By Guy Leitch

Arthur Piercy was paralysed from the neck down when his SAAF Mirage F1CZ was hit by a MiG 23's missile in the Angolan War. In an epic story of indomitable spirit, Arthur plans to fly himself around the word in a homebuilt Seawind amphibian.

As someone who is genuinely passionate about flying Arthur is not the sort of man to let an accident – even one as catastrophic as his Mirage crash – get him down.

Despite his disability Arthur has got his medical back and has passed his PPL flight test in a Cherokee 235 modified with hand controls for the rudder.

But he needed an aircraft that he could get in and out of and tailor-make to suit his needs. After a careful search he decided on the Seawind as it offered a unique combination of accessibility for a quadriplegic, go-anywhere amphibious versatility, and performance – although not what an ex-Mirage pilot might be used to!

In 1994 Arthur used a chunk his disability pension to buy a Seawind kit (it cost $34,000 at R2.95 to the U$). When it arrived he was amazed at how large it was – the wingspan is bigger than his Mirage's – and what a huge job it would be to complete. Eventually he moved it to Francois Jordaan's hangar at Wonderboom, where he had hoped to finish it by 2002, but his funds ran out and he had to take a full time job.

The Seawind has in the meanwhile gone on to become a popular design, with over thirty examples flying around the world. Unfortunately the design was set back by a disaster in flight testing and the factory closed, but it has now been re-opened to build complete and certified Seawind 300C aircraft.

Arthur has had his dream re-ignited and with fresh resolve has committed to getting his Seawind finished and flying. But his dream extends to far more than just having a plane to fly.

Arthur writes; “I have never been one to just get in an aircraft and burn holes in the sky without actually trying to achieve something specific. So when I was asked just what I intended doing with the Seawind when it was finished, the idea came to me - let me fly this aircraft back to the USA. Let me show the factory just what I had done with their aircraft!

From there the excitement of the challenge just started growing! Then, seeing as I am almost halfway around the world already, why must I turn back and go home the way I have just come? By going around the world as a quadriplegic I plan on raising U$1 million for wheelchairs and spinal cord research in South Africa.

And so Project Dreamwings was born. Getting in and out of a conventional aircraft proved very difficult (although not impossible) but if I could make it as simple as getting in and out of my car, then it would be great. Initially I did not have the strength to get in and out of a Cherokee without a lot of assistance. However after I managed to complete the Argus Cycle Tour (on a three-wheeled hand-cycle), I had developed enough strength in my upper body to lift myself onto the wing and into the cockpit. This is not elegant or safe, so the kit built route was the right way to go. It also enables me to put in hand controls for the rudder and brakes. It may be a lot more time consuming and expensive, but I am convinced that it will all be worth it.”

The key constraint is money. To complete the Seawind and get it into condition to fly around the world Arthur reckons will take a million Rand. To raise this he has come up with an exciting scheme where all aviation enthusiasts can help support this indomitable man in either a big or small way.

Arthur has launched a ‘co-pilot scheme’ for 1000 supporters to contribute just R100 a month for ten months. It is planned to only make 1000 models of the Seawind so that each sponsor will get a numbered model of his aircraft.

In addition, artist Justin Zimmerman is doing a painting of Arthur Piercy and General Gagiano

engaging the Cuban MiGs. Zimmerman plans to auction the original oil painting and signed prints and put the money into Arthur Piercy's flight.

If you want to become a co-pilot and make Arthur's incredible dream happen, then please make a donation of at least R1000 to the following account;-

Bank:	Nedbank
Branch:	Menlyn
Branch Code	160545
Account Type:	Cheque
Account No:	1605224758
Account Holder:	A D Piercy

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"The future belongs to those who believe in their dreams." - Nelson Mandela