

Buzz Aldrin advocates space tourism at USC talk

By Laura Simurda | March 30, 2006

LOS ANGELES -- Apollo 11 astronaut and the second man to walk on the moon, **Buzz Aldrin**, discussed the future of space tourism while recounting the events of his life at "To the Moon and Beyond," Wednesday afternoon at the University of Southern California's Town & Gown. The event, which drew about 200 people, celebrated 100 years of engineering at USC.

Aldrin said that in the future, space tourism would become a reality at some point. Envisioning a future where space travel is not only for the rich, he would like to see a nontransferable lottery system put in place so that everyone has an equal chance of space travel. The government and the private sector must work together to provide the funding and infrastructure necessary for space tourism to be successful, Aldrin said.

"I think you have to talk to your congressman to try to get the government to want to work with the private sector," Aldrin said.

There must also be work on a number of alternative paths to reach space so that, if one falls through, the other will be there as a backup, he said. "Where the real payoff comes from is getting people into orbit," he said.

Aldrin also discussed events in his life, including his first plane flight and walking on the moon. As a teenager during World War II, "one of my first days of shaving was when D-Day occurred," Aldrin said. After graduating from West Point, he moved around the country for a number of years while getting his wings. Aldrin then fought in Korea as a fighter pilot and returned to graduate from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with a doctorate in astronautics.

The first time Aldrin applied to become an astronaut in 1962, he was denied the position because he had not completed test pilot training. Aldrin later became a part of a group of astronauts in 1963 after the test pilot stipulation was dropped. During his speech, Aldrin talked about some of the lasting images he had from the 1969 moonwalk. While on the moon, "you can reach out ... and put your thumb over the Earth," he said. While taking a number of pictures of the experiments being set up on the moon, he became "fascinated

with the powdery substance of the surface," he said. For fun, he took a picture of the footprint that would become iconic of the historic landing.

Those students who attended seemed enthusiastic about both seeing Aldrin and hearing his views on the space program. "It was really exciting to actually hear from a man who walked on the moon," said Jess Hall, a senior majoring in astronomy. "I enjoyed it -- it was interesting." Others were still interested but wished he had discussed a wider variety of topics. "I wanted to hear his story about landing on the moon, so that was pretty cool," said Yoni Blau, a senior majoring in chemistry, but he said he would have liked to hear more about "ways he's still involved with NASA or any space agency program."

(C) 2006 Daily Trojan