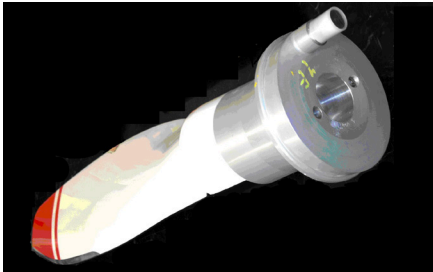
*Top: Angus Buchanan gets his first ride in a Falco. Center: Per Burholm with Falco model. Above: Rick Pellicciotti.*



I have GT Propeller building two new composite 74-inch blades for my Falco. I will save about 9.2 kilos of weight and I will let you know about speed increase.

Andrea Tremolada  
Milan, Italy

GT Propellers in Riccione, Italy, has been making propellers for about twenty years for many European designs, such as the Tecnam series aircraft. They have recently announced a program of making replacement blades for the Hartzell compact hub propeller series. Alex Tonini of GT Propellers reports that they have finished and are now flying these new blades on a Lancair with good results, and will later be testing the blades on Andrea's Falco.



The blades are a combination of wood and composite, and no new hub components are needed, and no governor adjustment is required.

Alex reports that they have built more than 500 blade sets to replace Russian YAK paddle blades that are no longer produced. The blades perform similar to the more expensive three-blade props in take off and climb and cruise much faster.

Alex says that working on Andrea's Falco blades have been very emotional for him and gives him more pride that the whole design and building process of making Spitfire blades as he is making blades for Italians with Falcos. He met with Stelio Frati a number of times, and Mr. Frati offered a lot of suggestions for the design. They also make blades for the SF.260 and other Frati designs.

The experience in the UK with GT propellers has been mixed. The fixed pitch propellers are reported to be rather lacking in repeatability, and there was one constant speed propeller throw a blade for undetermined reasons. As with any new design, it's appropriate to be wary, take a cautious approach and watch the developments with interest to see how well they work out over time.

**Top:** GT Propellers making replacement blades for Andrea Tremolada's Falco.  
**Center:** Eduardo Letti is installing an Aspen Avionics glass panel and a Trio Avionics autopilot in his Falco N1443D (built by Al Dubiak). Eduardo plans to fly the Falco to Brazil later this year.  
**Bottom:** Bjoern Brekke's Falco takes shape.





My Falco, ZU-BTT has eventually flown just over 100 hours. Back in April 2012, while over the Karoo semi-desert, I suffered loss of the propeller and managed to make a successful emergency landing on one of our national roads. The cause was a leak which had developed at the front Welch plug in the hollow crankshaft, allowing oil to get between the wooden prop and the flange and destroy all friction. All six bolts then sheared and, from the moment of first vibration to separation, all of half a second passed!

Anyway, it's now back in the air, and I'm rebuilding my confidence with short trips around the cabbage patch.

*Brian Nelson  
Randsburg, South Africa*

Jurgis Kairys responded "Super article... a pleasant surprise... (reflects) your love of flight and aviation... I'm grateful for your overall understanding."

I'm pleased with his compliment, but it's Jurgis who is the super article.

I mentioned his driving. What I didn't know is that he is currently trying to get his driver's license back. My guess is that every traffic cop in Vilnius has finally gotten one signed Kairys poster too many.

*Jonas Dovydenas  
Lenox, Massachusetts*

I encountered a mid-air bird strike over Apennine in June 2012. I was inbound Arezzo maybe 2000 feet above ground. It struck the right wing—I probably would not be here writing if it hit fully—at the outer section and just after the leading edge. It must have been a larger bird flying high ... evidently a Falcon which would have been an irony. I just saw a black spot in my peripheral vision and heard a bang. Hearing the bang wearing the headset is interesting, and also the Falco interior isn't very quiet.

The damage was minor only. The paint was partly broken and very little fiberglass covering is affected as well. The wood structure is fully intact with no cracks.

It seems the combination of fiberglass and the elasticity of the wood absorbed all the energy of the impact. Glad the Falco is made of wood! What a good bird...

*Raoul Schild  
Wien, Austria*

The best-built Falco (Hans Sonntag's D-ECPI) found a new owner, a dentist from Bremen. His first flight in life was in a Falco owned by his father, who passed away several years ago. He was looking for an appropriate Falco for a long time.



*Neil and Gwyn Aitkenhead with Bill Russell, Cecil and Karen Rives in Texas and Per and Lena Burholm in La Jolla, California.*

He will park the Falco in Ganderkesee, Atlas-Airfield, a little airfield close to Bremen in the west. I have to train him on "our" Falco. I am very happy that our Falco

found a home, and where I can visit her from time to time.

*Heiner Bredhorst  
Göttingen, Germany*