

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.



Peter Brown Went from Plain to Plane

by Laurie Einstein Koszuta



Brown took training in his own Cirrus through The Flight Academy located in Renton, Washington. Here, he is pictured on the day he earned his private pilot certificate.

When Peter Brown, a new member of the COPA board, and his family outgrew their home in Plain, Washington, a tiny enclave nestled in the Cascade Mountains just 23 miles from Leavenworth, they realized it was time for a change. It was 2020, and after exploring their options, Peter and his partner, Tricia, decided that relocating to the San Juan Islands, located off the coast of Washington and roughly 125

miles away, would be the ideal next step. They had friends in the area, had already researched the local schools for their 11-year-old son, Odin, and had found a home they truly loved. “I knew living on an island would come with challenges,” Peter explained. “One of the biggest issues would be relying on ferries or commercial airlines to get off the island. That’s when I realized I needed and wanted to learn how to fly.”



With no pilots in the family and no prior exposure to general aviation, Peter turned to online research to figure out how to begin. “My searches kept pointing to the Cirrus as one of the best planes,” he said. “That’s also when I discovered COPA and joined the organization. I started using the forums to ask for advice on whether to train in a Cirrus or follow the more traditional route of renting Cessnas to get my license. Many pilots on the forums recommended that I build muscle memory in the plane I intended to fly long-term.”

Encouragement from COPA members ultimately influenced Peter’s decision to purchase a Cirrus. “A very kind man saw my posts and offered to help,” he noted. “The man lived in Yakima, about an hour’s drive from Plain, and invited me to fly with him in his Cirrus. We took him up on the offer, and that experience sealed the deal for me – it was the airplane I wanted.”



Moving to an island made Peter Brown realize he needed to learn how to fly instead of relying on ferries and commercial airlines. Brown bought a 2018 Cirrus SR22T G6, pictured above, after researching his options online.

Since many of the islands in the San Juans have airfields, Peter wasn't interested in a floatplane. With help from The Flight Academy in Renton, Washington (KRNT), which brokered the deal, he purchased a 2018 Cirrus SR22T G6. "The plane was in Chicago, so I flew there with a pilot, and we brought it back together," Peter recalled.

Peter chose to train intensively in his own Cirrus at The Flight Academy in Renton, about a four-hour drive from the San Juan Islands. "I stayed in my camper van near the airfield and trained about five hours a day," he said. "It took me a couple of months to complete my training and earn my private pilot's certificate."

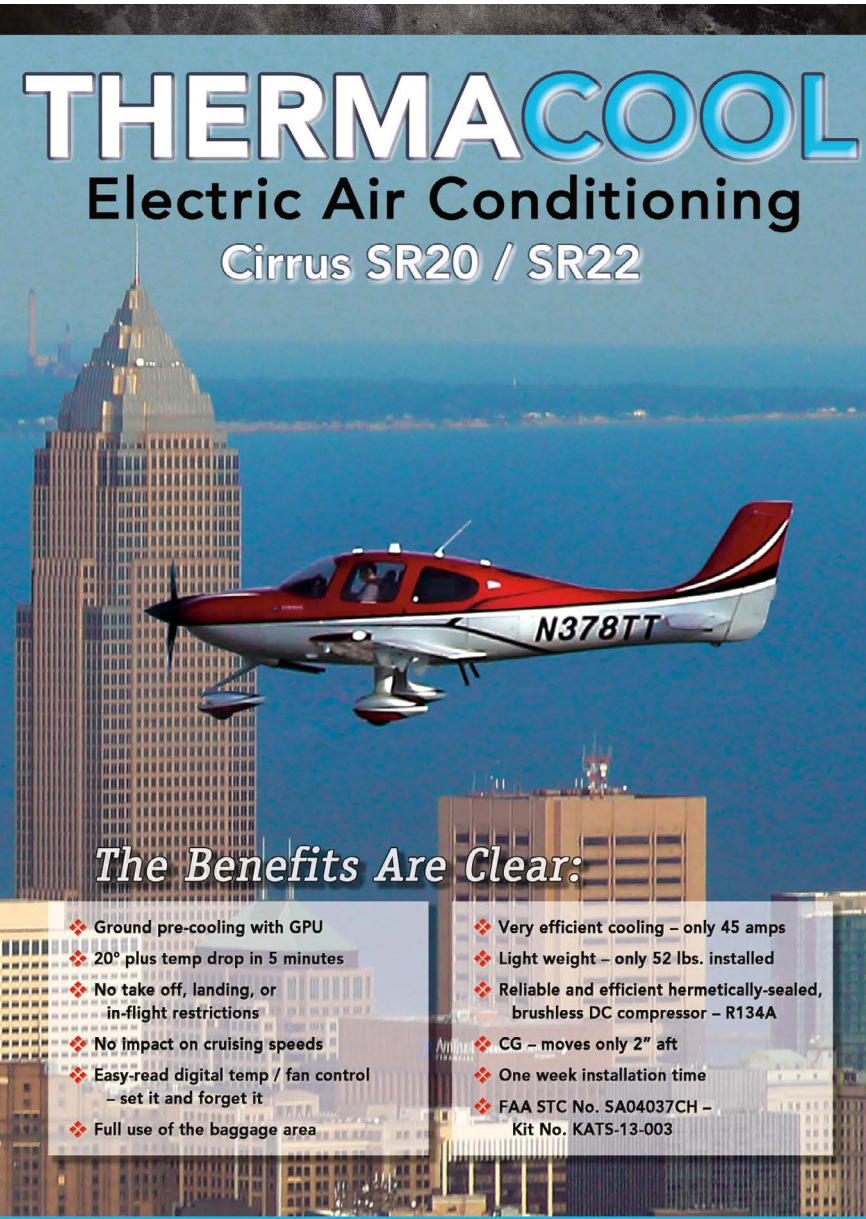
Rather than return to Renton to pursue his instrument rating, Peter found a seasoned flight instructor in Friday Harbor located on the eastern shore of San Juan Island. "I wasn't sure what to expect when we moved here, but I found a vibrant pilot community with many experienced aviators," Peter shared. "I found a fantastic CFI – an older guy who occasionally took new students and wasn't part of any flight school. He was great to work with. I completed my instrument training at Friday Harbor Airport (KFHR) and earned my instrument rating in about a year."

Peter's background in software design also shaped his journey. "I co-founded a company called Pathable that developed software for in-person business conferences and events," he explained. "Demand for virtual event software exploded during that time, and we grew from a team of 20 to 120 employees practically overnight. Suddenly, we were one of the only people in the world who could accommodate these events and shift online immediately. We just grew massively and had to stop

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“Learning to fly and buying the Cirrus was the best decision we ever made’ ...”



➤ **Brown enjoys sharing the wonder of flight** with his family. Here, he's preparing his niece and nephew for their upcoming flight.

accepting new customers. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly increased Pathable's value. After running the company remotely for 14 years, we sold it to a private equity firm, and I retired. It was an intense time.”

While retirement has been nice, Peter's interest in tech and software has resurfaced, and he wanted to jump back into it. Because his connection to the Japanese language runs deep – he studied the Japanese language in high school and spent significant time in Japan – it has influenced Peter's next business move. “Over the past six months, I've been developing a mobile app for intermediate Japanese learners using YouTube videos (Sekai.tv). It's still in the early stages, but I'm excited about it.”

Life on the San Juan Islands, coupled with owning a Cirrus, has been a dream for Peter and his family. “Learning to fly and buying the Cirrus was the best decision we ever made,” he said. “Managing an airplane can be a hassle, but it has made island life much easier and more enjoyable. If we want to go to Seattle, it is just a 30-minute flight instead of a six-hour journey by ferries. I have flown Tricia and her friends to destinations

in the Pacific Northwest. I often fly them from Friday Harbor to Boeing Field (KBFI) in Seattle to catch a commercial flight. Without the Cirrus, they'd have to take a bus or deal with inconvenient flight times from the smaller airlines in our area.”

One of Peter's favorite flights in the Cirrus is to their second home in Wenatchee, near Leavenworth. “The flight is amazing because you go from the dry, desert-like interior of Washington state, over snow-capped mountains and dense forests with dramatic weather, to suddenly flying over beautiful islands in the ocean. It's a stunning flight every time. I'd like to get comfortable flying to Canada,” he said. “It would be such a cool thing to do since I can actually see Canada from my house.”

Another favorite for Peter is flying with his young son to places like Las Vegas, Sedona, the Grand Canyon, and Lake Tahoe. He flew to his first AirVenture at Oshkosh this year. He laughs when asked if his son is interested in becoming a pilot. “Probably not,” he chuckled, “because he tends to sleep through the amazing landings and wants to know if we are there yet.” ⊕