

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

» Getting to Know  
COPA Pilots



*On March 28, 2026, Amanda Farnsworth, an AOPA board member and Tennessee Aviation Hall of Fame inductee, and Ivy McIver, executive director of the Cirrus SR product line, were each presented with the inaugural COPA Women Pilots Distinguished Leadership Award.*

*The following member spotlights offer a glimpse into the experiences, achievements and passion that characterize their aviation journeys.*



**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](http://www.laurieeinsteinkoszuta.com).

## From Backyard Dreams to the Flight Deck: Amanda Farnsworth's Ascent

by Laurie Einstein Koszuta

**When Amanda Farnsworth was 40, she decided it was finally time to go after a dream she had carried for decades.** She drove to John C. Tune Airport (KJWN) in Nashville, Tennessee, changed out of her business suit and heels, slipped into jeans and climbed into the cockpit of a Cessna 172. This pre-arranged first flight lesson was the beginning of a dream she'd long been told was impossible.

"I wanted to fly airplanes since I was a little girl," Farnsworth said. "I'd be playing in the backyard and look up whenever a plane flew overhead and knew I wanted to fly those planes too. I grew up in a small town in Tennessee where people said little girls didn't fly airplanes."



« **Amanda flying her SF50 Vision Jet in formation.**

Not fully understanding the rationale, Farnsworth followed a more traditional path but kept the idea of becoming a pilot one day in the back of her mind.

“I went to Vanderbilt University and graduated with a bachelor’s degree in mathematics,” she said. “I was able to get a scholarship and then pursue my master’s degree in computer science, also at Vanderbilt. But when I was finished, I didn’t have a lot of extra money, so I had to work.”

In the intervening years, she got married and built a prestigious career in the investment industry. At the time, she often told her husband, Bob, that she would learn to fly someday.

“Bob kept saying, ‘Please don’t fly airplanes; it’s not safe.’ It was a battle we went through for years,” she said. “But I just had to do it. And I finally did start training just four years after the birth of our daughter, Alexandra.”

She found her first flight lesson thrilling. “The freedom I felt was fascinating,” she said. “It was just the plane, the sky, the pilot and me. Earning my private pilot certificate was the fulfillment of a lifelong dream.”

The day after she got her certificate, she flew with an instructor to Duluth, Minnesota, to pick up a Cirrus SR22 demonstrator, and from then on, aviation became central to her life.

“I’ve been privileged to own five Cirrus aircraft,” she said. “I’ve had two SR22s and an SR22T. I took delivery of my SF50 Vision Jet in 2018. Much later, we sold that one and took delivery of another because Bob wanted the Safe Return Autoland capability.”



« **Amanda and her husband, Bob look back for a cockpit snapshot mid-flight.**



▲ **Amanda with her daughter, Alexandra, who earned her private certificate in 2025.**

Farnsworth was the first woman to earn a type rating in the SF50 Vision Jet and also has her instrument and commercial ratings. She hopes to get her seaplane rating in the future.

## A Mission to Open Doors

As Farnsworth's flying evolved, so did her sense of purpose, particularly mentoring aspiring pilots, especially women – a cause close to her heart.

“When I was learning to fly in the early 2000s,” she said, “I rarely saw other female pilots. When I would land somewhere, people would ask, ‘Who’s flying that plane?’ They were always so surprised.”

Those experiences shaped her commitment to advocacy. After joining the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) board of directors in 2012, she made it a personal mission to help bring more women into aviation.

“We needed more women pilots,” she said, “And now, both Cirrus and AOPA are fully committed to that goal.”

Her work also aligns closely with AOPA's You Can Fly initiative, which introduces high school students to careers in aviation and aerospace through a four-year, STEM-based curriculum. The program's statistics are staggering. Approximately 100,000 students have used the curriculum since it was first offered. Currently, there are 571 programs representing more than 1,400 schools and 25,000 participating students this year throughout 48 states and Guam.

For Farnsworth, expanding access isn't just about representation; it's about possibility.

## Milestones in the Sky

Farnsworth's aviation journey has included other interesting experiences that few pilots ever have.

In August 2016, she made headlines by flying her SR22T to Cuba during a rare window of eased restrictions between the United States and the communist nation.

“When Miami handed me off to Cuban air traffic control,” she recalled, “the controller sounded startled.” Upon landing, armed men rushed out of an old, dilapidated building and surrounded the aircraft.

“I hesitated to open the door,” she said, “because I wasn't sure what would happen next. But through broken Spanish, I realized they meant no harm; they came to see two female pilots.”

Farnsworth later learned that she and her copilot were the first all-female crew to land a private aircraft on the island in 60 years.

Another defining and ambitious endeavor came in 2019 with Girls Fly Atlantic, a trans-Atlantic crossing she made in a Vision Jet with copilot Katie Pribyl, an AOPA executive.

The mission's goal was to honor historic women aviators while creating STEM-focused curriculum content for students. They chose a routing that echoed the style of World War II aviators, which took them from Washington, D.C., to Bangor, Maine, then to Goose Bay, Labrador, Canada, then on to Greenland, Iceland, Scotland and Normandy before returning to the United States.

Farnsworth is often recognized as a trailblazer, including being inducted last year into the Tennessee Aviation Hall of Fame. However, she's quick to redirect that praise.

“The true pioneers were the earlier generation of female pilots, particularly those who flew during World War II,” she said. “They did everything the male pilots did except fly in combat. They were vital to the war effort.”

## Safety All the Time

Despite her high-profile roles, Farnsworth remains grounded in the fundamentals. One thing she is most passionate about in aviation is safety.

“I get frustrated when pilots skip preflight, ignore weight and balance and cut corners,” she said, “because safety is paramount. Those things take only a few minutes to complete.” She continued, “Airplanes are pieces of equipment and they can break down; you have to know what to do if that happens. I follow a disciplined regimen that includes annual Vision Jet recurrent and type-related training and regular instrument proficiency work. There is always something to learn.”



➤ **Amanda and her copilot, Dee Dee Turner,** were the first all-female crew to land a private aircraft on the island of Cuba in 60 years.

In that respect, Farnsworth is dedicated to Cirrus aircraft. “They have built a culture of safety since day one, especially with CAPS and now the Safe Return,” she said.

## Full Circle

Even though she remembers her early flying days when airports reacted as if a woman pilot were a novelty, she strongly emphasizes that the men in her aviation life have been very supportive and helpful whenever she needed it. “I found that to be true, especially within Cirrus and AOPA.”

She is also especially thrilled that her daughter is interested in aviation, having recently earned her private certificate in June 2025 and is currently working toward her instrument rating.

“Alexandra has been flying with us since she was 4 years old,” Farnsworth said. “In those days, she would be perched on old phone books to see over the panel. She was learning to make radio calls when it was appropriate.”

For the little girl who once stood in her backyard looking up at planes overhead, aviation is the culmination of a life fully realized.

“There’s this crazy peace about the skies, a peace that’s so freeing,” Farnsworth said wistfully. “It’s an awesome place to relax and visit with whoever is in the plane with you.” ☺



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