

Falco Builders Letter



Brief Encounter One Man's Tale of a Flirtation with a Falco

by *Adrian Hall-Carpenter*

I've had a very fortunate flying career. Not in respect of getting four stripes on my sleeve or doing well in the aviation industry (I'm in the automotive industry) but inasmuch as I've been lucky to own a good selection of my favourite aeroplanes.

I started off with a Cherokee 140 which I bought from the flying school when I had eight hours in my logbook. Once I'd qualified, I then I bought a Stampe and ground-looped my way around the grass strips of England until I learned what my feet were for. This was followed by a Super Cub, a Pilatus P-3, a Yak 52, a CAP 10 and many other lovely types.

But there was one type that had always eluded me: a Falco. I never seemed to be in the right place at the right time. It's a funny thing, but I find that aeroplanes seem to find you rather than you finding them. And this was the way it was with my Falco.

Back in 2009 I read in the LAA (our ver-

sion of the EAA) magazine that a gentleman called Richard Marks had sadly died. Richard had been building a Falco and his widow Angela had commissioned my pal Dave Silsbury to finish the aircraft to flying status. I duly gave Dave a call to see if the Falco would be for sale when finished and this turned out to be the case.

Subsequently a viewing was arranged. The aeroplane was beautifully built. Richard Marks was a woodwork teacher, had previously built a wooden boat, and it was obvious that he was a master with wood. The fit and finish of the woodwork and quality of the paintwork was sublime. It was registered G-RJAM being Richard and his wife's initials.

In This Issue:

- 6 A Falco Pilgrimage,
Chino to Oshkosh
- 22 Falcos at Fredericksburg
- 24 Of Pilots and Ironworkers
- 26 Coast to Coast with Susan
- 27 Mailbox

The Falco is a most beautiful and elegant aeroplane. Why is it that the Italians have this fantastic flair for style? I have often wondered what it must have been like in the late 50's when most of us here in the UK were flying Austers, Tiger Moths, Magisters and similar. Imagine sitting around on a Sunday afternoon having tea and buns and then someone arrives in a Falco. Wallop! It must have been like a vision from the future, instantly outdating all current aircraft. Similar to someone today arriving in the Millennium Falcon from Star Wars. Not for nothing are the names similar.

G-RJAM was particularly elegant as it had a Nustrini canopy. Whilst this does add to the looks (and possibly to the speed?) for me this was its downfall as I am 6'4" tall and there is no way I could sit comfortably in it. So that was it—thanks very much but no thanks.

Some time elapsed, the aircraft was advertised in the press, and I didn't give it another thought. Until the phone rang and it was Dave Silsbury.

"You remember the Falco?" he asked.



I affirmed.

“Why don’t you make an offer for it as no one else seems interested.”

Coming from an automotive background, for me this was an opportunity not to be missed. The car dealer in me surfaced and I informed Dave that if I did make an offer, it would not fall under the heading of generous.

To cut a long story short I ended up owning

Meredith Scott with Richard Marks and Alan Powell in 2002

a Falco. It didn’t matter that I couldn’t fit into it: I owned it and was one of those wonderful irrational irresponsible moments in life which come along alas all too rarely.

Dave finished the work on G-RJAM, did the initial test flights and then I arranged to collect it and fly it home to finish off the test flying at my home base.

When I turned up to collect ‘AM I discovered that if I threw the cushions in the

back and sat on the cockpit floor and leant forward I could just fit in, although it was a long way from comfortable. Dave gave me a couple of circuits to check me out. After all he had a whole two hours on a Falco, and I had none! I wondered how the insurance underwriter felt when he/she read the proposal form with my response to the question “Total hours on type” and saw the response *Nil*. Contrary to all that I had read, I felt very much at home with the sensitive flight controls which I found very similar to my recently sold CAP 10. So that was a relief.

Dave then left me to it. I checked everything really thoroughly, ‘AM only having a



The *Falco Builders Letter* is published roughly four times a year by Sequoia Aircraft Corporation, 2000 Tomlynn Street, Richmond, Virginia 23230. Telephone: (804) 353-1713. Fax: (804) 359-2618. E-mail: support@seqair.com Skype: SequoiaAircraft, iChat: falcosupport@mac.com Publication dates are the 10th of March, June, September and December.

Articles, news items and tips are welcome and should be submitted at least 10 days prior to publication date.

The *Falco Builders Letter* is available at www.seqair.com and by email—please supply your email address.

total of two hours flight time. It's surprising how that focuses the mind. I don't think I've ever done such a detailed, methodical and meticulous pre-flight. Having been lucky enough not to have had any serious problems in the air during my 30 years of flying I didn't want to start now.

I returned to my hotel and read the excellent flight manual and booklet on flight testing produced by Sequoia. I was ready for the flight home the following day.

The dawn was crystal clear, and I set off for the airfield in high spirits. Dave had muttered something about the Marks family coming to bid farewell to the aeroplane, but I was completely unprepared for what ensued. The whole family turned up and Richards Marks' daughter Holly was duly flown by Dave as an observer on a final pre-departure test flight. At least that's what it says in the log book. Much chat ensued, coffee was consumed, hands were shaken, photos were taken and eventually everyone departed. Or so I thought.

I got on with re-fuelling, checked the oil, and checked absolutely everything else at least twice. I didn't hurry. It was one of those rare and succulent occasions when there was more than enough time. It must have taken me a couple of hours to prepare the aeroplane and myself—I didn't want to screw up. As it was now about lunchtime and the airfield was pretty quiet, I thought it a good time to slip away quietly with a minimum of fuss. I started up, got taxi instructions to the hold, did my checks and lined up on Dunkswell's

Richard Marks



runway 22. Just before opening the throttle, I don't know why but I looked over my left shoulder. There leaning against the fence watching me was a mature lady—it was Angela Marks, Richards' widow. That moved me considerably so as I gathered my thoughts I resolved to do a nice neat crisp and precise farewell takeoff.

The flight home was fabulous; just breathe on the stick and the aircraft responds, very easy to keep height and heading and a true airspeed of 150 knots at 24 square flying at 1000 feet. I was home in 1 hour 40 minutes. A most enjoyable if not entirely comfortable journey.

After the euphoria of the homeward flight, the hard work really started in the form of the comprehensive flight test schedule. Here in the UK we have a simpler procedure than in the US. We only have to fly a programme of around 10 hours. 'AM required all the normal things when shaking down an aircraft, nothing untoward but very time consuming. However after delays for weather and holidays 'AM was soon fully certified for flight.

Now to sort out the graphics. Much time was spent on the internet looking at the excellent schemes on the Sequoia website together with every other photo of a Falco that I could find.

I envy you Falco owners in the US, because of the facility to have those minuscule registration letters and numbers, mostly out of the way, on the tail. Here in the UK we are obliged to have enormous registration letters right down the side of our fuselages (we even have a 13-page document from our CAA with spacing and minimum sizes for the letters etc. Just take a look at www.caa.uk/docs/33/CAP523.PDF and have a laugh.) This limits the use of those wonderful sweeping schemes that you have in the US.





Being of the opinion that the little Sequoia logos supplied with the kit are not in keeping with the size of registration letters that we are obliged to use here in the UK, I had a graphic designer copy them in a larger but still correct font. They also copied the original Falco logo. I hadn't much choice with the graphics colours as the interior of 'AM is green leather, so green was the only option. The forward end of the stripe is done with the Falco 'beak' and the original Falco logo is on the fin. A logo too many? You decide.

Having duly completed the aircraft, along comes a very nice man called David Drew who fell in love with it and made me an offer that I couldn't refuse. A deal was duly struck which included delivery to David's home airfield Nottingham.

I do believe that machines develop personalities, and I don't think 'AM was best pleased to be sold on so quickly. So on arrival at Nottingham airport 'AM demonstrated her Italian heritage by not giving me a green light to indicate gear down. There was a lovely red light to indicate 'gear in transit' but in spite of more re-cycling than a garbage dump, still no green light. All the movies I've ever seen when the hero does tower flypast to check for gear down look fun. When you do it for real there is a kind of numb helplessness as there is not much anyone can do to put your mind at rest; there is still the chance that this thing of great beauty will end up as a pile of splintered timber in the middle of the runway.

However 'AM was only doing what Italian electrics always do: teasing. The gear did not fold on landing and the lack of a green light was solely down to a failed bulb.

So what were my feelings as I handed my Falco over to David? A super aeroplane in all ways. Any changes I would make? Yes: I would fit an external canopy release handle for use in case of an accident, a test button for all the warning bulbs, a canopy with more headroom, and have a better short field performance for those of us here in Europe who do not have the luxury of a long hard runway.

I got a lift home in an RV6. I'd never been in one before. I could fit into it easily, it had a good short field performance and it was also very fast. Do I want one? No.

Why? Because it lacks soul.

And that's something that you can never say about a Falco.

A Falco Pilgrimage, Chino to Oshkosh

by George Richards

The last I had seen of my Falco was it heading off to the USA. In fact it had arrived at Long Beach port and was somewhere between the port and where it should have been, Chino airport.

While the Falco was on the way up to the USA I thought I'd check on the booking for the container Sidelifter. The owner/driver had warned me that he gets busy and a booking would need to be made well in advance advising at least three weeks notice. I had told the shipping company this was a requirement and my contact there had assured me that she had everything in hand. When I checked however, nothing had been booked, and he was telling me that there was slim chance he was going to be able to achieve what I needed. I wasn't happy. I phoned the shipping company to discover that my contact had left the company and had failed to pass on any information. Things were starting to look messy. The shipper however didn't sound too concerned, and said they would sort something out. I didn't share their optimism. Of course all this can be sorted out in one way or another and is really only a money issue, but that was something I didn't have the luxury of having. I was on a fairly strict budget. As you can imagine, the whole exercise was not a cheap one. The shipping companies aren't used to dealing with the public. They deal with companies which generally don't have too much issue with writing a bigger cheque when required.

In a few days it became clear that my worst fears were coming true. The Sidelifter was not available. From this point people started to clam up. Nobody seemed to





want to give too many specifics about what was going on. The day had passed that the container had landed but from there the exact location was difficult to pin down and nobody seemed to want to share.

One of the problems was that since the Sidelifter was no longer an option, the only way to lower the container to the ground was to use either a crane or a large forklift. A crane was selected (not by me) and it had to come from Long Beach to Chino with the container. The cost was going to skyrocket. At one stage it was indicated as much as NZ\$8000 more with costs of container storage, cranes, trucks, etc. this was clearly out of my reach. If I paid that fee I couldn't afford to fly the plane to Oshkosh. Obviously I was upset but my concern became whether I would ever see

my plane again. I could see that the money fight would lead to a standoff that would either bankrupt me or have my airplane be in some unknown yard somewhere while the fight continued. I didn't have a lot of favorable options so I elected to abandon the trip and try to get my plane home while I still had a chance.

I was gutted.

As the plan was falling apart I had emails containing advice coming from all directions. As helpful as it was intended to be, I didn't have a clear picture of the whole problem at that stage so it was impossible to do much about anything. It did add to the stress somewhat, and it was particularly frustrating when people asked for information I simply didn't have.

Little did I realize that I was battling



unions. For some reason, yet unexplained, the unions don't want Sidelifters in the USA. Companies had tried to introduce them before, only to end up bankrupt. The shipping and trucking companies have little option but to do what they are told. The fact that the crane had to drive across LA was another enforced issue. All of this added a huge cost, and it was well beyond my resources.

So anyway, after I had instructed the shipping company to return my aircraft Vicki and I sat down for breakfast and had a discussion about other strategies we could employ. What we decided was to raise our profile. Since my main worry was that I would never see my plane again, we figured that if the public were watching we stood a better chance of at least getting the plane back. Since Vicki uses Facebook a lot for her business we elected to start there and so by mid-afternoon we had a Facebook page and rapidly building a following.

Within three days the power of social media was starting to take hold. We had managed to gather around 250 interested followers, I'd received a call from the local newspaper for an article and several emails from people all around the world interested in trying to help. In fact some people wanted to start a phone call campaign against the shipping company. We managed to keep that one under control. The pressure must have been felt by the shipping company as we received a request for a meeting in their head office. I was in no shape to go to any meeting. The stress and upset was such that I feared that anything I would say wouldn't be particularly constructive so I declined the offer. Vicki saw the benefit in the meeting however and agreed to go on my behalf.

By the end of the meeting Vicki has successfully put our case forward and we were back on. The shipping company agreed to honor their original quote and

absorb any losses due to their own mistakes. During the meeting the shipping company also let slip that they had lost my Carnet [a "Merchandise Passport"] and somebody was requiring import taxes to be paid. Fortunately they had kept that from me and managed to sort that mess out.

With the roller coaster of emotions it was difficult to be elated but I was cautiously optimistic that maybe we had things back in motion. We had to quickly change the name of the Facebook page, since it had previously mentioned the shipping company by name but people continued to follow us on the new page and I think generally enjoyed what followed.

A few days later we jumped on a flight to Los Angeles as originally planned and headed out to Chino to accept the container. We'd been told to accept the container around 10am but I was keen to get there a little early to get organized. Around 9am we were just approaching the driveway into Chino airport when Vicki said, "I can see a big crane, and it looks like its lifting a container!" Great, why was I surprised.

Fortunately for me, Vince Orton and a few of the Guys from EAA Chapter 92 were on the scene and had things nicely in hand. In fact, Vince had taken control. Pretty damn good considering I'd never met the guy and especially since, I'd later learn, he doesn't do mornings! So a quick greeting was in order, and we got right to work opening the container. The way I had to pack the tail section into the container had the tail on a 45° angle in order to fit it in. That with everything being placed in odd angles did look more than a bit chaotic to the untrained observer so when I opened the door there was a few looks of concern from some of our new Chapter 92 friends. Fortunately though, it had arrived largely unscathed. There was a few small bits of cosmetic damage and a broken battery box stay due to something moving and hitting it, but I was on the whole, pretty lucky.

About an hour later we had extracted the machine from the container, the forward section had been lowered to its normal attitude and the container was being reloaded before departing for somewhere else and the meter could stop on the ridiculous over-charging.

I set to straight away putting the machine back together and by around 16:00 the engine was back on. The temperature was getting up a bit by then so I called it quits for the day and went back to our hotel for a swim.

And so it went. Over the course of the next three days I returned the Falco back to flying condition, had the controls du-



Catalina airport



Over Los Angeles



plicate inspected (a New Zealand requirement), fueled it up and ran the engine. The next thing was to test fly the airplane as required by the FAA in order for them to issue me a Special Flight Authorization to allow me to fly the plane in the USA. Things had changed a little however. The original plan had me test flying the plane before returning home but after a visit from the guys from the local FSDO they decided it wasn't going to need much and so it made more sense to test fly immediately before leaving for OSH. This meant I'd now return home for a month leaving the Falco untested. No big deal.

The last order of business in preparation for the adventure was to get some training on US airspace and procedures. I'd taken a few courses with King Videos, but I wanted to cement what I'd learned by talking with an instructor so I booked an hour of practical instruction with the local flying school. The instructor talked me through a few of the procedural differences so I wouldn't make a complete idiot of myself in the busy SoCal airspace and followed it up with a call to the flight briefing folks to run through a dummy flight plan application and full briefing so I knew what to expect. It was invaluable, and I certainly felt a lot more confident in the knowledge of local procedures and airspace.

The machine had gone together quite quickly so Vicki and I took the opportunity to have a short vacation before the return home. Of course the local shops did quite well too. The local economy had a brief reprieve.

The next month at work waiting for the trip to begin seemed a lot longer. We'd had a taste of what was to come, and I just wanted to get on with it but I had to pay for it somehow so I had no option but to stick to plan A. I spent the time reflecting on the great people we had met so far and how friendly and helpful everyone had been. Not many people at home had shown significant interest in my little project, but the folks in the USA all seemed fascinated that someone could even want to do such a thing.

The day eventually arrived and I was again boarding Air New Zealand flight number 2 bound for Los Angeles but this time with a big exciting adventure in front of me. I was excited for sure.

The first day back at Chino I dragged the plane out for a wash. A persistent westerly in Chino picks up a lot of dust from surrounding fields so the Falco had gathered a heavy layer of dust and dirt. While it was out I ran the engine again, updated the GPS data and generally got everything ready to go for the main event in two days time.

The following day I met up with Frank Holbert who is a Bellanca Super Viking owner. Frank has a really interesting website (160knots.com) showcasing his airplane and his flights to interesting places. I had used it to get some ideas for places to visit and listen to local air traffic control. This day Frank had offered to take me out to Santa Catalina, an event I couldn't turn down. So we met up early and flew initially out to Santa Paula to meet up with the local Super Viking expert and have a look at what he has going on in all of his hangars.

Dan wasn't there when we first landed so we wandered over the runway to the airfield's restaurant to enjoy brunch. This is one of the things that really impressed me about aviation in the USA and particularly California, namely the amount of airfield attractions that add to the richness of the aviation experience. In particular the airfield restaurants, we have so few but there seems to be one almost everywhere in the USA. One of the benefits of population I guess.

After brunch we headed off to see Dan at his company, MARS.

After a really interesting hour or so with Dan showing us all sorts of interesting things and going from hangar to hangar uncovering all sorts of little gems, we headed off to Santa Catalina. By now I was getting a feel for the local procedures and was feeling quite comfortable. The flight out to the island was over a heavy fog layer that covered the whole seaboard from inland of the coast to as far as the eye could see. Initially we couldn't see the island but Frank assured me that since it enjoyed a higher elevation that we would easily get in. In due course the airfield came into view just as Frank said it would.

We went for a short hike around the airfield, taking in the sights which included looking back toward LA over the fog layer and getting reasonably close to one of the sixty or so Bison on the island. After a drink and a chat we headed back to Chino. The day was a lot of fun but more importantly very instructional. I learned a lot, and it was great to observe the ATC system firsthand without having to fly.

The following day I completed my preparation and waited for Darryn Morgan, my traveling companion, himself a 737 captain, to join me for our big adventure the following day.

Darryn arrived as planned. We had a brief catch-up and discussed how the next day was planned out. We organized our things into piles of *go* and *stay*, had an early dinner and hit the hay with all our fingers and toes crossed that tomorrow would dawn clear so we could get away early.





Departure Day

It was 6am and the alarm went off. We'd been awake for a while and someone's fingers must have come uncrossed because outside had a typical 'June Gloom' Chino overcast. Not a great start to the day. However we continued in hope, got ourselves ready and headed off, via Starbucks again. On arrival I preflighted the Falco and waited for Joe from the FAA to arrive. He was there on time and was very helpful as usual. Unfortunately we had to make him wait as I didn't think it was a clever idea to take a plane on a test flight in an unfamiliar airspace with poor weather.

That didn't seem to bother him. In fact he went away so as not to make me feel pressured. We did spot him a one stage out writing a citation for a Cherokee owner that had been flying without a current maintenance approval. Yikes. We weren't making any friends here! After about an hour and a half it started to clear so we dragged the plane out, I gave it one last look over, filed a plan and departed for a short flight. It was a busy flight and was quite exhilarating. The weather still wasn't ideal making it quite busy, especially being strange airspace. I would have liked a little more capacity to have a more relaxed view, but it was fun just the same. Once I got back, Joe met me again, shook my hand with his good wishes, and we were cleared for the Kiwi Oshkosh Adventure departure.

Darryn and I loaded up the Falco, I had a look around the machine again, I filed a plan and received the longest brief of my life, and we were off!

The controllers were great. Clearly the Kiwi reg on the plane and the aircraft type caught them off guard a bit. Not helped by our accents, but they were super helpful. Again, what great service. We got a clearance up through class C to 7500' and settled in for our two-hour flight to Sedona.

The first thing I really remember of note was after leveling off at cruise altitude and flying for about 30 mins I had been spending so much time inside and scanning the airspace I hadn't really looked at the terrain.

At that point I relaxed a bit and looked out at the desert. I really wasn't ready for it. Holy s--t. Now that's a *desert*. Straight away I realized one important thing I hadn't planned for and hadn't appreciated. If we went down here we wouldn't survive with the limited water we had. I stopped drinking to preserve what little water we had. I didn't want to mention it to Darryn but on comparing notes later, he had the same thought. It really is hostile. Never again will I call the



desert road in NZ the desert road. There's nothing desert about it.

Along the way we altered course slightly to avoid the big suck from CBs forming above us. But all in all we had a pretty decent ride considering the later than planned arrival time into SEZ.

As we approached Sedona the terrain became familiar to what we had studied. The airfield is perched on top of a plateau called a Mesa (that term was new to me). It really is an airfield in the sky. I was a bit too busy to take in the scenery at that stage as I was contemplating the effects the strange airfield location would have on my approach.

After landing we checked in at the local FBO for fuel for the next day and went and had lunch at the Mesa Grill. What a cool place to eat with the best scenery I've ever seen.

After lunch we refueled and ordered a taxi to our hotel. On the drive from the airport we went past a lookout point. As we started driving down the road on the edge of the ridge the vista of the northern ranges with the stunning red layers rocks came into view. I had just finished exhaling, and I literally couldn't breath in. It truly was breathtaking. It's indescribable but as Vicki says, this place has to be on your bucket list.

The lady at the hotel was really friendly. Showed us some of the places to see. Unfortunately since we had been held up in Chino the day was short so we didn't really have the time to have a good look around. Also the main purpose was to get to Oshkosh and get ideas for places to visit another time. So we just enjoyed what we could.

The rest of the day we wandered around taking photos. Mine just iPhone





Santa Fe Starbucks

and Darryn on the flash camera gear. We had pizza and beer for tea for a wind down. What a great day.

Day 2 Sedona to Santa Fe

Another early start after a not-so-great sleep. The taxi picked us up at 07:00 and we arranged for a quick stop at the lookout. We didn't want to miss that opportunity again. Sedona really is an amazing place. The views are stunning. I will be back!

On arrival at the plane I found everything I'd lost the day before. This time was Darryn's turn to fly. By 8am we were airborne off Sedona's runway 21 climbing to 9500' on our way to Santa Fe, New Mexico. We enjoyed the last views of Sedona on the climb out before heading west.

The first disappointment for the day was passing Winslow and realizing that we had missed seeing the massive crater

formed by the meteorite collision. I had it in my head it was after Winslow for some reason. We had sorted that out the night before exactly where it was but after a sleep, I reset back to stupid and Darryn forgot to mention it. What also interrupted our thought process is that we thought it appropriate to play 'Take it Easy' by the Eagles while we flew past Winslow. We were so pleased with ourselves we forgot about the crater until we were too far past it. Darn!

The trip was the highest DA the airplane had ever experienced however it performed flawlessly. TASIing out at 165+ which considering the load it was carrying was a pretty good effort for a 160hp wooden airplane designed in 1955!

The landing into Santa Fe went pretty much as expected however we were already learning some things about high DA landings. It was around 8500' when we landed, and it was clear full flap wasn't

the best idea we'd had all day. Still, again the Falco handled it pretty well.

The controller at Santa Fe was great. He helped us find the fuel pump and was interested where we were from. It took a bit to figure out the local fuel pumps, but refueling it ourselves saved us a bunch. It cost us \$5.86 a gallon, but if we'd have gone for full service it would have been \$7.53. Yikes!

One of the technical issues we need to get right is the conversion of fuel volumes. We don't want to join the long list of people who have got that wrong.

On arrival a nice guy drove up and chatted for a bit. He was funny. He yelled from his truck "Tell me you flew that fu--er all the way here." Then said, "Hey, what does a Polish pilot say when he sees a grade 6 thunderstorm in his 12 o'clock?" "Let's do a 360 and get the hell out of here." Funny. He is an ex-Navy P3 Orion driver who while never visiting NZ he knew a lot about it. I'm sure he would have met guys from work.

On arrival at our hotel I realized I had left my credit card in the pump. After a panicked phone call to the local FBO from the hotel it was rescued. I felt a bit guilty about the self-serve gas after that.

After checking into our hotel, we went for a walk around Santa Fe. It certainly is the city different. It's got a cool vibe to the place. Everyone is super friendly as usual for the USA and the architecture is very much as you would imagine for a New Mexico. Never before have I thought a horse would be more appropriate form of transport.

Day 3 Santa Fe to Longmont

Before we began I had to rescue my credit card from the local FBO staff who had kindly offered to retrieve it from the fuel pump for me.

Continuing on the fuel theme, Darryn had left the dipstick on the wing the day before so that too needed rescuing but fortunately he located it after a quick hike back to the fuel pump.

At 08:00 I pushed the throttle in on the takeoff that had started my whole weight loss regime back home. The DA was indicating 8600'. The little airplane, despite gasping for breath, pulled away quite admirably but, as expected, the takeoff roll and initial climb was nothing like its normal spirited performance. I waited quite a while before lifting the gear since the runways are loooooong up at these altitudes.

The transit light stayed on for longer than normal before finally popping the CB. A minor issue that I could fix in LMO. I figured the toggle on the up switch had

likely been bent slightly in the shipping. As it turned out it was an intermittent switch that we had to live with until coming home, but it only played up a couple of times.

After being cleared for a frequency change we tried local flight service to activate our flight plan. No joy. It was going to be one of those days. We swapped to Albuquerque Center to try for another frequency but ended up receiving flight following and being advised no flight plan was on file. Something had gone wrong somewhere with that too. (It turned out to be finger trouble on his behalf.)

Well we were on our way already so I wasn't going back. On we went. Hopefully the TSA weren't watching!

Initial tracks had us flying slightly southeast in order to get past the lower end of the Rockies after which we turned North bound for Duane's airfield at Longmont, CO.

The ZK registration was clearly something different for the controllers. Some seemed helpful, some more on edge.

The scenery was a beautiful mix of mountain ranges on the left wing, deserts on the right wing and changing under cast from trees and campgrounds to parched soils. Even still the areas were clearly farmed in some way. I would imagine the farmers would face similar barriers that the outback Australian farmers must face.

Heading north past Colorado Springs the controller advised our transponder had failed and asked us to recycle. He never really told us it was going again, but it was clear from the start that he never really wanted us anyhow.

Springs Approach finally dumped us leaving us to navigate around the Denver class B and into Longmont. The Garmin GPS and my GPS capable iPad really paid dividends there, making the approach into Longmont a piece of cake.

We passed over a clearly affluent Longmont with some fairly expensive looking houses situated beautifully between lovely green trees, to join the circuit on an up-wind leg for runway 29.

Longmont airport is about 1000' below Santa Fe but still high. I used my standard low altitude approach technique. You have to learn somewhere but obviously





not quickly in my case. Next time, less flap.

We vacated at A2 and looked around to see this crazy guy on a pedal-assisted Peugeot motor scooter.

Duane!

We cracked open the canopy to be greeted by a friendly New York accent. It was great to finally meet. What a great guy.

We we're in the middle of joining up the geographical divide when a couple of reporters from the local paper turned up. That led to a lengthy session of photo shoots and talking. It was a lot of fun but the sun was savage so when we finally finished it was a relief to get out of the heat.

The lead up to arriving in Longmont we had enjoyed a friendly battle about where we were going to stay. I was concerned about overstaying our welcome but after Duane's "OK, let's cut through the bullshit!" it was clear we were staying with Duane and Mary for a couple of nights. Added to that, one of Duane's friends, Doedo, had offered us the use of his airport car.

Staying with Duane and Mary turned out to be one of the best things we did. What a great time. Duane and Mary are the nicest you could be privileged to meet. It's amazing how the Falco can bring people together across the globe.

Anyway. In the morning after a tasty omelette from Duane we headed out to the airport to gas the plane up. Just as I primed the plane to taxi it, Duane decided to jump in. It was hot at the airport, and I think the time he took to get in boiled the fuel off in the lines. Needless to say, starting was a bit of a fiasco. It normally takes about two blades when cold, anyway the good side to that was Duane taught me his method of hot starting at this altitude which worked great. Always nice to learn something new.

After refueling we took off for a quick look around Boulder. Wow, another really beautiful spot.

The afternoon was again talked away. It was really great sharing experiences and views with our friends.

Dinner time we went into Boulder for a meal and a wind down.

An awesome rest day (Day 4) with some great people before tomorrow's flight.

Day 5 Longmont to Council Bluffs

Another 06:00 wake up today but this Atime with a twist. We were lucky enough to have Duane in the kitchen preparing his speciality egg sandwich, which is on a bagel. And really, what self respecting New Yorker doesn't know bagels? It was a tasty welcome before the kick-off of our longest leg so far.

Soon enough we were airborne heading

east. We climbed to 7500', which is just 2500' AGL to avoid the Denver class B and settled in. The leg was basically one straight line with no other airspace other than the usual class E. We decided against flight-following so it was a fairly stealth trip listening to Darryn's playlists on his iPhone.

We elected to stay at 7500 as the winds were favorable, and it was relatively cool.

As we progressed east we saw the ground gradually drop away from under us. The scenery was flat terrain without a lot other than irrigated circles followed by more irrigated circles. We noted several cropdusters along the way although obviously well below us.

We made excellent time eastbound as we saw the little Falco truing out around 168 knots and showing around 170-175 across the ground.

As we approached Omaha we decided to avoid the Class C and descended down to Council Bluffs pattern altitude to get under the upside-down wedding cake. Boy it was hot down there and the only relief, if you can call it that, was the vents blowing more hot air in.

We decided to use Duane's reduced flap landing technique, and it worked out pretty well for Darryn.

After we parked, the helpful line guy from the FBO actually ran over, despite the heat, helped us park and fuel up. Like most people he struggled with the rear tank cap. When I got to it to help him it fell apart. Dropping the center piece into the tank. Bugger! Something to do this afternoon.

We went into Advanced Aviation, the local FBO, to pay for the gas and get a rental car. We also used their free Internet to find a hotel in closer to Omaha. It was a Buick that was a joy to drive. It ran smooth, steered properly, the air conditioning worked great and when you pushed on the brake pedal, it stops! No rod knocks on this baby! Totally unlike the monster Forerunner we had almost got used to in Longmont.

We took off to the hotel, quickly settled in and started catching up on our washing. Something we were going to do at Duane's but were having too much fun.

After sorting out a new fuel cap from Duane, to pick up at OSH, we found a couple of items to come up with a temporary solution to the problem, in the form of bottle caps.

Darryn wanted something from the Apple store, so we set off to find it on the other side of Omaha in a really nice shopping centre called Village Pointe.

We did bit of shopping, got a tasty sandwich from a local restaurant then headed back to Harbor Freight tools to get an ex-





tension magnet in the hope of extracting the center of the cap from the rear tank hoping it wasn't stainless. It wouldn't be a huge problem but since the rear tank has a large outlet it is conceivable that the bit could block the tank outlet. Unlikely but conceivable. We had enough gas in just the front tank to do the legs to OSH but I preferred not to.

Late that night I had a huge sinking feeling. I had completely forgotten to organize accommodation for our Oshkosh staging post of Mineral Point. I had identified a few trouble spots for accommodation but forgot that one. Evidently we weren't the only ones who thought staging for Oshkosh at MRJ was a good idea. It was 23:00 and there was nothing to be had at either MRJ or our fueling alternate of Vinton (VTI). We needed another plan.

While we were throwing ideas around, Darryn mentioned Appleton. It was our OSH alternate and our hotel was there. That made sense so that was what we decided and went to sleep knowing we had a plan.

I had considered just going straight to OSH but it wasn't my favorite idea. I did think that accommodation at our Oshkosh hotel at Appleton would however be easy to get. Anyone who hadn't booked for Saturday and Sunday already wouldn't likely want it since from Monday it's going to be chockablock! I was right.

Day 6 Council Bluff to Appleton

Another 06:00 wake-up (another new timezone too) and we drove the Buick out to Council Bluffs Municipal for our departure.

I fished the remains of the fuel cap out with the magnet I bought the day before in about one minute. Darryn pre-flighted, and I filed for ATW. We fired up and at pretty much right on the dot of 08:00 local the wheels were in the air. Density altitude less of a problem this time and the little plane lifted off a lot more enthusiastically than the last few days.

I had wedged a bottle cap into the rubber remains of the fuel cap but unfortunately it moved slightly on liftoff we had a fairly strong smell of gas from the rear tank briefly. It wouldn't have leaked much out but it doesn't take much to make a lot of smell. The rubber remains was actually sealing quite well but it has a hole in the middle for the rest of the cap. I had a better idea for next time but there wouldn't be a full tank for OSH so it wasn't going to be an issue and I've got a new one coming for then anyhow. I just switched straight to the aft tank and burned it down so it wouldn't squirt anything through the hole.

We turned northeast and started our climb for 5500' to take advantage of favorable winds at that level. As we climbed through about 2000' we went through a marked temperature inversion. It had been about 21 on the ground but once we popped up the temperature shot up to 29. Weird. We see them in winter at home all the time but I never really considered you could get them at high temperatures.

Next we checked in with Columbus Flight Service to open our flight plan and were advised there was a forecast for large convective activity just to the North West of our track. Those suckers were forecast up to over 45,000'. We hoped they stayed there!

As we tracked toward Appleton the engine was showing very slight signs of not being completely happy. About every 15 minutes or so it would have a little misfire. I fiddled with the mixture but it never really settled. It wasn't so bad that we considered a diversion appropriate but it does grab more attention than is preferable. Still, as Darryn said, rather here than over the Nevada and Arizona deserts.

Time moved on, scenery very similar to the latter stages of yesterday. Flat terrain, mainly farms, but slowly getting greener. Just like Duane said it would.

The sky was a high grey overcast looking darker to the left and forward. Great, the convective activity was staying put. In fact weather wise the flight was great. Still the engine wasn't that happy.

We crossed the great Mississippi River. Darryn took a few photos although the light wasn't great. I wasn't really super keen to circle for photos as I really just wanted to press on and get the unhappy bird on the ground and get it sorted out. It's funny when these little things happen you listen so closely it can seem worse than it actually is.

We got to our top of descent point, nosed over and started a high speed descent into Appleton. There was a couple of planes around but nothing startling. We could see Oshkosh's Wittman Regional Airport off to the right. We were looking straight down runway 11. That was exciting and finally I could see that this little crazy adventure of mine was really going to succeed.

We got a speedy clearance direct to a left base for runway 30 and the wheels kissed at 10:13 local.

I decided I'd prefer the FBO as opposed to the grass parking spot in order to get an A&P take a look at the machine, so the very helpful ground controller guided us to the maintenance facility. As we parked I ran it up and turned the mags off in turn. Sure enough, with the left magneto off it



Mississippi River



ran like a bag of ... well you know what I mean! The engine monitor showed cylinder 4 cooling down so we most likely had a bad or fouled plug in the lower slot on #4.

After we shut down the line guy advised nobody was around for the weekend for maintenance. Good one. Does anybody know Airventure is about to start? No big deal. I had a spare plug so I swapped it, ran it up and it was back to smooth on both mags.

We called ground and received a clearance to cross to the grass parking area to be the very first aircraft to arrive at Outagamie's regional Airport for Airventure. The marshallers were very friendly so we had to get their photos.

We tied down and got the transport to our hotel.

Tomorrow was to be our big day. Arrival into Oshkosh for Airventure 2012!

Day 7. Appleton to Oshkosh

The day has dawned. Timing is everything for today. There are several large contingents of slow airplanes arriving in packs today. I wasn't really keen to tangle with them and in fact we would likely be

put in a pattern to wait while they all landed. There's a huge group of Cubs arriving in the morning but unfortunately the best they could give for an ETA is somewhere between 06:30 and 12:00. That's not helpful for everyone else.

Then there is a huge group of RVs due in the afternoon.

We picked 11:00 local for our departure from ATW in the hope that we find a sweet spot.

The previous night we went over the Airventure NOTAM together, made a checklist and assigned jobs for each of us and cleared each of our expectations of the other so there will be no unexpected actions while airborne.

When we woke up we looked at the weather radar. Phew. It's nice the way things can work out sometimes. If we had gone to Mineral Point we would have had a large line of severe weather to negotiate. Something I wasn't keen to play with. They aren't toy storms in this neck of the woods.

Unfortunately Duane and Mary spent the night in Pella so they would have to deal with them. As the day went on, fortunately the storm line between them and

OSH did dissipate somewhat so we hoped they would get a good shot at it.

Our flight plan went on file at 09:00 local for ATW to OSH via the NOTAM VFR arrival route point of RIPON several miles to the South West of Oshkosh.

Next we wait to be picked up.

The excitement was brewing.

The transport dropped us off at the plane. We were the only ones near the parking exit, making our departure easy. We preflighted, loaded the GPS, picked up a clearance and taxied to holding point D2 for runway 30. Traffic was landing on the crossing runway but after only a short wait we were cleared for takeoff and out on our desired course.

After being cleared for our frequency change we opened our plan with Green Bay to satisfy the TSA and headed South to RIPON, the entry point for the Oshkosh VFR arrival procedure. There was a little traffic along the way but nothing startling. Our plan seemed to be paying off.

Duane had recommended we take the higher performance arrival at 2300' which we were keen to do but decided to make the final decision as we approached RIPON depending on what traffic was

There's always an emotional let-down that comes with reaching a goal.





around. As we approached, we were ahead of one at 1800', the slower 90 knot arrival altitude, and were comfortably behind a Mooney also at 1800'. Being of similar performance it seemed like a good fit to sit in the slow lane with the Mooney. We could see quite a few in the fast lane too so we were happy with the Mooney plan.

I popped the gear and settled in at 90 knots. It gave quite a high nose attitude but we didn't really need to see down. The navigation was a lot easier than I had thought it would be.

As we approached FISK, the next way-point in the VFR arrival route, we listened for the Mooney ahead to receive its landing instruction which duly arrived as an instruction to take the track down FISK Ave for the runway 36 arrival.

We were going to be next.

"RV type approaching FISK rock your wings" came across the radio

Well we weren't an RV but we knew it was for us so I dutifully rocked the wings. Our arrival instruction was basically to follow the Mooney.





As we turned east the Mooney slowed considerably which he wasn't supposed to do. This didn't make life easy. He added to the fun by descending making him hard to see. We weren't quite on the ragged edge but it wasn't really a comfortable speed.

There were a lot of two-way comms going on despite the NOTAM saying it wasn't to happen.

Grandma in her Mooney finally got her clearance to land on the yellow dot half way down the runway and decided to speed back up to 90 where she was supposed to be. This did help as we received the same clearance shortly after.

The rest was cake.

The Mooney ahead touched down beside the yellow dot and was rewarded with a "nice job Mooney" and we followed. By now our type ID was reduced to 'the Yellow'. Okay Falcos aren't common so I guess the controller admitted defeat with the identification of type.

After landing we scrambled for the window card indicating we were to park in the homebuilt area. This saw the end of the Mooney ahead. He got sent off somewhere to oblivion and we got directed to show-plane parking.

We got a prime spot and shut down. We were greeted by the marshallers but while trying to talk with them I couldn't help but feel slightly emotional as the culmination of two years in the planning had come to fruition.

After tying down we were spotted by an AOPA reporter who took an interest. He briefly interviewed me and set up an appointment for later in the week.

A friend from work turned up with his Canadian buddies to say hi, then we wandered off to get my FedEx box of fresh clothes.

An hour or so later we saw Duane and Mary taxi by and went to help them park. The greeting and more war stories ensued and the day slipped on by in the searing heat.

Darryn and I went for a wander south along the flight line and on the way back just happened to be in the right place as Bill Nutt taxied in. A brief hello and we were off again. This time in search of beer. Duane and Mary had the answer so we followed them for another troublemakers dinner.

It was over all too soon after a great time of laughs and good company as we had to head off to the bus.

And there we were. At Oshkosh. What a day! Even as I write this now I still find it a little hard to believe. It had been everything I'd hoped for and more.

It's been said that we all wind up dead in the end. You really do have to make your dreams come true while you can.

Falcos in the Texas Hill Country

by Alfred Scott

In any other locale, the hill country of Texas would barely be noticed, but if you're from Lubbock any variation from the ruler-straight horizon would come as a surprise. But that's what they call it down there, and that's where Germans moved to when they went west.

Hard to imagine a flat, western main street lined with German restaurants and biergartens but that is what is there, and it was the height of the tourist season so hotel space was hard to find.

We were headquartered at the Hangar Hotel, a huge Quonset Hut that evokes the feeling of WWII and painful memories for anyone, like me, who once lived in one of them. It's like romanticizing warfare, perhaps fun to think about from a distance but the reality isn't all that much to get excited about.

We can be thankful that a local German inn-keeping family produced Chester Nimitz, who during WWII did a bit of unconventional thinking that resulted in the Japanese losing four aircraft carriers at the battle of Midway. There's a Nimitz museum in town that will take you back to those days, plus the wartime experiences of George H. W. Bush.

In this spirit of nostalgia and fond memories of aerial combat we only know about from books and movies, we all climbed in our obsolete wooden airplanes to fly an hour north to Cisco, Texas, to visit the Supermarine Aircraft factory where they build 90% scale Spitfires with a custom Corvette engine.

This is all the creation of Australian Mike O'Sullivan who began his operation in Australia where he knew and worked with Guido Zuccoli and then moved it all to Texas. His Spitfire is a 90% scale all-metal airplane with a 430 hp Corvette engine. Mike and his crew gave us all a tour of his factory, where they turn out about 12 airplanes a year by hand. There are a host of problems of scale effect that have plagued other scaled down replica fighters, but Mike appears to have gotten it all right.

Group photo by Jonas Dovydenas, assisted by a California school teacher who gave a new meaning to "flash photography"—and which explains all the smiling faces you see here.





Technically, it's a two-place airplane and I suppose it might be technically possible to persuade someone to jam themselves into the tiny space behind the pilot, but it doesn't really look particularly appealing.

Mike climbed into the Spitfire and gave us all a demonstration, taking off from the grass field and then strafing the field. It is definitely a high-quality design and an exciting thing to behold in the air.

It evokes memories for others, in Jonas Dovydenas for example:

I can't explain what happened, I can only tell you what I remember about an event on a sunny day in a potato field near Ingolstadt, Bavaria, in 1945. I was with several women and some kids my age, spread out over a field looking for potatoes that the farmer had missed. I think it was Sunday. It could have been July or August, but not May, so the war was over. I heard the sound of a Mustang behind me (yes, I had heard it before) then a brief drumroll, then the sound of a relaxed pass overhead as the plane went into a gentle climb and was gone. Machine-gunned after VE day? I saw no dust kicked up by the bullets, if there were any. No one moved. The thing was over faster than it took you to read this far. Everyone just stood there, looking behind them, then turning to watch the unmistakable squared wings pass low overhead. I went back to looking for potatoes. I don't remember that anyone had anything to say about what had happened when we went home together. Just one of those mysterious memories of childhood, like an item on the internet you don't know whether to believe or not.

This year's "West Coast" Falco Fly-In was hosted by Jim and Jane Quinn, who left their Falco in Dallas so they could do a better job of carrying off the event. Bill Russell flew his Falco from Houston, while Cecil and Karen Rives came by Lexus. Rick and Debbie Pellicciotti came in their Falco, originally built by Cecil.

Dave and Tamera Nason came the longest way from the Pacific Northwest, while Jonas Dovydenas and I came almost as far in the infamous Swing-Wing Falco. Jim Petty came from Tulsa in his Falco, Roy Henderson from Granbury, TX, and Ray Hecker from California.

The next West Coast Fly-In will be hosted by Ray and Penelope Hecker at McMinnville, Oregon, tentatively set for Sept. 5-8, 2013. That's the home of the Evergreen Aviation and Space Museum that houses the Spruce Goose and other rare birds and spacecraft.

Of Pilots and Ironworkers

by Jonas Dovydenas

Last May Jurgis Kairys emailed me that he wanted to come to the states to look at two unfinished kitplane projects. He wanted a faster plane in addition to the Cessna that he kept in Vilnius. One project was in New Haven, the other at St Mary's airport, near the Pax River Naval Air Station. I enthusiastically volunteered to fly him to each place. New Haven is 30 minutes away, St. Mary's is a little farther, and it has been a familiar waypoint to me on the way to many Oyster Fly-ins over the twenty years of flying my Falco.

When Jurgis arrived the weather was not good, and he had to drive to each place. But it was good enough to take the Falco up and around Pittsfield and Berkshire County. It was a short flight, but both of us enjoyed it. We flew straight and level, enjoying the scenery as we chatted about the Falco. Then I did a fairly steep 360 degree turn to demonstrate one of my favorite qualities of the Falco: it shudders before it stalls in a turn. Then I suggested he could do some aerobatics.

He declined firmly. "I am not familiar with this airplane."

At first I thought it was an odd remark, but it was not. I realized that Jurgis is under a strict, self-imposed discipline not only when he is competing, but he has disciplined himself never to break the rules that are important to him, and he never does. Even when it doesn't seem that it would matter. We have known each other for many years. I have flown with him in his YAK-52. I have watched him in his car, and he drives like



1969: Jonas and the risk-averse John Rukavina. Search YouTube for "Cowboys of the Sky" and suntimes.com for "John Rukavina."



he flies. But now he was with me, in a plane whose condition he knew nothing about, with a pilot whose skills he was not sure of, and he was not wearing a parachute.

What seemed to me at the time a non-issue I understand now goes to the heart of how he has been able to fly for so long without making a mistake, now in his 60th year.

Think about that. I did, and I realized I had embarrassed myself. I have survived several aerial bombardments in Germany when I was a kid; I have photographed in combat zones in Afghanistan, and I lived to talk about it not because of any skill I had, but pure good luck.

Jurgis has been the top unlimited aerobic pilot in the world many times and luck, I say this with confidence, had nothing to do with it. He and his fellow Lithuanian pilots brought aerobic flying down to ground

level in the seventies, when they roared onto the international scene as part of the Soviet team not because they were lucky, but because they are good.

I have seen him practice his inverted cobra maneuver with the tail several inches off the ground. It is not luck that gives him the confidence to do that. It was his perfectionism and training and confidence that makes him able to fly without making a mistake. Once, while competing, his propeller shed one of its three blades. He reacted instantly by shutting down the engine before it ripped itself off the firewall. He then made an easy dead-stick landing. Maybe he was lucky, but I would say he made his own luck that day.

As I was starting to write about Jurgis I received an email from John Rukavina, an ironworker who installed the twin TV antennas on top of the John Hancock



building in Chicago in 1969. As it happens I was hired by RCA to photograph that installation.

John and I became friendly and one warm, calm, Sunday afternoon he took me to the top of the west mast. We were belly to belly on top of a 20" tube, 450 feet above the roof, a few feet less than 1500 above the sidewalk. John shifted his weight a little. The mast moved a little. Some fifteen seconds later it moved again, the other way. The shove had travelled down the antenna and came back up to give me a little shiver. We caught our breath, enjoyed the view, took some photos and then climbed back down the several hundred feet of open rungs, down a ladder to the roof inside the 10 foot wide, 100 foot high steel tube, upon which the antennas were secured.

That was in 1969. Now, John was telling me he was going to lift an antenna to a

mast on top of the Willis building, formerly the Sears. A TV crew was going to cover the lift and someone was making a video about his working life. It was going to be a helicopter delivery, something John hates because he thinks it's very dangerous, with too many things not under his control.

John is my age. He is 72. Like Kairys, he's a perfectionist, and he has never had an accident on any high iron he set in place. When a reporter asked him if he wore a safety harness, he replied that you only needed a harness if you were going to fall. That logic made the reporter's head spin for quite a while. The idea that you can do your work without making mistakes was a bang on the reporter's brain. And to most of us ordinary mortals. But not to John and not to Jurgis. Their work is mistake-free, or they die.

That does not mean that Jurgis and John

are above living dangerously. Jurgis Kairys's flirtation with extreme hazard can be seen in the photo of him after winning a competition in Japan. Those sirens look good to me too, but I can also imagine the frying pans flying around, aimed at him in the Kairys kitchen when he returns home to his lovely and patient Penelope (whose real name is *Birute*).

John tied a Romney for President banner to the mast he set on the Willis building that day. And he told a reporter that he would jump off a bridge if it would help Romney win the election. That took real guts because John knew what would happen. You can imagine what happened. And it did. But John's response was that he put the banner up for a candidate he supported in a free and democratic election in America, a free and great democracy. And he pointed out that he unfurled an American flag on top of the tower, above everything. He did that on behalf of all Americans, regardless of their politics. His statement was, hey, this is a free country and don't try to change it.

In John's defense I quote another (in) famous Chicago dissenter "guilty as hell, free as a bird, America is a great country." I would say that John is a philosopher indeed. And if he finds the right bridge to jump off I'll be there beside him, beside myself.

Here is what Jurgis told me about his flight in my Falco.

Flying the Falco was very impressive. I liked it how the plane energetically pulled away from the runway. We took off faster than I expected. In the air the plane was a pleasure to control, stable in flight, quite fast and nimble. It looks small, but inside the cockpit it is comfortable and there is room for everything. Everything in the cockpit is right and necessary. It was well thought out and built twenty years ago but today it is still reliable and without shortcomings. I realized that the Falco I was flying was Jonas's trusty, pleasant and beautiful friend.

Above left: Kairys really taking a risk—he has to go home. Below: From "The Seven Bridges of Vilnius" 1995



Coast to Coast with Susan

Yes, one picture can be worth a thousand words. As for this picture, I have only one word—*creative!* There is a story behind it though. In 2010 we were contacted by an enthusiastic Stephan Schoenfelder in Luxembourg. He had purchased a Falco F.81 Series II that had been built in 1963. It was in sad shape after a “bad landing” six years prior to his purchase. Stephan was intent in bringing it back to life and eventually into the air again.

He and I have had a good time working together ordering all the parts he has needed and scheduling deliveries between all his travel. He flies a 747-8 for Cargolux and my emails and pictures from him have come from all over the world: South Africa, Chicago, Houston, Pakistan, Dubai, Vietnam, Shanghai, to name a few places. I keep thinking wouldn't it be nice to have those frequent flyer miles!

This year he decided to replace the canopy and asked me to order one for him. In discussing shipping arrangements, I explained in detail that the manufacturer would be sending it inside a carefully constructed wooden crate designed to protect it from any damage and that crate would weigh approximately 300 lbs. I always ask if you have a way to get it *safely* from port of entry to your building site. He said no problem.

Weeks later, I notified Stephan that the canopy was being shipped. Several days later I get to work, open my emails and there are pictures from Stephan. One is someone opening a large wooden crate in Luxembourg and then this picture. Somehow, he managed to fit his brand new (and expensive) canopy into the back of his Volkswagen Passat to take home! I could not believe what I was seeing. I have enjoyed Stephan's sense of humor, but this was no joke. He really did this, and it made my day. I immediately emailed him joking that we would be announcing him as our new “alternative” trucking company in Europe. These are the moments when you sit back and wonder if perhaps you take your job just a little too seriously, and you need to relax. As Stephan has said to me before, *carpe diem*. Thank you Stephan.

We are working on a new project that may surprise some of you, but I think is really exciting. The Falco construction manual and drawings will be transferred to disks. The process will be long and detailed but we have a completion goal



Stephan Schoenfelder carries cargo in a Boeing 747-8, uses a trailer to move his D-ECPE Series III Falco but when it comes to packing his Falco canopy home, he uses a Volkswagen Passat.

in 2013. We want to give builders a 21st century option, especially our overseas builders who have to incur the expensive shipping cost of the existing large carton of manuals, drawings and plans. There is still some thought to give as to how to approach this through the website. We do not foresee going totally green for a while, so the “paper” package will remain. We will probably supply the larger drawings printed on 11x17 sheets with very high-resolution, color printing, and also supplying the drawings in PDF format on a disk. It is a major change but we need to be more available in the electronic world we live within.

Another announcement—we will no longer print and mail the *Falco Builders Letter*. The printing and mailing costs continue to grow, and more and more of you want to receive it by email. We will continue to post each issue on our website. Everyone now seems to have an iPad and the FBL looks great on an iPad, costs less, gets to you quicker and you can take all your copies wherever you go. I encourage you to join our growing email subscription list—just contact me.

I want to remind all of our builders to stay in touch with me about your progress. I love hearing from you and always look forward to your pictures!—Susan Arruda

Mailbox

You won't believe this bit. Today I ring up the shipping company to try to find out where the Falco is since it arrived last week. The guy had gone on holiday and left the file on his desk.. great.. but it gets better.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) here are required to inspect it upon opening to make sure no bugs, snakes or polar bears have snuck in. They only allow this to be done in an "Approved transitional facility." So today it is sitting at such a facility. Tomorrow the MAF guys turn up to do such a clearance. But get this... after that, the goods are cleared to go wherever eg Parakai Airfield. *But* the container is *not* allowed to go with the plane in it since its considered a risk item albeit a low risk item. However once the plane is out and sent to Parakai I'm allowed to hire the container empty, have it delivered to Parakai and put the same plane back in it! Bureaucracy at its very worst!

Needless to say we will get it cleared, then just take it out there anyway but what a bloody stupid system.

[Then the next day we get this:]

I'm pleased to say that as of about two hours ago, SMR is back at home in its hangar. No damage that I can see.

So I need to make better repairs of the minor damage from the first transit. Reassemble it and carry out an annual and will be back flying in time to enjoy summer down here.

George Richards
Auckland, New Zealand

After many hours of working on it, I have finally posted the documentary movie of the first flight of the Falco since the upgrade. The flight lasted about 30 minutes.

The flight was designed to be two turns around the field with some quick level turns at altitude, then a low pass to check the gear doors, followed by another low pass from the other direction. On the end of that pass I noticed some deer on the runway and I dove at them to scatter them. Still not sure about the gear doors, I made the 3rd low pass while Al Bird and Lance checked them and then into the pattern for the landing. We had wanted to get down as soon as possible to check every thing out. I could have stayed up there for hours it was so much joy.

The hardest thing about the flight was the "P" factor on take off. It was hard to hold it on the center line. I will get used to that.



Top: Dominique Francois is nearly finished with his Falco in France, and expects to fly it in the near future. Center: George Richards has his Falco back home. Above: Instrument panel for D-ECPI, a spectacularly beautiful Falco built by the late Hans Sonntag and Heiner Bredhorst in Germany and now for sale at www.seqair.com

This is all a little technical but the short of it is we do not know what is happening to the doors in the wind stream. They are held open by a spring and we want to make sure they are not in the way when I do retract the gear. I can't hardly wait for that one.

Configuration for this flight by intent was gear down for the entire flight. I also did not cycle the prop pitch at any time. We simply wanted to have as few possibilities of error as possible. Temps were all good considering the climb settings. That means the Air box is working great, at least with gear down. I saw 140 MPH top speed and as you can see the Falco was very stable and very nimble to handle.

Most of you know I have not flown much since this airplane went into my shop eight years ago. In fact my log books show only four landings since 06 and those were in the last three months when I got my biannual and not in type. The last plane I flew before that was a Chieftain twin. I would just like to say that I think the Falco is one of the best flying aircraft I have ever had the privilege to fly. To that I can only say that we owe a great deal to the designer Stelio Frati God rest his sole, and of course to Sequoia Aircraft for keeping it alive and well.

Many thanks to my neighbors and camera crews. Bo and Luann McDonald, Sue Johnston and of course my lovely wife Janet took the stills. And thanks to Sharon Dorrance, Sue Johnston and Lance Alter for the support and complements.

It is hard to put into prospective the feelings you experience going through this process. I came away with a good confidence in this aircraft and deep satisfaction of accomplishment. From here we will be expanding the envelope and flying off the hours required by the FAA.

Steve Crisp
Chewelah, Washington

Top: Falcos in the Texas Hill Country Center: Stelio Frati's drawings and memorabilia are in the process of being donated to the Volandia Museum of Flight in Milan Italy.

Bottom: Congratulations to Alastair and Neville who won the Air Squadron Trophy for the best plans-built aeroplane at the Light Aircraft Association annual event at Sywell on the first weekend in September 2012. This is the second time around for Neville, as he also won it with G-BYLL in 1990! This makes them the fourth Falco to win the award, coming after G-BYLL, G-GANE and G-OCAD.

