

Profile of a Champion

Remo Galeazzi's Marquart Charger won the top homebuilder's award for 1987.

BY PAMELA PARKE

Remo Galeazzi didn't start out with the idea of building a grand champion airplane. He just developed an overwhelming desire to construct his own aircraft.

But his homebuilt, a Marquart Charger, won the top homebuilder's trophy at Oshkosh last summer: the Grand Champion award.

Galeazzi and his partner, Jim Smith, recently gave a talk at the EAA chapter in Concord, California. The topic they were asked to address was, "How to Build a Grand Champion Airplane." They both know something about this process as Smith's Marquart Charger was grand champion in 1982, and Galeazzi's Charger won in 1987.

Galeazzi says they thought it was presumptuous of them to tell other people how to build a champion because this is not what they started out to do. Galeazzi says, "I just wanted to build a plane. I built it to the highest standards possible, while in the back of my mind, I thought, as I made each part, if so and so saw this, would he think it was good? What I aimed for was praise from my peers; praise from people who know nothing about aviation means nothing to me."

Without Smith's inspiration, Galeazzi probably would not have built his plane. "Before I teamed up with Smith, I was hesitant and I lacked basic skills like welding. I just didn't know whether to go for it or not, and then I got my partner. Jim was like a spark plug because he knew how to do these necessary things and he was willing to teach me. It is an educational process and you learn as you go."

Galeazzi wanted a two-place plane. Deciding on a project didn't take a lot of research because there weren't many plans for two-place aircraft available in the early '70s. Designing

one of his own was out of the question.

In 1971, he saw a design he liked. Ed Marquart had just finished a prototype Charger, and Galeazzi fell in love with it. The proportions were right and it was well designed. Galeazzi learned that Marquart had designed other aircraft and he knew what he was doing. So Galeazzi chose that plane. The project took him more than nine years of intensive work. According to Galeazzi, "Anyway you look at it, building a plane is a long, drawn-out process. Even if you do it quickly, it is going to take years." One reason the Charger project took Galeazzi so long, he says, is that everything he did went beyond the minimum required.

In Galeazzi's opinion, homebuilding took so much time away from his family that he considers it quite a selfish thing to do. On the other hand, his daughter was grown and his wife, Anne, is reported to have a lot of patience. Anne worked during the day and was tired when she got home at night, so she didn't mind too much that Remo worked several hours each evening on his project. Anne is not an airplane fan, although she does go flying with her husband.

When it comes time to license a homebuilt plane, most people want a short N-number. Galeazzi wanted "RG" in his registration because these are his initials. Many numbers are already in use, so he asked Jim Smith, who was going to Oklahoma City (site of the FAA's registration bureau), to reserve any set of numbers plus the letters "RG." Smith knew someone in the licensing department who said the best thing to do was to ask the computer what numbers were available. "He tried a variety of numbers, but many were taken," relates Galeazzi, "and he ended up

Remo Galeazzi's Marquart Charger won the most-coveted Grand Champion award last summer at the EAA's Oshkosh convention.

with the number 23. It is a coincidence that I have a license with my birth year and my initials; it worked out very nicely."

After completing the airplane, Galeazzi thought, "Wouldn't it be terrible if on the first flight I did something wrong and wrecked the plane?" He decided to play it safe and asked another pilot to test it for him. He chose Ted Babbini, an experienced pilot retired from Western Airlines, who also owns several antique planes. Babbini agreed to do the test flying.

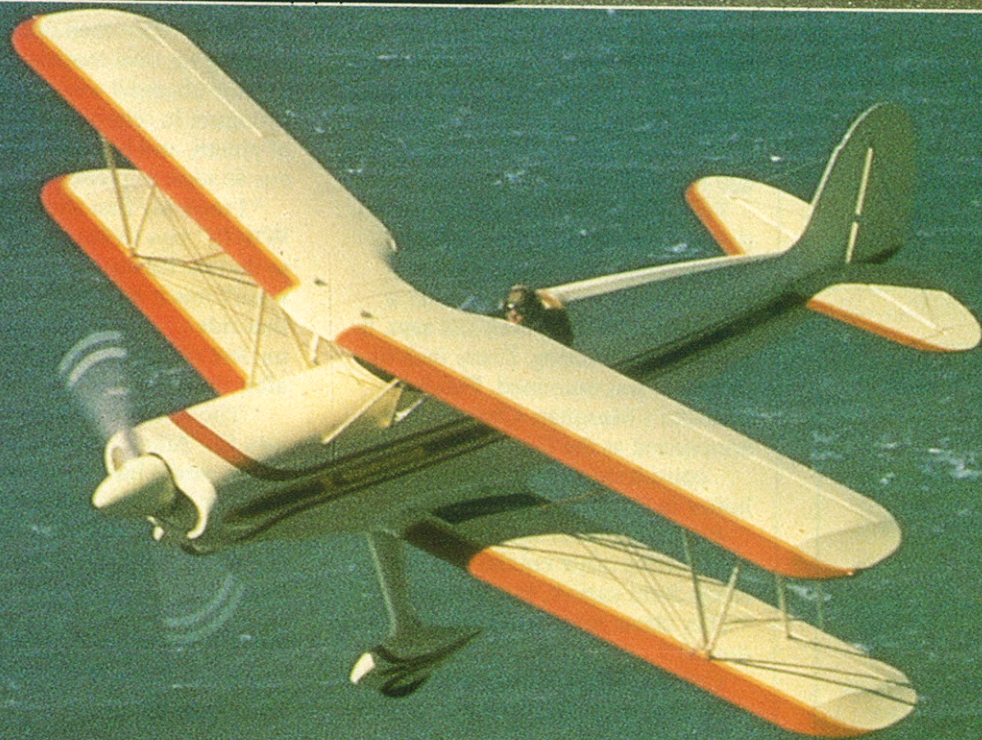
"I was confident everything was going to be all right, Galeazzi says. "There was no question about it; it was a good design built to the designer's specifications; the center of gravity was in the right place and the engine was running fine. On the first flights, I was on the ground looking up . . . but it was the same thrill. Several flights later, Babbini checked me out in it, and everything was great. It turned out to be an easy plane to fly, but I knew that before—that was one of the reasons I chose it."

The Marquart Charger has a 24-foot wingspan and 170 square feet of wing area. It has a 150-hp Lycoming engine and cruises at 125 mph at 2450 rpm. The Charger seats two tandem and weighs 1148 pounds empty. It burns eight gallons per hour and has three tanks, two holding 4.5 gallons in the wings and a 26-gallon main tank in the fuselage.

What could be better than nine years building a beautiful airplane? Flying it on a sunny day!

Photos: Pamela Parke

Photo: Gail Rathbun



Galeazzi displays some of the attention to normally hidden detail that helped him win the top award.

nice. I could never have paid for it myself with an average wage of \$50 a week.

"Athey started a flying school at the old Sonoma Airport, and after some time he went out of business and that was the last I saw of him. I always wondered about him because we became good friends."

Several months ago there was an old-timers' get-together in Healdsburg, California; Galeazzi did not go because he didn't hear about it, but a friend sent him clippings about the event that told about a guest named Athey. The article pictured the 80-year-old man standing beside the plane in which Galeazzi had been given his first airplane ride.

Galeazzi went to Healdsburg and had a wonderful reunion with the elderly gentleman. Galeazzi asked him if the rumor that Athey had flown under a bridge at Albion was true. This is a small fishing village by the ocean just a few miles from Mendocino, California. The bridge spans the bay just as it enters the Pacific Ocean. "Yes," said Athey, "I made a bet with a fellow one day that I could do it; I went up and got within 200 feet of the span before I began to have second thoughts. But it was too late, and I actually had to bank the plane to get under the bridge. If you have ever seen the bridge, you'll notice that there isn't much room, and when you get through the space, there's a big cliff on the other side. But anyway, I did it!" Thirty-five years ago there weren't too many people around to witness this foolish stunt. If he did it today he would be in real trouble.

Galeazzi is a member of the EAA Chapter 124 in Santa Rosa, California. This chapter is one of the largest and most active in the nation . . . a group of enthusiastic, friendly and proficient homebuilders who are ready and willing to help each other with their projects. In the case of Remo Galeazzi's trophy-winner, a lot of people have a reason to be proud. ☐

FOR MORE INFORMATION on the Marquart Charger, contact Ed Marquart at P.O. Box 3032, Riverside, CA 92519; phone 714/683-9582. Plans sell for \$125; an info pack is \$3 postpaid.

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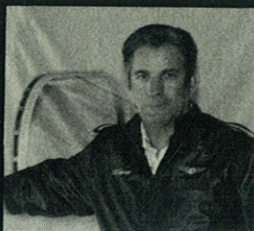
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