"When I have your wounded."
Army Aviation Hall of Fame 1975 Induction
(Inducted to represent the 1960-1969 period)

Major Charles L. Kelly, MSC was DUSTOFF and DUSTOFF was "Combat Kelly." The two became synonymous in Vietnam in 1964 when the most effective of all emergency evacuation systems emerged to full maturity in the mountains and paddies around the world.

As commander of the 57th Medical Detachment [Helicopter Ambulance], Kelly assumed the call sign "DUSTOFF." His skill, aplomb, dedication, and daring soon made both famous throughout the Delta. The lonely silence of many a distant outpost was broken by his radio draw, "...this is DUSTOFF. Just checking in to see if everything is okay." And when there were wounded, in came Kelly "hell bent for leather!"

On such a mission on 1 July 1964 Kelly approached a hot area to pick up wounded only to find the enemy waiting with a withering barrage of fire. Advised repeatedly to withdraw, he calmly replied to the ground element's advisor, "When I have your wounded." Moments later, he was killed with a single bullet.

Kelly was dead but the air evacuation was only beginning. His "DUSTOFF" became the callsign for all aeromedical missions in Vietnam, and "When I have your wounded" became the personal and collective credo of the many gallant medevac pilots who followed him.

An exceptionally capable instructor in medical subjects as a Captain, Kelly demonstrated a high degree of positive leadership early in his career, an asset that became fully evident in later combat in Vietnam.