

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

» Getting to Know
COPA Pilots

» *Will dreamed of one day owning a Cirrus and even joined COPA well before he did. His ownership of the 2004 SR22 G2 started with two other partners, who he later bought out.*



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.

Over the Fence

After years of watching from the sidelines, Will Fence climbed past life's barriers and found freedom in the left seat of a Cirrus.

by Laurie Einstein Koszuta

For years, Will Fence would eat his lunch at Ocean County Airport (KMJX) in New Jersey, located less than five minutes from his office. He was captivated by the touch-and-go landings he saw, having always been drawn to aviation. However, with no pilots in his family or a mentor to guide him, flying felt like a childhood dream best left for "someday."



"Life started early for me," Will recalled. "I got married at 24, started a family and in 1988, joined my parents in the wealth management and tax planning firm that they started in the 1970s."

It wasn't until his mid-40s, after navigating family illnesses and personal challenges that he decided to prioritize his dream. "I needed to do something positive for me," he said.

Discovery Flight and Determination

He took a discovery flight at KMJX and, like others, was immediately hooked. He began flight training soon after but quickly grew frustrated with scheduling setbacks. "I started to understand the challenges of getting a private pilot certificate," he noted. "I had difficulties finding instructors who were regularly available to finish my training."

Because Will knew that flight training was a perishable skill and required consistency, he was anxious to find an instructor. "I really wanted to finish," he recalled. "Fortunately, I found a good match at Princeton Airport (K39N) and, for the last couple of months of training, I drove an hour and a half each way. Looking back, I'm proud of my dedication. It wasn't easy balancing family, business and training, but I got it done."

The VFR Life

Will earned his private pilot certificate in 2016 and enjoyed the VFR life, renting Cessna steam-gauge 172s and 182s.

"I was logging experience and flying my family to various locations," he said. It was during COVID that he had the chance to log some unusual experiences that stand out in his mind.



Will and his family enjoy taking trips and vacations in the Cirrus and it has sparked an interest in aviation for one of his sons.

“When Pennsylvania state liquor stores shut down during the lockdown, my wife, our two youngest children and I, under the guise of adventure, flew to Wings Field to deliver some much sought-after martini accoutrements to my father- and mother-in-law, a story that’s now become family lore.”

Will continued, “And I was able to land a 172 at Newark, JFK and LaGuardia airports. Local pilots refer to it as the ‘Bravo Trifecta.’ Although I have landed at busy airports, it’s not something I’d do now in my Cirrus without a CSIP in that extremely busy Class B airspace. Back then, however, traffic was light and ATC was bored. They were happy to have us.”

Cirrus Calling

While renting airplanes, Will became familiar with Cirrus aircraft, and the dream of owning one never left his mind. He even joined COPA in 2017, shortly after getting his private certificate and long before owning one.

“I’d get into online tussles with people on Facebook who would make fun of Cirrus pilots because of the parachute,” he said. “I wasn’t even a Cirrus pilot then, but I was always a big fan and saw the value in the parachute and the safety culture. At the time, hypothetically, if I were to have purchased a 182, I would have put a parachute in that plane just for peace of mind.”

Renting airplanes has its limitations, and Will wanted to be able to take longer trips. “We had some fun times renting, but it doesn’t allow you to take the plane away for a week,” he noted. “We didn’t really enjoy the value of vacations until we got the Cirrus.”



Partnership in a G2

In 2022, Mike Gesicki, a friend and United Airlines pilot, invited Will to buy into a three-way partnership on a 2004 SR22 G2. “It was a great opportunity,” he said, “but I also realized what a large jump it would be to fly the Cirrus, and I wanted to have my instrument rating to really fly it well.”

With Mike’s mentorship, he trained in the Cirrus and after a year, bought out his partners. He has since transformed his G2 with numerous upgrades, including a full repaint and interior, a Garmin 750, a push-button start, Beringer brakes, Starlink connectivity, Surefly magneto and even a G7 cargo door retrofit. “I’m proud of the sensible safety upgrades,” he said. “It’s one of the most well-equipped G2s flying.”

Safety First and Always

His pursuit of safety extends beyond equipment, which is why he took spin training with Catherine Cavagnaro in Sewanee, Tennessee. “She is a legend, and I thought that it would be fantastic to learn this skill from her,” he said.

Will also draws heavily from the forums on the COPA website saying, “There’s a lot of wisdom to soak up there from people who’ve been flying longer than me on sensible upgrades or discussions about safety and learning tips and tricks.”

Confidence in the Cockpit

His wife, Sabrina, has always been a little nervous about flying. “To build her confidence, we went out to Las Vegas right after I purchased the Cirrus and took Mike Radomsky’s simulator training over a couple of days,” Will explained. “So now,

when we fly together, she’ll do drills in which I pretend to pass out, and she can command the Avidyne DFC 90 to a destination where there are services. It’s something we work on together.”

With four children, Will is also guiding his second youngest son, who is 15 years old, and has shown an interest in aviation. “I tell him it can’t be about clicks on social media and being cool,” he emphasized. “If it’s truly his passion, we’ll support him. But he has to show it through study and effort.”

Balance and Gratitude

Though his career in wealth management keeps him busy, Will does carve out time to fly to stay sharp and model safety for his family and clients. “In my work, I see how many people don’t enjoy their nest egg,” he said. “I try to balance enjoying life now with preparing for later. Owning a Cirrus has been that balance.”

Will hangs his airplane at Eagles Nest Airport (K31E), a small strip in the Pine Barrens of New Jersey. “It’s a challenging airport known for tricky winds, a banner towing operation and a jump school. If you can take off and land successfully there, you can land almost anywhere,” he said.

Looking ahead, Will’s primary short-term goal is to complete his commercial rating. Long-term, he’d like to earn his CFI/CFII and volunteer for Angel Flight. “My career takes up a lot of my time,” he said, “but my older son is joining the business as a third generation. Once he is more settled, I would like to do more, including trying formation flying. I am also part of the WINGS Pilot Proficiency Program, the FAA’s safety initiative.”

Will concluded, “I walk around with a lot of gratitude. It was a lifelong dream to fly, and I’m happy and blessed to be able to do it.” ☺



After taking sole ownership of the G2, Will has upgraded it with a full repaint and interior, a Garmin 750, a push-button start, Beringer brakes, Starlink connectivity, Surefly magneto and a G7 cargo door retrofit.