Mr. Franklin R. Collbohm
Inducted 1989

Mr. Franklin R. Collbohm was born in New York City on 31 January 1907. He attended the University of Wisconsin from 1925 to 1928 and was an aviation engineer who helped design and test fly such trailblazing aircraft as the DC-1, DC-2, and DC-3. Following World War II, he directed the RAND Corporation from its inception in 1946 as Project RAND, until his retirement as president in 1967.

During World War II, he participated in one of the original applications of operations research to military planning, which unquestionably served as a paradigm for the RAND Corporation. He was a member of a team that studied ways to improve the effectiveness of the B-29. Established at the War Department in Washington, the team was unique because of the unprecedented level of interaction between the military and technical civilian personnel. The project's success exceeded even the most optimistic expectations. After the war, he would be an influential advocate of the need to establish a think tank to provide the United States military with a continual flow of sophisticated advice on both the need for certain weapons systems and the feasibility of their development. In fall of 1945, Collbohm returned to Washington with a proposal for Douglas Aircraft to house a civilian group that would assist the Army Air Forces in planning for future weapons development. This group subsequently became the RAND Corporation.

Much of RAND's most important work focused on space programs. In February 1947, RAND issued a report which first recognized the potential of satellites to perform reconnaissance missions. Another indicated earth-orbiting satellites could serve as weather-observation platforms and suggested plans for designing and building them. RAND nurtured other aspects of the nation's space endeavors. It played a role in the

development of communications satellites and pioneered such areas as space power systems, trajectory calculation, launch reliability, and orbit stabilization.

RAND's Project Feedback in the early 195os generated the U.S. military space program. It led to the development of the early warning infrared Midas satellites, the Samos series of Air Force spy satellites, and the Discoverer satellites, the first to go into orbit and return their payloads to earth. Project Feedback produced an impressive collection of studies on every aspect of satellite reconnaissance. At its peak, the project involved many hundreds of scientists and engineers from RAND and various industrial subcontractors. By March 1954, RAND had completed the final two-volume report, which condensed the findings of the studies. The report recommended that "the Air Force undertake the earliest possible completion and use of an efficient satellite vehicle "as a matter of vital strategic interest to the United States."

In 1956, RAND proposed using a recoverable payload to accomplish photo reconnaissance missions employing an Atlas booster plus a solid rocket, together with a vertical strip camera. Collbohm co-authored a formal RAND Recommendation entitled Photoreconnaissance Satellites that he sent to the Air Staff in March 1956. It proposed the development and production of a recoverable photo reconnaissance satellite. Within weeks, the Air Force issued its plan for full-scale development of advanced photo reconnaissance satellites.

From the start, Collbohm surrounded himself with men in whom he had confidence and gave them wide discretion in their research. Experienced in dealing with the eccentricities of creative researchers, he avoided imposing rigid requirements on them. His management philosophy stressed initiative and creative expression. His broadly permissive and farsighted approach to the leadership of RAND undoubtedly contributed much to the healthy research atmosphere at RAND and its significant contributions to the nation's space program, both military and civilian.

After his retirement from RAND, Collbohm served as chairman of the Southwestern Research and General Investment Company. Franklin R. Collbohm passed away on 12 February 1990 at the age of eighty-three.