Army Aviation Hall of Fame 1975 Induction
(Inducted to represent the pre-1942 period)

Colonel William Wallace Ford, a Field Artilleryman since his graduation from the U.S. Military Academy in 1920, was a longtime aviation enthusiast who flew his own civilian aircraft. By 1940 he earned his Commercial Pilot and Instrument Ratings.

As a pilot he early envisioned the use of light aircraft in providing an "Air Observation Post" for artillery fire adjustment, and his authorship of a thought-provoking article in the May 1941 issue of the "Field Artillery Journal," entitled "Wings for Santa Barbara," focused attention on his advanced thinking.

Followed shortly thereafter by efforts of the light airplane industry to prove the utility of its products in the extensive 1941 Louisiana Maneuvers, Major Ford's penetrating article led to War Department approval of an experimental program to train Artillerymen to fly and to adjust artillery fire from light planes.

Drawing upon industry and government for flight and maintenance instructors, Lieutenant Colonel Ford then organized and directed a course which - in its radical departure from conventional techniques - produced Artillery "Liaison" pilots who were freed from their dependence upon established airfields, and who were able to operate from field strips and rough areas alongside the Artillery units of which they were a part.

Successful demonstrations to field units in the spring of 1942 proved the validity of this novel concept, and on 6 June 1942 the War Department's General Order authorized a permanent Department of Air Training - later to evolve into today's Army Aviation School. Colonel Ford then

established this school and developed its courses, which eventually turned out thousands of Artillery-trained pilots.

The success of these "Liaison Pilots" in World War II, a direct outcome of Colonel Ford's vision and abilities, paved the way for the subsequent development of Army Aviation as it is known today.