

Captain Jesus Melian's Bio

Welcome to the Southwest Airlines Adopt-A-Pilot program! My name is Captain Jesus Melian and I am honored to be your "virtual" adopted Pilot.

During the course of the program curriculum, you will be joining thousands of students and teachers nationwide in a wonderful journey of discovery, learning, and fun. You will expand your knowledge of mathematics, physics, science, geography, history, and aviation as you follow a flight crew's travel itinerary from coast to coast.

You will also learn how important it is to have goals and how to accomplish them. Dreams can only be achieved if you have the discipline, desire, and determination to prepare yourself for a lifetime of success and happiness. Education empowers you to make your dreams a reality. It happened to me, and it can certainly happen to you! Allow me to share my story.

I was born in Cuba and came to live in the United States at the young age of nine. Upon our arrival in the United States, my family settled in Miami, Florida. I was immediately enrolled in elementary school and began to learn English. It was not easy to adjust to a new life, a new school, and a new language, however I worked very hard to overcome these and other challenges and eventually found my new life in the States to be full of exciting opportunities.

From the time I began elementary school it was evident that I had a significant interest in anything to do with airplanes. While other children played with toys like cars, trucks and engaged in sports, I chose to spend my time going to the library and reading books and journals about aviation. I knew, without a doubt that I wanted to be an airline pilot someday and if I really committed myself to study and work hard, anything could be possible.

During high school years, I began to take advanced courses in math, science and aviation. The school I attended offered an extension program that allowed me to take classes at a nearby aviation academy. While attending school and holding a job, I also began to take private pilot lessons at a nearby airport. When I graduated from high school, I had completed an advanced curriculum and received several aviation ratings/licenses that would enable me to continue to pursue my aviation career goals.

Upon high school graduation, I joined the U.S. Air Force and also began attending college. During my limited spare time, I continued to take private flying lessons and eventually obtained what is called a CFI (Certified Flight Instructor) rating. This rating enabled me to teach other prospective student pilots, while gaining flight time and experience as a pilot and instructor.

When I entered military service I became an Air Traffic Controller. I could not become a pilot immediately during the first few years of my military career because I needed a Bachelor's Degree, acceptance into Officer Training School, and subsequently, Pilot Training School.

The opportunity to become an Air Traffic Controller in the military proved to be an extremely beneficial stepping stone towards my aviation career goals. It exposed me to very important aspects of aviation that I still utilize today, as an airline Captain. The immense knowledge that I gained as a Controller has been invaluable throughout my military and commercial airline careers.

My first assignment as an Air Traffic Controller was at Homestead A.F.B., a former military air base in southeast Florida, located just south of Miami. While stationed there I began my college studies at a nearby university. I met the wonderful woman who has now been my wife for almost three decades.

After completing my Bachelor's Degree and Officer and Pilot Training School, I was awarded the honor of becoming an instructor of the T-38 military aircraft. In the meantime, I also earned a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) degree.

I spent 20 amazing years in the Air Force. During those two decades, I was very fortunate to be offered some extraordinary worldwide assignments. As a result, my family and I enjoyed extensive travel opportunities and the chance to live overseas. The exposure to different cultures, societies, histories, and geographical locations was a very rewarding experience. Most importantly, we had the distinct pleasure of meeting so many new and interesting people and forging friendships that have lasted throughout the years.

I continued to attend special Air Force schools and training opportunities. As a result, I achieved consistent rank promotions and advanced leadership positions. I also accumulated thousands of flight hours, which would eventually be a favorable contribution to my professional aviation resume.

After 20 years of service to our country, I retired from the Air Force in 1995. Within two weeks of my retirement, I was very honored to receive an offer of employment at Southwest Airlines. Not only had I accomplished the goal of becoming a commercial airline pilot, but also achieved my dream of working at Southwest Airlines! The rest, as they say, 'is history'...

More than three decades have passed since the day I sat in a Cessna 150, eagerly anticipating my first flight lesson and ready to take on the world. It has been an amazing, 'ride' during the past 34 years since my flying career began. There were many obstacles and challenges along the way, but none of them ever weakened my spirit and enthusiasm. Even in the midst of adversity, I faced every task with relentless enthusiasm, continuously reminding myself that all of us have the potential to overcome the most difficult hurdles.

With this in mind, I would like to share with you my favorite quote from one of our country's famous entrepreneurs. During a speech to his automobile factory employees, the great Henry Ford said: 'If you think you can, you can. If you think you can't, you are right.' Focus, determination, discipline, self confidence, and integrity will undoubtedly guide you through the most difficult times. Finally, always remember to love what you do because success does not create happiness, but rather happiness creates success.