

# Falco Builders Letter



## Antique Baby

by Alfred Scott

Airplanes and automobiles are usually classified as antiques when they are 25 years old. So here we have an unusual situation, the first flight of a Falco started 30 years ago. Hard to believe, but Russell Woods and Frank Renwick first bought the Falco plans in December 1980.

Russell started building the Falco in 1982 and in 12 months he had made and assembled the fuselage with the frames and had half of the plywood installed. The tailplane and fin were also made and assembled, along with the spars and ribs for the wing, ailerons and flaps.

Frank withdrew from the project and in 1984 Bruce Fraser took his place. They live in Christchurch, New Zealand. Bruce worked as an airline captain with Air New Zealand, and he was also a very able aircraft engineer. Bruce had already built a Pazmany PL1, machining all of the parts including the wheels.

Russell was a plumber and had built a Jodel D11 and an Isaacs Hawker Fury replica.

At that stage, the project became too big for Russell's 12'x20' single-car garage, and since Bruce was building a Sea Hawk in the hangar they had built at Christchurch International Airport, the Falco would

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### In This Issue:

- 6 If You Seek His Monument,  
Fly His Airplane
- 8 Falco Birthday Party
- 13 The One That Got Away
- 14 Coast to Coast with Susan
- 15 Mailbox





***Bruce Fraser and Russell Woods***

have to wait. About this time, a 1947 Cadillac Convertible that Russell had been chasing became available and it needed a complete restoration. He still had the Jodel to fly, so he mothballed the Falco for what he thought would be a short time, but his passion for restoring classic American cars got the better of him, and he ended up doing six more before he ran out of suitable candidates and was able to carry on with the Falco.

While the Falco was sitting forgotten in the corner of the hangar, Bruce was building a fiberglass Sea Hawk for himself and a

The Falco Builders Letter is published 4 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.

Subscriptions: \$24.00 a year, \$35.00 overseas. Available only to Falco builders and Frati airplane owners.

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



*That's the Frati family crest on the tail. Not sure that Stelio Frati knew about the crest, but it's there in his honor.*

friend. He expressed an interest in the Falco, and muttered something about should have built one of these instead.

Bruce is a perfectionist at everything he does. He started out as a L.A.M.E. (similar to our A&P mechanic), then went flying and finished up as a check pilot on Boeings, during which time he built a two-place all-metal Pazmany PL1, then rebuilt a Maule. Later Bruce and Russell restored a twin Comanche.

Bruce and Russell decided to go 50/50 on the Falco in 1986 with the agreement that Bruce would do the metal work. That was in 1986.





After the Sea Hawk left the hangar, they started back on the Falco in 2002. They made everything from the plans except for the landing gear retraction motor and gear box, housing and a few gears. Bruce made a rather large English wheeling machine, just for the Falco cowling. They farmed out some welding with an aircraft qualified welder and they had a radio man to work up the stack.

The Falco first flew on August 19, 2009 with John Goddard as the test pilot. John has over 10,000 hours of flying time. Thus their Falco, ZK-FWA became the 92nd Sequoia Falco to fly.

The engine is a carbureted 150 hp O-320 Lycoming on a second-life rebuild. The propeller is a new Hoffman constant-speed, and the empty weight came in at 1220 lbs. With the landing gear doors on, the Falco will cruise at 155 KIAS (170 KTAS) at 5500', 23"/2300 rpm at 5500' and at 1587 lbs AUW. The had done the full flight envelope with the CG fore and aft and the trim works right down to landing. "All in all, we are very pleased with the performance," and the Falco has about 30 hours on it.

Russell and Bruce are both in their 70's and doubt they would pass a medical for a full license again, so their Falco is for sale. But first they have to play with it for a while.

And like Benjamin Button, this Falco was born old, 30 years old at birth, long past a classic and now an antique.

*Test pilot John Goddard in the Falco.*





## If You Seek His Monument, Fly His Airplane

by Jeff Miller, photos by Jim Winn

*This article appeared in the September 2010 Flying magazine.*

I may have been the last person to consider bringing the late Stelio Frati's F.22 Pinguino to America. Mooney apparently looked at the program, and Roy LoPresti, who also sought to produce the SwiftFury, was interested. By the time I arrived at the General Avia factory in Perugia, Italy, on a frigid January day in 1998, the company was on life support, and shortly thereafter was bankrupt.

I never met Frati, who was a designer, not a manufacturing engineer or marketer. So I know him only through his aircraft, some of which enjoyed commercial success, notably the agile and lovely Siai Marchetti SF.260. But I surmise that Frati's motives had more to do with the aesthetic and experiential aspects of flight than the commercial ones.

The man was incapable of designing an inelegant machine. The F.22 retained the SF.260's beauty but was intended for a broader training and touring market. What

it sacrificed in high-end performance, it gained in docile handling, while still retaining full aerobatic capability.

There is something admirable and thoroughly non-American in the Italian mindset that believes a beautifully crafted product will sell, simply because it is a thing of beauty and engineering precision. Sometimes that's true and sometimes not. I was involved in early efforts to sell the Avanti

turboprop—an utter market failure at the time, but one that today has found favor in the American market.

That at least proves that there are second acts for good products unappreciated at their introduction. Maybe the F.22 will have its own. On that gray, damp day in January, I was treated to a factory tour; very little work was going on, but tooling and the airframe structures were nothing short of business-jet quality.

### Jeff Miller in the F.22C





Then they asked me if I wanted to fly the retractable F.22C version. Up I went with the company test pilot, and we proceeded through a series of rolls, loops and spins. Those were interesting and showed off the aircraft's precise and easy handling qualities, but the joy for me was landing the airplane, which was just an effortless wafting down to the runway.

Italy has a bilateral treaty with the United States whereby an airplane certified there and flown there before import is automatically eligible for Part 23 certification. So it seemed feasible to set up an export arrangement that would not entail an expensive certifi-

cation effort. But for a host of reasons, not least the General Avia demand for a \$2 million up-front license fee, my exploration of the opportunity came to naught.

Maybe someone was making a joke in naming the F.22 after a flightless bird the penguin—or maybe he was prescient. Still, it's sad to see lovely airplanes not have their day in the sun. Even in a composite era, the aluminum F.22 will charm a select few who will appreciate its beauties and lovely manners.

Stelio Frati would no doubt be satisfied with that.

### Lost in Translation

The translations of product names to other languages has been a notorious problem over the years. When ESSO was considering a new name, they found that one name they were considering meant “go slow” in Japanese. When Frati first designed the F.22, he was going to call it the *Turbiné*, which is the Italian word for *whirlwind* or *hurricane*. It makes sense in Italian, but I pointed out at the time to Mr. Frati that the name would be read as *turbine* in the U.S. and that people would make jokes about how silly the Italians are to pick such a name for a piston-engined airplane, and the potential problem of line crews putting jet fuel in an airplane that is clearly marked *turbine*. So Frati changed the name to *Sprint*, and later models to *Pinguino*. But what Italians know and what is lost on the rest of the world, is that *Pinguino* is the nickname they use in Italy for student pilots, who are, indeed, flightless birds.

But who am I to talk? In 1966, fresh out of college, I was dashing around France, Italy and Spain in a Porsche 912, my last bit of freedom before going into the Marine Corps. And one sunny day I sat in an outdoor restaurant in Segovia, Spain and decided I would like a Bloody Mary. So I asked for *sangre de maria* to the utterly confused waiter, and like a good American, I kept saying it over and over, louder and louder, as if that would make the man understand. Only later did I realize I was asking for *blood of Mary* ... in a Catholic country.—Dr. Ing. Alfredo Scotti



# Falco Birthday Party



Dave Nason's star-studded tail. Falcomposite Furio. George Richards in the Ford Trimotor. Susan Arruda with Dave Nason's Falco. To right: Harold Thompson and his Falco. General Avia F.22. Dan Ruiters, who wrecked his Falco in the Swiss Alps—see YouTube "Engine Failure in the Alps"—checks out Nutt Falco gear.





Bill Russell and cmony from Houston



Neil Aitkenhead

David Silchman and Mary Root



Dave Nason and Jack Lange



Matt Emerson, who has worked on Benchmark program.

Yousha Liu Trumbley watches Susan offering consolation about food.



Dan Ruiters

Vic Maloy ("Mr. Arruda"), Mrs. Vrbas, Gary Vrbas



Rob Phullis, Bob Trumbley, Gary Vrbas, Susan Arruda



Yousha Liu Trumbley dominates the photo



Rob Phullis and Bob Trumbley



## The One That Got Away

Bill and Charlie Nutt arrived at Oshkosh with hopes of winning the big one, Oshkosh Grand Champion. They won the Reserve Grand Champion award at Oshkosh 2007. That's the number-two award and with the judging system at Oshkosh, you can only move up the ladder. Dave Nason had also won Reserve Grand Champion and returned the year later to win Grand Champion.

The judges like the Falco, because they know it's not easy to build, even with all of the kits, so over the years we've had a lot of Falcos win awards at Oshkosh and at fly-ins all over the place. Bjoern Eriksen, Dave Nason and Doug Henson have won Grand Champion.

So hoping to score big, Bill and Charlie spent the week at Oshkosh nervously watching judges going over their Falco. Then on Thursday, they got 'the letter' from the judges asking them to please stick around and come to the awards ceremony on Saturday night. That could only mean one thing, and Bill and Charlie were on cloud nine. Rita flew in from Delaware to be with Bill, and Charlie's wife Inez flew in from Minnesota.

Then on Saturday night, they sat and watched all of the awards and then finally it came time for the Big One, the Grand Champion Homebuilt Award. They were all on the edge of their seats, ready to stand up when the award was announced—for another airplane.

It was a crushing experience, and there were a lot of people who were very upset about it, including Dave Nason who knows the judges well. Dave asked around about what had happened, and it was nothing more than a mistake by a new person on the judging staff. The judge could see that Bill and Charlie's airplane was coming in among the very top planes in the judging and didn't realize that they had previously won Reserve Grand Champion.

That's just all there was to it, a simple mistake. Not much different from the baseball umpire's mistaken call that deprived a pitcher of a no-hitter.

In times like this, it's only human nature to have bad thoughts flit through your mind, but the Oshkosh judging is The Big Leagues of these types of contests, and the EAA judges are also the very best in the world, all dedicated to doing their best to



*Charlie and Bill Nutt with Jack Lange*

judge the planes fairly. They are the best, so it's equally upsetting to the judges to see this type of mistake happen.

I'm reminded of a guy I went to high school with, an outstanding student leader, captain of the wrestling team and head monitor at his high school. That's the number-one slot for a student leader. And then later at the University of Virginia, he won all of the awards and recognition from the fraternities, ring and ribbon societies. He was not just a big man on campus, he was among the very top of that select group. And he ran for president of the student body against a fraternity brother, and his friend won. He came in second in a

student body of maybe 6000. Then after college, he had a nervous breakdown and became a tragic figure. Coming in second crushed him.

So let's put this in perspective. Of the thousands of airplanes at Oshkosh, something like seven percent of the world's population of aircraft on the field at one time, Bill and Charlie came in maybe second or third in the judging of all of those planes. How many people can ever say that? Or that they had earlier given Susan Arruda a ride in the plane!

And there's always next year.—*Alfred Scott*

## Coast to Coast with Susan

Several years ago I watched a movie titled "Practical Magic." It was an entertaining story of two beautiful witches (Nicole Kidmann & Sandra Bullock) struggling with their love life. It was the title of the movie that intrigued me the most. It is the best way to describe my experience of AirVenture 2010 in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

I was not prepared for the number and variety of aircraft or the throng of people! Yes, the air shows were dynamic, but just walking around and attempting to take in the event was daunting. I was bowled over by a huge field of small personal planes parked in rows with their owners camping out by their airplanes—RV's with wings!

I have never seen so many pilots and airplanes in one place. There was magic in the constant drone of aircraft engines and the awestruck looks on 18,000 to 20,000 people. Talk about crowd control! Not a problem. Everyone had only one goal and that was to enjoy whatever happened next.

It was big fun to hang out with Dave Nason, Bill Nutt and Charlie Nutt with their fantastic Falcos and share their pride and all of the attention their Falcos received. Then there were the two dinners with builders that I so looked forward to meeting, after two years of just hearing about them or communicating by emails or by telephone with them. There was much to talk about and stories to hear and jokes to share. No matter whether they had traveled from Australia, Canada, Europe or places in the US, they all shared the same passion—the Falco. Sitting there, sharing a meal with all of these interesting people, helped me to further realize that Falco owners/builders really are a family.

I must admit that for two days I remained drawn to the fantastic array of warbirds being displayed. I was especially thrilled by the three restored B17's. A number of years ago I had the opportunity to go inside one. It was amazing! But, while standing with Alfred I discovered that they represent a special history to a personal friend of mine as well as to Jack Amos. Jack is a long time friend to Alfred, a seasoned Oshkosh attendee and was on this trip with us. In fact, he and Alfred regularly flew the Corporate Disgrace there for many years. Most importantly, Jack has been Sequoia Aircraft's marketing/graphic designer from day one. That logo you love so much on our merchandise is due to Jack's genius.



*Top: Graeme Lean and Susan Arruda. Above: Airplane photo by Vic Maloy.*

So, what I discovered is that Jack and our friend Chris both share the fact that they lost their fathers in combat in a B17 during World War II. They were infants and never knew their fathers. But, both have made a discovery-journey of what their fathers were like by becoming researchers of their fathers' military experience in the B17. They have unearthed all the details. Chris even found surviving members of his father's squadron. Talking with these men has given him a relationship with a father he never knew. They even made him an honorary squadron member, and he stays in touch with them as you would family.

If anyone ever questions the value of restoring any warbird, they need to try to understand the true worth of these airplanes. Many veterans were there, proudly attending to the planes and to their memories.

When you travel, you discover a little something new about where you are. For Wisconsin, it is something called Cheese Curds. Yes, it is a food. Alfred decided to make sure everyone had some at the Thursday evening meal. After trying a few, my decision is that they should stay in Wisconsin. My husband Vic was able to make the trip with us, and it was wonderful to watch his enthusiasm with the event and his thrill at meeting all the Falco owners and having the opportunity to finally understand the connections. I also watched him take picture after picture. Once we were home we found time to go through all of his pictures. I was not surprised that he was able to find "beauty" in his experience one afternoon, so I am sharing the picture with you. I can always count on him for having the ability to appreciate the aesthetics in life!—Susan Arruda

## Mailbox

My wife, Debbie, did not like riding in the back seat of my Long-EZ very much. Difficult to see out and not very comfortable. You couldn't carry much in the way of baggage either. So, when I sold the Long-EZ, I drug out the pictures and brochures for the Falco to show her. She only wanted to know two things: "Does it have side-by-side seating and can it carry some baggage?" I told her the answer to both questions was "Yes" and she said to go ahead and get one. As luck would have it, Cecil Rives' airplane was available and that was that.

Anxious to help Debbie feel like we had made the right decision, I suggested that we take a trip anywhere she would like to go in the airplane while she was off work for the summer (Debbie is a school teacher). We live in Memphis and being centrally located just about any place in the US is within range of a couple of stops. She said she would like to visit her sister in Atlanta and visit our daughter in Nashville. We made a few phone calls and arranged everything.

We left our house at 0600 on a Saturday morning. We got the airplane out, loaded our stuff and was in the air by 0700. One hour and 48 minutes later, we were on the ground in Atlanta having burned 17 gallons of avgas. Debbie's sister met us at the airport, and we spent a couple of days with her and her husband. On Monday, we went to the airport, prepped the plane and departed for Nashville. One hour and 10 minutes later, we were there and our daughter, Allison, picked us up. We visited with on her day off and met up with her husband, Nick, when he got off from work. We had dinner with the both of them and then returned to the airport. We put 10 gallons of gas in the airplane and at 1930 we departed for home. One hour later we were on the ground in Memphis. We reached our house at 2100.

The entire trip was Memphis to Atlanta to Nashville and back to Memphis. We used a total of 37 gallons of fuel. From a utility standpoint, we could have done the entire trip in one day with plenty of time at each stop for a meeting and meal. It was a great trip, Debbie had a good time, and I believe we are off to a good start on a relationship with a fantastic airplane.

As a side note, I cannot add anything to what has been written about the airplane itself. It is simply the finest airplane I have ever flown. I have flown the airplane 35 hours now making six fairly long trips. The



*Top: Stephen Schoenfelder's Series II Falco. Center: Rick Pelliccotti's Falco—built for him by Cecil Rives. Bottom: Jim Pitchford's Falco was originally built by Ray Purkiser.*

more I fly it, the more I am in awe of it.

*Rick Pelliccotti  
Memphis, TN*

My name is Stephan Schoenfelder and I am from Germany (Bavaria), 39 years old and infected with the “flying-virus” since I was 13.

The Falco is one of my favorite airplanes besides the Pitts S1T and the BF109. But the second one will be a lifelong dream. I want to say thank you for the website you created because I learned a lot by reading some of the articles and after a lot of reading and research, I bought the F.8L D-ECPE, Series II, #235 built in 1963 at Aeromere in Trento.

The airplane is not in flying condition since it landed six years ago on its belly after an engine failure. My plan is now to get it back into the air.

The plane doesn't look too bad, I have to say, and the wood is still in perfect shape, so are the joints. As far as I could see the landing gear screwjacks on the left side are bent, and I don't know how they did it (to bend them). Because the gear was fully retracted when they landed. At least that's what the former owner told me. The plane is already equipped with the Cleveland brakes. The rest is still in good and old original condition.

*Stephan Schönfelder  
Bavaria, Germany*

Unfortunately due to my flying schedule, I was not able to be present at the Falco Birthday party.

I recently flew N1443D on a business trip from Lake in the Hills to Greenwood, Indiana and back. The airplane flew great. The more I fly it the more I fall in love with this wonderful machine.

I visited my old American family that supported me when I was an exchange student in the US back in 1983-1984. Joe and Anne Bryant were surprised to see me after such a long time flying to their hometown in a beautiful sleek airplane. They have always known of my love and devotion to airplanes, but I doubt it they could have imagined it would go that far. We spent a good weekend remembering good times. It was really fun and the Falco was part of it.

*Eduardo Letti  
Porto Alegre, Brazil*

**Eduardo Letti with Joe and Anne Bryant and Falco N1443D.**

## Limited Offer: Falcos are forever T-shirts.



**We have a limited supply of Oshkosh 2010 T-shirts. Available in Medium, Large, X-Large and XX-Large. On the front: “The Sequoia Falco, Just fifty-five!” On the back: “Falcos are forever.” Heavy weight 6.1 oz, 100% preshrunk jersey cotton, ultra tight knit, double-needle sleeve and bottom hems. \$15, shipping included in the U.S. for each order. Add \$5.95 overseas. To order, contact Susan Arruda (804) 353-1713, support@seqair.com. Order now. Limited quantities available.**

