



Michael J. Lombardi

2026 Pathfinder Award Recipient in the Education Category

The Museum of Flight's Annual Pathfinder Awards honor individuals with ties to the Pacific Northwest who have made significant contributions to the development of the aerospace industry. Pathfinder Award recipients are selected by The Museum of Flight, the Pacific Northwest Section of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics and representatives of other aviation and aerospace organizations and companies throughout the Northwest.



When people think about aviation pioneers, rarely do they think of historians. Yet history is one of aviation's most valuable resources. Breakthroughs, lessons learned and challenges overcome become part of a collective memory that helps shape the future of flight. Few individuals have done more to preserve and share that memory than Michael Lombardi.

For over three decades, Lombardi dedicated his life and career to documenting, protecting and communicating the story of aviation. Beginning his career at The Boeing Company in the mailroom in 1979, he worked his way into the company's archives, spending 31 years there until his retirement in 2025 as Senior Corporate Historian.

Students, journalists, engineers, curators, authors and aerospace executives have relied on Lombardi's knowledge and expertise to bridge the industry's past, present and future. Lombardi transformed the Boeing Archives into one of the most significant repositories of aerospace history in the world. As Boeing expanded and acquired other companies, Lombardi worked to preserve the histories of these new additions

to the organization, ensuring that their stories became part of Boeing's legacy rather than disappearing in complex mergers.

Most distinguishable is his extraordinary ability to tell stories, making history feel alive. His lectures are renowned, and he has appeared in multiple documentaries. He became the public face of Boeing's history and is described as a mentor to numerous aviation authors.

When he retired in 2025, Lombardi had become far more than a corporate historian—he was a steward of aviation heritage, a trusted advisor, educator, mentor and storyteller. His work preserved the achievements of the past while inspiring future innovators to pursue their own dreams of flight, all of which make him a Pathfinder.