

# Boeing's new contest seeks to bring human flight closer to reality

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JetPack Man flies through the air and onto the frontstretch to present TMS President Eddie Gossage and SMI Chairman Bruton Smith with the "No Limits" flag that flew on the final Space Shuttle mission with Atlantis prior to the NASCAR Sprint Cup Series AAA Texas 500 at Texas Motor Speedway on November 6, 2011 in Fort Worth, Texas. Photo by: Jerry Markland/Getty Images for NASCAR

Eugene Vidal was President Franklin Roosevelt's aviation chief during the 1930s. His job was to oversee air travel and encourage the building of new and better airplanes.

Vidal was a dreamer. He had a bold plan to get ordinary Americans flying. Cars weren't enough for Vidal. He wanted every American to have their own flying machine.

To realize his dream, Vidal announced a nationwide contest. He challenged American inventors to build a "rugged, safe and simple" aircraft. It had to be as easy to drive as a car and cost around as much.

"In a short time, America will become a nation of pilots," he predicted.

Vidal's dream never did come true. However, more than 80 years later, a fresh new group of inventors is taking up the challenge again. They believe new technology makes Vidal's dream possible for the first time.

## **Flying Machine Must Travel At Least 20 Miles**

On Tuesday, a group called GoFly launched a new \$2 million contest. Its purpose is to encourage the invention of flying devices. Unlike the flying taxis Uber is working on, these machines would be used to transport a single person.

The contest has certain important rules. The device has to be simple and safe to use. It has to be able to travel at least 20 miles without stopping for gas or a recharge. When not in use, it has to be small enough for a single person to move it around, by hand or with a cart. It has to take off and land pretty much vertically.

The person flying must be able to land without much of a bump. While in the air, he or she must not experience "g-forces greater than 5 g." When a person moves quickly upward or forward, g-force is the force of gravity pushing against them; 5 g is similar to what a person feels on a roller coaster.

### **\$1 Million Grand Prize**

There are no rules about how the device should work, said Gwen Lighter, the head of GoFly. Jetpacks are a popular choice, but many other ideas are possible, she said. They range from "flying motorcycles" to "flying people." The devices could be "something you stand on" or "something over your head."

The money for the contest is being provided by the Boeing aerospace company.

Greg Hyslop is Boeing's chief technology officer. He believes even small teams have a chance of coming up with a flying device that works.

"There's enough money there that hopefully it's going to attract some really top-notch talent and some really great ideas," said Hyslop. There are \$20,000 prizes for the best-written plans and \$250,000 awards for the quietest and smallest entries. The grand prize is \$1 million.

## **New Technology Makes Flying Machines Possible**

Jetpacks have already been around for years. They show up when the military does demonstrations and at football games. Such devices are certainly dramatic, but they are too dangerous for people to use every day. They make no sense as a way for ordinary people to get around.

Lighter believes all that will change soon. Various advances make this "the first moment in history where it's actually possible to build a device where people fly," she said. These advances include better batteries and new lightweight materials.

Lighter said it's a thrilling moment for people like her. She recalled how as a girl she always dreamed of flying.

Roger Connor works for the National Air and Space Museum. He believes workable single-person flying machines will be developed in the very near future. However, it is not as simple as that, he said.

Developers will need to come up with an entire "transportation system," Connor said. Just like cars have to stick to the road, flying machines will need certain set places to take off and land. After all, no one wants to be hit by a flying person.

## Quiz

- 1 Which paragraph in the section "New Technology Makes Flying Machines Possible" explains WHY some people think that single-person flying devices could be developed in the near future?
- 2 Which sentence from the introduction [paragraphs 1-5] BEST explains what Eugene Vidal's dream was?
  - (A) His job was to oversee air travel and encourage the building of new and better airplanes.
  - (B) He had a bold plan to get ordinary Americans flying.
  - (C) He wanted every American to have their own flying machine.
  - (D) He challenged American inventors to build a "rugged, safe and simple" aircraft.

- 3 Read the selection from the section "Flying Machine Must Travel At Least 20 Miles."

*On Tuesday, a group called GoFly launched a new \$2 million contest. Its purpose is to encourage the invention of flying devices.*

Which word could replace "launched" WITHOUT changing the meaning of the first sentence?

- (A) started
  - (B) announced
  - (C) supported
  - (D) directed
- 4 Read the sentence below from the section "\$1 Million Grand Prize."

*There are \$20,000 prizes for the best-written plans and \$250,000 awards for the quietest and smallest entries.*

Which answer choice uses the word "entries" in the SAME way it is used in the sentence above?

- (A) Her diary was full of entries describing ordinary events in her day.
- (B) There was a total of 100 entries in the singing competition.
- (C) Each of the entries to the airport was going to be redesigned.
- (D) The fans loved watching the entries of their favorite movie stars into the building.