The Official Publication of the Piper Owner Society Since 1986

PIPERS MAGAZINE

September 2026

The Cherokee 235
Built for Family, Friendship & Flying

10 Maintenance Mistakes to Avoid



EAA 2026 SHOW REPORT

PIPER OWNER SOCIETY
EST. 1986
40
piperowner.org

www.piperowner.org
www.facebook.com/PiperOwnerSociety

$9.95 US

September 2026

PIPERS MAGAZINE

Vol. 39 No. 9

8 *Featured Plane*
Dad's Wing Wagon
A Cherokee 235 Built for Family, Friendship, and Flying
By Diana Jones

16 *Sky Talk*
New Purchase Coverage
How to Ensure You're Insured Before You Take the Plunge
By Scott "Sky" Smith

20 **Fuel Tank Repair**
New England Aero
By Gerry Sykes & Michelle Verrilli
Sponsored Content

22 **High-Tech One Upmenship**
By Joel A. Turpin, ATP CFII FAA Master Pilot

24 **Pitfalls in Troubleshooting**
Think First, Fix Faster
By Carl Ziegler, A&P/IA

30 **Maintenance Mistakes That Cost Owners**
Protect Your Airplane and Your Wallet

34 **To Korea With Luck**
7,500 Miles of Wind, Weather, and Waiting
By Bill Cox

36 **AirVenture 2026 Show Report**
The Memorable Week in Oshkosh Proved General Aviation is Thriving Among Enthusiasts of All Ages
By Carie Ferg

46 *Hangar Tip*
More Than a Pretty Cabin
By Ron Matta, Aviation Creations

MEMBER ACTIVITY

43 *Member Q&A*

DEPARTMENTS

6 *From the Publisher*
45 *Ad Index & Website Directory*

On the cover: Lenny Tropiano's Cherokee 235 by Jack Fleetwood (www.JackFleetwood.com).







The information presented in PIPERS Magazine is from many sources for which there can be no warranty or responsibility by the publisher as to accuracy, originality, or completeness. The magazine is sold with the understanding that the publisher is not engaged in rendering product endorsements or providing instruction as a substitute for appropriate training by qualified sources. PIPERS Magazine and Ferg Press LLC will not assume responsibility for any damages or harm arising from any information published in PIPERS Magazine, on its forum, or via other member support communication channels. Our advice, and the advice of our writers and our staff, is not intended as the final word in safety or maintenance; always consult your A&P.

Dad's Wing WAGON

A Cherokee 235 Built for Family, Friendship, and Flying

By Diana Jones

Some people grow up dreaming about becoming firefighters or astronauts. For Lenny Tropiano, aviation captured his imagination from the very beginning. As a kid, he was glued to the television during the Apollo missions and later followed every Space Shuttle launch. Airplanes represented adventure, possibility, and freedom.

When he moved from New York to Texas in 1990, he decided it was finally time to see what flying was all about. A discovery flight at a small flight school in Georgetown was all it took. "The thrill hit me immediately," Lenny recalled.





Photos of Lenny Tropiano's Cherokee 235 by Jack Fleetwood (*www.JackFleetwood.com*).



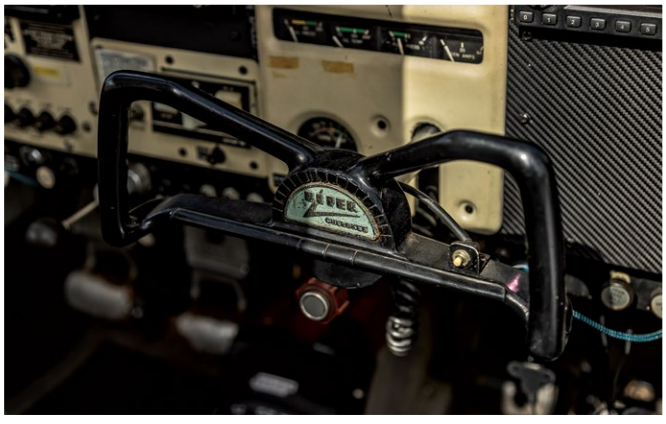
He signed up for lessons on the spot and began training in a Piper Tomahawk. He completed his written exam, soloed, and was nearing his private checkride when life took an unexpected turn. Marriage, children, career, and finances pushed aviation to the background. "It took a back seat for 27 years."

Even though he wasn't flying, aviation never completely left his life. He continued following the industry and eventually combined two passions, aviation and software development, by creating Flybound, an iPhone app that helps pilots determine which airports are practical destinations based on weather, aircraft performance, fuel, daylight, and personal minimums.

Still, something was missing.

In 2018, with his children grown and more flexibility in both time and finances, Lenny returned to the same flight school where he had first started. He rented Warriors and Archers, retook the written exam, worked through several instructor changes, and persevered through the delays brought on by COVID. On Sept. 2, 2021, more than three decades after his first lesson, he earned his private pilot certificate in Austin, Texas. "The thrill of that day was indescribable," he says.







Finding the Right Airplane

Two years before earning his certificate, Lenny had already made another important decision. Rather than continue renting airplanes, he bought into a one-fifth ownership share of a 1963 Piper Cherokee 235, N8513W. The partnership, known as the Texas Old Man's Aviation Society, offered exactly what he was looking for. The buy-in was affordable, the airplane came with a coveted T-hangar, maintenance costs could be shared among five owners, and the Cherokee felt familiar.

In fact, Lenny had spent many hours flying alongside a friend who owned a Piper Dakota 236, an airplane very similar to the Cherokee 235. He appreciated the straightforward handling, generous useful load, and dependable Lycoming O-540 up front.

The Cherokee also fit the mission he envisioned. He wanted an airplane that would let him complete his training without fighting flight school scheduling conflicts. More importantly, he wanted something capable of carrying his wife, family, and friends on cross-country adventures.

A Proven Traveler

For an airplane built in 1963, N8513W has aged remarkably well. The Cherokee has spent most of its life in hangars, and both the paint and interior remain in excellent condition. Previous partners invested wisely over the years, adding ADS-B capability through a Garmin GTX 345 transponder along with a JPI EDM-830 engine monitor.

Since joining the partnership, Lenny and the other owners have continued modernizing the airplane. Dual Garmin G5 flight instruments replaced aging vacuum-driven gyros that had become



SPECIFICATIONS & PERFORMANCE

1964-1965 Cherokee 235

All specs and performance numbers are drawn from official sources, often the aircraft flight manual or the manufacturer's website. Every vintage airplane is different; do not use these specs to plan a flight.

Performance

Top Speed	166 mph
Optimum at	NA ft.
Speed	156 mph
Range	935 sm
Endurance	7.9 hrs.
Economy at	10,000 ft.
Speed	137 mph
Range	1130 nm
Endurance	7.9 hrs.
Stall, Clean	70 kts
Take-off Roll	60 mph
Take-off 50 ft.	1,360 ft.
Climb Best Rate	825 fpm
Speed, Best ROC	100 mph
Speed, Best Angle	90 mph
Approach Speed, Clean	90 mph
Approach Speed, Flaps	80 mph
Landing, 50 ft	1,300 ft.
Landing Roll	680 ft.
Service Ceiling	16,500 ft.

Specifications

Engine	Lycoming 0-540-B4BS
Horsepower	235
Displacement	541.5 cu. in.
Min. Octane Fuel	80
No. Cylinders	6
TBO	2,000 hrs.
Propeller	McCauley
Type	1P235PFA80
Prop Diameter	80 in.
Landing Gear	Fixed/Tri
Mains	6.00 x 6
Nose Tire	6.00 x 5
Gross Wt.	2,900 lbs.
Ave. Empty Wt.	1,410 lbs.
Ave. Useful Load	1,490 lbs.
Baggage Capacity	200 lbs.
Total Fuel, Std.	84 gals.
Wingspan	32 ft.
Length	23' 61.2"
Height	7'1"
Wing Area	170 sq. ft.
Wing Loading	17 lbs./sq. ft.
Power Loading	12.4 lbs./hp
Main Gear Track	10' ft.
Doors	1
Seats	4

increasingly troublesome. In 2025, the panel also received a Garmin GNC 355 GPS/Nav/Com, replacing an aging Garmin 300XL whose monochrome display had become difficult to read.

The upgrades have made the Cherokee both safer and easier to fly. The GTX 345 provides weather and traffic directly to ForeFlight without requiring additional equipment. The engine monitor gives detailed cylinder temperature, exhaust gas temperature, fuel flow, and engine performance information. The Garmin G5s eliminate another pair of aging gyroscopic instruments, while the GNC 355 provides modern GPS navigation and flight planning.

Looking ahead, the partnership hopes to install a Garmin GFC 500 autopilot and finally eliminate the remaining vacuum system.

A Partnership That Works

Partnership ownership often raises questions among prospective buyers, but Lenny's experience has been overwhelmingly positive. "The guys in the partnership make it work," Lenny said.

Scheduling conflicts are almost nonexistent because everyone shares the same attitude about flying. The airplane flies between 125 and 175 hours each year. Lenny logs around 50 of those hours.

The hourly partnership fee helps build an engine reserve fund, a decision that paid off in a big way this year. After more than 2,300 hours since major overhaul, one of the magnetos unexpectedly separated from the engine. Rather than make piecemeal repairs, the partnership chose to complete an IRAN (Inspect and Repair as Necessary) during the annual inspection. The overhaul included replacing all six cylinders, the crankshaft, magnetos, fuel pump, brakes, and several other major components.

Because the engine fund had been carefully maintained, the partnership was prepared for the expense. Today the engine has more than 50 hours on it and is performing better than ever.

What Makes the Cherokee Shine

There are plenty of reasons Lenny enjoys flying this particular Cherokee. Its useful load is at the top of the list. Even with all four fuel tanks topped off, totaling 84 gallons, the airplane still has room for four adults and baggage. That flexibility makes it an outstanding traveling machine. The T-hangar is another major advantage, especially in Central Texas where intense sun and frequent hailstorms can quickly damage an airplane left outside.







Partnership ownership often raises questions among prospective buyers, but Lenny's experience has been overwhelmingly positive. "The guys in the partnership make it work," Lenny said.







Left: Lenny and his mom side-by-side. Airplanes have a way of becoming part of life's biggest moments. For Lenny, N8513W is far more than transportation. It's the airplane that finally allowed him to finish a dream that waited more than 30 years, and it continues creating memories with every flight.

Of course, no airplane is perfect. The single-axis autopilot does an acceptable job tracking a course but lacks altitude hold. The seats could use more padding on longer trips. And like many Cherokee 235 owners know, the large O-540 engine makes the airplane nose heavy during landing, requiring a little more back pressure in the flare than many pilots expect.

Lenny also pointed out that the classic Hershey Bar wing rewards proper airspeed management. Pull the power to idle too early, and the airplane sheds altitude quickly. Add in four independently selected fuel tanks, and flying the Cherokee rewards pilots who stay ahead of the airplane.

More Than a Hamburger Machine

Like many Texas pilots, Lenny enjoys flying for breakfast, barbecue, and beach trips. Fredericksburg's Aviation Diner, Gate 12 in College Station, Hard 8 BBQ in Stephenville, Cooper's in Llano, and Black Walnut Café in Conroe all rank among his favorite destinations. When the weather is nice, Port Aransas offers another perfect excuse to launch. A quick golf cart ride from the airport puts the beach within easy reach.

But the most meaningful memories have little to do with destinations. Soloing the Cherokee for the first time and taking his private pilot checkride in the airplane rank near the top. Flying Young Eagles and watching kids experience aviation from the cockpit has become another highlight.

Still, one flight stands above the rest. In June 2023, Lenny flew his mother to a fly-in at Randolph Air Force Base, a military field that required prior permission to land. It was her first and only flight in his airplane. "She was so proud of me," Lenny said. She passed away in August 2025, but that flight remains one of his most treasured memories.