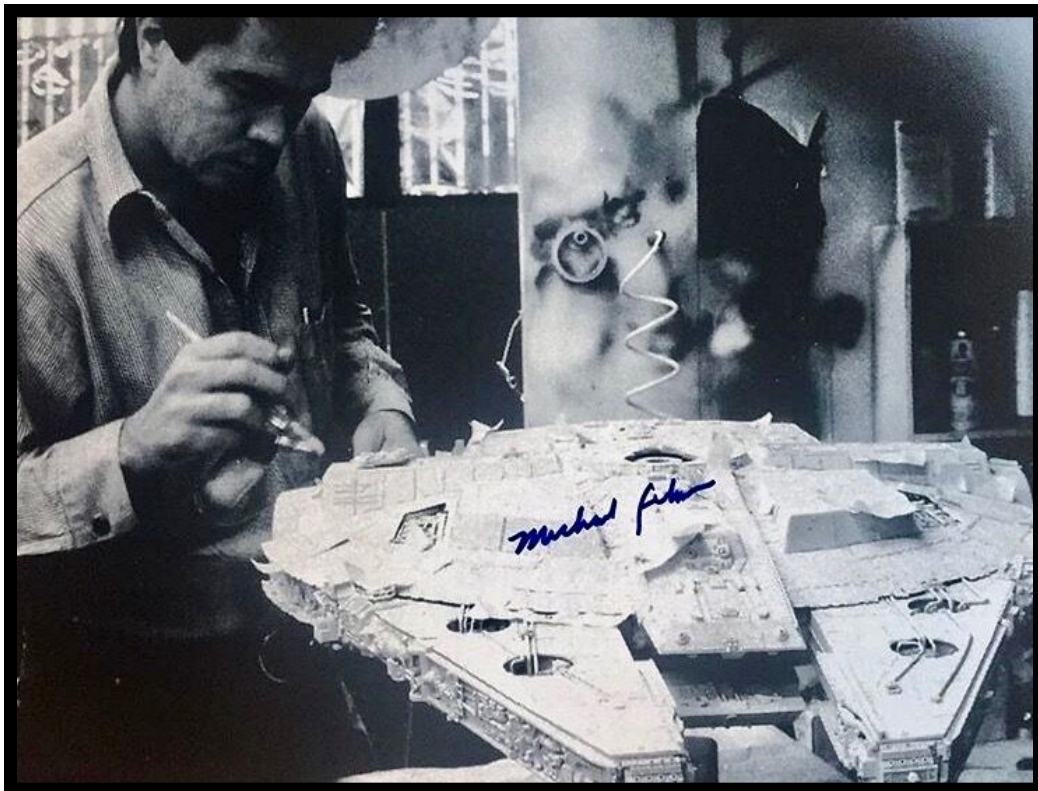




# Michael Fulmer

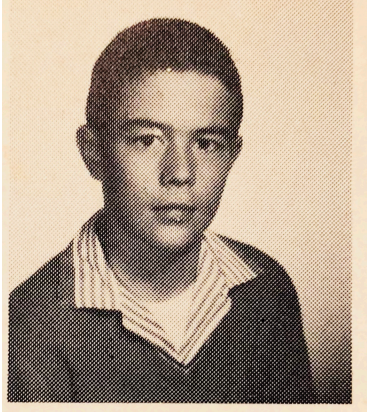
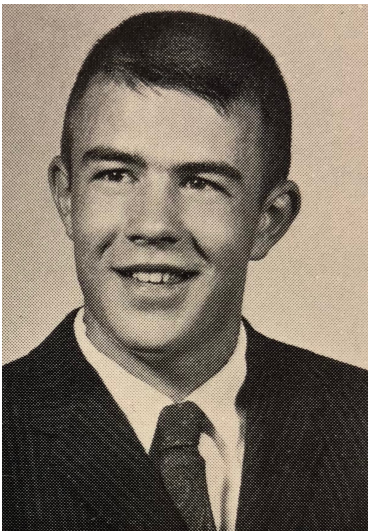
## Bellevue High, 1962



# Bellevue Public Schools



## Alumni Spotlight



Mike during his  
Sophomore & Senior years  
at Bellevue High School

Raiders of the Lost Ark, Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back, E.T., Back to the Future, Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan, Return of the Jedi, Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom...

Some of the most widely enjoyed and most successful films in modern movie history have a Bellevue connection right in the heart of them.



Michael Fulmer led an extraordinary life. After graduating from Bellevue in 1962, he joined the Marines and served in Vietnam. From there he worked as a pipe welder in Alaska and as far away as the Red Sea. His path eventually led him to Industrial Light and Magic where he became the Chief Model Maker for George Lucas and Steven Spielberg, designing and building such iconic ships as the Millennium Falcon, the US Enterprise, the time traveling DeLorean and even the flying bikes in ET.

Sadly, Michael passed away on June 7, 2016. Over the past few months we have had a series of conversations with his wife, Suella Kennedy, and she graciously shared stories about Mike and behind the scenes pictures of him and his work.



Mike started work at Industrial Light and Magic in 1979 on the set of Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back. He was hired build a welding studio. His first week on the set he overheard George Lucas talking with Visual Effects Director Richard Edlund about their Millennium Falcon model used in the original Star Wars film. It was 4 feet across and weighed 65 pounds. Edlund was complaining that it was too heavy and large to use the way Lucas wanted to for the sequel. Mike decided to be bold. He walked over and said he could build a 24-inch model in 30 days (practically unheard of and what most thought impossible). On the final day, he met the deadline, presented them with the 24 inch Falcon that is used extensively in Empire Strikes Back and Return of the Jedi, and the rest is history.

One of Mike's most memorable moments in Hollywood was on the set of Raiders of the Lost Ark. Mike came to really admire Harrison Ford and one day Lucas asked Mike to help with a stunt they were filming where Indiana Jones gets thrown onto the hood of a truck, falls underneath it, and then clings on to the back of the truck with his whip. You can see in the pictures Suella provided (further down) of Mike all dressed up as Indiana Jones standing next to George Lucas, ready to film. This scene is considered by many to be one of the most iconic stunts in the Indiana Jones series and modern movie history.

Mike could have worked in the movie industry for decades but, towards the end of the 80s, computers and digital effects were working their way onto Hollywood sets and Mike did not wish to be a part of that.

In 1992, the Academy of Model Aeronautics asked him design the National Model Aviation Museum in Muncie, Indiana. When it was completed, Mike served as the original curator of the museum.

Not long after that, he received a call from rock star Neil Young who was the one of the owners of the Lionel model train company. Young hired Mike to create prototypes for their collectibles. One of his most memorable ones is a highly-detailed miniature of New York's Grand Central Station.



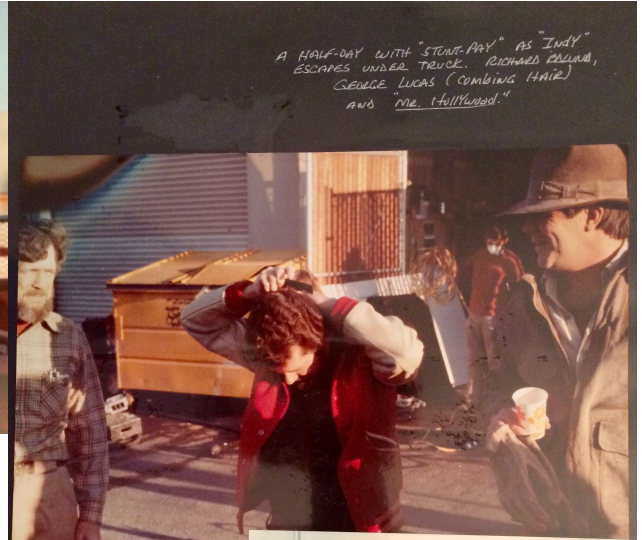
During our conversations, Suella shared these reflections of Mike:

Michael was a Renaissance man in that he had a broad range of experience and interests in every direction. He was keenly aware of the precious time we are given and attempted to make the very best use of his life, creating and bringing joy. Mike was constantly asking questions, curious about people and about their motivation, interests and outlook. He was a confident person who had no inhibitions around famous people because he didn't play by anyone's code but his own. He befriended Neil Young through his work with Lionel and gently told him that he didn't really like his music. But that was ok, they shared common ground. He took Clint Eastwood for a ride in his hot rod. Mike had a deep calm that made many people he worked with comment that he would be the one they wanted beside them in an emergency or on a desert island. He was an unshakable Marine and a real leader, much admired by his crew for being fair, organized and supportive of good work. He was thoughtful, sincere and had the gift of making the mundane either incredibly important or incredibly funny. His irrepressible energy often played out in practical jokes--the ILM model shop needed to let off steam from time to time.

Mike didn't get to have a real childhood--being the oldest of 4 boys in a military family that was constantly on the move, his responsibilities came early. However, later he celebrated childhood with his exquisite tin toy collection, building models for himself as well as his livelihood, and enjoying the natural world. He accomplished so much, partly because he was in a deadline-driven job but also because he had so many dreams to manifest, many irons in the fire. His advice to everyone was, "Make every day count. It will all be gone in a flash."



Behind the Scenes Photos shared from Mike's personal scrapbook, getting ready to shoot under-the-truck close ups for the famous Raiders of the Lost Ark stunt. George Lucas is in the red and white jacket.

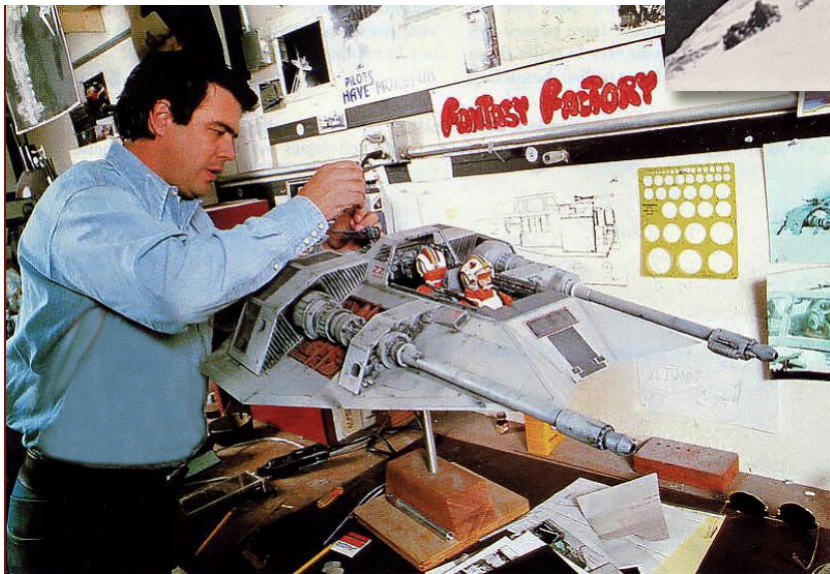
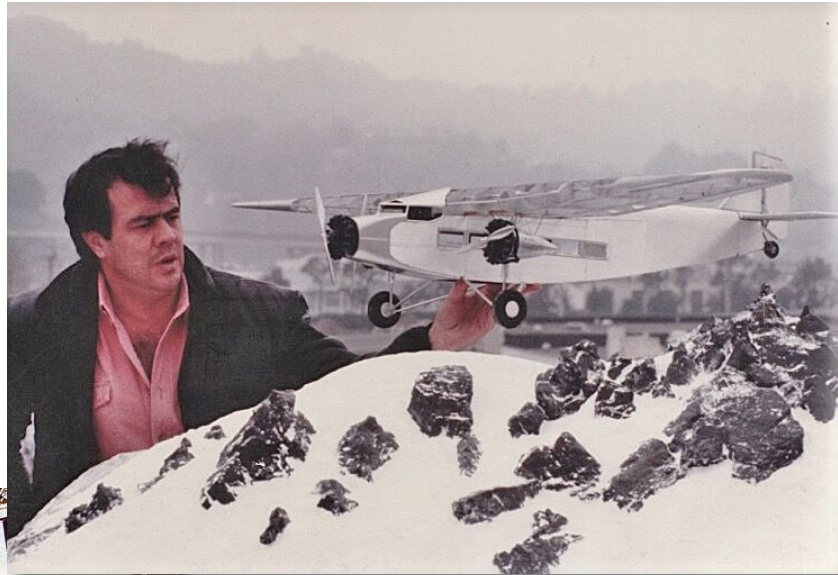






Mike (right), working on a speeder bike for Return of the Jedi

Mike getting the plane ready for the crash scene in Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom



Touching up a ship for the opening battle of Empire Strikes Back

### Special Note:

If you have read this far, we wanted to let you know that it was a picture of Mike that led to the Alumni Spotlights and BPS Alumni Excellence videos. A picture of Mike posing with C-3PO and R2D2 was found buried in some alumni files and it was the discovery of this picture that led to wanting to learn more about him. It also led to a desire to find who else is out there that have ties to Bellevue Public Schools and have gone on to do some pretty amazing things.

### Links:

Partial list of Mike's Movie Credits (some of his work was uncredited)

<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0298434/>

Learn more a lot more about Mike here:

<https://www.michaelfulmer.net/>

A new Michael Fulmer Tribute Facebook account with many more behind the scenes photos. The site is run by his family. Send a friend request and give them some love from Bellevue, Nebraska

<https://www.facebook.com/michael.fulmer.1612>

### About Us

We hope you enjoyed our Alumni Spotlight! This is a recurring column on the Alumni Association Facebook Page. If you know of a Bellevue graduate that we should shine the spotlight on, please reach out to us and they will be considered for a future column. Continue to invite your friends and family to Like and Follow our Alumni Association page: <https://www.facebook.com/BPSAlumni>





To the students of Bellevue High School. A lot of miles on me since the Class of '62... But the journey is what life is all about. Love the life you've been given. .. It only happens once.

—Michael Fulmer, 2001