'When I Have Your Wounded'

By Brig. Gen. Patrick H. Brady

Today, after 25 years, I still remember in detail the first time I saw him. I have often wondered why. It is the same with my wife, but with few others. I certainly never knew at the first meeting the impact either would have on my life—but this man has been with me these many years, in my decisions and in many of my efforts to sort out what I wanted to be. I'd like to share with you a part of his life I shared, and some things I learned from him about leadership.

I had arrived in Vietnam the day before. Never had I experienced such heat. It was as if someone had covered me with a hot, steamy wool blanket. There was no sleeping that night because of the heat, the excitement and the persistent chirping sound in my room. I thought it must be some wayward birds. When the sun came up, I found my walls covered with lizards. Singing lizards? Indeed, it was a reptile rhapsody that had serenaded me that first night.

I was joining the 57th Medical Detachment (Helicopter Ambulance), which had arrived in Vietnam in April of 1962. Since then, they had struggled for operational definition, recognition and permanence. There were those who coveted their brand-new helicopters and many who felt that the medevac (medical evacuation) mission should be a part-time mission. Their primary mission was American casualties, and since there were few of them at this time, these folks believed that the medevac birds should be fitted with convertible red crosses and used for other missions when there were no casualties to carry. The unit was holding its own and had become known as Dust Off. This radio call sign had no particular significance. It had been picked from a list of call signs and kept to avoid confusion. When someone called for Dust Off, everyone knew it was for a casualty. Maj. Charles L. Kelly was the commander.

Early the next morning, I reported to Tan Son Nhut airfield where I saw my first Dust Off clearing the end of the runway. They told me it was Maj. Kelly going on a mission. We were at lunch when he joined us.

Charles Kelly was a small man—very

of stored or soldier-carried ammunition and the potential for "cook-off"—unintentional ignition in the chamber of a gun heated by firing. In respect to the first question, it appears that the caseless rounds may actually be less dangerous when hit by enemy fire, since there is no shrapnel from a brass or plastic case, and the propellant burns mildly at atmospheric pressure. Frequency of cook-off was a problem in the early NATO tests, where a nitro-cellulose-based propellant was used. The propellant now used, however, is a moderated high explosive, more resistant to external heat effects by a factor of ten, so that cook-off does not become a problem until around 100 shots have been fired.

■ The **Steyr-Mannlicher** ACR was the most obscure of the four designs before the recent release of details. Its lines are suggestive of the 5.56-mm Steyr AUG, the current Austrian standard rifle, but it is radically different inside, being optimized to fire a saboted fléchette through a 5.56-mm bore from an inside-primed plastic case. The ammunition is about 60 percent lighter than the M855 U.S./NATO round.

The fléchette-sabot assembly is similar to that in the AAI ammunition, except that it is held together in the bore by a plastic boot, rather than an "O" ring. A plastic head centers the assembly in the cylindrical plastic case, which is 45-mm long. The most unusual feature of the round is the ring-shaped primer positioned at the bottom interior of the case and reminiscent of some patented inside-primed systems of the mid-nineteenth century. The fixed firing pin crushes the side of the case and the aluminum primer cup as the weapon's rising chamber comes into battery. The remains of the cup and the plastic case head are blown out of the muzzle.

Like the AAI weapon, the Steyr is rifled with a very slow twist (one turn in 100 inches), primarily to aid sabot separation at the muzzle. The muzzle velocity of the 10.2-grain steel fléchette is about 4,900 fps, at a nominal working pressure of 60,000 psi.

The high muzzle velocity produces a trajectory so flat out to 600 meters that elevation adjustments were not deemed necessary for the multipower (1.5X and 3.5X) telescopic sight. The velocity is a product of working pressures higher than considered safe in conventional weapons. In the Steyr ACR, however, the case is completely enclosed in the rising chamber, which is cammed in and out of battery by a gas-actuated slide piece and locked by a pin through chamber extensions. In the Steyr entrapped gas system, the piston is fixed, with a sleeve around the barrel acting as a moving gas cylinder wall, and the slide piece as an integral extension. The fixed firing pin operates through an appropriately shaped hole at the rear of the chamber. The mechanism is a simple one with relatively few moving parts and can be completely disassembled without tools. The Steyr ACR fires semiautomatically or in three-round bursts only, and the push-through fire selector just behind the trigger is on safety in the leftmost position.

The after end of the long combination rib and carrying handle atop the Steyr weapon incorporates a mount for the optical sight or an iron peep sight and serves as a sighting plane in snap shooting. A well has been designed into the muzzle end of the stock to accommodate muzzle-launched ordnance, such as rifle grenades.

Overall length of the Steyr ACR is 30.12 inches, and it weighs 7.12 pounds without sights or magazine. Weight with the optical sight and a loaded 24-round magazine is 8.49 pounds.

Two other entries were originally included in the ACR technology demonstration program, but development troubles caused them to miss the deadlines for hardware submission, and those contracts are in the process of termination, according to Vernon E. Shisler, ACR project leader at ARDEC's Close Combat Armaments Center. One of the designs dropped was by McDonnell Douglas Helicopter Co. and was the only other multiple-projectile proposal, a semiautomatic-only weapon firing multiple fléchettes telescoped into a plastic case. The other canceled design was from ARES, Inc., the firm founded by virtuoso arms inventor Eugene Stoner, who created the M16. The ARES proposal was for a muzzle-compensated weapon, firing telescoped, plastic-cased ammunition similar to Steyr's, but with full-time tracing.

The Ft. Benning tests are a cooperative venture of ARDEC, the Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) and the Joint Service Small Arms Program (JSSAP), and will be carried out by Army and Air Force teams. The Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard are monitoring the experiment, but not participating. As a test control measure, some of the teams will fire the service standard M16A2.

The new test range, which will eventually become a TRADOC asset, provides targets at ranges from 25 to 600 meters. The experiment will take place over three range bands —25 to 75 meters; 75 to 300 meters; and 300 to 600 meters. Firing teams at the shortest ranges will use snap shooting techniques from a standing position against both single and multiple targets appearing in rapid sequence for brief periods (one to five seconds) and over wide angles. Shooters will not know the number of targets, their range or location, or the time they will be exposed.

Intermediate-range shooting will be done in the prone position, and will include targets moving at two different speeds. For the longest ranges, shooters will fire from foxholes with sandbag rests. This phase will not include moving targets, but, again, the location, range, number and sequence of targets will be unknown to the firing teams.

The experiment will also attempt to introduce some of the physical and mental stress of combat shooting. Teams will exercise vigorously before going on the range, where they will face battlefield noise and return fire simulators, as well as targets that replicate the obscure movements of enemy infantry. Interservice competition and peer pressure—reinforced by incentive awards—are supposed to provide some of the mental stress.

Historically, numerous Army combat studies show that all of these factors in combination reduce the capability of riflemen and their weapons to a small fraction of what they can achieve on proving grounds and training ranges. When fired from a machine rest, for example, the M16A2 rifle can achieve 100 percent hit probability (hits per trigger squeeze) at ranges slightly beyond 300 meters, before its inherent accuracy potential begins to produce misses. In cumulative M16A2 record fire statistics, hit probability drops to about 68 percent at 300 meters and 30 percent at 600 meters. In the typical "worst" field exercise, average hit probability at the same ranges is about ten and four percent, respectively, and would be only a little over 20 percent at 100 meters. Actual combat performance is judged to be even worse because of the stress of fear and exhaustion and the difficulty of acquiring obscure, unpredictable targets.

The ACR program hopes to improve this performance by 100 percent, using a combination of such innovations as seen in the demonstrator weapons—controlled dispersion, multiple hits per trigger pull, low recoil, flat trajectories, better sights and good handling qualities—to first reduce the large aiming errors experienced in combat, then to minimize the effect of such error as remains.

The primary measures of performance in the Ft. Benning field experiments will be the number of targets hit as a percentage of those exposed; the number of hits per trigger squeeze and initial trigger squeeze; number of hits for the total number of projectiles fired; elapsed time to fire and to make the first hit; the estimated number and type of simulated casualties; and a cumulative percentage of targets hit as a function of time.

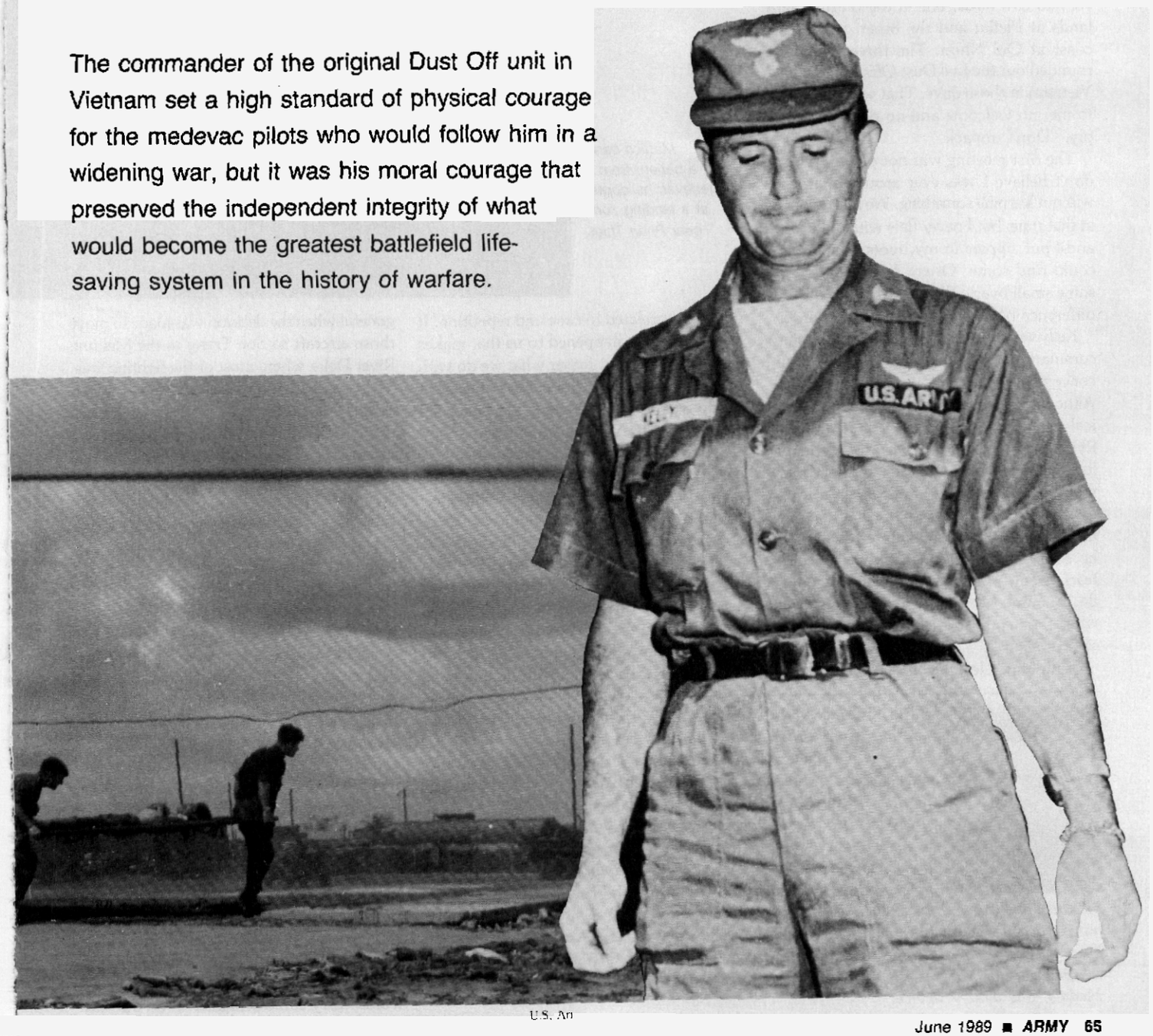
proud, perhaps a bit vain but still rather shy. He combed his hair toward his eyebrows to camouflage a receding hairline. His belt seemed too tight, and although it never affected his breathing, he seemed always to be holding his belly in and puffing out his chest. His walk was structured but rather graceful. His face was quite Irish, freckled and round, dominated by large eyes that seemed to change size according to his mood. Those eyes moved more quickly than the rest of him and could be rather disquieting once they rested on you. Only rarely did I ever see them twinkle, and I never heard him laugh. He spoke with a soft Georgia drawl and never raised his voice, regardless of his mood or the danger of the moment. You only needed to look in his eyes to know his mood. He was deeply religious, and I believe he read the Bible daily.

I had heard a lot about him. Vietnam was his third war. Between wars, he was a high school principal. I was told that he was the only man ever to wear the Combat Infantryman Badge, the Combat Medic.. Badge, as well as jump and aviator wings. He had been an enlisted man and rose through the ranks to major. Legend had it that he had been court-martialed earlier in his career and would never make lieutenant colonel.

The first words I heard him say were: "We never covered ourselves with glory today." He had just returned from an operation along the coast south of Saigon. An H-21, the old banana-shaped helicopter, had gone down in the South China Sea. Kelly and his crew heard the distress call and almost beat them to the water. Miraculously, the entire crew had gotten out before their bird sank. They were in the water clear of the '21 when Kelly came down over them.

Kelly started to put his skids in the ocean, but his copilot, who was the commander of the mission since Kelly had only been in country one week, would not allow it. He was concerned about the waves. Kelly was forced to hover over the downed crew and watch them drown one by one as his crew, using a litter, failed to pull all but one aboard. The combination of the downwash from Kelly's rotor blades, rough seas and the

The commander of the original Dust Off unit in Vietnam set a high standard of physical courage for the medevac pilots who would follow him in a widening war, but it was his moral courage that preserved the independent integrity of what would become the greatest battlefield life-saving system in the history of warfare.



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weight of their clothing—especially their boots —prevented Kelly's crew from pulling them on board. We heard later that some washed ashore with one boot on and one off.

There was deep anguish in Kelly's face as he told the story. I don't think he ever forgave his copilot for not letting him put his skids in the water. As risky as that might have been, it was the only way those men could have been saved. That would be the last time Kelly left undone anything that had any chance of saving a life, no matter how dangerous.

When Kelly finally focused on me, he told me not to unpack. I learned later he was sending me north where we had two birds, one in the central highlands at Pleiku and the other one on the coast at Qui Nhon. The three in Saigon rounded out the five Dust Offs that covered Vietnam in those days. That was all he said to me: no welcome and no pep talk—simply, "Don't unpack."

The first meeting was not pleasant, but I don't believe I was ever around that man without learning something. We had no hoists at that time; but I never flew without a rope; and I put zippers in my boots as soon as I could find some. Often, I learned, it was some small overlooked detail that made the difference between surviving and dying.

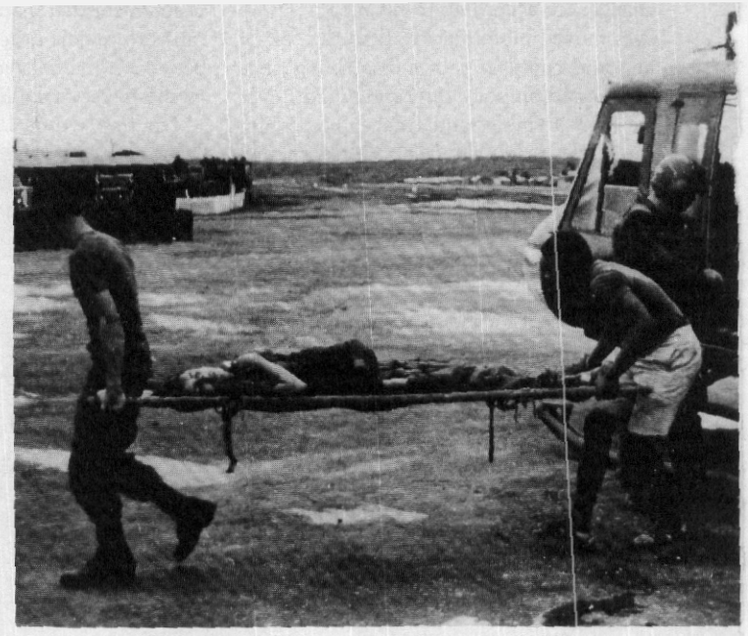
Kelly was a teacher, a quality rare in many commanders I have known. He seemed unconcerned about previous flying experience. Although there were many experienced medical pilots (in terms of years of service and flying hours) in the Army, most of the pilots in Kelly's unit were not experienced. He made no effort to get anyone specifically assigned to his unit but took what the pipeline brought. He was as interested in what he could do for his men, what he could teach them, as he was in what they could do for him. Mostly, he was interested in what they could do together for the mission.

From him, I learned that experience was not always related to time and repetition. It is not what has happened to us that makes us experienced, but rather what we do with what has happened to us—or better yet, what we do with what has happened to others. I worked two tours with "inexperienced" pilots, and they were marvelous. Alertness is a part of all that. It is vital in experience and should be vital in training. Some soldiers just are more alert; and time, repetition or duration is not the key. Caring is the key. The inner quality that makes soldiers alert, that makes them experienced, is caring. I've never met a soldier who cared more than Kelly, not just about people, but about what was right and about doing what you did right.

There was little action up north, and I was grateful when the decision was made to move those aircraft to Soc Trang in the Mekong River Delta where most of the fighting was. The two aircraft and their crews would become Detachment A of the 57th, and much to my delight, Kelly told me I could command it. He would go down first and set things up. I would follow shortly after.

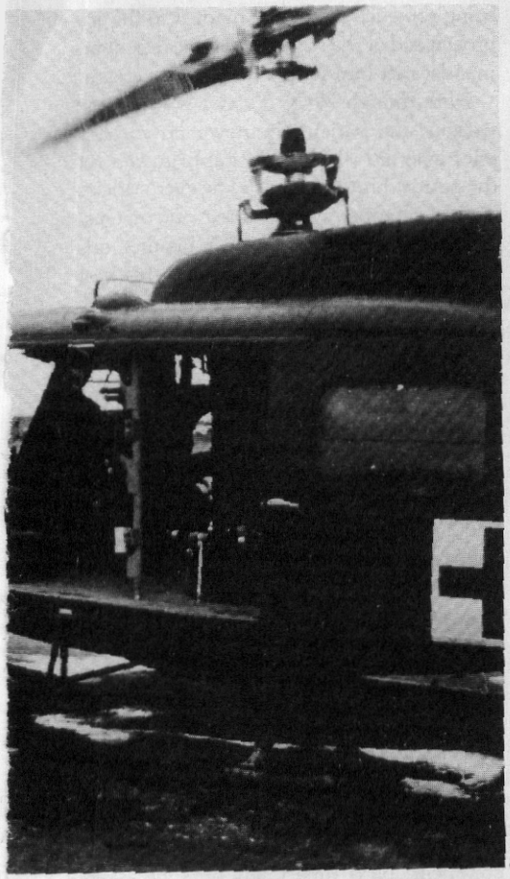
Soon after I got back to Saigon, I went on a mission with the unit supply officer. We were on short final into a "secure" area when there was a splatter of blood across the cockpit and he announced, rather quietly I thought, that he had been shot. Kelly wasted no time notifying me that since I had gotten his supply officer shot, I was now the new supply officer—a job I hated. The truth was that Kelly was flying in the Delta and didn't want to come back to Saigon. I never missed an opportunity to rag him about his earlier promise to let me command Detachment A. He would just look at me, occasionally with his twinkle (mostly without), and ignore me.

An early encounter I had with Kelly was the result of a mission we flew near Phan Thiet, just north of Saigon. The Vietnamese friendlies were surrounded and had taken quite a few casualties. We had been carrying patients out of the area all day. During a refueling stop, a U.S. adviser asked if we would carry some ordnance in on our next



Medics carry a patient from a medevac helicopter at a landing zone near Phan Thiet.

BRIG. GEN. PATRICK H. BRADY. Army chief of public affairs, evacuated more than 5,000 wounded persons during two tours in Vietnam as a medevac pilot. He was awarded the Medal of Honor after a series of missions on 6 January, 1968, in which helicopters he flew rescued 51 severely wounded patients under direct enemy fire. Maj. Brady's aircraft were so severely damaged in the dawn-to-dark missions that he used three to accomplish the day's operations. When the day was over, the helicopters had more than 400 holes in them, and two other crewmen had been injured. A native of South Dakota with more than 29 years of commissioned service, he is an ROTC graduate of Seattle (Wash.) University and holds a master's degree from Notre Dame. Among his other decorations are the Distinguished Service Cross, six Distinguished Flying Crosses, the Bronze Star Medal with V device and oak leaf cluster, the Purple Heart and 53 Air Medals, one with V device.



U.S. Army

trip. The only other bird in the area was a fixed-wing spotter plane. My copilot, who had been in country longer than I had, called me to one side, and we discussed the propriety of the request. He noted the Geneva Convention prohibitions on such use of medical resources and the medical community's concerns in this regard. If the word got out, we might get into trouble. I wasn't all that clear on the Geneva Convention, but we both agreed that what was clear was that if our friendlies didn't get some ammunition, we would end up carrying all of them to the morgue. We took the ammo in.

About that time, the spotter plane was shot down. When we got into the crash location, we found both U.S. flyers dead. We were forced out of the area by enemy fire but decided to wait for the friendlies to secure the crash site so we could take the bodies back that night. Carrying the dead was also not an approved medical mission and a frequent cause of discord between the medical and operational folks. On the way back, much to my discomfort, I got word that Kelly wanted to see me.

We got into the airfield after midnight, and Kelly and many of the 57th were waiting. Kelly did not look pleased. He took me to one side and in measured tones, quieter than usual, asked me what in the hell I was thinking of—carrying that ammo. I told him I was practicing preventive medicine. He kind of blinked, almost smiled, but said no more.

I followed him back to the group where he announced that he was proud of our work that day. He said it was the kind of thing he wanted to see Dust Off do and that he was recommending our crew for medals (we had carried quite a few casualties and taken several rounds). No one mentioned the Geneva Convention after that, nor did I ever hesitate to carry the dead as long as it did not interfere with service to the living. You'll find disagreement on both missions. To this day, I'm not sure what the book says about a situation like that—nor do I care. As a young officer I had taken a risk, right or wrong, and my boss, even though he would have been the one to answer for my actions, stood by me. It's easy to find a boss to stand by you when the buck stops at him, not so easy when it stops at his boss.

Kelly's great adversary, and boss, was Brig. Gen. Joe (Joseph W.) Stilwell. He was Vinegar Joe's (Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell of World War II China-Burma fame) boy, and we called him Cider Joe. This guy was a genuine character. He was not an aviator, but he flew; and when he wasn't flying, he rode as door gunner. The man was combat hungry and tough as hell. I was told he once survived a jump after his parachute malfunctioned. The last I heard about him was that his plane ditched at sea, and he was never found. Some folks waited a long time for him to walk up off the ocean floor.

His meetings with Kelly were always colorful, occasionally comical and even violent. Kelly was not intimidated by anything, let alone rank. Stilwell resurrected the issue of convertible red crosses and the cannibalization of Dust Off. He told Kelly that it was only a matter of time until he gained control of Dust Off and noted that the surgeon general was a personal friend of his. Kelly allowed that the surgeon general might be his friend, but he wasn't a damn fool.

Kelly called us together after his first meeting with Stilwell and warned that those "folks in headquarters" did not wish us well. If

U.S. Army

Before his boss, Brig. Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell (left), departed Vietnam, Maj. Kelly (right) presented him a plaque emblematic of their long-running differences over the control of medevac helicopters.

Dust Off is to survive, he said, we had better prove that no one else could do what we did as well as we did. Performance was the key to our survival, and although he never set any rules for us, he certainly set the example.

The key was patients—saving lives no matter the circumstances; get them out—during the battle, at night, in weather, whatever. Get those patients, the more the better; and don't let anyone else carry our patients. We increased, even advertised, our service to the ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam). We even carried the enemy wounded. We never discriminated against a hurt human, no matter his cause.

U.S. Army

A UH-1 medevac ship of the 57th Medical Detachment, then attached to the 196th Light Infantry Brigade, extracts a casualty from dense jungle with the use of a Stokes litter.

Kelly set up a kind of circuit. He would head out at dusk and cover the outposts of the Delta, checking for patients and putting out the word that Dust Off was available anytime it was needed. Although he had many close calls, it was because of the night flying that many began to call him Madman Kelly.

Night missions, single ship, with one engine were viewed with alarm by many and flown only in the most extreme emergencies. Most believed that if you lost that engine at night, you certainly were dead. Even if you lived through the autorotation, they warned, "Charlie" would get you before sunup. Kelly flew missions nightly, on a routine basis.

The key to lifesaving was time—the time from injury to medical care, not necessarily to a hospital. Dust Off had highly competent medical care on board. The helicopter destroyed the time obstacles of terrain, but it made no sense to waste lifesaving time waiting for the sun to come up.

Dust Off was a pioneer in night flying. Indeed, many of us felt it was the safest time to fly, and we all became good at it. I was never in a Dust Off unit that lost an aircraft because of darkness—because of the enemy on rare occasions, but never because of night. Repetition, not avoidance, is vital in dangerous training. You don't get good at something you will have to do by avoiding it. Night hours were training multipliers—they made you better at all types of flying.

Even day missions were primitive and challenging in those days. Our communication with the ARVN seldom worked and was rarely accurate even when it was working. You never knew what was waiting when you found the site (which in itself could be a challenge) and seldom had anyone to talk to when you got there. It was not rare for Dust Off to land in the middle of the Viet Cong. We learned fast and quickly developed many flying techniques to promote survival. Before long, we were very difficult to kill. Although we took a lot of hits, nothing stopped us from eventually bringing home the patient.

Kelly was burning up the Delta and also becoming very famous down there. Jim Lucas, a Pulitzer Prize-winning author, began to write about him. Only later would those of us in Saigon learn of his fame, but we were working hard to keep up with him. His methods were occasionally unorthodox but always effective as far as the patients were concerned. On one pickup, his crew got out and fought with the ground forces until they could get the patients aboard. Another time, he took some hits in the fuel cell and was leaking JP-4 on the way to Soc Trang. The tower called and said they would meet him on the runway with a fire truck and ambulance. They asked if he needed anything else. He said yes, that he'd be obliged if they'd bring some ice cream. He made it to the approach end of the runway, and the base commander met him with a quart of ice cream.

Even though Kelly did not come home without the patient, he never criticized a pilot who did—he would simply go and get the patient himself. Nor did he ever criticize a crew member who wanted out of Dust Off. Some did not agree with his methods and wanted out. They went with his best wishes. There were also a lot of adventurous young men lined up to fly with Dust Off.

I don't want you to get the idea he was perfect. Kelly had his ways. He didn't like our unit patch and wanted us to develop a new one. He said he was open to ideas but thought there should be some way to get an angel in it. That raised some eyebrows. He had a picture of an angel by his bed. It may have been a daughter dressed for a play, but Kelly had this thing for angels.

I found a gunship pilot who was a great patch designer. I asked him to paint a design using a kangaroo in a flight suit carrying a patient in its pouch. It was beautiful. I put it in his chair so he would see it when he came to Saigon. He walked into his office, never even tried to sit down, completely ignored the painting and left without comment. Next time I saw him, he asked how I was doing with his angel.

Toward the end of June 1964, the command was changing hands. Stilwell was leaving as commander, U.S. Army Support Command, Vietnam, and Kelly came to town for the farewell dinner. I was having lunch that day with Kelly when we got word that a ship had gone down up north and a pilot was killed. I asked for his name. Kelly wondered why I wanted to know that. I told him I had some flight school friends up there, including a close friend who was my stick buddy in flight school. He remarked that it is better not to ask for names in this business. I worried about the coldness of his remark but figured that three wars might do that to you.

That evening, he and I and a recently arrived chaplain were sitting together listening to the Stilwell farewells. I had never seen Kelly so animated. He was by nature a quiet, private man, but this night he was cheerful. He read between the lines of the speeches, and his remarks were colorful and his language rather earthy. The chaplain winced on more than one occasion.

At their last meeting, Kelly presented Stilwell with a plaque decorated with five red crosses and the tail numbers of our aircraft. He told Stilwell, "General, you wanted my aircraft so bad, here they are." I have a picture of that encounter, and Stilwell is smil-

Pilots and crewmen of the 57th Medical Detachment served as pallbearers at Maj. Kelly's funeral in Saigon, July 1964.

ng. I don't think the Dust Off issue was completely settled by then, but Kelly had his antagonist at bay. For all their differences, I always felt there was something rather special between Kelly and Stilwell.

I took Kelly back to Soc Trang after Stilwell's farewell and once again bugged him on his promise to let me have Detachment A. I was shocked when he said I could take over on 1 July. I think he was concerned about the fight for Dust Off and had finally decided he should be in Saigon for that battle.

I can still remember the cold chill I felt in my belly when we got word that Kelly was down. We all raced for our birds and headed for the Delta. On the way down we monitored the operation. A slick (troop-carrying helicopter) went in and got the Dust Off crew, and we heard they were safe at Long Binh. We all breathed a sigh of relief, and I remember smiling to myself as I thought about Kelly's reaction to being picked up by a slick.

I saw a lone Dust Off on the ramp at Long Binh and parked behind it. One of our pilots was sitting in the door. I was in a cheerful mood until I noticed he was crying. Then I saw the body bag behind him. Before I could say anything, he nodded at the bag and said it was Kelly. All the air went out of my body, and I sank down beside him. He had come through so many tight spots, so close so many times, that it never occurred to me that they could kill him. The reality just shook me.

He had gone into a supposedly secure area for some urgent wounded—one of them a U.S. soldier. Once on the ground, they began drawing fire. It was not unusual in those days to take fire out of friendly lines. The ground forces screamed at Kelly to get out. He replied in his quiet Georgia drawl, "When I have your wounded." His next words were "my God," and he curled up from a single bullet shot right through his heart. The ship curled with him, and the rotors beat it to pieces. The crew got out safely but would not leave until they dragged Kelly out. There was a U.S. physician on board, and he declared Kelly dead on the spot. Then they were rescued.

They had only been at Long Binh a few minutes before I got there, and the same people were yelling for a Dust Off to come back for the urgent patients Kelly was killed trying to rescue. I recall Kelly's deputy, now our new commander, rushing over to us as we sat there in silent numbness. He began to shout and wave and give orders and question why we sat while there were patients in the field.

I can remember rousing from my stupor and becoming outraged at his insensitivity to what had happened to Kelly. They had been friends for years. He saw my anger and said simply and quietly, "It's over; it's done; and we've got work to do."

He was right. Kelly was probably smiling in the body bag behind us.

We cranked up and went back for Kelly's patients. That area is so clear in my mind. Kelly's ship was still burning, the area still called secure and the patients still classified urgent. We were landing beside the burning Dust Off when our ship took several rounds, probably the same folks who shot Kelly. We jumped over a tree line, checked to ensure we were still flyable and went back.

This time we made a tactical approach, found some cover and retrieved the patients. The U.S. patient walked to the aircraft carrying a bag. All the patients were ambulatory. None was urgent. I was told that one was coming out of the field to go on R&R.

I stayed in Kelly's room that night and slept in his bed. I remember sitting at his desk writing up the missions of that day. It

was 1 July, 1964, and I was finally the commander of Detachment A, just as Kelly had promised.

He was the 149th American killed in Vietnam, and the outcry was overwhelming. I think it was then that we all realized how revered he was in the Delta.

I was told that Stilwell broke down and cried when told of Kelly's death. He was given the highest awards of the Vietnamese government, and they had the biggest funeral I had ever seen in Saigon. His pilots were pallbearers. It was an emotionally tough time for all of us.

There were two coffins in the chapel that day. The other one was my stick buddy, the one Kelly told me not to inquire about. They were now side by side. The chaplain was the same one who had winced at Kelly's war stories a few days earlier. He never mentioned the names of the dead on his altar that day, and I have often wondered if he knew who it was he was praying over.

I never again heard another word about convertible Dust Offs. In fact, they began to bring in more Dust Off units. There is no telling how many lives were saved because of Kelly, probably because of his death, and the preservation of the dedicated Dust Off as opposed to some part-time, ad hoc system.

Shortly after I took over Detachment A, the local commander called me in. I listened while he said that he was not at all surprised that someone had been killed. He didn't think it would be Kelly though. He thought it would be one of the young pilots. He expected Kelly's death would teach us a lesson, and we would modify our methods. As I listened, it was clear that some really did think Kelly was crazy and that much of the flying we did routinely was believed by others to demonstrate poor judgment.

When he had finished, I told him nothing would change. We would continue to fly as he had taught us and try to learn as much as possible from the only battlefield we had for use on the battlefields of the future. We would be wasting our time to do otherwise.

To his credit, he never tried to change or restrict us despite his personal convictions. When I left, he gave me the bullet that killed Kelly. Apparently it had come in the open rear door, passed through Kelly's heart and lodged in the door to his right. No other round had hit the aircraft. Kelly would not wear a flak vest, and he had long been criticized for that. It was uncomfortable and really didn't stop much. (The cockpit armor "chicken" plates hadn't arrived yet.) But some said that if Kelly had had one on, he might have lived. I guess his mortician is the *only* one who knows. Now that Kelly was dead, we remembered his angel and made a metal crest of an angel in a flight suit. We wore them on our hats and holsters. I lost my last one during my second tour when my hat flew out the door on a night mission. I still grieve over that loss.

The only change to the 57th patch was made some time after I left when they added the words, "The Originals." I flew with the Originals but never got to wear that patch. I can tell you that members of the 57th wore that patch with pride, but I must also confess I feel a strange emotion when I see others wearing it, and I don't really know why. Those of us who flew with the original Dust Off tried to prevent them from using our call sign, but the same rationale that allowed us to keep it prevailed, and we lost.

I can tell you that some of those who came behind Kelly did not agree with his methods. They were more concerned with getting themselves out than with getting the patients out. He was a tough act to follow. As the older ones washed out, the young ones fought to preserve his spirit and his traditions. I think he is still alive in Dust Off units today.

Although Kelly is most remembered for his physical courage in saving lives in combat, it was his moral courage that saved Dust Off—the greatest lifesaver the battlefield has ever seen. I have known many with blinding courage on the battlefield who would later succumb to the outrages and onslaughts of the bureaucracy and its daily drill of paper. I have known others who would cower in the unending war we all wage between our security, our desires, our passions and those wonderful things called our ideals. Kelly was unique in the degree to which he possessed all forms of courage.

Although I know virtually nothing about Kelly beyond the few months in Vietnam, I would bet he was from modest beginnings. He certainly was a humble man, and humility is a constant mark of great leaders. He drove home for me the incredible treasure that is courage. In many ways, we are not born equal—not in terms of ability and certainly not in terms of opportunity. In matters of courage, however, we are all equal. Courage is the greatest resource in life, and it is readily and abundantly available to all. In fact, courage is probably the most significant equalizer in life; it certainly produces great people from among those without remarkable ability or opportunity.

I think I also found the source, the key, to courage in Kelly. Of those I know who died in combat, none that I knew died for the flag or the country. They died for the people of this country, those they loved, their buddies—the country only inasmuch as it protected those they loved. So love was part of it (sacrifice is really nothing more than love in action), but so was faith—a belief that there is something beyond the moment and beyond and above the self.

I've not known many men of consistent, repetitive courage who were not also men of faith. Fear is nothing more than our faith on trial. Kelly was a man of deep faith. He never missed church, and each day he posted an inspirational thought on the bulletin board. He certainly didn't wear it on his sleeve, but it was evident to all around him. I know that in my own experiences, my faith was for me a substitute for fear, a source of calm and comfort, and it gave me a confidence I don't think I would have otherwise had. I think the greatest fear I ever had was that I might let him down.

The contrasts in this man were sharp. He was quiet, even shy, but as loudly decisive as anyone I've ever met. He was colorful, some said flamboyant, but so aware of his humanity, really almost meek. He did not take himself seriously, but he was very serious, even fanatical, about his mission and responsibilities. That trait has been present in all the great men I've known. Others may make rank, but they'll never make a difference. He had no nose for the perks of leadership—only the responsibilities. He seemed to have no insecurities. Inside this modest man was a volcano of certainty about what he was about. He could not even pretend to be phony.

I'm sure if I looked hard enough I could find flaws in this man—but I don't want to. And that is what a real leader will do to his subordinates—that's the difference between a leader and someone in a leadership position.

Today there are many monuments and memorials to this man, but none as lasting as those in the men who served with him. His last words, "When I have your wounded," set a standard for excellence that was both monumental and memorable. He was responsible for what Dust Off was in Vietnam—simply the most effective and efficient execution of a vital mission in that war. Kelly was one man who made a difference. He was a leader, a man who provoked openness, honesty and caring—who lasted beyond his lifetime. The great thing about true leaders like Kelly is that they never leave us. Dead or alive, the noblest part of their being remains behind, becomes a part of our being—as soldiers, of our profession, of all those things that make our way unique.

"When I have your wounded"—what a great way to die; and really, not a bad way to live.