





**A Life's Passion:
Brett Panter's
Soaring State of Mind
by Brittany Panter**



The Aztec has everything that Brett Panter needs. With tip tanks, the aircraft can hold 177 gallons of fuel.

In 1977, Brett Panter, a 17-year-old growing up in Hollywood, Fla., had a higher altitude in mind. At the suggestion of his father he went out to North Perry Airport (KHWO) to investigate what flying entailed. The airport encapsulated the adolescent fantasy of flying in a practical manner, solidifying the dream in the form of a plane.

Panter's first flight was in a Piper Tomahawk. "I remember the first feeling of flying, it was so exhilarating and exciting," he recalled. As many Piper Flyer Association members know, the freedom of flight is something that must



be experienced to be truly understood. Once Panter gained that understanding he was hooked—line and sinker.

From First Solo to Old Pro

Panter began his training and a few

months before his 18th birthday, he soloed in the Tomahawk. Every pilot remembers his or her first solo flight, the first time in the plane without an instructor to designate when to rotate, or increase airspeed, or when to flare.

The autonomy of a solo flight is equally frightening and enthralling—and came to Panter as currents of energy, like air rushing over pilot and plane.

The gain is worth the trial; the feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction



In addition to flying his Aztec F for business and pleasure, Panter donates flights to charitable organizations and flies with the U.S. Coast Guard.



Panter has authored multiple advisory articles regarding essential aspects of flight safety.



Above, left: For Wendy and Brett and their five children, flying is a significant part of the Panter pride. **Above, right:** Panter acquired N2568M from a flight instructor. At purchase, the airframe had only 1,900 hours on it.

far exceed any of the fears and doubts. Flying isn't just a hobby for Brett Panter, it's a state of mind. "Flying has had a positive impact on my entire life, from social events, to fundraising for various causes, to its business applications. Flying has always been a part of my life and I expect that will remain true for as long as I am able to fly," he says.

Panter left Hollywood, Fla. for bluer horizons at The University of Michigan where he continued to fly. Being on a collegiate budget, he contracted with others from his dorm in order to further his flying. Together they gathered enough funds to rent a Piper Warrior for \$28 an hour with full fuel.

Incorporating flying and socializing, Panter gave his fellow college students a new perspective for \$7 each. There was never a time when he failed to find three new "ready and willings"—or "old and steadies"—to put in for an hour of flying fun. Panter's logbooks are full of the names of University of Michigan cohorts who rose above it all with him.

Years flew by, and Panter graduated from the University of Michigan and went on to law school at the University of Miami. All the while, Panter continued his avocation of aviation. "For the most part, I've always flown Pipers," Panter said.

The Flight Crew

After law school, Panter's burgeoning career curtailed his flight. However, his wife Wendy encouraged him to get back in the pilot's seat. The cockpit inspired the couple to create their own crew—and five children later, flying remains a significant part of the Panter pride as well as being integral to Panter's professional life. Wendy has been a huge supporter of the Panter family's flying adventures, and is the family's expedition planner.

Panter has flown his family to Wisconsin, New York, Virginia, Georgia, all over the state of Florida and to many of the Bahamian islands. The entire family makes annual trips—in their Piper Turbo Aztec—to their home in Highlands, N.C., landing at Macon County Airport (1A5) in Franklin.

An Aztec Fits His Mission

Panter chose his Aztec because it fit his mission. "It's got everything I need," he said. And one thing he appreciates is the additional range. The aircraft is equipped with tiptanks for 177 gallons of fuel (a standard Aztec has a fuel capacity of 144 gallons). "Not only can I get [to North Carolina from Miami] in 3 hours, 45 minutes, I land with 50 gallons."

"I looked at a Matrix," he explained. "It was definitely more economical, but didn't have that same feeling. The saying about twins being twice as much fun is true for me with the Aztec."

N2568M was acquired from a flight instructor. It had only 1,900 hours on the airframe when he purchased it. "I knew I didn't want a Part 135 aircraft," Panter said. "This turbocharged F model had original paint and interior, but no rust or corrosion. I was there when it was stripped [before repainting], so I know it's solid."

"And, my wife loves it," he continued. Peninsula Avionics in Miami has done avionics work in the plane since 2001. It's "loaded" with a Garmin GMA 340 audio panel, a Garmin GNS 530 GPS Nav/Com (upgraded to WAAS in 2007), an EI fuel management system, as well as a JPI EDM 760-6C engine monitor system with display, which Panter says is "within a gallon" of accuracy. "I want to know what everything is doing," he explained.

It also has a Bendix/King RDS 82VP radar, a PCD7100-P CD player from PS Engineering, a Garmin GDL 69 remote data link receiver, a GTX 330 Mode S transponder, and a brand-new engine on the left side. "We take good care of it," Panter said.



Panter, a trial lawyer, harnesses the Aztec's ample air power to commute to clients all around the southeastern United States.

“We” also includes Panter’s partner in the aircraft, Rod Sintow, who was virtually a stranger to him when the Aztec was purchased. But now, Panter says, their aircraft partnership has flourished into a great friendship. “Rod supports all of the charitable endeavors, too,” he said. They have owned the aircraft for eight years, and Panter has logged almost 1,000 hours in it.

Lifelong Learning

Panter is a successful trial lawyer, and the founder of Panter, Panter & Sampedro. The firm handles all types of catastrophic personal injury claims, including aviation disasters. Panter has authored multiple advisory articles regarding essential aspects of flight safety.

About 10 years ago, Panter took his flying adventures to new altitudes by

receiving his Instrument, Commercial and Multi Engine ratings. He began his multi-engine flight training with a trusty Piper Geronimo (built in 1959, the same year as his birth).

By flying a Geronimo with a very basic panel, Panter developed an acute understanding of his own ergonomics which he was then able to translate to his multi-engine and instrument training. “I



His Aztec is “loaded,” and Panter has logged almost 1,000 hours in it.

flew that Geronimo for 300 hours. There was no autopilot, just a basic panel—so I was flying by the needles,” he said. “It was awesome training for flying twin aircraft.”

Panter received top-notch instruction for his instrument and his multi-engine ratings from retired Delta Captain Ira Leshin. Capt. Leshin reinforced in Panter the desire for continuous flight training.

Panter believes firmly in flight training, flying often, and training on a simulator to maintain keen instrument skills.

Panter has accumulated over 2,000 total flight hours. He harnesses the Aztec’s ample air power to commute to clients around the southeastern United States, to fly with his family, and to donate flights for good causes.

Panter’s son, Bryce, is 16 and has followed the family flight plan. He has recently begun training with the Miami Gliders and is considering a high-flying career. Panter’s daughters enjoy flying as well, and perhaps in the future—when their dad gets an instructor’s license?—will decide to get their ratings.

A Volunteer Aviator

Panter believes in giving back to his country and his community, and he uses flying as a means for magnanimity. He serves his country by flying for the U.S. Coast Guard in Miami. He serves his community by utilizing his Aztec for Miracle Flights, transporting needy children to remote locations to receive medical care.

“You get to do two things at once,” Panter said. “You are providing trans-

portation, yes, but you are often giving someone a once-in-a-lifetime experience. I’ll never forget one child I assisted. She was about 10. She had scoliosis, and I flew her for her treatment. Later, her parents came to my office and thanked me personally,” Panter explained.

Panter also donates flights to the Make-A-Wish Foundation, the American Red Cross, The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, Taylor’s Closet Foundation, The Joseph Samuel Isicoff Memorial Fund, and many young lawyers’ fundraisers as well as other community charities.

Brittany Panter is a 22-year-old student in her first year of law school at the University of Florida. She and her siblings—along with her dog, Luke—often fly in her father’s Aztec. Send questions or comments to editor@piperflyer.org.

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