

Guy Dennis Gruters

Guy was born in Sarasota, Florida, in October of 1942, the first child of his parents. Guy was conceived before his father left to fight in World War II. Twenty-eight months later, his father returned from Europe. The family moved first to Washington, DC, where his father worked in the Pentagon, then to New York City, then to Fairlawn, New Jersey. Guy grew up in Fairlawn to the age of sixteen, when the family moved again to Sarasota, Florida, in 1958.

While growing up in Fairlawn, he attended Saint Anne's Catholic school. Guy was a member of the Fairlawn Rocket Club and also progressed through Cub and Boy Scouts, earning his Eagle Scout rank before moving to Sarasota. He also camped and trapped extensively in the Saddle River area.

Moving to Sarasota following his junior year, he played on the Sarasota High School football team in his senior year. Guy then applied to attend the Air Force Academy and was accepted.

He completed a degree in engineering science from the Air Force Academy. He was a top student, graduating with honors (Summa Cum Laude) in 1964. He was on the judo and boxing teams and also played football on a squadron team for two years. Guy also spent a few weeks in Georgia and earned jump wings upon completing the US Army parachute school at Ft. Benning, Georgia.

After graduating from the Academy, he obtained his Masters Degree in Astronautical Engineering from Purdue University. He married his wife, Sandy, during this period, and they welcomed their first two children.

Following pilot training in Valdosta AFB, Georgia, the assignment was F100 Fighter Gunnery School for six months at Luke AFB, Arizona. Upon completion, he volunteered for Vietnam service. As a new fighter pilot, Guy was assigned to serve as a Forward Air Controller, abbreviated "FAC," in a small O-1 "Bird Dog" aircraft. He flew low-level combat missions assisting the ground troops of the 173rd Airborne Brigade by directing fighter strikes on the enemy forces.

Near the end of his first year's tour in Vietnam, he volunteered to serve in a top-secret MISTY Squadron that flew fighter aircraft, F-100Fs, over North Vietnam. The MISTY Squadron flew low level flights to find targets and then directed other fighter aircraft to targets on the ground in North Vietnam, using smoke rockets to mark the enemy positions. They were called "Fast FACs," because they used fast fighters for the FAC mission.

He flew over four hundred combat missions in Vietnam, first in the O-1 over South Vietnam and then in F-100s over North Vietnam. He was responsible for saving many lives and on various occasions won significant combat awards: among them two Silver Stars and two Distinguished Flying Crosses for risking his life to save his fellow countrymen and South Vietnamese civilians.

As a result of the extensive anti-aircraft fire involved, he was shot down twice over North Vietnam. The second time he was captured and spent the next five years as a POW in six different POW camps, twice kept in the famous Hanoi Hilton.

While in the camps, he experienced a thorough conversion experience and was able to finally forgive the guards that had killed his friend, Lance Sijan. The five years plus in prison affected him in many ways. He has been able to share his experiences with many thousands of people in the last twenty years as will be further described below.

He was freed from the prison camp when his brother, Terry, and others flew in a major series of air raids called Linebacker II in December, 1972, which brought the North Vietnamese to their knees.

He returned to the USA to be with his family, and then elected to leave the Air Force, feeling he had put his wife and parents through enough.

He entered civilian life, initially becoming an Eastern Airlines pilot. Upon the major furlough in 1973, he was hired by IBM and served as a Marketing Representative and transferred to the General Systems Division. Guy was very successful as an IBM salesman. When he resigned in May, 1979, he was national account manager for the GTE telephone company, a three billion-dollar corporation comprising fifteen operating companies nationwide. Awards with IBM included the hundred percent sales club each year, an award for the best demonstration programming in the country, and a first-place finish in the majority of IBM schools attended.

Leaving IBM in 1979, he joined with his brother Terry heading up a new software company that created, sold and serviced two significant software programs for the then brand-new PC computer. One was an accounting package and another an insurance agency package.

After years of great success, the new company suffered a major setback when one of the key employees sold the tax calculating component of the accounting package to a major accounting firm and placed Guy and Terry in a difficult situation with a fraudulent bankruptcy filing. After a five-year court battle, they won a major settlement and returned back to normal business again.

In addition, Guy had returned to Eastern Airlines when the seven-year furlough was over, and retired as an Airline Captain in 1991.

Guy went to work for Pearl vision in Dallas, Texas, and then McCrory Corporation in York, Pennsylvania, as VP-Management Information Systems, before moving to Ohio to work with his

youngest brother, Peter. Peter had founded a non-profit corporation and requested Guy's help. Guy began his public speaking ministry in Ohio, which continues to this day.

During these years after returning from Vietnam, while living in the south, Guy and Sandy's oldest children attended college at Vanderbilt and Auburn Universities. They were also blessed with five additional children, all five of which attended Franciscan University (Steubenville) in Ohio following the move there. They have seventeen grandchildren who are a source of endless pleasure.

To Catholic and other religious groups, Guy's talks stress forgiveness, family leadership and the love experienced in war. To military and business groups, they stress leadership and teamwork lessons learned in the prison camps and the business world.

To further get the word out, he wrote and published a book titled *Locked Up With God*, which presents thirteen of his best talks. He also has developed and maintains his own website, guygruters.net, which is also educational in nature. A list of the many different talks given in recent years can be reviewed by choosing the page "Recent Talks."

He has provided speaking tours to military bases in England, Europe, Hawaii and the Far East. These are in addition to the many, many other talks given all over this country. He has appeared on EWTN on three separate occasions. He was also interviewed by Diane Sawyer on a ABC nightly news program. He has given many talks at the Air Force Academy, speaking particularly about a fellow POW whose name was Lance Sijan. Guy is the only one living that spent time with Lance during his last days in a North Vietnamese POW camp.

Lance was an F-4 air force fighter pilot downed over North Vietnam a month and a half before Guy was shot down the second time. Guy and the pilot that Guy was shot down with met up with Lance in a small jungle prison camp. Lance was tortured severely and slowly killed by the North Vietnamese guards for refusing to tell them any information about the American military operations. As a result of Guy and his fellow pilot being in cells close to Lance's during his final days, witnessing what Lance went through and hearing every word of the interrogations, they were able to tell the story when they returned to the US. Their testimony resulted in Lance being awarded the Medal of Honor post mortem.

Lance is the only Medal of Honor winner to have graduated from the Air Force Academy. Guy's testimony was given to Malcolm O'Connor, who wrote the book *Into The Mouth of The Cat*. Other books that have Guy's story, or part of it, include: *MISTY*, Edited by Major General Don Shepperd and *Bury Us Upside Down* by Rick Newman and Don Shepperd. In addition, Guy's story has appeared in numerous magazines and news articles many times over the years since returning from Vietnam. Guy also has a CD carried by Lighthouse Catholic Media titled, *Surviving With God In A Communist POW Camp*, that can be downloaded on any iPhone or similar device in which the Lighthouse App can be utilized.

As mentioned, Guy moved with his family over 20 years ago to Ohio to help his brother, Peter, on a special mission to save the family. Guy has been intimately involved with this effort during these years. The effort includes the writing and publishing of many books on family life and spiritual life. These books are meant to help families become holy Catholic families even and especially in the present world we live in.

The effort to save the family also includes the development of what is necessary to form a new religious/lay association in the Church to help families make it in today's society. Society itself is so harsh, so cold and so contrary to Christian values and traditions. And these proven traditions and values facilitate family love, togetherness and lasting union, which Guy experienced in the family he was raised in.

His family was certainly not perfect, but it was far better than most present-day families, which are so wounded and dis-functional by the forces affecting them in today's society. Thus, the effort to save the family is continuing. The hope is that the new film being produced will play an important role in spreading God's love and be a witness to the great values of family togetherness and support it emphasizes. These values provided Guy and his family the ability to give and sacrifice in the many situations and aspects the film will portray.

In a way, the war continues for Guy and his brothers, but it is a different fight, a fight on the home front. This fight can also be won. Guy plans to spend the rest of his life doing what he can to overcome the forces against the family and the traditional American way of living family life.