



# The Seawind Flyer

Fall 2008

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*"The evolution of an intelligent design."*™

We're glad to be back with a Seawind Flyer after one year of interruption.

Many of our readers and followers have stuck with us and have called or written to encourage us not to give up. That encouragement has kept hope alive here at Seawind, and we wanted to send out a Flyer in order to respond to the requests we get every day for information and updates.

BEFORE YOU READ THIS FLYER, please go to our web site at [www.seawind.net](http://www.seawind.net); click on *Newsletters*, then click on *fall 2007* to read about the events that led up to the interruption of operations last year. We will wait for you to come back.

Welcome back.

## WHAT A TERRIBLE YEAR

I can't put into words the devastating experience of having to shut down what was my full-time effort for 16 years; the sadness of telling dedicated employees that they have been laid off and need to find another job. It was just as difficult to tell loyal suppliers and subcontractors who had worked with us for many years and who were going to supply parts for the certified Seawind that we were closing down.

Then to stand by helplessly and watch a court appointed Receiver take possession of everything you have produced and view it as salvage.

Those were not good days.

Then we started to receive expressions of encouragement from our order holders, followers, readers, and past employees. We received many poignant letters from people who would never be able to af-

ford a Seawind, but who have followed our progress for many years.

Now I know how the people felt at Columbia, Symphony, Lake, and other aircraft manufacturing companies who are no longer with us.

Our order holders have to be the most loyal customers in the world. In a wonderful demonstration of faith and trust, 68 of our original order holders have stayed with us this entire year. Without them, the resumption of the project would not have been an option.

I could not stand to see a promising business carved up and dismantled by a Receiver who had no vision; who saw no difference between a composite aircraft company and a mattress factory.



*What do you do with plugs, molds, jig fixtures, machines, and stores that take up 25,000 sq. ft. of space?*

So I decided to compete to regain the assets, the sale of which was being very poorly handled. The key to success was whether the Bank, which I have dealt with for almost 30 years, would continue to provide the mortgage on the building. What do you do with plugs, molds, jig fixtures, machines, and stores that take up 25,000 sq. ft. if you do not have a building? The Bank agreed and made it possible for us to reacquire the assets. I will leave out the gory details as to why it took 11 months to complete the process, instead of the three months that it should have taken.

## WHAT IS LEFT TO BE DONE FOR CERTIFICATION?

We were so close to certification when the *Perfect Storm* struck:

- ~ About 70% of the flight testing was complete;
- ~ Only one more lifetime of damage tolerance (fatigue) testing was left to do. It will take three months;
- ~ One firewall burn test needed to be done;
- ~ All the interior upholstery burn tests remained;
- ~ A few electrical drawings needed to be completed;
- ~ Three months of effort was needed to complete all the remaining reports on the test data, which had been previously recorded.



*Second Seawind prototype.*

The second aircraft was two-thirds complete when we shut down. Work must be started immediately to finish and instrument the second Seawind for flight test. The parts for the third Seawind have been made, and the assembly had just started when we shut down. We also have the composite parts for the fourth Seawind.



*Assembly of the third Seawind had just started.*

## THE RECOVERY PLAN

The recovery plan is to finish the remaining tests and test reports, while at the same time completing the second Seawind. As soon as the flight tests begin, we will resume assembling the third Seawind, while engineering is submitting the final documentation to Transport Canada.

Unfortunately, all recovery plans are centered around raising sufficient money. We have been actively seeking investors for some time. We have promised not to resume operations until we have sufficient funds to complete certification. It would be a disaster to start up prematurely and to run out of funds again. We would not risk our investors' money, nor would we do that to our employees.

In round numbers, we need \$2 million to complete certification. In aviation, that is a paltry sum, unless you don't have it. At this writing, we have commitments for \$1.2 million, and we are seeking investors for the remaining \$800,000. We are so close.

Investors in private corporations are required by the security and exchange rules to invest a minimum of \$150,000 or more. Otherwise we would have to prepare documents similar to those of businesses that are listed on the stock exchange, and that would cost more each year than the total we need to raise.

If you are interested in investing in the Seawind project, please contact us for an information package.

Time is our enemy. We need to resume the project soon, so we have been doing everything we can until we have the funding on hand.

We have been meeting with key people and previous employees to determine their availability and interest in joining, or in the case of previous employees, rejoining the team.

I am pleased that everyone we have talked to will either come back to work or participate part-time in their specific specialty until certification is complete.

Frank Hofmann has committed to heading up the project. He is a very experienced professional in the design, production, and maintenance of general aviation aircraft. We also have commitments for assembly supervisors and administrators, so we are in good shape for start-up from a personnel standpoint.

In addition, we have contacted suppliers and subcontractors and are re-establishing relationships with them. All are hoping for us to make a comeback.

Most importantly, the NRC is interested in taking on our flight testing program. Transport Canada has been alerted of our interest to resume the program. Both Transport Canada and the NRC are prepared to meet with us at the appropriate time.

Again, there is a limit to what can be done without having the funding. There is also a limit to how long we can go without resuming the project. As I said before, time is our enemy.

Richard Silva

## **A Story of Vision and Grit**

By Russ Niles of *Canadian Aviator*

For years it was kind of a standing joke in the aviation media; the semi-regular announcements from Seawind that they were getting close to certification

of the big amphibian with the unique tail-mounted piston engine. I remember seeing ads for the design as a kit and thinking how cool it would be to have something that fast and capable that could land on water. Well, Dick Silva saw the same ads as me but he did something about it.

About a decade ago, he determined the market was right for an aircraft in which the words “fast” and “amphibian” could be used in the same sentence.

Now, starting an airplane company and attempting certification is an extraordinarily complex and difficult process, not to mention hideously expensive. You really have to believe in yourself and your product to even attempt it. The vast majority fails to get there, and if they do, they’re so broke from the process there’s nothing left to get the business going. Even those who have made it will tell hair-raising stories about how close they came to being an also-ran.

By anyone’s standard, Silva could have honourably given up years ago. Because, in addition to the incredible challenges facing any aircraft certification, Silva’s company suffered all kinds of bad luck along the way, hence the smirks from the peanut gallery.

Well, we all stopped laughing last August when Seawind’s only certification test plane was lost and its test pilot killed. A major new investor who was to participate in the project backed out after the crash (ed.) and Canadian Aviator, which had a long business relationship with the company, got a polite note from Silva explaining that he just couldn’t carry on.

Well Silva doesn’t give up easily and neither, it seems, do his customers. Less than a third of the 90 or so position holders asked for their money back and the rest encouraged him to start over. And now it seems like that might happen. As I write this, Silva is less than \$1 million away from resuming production in the company hangar in St. Jean.

Throughout its brief history, the development of manned flight has been characterized by grit and determination in the belief that success lies just around the corner.

And as we get ready to celebrate 100 years of flight in Canada next year, I can't think of a more fitting way to help mark the milestone than with the certification of an aircraft whose development mirrors the struggle of the visionaries who have brought us this far.

(Reprinted with permission from *Canadian Aviator* September/October 2008)



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