

“At Home in the Sky”

Liam Dermady

For many, human flight is simply a dream of the past that has become a reality and faded to commonplace. Its magic vanishing as it evolved from a miracle to a luxury and finally a tool of society. But to be at home in the sky is a feeling that never fades. It is a privilege that all aviators share and only an aviator can truly appreciate. I could never forget the feeling of looking out at the world, through that tiny pane of glass on my first flight. Anyone can appreciate flying. Being above the ground is a feeling unique to everyday experience for most people, despite it being a popular way to travel. It can be exhilarating, thought provoking and even inspiring.

But to be an aviator, one must love flying for what it is — as it is today, with all the painstaking preparation, technicalities, sweat and sleepless nights that make it possible, but often inconvenient. For me, it was the searing, laborious summer afternoons mowing grass, and evenings spent pouring over FAR/AIM chapters that kept me in love with the sky. For me, the implication of getting high was a bit different from most people in high school. I ditched parties and cut dates short every weekend to wake up early and spend the day working, accumulating pennies for one precious hour. That hour — where the machine becomes a part of me and I can feel its battle with the air as if it was my own, through a plethora of quivering needles. I am alive in a new world, maintaining homeostasis by carefully monitoring each gauge. A rewarding feeling of purpose and accomplishment overcomes me every time I enter it.

I’ve made sacrifices all my life for flying. It has always been the struggle, and the things I’ve given up for it that have fueled my passion for so long. I do not consider myself a born pilot. I had no great uncle in the Air Force. My father doesn’t own an airplane. I grew up in a family of 5 without wealth and connections. I simply never outgrew a childhood curiosity; what began as a fascination with the intricacy, and the exquisite yet elegantly practical mechanics of a flying machine, grew with me. Instead of going to little league practices or playing on a Nintendo I would pick up a book about flight. Aircraft were also a context for learning; the increasing digitalization of modern avionics and aircraft systems sparked my interest in computers and technology, which eventually led me to join my school’s computer science club and help program a web page. Aviation was an obsession, but one that led me places and influenced me to ultimately become a better person — my perseverance, motivated by a simple desire to fly. I pushed myself to overcome the obstacles in order to become a pilot, and I know I will continue to do so.

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