

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.

The Burtons with their 2022 Cirrus SR22T G6 which Larry currently flies and Margaret will transition to in September.



Duet in the Sky:
Margaret and Larry Burton’s
Skyward Journey

by Laurie Einstein Koszuta

As a professional pianist and dedicated piano teacher, Margaret Burton has spent decades behind the keys of a grand piano, shaping the talents of her students and bringing music to life in concert halls. But the thought of flight controls and airspeed indicators ever becoming part of her world never crossed her mind – until her husband Larry, an ear, nose and throat physician and aviation enthusiast, decided to become a pilot. That led Margaret to realize that if something went wrong while they were flying, she wanted to know how to handle it. “If something happens to Larry, I want to be able to land the damn thing,” she said. “And I wasn’t joking at all when I thought and said that.”

Larry encouraged her, echoing advice a friend had once given him: “Go up for an introductory flight and see what you think.” Margaret readily agreed and did just that.

Larry’s Dream Takes
Flight

Larry’s passion for aviation stretched back to his childhood in Houston during the Apollo era. His family lived next door to the widow of Roger Chaffee, one of the astronauts who

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From left: Rose Dorcey, fellow pilot and inductee of the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame; Margaret; John Dorcey, the Burtons' CFII, who is also one of only a few FAA dual award recipients – the Wright Brother's Award and the Charles Taylor Award – and is also an inductee of the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame; and Larry.

perished in the Apollo 1 fire in 1967. "We had a lot of pride in the space program since it was all around us," Larry said. "I always wanted to fly, but I thought the only way was through the military. That was during the Vietnam War, and I wasn't interested in that path. Later, I didn't think I could afford it, and when I finally could, I had a career and a family requiring my full-time attention."

It was a dream that lay dormant until October 2019, when he asked a friend, a Cirrus pilot, about how to become a pilot. The friend suggested booking a discovery flight with the Winnebago Flying Club in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, which was known for its good reputation and affordable way to experience flying.

"I decided to quit putting it off," Larry reflected. "I figured if flying was not for

me, then at least I'd scratch that itch. But the first time I grasped the yoke of the Cessna 172, I knew instantly that I was hooked and signed up for lessons."

Margaret's Initial Skepticism

When Larry, Margaret's husband of 40 years, shared his flying ambitions with her, she laughed and said, "Oh, there he goes again. He's always doing something adventurous. Between the two of us, Larry's the one who says, 'Let's go do this, let's go someplace.'"

Between work and family obligations, Larry's flight lessons progressed slowly, but he wanted to share his love of flying with Margaret and his two grown children. "I was flying once a week or

every two weeks, which is hardly enough to progress toward licensure. Finally, I said, 'I want to take everyone up to see the beautiful fall leaves in northern Wisconsin. It's time to buckle down and get my license.'"

Although COVID slowed his training, he pushed through and intensified his efforts to earn his private pilot certificate in October 2020.

The Plane That Won Them Over

Because they live close to Wittman Regional Airport (KOSH), Larry had long been volunteering as an aircraft greeter at EAA AirVenture. In the summer of 2021, after he earned his private pilot certificate, he had a conversation with

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his family. It was the Sunday evening before the show opened the next day. “This year at EAA AirVenture,” Larry announced, “I’m going to start shopping for planes. However, you cannot allow me to buy a plane at the show. I’m just looking.”

That resolve lasted all of two days, until the Tuesday evening of the show when Larry told his family at dinner that night that he had decided which plane he was going to buy.

“It was a Cirrus,” Larry said, “but I wasn’t about to make a decision this big without my family’s input. We all needed to agree.”

Larry invited his family to meet with the Cirrus sales team Wednesday morning to ask questions. Margaret and the kids were skeptical, convinced the sales team would have to work hard to sell them on the idea.

“When we got there,” Margaret recalled, “I tried to keep a stone-cold, bad-cop demeanor. So, I asked a lot of safety questions. They answered by simply saying, ‘This plane has a parachute and an excellent safety record.’ Additionally, Cirrus informed us that they provide comprehensive training to both pilot and non-pilot partners-in-command, ensuring we are well prepared. That is what sold all of us on the Cirrus.”

The Burtons placed their order that day for a 2022 Cirrus SR22T G6. When the airplane was ready, they allowed Cirrus to lease it back before taking delivery so Larry could complete his instrument training in the Cessna 172 before transitioning to the Cirrus.

A week and a half after receiving his rating, he flew to Knoxville, Tennessee, for four days of Cirrus transition training with Cirrus CSIP Alex Marroto, including one day dedicated to instrument flight rules (IFR) instruction. Once the training



➤ **Besides believing** “two pilots in the cockpit are better than one,” Larry said his joy of flight is greater because he gets to share it with Margaret.

was complete, he and his instructor from Oshkosh flew the Cirrus back to Wisconsin.

Larry has continued to accumulate ratings and certifications, including instrument, commercial, multi-engine and Eclipse Jet type ratings, as well as a seaplane rating. He is currently working toward his airline transport pilot (ATP) certification.

Margaret’s Journey to Pilot

Margaret’s involvement expanded beyond running radios and learning avionics. “Margaret has always been a huge advocate for women,” Larry said. “When she said she didn’t just want to learn how to land the plane, she wanted to become a pilot, I thought, ‘That’s my Margaret.’ Two pilots in the cockpit are better than one.”

Her initial hesitation gave way to confidence as she trained for her private pilot certificate in a Cessna 172. Margaret’s CFI had prepared her for weeks, waiting for calm winds for her first solo flight.

“We were doing pattern work on Runway 36 at Oshkosh,” Margaret noted. “I took off, landed smoothly and then took off again. On the third circuit, my instructor asked if I had my medical, pilot’s license and logbook with me. I took a deep breath, as I knew what that meant.”

At that point, the instructor told Margaret that he was going to endorse her for her solo flight. Then he told her that when they landed, she was to inform the tower that she would exit on Taxiway Papa, drop him off and then perform three takeoffs and landings by herself.

“I’d flown enough early-morning patterns to recognize the voice of one of the controllers,” Margaret said, “I made my calls, flew my patterns and nailed each landing. On my third circuit, as I passed midfield on downwind, the controller’s voice crackled over the radio, telling me not to forget to pick up my instructor on Taxiway Papa. As I exited the runway, the controller asked, ‘Was that your first solo?’ and then congratulated me, which made it even more memorable.”

Margaret added, “I have not been on the controls of the Cirrus, but Larry has

been showing me how to program the avionics, engage the autopilot and make changes in flight when air traffic control gives us new clearances. I’ve been practicing that for a while. In April of this year, I completed my instrument rating in the Cessna 172, and this September, I will transition to the Cirrus with the help of Platinum CSIP Ed Watters.”

Formation Flying

When Larry first suggested formation flying to Margaret, her immediate reaction was, “You want to do what?” She pictured the Thunderbirds or Blue Angels far too close for comfort. “Even though I was already flying at that point,” she said, “the thought of being a few feet from another aircraft was intimidating. I liked the concept of separation in the air.”

The first weekend Larry went up for formation flying training, he urged Margaret to join the last sortie of the day. “I saw how windy it was,” she said, “and thought, ‘No, thank you.’” But she changed her mind shortly after and, just as the aircraft’s engine was about to crank, quickly climbed into the back seat.

“When we were airborne, we banked and climbed in tight formation,” Margaret said. “I found myself snapping photos, laughing and coming away from the experience thinking this feels a lot safer than I expected!”

Larry sums up his approach to flying: “I have three rules, in rank order. First, be safe – if I can’t be safe, I won’t fly. Second, have fun. If the fun ever stops, it’s time to hang it up. And, third, keep learning. If you ever stop learning, stop flying.”

To stay up to date and improve their flying skills, Larry and Margaret have attended multiple COPA Pilot Proficiency

Programs (CPPPs), and both have attended COPA Migrations, with plans to attend this year’s event at Amelia Island. They have both taken Mike Radomsky’s Cirrus Emergencies Safety Course in the full motion simulator, and they utilize EAA’s Pilot Proficiency Center just down the street for simulator work with instructors. Larry is an active participant in the COPA Formation Flying Group, has completed a four-day Rocky Mountain flying course with Platinum CSIP Matt Carrigan, and plans to obtain his tail dragger rating this fall from Mike Goulian Aviation in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

Travel Plans

Their travels have taken the couple from Door County, Wisconsin, to St. Louis, Nashville, Houston, northern Canada, throughout the Rocky Mountains, as well as to several Caribbean islands. They have also visited their son who lives in Boston and their daughter in Phoenix. These trips led them to realize they desired a larger plane for longer flights, especially if they wanted to take their two adult children on vacation with them. That led the Burtons to purchase an Eclipse 550 jet in May 2024. Although many predicted they’d give up the Cirrus once they started flying the Eclipse, they disagreed. “We love the Eclipse, but we’re not getting rid of the Cirrus. It’s part of the family,” Margaret said.

Just this summer, they flew their Cirrus up to Alaska for a month. “In the Eclipse, you fly TO Alaska; in the Cirrus, you FLY Alaska.”

For Margaret, there is a common thread between music and flying, as both require preparation, precision and practice. For Larry, the joy of flight is amplified because he can share it with Margaret. ☺

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Aircraft Registration Numbers with 3-Digits or Less

1 Number + 1 Letter	2 Numbers + 1 Letter	1 Number + 2 Letters
2R	10D	58R
4J	10P	58T
4K	11F	59F
4Y	11Q	59G
4Z	11T	59J
5C	11Z	59K
5T	12C	59R
5Y	12E	59S
6C	12H	59U
6E	12L	59W
6H	12U	59X
6N	13F	60D
6S	13G	60G
7G	13Q	60H
7L	13R	60N
7Q	13S	60U
7T	13U	60V
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7Y	13Y	61C
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