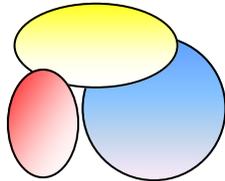




www.bristol-wing.co.uk



Bristol Wings



Newsletter of the LAA Bristol Wing

March 2014

NEXT MEETING—

Our next meeting at 7.45 pm on **Wednesday** and as usual we'll meet in Room 7 at BAWA.

This month John Brady will talk to us about being a Lightning pilot in the 60s, and then move on to the campaigning work that LAA is doing on airspace, airfields, regulation etc. John represents the LAA at NATMAC, the airspace committee which the CAA uses to interface with user groups and he represents the wider GA on working groups dealing with the Future Airspace Strategy. .

Directions to BAWA are available on our website: www.bristol-wing.co.uk



LAST MONTH'S MEETING—Safety Evening

Some 48 members of the local GA community met to hear a presentation from GASCo CEO Mike O'Donoghue and Regional Safety Officer Michael Benson on the organisation's "Safety Six".

They walked us through the stages of a flight, addressing the various factors which contribute to improved safety. We were asked to name what we would least like to be asked to demonstrate during our biennial "flight with an instructor" - and then urged to make sure that we did exactly that!

The level of interaction amongst the audience showed how much the evening was appreciated - many thanks to Mike and Michael.

Those who did not attend are encouraged to look at the GASCo website www.gasco.org.uk/ - and why not take out a subscription to GASCo?

Inside this issue:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Next Meeting: John Brady | 1 |
| Picture Quiz | 2 |
| RAeS Bristol Branch meeting | 2 |
| Where to go? Free Landings | 3 |
| LAA News | 3 |
| CAA News | 3 |
| Bristell NG5 article—Nigel Stokes | 4/5 |
| Of Adventures and Men | 6/7/8 |

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RAeS Bristol Branch

Date: 20th March 2014

Start: 6.30 pm

Subject: Certifying Military Operations

Speaker: Richard Spencer M.Inst.Phys, C.Phys – Certification Manager, Airbus

How do you certify military operations to both civil and military requirements? How do you demonstrate safe operation using equipment that is not part of your aeroplane?

Richard will answer these questions in the context of air-to-air refuelling and aerial delivery. One difference between civil and military is that airlines do not throw their passengers (quickly followed by their luggage) out of the aircraft in flight, although the cabin crew might like to on occasion! In addition, civil aircraft refuel with their feet firmly on the ground! How do you overcome these differences?

Venue: Pugsley Lecture Theatre, Queens Building, University of Bristol, BS8 1TR

(Enter via the main entrance to the building. Turn right at the Porter's Lodge and take the stairs to the first floor (wheelchair users may use the lift). The Pugsley Lecture Theatre is directly in front of you.)

For enquiries contact Alessandra Badino (0751 529 7787, alessandra.badino@airbus.com)

Registration recommended : www.raesbristol.org.uk



Picture Quiz

Last month's Picture Quiz

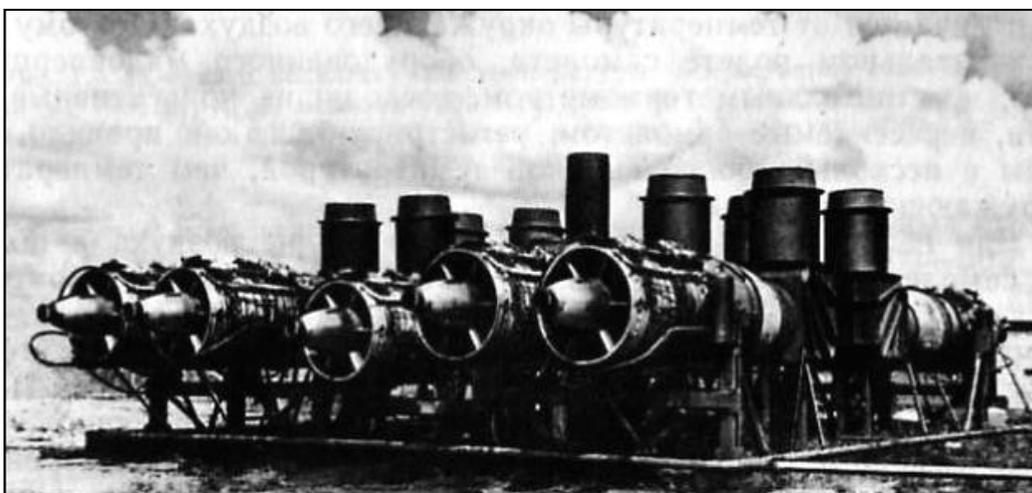
Phil Mathews wrote: "I'd go with Parnall & Sons. Builders of shop fittings, aircraft and gun turrets", but Alan has replied with 'Not nearly enough information!'

Here's what he has:

The factory on the corner of Parnall Road and Lodge Causeway in Fishponds, Bristol was the home from 1907 of a company called Brazil-Straker that made cars and buses. During the First World War they made staff cars and lorries and they diversified into aero engines and parts, many under licence from Rolls-Royce, and designed their own radial engines. The aero engine business was taken over by a firm called Cosmos Engineering who sold off the automotive business that carried on in North London. In the immediate post war period Cosmos went into liquidation and the government 'leant' on the Bristol Aeroplane Company to take on the assets, the radial engine design and the staff including the Chief Engineer Roy Fedden. He set up a works at Filton aerodrome that became Bristol Aero Engines, so you can see that the Fishponds site was the start of what today is the Rolls-Royce factory in Patchway.

Meanwhile a shop fitting company called Parnall & Sons moved into the Fishponds site. During the First World War they too had made aeroplanes in other sites in Bristol and post war George Parnall set up the Parnall Aircraft Company at Yate that made aircraft and gun turrets. Meanwhile Parnall & Sons carried on with shop fitting work and the interiors of ocean liners. When the Second World War arrived they made aeroplane parts using their woodwork skills such as Tiger Moth wings. This continued into the 1950s with the wooden fuselages for de Havilland Venom jet fighters and the interiors for Bristol Britannia airliners.

Well! That's us fully informed now...Thanks Alan. Ed



This month's puzzle picture from Trevor:

"What's going on here?"

Where to go...

Free landing vouchers for **March 2014**

Flyer: Andrewsfield, Cranfield, Fenland, Fife, Haverfordwest, Holmbeck

Pilot: Eaglescott, Enniskillen, Seething, Spanhoe

LAA: Cranfield, Lydd, Shipdham,

Future dates for your diary:

Wessex Strut Annual Fly In - Saturday 19th April

Bonjour Bodmin 3rd & 4th May—A special French weekend—why not come along in French fancy dress?

PPR Bodmin Airfield 01208 821419 or Pete White 07805 805679

Sywel's AeroExpo 30th May – 1st June. Free entry to the show to pilots and passengers, just a landing fee to pay (£10 for single engine aircraft). Slot bookings are at www.sywellaerodrome.co.uk/bookings.php

And looking even further ahead: Thorney Island – Saturday 6th & Sunday 7th Sept Baker Barracks Fly in event,

**I fly because it releases
my mind from the
tyranny of petty things.**

~

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

LAA Education Courses

Rotax: Saturday 22nd March

Jabiru: Sunday 23rd March 2014

Venue: ST Aviation, Southerly Airstrip, Nr Downham Market, Norfolk, PE38 0HS

Cost: £110 (includes refreshments and a hot lunch)

Tutor: David Burnett / Roger Lewis

Time: 9.00 / 9.30am to 5.00 pm

Notes: No landing fees. Local B&B available.

Please contact David Burnett on 01366 377 005

(or david.j.burnett@btinternet.com) for details on accommodation and / or PPR

Welding - one on one courses are available and run by Robin James based in Leominster, Herefordshire.

Cost of course: £240.00. Please contact Robin James direct to book a place. Payment to be made direct to Robin.

LAA Roadshows

Goodwood on May 24/25. Camping on the airfield will be permitted from Friday if you wish to fly in early and the clubhouse will be serving breakfast from 0730 on Saturday and Sunday morning. Food will be available throughout the day and there will be a BBQ on Saturday evening. Visits to nearby Tangmere Military Aviation Museum can be arranged; admission to all LAA members will be at the reduced Seniors rate of £7 regardless of age. Free landing.

The second Roadshow heads north to **Sherburn-in-Elmet** and takes place on **June 28/29**. Further details available soon but again there will be camping and food available, plus free landing.

The final Roadshow heads down to the south-west and will be held in conjunction with Devon Strut's **Dunkeswell Fly-in on July 5/6**. The Roadshow will add further to what is already a fun-packed event. Camping and food available, plus half price (£5) landing fee.

Interesting Internet Links

Here are a couple of internet links which you may find interesting to read:

Having just returned from 6 weeks in Australia I found this 'Letter from and Australian Cattle Station Pilot' quite interesting and funny (Mary) <http://www.pilotsofamerica.com/forum/showthread.php?t=67609>

A five minute Typhoon ride: <http://www.youtube.com/embed/sjvgC1cKOGA>

Attributes to become a successful pilot—'Frightfully British, What!' written in 1918: [Lancet, Sept. 1918.pdf](#)

CAA News

The CAA regularly issues documents affecting us. Below are links to some which may be relevant to some of our members/readers:

CAP 774 – UK Flight Information Services – NOTICE OF PROPOSED AMENDMENT

CAP 774 (UK Flight Information Services) provides the civilian and military Air Traffic Services (ATS) provided in UK Class F/G airspace and associated procedures for pilots, Flight Information Service Officers (FISO) and Air Traffic Controllers (ATCO). **The CAA and Military Aviation Authority (MAA) have conducted a joint review of specific aspects of CAP 774 (UK Flight Information Services) and propose consequential amendments to CAP 774.**

In addition to minor editorial changes and enhancements, the proposed changes are focused on the following areas: **ATS Principles; Traffic information and collision warnings provided to aircraft under a Basic Service;**

Traffic Service and Deconfliction & Procedural Services: Full details can be found on the following link:

<http://www.caa.co.uk/docs/2753/Notice%20of%20Proposed%20Amendment%20to%20CAP%20774%20-%20Invitation%20to%20Comment.pdf>

IN-2014/Transition Altitude Update <http://www.caa.co.uk/docs/33/InformationNotice2014033web.pdf>

CAP 393: Air Navigation: The Order and the Regulations <http://www.caa.co.uk/docs/33/CAP%20393%20final.pdf>

In for a Penny in for a Pound by Nigel Stokes

Well I've committed myself now. I'm embarking on a new affair and most of my chums think I've had a mid-life crisis which, at my age, would be a gigantic mathematical inexactitude. Not for the first time in my life my head has been turned by an attractive prospect and the thrill of the unknown.

I was wandering around the LAA Sywell rally in 2012 and, turning a corner, saw a sensational body on full show. She, a Bristell NG5, invited more than a casual glance, she was sleek and sexy and was asking to be admired. I wanted her and very soon I knew she was perfect for me.



G-STLL owned by the UK importer, Farry Sayah

Earlier that year I had toured France for a few days in a Pioneer 300, G-CEIX, originally superbly built by Frank Bond and now owned by a good friend of mine Roger Andrews. During this French adventure, Roger shared the flying with me and I began to be a little envious of the speed, quietness and comfort of the little Pioneer. None of these qualities could be ascribed to my own aeroplane, a much loved and used Jodel 117, G-BDIH. My wife, Jan', has never been comfortable in 'IH' and its always been a bit of a disappointment to me that we cannot go touring together so, when I saw the Bristell with its generously sized cockpit, good load capacity including wing lockers, sleek lines suggesting quiet and reasonably high speed cruising and a modern engine that promised economical cruise with Mogas, well it was 'game over'.

Only one drawback remained....I would have to build her myself.

I must say, I was excited by the challenge but nervous of my ability, or to be more accurate, lack of it. I was urged on by several colleagues who were present to see my hesitation and it was Frank himself who delivered the

knock-out blow by generously offering his workshop space and enthusiastic morale support.

The Bristell is designed by a Czech engineer, Milan Bristela; an unlikely name given his nationality. He is the designer of the SportCruiser and his NG5 is somewhat similar looking but has had some major under-skin changes, different wing and a subtly different underside, all of which have, apparently, overcome the major criticism of the SportCruiser, that being a rough ride at high speed in turbulence. Francis Donaldson has flown the UK prototype and has pronounced it much to his liking which is certainly good enough for me.

I've chosen a Jabiru 6 cylinder, 3.3 litre, horizontally opposed, air cooled engine. This choice is not without its critics as the official alternative is the ubiquitous Rotax 912. Despite its popularity I've never been an ardent admirer of the 912, I shudder every time it 'seizes' to a halt and I am not keen on carrying around the extra complexity and weight of a gearbox and water cooling apparatus. The Jab' has its detractors but I believe that with the right cooling baffles and outlets, it is a reliable modern product with the two added benefits of more horsepower and a very flat power curve that eliminates the necessity for a 'wobbly' prop'.

Another decision I have made, which causes several of my friends to shake their heads in disbelief at my perceived stupidity, is to choose a tail-wheel version. This decision is compounded in its apparent perversity by the fact that it turns out that I'm the lead builder of this version...anywhere in the world. Oh well, 'in for a penny, in for a pound' as they say.

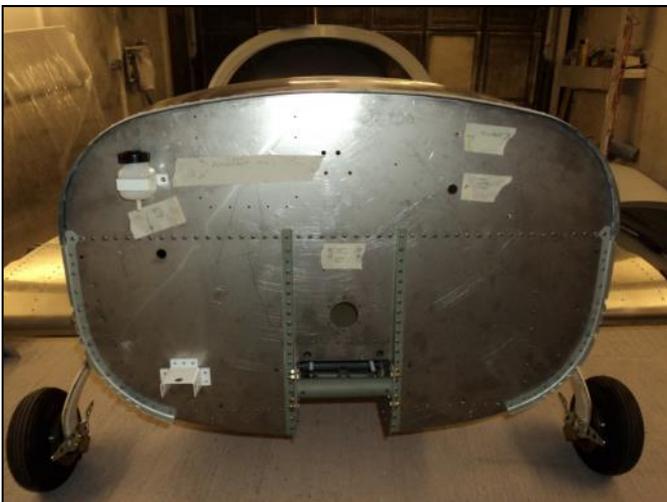


The first tail-wheel Bristell NG5 in the world!

Anyway, my money is now where my mouth is and the kit has arrived.

The importer, Farry Sayah, is a well known SportCruiser guru and champion of the NG5 and is also an LAA in-

spector. My aeroplane construction experience, such as it is, was mainly derived from building KeilKraft kits in the 1950s...and they always warped or crashed! To all my stated misgivings about my ability to complete a full size aeroplane, Farry's response was, "Don't worry, it's a construction not a fabrication kit". In order to prepare it for painting I have done some preliminary work on the rolling fuselage (it comes with the undercarriage already mounted) and, I must say, Farry appears to be right. At first sight the fuselage, wings and empennage appear complete but further inspection shows a number of panels missing behind which I have had to install all the control mechanisms. The runs are quite complicated and, of course, have to be installed absolutely perfectly otherwise they can't be 'signed off' by my inspectors. This has been many hours of work already and I am now able to see that the installation of the engine, all the wiring, all the hydraulics, all the control surfaces and much more, is going to take quite a while. I'm not going to commit myself to any finish date and all questions along those lines I bat back into the long grass; it'll be finished when its finished.



So, starting in February, my first big job, now the partly painted fuselage is safely installed in Frank's garage/workshop, will be to install the engine and cut the highly expensive cowling to fit. Any slight error in the cutting will be on display forever...so no pressure there, then. Following this will be the hydraulic piping which feeds, independently, the left and right main-wheel brakes operated by either pilot's pedals. There is a handbrake too which makes life a bit easier. Then comes the big job, the wiring. With two radios, a transponder, a Skyview EFIS and EMS, GPS, fully functional intercom etc etc, I think this will be my longest running challenge.....but I'm jumping well ahead of myself here.

I'm on a family holiday 6000 miles from my project at the moment so am using the time to design all this electrical and avionic 'gimmickry'.

Now, where did I put that pencil and rubber? oh yes, here under the sunbed.....



OF ADVENTURES AND MEN

*This is an abstract from the autobiography by Rene Fournier, the designer of the RF series of Motor Gliders, to be published later this year and translated from the French by **Graham Clark**. At this stage of the story, the RF-4 series of single-seat motor gliders was in production by Sportavia at Dahlem in Germany, then managed by Alfons Pützer.*

Every day we received news from our customers and one April morning an American turned up at the Sportavia factory from Los Angeles. Mira Slovak was a Boeing 707 captain with Continental Airlines. Fifteen years earlier he had fled from communist Czechoslovakia as the captain of a scheduled airliner and landed in Germany, following which he obtained political asylum in the United States. He arrived there with two shirts and three dollars in his pocket and, overcoming bureaucratic obstacles, resumed his career as an airline pilot. He also became the National Air Race Champion, took part in and won numerous hydroplane boat races including the Gold Cup, the British Columbia Cup, the President's Cup and much else besides. He was obviously an accomplished pilot, but what was he doing here at Sportavia?

Alfons was quickly put in the picture when Mira Slovak unrolled an aeronautical chart. Mira explained he had come here to order an RF-4 on the spot, to have it equipped according to his personal requirements, and then to fly it in stages to the United States.

That represented a 13,000 km trip, much of it across the North Atlantic, Greenland, Labrador and Canada: then an east to west crossing of all North America, right to his home base at Santa Paula, California.

For these long over-water flights he needed to extend the range of the RF-4 from 650 km to 2,000 km by incorporating additional fuel tanks in the wings. Also he needed to install radio navigation aids, and to find sufficient space for survival equipment in case of a forced landing in an inhospitable region. All this would require a 30 percent increase in empty weight, which given its structure the little RF-4 could manage without any risk.

Mira Slovak's project looked to be mad, but appeared to be technically possible.

When Alfons told me about it, I was equally perplexed. But given the fact of Bernard's trans-African flights, did that not prove it was possible, thanks to the robust construction of the RF-4 and its engine?

The modifications were effected by Sportavia and took one month, following which the fully equipped aeroplane was painted white and blue; bearing the name Spirit of Santa Paula given by Mira Slovak, it was ready for the grand departure.

On the morning of 7 May 1968 it was loaded up like a little bomber, and commenced the long take-off run from the grass runway at Dahlem, departing to the West at the hands of its audacious pilot. As we watched it disappear over the horizon, we asked ourselves whether it had been wise to support this project; one which as far as we knew no other aircraft of such low power had succeeded, or even ever attempted.

A little while later he flew over Brussels, the Dunkirk beaches and then suddenly the English Channel was beneath his wings – a canal in comparison with the North Atlantic Ocean, which awaited. Prior to reaching the White Cliffs of Dover he was confronted by a horizon of large black clouds, preceded by heavy rain beating down on his frail little skiff, grey skies blending with the grey sea. Heading for Luton in England, he was

given radar guidance through awful weather but finished this leg of the journey, landing without incident. After a brief stop, and still in rain, he departed for Glasgow, where he arrived five and a half hours later. Here, Mira Slovak had to ask himself if the Weather Gods had decided he should not continue, because the heavy rain continued unabated for five days and nights, transforming the poor little Spirit – which was parked outside – into a fountain. Eventually, on the sixth day, an anti-cyclone formed over Greenland, gradually forcing the bad weather further east. Then came take-off for Stornway in Northern Scotland, where once again the poor little RF-4 was lashed by strong winds and rain. At Stornway a group of 60 people had assembled to witness the arrival of this new Lindbergh. One of them shouted out: "What madman would want to cross the Atlantic in this Micky Mouse aeroplane?" To which Mira simply responded: "Me."

After having submitted the flight plan, dipped the oil and done a thorough pre-flight check, he took off and headed for the North Atlantic. A little while later he was alone, truly alone, over this immense expanse of blue and sombre water, headed towards a piece of land still invisible over the horizon, the Faroe Islands.

It called for real courage to face such loneliness, to take such risks. But Mira did not ask the question; he stuck to his heading and reached the Faroe Islands without difficulty.

The next morning and encouraged by clear skies, he set course for Reykjavik in Iceland. The forecast predicted only a few snow and rain showers at the coast. For more than three long hours there was nothing other than sea and clouds. Then suddenly in the distance there appeared the first snow-covered mountains and the coast of Iceland. From nowhere he was surrounded by a black cloud resembling volcano emissions, but without totally blocking his view, then followed by a snow cloud that he crossed, a few hours later by rain, and then at Reykjavik by a perfectly blue sky. Annoyed at having lost five days in Scotland due to the rain, Mira only took an afternoon to unwind. He went to bed early and was off again the next day at 4 am on the next stage of his flight to Kulusuk in Greenland. This was the longest of his overwater flights, 6 hr 15 min. Heavily laden with full fuel tanks and survival gear, he flew relatively low over the sea. At this height, it looked at first to be fairly calm, until he saw an enormous cargo ship being shaken about 'like a toy in a bathtub'. He concluded that the wind was very strong and he would not be able to reach Kulusuk in the estimated time. He asked himself how long he could survive if he had to splash down in this raging and icy sea. He was overcome by a strange feeling; was his life not suspended by this little motor that he could hear humming away, just like the beat of his heart? He reasoned that although he had all the necessary survival equipment, which rescuers would need to find him, he thought that even so their chances were not great. He flew on for three hours through this loneliness, storm clouds, snow and sudden rain. He avoided them with frequent diversions from his course, losing precious time. After four hours, he tried but failed to get an ADF radio-compass bearing from the powerful transmitter at Gun. "With this strong headwind", he thought, "I will be very late." After another hour had passed

Mira could still not get a signal from Gun. The situation was becoming agonising, but suddenly right before him were the mountains of Greenland and the Kulusuk radar station aerals. Once again he tried to get Gun, but got no signal. Finally, he made contact with a USAF ground station, where the anxious voice said: "But where have you been? You are two hours late on your estimate. Everyone reckons you are down in the water and we were about to start the search."

Mira explained about the headwinds and asked why there was no signal from the Kulusuk ADF.

"We shut it down two days ago for maintenance", came the reply.

After landing at Kulusuk, filling the tanks and an excellent breakfast, Mira was soon airborne again, in spite of the fatigue of this long and demanding flight. This time, before crossing Greenland from East to West, he once again made contact with the USAF to give them his track. Given the mountainous terrain he was to cross, he asked for permission to climb to 10,500 ft; the highest ground there is 10,000 ft. "Okay," said the voice. "But be careful. We have lost three pilots in the last few months."

Mira doesn't understand why, because the sky before him was one of biblical calm. But a little while later he realised the dangers of flying in this region. Studying the horizon, he found it increasingly imprecise and blunted by snow. Having no artificial horizon and only a turn and slip indicator, the only way to keep straight and level was to keep an eye on the sun and its reflection from the ice. "With this reference", he said, "it was like flying through a tunnel of ice." Four hours later and half blinded by this vision, he landed without further problems at Sandestrom on the west coast of Greenland.

After having paid "the most expensive landing fee in my life", he said the next day, he took off for the North-West Territory of Canada, destination Frobisher via Cape Dyer.

The weather was superb, the sea studded with 'ice cubes' and the wind seemed calm for the crossing of this sound, located along the Arctic Circle; a flight of 500 nautical miles, to which Mira was now becoming accustomed.

Having reached Cape Dyer and setting course for Frobisher a little time later, he noted the engine temperature had gone up 20°C and the oil pressure dropped to 5 bar. He was a bit worried, and asked if he should return to Cape Dyer or continue en route. Not having an outside air temperature gauge, he decided to put his hand out into the slipstream via the clear view panel, and found that the air outside seemed to be warmer. At once, his concern vanished and he continued on track. The countryside unfolded before him with one hill after another, endless stretches of water with no visual references and where, in spite of himself, he could not resist asking whether anyone could possibly find him in this savage country, forgotten by man. Finally, he managed to tune in to the Frobisher beacon, where he arrived some time later. To his great surprise, he was welcomed by some 100 Eskimo schoolchildren, who had been given a half-day holiday for the occasion!

The next stage was the flight to Fort Chino, but after five hours aloft he still could not get radio contact. He was extremely worried because it was 01:30 at Fort Chino and there was more than 1,000 ft of fog between him and the ground. According to his flight plan, he should have already crossed the Bay of Ungava and should be about a mile from the coast, so to make sure he decided to fly under the layer of cloud. He lowered the gear and deployed the airbrakes to descend through a hole. When under the cloud he found to his great satisfaction that

he was exactly on track. It was impossible to follow the coast in conditions of such poor visibility and a cloud base of 500 ft, so he decided to climb back above the cloud and gave it full throttle. Fine droplets were accumulating on the windscreen with the risk of icing. He could feel the aircraft getting progressively heavier and after about 20 minutes the windscreen was covered in ice, so much so that he could no longer make out the engine cowling. Also, the HF radio aerial attached to the right wingtip had accumulated ice and was vibrating so badly that Mira wondered if it would not break the fin. Then he popped out of the cloud into sun and blue sky, to a magnificent spectacle. Slowly, the ice began to melt and after 6hr 30 minutes he finally arrived at Fort Chimo, where he landed without further ado.

Once again, the tanks were filled and Mira left almost straight away off to the south for Knob Lake, flying across a region of elongated small lakes. However, 60 miles from his destination he got lost. He was simply unable to recognise any features in the region and was battling snow showers that added to his confusion. He then entered another region of low-altitude weather, forcing him to fly low down. His hopes of finding a landing site were fast diminishing. Just when the situation was becoming critical with large snowflakes, he spotted a pylon straight ahead. Later he said: "At that moment, if someone had offered me a million dollars or the pylon, I would have chosen the pylon." All he then had to do was follow the telephone line to Shepardville, where he landed at last.

The next stage was no easier. From Shepardville he rejoined the Sept-Iles near Port Cartier on the north bank of the Saint Laurent estuary. This is desolate countryside with very few landmarks or made-up roads. Mira swore that he had never been so scared in his life as he had been over this bare country, over which he navigated in abominable weather.

After arriving at Sept-Iles, he set course for Quebec and then Montreal. At last, he was back over 'Good Old America' and shouted "I'm back home!".

The rest of the flight continued with all the usual safety services and assistance that a VFR pilot could enjoy when flying over North America in 1968.

It was thus with the idea that he had won his dare that Mira Slovak continued en route. After crossing the border of the United States at Ogdensburg in New York State, he arrived in the Tri Cities (?) where he had to spend the night because of a violent thunderstorm. The next day he set off for Youngstown in Pennsylvania and made a detour to Woodster, Ohio, home to the Sportavia US agent. Afterwards it was Indiana, Illinois and he crossed the Missouri en route to Wichita in Kansas for a stopover. Then it was off to Las Vegas via Reno where he was awaited by the press and television. From there, the next destination was Watsonville on the Pacific coast south of San Francisco, where there was a big meeting for historic aircraft, with many of his friends taking part.

Finally, he flew in formation with his friends to his home base of Santa Paula north of Los Angeles, and the ultimate destination of this fabulous and difficult flight.

In flight, in spite of all the honours showered upon him, he thought with great modesty: "No, I am not Lindbergh. I don't expect any trophies, no great celebrations or receptions. I was simply in pursuit of a dream, and now it has finally arrived." Suddenly, such thoughts were interrupted by serious turbulence on penetrating a violent front. Following the Pacific coast and passing Ventura, Santa Paula Airport came into view and he could see how once again a huge crowd had assembled to

witness the arrival of the Spirit of Santa Paula and its brave pilot.

Suddenly, just when he had lowered the gear and was about to land, the aircraft was hit by violent gust, but he was still too far from the runway. Why did he not give full power and go around? Later, he was unable to explain. Suddenly, at a height of 50 ft, the aircraft stalled and 'fell like a duck shot from the sky.' He was taken unconscious to hospital where he remained seven days before recovering his spirits. Surrounded by bandages and drip-feeds, he stared at the ceiling trying to understand what had happened: "What did I do? How could a man like me with 22 years flying experience make such a stupid mistake?"

One could well understand how this happened given the type and duration of the flight, the test of nerves and fatigue, all of which caused him to lose a kilo for each day of flying, especially given that he was not exactly overweight to start with! One could understand also that, distracted and exhausted and full of emotion in the triumphant arrival, overloaded, and in this wind shear that he simply stalled, in spite of his fantastic experience. Was this destiny? Undoubtedly it was his friend Ernie K. Gann who had the answer. When asked "Do you believe in destiny?" he answered "Yes, I believe in it. Look at Mira Slovak, who crossed the Atlantic covering 13,000 km and huge areas of hostile terrain. He encountered bad weather, over places where he could not possibly land, where nobody would have found him. He did all that in a little airplane with a little 39 hp engine and got home. He successfully completed this difficult flight and was 50 ft from landing at his final destination, when he ran out of height, speed and luck, all at the same time. Yes, I believe in destiny!"

Mira Slovak recovered from his accident without serious consequences. He didn't wait to be discharged from hospital before telephoning Sportavia in Germany to order replacement parts for those damaged in the crash. He was going to have it repaired, because he already had another idea. As the days progressed, they took shape in his mind. He meditated, studied and brooded upon it. One thing was sure, his extraordinary exploit could not end this way. It had been but one step on the voyage he had yet to repeat; yes, with the same emotions, with the same problems, the same test of his anguish and the same fatigue. Yes! He decided that he would once again cross the

North Atlantic, but this time in the opposite direction!

Though the American press and television gave huge coverage to the exploits of Mira Slovak – recognised as exceptional in spite of his tragic arrival, both for the pilot and the aircraft – in May 1968 French newspapers had other things to report than this fabulous story. The French were letting off steam and a disoriented society was looking for a new way forward, and this was much more important than this extraordinary flight.

A year passed and the surprise was total when Mira Slovak landed before our very eyes at Le Bourget Airport right in the middle of the June 1969 Paris Air Show. Both Mira Slovak and his RF-4 were repaired and back on form. He had quietly begun to fly from New York To London, and had just crossed the North Atlantic in two stages via Iceland, repeating the most difficult part of the flight. We were both astounded and full of admiration.

He was asked how he had managed to carry so much fuel. Smilingly, he showed me how he had removed the skin and ribs forward of the main spar up to mid-span, and had replaced them with two large fuel tanks with the same shape as the leading edge profile. Intrigued, I took hold of the wingtip and found that I could flex it up and down without any difficulty. I said to myself, that there can't be any Veritas experts in the USA, or they are seriously in need of new glasses. The original structure of ribs and skin forms a D-box whose task is to add torsional strength to the wing, but his modification considerably reduced the strength. But this didn't seem to bother Mira Slovak, who was in no way concerned. Confident in his guiding star, there he was with us, smiling, happy, and it was a true pleasure for us.

Having completed two epic journeys, his aeroplane was de-rigged in Paris and transported by air cargo to its ultimate destination, the Museum of Flight, Everett, in the State of Washington.

There it hangs from the ceiling on the main hall, reminding those who view it of two amazing journeys which have gone down the history of aviation; made by one of the smallest aircraft in the world, by a pilot who was perhaps a bit mad, but extraordinary and courageous.



René Fournier seen here last year with his son Frédéric at home near Tours, holding a presentation head-on view painting by Bristol artist Angus Macaskill of his first aircraft, the RF-1. At age 92 René still provides technical support for the aircraft he designed and produced.