

# Falco Builders Letter



## Circumcision by Sawzall

The Deliberate Destruction of a Falco

by Mike Wiebe

I have owned two Falcos in my life. One I built. The other I destroyed. This is the story of the one I destroyed.

My love affair with the Falco started in the early 80's, when Dad and I first discovered it on a trip to Oshkosh. My father was a prolific builder, and I became partner on many of the later projects. It's not brava-do to say that the Falco was the crowning achievement for Wiebe Aero. If you're interested, here's the story of the first Wiebe Falco. <http://www.seqair.com/Hangar/Wiebe/Wiebe.html>

As to the second Falco, many early parts of the story can also be found on the Sequoia

Aircraft website. It's worth reading. The short version is this. In 1989 Rex Hume built a very nice example of the beast, with a 180 HP carbureted engine and his own formed aluminum cowl. In spring 2008, he sold it to Simon Paul, who equipped it for

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ferrying back to his home in the Netherlands. On a nine hour leg from Winnipeg to Goose Bay, Simon had a mechanical failure while flying IFR somewhere between "A Rock" and "A Hard Place" in Nowhere, northern Canada. Open Fore-flight or your favourite map browser to identify the town of Geraldton Ontario for a sense of where Simon was. He ended up surviving a descent through cloud, ditching the airplane in a river and swimming to shore where he was rescued. It's amazing that Simon didn't sink in the river, given the weight of all the horseshoes he obviously had up his butt to make it this far.

Bob MacCallum — a Toronto area Falco advocate — and my dad Jack drove some 16 hours to the area with the intention of salvaging the aircraft. Though both have deep woods experience, they couldn't get to the site by ground because of the terrain. However, they did find it by air, floating



in the river, after getting a ride in a local forest fire spotting plane. Even with that information they were unable to reach the aircraft by ground. After about four days of trying, they drove home. Soon after, Recon Air — a world famous rebuilder of de Havilland Beavers and Otters, and a local company — went in by canoe to recover the engine and secure the aircraft for later recovery. That winter, Recon recovered the remainder of the aircraft by snowmobile. In spring 2009 the whole project ended up in Bob MacCallum's shop near Toronto, not far from my home. The full history is worth reading at the Sequoia website. See <http://www.seqair.com/Hangar/Hume/IntoColdWater/IntoColdWater.html> and all the

subsequent links. In the last decade, Dad and I have kept in touch with Bob, visiting occasionally to see his slow but well planned recovery efforts.

In late 2018, Bob passed away, which left a soggy Falco to deal with. I learned about Bob's passing from Alfred, who had gotten a call for help from Bob's wife Anne, and who thought I was the man for the job. Having met Anne a few times, it was easy to go visit, have a coffee, reminisce and see what I could do to help her out. It really wasn't my objective to buy another Falco. Famous last words...

It was always Bob's intention to build a Fal-

co. But Bob was an engineer and a man of many projects and a big shop. His first love was cars — building them and racing them. His wife and daughter — who also race cars and volunteer as track stewards and race coordinators — had their hands full. They didn't yet know what they would do with the rest, but if I was to remove the Falco that would be a start. I went to the shop. From the milling equipment to the woodworking equipment to the electrical experiments to the two vintage 1970's era Lotus Elan's (disassembled...not surprisingly...), Bob's shop was the envy of any builder of stuff. The 50 x 60 foot space looked like one of those wooden puzzles where you have to move one piece to make room for the next one to move. Except there wasn't any open space to make the first move. Enter the tool of choice — the reciprocating saw, a.k.a. Sawzall.

Now, any man (sorry ladies...) who has built an airplane, in particular a Falco, has probably just sucked in their breath and crossed his legs, knowing exactly where this story is headed. The affront I was about to commit on a beautiful — albeit waterlogged — wooden creation would not be unlike the Lorena Bobbitt affair of 1993. Take a deep breath....

But let's back up a bit. As noted previously, Bob fully intended to build a Falco. He saw the Hume/Paul project as a) an example to learn from, and b) a collection of non-wood parts to re-use. So he did couple of smart things before stashing the project away. First off, Recon had preserved the engine and prop as soon as it was out of the water. With Bob's engine experience, it wasn't difficult for him to disassemble it, check everything and package it away

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nicely for a future rebuild. He also uncovered the cause of the engine failure that led to this chain of events — a broken control arm on the carb heat box.

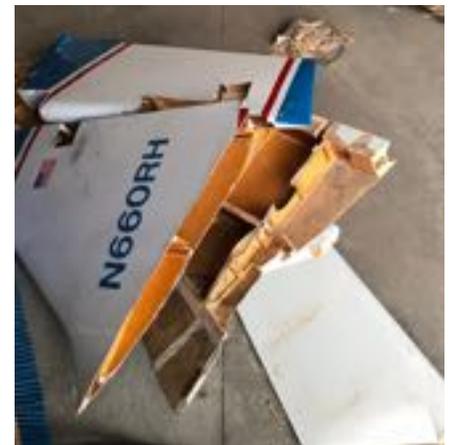
Bob also cleaned up some of the other critical metal parts, and was successful in operating both the gear and the flap mechanism, again with the intention of preserving them for his later use. It's remarkable to see even now how little mechanical damage was to the aircraft. This is a testament to both the strength of the Falco design



and Simon's clear skill in an emergency situation. I fly a float plane, and I think some of my legitimate water landings are worse than Simon's Falco-boat. As I pull the project apart I have so far found one rod end broken off a small pushrod associated with closing the main gear doors. Rex had hammered the cowling out of metal rather than building fiberglass, and that also took a bit of a beating. Though I imagine most of that damage occurred either dragging the plane to shore in the fall or carting it out by snowmobile in the winter. The most unfortunate damage was from a tree that fell on and broke the canopy while the plane was sitting beside the river waiting to be brought out.

But alas, the wood. Many years had passed with the project sitting in Bob's shop. During that time it had clearly dried out nicely. So nicely that for a brief moment I fantasized about rebuilding the engine and going flying. That dream stopped when I grabbed a corner of the aileron and peeled the finish back from the wood ply. I'll steal a paragraph from Bob's article at the time of recovery. It explains the situation well.

*"The Falco unfortunately didn't much like being submerged in water. A large number of the glue joints have failed and the structure, especially the lower surfaces, are pretty sad. The whole of the fuselage bottom and most of the lower wing surfaces are totally devoid of paint and the fiberglass covering. The adhesion has failed and whole sheets of the finish have come away leaving the bare wood exposed. Glue joints on the ribs, the longerons and those securing the skins to the lower surfaces have all failed leaving the structure very un-structural. The good news: Mechanically everything has*





*survived. The prop is intact, undamaged. The engine must have been stopped and the blades horizontal on touchdown. The engine is completely intact and in good condition. It does not appear to have suffered from its 'dunking' and I have just finished dismantling it for inspection. There is no rust or physical damage to any of the engine components that I have been able to find so far. The only slightly dicey things were that many fasteners were very loose, and one of the pushrod tube retainer clips inside the rocker box of #2 cylinder had fractured leaving the exhaust pushrod tube unrestrained."*

After that brief flirtation with rebuilding, Bob's wife Anne and I were back to square one. And that Sawzall. Needless to say that one can dismantle a Falco with wood-working tools much more quickly than one can build it. My goal was to preserve any reusable (that is, non-wooden) part. So I started to cut one-foot circles of wood around every hinge and pulley I could find. In about three hours I had a stack of control surface remains and some clear outlines of wings and tail pieces that were still distinctly Falco-ish. They went to the dump. I also had boxes of "wood chunks and metal fittings" that would make good winter project work at home.

This was all happening in early January

2019, but we were lucky that there had not yet been a lot of snow. So the decision was made to leave the cockpit area intact for transport to my cottage (to be dealt with in warmer weather) and to bring the boxes of parts home for further clean-up. A buddy and I loaded up the trailer for the drive to the cottage. At a stop at McDonald's for lunch a breathless young man burst into the restaurant, picked us out of the crowd as the most likely culprits, and demanded to know what the hell we were doing with part of a Falco in a trailer unceremoniously driving in the snow. Apparently that is no way to treat a creation of the great Frati! It turns out he was an aeronautical engineer who had studied Frati in school and had recognized the clean lines of the Falco as he was driving by. We all had a good laugh over the likelihood of him seeing his first real Frati airplane under such circumstances. At the end of two long days, the cockpit sat safely in my cold seasonal workshop at the cottage, while most of the other parts (including the engine) sat in my warm shop at home in the city.

Fast forward to fall of 2020. Apparently as an engineer, I also have too many projects. So it has taken the isolation created by the COVID-19 virus for me to finally

get around to the rest of this project. It's quite cathartic to sit at a workbench to disassemble and catalogue parts of a Falco, while contemplating their ultimate resurrection. Much more relaxing than the damned Sawzall experience. In general, the various fittings survived quite well, with almost zero corrosion. However, the same can't be said of the AN hardware. Nothing broke during disassembly, but I will have to source new nuts and bolts. As noted originally by Bob the engine and prop look good, though I'm still going to measure the various parts to be sure. Dad has offered to rebuild it for me. That'll be interesting to see now that he's living in a retirement residence. The canopy is toast courtesy of that tree in the woods, but the frame and remaining canopy hardware are intact. Fuel tanks are good. So on and so on.

But my dilemma is this. They say that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and expecting a different result. I would modify that slightly. We were very happy with our first Falco. Therefore if I were to build a second Falco, I would strive for the same result, not different. However, if I were to do the same thing over... that is, build another Falco... while expecting the SAME result, that would be



double insanity! It was tough the first time. But shouldn't it be easier the second time? I approached my wife Lee Anne to help me contemplate this dilemma. This is the same Lee Anne that has helped in various ways as "Team Wiebe" (Dad and I) built 10 aircraft — mostly from scratch — over about thirty-five years. After a brief contemplation she informed me that I have a lot of Falco parts for sale. See? Decisions are easy when you approach the appropriate advisors.

If you're interested, let's talk. In theory, I have everything except the canopy glass and the fiberglass cowling. Virtually all the control surface hinges, landing gear, etc are in very good shape. Most have been stripped and repainted or alodined, though all the AN hardware will need to be replaced. For the person who doesn't want to build metal parts but doesn't mind buying AN hardware, this would be well worth it. The engine is a 180HP O-360 AIA (carbureted). I know nothing

of its history and the surviving paperwork offers little. As an engine expert, Bob made a good assessment of the engine in his initial teardown article, and I'll be making measurements shortly. The Hartzell prop was new when the airplane first flew. That means it has a total of about 700 hours.

For the right buyer, I'll even throw in a lightly used Sawzall. It feels dirty now when I touch it.



Here's a sampling of what is available. See full listing at Falcos for Sale at [www.seqair.com](http://www.seqair.com).

## Garmin G3X Touch in Falco

by Dave Thomas

In 2017 I started to think about installing an 8.33 spacing radio in my Falco (mandated by the CAA), We had also found since first flight in 2005 that airspace in Great Britain was getting more conflicted. This was causing more concern since the CAA was becoming more officious, with more fines and a 'you're guilty until proved innocent' approach. Consequently we decided to upgrade to iPad navigation using (the popular in UK) Skydemon. This was installed on a mini iPad sat on our laps, and gave us notams, and weather as well as navigation for our flight. Eventually we determined our new navigation system would be in a better location, in front of us on the panel. Have you tried juggling a mini iPad, folded maps and pilots log all on your lap?

One thing lead to another, and we determined the only way to clear space on the panel would be to install a modern EFIS system. This placed flight and engine information in front of us, leaving space for a mini iPad to the left of the Falco radio stack. The choice finally came down to

Garmin G3X Touch system because at the time of planning the Garmin system seemed the most likely system to be able to be approved by LAA for IMC flight, and we already had an application in for assessment with the LAA.

In addition the Garmin system looked likely to be approved with the G5 instrument as a back up instrument, clearing more instrument space, because three mechanical instruments could be deleted. Of course this means the aircraft would have to be 'all electric,' however we had always had a small B&C SD8 back up alternator on the engine vacuum pad, so this didn't seem to present to many problems.

The essence of the new instrument panel was 'minimal alterations' however a new layout drawing had to produced and include not only what it looked like from the front, but also the back, because switches and instruments are most often larger behind, than in front! Eventually my boss, James was co-opted and produced the final layout in Solidworks. Then the file was sent off to a work contact and the panel produced by laser cutting and was then powder coated in the works. I drove 'up north' and collected the new panel about three months after starting design.

Ordering the Garmin instrumentation was a surprise, because I discovered that no parts were held in the UK (at the time) and everything was on one to three months back order. However patience had already been learnt many years before with Falco building, and knowing that all the instrument panel wiring would have to transferred from panel to panel, I decided to cut a temporary panel from timber to mount the Garmin elements and construct the Garmin wiring loom. This took approximately a month of evenings and some weekends (bad weather days).

My idea was to minimise downtime. Eventually. Just before Easter 2018, with some help the old panel was removed, weighed and major destruction commenced. No turning back now!

New electrical wiring diagrams were drawn up, and all electrical parts were installed in the new panel. Starting at the bottom, and with the CB's, all the Falco original wiring loom went back in with amendments and re-use / re-allocation of certain of the wires in the original loom.

The original intention had been to re-use the original indicator lights in the new panel, that proved quite difficult, and so



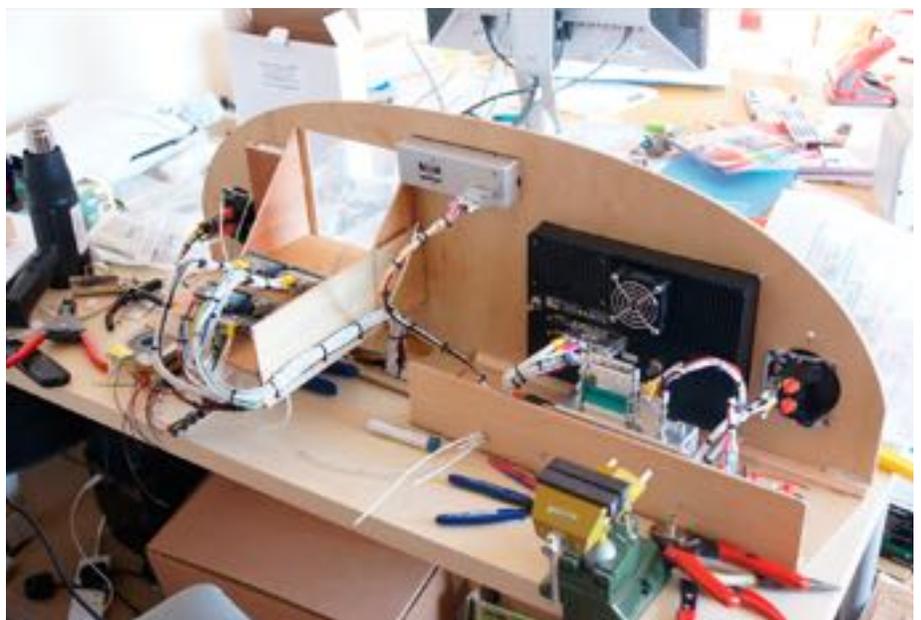
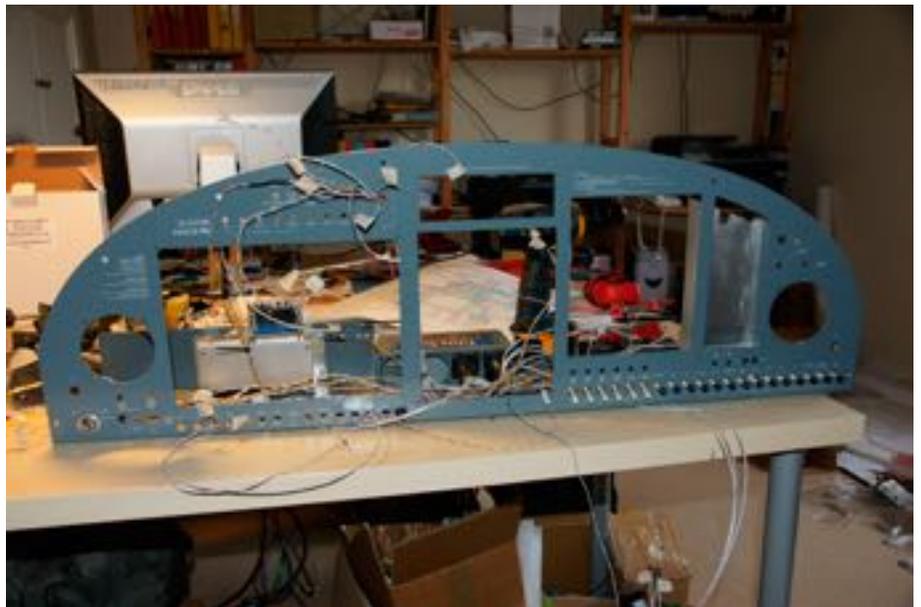
the decision was made to substitute more modern LED indicator lights. This led to another change, in that the original indicator lights couldn't be dimmed, whereas the new ones can — by way of a pulse width modulator and mosfet installed on a common ground circuit. One twist of a knob and all indicator lamps dim together.

It took approximately 1½ months to install everything in the new panel, and to test it on the bench. However, that's when all my problems started! Installing the new panel in the plane with help again went well. However, a number of elements when connected in the plane didn't operate as expected! One of those involved a re-allocation of one of the cables in the gear circuit for warning on the G3X touch. However, what I hadn't realised, and didn't discover for a long time was during the amendment, one other cable had dropped off a connection and was sitting in the bottom of a very dark (between the seats) tunnel and the gear would come up, but not go back down!

Finally, after a month or more we got to flight testing. At which point we discovered after a few turns and manoeuvres big red crosses over lots of the instruments. This was traced to me having to move the magnetometer. I had had trouble with interference, and finally got it to work mounted under the baggage shelf. For expediency I had mounted it upside down, but pointing the right way. Wrong. Although not mentioned at the time, the magnetometer must be mounted right side up, pointing the right way. Later, we had problems with the automatic switching between G3X Touch and the G5 back up instrument. This caused me to remove the panel and bench test it at home. More than several calls to Garmin, and eventually Andrew at Garmin duplicated my installation in his office, and guess what — his installation did exactly the same thing. This led to a wiring amendment, and a firmware update.

Part of the installation involved removing my Trutrak wing leveler, and replacing with a roll and pitch Garmin installation. This meant I had to get approval for the pitch servo installation from LAA. With help from Angus, and Alfred, with his new drawing A17 approval was granted. I was lucky with the aileron servo because I obtained a capstan servo from Garmin, and this only required a slightly revised mounting plate, cut to accept the slightly different shape of the Garmin servo.

Because of the extent of the installation, and time of sitting on the ground (about



four months), I decided that having a well qualified pilot, and co-pilot/ test flying buddy was a good idea and my very good friend Peter Grist (who started the aircraft build around 1985, and undertook first flight in 2005) kindly volunteered. Peter is an instructor at a local airfield as well as being a member of the precision pilots association. Who says that Falco's don't lead to long term friendships.

Good thing he volunteered too, because after test flying for a month or so I was informed that my wife and I would both need differences training to fly our old aeroplane, because it was now new with a shiny new EFIS. In Britain we would need to be signed off for differences training before we could fly our Falco. A call to the local flying school elicited the information that we could be signed off by flying their Garmin equipped Cessna 172's at approx £1000 each. Not happening, I thought. A call to the LAA's chief coach elicited the comment, yes we can do it on your aeroplane, but you have to get the full permit before we can undertake the coaching required. So we flew with the test permit until the autopilot installation could be signed off, and then undertook differences training through the LAA coaching scheme, with Dave Evans, who did the test flying of Angus' new falco. And it was MUCH cheaper than the local flying school. He was a new coach at that time, and he was brilliant. A great experience for both of us. It took us a year from first installing the panel in the plane to reaching this mile stone.

Incidentally, I understand that there is a push to encourage green electric aircraft, but in Europe we will all have to undergo differences training before we can fly them!

It took us nearly six months to complete the flight testing required for the autopilot installation, a lot of this was due to installation problems with the Garmin system, rather than any problem associated with the autopilot itself. Indeed the autopilot is an incredible piece of kit design. It will climb to a preset altitude at a preset IAS, or VSI setting, and it holds altitude to better than 20 ft — well better than 10 ft mostly. It flies the plane with more accuracy than I can, and on a long trip (we took the aeroplane around Europe twice last summer) it leaves you much more time for monitoring the maps and dealing with ATC. We even tried it in (inadvertent) IMC and it doesn't seem to know it's in cloud!

The end result is I hope a panel that follows all the work undertaken by Alfred, and updates it to conform to the modern standard of EFIS. Even 15

years ago, when we first completed the aeroplane we could never have dreamed of the capabilities we now have built into our plane.



## Hard Dried Cow Pat

by Graeme Lean

There is a saying about pilots who fly retractable gear aircraft, 'there are the ones who've had a gear failure and those who haven't — YET'. This weekend I joined the first group.

I'd flown to a grass strip in a cow paddock for a fly-in breakfast, something I do regularly. This time I took a 'short cut' to the area where the aircraft were parked when the nose gear collapsed with an oh-sh#t, expensive silence as the motor died with the prop strike.

It appears that the cracked ground from the drought had set up a vibration and then contact with a hard, dried cow pat had caused the gear to bounce out of the overlock position and the rest is history.

The hard part was watching the ultralight blokes leaving in their fixed gear aircraft with smug look on their faces.

On the positive side nobody got hurt, and the wonderful side of the aviation fraternity shone through. I've been given hangar space at the strip to store the plane. People gave us a lift home (2.5 hrs drive). And when I went back to remove the engine yesterday one very kind gentleman drove an hour and a half to bring an engine hoist and help me remove it.

Estimates are six to eight weeks for engine overhaul and propeller replacement. An engineer with an ex-QANTAS milling machine has offered to turn out the screwjack and adjustment screw.

I'm planning to machine a bit more overlock into the gear.



## Giulio Meroni

by *Andrea Tremolada*

Giulio Meroni is the person who helped to turn one of my dreams into reality. He was a patron, a visionary, an entrepreneur, but above all a unique, unexpectedly generous friend.

Fate brought us together. It was around six in the afternoon of a Sunday in July 1996, when I found myself stuck in Sardinia with an old plane whose engine didn't want to start. The only way to go back to Milan was on an airline flight.

Being on the stand-by list, I was the last passenger to board and took the last available seat, which happened to be next to a man whom I immediately started to compete with, in a silent, relentless elbow battle over the seat armrest. When he unbuckled, after taxiing and take-off, he dryly turned to me and said that because he was a few years older than me, I had to respect his seniority: the armrest was his, and his only! Welcome Mr. Meroni!

We were two of a kind: We could hate each other, or become friends. We became friends. The flight went by quickly, we spoke about our lives while his wife Vanna, sitting in the next row, occasionally engaged in our conversation. At the time I was working for Versace, while he was the founder and president of an Italian furniture design company called Meritalia. I told him that I had started building a small plane in my garage, that I loved wood and mechanics, cars, speed, design. We found many common passions, and before leaving the plane he gave me his card and invited me to visit his factories.

A few weeks later, one of his trucks was in the backyard of my house and all the Falco pieces built so far and all the kits were moved to Meritalia, where he had made available to me his best woodworkers, Epifanio and Giovanni, as well as his shop director, Giuliano Caimi. I ended up driving them crazy for the two years it took to build the Falco.

We inaugurated the plane in June 1999. My mother, who had participated in the early stages of the construction, was at the hospital in the final stages of her illness. I was able to have her taken by ambulance, and two weeks later she flew away.

Over the following years, Giulio and I developed deep esteem for each other and, on my side, unlimited gratitude. We would often call or see each other, but our best meetings were the unexpected ones, like the very first one: once on a flight to Moscow, a few times in airports around the world, in New York or



*Andrea Tremolada and Giulio Meroni*

Hong Kong, and even driving on the highway, overtaking each other at high speed (he was a car collector and owned cars I would have died for). And each time there were hugs and kisses and smiles and the true joy that only veritable friendships give.

The last time I saw him, I was on my way to the airport to fly to Puglia, in the south of Italy. For some reason, he suddenly came to my mind while I was passing by the cancer hospital. I called him, but his wife Vanna picked up the phone: Giulio was in the final stage of his illness, and he was right there, in that hospital. I asked her his floor and room number: it was the same floor, the same room where my mother had died years before.

I turned the car, parked it in the middle of the street, entered the hospital. The smell and colors of those hallways opened a sinkhole of memories in my mind. My heart was devastated while I climbed the stairs, in an instant I was in his room. It was like having a knife in my stomach, I opened the door and there he was. I knew too well all this already.

Vanna was with him, I took his hand and Giulio opened his eyes, woke up, a miracle! We recalled our memories, my crossing of the Atlantic, he asked about my job, we spoke of new projects, even about our future together, and then we hugged like two old, very close friends. I closed that door and I walked away home, literally forgetting the car, and that I was supposed to leave for southern Italy.

He climbed to heaven the following morning, on July 7, 2013.

There is no flight on the Falco, especially when I am alone on board, that I don't feel his elbow pressing hard against mine.



Andrea and his mother with Vanna and Giulio Meroni



## Kelly Eberle

My dad owned a silver Cessna 170 tail dragger. He flew it a lot when he was younger and logged over 3000 hrs. I never got to go for a ride or even see the airplane in person as I was too young. What I did get was all the great stories of his flying adventures and the comments from Mom that she was scared to death on several occasions.

That was it for me, I was hooked. I started with plastic model airplanes and graduated to gas powered control line models. At age 22 I received my private license flying in Reading PA and wanted to fly for the airlines. My best friend (Skip) and I decided that a bachelor's degree would help us get the airline jobs.

So, we moved to Florida and enrolled at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in 1981. Between classes at the library I picked up an aviation magazine one day and saw the advertisement for the Falco F8L. I told myself, someday I am going to build that airplane. After two years ERAU wanted \$25000.00 down to enter the flight portion of the program. I was broke, so I switched majors and went into the AMT program and received my Airframe and Powerplant certificates.

After graduation, Dad wanted me to help him start an equipment manufacturing company, so I figured I would do that for a few years and then start flying again. Well that was 36 years ago, still working for our equipment company. I did start flying again around year 2000 and received my commercial instrument ratings and became a CFII. But then 911 hit and suddenly pilots were no longer in demand. Life goes on and in 2012 My wife (Irina) and I became empty nesters. Now that we were all alone, I started chasing her around the house and eventually she said "Don't you have something else to do?" and I remembered the Falco, now is the time. I purchased the plans from Seqair in 2012 and have been working on the wood parts at home in the garage (my workshop) and the metal parts at our equipment company when time allowed.

The Falco is a great design, and I am thoroughly enjoying the adventure. Each day brings a new challenge, a new jig, a new aha moment, a new oh man I should not have done that. I love working with spruce and birch and the idea that you can create a beautiful airplane with wood and glue is amazing. The drawings and construction manual have made what would seem





impossible to most people a simple step by step process that anyone who likes to work with their hands can accomplish.

It does take time. I am not finished yet, but it is worth it and I am enjoying the journey. Looking forward to the day when I push the throttle forward and this work of art leaves the ground and I can experience the legendary Falco F.8L in the air.

Many thanks to Stelio Frati, Alfred Scott and his team at Seqair and the Falco Association for making this dream possible. And a special thanks to my wonderful wife who allows me to disappear into my workshop from time to time and even lets me catch her now and then. That is fun too!

*Kelly Eberle  
Lewisville, TX*



*This is a good place to show you Simon Foxlee's Falco.*







## Cumberford Martinique

by Robert Cumberford

As a teen-ager in the Fifties I actually started building a sort of cross between French *grand routiers* and a California hot rod, very French in appearance but using American components. Unfortunately for that project, but very good for me, I was hired by General Motors Styling to become one of its designers when I was just 18 years old. That led to a long career as an independent car designer, working in Mexico, England, Italy, and France, where I moved in 1972 pursuant to my long-time interest in the French motor industry. I worked with Renault in the Seventies, and with Peugeot-Citroën in the Nineties, and spent as much time as possible talking with whomever was a participant in the glory days of French coachbuilding.

At the end of the Seventies my younger brother James — then a Fellow at the MIT Sloan School of Management — wrote his thesis on the potential for an independent boutique car company. We mutually decided that whatever we undertook, our car could not be like the ill-fated Delorean, brilliantly designed by Giugiaro, but seriously outdated in style before it finally reached production. It was James, a junior high school student at the time I was working on my “French” car in the early Fifties, who suggested that we just execute

that quarter-century-old concept using a combination of the latest technologies and old-fashioned hand work.

We built prototype cars under the name Cumberford Martinique. The canons of style were fixed as being no later than 1937, but adaptations were made as required for the car to be certified in the US with NO exemptions or waivers. At the time when we were active on the project — 1978-82 — there were no small-volume provisions in the federal automotive regulations. When our project was announced on the cover of *Car and Driver* magazine, we had an influx of orders with 10% deposits, but did not have the capital to enter production, and our principal investor insisted that he should retain 51% ownership.

With that restriction, we could not raise the five million dollars we needed to begin to fulfill existing, primarily because we had in effect been “run over” by the John Delorean cocaine scandal. Thompson-McKinnon, a small brokerage house on Wall street engaged to take the company public, said that it was totally impossible to interest investors in a start-up car company. So we stopped all activity, returned all down payments with interest since we had put deposits into escrow accounts to assure against defrauding any clients. We were not able to revive the project in a timely manner, and of course the constituent parts are no longer in regular production.

The car itself is a distillation of multiple French inputs. The chassis is cast aluminum, as in the Amilcar Compound, Hotchkiss-Gregoire, and of course the Bugatti Type 64, of which all extant examples are in the Mullin Museum in California. The hydro-pneumatic suspension is all by Citroën, specifically from the front of the CX, the tires are from Michelin in their special TRX metric dimensions, the body shapes were developed in the wind tunnel at St. Cyr-l'Ecole (equal to the Porsche 928 S4 in terms of drag coefficient). We like to think the complete project did honor to the people who inspired us.

Ours was the first-ever firm to be able to buy directly from BMW on an OEM basic, and the first to have access not only to Citroën components (Rolls-Royce bought a hydraulic pump) but also factory drawings. Those were supplied on a handshake basis by Raymond Ravenel, head of the firm in 1980, without a contract, because my reputation in the industry was known to the firm.

My brother and I are in the final years of our long and exceptionally exciting — but definitely not particularly remunerative — careers, and we would like to sell our project and its multiple components — designs, drawings, parts, tools, spare chassis and driveline, etc. — to assure a reasonably comfortable retirement.



Texas, early 80s, Georg Kacher from *Auto Motor und Sport* at the wheel.

The pictures you see here were taken between January 1982 and 1987, when two units were loaned to the San Diego automotive museum. The appearance of the complete car is more like a “barn find” today, following the San Diego museum’s disastrous removal to a warehouse with a leaky roof without advising us. It is in need of a cosmetic refreshing, and minor mechanical modifications — anti-lock braking systems were developed by Citroën and could easily be mounted on this car — would be welcome.

There are two Cumberford Martiniques in France, one (#002) is the complete running car used for testing and development which has accrued approximately 50,000 miles on the road. It ran on Connecticut manufacturer license plates, but was subsequently registered in Texas with an assigned serial number stamped into the chassis casting. The #002 car was driven from Stamford, Connecticut to Austin, Texas in 1982 and from Austin to Pebble Beach, California in 1985. The other car is a bare chassis with suspension, engine, and driveline mounted. Both were taken to France (in a shipping container) in 1986, but the complete car was never registered there.

The engine, driveline, and complete wiring harness are 1981 BMW 7-series, the chassis is all cast aluminum, suspension, steering, and brakes are derived from Citroën components. The wooden fenders are three-layer African mahogany laminates over Kevlar-resin wheelhouse moldings. Body skins are aluminum sheet. Wheels are unique to the car, and whether the dies still exists is unknown, but there are certified spares on hand. Western Wheel Division of Rockwell International has been merged and subsumed into a different entity I believe. At the time they were made, these were the strongest wheels they had ever made, to the point that they abandoned testing to destruction. Tires are H-rated Michelin TRX of a size made available to Lincoln, Ferrari, and ourselves. Only Ferrari used them in production, for the Testarossa, but they can still be supplied at roughly \$250 each.

When we built our prototypes we were organized as a company and had obtained a lower quote for liability insurance than either Rolls-Royce or Ferrari from the same insurance broker, based on what they perceived, after a careful study of our practices. We tracked every component, had developed a statistical analysis program for production, etc. We had established from the beginning a policy of



meeting every standard without waivers or exemptions, which satisfied the inspectors.

My brother and I, both now in our 80s, have realized that we are not likely to restore the one car, or complete the other, and we cannot reasonably afford to convey them to a quality restoration house on our own behalf, hence the decision to sell. The two chassis are legitimately in the

European Common Market zone, so can be sold here without customs fees, and as American cars assembled with U.S. duty-paid components we believe they can be returned to the US without duty. We are prepared to sell the #002 car as a separate entity. The separate chassis and associated tooling, drawings, and on-hand components for completion can be considered a separate lot.

# Mike Jerram

The Editor presents a tribute from his friends and colleagues



It is with great sadness we must report the death of Mike Jerram, *Pilot* magazine's longest serving contributor and editor. Latterly 'chief nit-picker' – the title he laughingly gave himself – Mike's first published contribution was, as he described it in an email, 'a moody sunset shot of a Rothmans Stampe, shamelessly aping James Gilbert's photographic style at [US magazine] *Flying*'. At the time Mike was working for a regional newspaper in Hampshire as a journalist/photographer.

'I submitted it and others of similar vein to James's

predecessor, Brian Healey,' wrote Mike. 'They came back by return of post with a curt note that "*Pilot* does not publish this kind of picture". When I saw James's name on the masthead of that April 1972 issue I thought I'd try again. He ran the Stampe shot full-bleed on the Contents page and paid me a vast sum. I don't recall exactly how much, but I do know it paid more than a week's rent on our flat down in Portsmouth, and far more than the local paper had paid me for covering weekend events that the staffers didn't want to bother with (Women's Institute

tea parties, baby contests, non-League soccer etc.)

'On the other hand, and perhaps fortunately, aviation photography did not offer such life enhancing experiences as being attacked by militant students while covering an Enoch Powell speech, and only avoiding injury by swinging my Pentax SV with 200mm lens around my head like a whirling cosh – a trick taught me by one of the staff snappers who was doing the same alongside me.'

The Stampe photo was the first of innumerable contributions that quickly led to James Gilbert

*Above: Obituary from January 2020 Pilot magazine in England.*



recognising Mike's talent and giving him his head, and soon he was producing 'Pilot Notes', stamping his own cynical and witty yet journalistically rigorous style on the magazine's storied news section. Indeed, Mike was highly instrumental in establishing *Pilot's* ethos and the magazine's distinctive voice. He ran the magazine while James was on holiday and, over the years, took on more and more of the departments—the book reviews and, in its early days, 'Old Timers'—and held the title of Deputy Editor until the early 2000s, when a new owner and new editorial team imposed what was happily only a temporary hiatus in his nearly half century long involvement with *Pilot*.

Many of Mike's articles will be remembered by readers—not least the one on what was then Alan Chalkley's Piper J3 Cub, G-ASPS. Among those thus inspired to get a J3 of their own were past Editor Nick Bloom and the current Editor's father. (In a further link to what you might call the *Pilot* family, G-ASPS of course now belongs to columnist and LAA CEO Steve Slater.)



Infamously, another of Mike's pieces brought a threat of a libel suit against *Pilot* from Beagle boss Sir Peter Masefield. However, the threat quickly receded when various former Auster/Beagle folk, including that great Auster exponent Ranald Porteous—a personal friend of Mike's—and George Miles, both of whom he'd spent many hours interviewing, piped up and said, "No, Mike had it

ABOVE: evidence of Mike's abilities behind the lens, from sports coverage in his regional newspaper days to air-to-air photography for *Pilot*

exactly right: Masefield f\*cked it all up!" Of course Mike, being the professional he was, had got his facts right and had reported them honestly and fearlessly, just as he and James Gilbert always did. This approach may not always have been popular, but it won respect. "Curiously, every year thereafter until his death I used to get a Christmas card from Sir Peter," said Mike "so he must have forgiven me". →

## **I-CIRE** **Stelio Frati's Falco**

I take this opportunity to tell you that my Aviamilano Series 1 Falco I-CIRE, which belonged to Engineer Stelio Frati, after a period of machine stopped on the ground for a new Ferrari yellow livery and for an update of avionics now is ready for flight.

*Sandro Rosati  
Carpi, Modena  
Italy*







Fraji signing the Falco



Yellow Livery



Fraji's signature



ICIRE and Sandro



S. Fraji, ICIRE and Sandro - 50th anniversary of Falco, Carpi Airport LIDU



My copilot



## Martha's Corner

Greetings to everyone from the soon to be springtime rolling hills of south central Pennsylvania. Craig and I continue to serve all your Falco needs. We were able to stay open during our state's period of shutdown due to the fact that a repair station is considered essential as "aircraft support". We never considered that your Falco projects were anything less than essential however some wives may or may not agree with that. Until we found out that we were in fact allowed to officially remain open we simply went in through the back door instead of the front door because we had no other employees to put at risk and after all this is still America and particularly PA, where government dictates are not thought of favorably.

Sadly some of our customers in the aircraft industry have really suffered financially from the pandemic and may even have to relocate to find work along with relocating their Falco projects in various states of production. You can imagine the task ahead for them and we do hope that new opportunities open up for them and their families.

While many people lamented the circumstances of 2020 we actually had a great year in that we welcomed into the family three new healthy grandsons. Pics attached. So who can ask for more blessings in one year than that?! At the same time we do send our condolences to anyone who may have experienced devastating loss this past year.

As many of you know, Fred Jiran retired from making the composite components and kits, and we have acquired his molds, tooling and some extra stock. We are looking for a composite shop in the area willing to make these items as they are needed. Covid temporarily put a hold on those plans, but we hope to have news on that in the near future.



There have been several inquiries about P/N 605, Nose Gear Adjustment Screw. We had run out of those and were able to find a local machine shop to CNC machine these, and they are now in stock for anyone interested. We are also having P/N 520-2 Gearbox Housing made, shown here and on the next page.

Along with brand new manufacturing by outside vendors comes price increases for those parts. Not our choice obviously but an unfortunate reality that cannot be avoided.

We continue to offer payment options of credit card, PayPal, Wire Transfer and check and I always look for the most economical methods of shipping and freight available. Contact info remains the same (n46079@comcast.net or 717-246-1200) with the addition of texting to 717-578-0080 (Eastern Time) to possibly make for quicker and easier communication.

With the new year now here and with the virus waning, we wish everyone out there wonderful safe times ahead with family and friends. Happy building, rebuilding, repairing or flying!

*Craig and Martha Gunder  
Red Lion, PA*



Above: Machining the P/N 520 Gearbox



*Here's the P/N 520 Gearbox, now being machined from a solid forged block of 6061T6. There is a limited supply, first come first serve. Get your orders in with Gunder.*

## Susan Rewired

One day Alfred said to me, why don't you share "What I have been up to" since Sequoia closed. Well now if I were 10 years old again, I would have to come up with a really good story for my father and it would have to be the truth. So, here is my true story.

After we shut down Sequoia Aircraft I took a few weeks off to rest. But that was boring and I dusted off my résumé. I was soon employed by a private investment firm as the accounting consultant. That lasted about three weeks. I came home from my office wondering what the heck I was doing! The year before I had a near death experience. What did that teach me? I realized I needed to stop and as they say "smell the roses." So, I decided to retire.

But I am not a "sit still" kind of person. I jumped into some home improvement projects that included a bathroom and bedroom. Yes, I now have a workshop in the garage because I soon learned you needed the right tools to get the job done correctly. I can talk to you about drywall, joint tape, "mud", miter saws, stains, paints, etc. I really enjoy doing the work myself and my collection of tools. I even learned to lay plank flooring through-out the house. I do not touch electrical or plumbing though. I have competent people to do that for me. My husband does not introduce me as his wife anymore but as his contractor. I take it as a compliment!

I have always enjoyed flower gardening and landscaping. But we live on two acres of thick forest inhabited by tons of wildlife. The battle was what to plant that would not be eaten by someone. It was a battle against the natural. I found the solution. I went through the steps of having our little park certified as a national wildlife habit. What did that mean? Well, an entirely different approach to co-habitation with the deer, raccoons, squirrels, opossums, bats, turtles, rabbits, snakes, moles, voles, fox, moths, butterflies, spiders, bees, and all types of birds.

With the certification, we promised to protect them. Nothing dies here intentionally. We use nothing chemical only natural products. We agreed to provide a safe habitat with shelter and water. It has been easy and wonderful and even less expensive. We get good advice from the Federation about what to use "instead of" certain products. My lawn is now moss and stays beautiful year-round. With their help I learned what to plant that would be distasteful to the deer. Also have learned what to plant to encourage bees and butterflies. It is fun and rewarding.

Then, four years ago my husband handed me a bomb. He wanted to create a business



*Susan with her Toyota 86 and her office before and after cleanup.*

that would be a leadership/consulting company. He needed my help. It meant getting it all set up and organized. You know, things like Federal ID number, business license, bank account, etc.

We also had to declare space in the house for his business. That meant I had to also create an office for the business. He does not see clients here but there had to be a defined space. There was only one option.

We had a room over the two-car garage that was used for storage and one corner for his desk. I had to re-do it completely. I have given Alfred before and after pictures. I spent several months working from our dining room table. I had to set up financial software and files and grasp an understanding of what his business was. He and I now share the office space, because he named me his Business Manager! I have business cards again! There is a placard on my desk that says "Boss Lady". Yes, we are still married.

During this process I asked him if I could be rewarded for all my efforts. He thought that was a fair request and asked me what I wanted. I wanted a new car. I had spent years being practical but was tired of that. I wanted to return to my "muscle car" years. I still miss my 1977 Corvette Stingray. I went to the local Toyota dealership and saw a car in the display room. It did not have a name, just a number: 86. I fell in love but it was gone a few days later when I went back to buy it. I was upset! This model is a special order. So, they ordered one for me from the manufacturer. It took four months for it to get to the dealer. I love it!

The car is made for "drifting." I promised my husband that I would not learn to drive the drifting course. It has black and red leather interior and yes, metal foot pedals. Of course, it has all the virtual bells and whistles. What I like most is the engine "roars" and it is very quick. When I took it in for its first check-up, the sales manager asked if I was happy with it. I answered "Oh yes, but there is one big problem." He was taken back and asked with concern what that would be. I smiled and said, "Well it keeps wanting to go over the speed limit." No, I have not gotten any speeding tickets—yet. I think the Falco is still in my blood!

I have a few more projects in process so will be taking out the paint brushes this week and laying flooring in that room next week. I like staying busy. One confession: when I have to complete some type of form and asked if I am "Employed" or "Unemployed" or "Retired" I quickly strike through the "Retired" and write in "REWired"!

Susan Arruda  
Williamsburg, VA  
s.arruda@aol.com



Juri Badalini

## Mailbox

Most everyone gets at least a few highlights in their life... one of mine was meeting you and becoming involved in the Falco experience.

*Al Aitken  
Culpeper, VA  
al8ken70@gmail.com*

An update on Stephen Friend's Falco VH-SBD. As you are aware Stephen passed away a few months back and we had been trying to sell the Falco for him. After his passing I had tried to sell it for the estate with little success. We had a few tyre kickers come and have a fly/inspection over the time. One guy, who previously had owned a Frati aircraft, came a long distance flying a total of four commercial flights to do the check out. After a long flight, aerobatics and exploring the envelope a fair bit he said that it was a great plane, flew well but he didn't like the idea of it being timber. How's that for not thinking it through before coming down!

Anyway, the Falco has now been passed through the estate and handed on to Stephen's brother and nephew. I delivered it to them last week.

So thanks for your interest in SBD and what we were going to do with her, but as I mentioned it has all been sorted.

Hope all is well with you over there. The bush fires around us here have settled down and we now feel a lot safer.

All the best, and once again thank you.

*Drew Done  
Merimbula, NSW  
Australia*

I appreciate the obit for John Harns. John gave a lot of Falco rides to prospective and active builders during the 23 years of the West Coast Falco Fly-ins. My first Falco rides were with John and Jim Slaton at the Sun River Fly-in in 1994. He also graciously assisted new builders and owners in check-out rides for new Falco pilots.

He was a great champion of the Falco and loved to demo aerobatic maneuvers.

I would hazard a guess that he may also have the largest number of Falco hours in cross country trips, although Dave Nason and Doug Henson may be challengers as well.

*Jim Quinn  
Dallas, TX  
Falco N118J built by Jim Slaton*



**Top: Falcos of Drew Done and Stephen Friend. Center and Above: Mike Schuler and Bob Trumbley's Falco.**

**Top and Center: Falco I-TINI is an Aviamilano Series II Falco.**

**Bottom: Falco D-ENIB is an Aeromere Series III Falco recently restored by Klaus Kalmer in Germany.**

What a wonderful rebirth, Alfred!

Sadly I must convey less welcome news from England and *Pilot* magazine: our great friend and former Deputy Editor Mike Jerram died unexpectedly on 11 November, leaving a great void in all of our lives. Mike was not only a highly-regarded friend and colleague but, together with Editor/Publisher James Gilbert, set the tone and standard for *Pilot* from its early years right up to the 2000s. He was compiling almost a third of the editorial content right up to the very end.

I attach a PDF copy of our tribute. Please feel free to quote any or all of it in the splendid Falco Builders Letter. [see page 19-20]

*Philip Whiteman  
Editor, Pilot Magazine*

It's great to see you back in action Alfred. I look forward to seeing the new Falco Builders Letter soon.

Mike and I are close to engine startup and preparation for final inspections and first flight. Its been a long but very rewarding experience getting to this point. Now we are looking forward to actually reaping the benefit of 14 years of learning, sanding, more sanding and now more sanding while I am finishing up with the avionics setup. The paint shop has us scheduled for March so we might get the first flight before then.

We stuck to the drawings for the construction using the "raised" Nustrini canopy change. The biggest changes are in the avionics. We have two GRT 10" HXR EFIS, Advanced AOA and a vertical compass in the panel. The rest of the avionics are mounted remotely on a shelf under the rear fuel tank. No vacuum system – we put a second b/u alternator in place of the vacuum pump. We also have two P-mags on the IO360. A modern panel for a timeless design!

Hope to see you at a Falco event if we ever get through this COVID-19 stuff.

*Bob Trumbley  
Guelph-Eramosa  
Ontario, Canada*

"Don't be afraid of Covid" doesn't seem like the kind of tweet that ages well.

*Kas Thomas  
Costa Mesa, California*



Juri Boddolini



Juri Boddolini



Klaus Kalmer

I thought I'd pass on this photo. I had to update my panel (long story) and installed two Garmin G-5s, love 'em!

Also one of my Falco with two Ferraris, plus some Falco art.

*Duane Root  
Boulder, Colorado*

I noticed my name was mentioned in the letters by David Austin so thought I better respond. Currently just topped 250 hrs of Falco flying in G-OCAD a wonderfully built Falco by David Nowell. Mainly based now in France I have flown extensively around the Med but on occasion get back to the UK and venture up to the Scottish Western Isles; a magical place to fly when its not raining.

The old steam gauges have been replaced by MGL EFIS & autopilot in a carbon fibre panel and electronic ignition. Soon to be replaced are the Whelan strobes with LED lighting all round before next years long distance flying weather returns.

Target this year following the Guernsey Air Rally will be Malta and hopefully Croatia. If anyone is interested I have a friend who can make extremely light weight sun shields for the canopy, and I also have a mold to churn out CF panels.

The panel mold is blank so can be cut to suit, and I have used a Profinish 90g Twill, Soric, 400g twill which makes a substantially stronger panel than the Al equivalent.

I have also skinned the original glass fibre tunnel, air vents, etc to match and sprayed a matt lacquer so as the panel is not reflective.

*David Vale  
iaviate@icloud.com*



*Top: Duane Root's upgraded instrument panel. Center: With two other Italians. Above: From one of the great art galleries of Europe.*

Fast and slow. How can some things be both at once? Time passes slowly (like at work) but races by on the weekend. Years go by but past events seem like they happened only yesterday. The Falco is a fast airplane but is slow to build. I guess everything is relative. I am the definition of slow if you compare my seemingly lifelong project with Karl Hanson's 24 month build time. Oh well, I'm still at it, and I'm still enjoying it.

In case you are wondering, I am making progress. I have a beautifully smooth airframe that makes me want to "throw rocks" at my Cessna. I'm installing lots of parts that most people would have lost after many years and a couple of moves (gee, I saw that axle spacer only 15 years ago...).

We have a monthly open house at Santa Paula Airport where participants open their hangar to show off their toys and qualify for the personal property tax exemptions for airplanes over 35 years old. The reaction to my project is all over the map. The most common question is "What is it?" The second question is the dreaded "How long have you been working on it and when will it be done?" I answer the first question with some history thrown in but the second question, well, I plead the 5th and reserve the right to remain silent. The people who already know what it is have a different reaction. From them it's more like "Wow, that's a lot of work!" or the much appreciated "Bless your heart!"

I am now based at Santa Paula Airport in Ventura County. This is a wonderful, private airport where antiques, homebuilts and airport dogs rule. I am currently fitting wing fillets and installing control system components. Hope to have it sitting on the gear soon.

*Rick Fitzwater  
Santa Paula, CA*



I bought the plans twenty years ago, and some of these photos are from the early days of the project. There are two pictures of my parents helping me pull staples from the skins on the tail; neither of them is with us any longer. There are also a couple photos of my son, who made the wing rib jigs while he was in high school. He has gone on to be a physicist.

*Mark Wainwright  
Los Gatos, CA*



*Mark Wainwright with his parents and son working on the Falco years ago.*



Top: Jurgis Kairys and Jonas Dovydenas in Lithuania with the former swing-wing Falco. Above: Aeromere Series III Falco D-ENYB, later registered G-ATAK in England, now EI-BCJ in Ireland.



*Falco builder, pilot and owner Dan Dorr lives in Santa Rosa, California, up in the hills to the east of the city. The Glass fire stopped about 70 yards away from their house. His Falco is at the airport west of the city, well away from the fire.*