

THE GREAT RACE

In the California desert a world-class test pilot takes on the “muscle car with brains” and it’s almost no contest. Almost.



F-100

fighter ace
Dick
Rutan

likes nothing better than to smoke the competition when he's given a challenge. When the highly-decorated Vietnam veteran left the Air Force only to rocket his dazzling military career up into the outer altitudes of notoriety by building and piloting the legendary Voyager Aircraft on its historic 1986 nonstop around-the-world flight, it was the plane's fuel he left in the dust by screaming from Edwards Air Force Base to Edwards AFB before it drained out – a global sprint of 9 days, 3 minutes and 44 seconds.

Today Rutan is an aggressive, competitive XCOR test pilot who lives in Lancaster, CA with his wife Kris; and is he ever revved to give it all he's got in any contest, you name it.

And so we have.

Flying Adventures approached the

lean, mean – and eager – flying machine with a competition we knew he'd fall for. Lately we've heard a lot about a new "muscle car with brains" that claims it's the smartest, fastest, toughest – and safest – set of wheels to lately to hit the highway. *Oh, yeah Infiniti M45* we had to say. "Chest-beating acceleration," you think? A "stealthy, muscular physique," you claim? "Brings back the big-block, muscle-car performance of the 60s and 70s squarely into the future"? *Oh, yeah??*

Prove it.

Let's see what you're made of, we challenged, let's put you up against the great Rutan. Happily, both the ace and M45 were game. And so here, first on a 9,600-ft runway in sun-baked Mojave, CA, and then at the infamous Willow Springs International Speedway in Rosamond, CA, the "fastest road in the west," *Flying Adventures* called them to battle: the feisty test pilot vs. the Infiniti M45.

The first heat of our "Great Race" competition was simple: On an airstrip course marked with a finish line, Rutan and his weapon of choice, an aircraft (the beloved homebuilt

experimental Long EZ he affectionately dubs *Old Blue*) would race the car to the finish marker. According to race rules, written by Rutan himself, whoever gets there first, wins. Driving the Infiniti was Linda Ehrlich of Southern California, an enthusiastic 40-something professional woman and secret speed demon who volunteered to take time out of a busy day of errands for the thrill of "a real competition." "Bring it on," she said, "I'm always game."

The second heat at the speedway asked Rutan to do his fiercest, fighter-pilot best to check-out the M45's performance in a punishing series of tests, among them scorching around corners at top speed, accelerating to 100+ mph and slamming on the brakes, and generally attempting by any and all means to flame-out his self-styled tough-guy competitor, the car.

Finally, in a third heat Pilot Michael himself took the wheel to follow in the incendiary laps of Michael Andretti (in an Indycar), Nigel Mansell (in an F1) and other Willow Springs greats in seeing how fast the he could get the M45 to fly.

Yes, it's the feisty test pilot vs. the Infiniti. Who came out on top of our competition? Just keep reading. Ladies and gentlemen, start your engines, and *ready set go!* through the pages that follow. Welcome to our review of the Infiniti M45.





Gutsy Lady in a Sedan

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On your mark, get set, go! Pick up the dry cleaning, load up on groceries, get the nails done, and ahhh, don't forget the Starbucks stop along the way. Racing to get my weekend "To-Do" list is always fun for me – Leadfoot Linda, as I was fondly nicknamed at the age of twelve (when I got my first motorcycle). The need for speed was in my blood. With a family embroiled in racing, this 40-something mother – and grandmother! – has the reputation for pushing the limits when it comes to cars and motorcycles. So when Pilot Michael offered me a chance to test-drive the new Infiniti M45, I jumped on the opportunity with an enthusiastic, "bring it on!"

Little did I know I was set up to race the M45 against ex-fighter pilot Dick Rutan on an airstrip in Mojave, CA, and no less against his airplane! Little did Dick know (as I could tell by his expression when I show up at the airport) that he would be racing a "soccer mom" in a four-door sedan. "Is this the car I am racing?" He looks at the car and me, raising his eyebrow. "Yes," says Pilot Michael, "and the driver too!" You should have seen the smirk on Dick's tanned face as he ushered us to his hanger!

While Dick warmed up his home-built Long EZ, known for breaking several world speed records, I relaxed in the car, sunroof open, sipping my latte and reading the paper. The hour before, on the drive out to Mojave, I commented several times, "It sure

doesn't feel like I am going over 100", reminding myself I was still on the freeway and backing off just a little. It was apparent from the first punch out of the driveway, I was going to have fun, fun, fun, with this car!

Once Dick had warmed-up his engine, we sat at the local hangout over a hearty, manly breakfast and talked about the "rules" of the race. The race would take place on Mojave's 9,600 foot long and 200 foot wide concrete runway. I would be on the right side of the center line and Dick would be on the left. We would start at the threshold line and he would call the countdown to the "go" mark over his radio. My passenger would count down the 1000 foot markers as I would say my speed, all this being recorded on tape. Just in case of a photo finish!

We pulled up to the runway threshold and positioned ourselves. The excitement and tension was mounting! Dick in his world-record breaking Long EZ, and me in my sleek Infiniti M45. We looked at each other, racer to racer; we revved our engines to impress each other and gain as much RPM advantage as we could. Finally, it was time for the showdown. Grandma in her sedan versus the fighter jock in his world

record holding airplane! The revving engines created an energy of anticipation – the adrenaline was starting to pump! Just then, over the radio, I hear Dick's voice: "Three....two.....one....go!"

I slam the pedal to the floor; "Yahoooo" I cry with excitement. I hear the



markers read out as I watch my speedometer fly. "1,600 feet – mark 80 mph, . . . continued on p.50



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Test Pilot in an Aircraft



“Old Blue is gonna eat you alive, gonna turn you into dust!” growls Voyager commander and test pilot Dick Rutan over the radio. The former fighter jock is running-up his

doesn't matter how far down the runway or at what speed I blow you away. When you see me crossing the far side of the cement way ahead of you...well, just be careful you stop in time!” Rutan laughs: “Hey, do I get a head start?”

The feisty test pilot has every reason to feel so confident. After all, his custom designed experimental Long EZ, top speed 220 mph, once flew from Anchorage, Alaska to Grand Turk in the West Indies, a distance of 7,344.56 km, without landing, so Rutan's loyal little record-breaker is bound to serve him well. Fast and fierce they both are, plane and pilot. “Remember the rules,” he radios one last time, “it's ready, set, go, and whoever gets to the end first wins.”

Never mind who might have an unfair advantage. The record-breaking plane and its world-renown pilot versus their competition, the “brand new big sparkly shiny car” Dick's smirk indicates he considers a creampuff, driven by a petite and

one (the plane) gets to go full speed and keep on going at the finish line, while the other (the car) must flat-out accelerate only suddenly to stop 9,600 feet later – that or else sail off into no man's land and untold danger beyond the airport runway.

“Hey,” says Rutan, adamant. “A race is a race. It's whoever gets to the finish first. How can that not be fair? Let's go do it!”

Ready, set, go!

1 minute 4 seconds later, when the Long EZ flies over the finish line, Rutan is incredulous to see the creampuff...*can it be? No! The creampuff already has crossed!* In 1 minute 2 seconds. *I've been beaten by 2 seconds!*

“I was trying to cook,” he radios before coming around for a landing – as the loser. “I was trying to cook and you were cooking!” Like a bat out of hell the petite smiley blonde had done 0-60 in under 6 seconds and by the time she reached top speed was smoking at 136, 138 – “way too fast,” she says later – and the stupefied test pilot is now only a little worried he'll have to slip into a tutu and prance down the runway, as was the good-natured joke of the wager he'd made before the race. Big mistake.

But Rutan, ever a good sport, isn't sore, though loser he be.

“You took off and hell, I couldn't catch you!” he tells the woman who showed him up. “I'm flat-out down the runway quick and still...” He eyes

... continued on p.50



Long EZ at the race's starting line on a Mojave

airport runway, and he is so cocksure of himself he becomes a betting man. “Here's the bet,” he says. “Who's going to win this drag race, the airplane or the car? In other words, it



smiley blonde who's nursing a fresh shiny manicure. Never mind that while both will start at a dead stop,



Gutsy Lady

... continued from p.48

2600 feet – mark 112 mph, 6600 feet – mark 140 mph.” 140 mph! What a thrill! I didn’t need wings to make this car fly! Just as I hit the last 1000 feet of runway, I back off the gas and bring the car to a stop at a marker 2 feet before the dirt (afraid of smoking the brakes and getting the car dirty for the winner’s circle photos!) Just as the car comes to a stop, I see through the sunroof the underside of Dick’s Long EZ passing overhead. “Wow, what an adrenaline rush!” I say, my heart pounding. Forget winning the race! I couldn’t believe 140 miles per hour! “Darn, I wish I had more runway!” I laughed out loud.

Post-race back at Dick’s hangar, he waltzes over to declare his victory. “Not so fast fly boy”, I mumble. After debating over the technical definition of the finish line (he claims I had to be in the dirt), we listen to the tape over and over to hear when exactly the Long EZ passed overhead, clocking it to determine the precise moment – a 2 second difference. The debate continues until finally, Dick says, “Pop open that hood and let me see what this car has!” Yes, the 4.5 liter, 340 horsepower engine really impressed many of us at the airport that day. As Dick looks over the engine, he finally concedes – and there’s that smirk again – “Thank goodness it was the car that beat me!”

You are right Dick! It was the car. The only car I have felt safe and confident to take me to 140 mph and back. And to think, in a Great Race up against the mighty Dick Rutan, I didn’t break a sweat or even a nail!

Test Pilot Dick Rutan

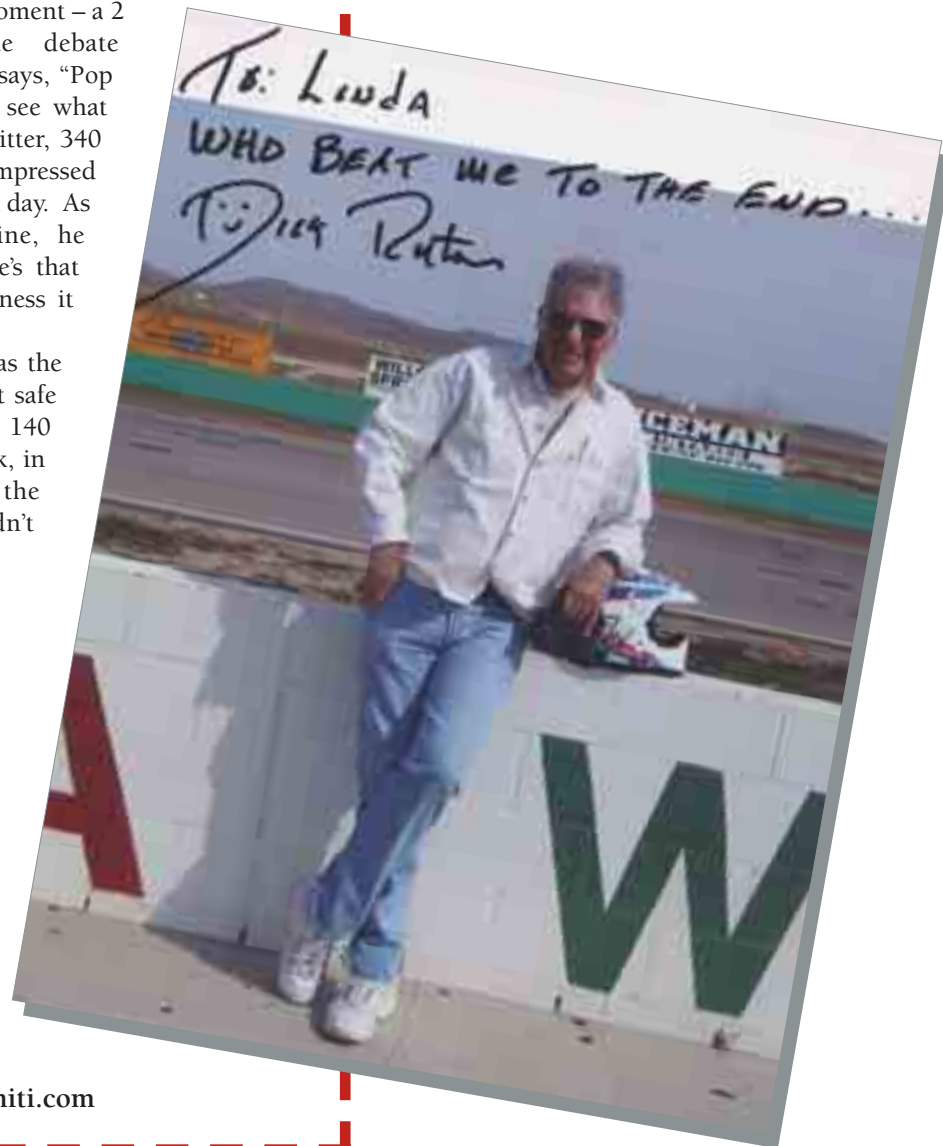
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the M45 with suspicion – as well as curiosity. “Hey,” he laughs, “is this something like in Hollywood? You know, those chariot races with Charlton Heston where he doesn’t know how to drive very well but they say, don’t worry about it, you’re going to win the race.”

Sorry feisty pilot, there’s been no fixing of this contest. After all, Rutan himself wrote the rules – as he admits, “if you beat me to the end of the runway, then all the rest is academic.” And now it is Rutan himself who’s got to live with the result, tutu or no tutu.

How? His expression says all when he lifts the car’s hood to take a look. His smile turns devilish when he asks permission to sit behind the wheel.

I’m going to test-fly this baby myself, he says without saying it. And then out loud: “I’m a world-class pilot,” he laughs and it’s all at himself. “I can fly anything. Let’s go do it!”



You can get more information about the Infiniti M45 at: www.infiniti.com

Speedway Record

Time: 10:32 a.m.
Place: Willow Springs Int'l
Speedway, Rosamond, CA. 2.5-miles,
9-turns

Course Lap Record: 1.06.050
minutes

Course Lap Record Holder:
Michael Andretti (Indycar)

Competitor: Pilot Michael (Infiniti
M45)

Flying Adventures' own airborne
ace is attempting to set a new Willow
Springs speed record in a category of
automobile never before seen at the
NASCAR-Formula 1-Grand Prix
speedway: a luxury sedan.

The track is quiet, empty but for
masses of black skid marks.
Paramedics stand by. The ace,
although nervous, is fired-up with
excitement.

Racer take your position!

Go!

Like a bucking bronc the sedan
bursts into action; it flashes down the
track, it rips back and then laps for a
time of 1.33.85 minutes.

Again the jackrabbit of a car dashes
by, speeds back. Time: 1.33.52
minutes.

It screams by, screams back; flames
by, smokes back. Time and time?
1.33.23 minutes and 1.33.21 minutes.

All right, Pilot Michael!

Unbelievably, 27 seconds off
Andretti each and every lap. A car this
fast (and apparently safe since the
paramedics weren't necessary) might
be wheels our airborne adventurer
would take in a hot second. That is, if
ever he were to give up being Pilot
Michael and trade-in life in the air for
the world of road and freeway driving.
Not likely. Still. It's good to know that
if he were grounded, here's a car that
reflects his style: the smart, the fast,
the fine...the Infiniti M45.



Aircraft:
Experimental Long-EZ
Manufacturer - Dick Rutan
Year of Manufacture - 1980
Designer - Burt Rutan
Year of First Flight - 1980
Test Pilot - Dick Rutan
Powerplant - IO-360-F1A6 Lycoming
Horsepower - 180
Empty weight - 926 lbs
MTOW - 1500 lbs
Cruise Speed - 200 mph

WORLD RECORDS
Aircraft: Experimental Long-EZ
Pilot: Richard G. Rutan

SPEED
over a measured course: 2,000 km
Speed: 200.89 MPH
Date: February 10, 1982

SPEED
over a measured course: 1,000 km
Speed: 207.82 MPH
Date: February 10, 1982

SPEED
over a measured course: 500 km
Speed: 211.62 MPH
Date: February 10, 1982

DISTANCE
without landing:
7,344.56 km / 4,563.7 miles
Course: Anchorage, AK (USA) -
Grand Turk (British West Indies)
Date: June 5/6, 1981

DISTANCE
over a closed circuit
without landing:
7,727.96 km / 4,800.03 miles
Course: Mojave, CA (USA)
Date: December 15, 1979

Automobile: INFINITI M45
Manufacturer - Nissan
Year of Manufacture - 2003
Powerplant - 4.5 liter (4,494cc)
32 valve, V8, with low-friction
molybdenum coated pistons
Valvetrain - DOHC 4 valves per
cylinder with microfinished
camshafts and titanium valves
Horsepower - 340 @ 6,400 rpm
Torque - 333 lb-ft @ 4,000 rpm
Transmission - Electronically con-
trolled 5-speed automatic, with
driver-adaptive learning algorithm
and a manual shift mode.
Curb weight - 3,851 lbs
Stock Speed - 140+ mph

PERFORMANCE NOTES
Infiniti Torque Demand (IDT)
Conquers hills with smooth and
steady speed without additional
throttle input from driver. It works
by automatically modulating engine
output and transmission response.

Variable Induction System
Improves off-the-line acceleration
and enhances passing power
through optimizing airflow at
both low and high speeds.

Crisp Handling
Unparalleled feel achieved through a
rigid platform, stiffened by a front
strut tower brace and supported by
an independent sport-tuned
suspension. Aluminum-alloy
components reduce weight for
superior response. Steering is
enhanced through a vehicle-speed-
sensing power rack-and-pinion
setup, with varying resistance for
greater control at higher speed and
easier low-speed maneuvering.

Dick Rutan Challenges the Car

Firetruck on your mark.
Ambulance ready.
Safety helmet set...go!

And they're off. Test pilot Dick Rutan at the wheel of the same Infiniti M45 that got his world-class competitor's goat drag racing Old Blue, his trusty LongEZ. Rutan has the 2.5-mile, 9-turn Willow Springs speedway to himself and *damn* if he isn't going to push this car to the envelope's farthest edge. It's not revenge – exactly. It's just that Rutan wants to know what this machine's got that's a match for his toughest, most fearless self – the Vietnam combat hero whose three high-risk tours of duty were so dangerous and “so exciting I didn't want to come home,” that finally the enemy had to shoot him down to get him out of Vietnam.

Yes, adrenaline is a friend to Dick Rutan. The pilot who in '86 urged the Voyager Aircraft clear around the world, and wouldn't – *no matter what* – let her fuel quit, wants to waste the M45. That's right, *waste* – because that's what test pilots do: see what things are made of. Straightaways at 100 or more mph, corners at 60-plus, get those RPMs screaming at fever pitch and slam on the brakes...He's going to do it. All.

Helmet on, Rutan straps himself in. “Don't worry,” he laughs before smoking down the track. “I don't have enough guts to drive it stupid and see what happens. I'll let someone else do that.”

Anyone watching the ace rip around and around the NASCAR, Formula 1 and Grand Prix motorcycle track would see a 4-door luxury sedan acting more schitzo than expected. Who could say what Rutan was actually *doing* with the M45? But it looked brutal.

When his final lap up, the test pilot cruises to a stop, leaps out, and is exultant.

“This is a truly fantastic, fantastic handling automobile!” he says, his devilish smile turning to kid-like glee. “Whoever made it should be proud. It's a significant contribution to safety.”

Tell us about it.

First, the car's retro yet futuristic muscle car styling and interior ergonomics – “Absolutely incredible,” he says. “Amazingly easy to get in and out of and comfortable... instrumentation high up on the control panel...there's absolutely nothing in the way so your focus stays on the road...lots of F.O.G. as we say in airplanes, ‘finger on glass,’ meaning a lot of controls on the stick so you never have to let go to go from bombs to guns to air to air and different



*“This car
is as
solid at 120
as it is at 20.”*

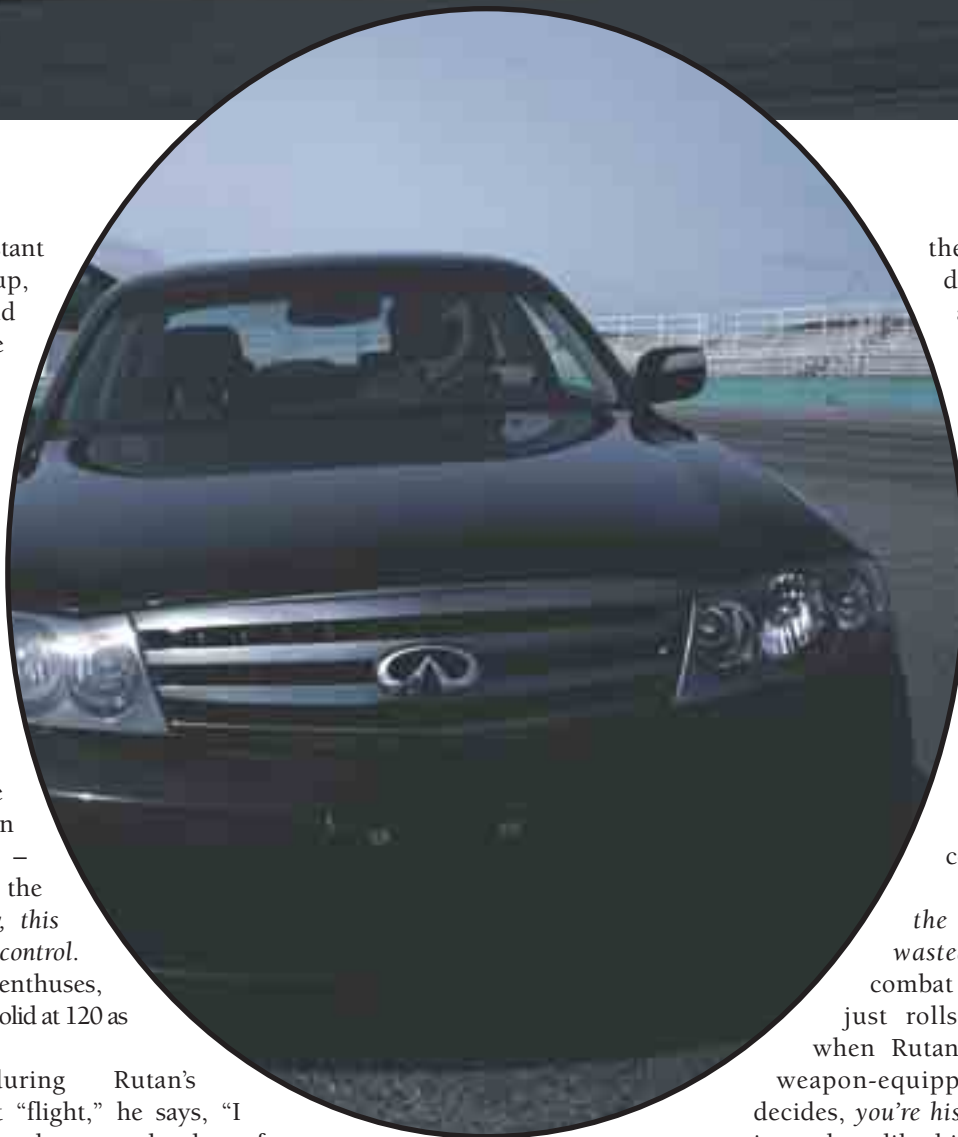
missiles.” The Infiniti's F.O.G. is all instruments visible at all times, he says, “a significant safety feature.” He continues: “All the bells and whistles?” Here he means the GPS and it's “incredible database of info” and the voice activated commands that adjust everything – *everything* – “Amazing.”

“When I fly an airplane I'm a real stickler for handling qualities,” says the ace. “As you move the controls



you have constant force build-up, you turn and you pull more and more G's and the angle of attack is higher and higher, and...well, you always want a feel of all forces harmonizing nicely. This car is the same thing! Even while turning – even at 110 mph! – the driver gets the sensation, *hey, this thing is under control.* In fact," he enthuses, "this car is as solid at 120 as it is at 20."

Often during Rutan's punishing test "flight," he says, "I felt I was on the ragged edge of departure, but this car? Well, some cars you get 'em to 120 or 140 or something and you keep thinking, *man, I wish I wasn't here.* But with this, there is absolutely no 'depart control flight', as we say in aviation. You know, when the pilot is no longer in control." And you've got a stall. Snap



roll. Spin. Rutan admits he tried his "naturally aggressive" best to get the M45 to whip, to slide, to spin out. "I was pushing as hard as I could and...no skid. Never a skid." He continues: "I can get in some airplanes and they feel squirrely, like you're afraid to move

the controls or the damn thing'll get away from you." But here. "Even with intense braking it feels like little gremlins are in there running around fixing the wheels so they don't ever slip or lock-up. When you *try* to spin out and just *know* you're gonna spin out, it doesn't...you know, depart control flight."

Frankly, he says, *the car cannot be wasted.* This is no combat gunnery target that just rolls over and *croaks* when Rutan flies in with his weapon-equipped F-100 and decides, *you're history* – like the guy is used to; like his chest-load of war hero's medals attest. This is a car, he admits, that is "absolutely impressive, especially in its handling. No matter what you do," he adds, "it always takes care of you."

Smart, tough 'n gutsy? Guess it takes one to know one.



The storm-battered (yet beautiful) Voyager Aircraft lands after soaring nonstop around the world in a 9 days, 3 minutes and 44 seconds.

This is what he believes: No guts, no glory *and no lawyers!* “I found out somebody is using me illegally to sell some snake oil stuff and you know what?” says Dick Rutan, miffed. “I’m gonna go get ‘em!”

This is a battle that might best be won or lost outside litigation, however, for when it comes to standing up to lawyers the great Rutan admits he’s a weenie.

“I can’t fight them!” he laughs, yet incredulous. “They can eat me for lunch.”

No, better anyone who cares to take on the flying ace climb into an F-100 for some air to air combat. It’s only fair. Better the battle take place on Rutan’s turf. Here, he says, as the characteristic ferocity returns, “I’m really good. I know all the tricks. I’ll kill ya!” Fighter pilot, test pilot and aviation legend, Dick Rutan of Lancaster, CA is another force entirely when it comes to conducting business in the air.

Consider: 325 combat missions in Vietnam in a stellar 20-year Air Force career meant guts and glory *plus* for the Tactical Air Command fighter jock whose high-risk MISTY exploits saw him pinned with the Silver Star, five Distinguished Flying Crosses, 16 Air Medals and the Purple Heart.

Consider: The historic 1986 nonstop flight of the Voyager aircraft, around the world in nine days on one tank of fuel, gave the world “aviation’s last first.” And when President Reagan awarded its designer, creator and commander the Presidential Citizen’s Medal of Honor (one of only 16 given in U.S. history) it was to Rutan, the man. Later, in 2002, this same

visionary commander was enshrined in the National Aviation Hall of Fame for “heroism [that] helped define 20th century America.”

Consider: As chief test pilot for XCOR and the first-ever rocket-powered experimental Long EZ, Rutan continues to go for the record books, gloriously.

Now then. Is there anyone present who’d like to re-think that illegal snake oil? It is evident Rutan is a man who doesn’t *like* to be eaten for lunch. We’re talking *ethics* here, the kind that guide the guy’s life.

“In the military I always trusted everybody – explicitly,” says Rutan. “And they trusted me

thing in those high-risk missions when Rutan and his fighter-pilot men were the target of napalm, rockets, tracers, indeed whatever the then-enemy could use to shoot their “deliverers of the white death” out of the sky. It was good because add to it a crazy love of the



In the world of this highly decorated vet, visionary aircraft designer and risk-taking, record-breaking pilot, “dangerous” is a word you...

because I was their wing man or flight leader. That’s just the whole ethics I grew up with: trust.” Trust was a good

“really exciting” combat sorties that made for a high “higher than an adrenaline rush,” and you’ve got an intoxicating cocktail of success that kept Rutan at the throttle of his F-100 through three tough tours of duty – until finally he was shot down. His chest load of war hero’s medals attest to a past to be proud of.

Typical. Guts and glory – and confidence – always have defined Rutan. He earned his wings by age 16 and today holds a full house of pilot’s licenses, from CFI to helium and hot air balloon. In May 2000 he took a joyride in a Russian AN-2 Antonov biplane to the North Pole, and had no doubt how the disaster would end: with him on top of the world. Literally. Landing on too-thin ice the plane suddenly broke through, nose first, and

began sinking – fast. By the grace of a quick escape Rutan and his buddies stood freezing and alone on the Pole until deliverance came a full 12 hours later in a First Air rescue Twin Otter.

In 1998 Rutan attempted the first ever flight around the world in a balloon but had to bail at 6,000 feet when a helium cell ruptured. What did he do? Try again, of course. The second capsule, christened World Quest, failed to capture the record but hell, Rutan had trust. Not just of his own skill in the air and the ability of his fellow flyers to conceive of and create both aviation milestones and aviation excitement – to wit, the two experimental Long EZ's which he and pilot Mike Melville built and flew “around the world in 80 nights.” But also of a passionate obsession for daring, for adventure – for flying. The exact same passion that propelled the Voyager (today on display at the Smithsonian) nonstop around the world in nine stormy, historic days.

My experiences in Vietnam taught me early, he says, that “something happens when you’re in mortal combat with your fellow man – and only then – when you think you’re going to die. Something deep inside. You’re out there flying alone and someone is shooting and wants to kill you? It’s like, ‘that son of a bitch is trying to kill me! I’ll get that bastard and teach him to shoot at me.’ Sometimes,” he admits, “that can be a little dangerous.” In the world of this highly decorated vet, visionary aircraft designer and risk-taking, record-breaking pilot, “dangerous” is a word you might not want defined should you be on the wrong side. Even if Rutan is a dotting grandfather of seven and given this, surely also a softie.

Got that, snake oil sellers? Woe be you who think you can get away with it. Dick Rutan, aviation legend, may be shy when around lawyers, but as one of the world’s most celebrated fighter jocks, there is no way, no how, he’s going down.

Dick Rutan War Hero, Test Pilot, Voyager Visionary



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...325 combat missions in Vietnam in a stellar 20-year Air Force career meant guts and glory...



Rutan's remarkable Voyager Aircraft rolls out of its hangar to make its 1986 debut before an admiring public