

MEMBER
SPOTLIGHT

» Getting to Know COPA Pilots



LAURIE EINSTEIN KOSZUTA has been a freelance writer for many years and along with her husband, John, now owns a Cirrus SR22. With John as the pilot-in-command and Laurie as the partner, they regularly travel to see family, visit friends and enjoy our beautiful country. You can read more of Laurie's work on her website: www.laurieeinsteinkoszuta.com.



Dieter Mueller is
Cleared for Takeoff

by Laurie Einstein Koszuta

Dieter Mueller didn't catch the aviation bug until he was nearly 50. It might not have happened had he not met an entrepreneur with an airplane and an invitation. The invitation was for Dieter to go to Austria and fly with the entrepreneur on his airplane in the Alps. Before that, the German resident from Augsburg, Bavaria's only brush with aviation was building model airplanes as a youth and suffering nausea

and vomiting after attempting to fly a glider. It took three years after that flight in the Alps for Dieter to realize how much he had enjoyed the experience and make the decision to become a pilot.

"I am probably considered a nerd," Dieter said, "because I have always been enthusiastic about technology and electronics." Those interests guided him to a college degree in engineering and later to own Germany's third-largest contract electronics manufacturing company.

In June 2015, Dieter took his first flight lesson at the Augsburg Airport (EDMA). "That lesson was in a Cessna 172SP with Garmin G1000 avionics," he said. "It was magical. I took my first solo flight nine months later, which was simply indescribable. It is an experience I will never forget. I passed my exam and received my private pilot certificate just a few months later in June 2016."

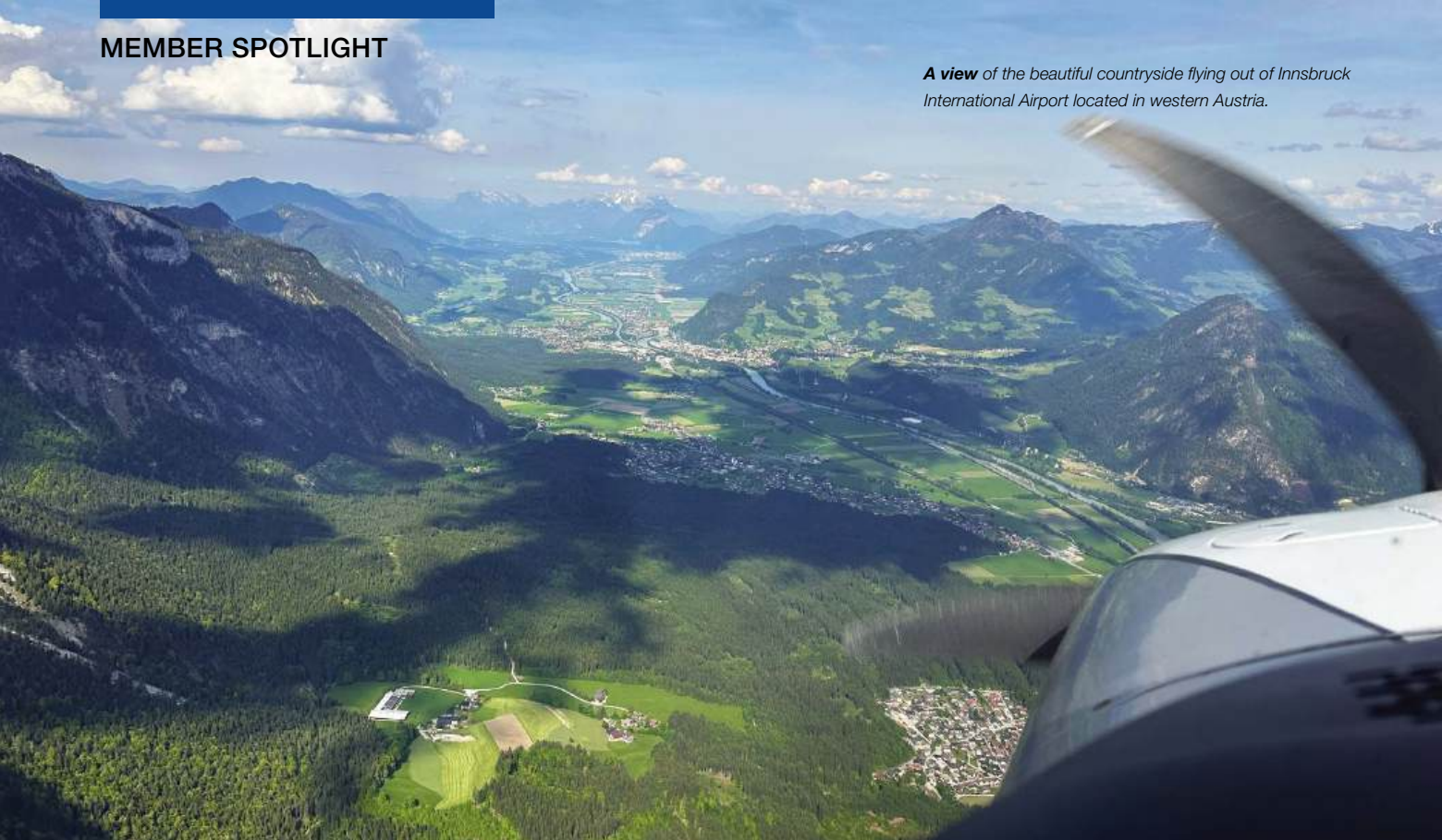
« **Dieter** with his Commemorative Edition 2011 SR22T G3 GTS, one of only 10 produced for the 10th anniversary of the Cirrus SR22, which he purchased in April 2022.

"During my flight training," Dieter noted, "I didn't have my own airplane, so I rented a Cessna 172 from our local flying club. The problem was that when VFR conditions were nice, it was difficult to find available airplanes because everyone had the same idea. That was true on weekdays but especially on weekends. Because of this, collecting many flight hours was hard, but I didn't give up. I also flew a Piper PA-28."

Dieter added a Night VFR (NVFR) extension to his pilot certificate as he continued flying and renting airplanes. (The NVFR is an extension of the private pilot license that allows pilots to take night flights following VFR rules.) Even with the extension, he knew adding an IFR rating would be particularly beneficial when flying on favorite trips through the Alps and southern Germany. After training in a Cessna 182T, he obtained his IFR rating in August 2023.

"The Cessna 182T was an airplane that impressed me so much," Dieter said, "and for just a short moment, I thought the 182T might be a good option if I decided to buy an airplane."

Dieter discarded that idea after perusing several online aviation forums and reading about the Cirrus SR series of airplanes. "I went on those forums," he said, "because I liked reading and learning about flying. As I read more articles about the Cirrus, I became increasingly enthralled. One article by German aviation journalist and instrument-rated pilot Alexis von Croy thoroughly inspired me."



A view of the beautiful countryside flying out of Innsbruck International Airport located in western Austria.

In the article, von Croy described his experience finding and ultimately buying his SR22. After reading that, I knew that if I ever bought a plane, it would be a Cirrus.”

Dieter’s commitment became even stronger when he saw his first SR22T and was able to get up close and personal. “At that point, I knew that the Cessna 182T was not the airplane for me.”

Dieter owns a Limited Commemorative Edition 2011 SR22T G3 GTS, which he purchased in April 2022. “My plane is one of only 10 produced for the 10th anniversary of the Cirrus SR22. It is fully equipped with every bell and whistle Cirrus offered that year. The great part is that I was able to buy the airplane because of a lucky coincidence.”

According to Dieter, the airplane belonged to the owner of a Cirrus aircraft maintenance company located at the Augsburg Airport. The owner decided



One of Dieter's favorite flights is through the Austrian Alps, shown here on a recent trip.

to sell his G3 when he purchased a new G6. The good news was that the G3 was flown almost exclusively by the owner, was always hangared and well maintained. In addition, part of the purchase agreement included the hangar space for the airplane, which was a big deal because pilots are usually on a

four- to five-year waiting list for a hangar in Augsburg.

During his acceptance flight, with his Cirrus instructor sitting in the right seat, Dieter took off and was completely euphoric. “I had never flown an SR22T before I bought my plane,” he said. “I was completely surprised by the huge

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⤴ **On final approach** at sunset into Augsburg Airport (EDMA) near Munich.

“I was completely surprised by the huge difference from the aircraft I had previously flown ...”

difference from the aircraft I had previously flown, and I immediately realized that I had done everything right.”

Dieter and his wife, Ruth, take trips in their SR22T with family and friends. He occasionally flies the Cirrus on business trips within Germany and Austria, which has become more frequent since completing his IFR rating. “My favorite flights are those we take through the mountains in the Alps, VFR crossings of the Munich International Airport and flights in Visual Meteorological Conditions (VMC).”

Another reason that Dieter loves his Cirrus is the COPA community. “I became a COPA member in 2022 after I bought my airplane,” he said. “It was my Cirrus transition training instructor who recommended that I join. I find it to

be a great community. I visit the COPA forums daily because I know I can get serious and valuable answers on topics of interest to me. I contribute from time to time. I have completed all the COPA on-demand courses and Cirrus Airframe Parachute System (CAPS) training, and my wife has attended the invaluable Partner-in-Command training course. Another bonus is the discount on avionics products.”

When Dieter isn’t working or flying, he is an ambitious scuba diver with more than 25 years of experience and training levels up to a technical diver with mixed gases. “I love diving because I can enjoy the underwater flora and fauna everywhere in the world’s oceans. I also love cars and own a 56-year-old vintage convertible.

I use it on sunny days for trips with my wife and grandchildren.”

In the coming years, Dieter’s goal is to spend more time flying IFR routes in his Cirrus. “I want to learn more about Instrument Meteorological Conditions (IMC). I also want to complete courses on flying in icing conditions and flights in rigid IMC with a Cirrus instructor. I would also like to learn how to fly a helicopter and take upset recovery training.”

Dieter concluded, “There are so many wonderful things about owning a Cirrus. I love all of the technology of my airplane and its operation. And I love the freedom above the clouds and the peaceful view of earth from above while flying.” ☺



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