

Michael Burnell, SCA Class of 2006



Ever since Michael was a little boy, he wanted to be a jet pilot. This was probably a result of exposure to his father's flying career as a Navy Pilot and Delta Pilot. Both grandfathers served their country during times of war (WWII and the Korean War), and so it was with a sense of patriotism in the family that led Michael to a post-secondary education and service to his country.

Rigorous academic challenges throughout his time at SCA, as well as a strong Christian foundation, helped to prepare Michael for what was to come at the Naval Academy.

Participation in the school's athletic program helped Michael develop leadership skills that proved to be essential as a military officer.



"In general, as parents, we had the confidence and peace of mind in knowing that SCA had provided our children the tools to get through the challenges to come in their lives, specifically knowledge of the teachings of Christ and the Bible," affirmed mother Carol Burnell. "We knew their solid academic and Christian education at SCA gave them the tools to pursue the careers they so desired."

Mrs. Burnell recalls, "There was a point as each one of them approached high school that we offered them the opportunity, if they so desired, to attend another private or public high school. We were enormously relieved when both Michael and Kathleen (class of 2009) wisely chose to remain at SCA."



During his senior year at SCA, Michael received a nomination from Congressman John Shadegg for appointment to the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis beginning in 2006.

Michael graduated with honors with a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering. While at the academy, he qualified as a pilot candidate.

Following his commissioning in May of 2010, Michael was assigned to N.A.S. Pensacola to begin pilot training.

Michael later became an F/A-18E pilot and was assigned to Strike Fighter Squadron 81 at N.A.S. Oceana. While at VFA81 he deployed aboard the USS Cal Vinson to the Middle East in support of Operation Inherent Resolve from August 2014 – June 2015.



During that deployment one of his achievements was to be awarded the prestigious **Air Medal** (awarded for individual meritorious achievement and Strike/Flight in operations during combat). Other achievements included tanker pilot, section lead, and division lead.

Michael was selected to train to become a Landing Signals Officer. The LSO job is awarded to the most qualified pilots who then undergo specialized training to better facilitate landing operations on the aircraft carrier by providing guidance to pilots approaching the carrier.

Michael was also awarded the **Navy and Marine Corp Achievement Medal** in 2016 for the planning and execution as officer in charge of his squadron's detachment during a 2 week joint Navy/Air Force detachment in Elmendorf, Alaska.

Michael then requested and received orders to his current post at VT21 N.A.S. Kingsville. His primary duties are as instructor pilot and LSO, where he provides ground and flight training for 120 USN & USMC student Naval aviators for the T-45 aircraft.



During this time, he received **Instructor of the Quarter Award** (1 of 25 instructors) for outstanding training and leadership.

Michael has numerous awards and many leadership roles up to this point in his career including Weapons & Tactics Officer, Aircraft Division Officer, Assistant Operations Officer, Student Control Officer and Instructor Pilot.



Michael and his lovely wife, Lauren, currently reside in Texas. Lauren is currently working as a manager in one of the nation's leading cyber security firms.