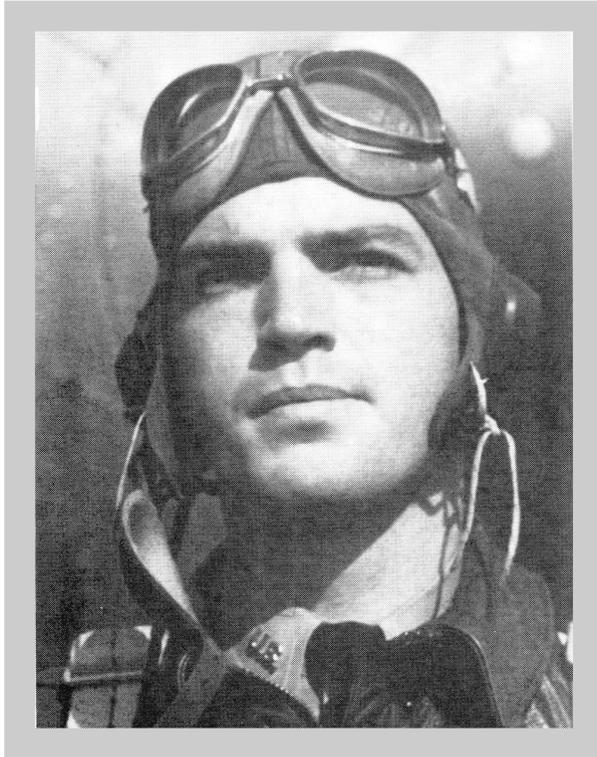




FALCON
FOUNDATION



SCHOLARSHIP IN HONOR OF

CAPTAIN
COLIN P. KELLY, JR.

U.S. ARMY AIR CORPS

Captain Colin P. Kelly, Jr.

In the town of Madison, Florida, a sixteen foot granite monument consisting of four winged angels facing opposite directions, dominates the square. The monument was unveiled at Madison Square Garden in 1943 and displayed there for several months. The following year it was moved to Madison where it now stands, as a silent impressive tribute to Captain Colin P. Kelly, Jr., U.S. Army Air Corps - the first United States hero of World War II.

Colin Kelly was born into a family with strong military traditions. His ancestors fought in the Revolutionary War, and in the War Between the States. Several relatives attended the United States Military Academy. As his father before him, Colin attended Marion Military Institute, located in Marion, Alabama. Following his studies there, he was appointed to the United States Military Academy at West Point, Class of 1937.

The 1937 Howitzer described Kelly as:

A combination of Irish blood and Southern sunshine has given Kelly the best qualities of both. Equally famous are his drawl and friendly smile. A temper, perhaps, but one that rises to defend the principles that he cherished. He has not devoted all his effort to study and, consequently, has not achieved a high academic rank, but he has participated in sports and other activities, and found time to enjoy West Point thoroughly. He is positive in his opinions- vigorous in his actions. All-round ability and a knack for making friends bespeak a bright future for him, and those of us who really know him will be glad to say, "I knew him when."

Following graduation, he married Marion Wick and entered flight school in preparation for a career in the Army Air Corps. During the summer

of 1940 an incident occurred which demonstrated Colin Kelly's selfless nature. While flying from Wright Field to Mitchell Field in New York, he encountered a ceiling at Mitchell near zero, and he was directed to land at Floyd Bennett Field. There the weather was just as bad. So that now Lieutenant Kelly was placed in the melancholy position of having very little fuel and no apparent place to land. He passed over several wide streets in Brooklyn. The areas were ample and the visibility good, but children were playing in the streets. Finally, just before his fuel was exhausted, he saw a street under construction in the Canarsie section of Brooklyn. There he landed. The aircraft rolled down the street until it struck an embankment of dirt. Fortunately, he was only slightly injured.

In September he was promoted to captain. In the spring of 1941 he was transferred to Hawaii. Then, in mid summer of the same year, he was assigned to the 19th Bomb Group at Clark Field in the Philippines.

Three days following the outbreak of World War II, the Japanese began landing operations on the Island of Luzon. Kelly's squadron was ordered to interdict these operations. His B-17, a four-engine heavy bomber, was being loaded with 600-pound bombs when an alarm sounded. Japanese aircraft had been sighted heading toward the base. Only three bombs had been loaded before Captain Kelly was forced to begin his take off roll, but the bombers could not be caught on the ground.

Over the waters of Luzon, Kelly and his crew were looking for an aircraft carrier. Flying through scattered clouds they found a 29,000-ton capital battleship instead. It was thought to be the Haruna. The ship was approximately four miles offshore moving slowly parallel to the coastline. He ra-

Captain Colin P. Kelly, Jr.

died his base for permission to bomb the ship. After an hour without instructions, he decided to attack. In order to ensure success, Kelly made three passes over the enemy ship. Anti-aircraft fire from the accompanying warships burst around the bomber. The battleship, however, maintained course and speed without firing a shot. The B-17 flew a quartering approach to the longitudinal axis of the ship. On the final pass the bombardier released the three six-hundred bombs. Two were near misses, but the third bomb hit the ship directly. Kelly turned toward Clark Field. Below, the ship was in flames, trailing oil, and heading toward the beach.

As the Flying Fortress made its way home, it was attacked by two Japanese fighters near Aparri, North Luzon. During the fight the commander's dome was shot away, the instrument panel destroyed, the low pressure oxygen tanks in the radio compartment exploded, and a fire erupted in the bomb bay. Smoke filled the aircraft. When the fire reached the radio compartment the heat became unbearable. Realizing the plane was doomed, Kelly ordered the crew to jump. As the crew members bailed out, Kelly kept the stricken airplane under control. Before he could leave the burning plane it exploded and crashed. With the exception of

Sergeant Delehanty, who was killed during the fighter attack, the rest of the crew members were saved.

Colin P. Kelly, Jr., was the first graduate of West Point killed in World War II. For his role in the action December 10, 1941, he was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Purple Heart. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was so moved by Kelly's deed that he wrote a letter to whoever would be President of the United States in 1956 asking that Colin Kelly's son be appointed to the United States Military Academy. Although President Eisenhower honored the request, Colin Kelly's son entered West Point as a result of competitive examination.

Shortly after the action on December 10, new reports declared that Kelly's B-17 sank the battleship. It was reported the Ashigari was also sunk. Both stories proved not to be the case. So as it turned out Captain Colin Kelly presented neither the Haruna nor the Ashigari to his country on December 10, 1941. In the long run he provided something far more important - a cause and an example.

To The Falcon Foundation:

To the generation of World War II, the name Colin Kelly evokes special memories. At a very critical and grim time in the history of our nation, his deeds provided not only a sense of pride, but they inspired hope as well. It's a privilege to sponsor a scholarship in honor of this gallant bomber pilot – America's first hero of World War II.

Yours sincerely,

William R. Ireland, Sr.
William R. Ireland, Sr.



The Falcon Foundation is a 501(c)(3), non-profit foundation. Its purpose is to provide scholarships to College or Preparatory Schools for motivated young people seeking admission to USAFA and a career in the Air Force.

Although it is a separate organization, the Falcon Foundation works closely with USAFA.