

(Photo by GeekWire/Kevin Lisota)

Bezos and airplane restorer Addison Pemberton (http://www.museumofflight.org/user_area/uploads/2016_PathfinderAward_Pemberton.pdf), known as the “Godfather of Biplanes,” received the awards for their contributions to preserving the past and building the future of flight.

More than 450 supporters and VIPs attended the annual black-tie award dinner, held in the T.A. Wilson Great Gallery (<http://www.museumofflight.org/explore-the-museum/museum-galleries/great-gallery>) beneath the wings of the museum’s Blackbird spy plane (<http://www.museumofflight.org/Exhibits/blackbird>).

Although Bezos’ most lucrative “day job” is to lead America’s biggest online retailer, he acknowledged that his fortune – currently estimated at more than \$70 billion (<http://www.forbes.com/profile/jeff-bezos/>) – is meant to serve a higher purpose. Literally.

“Amazon has been kind of a lottery winning for me,” he said. “And by the way, the Amazon winnings are what I’m using on Blue Origin. So those winnings are going into developing space.”

Aerospace plays a part in a wide range of Bezos’ pursuits, including Amazon’s future. Here’s a video rundown of the high points from his talk:

Delivery by drone

Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos shares his vision for package delivery with Prime Air drones.



Bezos said Amazon’s efforts to develop fleets of drones for package deliveries are proceeding apace – with a farm in the English countryside near Cambridge (<http://www.geekwire.com/2016/search-amazon-drone-testing-site-britain/>) serving as the main testing ground.

“We’re getting really good cooperation from the British equivalent of the FAA, the CAA (<https://www.caa.co.uk/home/>),” Bezos said. “It’s incredible. It’s really cool.”

Deployment of the drones depends not only on Amazon’s progress, but on approvals from the Federal Aviation Administration, Britain’s Civil Aviation Administration and other regulatory agencies around the world.

When the robotic aircraft go into operation, they’ll be able to fly at speeds of more than 50 mph with a 20-mile range. The system is designed to deliver packages weighing less than 5 pounds, a weight range that Amazon says covers 86 percent of the products it sells (<http://www.geekwire.com/2013/amazons-aerial-delivery-drones-bezos-big-idea-fly/>).

“It’s going to work really well in one of the hardest neighborhoods — urban, dense suburban neighborhoods,” he said. “You just need a landing field. And if you have a landing field, you can mark it with a symbol which you can print out on your printer and put wherever you want the vehicle to land.”



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The drone will be programmed to recognize the symbol on the printout and drop its package in the landing zone.

"If it sees anything that makes it nervous, it can divert, or phone home for help and get a human to help it land," Bezos said.

Amazon Prime Air

Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos on their Prime Air cargo aircraft



Amazon is already using a more conventional type of flying machine to deliver its packages. The company's first branded Boeing 767 cargo jet was unveiled in August (<http://www.geekwire.com/2016/photos-amazons-first-prime-air-cargo-jet-takes-spotlight-seattles-seafair-air-show/>), and more planes are being added regularly (<http://www.geekwire.com/2016/atlas-air-boeing-767-freighters-amazon-prime/>).

The company plans to build up a 40-plane Amazon Prime Air fleet to supplement cargo transport services provided by the likes of UPS and FedEx.

"Twenty-one years ago, when I started the company, I was delivering all the packages to the post office myself," Bezos recalled. "I was hoping that one day we'd be able to afford a fork lift. So it's a very big change in a very short period of time. I feel incredibly lucky for a whole bunch of reasons, and that's one of them."

Space trips on Blue Origin

Jeff Bezos discusses space flight and his vision for Blue Origin



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Eventually, the project's organizers plan to build several clocks capable of running 10,000 years, to be placed in sheltered locations around the world. "The idea is, it's a symbol of long-term thinking," Bezos explained.

Just knowing such a clock exists could help humanity change its perspective on problems ranging from world hunger to interplanetary migration.

"The fact of the matter is, we humans are getting so technologically capable that we need to think longer-term," Bezos said. "Ten thousand years ago, we really couldn't do very much damage. I think 100 years from now, 500 years from now, we're going to be able to do quite a bit of damage ... and do great things. I'm super optimistic. ... I think we'll figure it all out. We're going to have an amazing future in the solar system."

Bezos said the clock project's true significance may not sink in until centuries from now – by which time he expects his vision of millions of people living and working in space (<http://www.geekwire.com/2016/interview-jeff-bezos/>) to have become a reality.

"Three, or four, or five hundred years from now, people will be going, 'There is a 500-year-old clock in this mountain over here! Some crazy people back in the 21st century built it as a symbol of long-term thinking!'" Bezos said. "Maybe it'll have an effect 500 years from now."

Ten thousand years from now, Bezos doubts anyone will remember who were the richest people of our age, or who won which presidential election.

"I do know one thing they will remember, for sure, which is the Apollo landing. ... They are going to remember that that's the time when humanity first left this planet," he said. "That's going to be a big deal, even 10,000 years from now."

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