



2020 NATIONAL INVENTORS
HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

Born: Oct. 17, 1884

Died: April 18, 1956

Primary Connections:

- Smith Parachute Co.: Co-founder
- Pioneer Parachute Co.: Co-founder, Vice President, Chief Engineer
- Floyd Smith Aerial Equipment Co.: Founder
- Glenn L. Martin Co.: Mechanic and Test Pilot

Education:

- Public schools in Union, Oregon, and San Diego, California

Key Memberships/Awards:

- Parachute Industry Association: Don Beck Memorial Achievement Award, 2009
- National Aeronautic Association: Aero Club of America Medal of Merit, 1916

10 Things You Need to Know About

Floyd Smith

Inventor of the Modern Parachute

U.S. PATENT NOS. 1,340,423 & 1,462,456

1. Smith was born in Geneseo, Illinois, in 1884.
2. His full name was James Floyd Smith.
3. Smith worked as a cowboy, machinist, orange grower and sugar factory worker before he found his calling as a circus aerialist and trapeze artist.
4. He toured the country for years as a member of the Flying Sylvesters, performing in circuses and vaudeville shows.
5. Smith married his circus daredevil act co-star, Hilder Youngberg, in 1907.
6. He and Hilder built and flew their own biplane in 1912.
7. Smith was inspired to create a new parachute design after a near-disastrous jump by his wife.
8. In winning the Aero Club of America Medal of Merit in 1916, the group recognized Smith for “three new world hydro altitude records in a Martin seaplane.” The highest of these records was 12,333 feet.
9. He died in 1956 in San Diego, California.
10. Smith had 33 U.S. patents.



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