

Jeff Bezos' Vision: 'A Trillion Humans in the Solar System'

By Leonard David, Space.com's Space Insider Columnist | July 21, 2017 06:30am ET

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CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. — It is now 48 years since [Apollo 11's moon landing](#) on July 20, 1969. That history-making first human touchdown on the lunar landscape was celebrated here last Saturday during an evening gala held near a massive Apollo Saturn V booster.

While primarily a reflection on decades past, the event also proved to be a look into the future, courtesy of remarks by [Jeff Bezos](#), the retail mogul of Amazon.com fame and fortune and the head of Blue Origin, a company with big plans to pioneer the space frontier. [[Photos: Glimpses of Secretive Blue Origin's Private Spaceships](#)]



Jeff Bezos receives the first annual Buzz Aldrin Space Innovation Award from Apollo 11 moonwalker Buzz Aldrin at an Apollo 11 anniversary gala on July 15, 2017.

Credit: Chuck Davis

Commemorating Apollo 11

The gala was hosted by Apollo 11 moonwalker [Buzz Aldrin](#). He was joined by Apollo veterans Michael Collins, the Apollo 11 command module pilot; Walt Cunningham of 1968's Apollo 7 mission; and Harrison "Jack" Schmitt from Apollo 17, the last expedition to the moon, in December 1972.

The [Apollo 11 gala](#) event was the first part of a three-year fundraising campaign devised by the ShareSpace Foundation, which will culminate in the summer of 2019 with global activities coinciding with the 50th Anniversary of the first moon landing.

Bezos was on hand to accept the first annual Buzz Aldrin Space Innovation Award. The unique glass award was produced by the Soneva Resorts' Glass Art Studio in the Maldives.



Taking part in the July 15, 2017, gala at NASA's Kennedy Space Center, left to right: Apollo 7's Walt Cunningham; Michael Collins of Apollo 11; Buzz Aldrin; and Harrison Schmitt of Apollo 17.

Credit: Cat Vinton

Out-of-the-box thinking

"I pride myself on thinking out of the box ... of being innovative," Aldrin said, saluting those same characteristics in Bezos.

"Jeff Bezos told me on a recent visit to [Blue Origin](#) that he's been dreaming of space since the age of 5 years old. He watched Neil [Armstrong], Mike and me journey to the moon during Apollo

11 in 1969. Since then, he has charted his course through innovation, and he's been quietly breaking barriers with Blue Origin," Aldrin said.

Aldrin highlighted Blue Origin's [New Shepard](#), a fully reusable, vertical-takeoff/vertical-landing system that will fly suborbital space tourism and research missions. He also detailed the company's reusable New Glenn orbital rocket, which is under development, as well as Blue Origin's powerful BE-3 and BE-4 engines.

"I don't think there's been anything quiet about rockets in the first place," Aldrin said, "but Blue Origin is primed to make the loudest noise yet." [[Blue Origin's Giant New Glenn Rocket in Pictures](#)]



Evening festivities at the Kennedy Space Center brought together astronauts and space industry pioneers, who were there to stress the need for education and inspiration for space exploration.

Credit: Chuck Davis

Desire and passion

Bezos said the Apollo program was inspirational, helping to fuel his desire and passion to make a difference in space exploration.

"I have won this lottery," Bezos said. "It's a gigantic lottery, and it's called Amazon.com. And I'm using my lottery winnings to push us a little further into space."

Bezos said he is not in the camp of the "Plan B argument" for the colonization of space — that one day Earth is going to be destroyed or uninhabitable, so we better have another place to live.

"I hate that idea ... I find it very un motivating," Bezos said. "We have sent robotic probes now to every planet in this solar system, and believe me, this [Earth] is the best one."



Apollo 11's Buzz Aldrin reflects on the first human landing on the moon, which occurred on July 20, 1969.

Credit: Chuck Davis

While we should and will colonize space (via the harnessing of solar energy and asteroid resources), Bezos said, there's also a need to avoid stagnation here on Earth by putting controls on population or energy usage per capita. That's sure to be a boring world, he said, and not compatible with freedom or liberty.

Bezos' visionary scenario is being held back by a central issue, he said.

"Space travel is just too darn expensive. And we know why it's too expensive. It's because we throw the rockets away," Bezos explained. "We're never going on to do these grand things and to expand into the solar system as long as we throw this hardware away. We need to build [reusable rockets](#), and that is what Blue Origin is dedicated to ... taking my Amazon lottery winnings and dedicating to ... it's a passion, but it's also important."



Space pioneers reflect on the past and the future at the Kennedy Space Center gala, left to right: Buzz Aldrin, Jeff Bezos, Jack Schmitt, Michael Collins and Walt Cunningham.

Credit: Cat Vinton

Back to the moon

Bezos also said at the gala that "it's time for America to go back to the moon, this time to stay."

"We should build a permanent settlement on one of the poles of the moon," he said. In that lunar locale, water in permanently shadowed regions, such as the bottoms of craters, can be accessed. And "peaks of eternal light" in polar regions — mountaintops or crater rims that are always bathed in sunlight — can provide solar power.

"We didn't know back in the '60s and '70s, but we know now, that the poles of the moon are extremely interesting places, and we should go back, and we should stay," Bezos said. "If we have reusable rockets, we can do it so much more affordably than we have ever done it before. We have the tools. We have the young people with a passion to do it. We can get that done today."

Leonard David is author of "Mars: Our Future on the Red Planet," published by National Geographic. The book is a companion to the National Geographic Channel series "Mars." A longtime writer for Space.com, David has been reporting on the space industry for more than five decades. Follow us [@Spacedotcom](#), [Facebook](#) or [Google+](#). This version of this story was posted on [Space.com](#).