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**Rhet. 105**  
**Final paper (rough draft)**

**The dream chasers**

According to a little electric dictionary I have, the definition of aviation is the designing, building and flying of aircraft. Whenever, I hear the word, aviation, it reminds me a pilot with a clean white uniform. What people first remind from the word may be all different from each other, but they would all relate it to flight. When I was a little kid, I used to dream to be a pilot who flights to all over the world with pretty stewardesses. As I grew up, I, however, began to dislike getting on an airplane and eventually gave up the dream. Nowadays, I wish to be a successful businessman, although, sometimes, I still dream myself being a pilot. While struggling to decide what I am going to focus on for the project, the old dream popped in my head. I thought it would be great if I do my project on aviation which I once yearned to study.

Once my mind was settled, I realized that I don't have any information or idea on how to start researching aviation. I didn't know if there was an aviation club or fraternity in UIUC or whether it is okay to study aviation students who take a particular aviation class I pick. While being heavily stressed out by lack of information, one of my friends told me that he knows a guy in Institute of Aviation. With my friend's help, I was able to contact the guy, Ho Suk Chung and I invited him to dinner.

I had a stereotype that pilots are mostly good looking, active and healthy, which I can't tell how and where I got it from. Contrary to my expectation, he rather looked smart and calm. The conversation I had with Ho Suk enabled me to make great progress on my ethnography project; he informed me of existence of an aviation club in this campus and he told me an email address of a head of the club. So, I emailed Dan to

explain my project and that was how I first contacted him and the beginning of my one-semester long project.

Aviator in simple words means an operator of an airplane. Education of the operation is fairly available in the United States, and anyone who is interested in aviation is able to attain a license through a flight school. However, becoming a pilot of a major commercial airline such as American or Delta is not as easy as getting a flight license. Getting a flight license will probably take about a year but becoming a major commercial airline pilot will take around 15 to 20 years for the major airlines require at least 3000 hours of flight. The AHP meeting that I attended for the first time, provided me an opportunity to meet a major commercial airline pilot. He was invited to the meeting as a guest speaker to share his experiences in military and commercial airline.

The guest speaker, Captain Haas, was a marine reserve pilot who flies commercially for Delta airlines. He graduated from University of Missouri and had never experienced a flight before entering college. He served as a pilot for 18 years in U.S Navy. Other pilots who accompanied the Captain for the presentation were Major Hill and Captain Schoonover. The main topic of his presentation was to explain the benefits you receive from entering the military. Taking an oath to enter military after college would provide financial aid to students. Also major airlines would give top priority to people who have an aviation experience in the military on selecting their aviators. They explained that there are three steps to go through to become a pilot in the military: officer candidate school (OCS), the basic school (TBS) and the flight school. The main focus in OCS is physical training, military skills and problem solving, whereas TBS mainly focus on leadership. Getting an admission from flight schools is relatively much harder than it is to get into OCS and TBS, because jet aircraft requires

not only excellent physical and mental conditions but also pilot's ability of making quick and accurate judgments in few seconds. The students in the room paid attention seriously and tried to jot down some useful information. (A couple of them were thinking of joining the navy.)

His presentation was well-prepared and was persuadable enough to attract my attention. However, I sometimes felt a little bit bored since I could not understand the technical terms they used constantly. It seemed that I was the only one not understanding the name of the aircrafts and technologies in aviation. Along with boredom, I also felt shame in my lack of effort to gain information about the presentation. I could have asked Dan or even the guest speakers about aviation before the presentation started. The lack of knowledge in the field was the first challenge I faced. If I knew more about the aviation, I of course would not have started this project. Despite my ignorance, I was depressed as I could sense a huge gap between them and me.

The challenge inspired me to research on technical terms used in aviation and I narrowed down my focusing area to avionics used in aircrafts in UIUC. There are three kinds of aircrafts in Institute of Aviation: Piper Archer, Piper Arrow and Seminole. Avionic system, called ADF which stands for automatic direction finder is used in Piper Archer and GPS which stands for global positioning system is used in Piper Arrow and Seminole. ADF is one of the older types of radio navigation and it is used as a means of identifying positions, receiving low and medium frequency voice communications, homing, tracking, and for navigation on instrument approach procedures.<sup>1</sup> The GPS is a space-based radio positioning, navigation and time data distribution system that

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.allstar.fiu.edu/aero/ADF.htm>

provides precise location, speed and time to an unlimited number of military and civilian users.<sup>2</sup> A constellation of more than two dozen GPS satellites broadcasts precise timing signals by radio to GPS receivers, allowing them to accurately determine their location in any weather and anywhere on Earth.<sup>3</sup> GPS system was made and is used by U.S Department of Defense and the satellite constellation is managed by U.S Air Force.

Interview is one of the best ways to learn more about a person through two simple elements: asking and listening. Indeed, the interview with the head of the club, Dan Skelsky enabled me to take a closer look at the lives of aviation students and the interview contributed a lot, when judging who AHP members are.

I asked him several questions that I had been wanting to know and the most impressive part of the interview was the many tasks that they have to complete each semester. The mandatory classes that aviation-major students have to take require relatively more effort and time than other classes that have the same credit hours as aviation classes. Dan explained me that Aviation students are required to take a flight class each semester and they fly three times a week for two hours in a week. Also, there is a ground class where they learn theories and lists of technology terms in aviation and they have to attend the class two times a week for an hour and half. So, the classes are total 9 hours of aviation class per week. However, flight school is not counted and the only class that gives credits is ground class. Furthermore, they have to take a check ride, which means that you go up with an instructor and demonstrate that you are proficient and all the maneuvers to that class you took.

“I think this is crime that aviation students have to go through. I don’t know if the crime is the best word. But this is kind of unfair.”

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.globalsecurity.org/space/library/report/1997/sp97/gps.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/GPS>

Dan described the disadvantage in a grumbling manner, but I felt that Dan did not hate it as much as he sounded since he studies what he has wanted to do from childhood. But, I agreed that earning no credits for flight class is a little bit unfair.

The joint meeting between WIA(women in aviation) and AHP brought up an incomprehensible question: why are they so passionate in doing all this kind of stuff? The main issue at the meeting was fund-raising, and the students eagerly participated in giving their opinions. They volunteered themselves to take care of bake-sale at Champaign airport. I could answer to neither the question nor the reason for their eager behavior since I had never played an important role in such clubs and never even felt the desire to do so. In high school, I had joined several clubs, but honestly, I joined most of them hoping to make my extracurricular fancier. After pondering over the question, the only answer I could come up with was that they really love what they do, and they love it because it is about aviation.

At times, the fieldsite observation allowed me to realize the unconscious stereotype I had. The next meeting I attended after the joint meeting gave rise to another question: how are students and instructor so close that they drink together? The meeting was an unofficial meeting, called the “hang-out day,” and the aviation instructor was there. His presence was totally unexpected for I had never seen students and teachers associate together at a bar. They were joking and drinking together as if they were close friends, and I seemed to be the only one who looked perplexed. I had never thought such association was unacceptable but did believe that there was an invisible boundary between students and professors. Professors and TAs are homework, quiz and test givers and students are the takers. Obviously, students get stress from being the inferior end of the relationship, and the inevitable

feelings create some distances between them. While, trying to answer the question in aviation students' perspectives, I realized the question was derived from my stereotype I have, not from anything related to aviation students.

The research that I have done for annotated bibliography greatly broadened my range of aviation knowledge and helped me comprehend my subculture much better. Literally, I had not known anything about history of aviation except for the fact that Wright brothers contributed a lot to aircraft development.

For endless centuries, mankind had yearned to fly in the sky. Although not recorded, many people might have attempted to fly before Leonardo Da Vinci made a drawing of a flying machine in 1500. Four hundred years later, Orville and Wilbur Wright of the United States made the first engine-powered, heavier-than-air flights in 1903. In 1939, the first successful flight of a jet-engine airplane took place in Germany and since then, aviation technology has advanced dramatically and newly produced aircrafts are flying beyond the sky to explore the space.

The archive finding brought me unexpected information about a professor who may be called the father of Institute of Aviation of this university. While trying to find some data of history of AHP through online database, I discovered that an entire box is about one person, Leslie A. Bryan. In the box I received, there were some scraps of newsletters published in 1960s and the Aviation technology books and papers that he wrote. Skimming the papers and books in the box, I realized why all of his works was stored.

Leslie A. Bryan distinguished himself in many fields; education, aviation, and athletics. As a director of the Institute of Aviation at the University of Illinois from 1946 to 1968, he took national leadership roles in professional organizations and published

widely. He also took part of a number of consulting roles, including services as an advisor to both Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy. He was also a member of the Athletic Association Board of Directors at UIUC from 1951 to 1968 and served as its vice president from 1952 to 1954. Before he came to U of I, he had been a professor of transportation at Syracuse University and also a track coach and athletic director. At UIUC, he managed the major expansion of the university aviation program.

Reading all the papers that I've written for this project repeatedly, I came to conclude that AHP members are passionate students who have many works to do, but know how to enjoy what they are doing. As mentioned before, they have to take aviation classes that require more effort and time than other classes that have the same credit hours. If so, AHP club members might have chosen to spend more time on studying or doing whatever they want on every Thursday night, rather than going out for AHP meeting. But, instead, they chose to go out to meet other students with the same major because they know that sharing happy or sad aviation-related episodes through socializing with other aviation students would invigorate each other. Perhaps, the students have understood the true meaning of this English proverb.

“A Sorrow shared is half a trouble, but a joy that is shared is a joy made double”

Two months of observing my subculture seemed too short, but yet it was a novel experience to me. Since, AHP meeting is held only once a week at fixed time, the meeting was always my top priority. However, sometimes, it was so hard for me to observe them for the meeting often coincided with a review session for the test on Friday and I was once terribly sick on that day. Fortunately, I was able to attend every possible meeting somehow and find differences between them and me.