

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.





Cirrus-ly Inspired:

Mimi Scott's Flight From Cardboard Cockpits to the Clouds

by Laurie Einstein Koszuta

When Mimi Scott was 7 years old, she was already a pilot.

Using a cardboard box, she'd craft a makeshift cockpit and carefully sketch gauges and dials inside. Then, she'd climb in and pretend to soar through the skies with her stuffed animals as passengers.

"I just loved airplanes," she said, "there were no pilots in my family, but when my parents took my brother and me on trips, it was magical."

At the time, Mimi's family lived near the Suwannee County Airport (24J) in northern Florida, approximately 85 miles west of Jacksonville. Because of its close proximity, she often rode her bike to the airfield to watch planes take off. "It took me a while to build up the nerve to talk to the pilots," she recalled. "But when I finally did, they were so kind. They showed me their planes, and after some time, they even offered me rides in exchange for helping wash their planes."

Her first flight was in a Cessna 152. "Once we were airborne," she said, "the pilot let me take the controls and 'fly' for a bit. When we landed, I had the biggest smile on my face."

"I was an adventurous kid," Mimi added. "I rode horses and dirt bikes. I knew my parents would eventually let me take flying lessons. My father was a dentist, and my mother was a lawyer. They were supportive and thought it would be cool to have a pilot in the family."

« **Mimi with her children** when they were younger, in Aspen, Colorado.

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At 15, her parents agreed to let her begin taking lessons, which she did at the same airport. At 16, she earned her pilot's certificate. Mimi continued to fly throughout her high school years by renting airplanes. "The environment was so relaxed and trusting then," she chuckled. "The pilots didn't even lock their planes; they just left the keys inside. Renters wrote their name and flight duration on a clipboard, and the airport would send a bill."

After graduating high school, Mimi studied aeronautical science at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Prescott, Arizona. During her time there, she earned her commercial pilot certificate, along with her CFI (certified flight instructor), CFII (certified flight instructor – instrument) and MEI (multi-engine instructor) ratings. She even returned to her small-town airport to flight instruct.

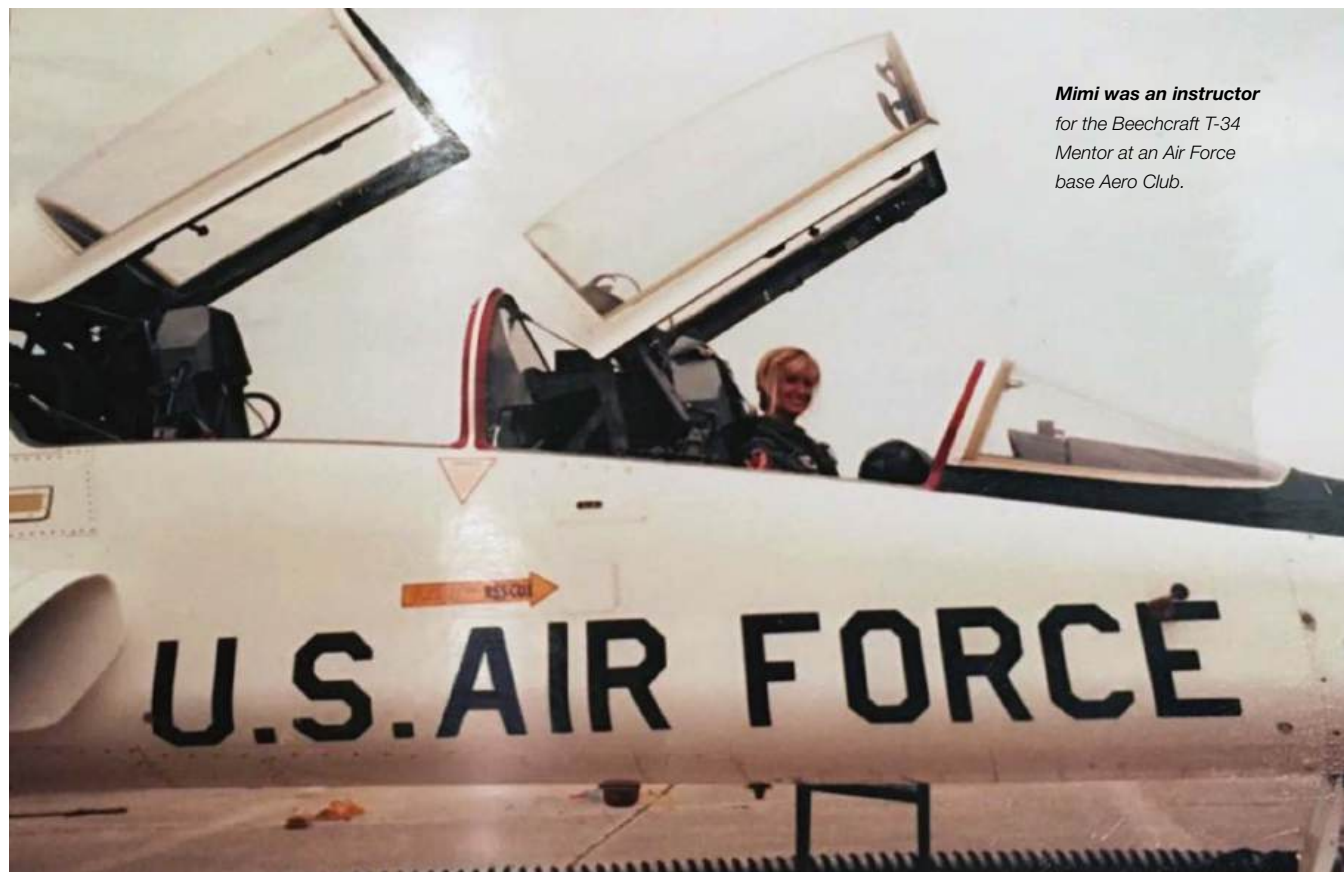
As she grew up, Mimi's parents instilled a strong sense of duty and service to the country, which left a lasting impression. "I decided to apply to the Oklahoma Air National Guard because I had family in that area," she said. "Getting a pilot slot was challenging, so while I waited, I flew for Air Midwest, a small commuter airline operating Metroliners out of St. Louis. They hired me as a low-time pilot."

At the same time, Mimi also instructed pilots at an Air Force base Aero Club to fly the Beechcraft T-34 Mentor, a tandem-seat, single-engine trainer.

At 24, she officially joined the military, flying Lockheed C-130 Hercules aircraft. "The unit had recently opened its mission to include women flying tactical airlift and airdrop missions," she explained. "One of their goals was to bring a female pilot into the squadron, and I became their first. As a young lieutenant, I flew as much as possible. It was almost like a full-time job."

After serving in Oklahoma from 1993 to 1998, Mimi joined the Louisiana Air National Guard, flying a support C-130 while the unit primarily operated F-15s. "I loved the Guard," she said. "It's the best-kept secret of the Air Force. You get the same high-level training as active-duty pilots but with part-time flexibility. It's a great balance."

During that time, Mimi married, and she and her husband, Rolf, divided their time between Texas and Colorado. The couple had two children and were building a happy life together. Tragically, their lives took a heartbreaking turn when Rolf's cancer, which had long been in remission, returned, and he passed away soon after. Faced with a tough decision, Mimi



***Mimi was an instructor
for the Beechcraft T-34
Mentor at an Air Force
base Aero Club.***

Mimi and her children with their brand-new 2007 SR22TN in Aspen, Colorado.



settled in Colorado to raise her young children, drawn by her love for the mountains.

“In Aspen, adjusting to being a single mom took me a while,” she said, “so I temporarily stepped back from flying. I missed flying, but I didn’t want to return to the military because I didn’t want to deploy and leave my children without any support.”

Not long after, Mimi heard that Cirrus was coming to Aspen for demo flights. “My initial thought was that I would just take a look because I wasn’t interested in flying a single-engine plane again. My last plane was a four-engine turboprop, and I wasn’t about to return to those days.”

Mimi was stunned on the demo flight after flying to Leadville, the highest airport in the U.S. “It performed beautifully,” she said, “it was easy to fly, and the glass cockpit was amazing. It didn’t take long to decide that this was the airplane for me, and I signed the paperwork for a brand-new 2007 SR22TN.” (The “TN” specifies Tornado Alley’s turbonormalizing upgrade kit was factory-installed on the SR22.)

At the time, Cirrus deliveries took place in Duluth, Minnesota. “While I was in Duluth,” she noted, “they taught me how to fly the plane. I flew back to Aspen just a few days later. Landing in Aspen can be a tough airport, but my military training prepared me for the challenge.”

“I loved that plane and so did my kids,” offered Mimi, who now resides in Boise, Idaho. “I spent every nice day I could flying, either going for a hamburger or taking my kids out of school to go on adventures throughout the West. I taught them how to use the parachute. My son, Eric, took an interest in flying, and once he was big enough, I’d let him sit in the front seat and teach him how to take off. His legs weren’t long enough for the rudders, so I’d help.”

Mimi had her prized Cirrus for nine years before selling it. By then, her kids were older, and she realized she wasn’t flying as much. “Planes need to be flown,” she said, “they don’t like just sitting.”

Today, Mimi remains connected to aviation. Eric is currently in flight school in South Dakota, working on his ratings to become a commercial airline pilot. “I couldn’t be prouder of him. It’s great to have someone to talk aviation with,” she said.

Although she hasn’t owned an airplane since 2018, Mimi continues to fly with friends using their aircraft. “I haven’t stopped flying,” she said, “I just don’t have my own plane right now. But I have been actively looking to purchase an SR22T G6, hopefully in the near future.”

Even without her own Cirrus in a hangar, Mimi continues to stay active in COPA. “Flying in the military taught me the value

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of learning from others' experiences. I went to my first Migration in Scottsdale last year, and I loved it. The camaraderie and the stories of other members were inspiring."

While at Migration, Mimi listened to a lecture on formation flying. "I found that talk especially interesting because I did formation flying in the military with the C-130 and T-38, and I'd love to get back into it."

Mimi values COPA, especially for its emphasis on safety. "I get on the forums, read accident reports, and find it incredibly valuable to hear about other pilots' issues. It helps me learn, and the information is transferable to any aircraft I might fly."

One of the things Mimi loved most about flying the Cirrus was the connections she made. "I once flew from Aspen to Driggs, Idaho," she said. "When I landed, I didn't know anyone there, but I noticed a couple of Cirrus on the ramp, and some people started waving us over. It turned out to be a hangar party, not just for Cirrus owners but for the whole aviation community. We enjoyed a barbecue, and everyone was just incredibly friendly." +



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