

# NAVAL HISTORY DIVISION

## CAPTAIN EUGENE A. CERNAN, UNITED STATES NAVY

Eugene Andrew Cernan was born in Chicago, Illinois on March 14, 1934, son of Andrew George and Rose Ann (Cihlar) Cernan. He attended Proviso Township High School, Maywood, Illinois, and Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana, from which he received a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering in 1956. While a student he participated in the Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps Program. He was commissioned Ensign, U. S. Naval Reserve on June 2, 1956, and subsequently advanced in rank to that of Captain, to date from July 10, 1970, having transferred to the Regular Navy on July 22, 1957.

After receiving his commission in 1956, he had duty aboard the USS SAIPAN (CVL-48) until October 1956. He had flight training at the Naval Air Basic Training Command, Pensacola, Florida and the Naval Air Advanced Training Command, Memphis, Tennessee. Designated Naval Aviator in December 1957, he next had instruction with Advanced Training Unit TWO HUNDRED SIX at the Naval Air Station, Pensacola. He was assigned to Attack Squadron ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-SIX from February to November 1958, then transferred to Attack Squadron ONE HUNDRED THIRTEEN. In June 1961, he became a student at the U. S. Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, from which he received a Master of Science degree in Aeronautical Engineering in January 1964.

Selected as one of the third group of astronauts by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration in October 1963, he began training at the Manned Spacecraft Center, Houston, Texas in January 1964. He occupied the pilot seat along side of command pilot Tom Stafford on the GEMINI IX mission. During this 3-day flight which began on June 3, 1966, the spacecraft attained a circular orbit of 161 statute miles; the crew used three different techniques to effect rendezvous with the previously launched Augmented Target Docking Adapter; and Captain Cernan logged two hours and ten minutes outside the spacecraft in extravehicular activity. The flight ended after 72 hours and 20 minutes with a perfect re-entry and recovery as GEMINI IX landed within one and half miles of the prime recovery ship USS WASP. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with the following citation:

"For heroism and extraordinary achievement...as an Astronaut with NASA from June 3 to 6, 1966 aboard GEMINI IX. During this period, while serving as Pilot, Commander (then Lieutenant Commander) Cernan completed a space flight of seventy two hours and twenty-one minutes...The primary objectives of this mission were rendezvous and docking with the ATDA, and the extravehicular activity of Commander Cernan..."

He was assigned as a backup pilot for GEMINI XII and in May 1969 was a member of the three-man APOLLO 10 crew during the eight day simulation of the APOLLO 11 lunar landing mission, except for the actual moon landing. The Lunar Module carried Captain Cernan and Colonel Thomas P. Stafford, USAF to within 50,000 feet of the Moon's surface, while Command Module Pilot Commander John W. Young, USN, orbited the Moon in the Command Module at an altitude of about seventy miles. The flight ended on May 26, 1969, with splashdown in the Pacific Ocean, 443 miles east of Pago Pago, American Samoa and 7,000 yards from the recovery ship USS PRINCETON. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal and cited as follows:

"For exceptionally meritorious service...as Lunar Exploration Module Pilot and crew member of the APOLLO 10 spacecraft on its historic mission around the moon during the period May 18 to May 26, 1969. Commander Cernan handled his most difficult assignment with great ability and outstanding success. The professional manner in which he performed in the critical moments of separation and rendezvous with the Command Module, and throughout the entire flight of APOLLO 10, demonstrated exceptional competence and was essential to the success of the mission. Watched by the entire world, the superb performance of APOLLO 10 and her crew enabled the United States to vastly increase its knowledge and experience in outer space and to prepare the way for Manned Lunar Landings..."

In addition to the Distinguished Service Medal and the Distinguished Flying Cross, Captain Cernan has received the NASA Exceptional Service Medal and the Navy Astronaut Wings. He is also entitled to the National Defense Service Medal with bronze star and the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal (Taiwan).

He is a member of Tau Beta Pi, national engineering society; Sigma Xi, national science research society; and Phi Gamma Delta; national social fraternity. His hobbies include gardening and all sports activities.

He has logged more than 2,200 hours flying time, with more than 2,000 of that time in jet aircraft.