



# Bruce Cooper Talks to Ritz de Luy

**A 'virtual' meeting between Bruce Cooper and Ritz after his Free triangle distance world record (1650 km) flown in Argentina - 25.12.2010 - with Jean-Marie Clement**

'Hello Ritz, nice to hear from you. We go back a long way - I think it was the last Australian worlds. Dare I mention Vivienne Bryner and her green bikini?'

That was the answer I received from Bruce when I asked him to answer five questions about his world records flown in Argentina on December 25 2010, in association with French pilot Jean-Marie Clement.

**Q1. First of all congratulations on the world records. Was there any sign on that early Christmas morning 2010 something 'Big and Special' was going to happen? In other words 'was it in the air?'**

'We planned the task 12 months ago and I spent ten days working through the soaring and out landing options in the lead up to the day. The possibilities were showing up in the forecasts during the previous four days. We spent all of the 23rd finalising and uploading the new database to include the new airstrips we might need. On the 24th Jean-Marie Clement (J-M C) tried a 2,000 km flight to get his

diploma out of the way but the weather was not good enough. The satellite pictures did suggest that we should have tried the triangle on the 24th but that was only after launch time. The weather pattern was probably at its best over night and the day we flew the weather deteriorated after 800 km. I was particularly keen on a triangle flight as it is something few people have done in that area. As it happens the task would have been really easy if flown in the over-night- weather.

**Q2. You flew with Jean-Marie Clement, could you please introduce us to him? Is he a 'regular' in Argentina?**

J-M C has been going to Argentina since 2002 and is one of the three teams that have been chasing world records down there. (Klaus Ohlmann and Terry Delore/and the late Steve Fossett). He ships his own Nimbus 4 down from Europe. (Call sign MM alias 'mille mille' which is Italian for 2,000 each year). The glider was equipped from new with 2,000 km flights in mind. J-M

C was European champion in the 80's and finished fourth in the Worlds. He has been very kind to me and I enjoy flying with him. To sum him up I should tell the story of our last world record 12 months ago. When he said 'the weather is not good this morning so we should have a nice lunch and break the world 1,000km O&R speed record in the afternoon.' The lunch was excellent and we broke his own record that afternoon completing the task in less than five hours. That is how he is. I have been fortunate to fly with many world champions and several of the top Kiwi pilots but J-M C has probably taught me more in the last 15 months than I have learned in the rest of my 39 years gliding. I would love to fly with Terry Delore as J-M C rates him as the best pilot ever!

**Q3. How do you share the soaring, who is in command, do you set rules before a flight, who does what?**

Interesting question! We don't have any set plan. Each of us has a different style of flying and we each

fly a section till the other sees a better way and then swap. We share ideas but when one is following a line of energy and the other is squirming and really wants to take a different route, it's a good time to swap controls and rest before the next stint. Fifteen hours is a long time and sharing the flying is a big advantage over the solo pilot. On our early flights together you could see from the logger who was flying by the style but now we are more similar. We have flown together for six months (wow that's a lot of time together?) out of the last 15 so we have both picked up on each other's style

**Q4. In the past you flew in Australia? How come you changed from flat conditions to mountain-flying and why do you like it so much?**

I grew up in the Scottish mountains and have always loved wave flying. I had flown a mountain

competition at Vinon, France, and the pre-worlds at Omarama previously. My last two trips to Australia were both fantastic. I flew at Corowa where Grietje and Francesco run one of the best soaring centres and they really looked after me. Then I was lucky enough to spend a season instructing at Benalla. My daughter Molly, joined me for a month and I had the pleasure of sending her solo at the age of 15.

I still miss Tocumwal and still enjoy the flat land flying. I like to vary my flying and I think I would tire of just one area or one type of soaring. I like the idea of stretching my ability and going where I have not been before - preferably where no one has been before. Mountains and wave are my real passion though. I am desperate to get back to Omarama but this Argentinean adventure literally landed in my lap and I felt I had to rise to the challenge and make the most of a very rare opportunity. It is so difficult to

make gliding happen in Argentina. Every season could be the last and I need to try to get even one more season there.

**Q5. What would you add to what I haven't asked? How about what's next?**

Well I also like ridge running and I was fortunate enough to be offered the chance to fly with Juan Mandlebaum who made that great movie 'a fine week's soaring' featuring Karl Striedieck and I will be going to Mifflin for a couple of weeks ridge flying in May. I am keen to do things that are different so if anyone comes up with an idea to go somewhere out of the way and wants someone to fly with, just call. I'm semi-retired. I would love to fly the Atlas mountains - basically anything that's different.

I think anyone would guess that we have a 2000km triangle planned, but others do too. I love friendly competitiveness so roll on next season!