

Bio of Mike Melvill

Michael Winston "Mike" Melvill is one of the test pilots for SpaceShipOne, the experimental spaceplane developed by Scaled Composites. Melvill piloted SpaceShipOne on its first flight past the edge of space, flight 15P on June 21, 2004, thus becoming the first commercial astronaut and the 433rd person to go into space. He was also the pilot on SpaceShipOne's flight 16P, the first competitive flight in the Ansari X Prize competition.



He was born in Johannesburg in South Africa Nov. 1941. He attended Highbury Preparatory School and Hilton College. Later on Melvill moved to the United States from England in the 1970s and became a U.S. citizen. Melvill is married; he and his wife Sally have one son and four grandchildren.

He met Burt Rutan when he showed him his Rutan VariViggen he assembled in his home. Melvill is the vice president and general manager of Scaled Composites, LLC; he has 24 years of experience as a test pilot, and has logged nearly 7000 hours in over 130 types of aircraft. A longtime acquaintance of Scaled Composites founder Burt Rutan, Melvill has flown the first flights of ten of Rutan's aircraft. Melvill also helped develop the docking system for SpaceShipOne.

Melvill is an associate fellow of the Society of Experimental Test Pilots; in 1999, he received their Iven C. Kincheloe trophy for his work in high-altitude development testing Scaled's Model 281 Proteus. Melvill also built his own Long EZ aircraft, which he flew around the world with Dick Rutan in 1997. He is also the only person other than Dick Rutan or Jeana Yeager to have piloted the Voyager aircraft. Melvill is the sole or joint holder of nine FAI aviation world records in various categories.

Melvill was the pilot for SpaceShipOne flight 15P, SpaceShipOne's first spaceflight and the first privately-funded human spaceflight mission, on the morning of June 21, 2004. In a ceremony two hours after landing, Melvill was awarded his astronaut wings, the first person to earn them for a spaceplane flight since the X-15 flights of the 1960s.