

# Biographical Data

Lyndon B. Johnson Space Center  
Houston, Texas 77058



National Aeronautics and  
Space Administration

**MICHAEL J. SMITH (CAPTAIN, USN)  
NASA ASTRONAUT (DECEASED)**

**PERSONAL DATA:** Born April 30, 1945, in Beaufort, North Carolina. Died January 28, 1986. He is survived by his wife, Jane, and three children. Michael enjoyed woodworking, running, tennis, and squash.

**EDUCATION:** Graduated from Beaufort High School, Beaufort, North Carolina, in 1963; received a bachelor of science degree in Naval Science from the United States Naval Academy in 1967 and a master of science degree in Aeronautical Engineering from the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School in 1968.

**AWARDS:** Posthumously awarded the Congressional Space Medal of Honor.

**SPECIAL HONORS:** The Defense Distinguished Service Medal (posthumous), Navy Distinguished Flying Cross, 3 Air Medals, 13 Strike Flight Air Medals, the Navy Commendation Medal with "V", the Navy Unit Citation, and the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Silver Star.



**EXPERIENCE:** Graduated from the United States Naval Academy in 1967 and subsequently attended the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School at Monterey, California. He completed Navy aviation jet training at Kingsville, Texas, receiving his aviator wings in May 1969. He was then assigned to the Advanced Jet Training Command (VT-21) where he served as an instructor from May 1969 to March 1971. During the 2-year period that followed, he flew A-6 Intruders and completed a Vietnam cruise while assigned to Attack Squadron 52 aboard the USS KITTY HAWK (CV-63). In 1974, he completed U.S. Navy Test Pilot School and was assigned to the Strike Aircraft Test Directorate at Patuxent River, Maryland, to work on the A-6E TRAM and CRUISE missile guidance systems. He returned to the U.S. Navy Test Pilot School in 1976 and completed an 18-month tour as an instructor. From Patuxent River, he was assigned to Attack Squadron 75 where he served as maintenance and operations officer while completing two Mediterranean deployments aboard the USS SARATOGA. He flew 28 different types of civilian and military aircraft, logging 4,867.7 hours of flying time.

**NASA EXPERIENCE:** Selected as an astronaut candidate by NASA in May 1980, he completed a 1-year training and evaluation period in August 1981, qualifying him for assignment as a pilot on future Space Shuttle flight crews. He served as a commander in the Shuttle Avionics Integration Laboratory, Deputy Chief of Aircraft Operations Division, Technical Assistant to the Director, Flight Operations Directorate, and was also assigned to the Astronaut Office Development and Test Group.

Captain Smith was assigned as pilot on STS 51-L. He was also assigned as pilot for Space Shuttle Mission 61-N scheduled for launch in the Fall of 1986. Captain Smith died on January 28, 1986 when the Space Shuttle Challenger exploded after launch from the Kennedy Space Center, also taking the lives of spacecraft commander, Mr. F.R. Scobee, three mission specialists, Dr. R.E. McNair, Lieutenant Colonel E.S. Onizuka (USAF), and Dr. J.A. Resnik, and two civilian payload specialists, Mr. G.B. Jarvis and Mrs. S. C. McAuliffe.

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