

Falco Builders Letter



Dave Nason with his 180 hp Falco.

First Flight: Falco N227DT

by Dave Nason

I was born and raised around Seattle, Washington, the airplane capital of the world. At 19 years old, my twin brother and I found an L-2 Taylorcraft for sale in the local want ads for \$850. A few days later as we brought it down the driveway on a trailer, the neighbors came rushing over to find out what those Nason boys were up to now. We spent the summer of 1967 re-covering it with Ceconite and getting it airworthy.

Then we started flying lessons. I was in ROTC in college and got more flight training. After college, it was on to the Air Force where I flew T-37s and T-38s at pilot training. I did my four years flying C-141 transports during the last of the Vietnam war. I was preparing myself for an airline pilot career, but with fuel shortages and plenty of pilots, I've been a building contractor ever since.

While in the Air Force, I started building a Bushby Midget Mustang. I got about two-thirds along (between building houses) and lost the plans and key parts in a fire. I

never got back to it, but it is sitting there waiting its turn to be finished.

In 1978 I bought an old Bonanza, serial #12, which I have been flying ever since. Meanwhile, I got married, and my brother-in-law got me started building and flying radio controlled model airplanes. I built and flew several models, the last project being a fifth-scale Spitfire, with an 89" wing span. It took about a year to build, and I told my wife, the next time I put that much labor and love into an airplane, I want to be able to sit in it.

My first introduction to the Falco was the *Sport Aviation* article about Bjorn Eriksen in the October 1993 issue. With the similar lines and construction techniques to the Spitfire model, I sent for the infor-

In This Issue:

- 3 The Kennedy Crash
- 6 Goings On at Sequoia
- 7 Sawdust
- 7 Susan's Corner
- 7 Calendar of Events
- 8 Mailbox

mation packet and was hooked. Since I'm always reading airplane magazines, it was a couple of months before my wife Tamara knew what I had in mind. I actually started construction of #1227 in February 1994.

I was comfortable working with wood, coming from a cabinet-making family, and being a builder by trade. From my experience with the Midget Mustang, I knew that building all the pieces takes too long, and you can lose interest. I bought the rib and spar kits to cut down on the building time. As I got into the construction of the tail, there were some questions in the back of my mind. I wondered how close to make the gaps in the control surfaces. We also received information on the West Coast Fly-In. We made plans to attend so we could see more than just the pictures and get some answers to my questions.

I wanted to have the tail section well along so it would give me credibility at the fly-in. I shouldn't have been concerned. From the moment we arrived, the group made us feel part of the 'family'. Dave McMurray had his Falco to show off for the first time, so I tried to build mine as nice as his. I asked lots of questions and took even more pictures. Tamara got to ride first. Jim Slaton did a good selling job too, which is a big plus when your spouse supports your 'hobby'.

By the second West Coast Falco Fly-In we attended, the wing was well along, and I was looking ahead to what engine mount I should get. I had ridden in the 160 hp but would rather have the 180 hp. Our Bonanza has a good climb rate, and I wanted the extra power. Howard Benham had a 180 hp engine and had just completed his Falco earlier that summer. I got a ride with him and knew that was what I wanted.

I was really sorry to read in the next newsletter that he had wrecked his plane. Just by chance, in early December, I found out that his plane was being sold by the insurance company. With Benham's help, I got the whole plane, and trucked it from Kansas back to Seattle in January 1996. I was able to re-use his wiring, instruments, engine and propeller. This saved a bunch of money and at least one to two years building time.



Tamara, Natalie, Shannon and Ginger check out the Falco.

Having one to look at up close (through the splinters) saved me lots of headaches!

I started building the tail section in the basement workshop. This made it real handy as my wife had to only stomp on the floor when dinner was ready. The girls loved to come down and play in the ever-

present sawdust and wood scraps. We live on a small airstrip adjacent to the housing development, so the wing section was set up in the shop area of our hangar. We had an intercom to communicate between house and shop, and the kids could still be close to Dad. The one daughter would often scold me if I was in the house and

not working on 'her' airplane. She also thought it should be pink. No way!

When it came time for the fuselage, we had to move again. The shop was on the second story of the hangar. I had one of my suppliers bring a crane to move the wing out of the hangar, back up to a garage across from the house. My work truck and travel trailer got to set out in the weather for the next two years. When the finished project was ready to be moved back to the hangar, the



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biggest problem was getting 12' of Falco out a 10' door. It was real close—only pinched knuckles, no scraped paint.

On May 1, 1999, we moved the two halves to the hangar, and the first flight was June 28th. I kept current flying the Bonanza until about ten days before flying the Falco. At each of the fly-ins I got rides with several different pilots. Last year I let it be known that I wanted some 'stick' time, and Larry Black saw that I got three take-offs and landings. He and John Harns encouraged me to do the test flights myself. I read the Flight Test Guide and Flight Manual a number of times.

I was quite nervous the day of the first flight. I thought about the airplanes I flew in the Air Force. I decided, if I could do that, then I can do this. Ten seconds after the power came up, our Falco flew off just as advertised. I needed to hold right aileron and right rudder, which was to be expected. My three youngest girls are excited about learning to fly in the Falco, and they took a little convincing that the 25-hour test period would take longer than just 2 days.

To date I have about 12 hours and 20 takeoffs and landings. Each time I feel better about the plane and the handling characteristics. I thought it would be similar to the Bonanza, but it's lighter on the controls and faster. The procedures (prop, gear, flaps) are similar. Our Falco took five and a half years to build, and I wondered if the flying would be as much fun as the building. Each flight I am enjoying the airplane more. I tried to pay attention to extra weight, so the airplane weighs 1,259 pounds empty, which pleased me.

It has the 180 hp engine with lightweight starter and alternator, S-Tec 20 auto pilot and full upholstery (heavy). I built my own wing fairing using balsa strips and graphite, extending it about 8 inches past the joint. I didn't like the extra bumps for the big engine so I built my own cowling, using graphite and Kevlar. I think this probably saved some weight. I used Aerolite glue throughout, as I wanted to paint the airplane red, after all, it's Italian and it's fast! The airspeeds to date have been very satisfying, but we look forward to flying along side the others in Durango in September.

The help, advice and encouragement received at the yearly fly-in's has been invaluable, along with the builders newsletters. I followed the advice of another EAA member, of trying to work at least an hour a day, if possible—my wife would say more—and not looking at the whole project but just one piece at a time. □



The Kennedy Crash

by Stephan Wilkinson

Our thanks to James Gilbert for permission to publish this simultaneously with Pilot magazine.

John Kennedy Jr. was a friend of Andrea Tremolada, and we asked Andrea about the photo that appeared in the National Enquirer and if it was his Falco. He replied:

Yes, in fact, we have flown many times together, four years ago he had the first ride in the Falco over Lake Como. And then we have been flying other times. He enjoyed also some aerobatics. He really loved flying. I'm really sorry about what happened.

The same picture has been reproduced in many newspapers here in Italy.—Andrea

One of my great fears, when I was the executive editor of the American magazine *Flying*—a position that made me nationally notorious among pilots as a condescending know-it-all—was that I would make a dreadful mistake and crash an airplane as a result of poor judgment. The pilot populace would have nattered and clucked like old hens, and my magazine peers would have been harsh in their own opinions. I remember when the jaunty publisher of our competitor AOPA

Pilot ran the magazine's fancy new Beech Baron entirely out of fuel and had to crash-land it, and his career never recovered.

Non-pilots would never have noticed my lapse, had it ever occurred—and I too frequently did my best to make it happen—but John F. Kennedy Jr. had the awful fate of committing his final error of aeronautical judgment in front of the entire planet. His crash on July 16 into the Atlantic off Martha's Vineyard, a Massachusetts resort island favored by the quietly rich and unwillingly famous, set off an inevitable babble of media keening.

It revealed once again that most of our opinion-makers—reporters, editors, news analysts, talking heads, columnists and “personalities”—are roughly as familiar with aircraft and aviation as they are with quantum physics.

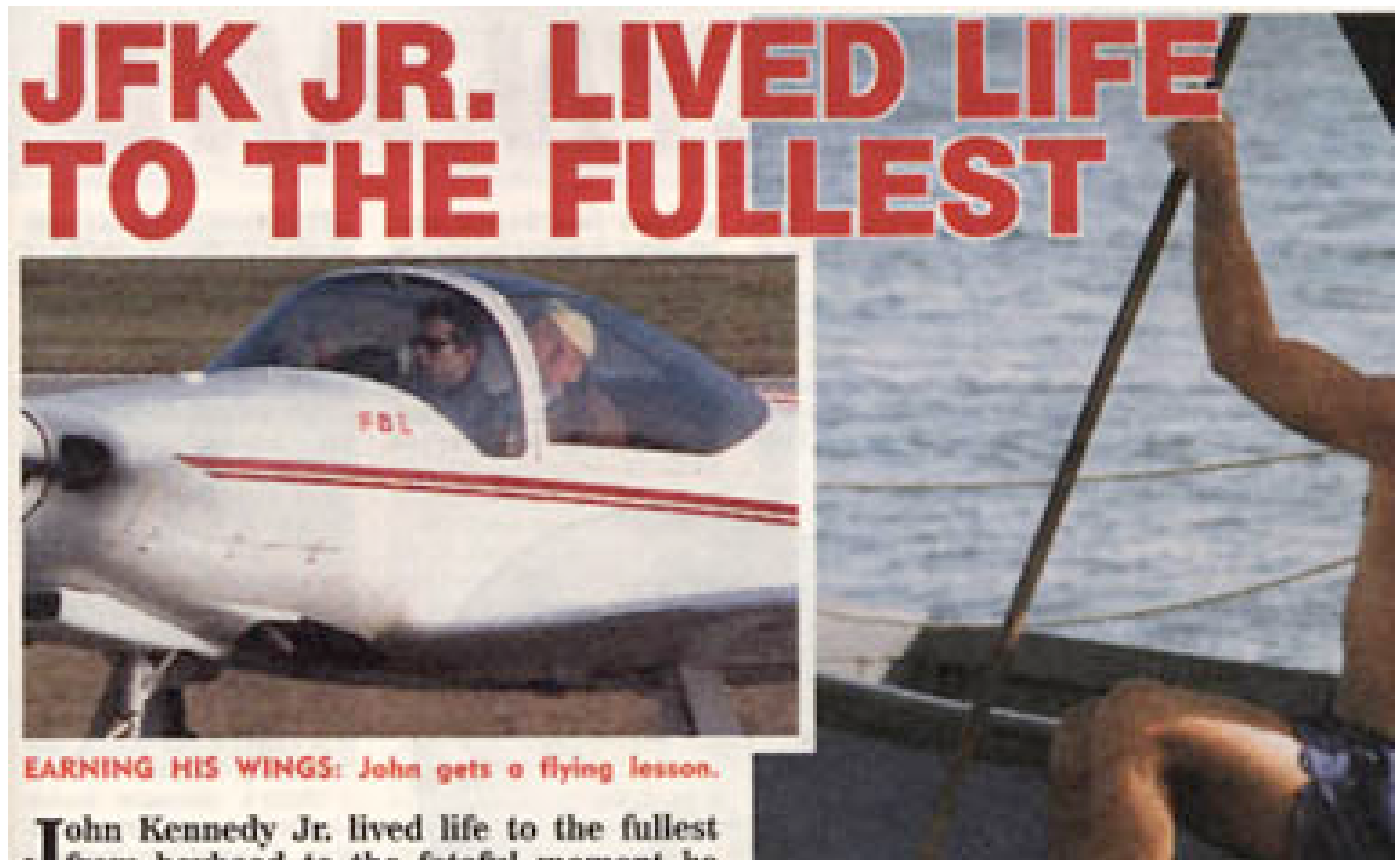
Surprising, perhaps, since they spend so much time aboard airplanes as part of their work. Yet many of them barely know how an automobile works, some Manhattan scribes can't even drive, and most New York reporters and editors think—in the words of *Automobile* Magazine Editor David E. Davis—that “all cars are yellow and have lights on their roofs.” That they wouldn't have the foggiest notion of how airplanes work, then, is not surprising.

Technology of all sorts, whether it's medicine, astronomy, automobiles or aviation, often brings forth the worst possible reporting from people who might be expected to be relatively knowledgeable about at least three of the four foregoing specialties. One New York *Observer* columnist, boasting that his background included “not one but two flying families,” came up with a list of utterly witless questions that, he said, were yet to be answered as far as he was concerned. No wonder. One of them was whether or not Kennedy even knew the “the identifier” of the control tower at Martha's Vineyard. (Well, how about “Vineyard Tower”?)

Another sternly put query asked whether or not Kennedy's Piper Saratoga “carried flotation gear,” as though the extension of pop-out helicopter pontoons might have helped in what was probably a 300-knot, nosedown impact with the water. And why weren't Kennedy and his two passengers—his wife Caroline Bessette Kennedy and her sister Lauren—wearing lifevests? (Did the nitwit writer think Mae West might have cushioned the impact?)

The Saratoga itself, that old breadbox of a retractable-gear Cherokee Six, suddenly took on a new life as an aerial “hot rod,” as one newsmagazine characterized it, pointing out that it screamed through

Media frenzy: The National Enquirer has John Kennedy Jr. earning his wings in a Falco.



the air at “over 200 mph.” *Time Magazine* revealed that this exotic required “a butterfly touch” on the controls—a characteristic that I never detected in any of the Saras I’ve flown; an anvil hung from the yoke is more like it. Kennedy was flying a normally aspirated Saratoga (though yet another magazine described it as “his turbo plane”) and would have been hard-pressed to hit 175. But never mind, even pictures of bespatted, fixed-gear Cherokee Sixes were liberally published to illustrate what Kennedy was flying that fatal night, and one magazine used a photo of him in a rented Bonanza as an example of “the Cessna he’d previously owned.”

In fact the *National Enquirer*, our prime national scandal sheet, published a photo of Kennedy in the right seat of what I recognized as our mutual friend Andrea Tremolada’s Milan-based production Falco. The caption? “Earning his wings: John gets a flying lesson.” Right. In Italy.

Oddly, nowhere in the media was it mentioned that Kennedy had at his fingertips a device that almost certainly would have saved the lives of the three victims: the autopilot on the panel of his well-equipped Saratoga. Had he punched it on the moment he suspected that visibility was deteriorating, the Piper would have remained entirely controllable.

But like most new pilots loath to let a black box do the flying when aviating is still such a thrill, Kennedy was hand-flying the airplane probably for the sheer joy of control. Kennedy climbed from 2,500 feet back to 4,500, apparently aware that he had descended into what were essentially IFR conditions, before losing control. Proof will have to await the National Transportation Safety Board’s examination of the recovered instrument panel, but there’s no evidence yet that it ever occurred to him to engage the autopilot.

Perhaps the most frequent media criticism of Kennedy was the hoary “he failed to file a flight plan.” Reporters aren’t aware of this, and the FAA would never admit it, but in the free-flying United States, the only pilots who file VFR flight plans are students, who are given the silly make-work exercise largely as practice, and occasionally those of us who fly over large stretches of deserted, rugged terrain. In fact, any sensible pilot simply keeps the relevant ATC center sector frequency dialed in and knows he has instant communications access to somebody who can find him within seconds, either via a transponder code or the airplane’s GPS

readout. Why wait for a sleepy, remote flight service station to at best scramble the Civil Air Patrol a day later?

Obviously, Kennedy’s flight-plan “carelessness” was utterly irrelevant to a sudden, 4,500-fpm descent impact almost certainly caused by spatial disorientation and upset on a night of torpid, hazy, near-IFR conditions. (I was barely 50 miles away, on Cape Cod, the day after Kennedy crashed and saw the mugginess myself.) But even the difficulty of proper instrument flying was exaggerated by many of the interview-happy local pilots cornered by TV and newspaper reporters.

One who watched Kennedy depart reported that he’d done his “rev-up,” as the *New York Times* called it, right at the airplane’s parking spot, darkly hinting that such a strange procedure suggested to him that there was “something wrong” with the airplane. (The reporter explained that “rev-ups” were customarily done “while taxiing.”) Other pilots criticized Kennedy’s chosen route to Martha’s Vineyard over Long Island Sound—barely 20 miles wide at best and bracketed by well-lit shorelines north and south—rather than hugging the Connecticut coast. Political writer Richard Reeves, who had the dual credentials of being a Kennedy-family biographer and having once been an occasional private pilot, affirmed on TV that you have to fly IFR “every day” in order to remain current.

Few pilots admitted what we all know: that there but for the grace of God go you and I, for what 200-hour pilot *hasn’t* blundered into low visibility, sailed into a sudden squall, forgotten to figure density altitude or done a showoff takeoff that almost went terribly wrong?

Perhaps the only intelligent critique to make it onto the pages of a newspaper during the week after the crash was a *New York Times* op-ed essay by writer, flight instructor and former charter and air-taxi pilot William Langewiesche, whose father wrote the beloved book *Stick and Rudder*. Langewiesche opined that fewer such accidents would occur if less time were wasted on easily handled “recovery from unusual attitudes” instruction and more were spent by instructors flying VFR students into solid cloud and letting them experience the bafflement and terror of real-world IMC.

Yet Langewiesche was taken to task for “missing the point” in a letter published by the newspaper several days later. “Sim-

ulator training in corrective maneuvers for conditions known to produce vertigo works for military and commercial pilots,” said the letter-writer, an MIT “flight-simulation teacher.”

Had JFK Jr. been a military or commercial pilot, it would have worked for him as well. The point that Langewiesche *didn’t* miss is that unfortunately, Kennedy was a 200-hour private pilot.

One result of the ample expertise to which the nation was subjected in what was otherwise a slow news week—no be-thonged White House interns, no wars, no serious political campaigning—was that Everyman became an aviation authority. As my wife and I rode the train home from Manhattan the evening after a flight I’d made from New York to the West Coast in our Falco, Susan commented that she was surprised I’d made it all that way VFR. “Didn’t work for Kennedy,” sternly said the man in the seat ahead, turning around to interrupt our conversation.

Not since the several airliner/lightplane midair collisions of the 1970s has general aviation in the United States been subjected to such harsh scrutiny and pitiless probing. Fully a week after the Kennedy crash, newspapers and TV programs were schooling their audiences on how to spot a bad private pilot, when not to fly in a lightplane, and generally telling the country that Pipers and Cessnas were about as safe as cocked automatic weapons.

“Each year, about one in 100 of the nation’s private planes has an accident,” the *New York Times* reported, “and one in 300 has an accident that kills somebody.” The one-in-100 number for “accidents,” which of course includes the aeronautical equivalent of fender-benders, is accurate (1,907 accidents during 1998 among a total GA fleet of 192,414 aircraft). But the fatalities ratio is wildly overstated. Last year, there were 361 fatalities, which means one for every 533 GA aircraft. Even if we count only piston-engine fixed-wing airplanes, eliminating helicopters, turbines and balloons from the total, the ratio only drops to one fatal for every 479 “private planes.”

Soon the furor will die down, to be replaced by the revelation that one of our Presidential candidates cross-dresses, the destruction of Los Angeles by an earthquake or a sweeping national realization that all Internet stocks indeed *are* worthless. But until then, an awful lot of American private pilots are going to be flying solo.

Goings On at Sequoia Aircraft

This is a short newsletter because we got behind so badly on the March issue, and it takes a while for new items to pile up here to make up enough material for another Falco Builder Letter. So we're going to be brief this time (hey, sometimes our newsletters are quite long) and we'll try to get back on schedule with the September issue.

Things continue to be exceptionally busy here. Everything is running along at about twice the pace of last year, except for the restocking of inventory, which is much bigger. This year we're reordering about four times the normal amount of parts, and we're working hard to get the backordered parts down to essentially zero.

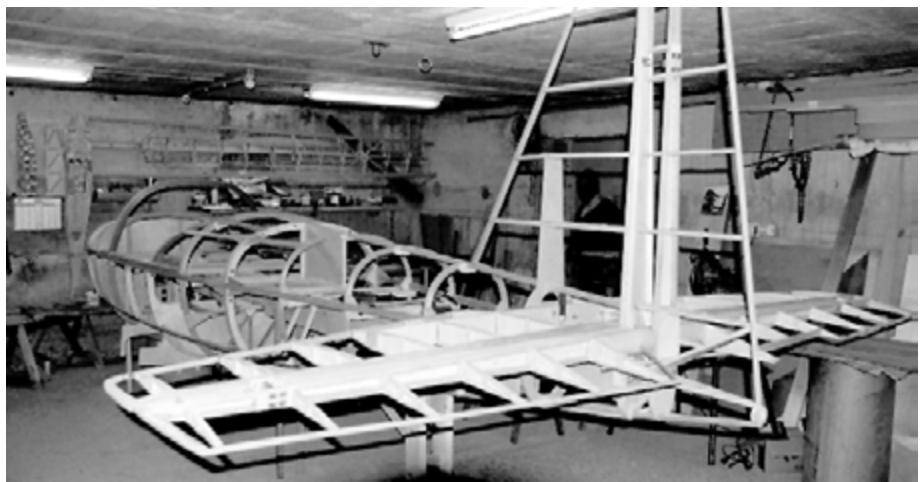
I continue to be astonished at what our website is doing for us, and how many people check in there. Sometimes, we will post an article on the website, and then three days later, everyone I talk to on the telephone has read it, including people in Australia, New Zealand, and all over Europe. And it's not just active Falco builders either, but people all over aviation who love to go through the Falco website and see what we're doing.

In the short term, my plans are to more aggressively use the Falco website for the delivery of information to Falco builders, and to come up with new ways of assisting builders. There is a natural tendency of inertia that affects all companies. For example, if we note a minor error on a drawing, does it make economic sense to send every single builder a new revision list? No way. But if we use the Internet to deliver the information, we can aggressively pursue improvements to the plans, kits and manuals.

In the past, we have published a price list of Falco kits, and we have included prices of other things that you might buy from other companies, glues, pitot tubes, tires, etc. We have eliminated that from our price list, and it is located in the Falco Skunkworks.

I am also reworking the Falco Kits portion of our website, and I expect they will all be located in the Falco Store when I get finished. My intention is to provide greater information about the kits, including shipping tickets, photos of the components, shipping considerations, etc.

I'm also looking for new ways to answer persistent questions that come up. Let's say a mentally challenged builder—Pierre



Top: Ed Bates and Barrett Bailey, with Barrett's Falco project in Spring Hill, Florida. Above: Leon Boizot's Falco takes shape in France.

Wildman, for example—is reading the manual, and it says to install P/N 877, but Pierre doesn't know what kit the part is included in. So he tears through the shipping tickets, looks in boxes, and finally just emails me, and what do I know? I'm just the owner! You need to talk to Susan, who tracks all that stuff!

So I'm planning to create a What's Where index of Falco components, so you can go to our website, look up the part number, and it will tell you what kit the part is in.

Then, moving up the intellectual ladder, let's say a mechanic is working on a Falco and wants to locate a part. With automobiles and major aircraft companies, this sort of information is typically provided on microfilm, so the mechanic flips through 'pages' of a manual, looking at exploded assembly drawings until he identifies the part visually and then gets the literate people in his office to actually write down the information, and order the parts.

That's the same sort of thing I'm thinking about creating on the Falco website. Exactly where and how we do it, I'm not sure, but I will be looking for feedback and suggestions from all of you.

We will also be including late-breaking news of parts that have just come in. After an interminable delay, we finally have airspeed indicators here, and we expect to have manifold pressure/fuel pressure gauges shortly. We will be adding these to the instrumentation kit and they will be available separately as well.

And finally, I would love to have more of you in the Falco Workshop on our website. We're all in this together, and we all benefit by an ever-enlarging Falco world, so please send in photos of your project and a bit of news about yourself. I always would like to have a photo of you with the airplane, since seeing what each of us looks like adds so much to the appeal.

—Alfred Scott

Sawdust

- Getting your priorities straight [from the Jackson Hole Daily, July 9-11, 1999]. Either the horses or the husband has to go! Three paso fino mares. \$3900. Or one lazy, know-it-all husband, FREE (the horses are a better deal). (307) 886-9420 evenings, (307) 885-5788 days. Monica

- At the Paris Air Show, Naples-based VulcanAir announced that it has restarted the production of the Stelio Frati-designed SF.600A Canguro turboprop utility twin, rights to which they acquired from SIAI-Marchetti when it was absorbed by Aermacchi. Three aircraft are currently being built. A single-engined version of the Canguro is also in development, to be powered by a Czech Walter M-601 turboprop. VulcanAir expects to have

a prototype flying in early 2000, and to achieve certification in mid-2001.

- Two new Falcos should fly shortly. Andre Bauby should be flying by the time you get this at the Aerodrome de Longueville, France. And Andrea Tremolada's Falco has already flown (albeit under a helicopter while being transported to the airport) and should fly under its own power in August.

- Model builder. If you haven't seen it yet, check out Al Dubiak's photo album in the Falco Workshop at www.SeqAir.com. It's easily the most extensive set of construction photos we've published to date, and the construction sequence is the same as described in the Falco Construction Manual, indeed, we plan to illustrate new chapters to the manual with these photos.



He sold it: Steve Wilkinson has sold his Falco to Bob Hendry, of Portland, Oregon. Why? He wasn't flying it that much, was working on a Porsche for his daughter. We've hardly seen the last of Steve, so don't worry about losing contact. Seen here are Susan Crandell and Steve at the Great Oyster Fly-In.

Susan's Corner

I'm still up to my elbows in ordering and stocking parts. I know you guys get frustrated with me at times, when I can't get a part quite as quickly as you'd like, but believe me, I'm giving it my level best. Just hang in there and I'll get the backordered parts to you as soon as I can.

I had a note from Bob Brantley saying that he has a set of the Chin 5.30 x 6" 4 ply rated tires with tubes that he'd like to sell for \$40. If you're interested, contact Bob at rpbrantley@email.msn.com.

We still have golf shirts, T-shirts and hats available, for those of you that haven't ordered yours yet. And speaking of hats—we had a complaint about the button on the top of the cap interfering with wearing a headset. Well, the button will pry right off, and it has no effect on either the looks or the construction of the hat. That one was easy to solve!

I frequently get asked the question from new builders, about a complete plywood materials list, and I always feel bad that I don't have one. So... how about one of you guys that has already figured it out, send it to me and we will post it in the Falco Skunkworks on our web page.

I'm just back from vacation, refreshed and renewed, and what a great vacation it was. I travelled back to the homeland (which is Maine for those of you that don't already know) to visit with family and friends. 46° nights and 70° and 80° days, no humidity and a sweet breeze off the ocean—that's easy weather to enjoy... and become accustomed to. Unfortunately, I had to come back to 90% humidity and a heat index of 110°! UGH!

That's it for this time guys. Alfred says this is going to be the fastest Builder Letter on record! And just remember—try to keep the number of your landings equal to the number of your takeoffs.—Susan Stinnett

Calendar of Events

West Coast Falco Fly-In. September 16-18, 1999 at Durango, Colorado. Contact: Fred Doppelt (970) 884-0843, email: fredd@animas.net or at 298 Mushroom Lane, Bayfield, CO 81122

Oshkosh 2000. Plan now to attend the 45th Birthday Party for the Falco. All Falco owners are ordered to attend. Expect a massive turnout—Stelio Frati says he will be there.

Mailbox

I got some unpleasant news a few weeks ago. I was told I had a lung tumor, I thought then that I was a goner with only a few weeks to go. I must admit I got a dreadful fright, I did not think it was an opportune time to go, only one year after retirement. Luckily the latest info, after tests, X rays, MRI's, biopsies, (the latter not fully finalized), seems to indicate that the situation may be recoverable. A couple of ribs reduced and meat removed. Probably chemo or radio treatment. I don't look forward to going bald.

The initial report panicked me to get the plane painted so that my wife could sell it. I, prematurely, asked all my Falco friends to help in getting it ready. The response was overwhelming. After years of being told that I was a selfish bastard, everyone hated me and my plane, so many people contacted me that even though I had taken the previous comments with a dose of salt, I was surprised and very, very grateful.

My wife, with whom I have lived for 42 never-dull years, is a magnificent woman, a rock, bloody hard if you contact her at speed, but the poor woman is suffering my pain as well as her own, and the terrible things I do to her. The drugs I am being fed are turning day into night, and I cannot sleep at nights and as a result neither can she. Luckily we have a family who seem to like us and give us enormous support, I cannot understand why. The older we get the more I appreciated the old battle-axe.

It seems that we builders, obsessed and single-minded though we are, are a very tight and caring bunch. Stuart Gane, Dick Marks, my old model aeroplane pal Basil, other builders like Bob Gardner, perhaps the daddy of local builders (he has 4 or 5 under his belt) and our local Strut Coordinator, Richard Wakeford all pitched in with help, encouragement and advice where ever possible. Dave, who painted the plane, was asked, with black humor, if he would come to my funeral, Well, only if the booze was free. Someone said that we builders are not only egotists but along with it we have a decent streak. They could be right.

My Falco, which I enjoyed flying too much to waste time painting, is now looking respectable. More than that, it is looking good, nowhere near as spectacular as Stuart Gane's but no longer offensive. Thank goodness Stuart will stop pissing me off now about letting the side down. You Yanks have no idea how beautifully he has built his aircraft. The guy automatically picks up awards wherever he goes.



Seen in Europe: Stuart Gane continues to accumulate awards, while irritating Charles Wagner—always a worthy cause.

I am promised a 5-kt increase in speed due to the smooth finish, I have, eventually, decided to listen to Bob and others and re-design and speed up the ram air carburetor intake. I do not intend to copy Neville's first design which looked like an elephant's dick in anger. I did not think that I would start wanting to win knots at every opportunity but I am beginning to go that way. I am getting 135 kts at 23/2300 with a huge 58 square-inch Bracket air filter stuck on the front.

*Charles Wagner
Glasgow, Scotland*

Sen. James Inhofe
458 Russell Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Inhofe:

I'd promised a couple of hours ago to send you photos of the Falco aircraft that I am selling, but upon sober thought and the too-slowly growing realization of exactly who you are, I've decided that I can't possibly sell the airplane to you. Not because you're a conservative Republican and I'm a lifelong Democrat but because you're 1/ a high-profile individual, 2/ assumedly a lawyer, and 3/ someone who is interested

in letting his children fly the aircraft, perhaps even together.

If this were a certificated production aircraft, I wouldn't hesitate a moment in negotiating with you. But I am the builder, the "manufacturer" of this airplane, and I am the "mechanic" who has maintained, repaired and annualized it as authorized by the FAA repairman's certificate I hold as the airplane's homebuilder. Any inexplicable failure of the airplane's structure or engine would come home to roost on my shoulders.

Over the years, I have built a substantial enough estate for my 15-years-younger wife and our daughter that I daren't risk it. Obviously, I'd be liable even if I sold the airplane to an illiterate plumber, but to consider selling it to a United States senator with a legal background is pushing it.

Nothing personal. I wouldn't have sold it to John Denver either. My apologies for taking the time you expended and calling me and pursuing the *Trade-A-Plane* ad; at least I get out of it an amusing story to tell at dinner parties.

*Stephan Wilkinson
Cornwall-on-Hudson, New York*