



Carl Schuppel

# Remo's Champion Charger

by JACK COX

Lightning **does** strike twice . . . and, indeed, has done so on two occasions at Oshkosh in the past decade. In 1978 one of two Midget Mustangs built side-by-side in the same workshop was flown to the EAA Convention in Wisconsin where its owner/builder, Bill Johns of Osawatomie, KS, would be awarded the Grand Champion trophy for home-built airplanes. Seven years later, in 1985, the other Midget Mustang would finally make it to the Big Show for the first time and it, too, would win the Grand Champion award. Its owner/builder was Larry Haas of La Cygne, KS.

Now, it has happened again. Throughout most of the decade of the 1970s, virtually identical Marquart

Chargers were being built . . . in a converted chicken house . . . near Petaluma, CA by EAAers Jim Smith and Remo Galeazzi. Both aircraft were flown to Oshkosh in 1982, but it would be Jim Smith who would fly home with the Grand Champion trophy for home-builts. Five years would pass before Remo would fly his Charger back across the Rockies again, but it turned out to be a very rewarding trip . . . he returned home with the 1987 Grand Champion trophy for plans built home-builts.

All four airplanes, the two Midget Mustangs and the two Marquart Chargers, share a common characteristic. Each was built with a minimum of plushness, the effort going instead into ex-

treme . . . and I do mean **extreme** . . . attention to detail and craftsmanship. The Chargers, for example, have no sheet metal screws employed anywhere in the airframes. Every piece of cowling, every fairing, every inspection plate is attached with countersunk stainless aircraft screws and fiber nuts . . . or nut plates. There are no sheet metal overlap joints . . . every panel butts accurately to the next. Further, all bolts are of the proper length, just the right number of threads are exposed . . . and every rib stitch is spaced to what appears to be a measurement accurate to at least a thousandth of an inch. Judges love the Charger because the sides of the fuselage, all the way back to the rear cockpit, hinge up for inspec-



tion. In the case of these two airplanes, innards are exposed that, if anything, are even more impressive than their beautiful exteriors: wiring harnesses that put one in mind of outsize microchips, the backs of instrument panels as finished as the fronts, etc., etc. One walk around either airplane leaves no question as to why each took nearly a decade of steady, intensive spare time work to build.

To my knowledge, Jim Smith's N26JS has never been awarded less than the Grand Champion trophy at any fly-in at which it has been entered for judging. This has been both pleasurable and just a little hurtful for Jim because every win has also meant a loss for his close friend, Remo Galeazzi . . . hurtful because he knows Remo's airplane is only a hairsbreadth less in both technical and aesthetic perfection than his own. Had he not been in the competition, it would have been Remo hauling home all the loot. To Jim's great satisfaction, however, time and fly-in rules have solved the dilemma. Most fly-ins permit an aircraft to win its Grand Champion award just once . . . so, now that his Charger has made the rounds and is no longer eligible, it is Remo's turn. Just this year, Remo has taken home the Grand Champion trophy from Watsonville and Oshkosh and, I'm certain, more will follow. The fact that he can still do so with a five year old airplane is perhaps the best testimony to just how good a job Remo did of building it in the first place . . . as well as how meticulously he has maintained it over that period of time. Every time I see Jim or Remo, I jokingly accuse them of having huge glass domes which they lower over their Chargers to hermetically seal them until their next outings. The

airplanes look that great to this day, with each having flown some 300 hours or so.

Both Chargers, incidentally, have been featured here in **Sport Aviation**, and both have graced our cover. Jim's N26JS was on our October 1982 cover as that year's Grand Champion at Oshkosh, and Remo's N23RG was on our June 1985 cover, the occasion being the publication of his marvelously entertaining article entitled "Chicken House Chargers."

So, how has Remo kept 23RG so spotless? Nothing out of the ordinary, he says — just a procedure both he and Jim follow without fail. Everytime the Chargers are flown, no matter how short the flight, they are thoroughly cleaned before they are put away in their hangar. Dirt and oil can't harm the finish if they are not there — it's as simple as that.

In addition to the two trips to Oshkosh, Remo has flown 23RG all over California, has had it as far north as Vancouver, Washington and as far south as Eloy, AZ. On the way home from that trip, he and Jim Smith flew their Chargers over the full length of the Grand Canyon, which ranks as perhaps the most memorable flight of their careers. Most of Remo's flying, however, is strictly local, including a lot of open cockpit rides for friends. He estimates he has given rides to about 55 people, many of whom were experiencing their first flights. A few want him to "do something", and he obliges with whatever mild aerobatics they seem to enjoy.

Remo Galeazzi, rear seat, and his friend, Bud Waldo, at Oshkosh '87.



Joe Starr

The flight to Oshkosh '87 was an adventure shared with his friend, Bud Waldo who is the current president of EAA Chapter 124 in Santa Rosa, CA. A retired 747 captain, Bud served as navigator and radio operator and, of course, spelled Remo at the stick when he needed a rest. Remo says that, left to his own devices, he is strictly an IFR pilot . . . "I follow roads" . . . so it was interesting for him to have someone aboard who knew how to work the ATC system to the extent they needed it and to follow the VOR needle when the roads below made a big loop in some unwanted direction.

The big excitement of the flight east came as they were crossing a typically desolate stretch of Nevada. Approaching an MOA, Bud called the appropriate facility to determine if the area was hot

Carl Schuppel







and was told no military traffic was about at that time. Shortly afterwards, Remo glanced to the left . . . just in time to see two fighters thunder right under the Charger, left to right. He only had time to yell, "Look right!" to Bud . . . and both sat, mouths agape, watching the tailpipes of two ugly brutes neither could identify rapidly vanishing off their wing. When they regained their composure, Bud keyed his mike and said, "I thought you said there was no traffic out here — we almost hit two jets coming through here!" The voice on the other end said it had no contacts on its scope, including the Charger . . . to which Bud replied, "Well, why don't you just consider us a stealth aircraft then." There was a moment of silence on the radio, then some giggling in the background and, finally, a simple, "Yeh, we'll do

that."

There are strange goings on out there in those Western deserts, Remo says with a chuckle.

Remo and Bud made Wendover, UT the first day and stayed that night at one of the big casino hotels just inside the Nevada line. The next morning the only downer on the trip occurred. While packing the airplane, Remo put his camera, a Pentax Super ME, down on the ramp, intending to take some pictures of the adjacent Bonneville salt flats, and in the bustle of activity involved in getting the airplane ready to go, forgot and left it there. He called back from the next fuel stop, but, of course, it was gone. If anyone reading this knows the whereabouts of the camera, Remo would really appreciate its return — it was a gift from his wife and

daughter.

The remainder of the trip east was awesome, as only a low level, open cockpit flight over the Rockies, out across the Great Plains and into the verdant Midwest can be. They finally caught up with a front and had to spend an unplanned day in Dubuque, IA . . . and then had to get vectors around Madison, WI as the ceiling began to lower there, but they made it into Oshkosh with no problem, thanks to Bud's hitting the tiny village of Fisk (which is the last checkpoint in the special Oshkosh entry procedure) right on the nose.

The week at Oshkosh was, of course, capped off for Remo when he was called to the stage in the Theater in the Woods on Thursday night to receive the Grand Champion trophy for plans built homebuilts. His Chapter 124 friends say





All Photos By Joe Slarr

Remo could have made it in the world of big time show biz as a stand-up comedian, but on this occasion he admits to being absolutely speechless. He had not come to Oshkosh with an expectation of winning the Grand Champion award, he said later . . . maybe a Workmanship trophy, but not Grand Champion.

Remo's newfound fame beat him home by quite a few days. By the time he arrived, local newspapers had already printed the story . . . with a lot of the information coming from Jim Smith, who was tickled pink with his friend's long-incoming recognition. As Remo never fails to acknowledge when he talks about his airplane, Jim was his teacher, his taskmaster and his friend throughout the long building process . . . and

without whom the 1987 Oshkosh plans built Grand Champion would never have been built. It's probably a toss up as to which of the two is prouder at this point.

Since completing his Charger, Remo has retired and as is so often the case with active, creative people, is busier than ever. His cousin, Ted Babbini, a retired airline pilot and avid antique airplane and motorcycle restorer, has him deeply involved in the restoration of a Ryan STA once owned by the legendary Tex Rankin . . . and he is getting involved again in the passion of his childhood, building model airplanes. A tradition at the annual Watsonville, CA fly-in is a peanut scale indoor model contest at the local fairgrounds on Friday night. Remo had been watching this

with increasing interest for a number of years and, following the 1986 event, decided he would enter in '87. He really worked at it, including calling on the expertise of his friend and nationally acclaimed modeler, Fernando Ramas, and showed up at Watsonville this year with four models. It probably should come as no surprise to learn that Remo won the contest . . . which pleased him to no end. He is getting very interested in the antique model activity that is becoming so popular these days and says he intends to get involved. His first gas model was a Quaker Flash, a free flight job guys are putting radio control systems in today, and he'd love to build another one.

When he does, you can bet it will be a prize winner!