

The boy who dreamed of being a pilot from a rooftop and today flies on American Airlines

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A rooftop in the Tacuba neighborhood of Mexico City was the best clue to blow up a dream. Alejandro Escolá climbed along with his cousins and brothers to the roof of his house to watch the planes go by and imagine that he was the pilot, a **steel bird**.

“The first time I saw a cockpit was when they took us to a plane, which they had made a restaurant, I remember being impressed with the panel and the instruments. I imagine it was a DC-6, but in my memory, it was a huge plane”, remembers Alejandro Escolá, who now looks at the sky from a plane that he pilots in American Airlines.

The Mexican now belongs to one of the world's leading US airlines which, together with **American Eagle**, offers an average of 6,700 daily flights to 350 destinations in 50 countries.

This April 7, the Mexican pilot celebrated **World Aviation Pilot Day** and recalled the story that precedes his path to the world of commercial aviation and the achievement of a dream that began on a rooftop in Mexico.

Making tamales

Alejandro Escolá was born in Mexico City during 1959. The Tacuba neighborhood was the area that sheltered his childhood with his parents and siblings.

"I grew up making tamales in the tamalería of my parents, who since I was little taught me the meaning of what effort and sacrifice is," says Escolá, who took his steps towards a university carrera, but never forgot his dream of flying.

At the age of 18, the young Mexican began to investigate what he needed to be a pilot. This is how he decided to go to **the Mexico City International Airport (AICM)** to talk with pilots he encountered.

Aviation professionals recommended Alejandro study in the United States, since in the neighboring country to the north he would find the best aviation schools.

However, there was a challenge ahead: **Escola had to learn to speak English in order to leave his native country.**

"I would go to the US Embassy in Mexico at 4 in the morning to look for information and what requirements I needed to study. I spent all day filling out papers and forms to get a study visa, "says the Mexican.

Embassy employees sent the English student to the **Benjamin Franklin Library** to search for information on aviation studies. Thus began the admission process to various universities.

"So I got to the University Tulsa, Oklahoma. I continued to take English classes and after a year, I began my aviation studies at the Spartan School of Aeronautics. There I not only flew an airplane for the first time, but also obtained several of my licenses. My main training as a pilot was there ", says

Alejandro Escolá.

Image: American Airlines / Alejandro Escolá

“I achieved my dream”

In 1982, his 23 years old , Alejandro already had several flight licenses, but he lacked experience and flight hours. That would change shortly for the path that family life would follow.

Escolá's older sister moved to **Puerto Rico** , since her husband was originally from that region. When he finished his studies in the US, Alejandro decided to visit his family and shortly after he decided to stay and live on the island.

“In Puerto Rico I raised my family and at the same time I continued working to be able to get to an airline,” says the Mexican pilot.

In Puerto Rico, the Mexican obtained his instructor license and thus was able to accumulate flight hours. “When I was able to get the ATP license, I was able to enter an airline called Executive Air, they had CASA planes, only 19 passengers and no flight attendant, then that airline became **American Eagle**, which was a subsidiary of **American Airlines** , there I spent 23 years of my career flying the ATR plane throughout the Caribbean, ”he explains.

The opportunity seemed not to be long. One program offered American Eagle pilots to upgrade to American Airlines. The only requirement was to fly an EMB 145 aircraft for at least two years.

On September 11, 2001, **the attack on the Twin Towers, in New**

York, and only 3 months after being part of American Airlines, the aviation industry completely changed before the terrorist events. "I saw my dream more and more distant," says Alejandro.

"It wasn't until January 2011 that I had the opportunity to get to American Airlines. It was a lot of work and many hours of study, but I achieved my dream, I flew the 737 plane until 2016 and that year I went on to fly the 777 plane, where I have been for 3 years ", he recalls.

Alejandro Escolá believes that the aviation industry has progressed a lot and young people can access their dreams of flying.

"Sometimes the hard work and experience needed to get to be in command of an airplane is not shared. You start by obtaining the private pilot license with approximately 40 hours, then instrument training, then the commercial pilot license and multi-engine training. It is recommended to obtain the instructor license, in order to reach the 1500 hours required ", he says.

Today, Alejandro Escolá, a native of the Tacuba neighborhood in Mexico City, is ready to help young people achieve their dreams. Today look at the roofs of other houses where perhaps there are other children who dream of occupying the cabin of their plane on **American Airlines** .

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