

What it means to be an aviator

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. Aviation would definitely involve some technology and studying and interviewing people interested in aviation may provide me another perspective on understanding aviation.

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 have 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. He also promised me

that he will ask an aviation professor that if it is possible for me to get on a light plane with him.

Right after dinner, I sent an email to the head of the aviation club, and he said he is willing to give me full support to help me do my project on the people interested in aviation. He informed me that next meeting is scheduled for Thursday (February 9th) at 7pm in room 252 Mechanical Engineering Building and there will be a guest speaker who is a marine pilot, airline pilot be speaking to us about their experience in the military and their experience as a Delta Airline pilot.

It seems that I have not had a big challenge or difficulty in doing this project so far and I really feel lucky on that. It has been only about a week since I started this, but I believe this week will be the most significant week for my project. I found the field site that I am eager to research and I got permission from the head of aviation club that I can study the club and club members. I was often told by father that “Well begun is half done” which means a good start almost assures success. It is in a way hard to say I am really half way through but I do feel confident that I will complete this project with full of satisfaction at the end of semester. I hope this ethnography project will help me understand not only aviation and aviators but also all the communities that I feel unfamiliar. Also, through this project, I want to compare and contrast aviation in my point of view and aviation in their perspectives. I did want to be an aviator but mostly likely it was a whim. However, the people that I will observe throughout the semester are ones who take aviation serious enough to spend their lives on it. So my main objective of this project is to redefine my comprehension of what it means to be an aviator.