



Capt. (ret.) Guy Gruters, Air Force Vietnam War veteran and former prisoner of war, recounts his experiences as an F-100 Super Sabre pilot to Airmen at the Airman Leadership School Jan. 22 at Fort George G. Meade, Md. (U.S Air Force photo/Airman 1st Class Samuel Daub)



Capt. (ret.) Guy Gruters, Air Force Vietnam War veteran and former prisoner of war, speaks to the current class at the Airman Leadership School Jan. 22 at Fort George G. Meade, Md. (U.S Air Force photo/Airman 1st Class Samuel Daub)



Capt. (ret.) Guy Gruters, Air Force Vietnam War veteran and former prisoner of war, answers an Airman's question Jan. 22 in the Airman Leadership School Fort George G. Meade, Md. (U.S Air Force photo/Airman 1st Class Samuel Daub)

Vietnam War POW Talks Teamwork

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By Airman 1st Class Samuel Daub
70th Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance Wing Public Affairs

FORT GEORGE G. MEADE, Md. -- Capt. (ret.) Guy Gruters, Air Force Vietnam War veteran and former prisoner of war, shared his experiences with 70th ISR Wing Airmen and Fort Meade service members Jan. 22 at the Airman Leadership School and Friedman Auditorium.

During the presentations, Gruters recounted his survival of North Vietnamese prison camps and torture at the hands of communist fighters.

Gruters survived more than five years of imprisonment and was able to return home with honor. His strength to carry on he credited to a strong faith in his leadership and teamwork with his fellow captives.

He imparted the wisdom he gained under these circumstances to the future supervisors in his audience.

"To me, the most important message is to have a strong faith and above everything else to try to do the right thing in every aspect of your career," Gruters said. "I mean always, always, everyday try to do what you truly believe is the right thing despite any consequence."

Gruters went on to clarify.

"That right thing involves real obedience to your leadership and all your procedures and everything that everybody is telling you to do above you and real loyalty to your leadership and real loyalty and true loyalty to all the people you are responsible for -- loyalty up and down the line. Don't play any games with any selfishness - truly try to be unselfish in everything and you'll never regret it."

His discussion accompanied a PowerPoint presentation centered on teamwork. Gruters shared that the same force employed to help him return home in 1973 is the same that affects the success of today's leaders and Airmen.

"If you're a leader who really cares for your people, your people know it and will do anything for you," He said. "You won't have people doing just what they are supposed to do. They'll go above and beyond for you and the unit will be stronger because of it."

Gruters also recommends taking responsibility for mistakes at every opportunity to do so. When taking responsibility, Airmen also receive the opportunity to correct the issue and be proactive in improving their work place.

"It looks like a stupid thing to do but believe me it's the right thing to do. The thing about it is when you take the blame for the problem, people let you fix the problem. Because you've taken the responsibility everybody lets you lead the way out."

Before speaking, Gruters was introduced by Maj. Peter Gruters, from the 34th Intelligence Squadron, his nephew. Major Gruters joined the Air Force shortly before the events of September 11. His grandfather served in World War II and his uncles, Terry and Guy Gruters, were both pilots in the Vietnam War.

"One of the reasons I got in was to continue that tradition as the next generation," said Major Gruters. "Bottom line goes back to the Air Force Creed, 'I am faithful to a proud heritage, a tradition of honor and a legacy of valor,' that really hits home for me-- just to continue that legacy of family."

Gruters, after speaking, ate lunch with the Airmen and answered an array of questions. He also spoke to a joint-service audience at the Friedman Auditorium later that day.



POW's Legacy Helps Nephew In Leadership Roles

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By Senior Airman Zachary Vucic, Air Force News Service

FORT GEORGE G. MEADE, Md. (AFNS) -- Military tradition runs deep in some families, with generation after generation raising their right hand and swearing to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. One family however, has continued to put its mark on military service even after inconceivable anguish struck during the Vietnam War.

In December 1967, the family was informed that one of their own, Capt. Guy Gruters, had been shot down and was now a prisoner of war. Guy sat for nearly five and a half years as a POW, with a portion of that span being at the notorious Hanoi Hilton in North Vietnam. He endured extreme temperatures, torture, isolation and horrid living conditions.

Today, more than 46 years after Guy's capture, a Gruters family member has taken those lessons of fortitude, honor, valor, selflessness and teamwork to continue his legacy in Air Force service. Maj. Peter Gruters is the director of operations with the 34th Intelligence Squadron at Fort George G. Meade, Md., and nephew of the man who would be the inspiration for his Air Force career.

"The Airman's Creed sums it up: I am faithful to a proud heritage, a tradition of honor and a legacy of valor," said the younger Gruters. "It was my turn to stand up and carry on that tradition."

Now, as a leader in his own right, Peter uses his uncle's experience as a lesson in perspective for both himself, and the Airmen he leads. He said the lessons learned from how the POWs united and functioned in extreme austere conditions exemplify the teamwork needed in today's Air Force.

"Whatever situation I'm going through, I know there's a worse situation out there," he said.

His interest in leadership stuck early in his career when he studied the subject in pursuit of a master's degree. After being given a leadership role within an intelligence squadron, he was hooked.

"I was only going to (serve) for four years," Peter said, adding that he intended to move back to his home state of Florida. "I stayed in because I got to lead Airmen. I came in because of family, but I stayed in because of the Airmen."

The perspective of what his uncle went through is something he carries with him and passes on to Airmen.

"I have incredibly big shoes to fill," Peter said. "I'm never going to reach to (Uncle Guy's) level ... but the one thing I do have is a positive role model and a positive example to strive for."

Thinking of the family history, he said his mother wasn't keen on the idea of him joining. His famed uncle however said he was "ecstatic" about Peter being the first of 20 cousins to join the service – "Especially about the Air Force."

Peter has deployed five times in his career and earned various awards along the way, including a Bronze Star medal. He said he has no intention of attempting to duplicate his Uncle's achievements, but he pushes every day to live up to his family legacy and lead his Airmen



Maj. Peter Gruters stands with his Uncle, Capt. (ret.) Guy Gruters, after Guy's speech Jan. 22, 2014, at Airman Leadership School on Fort George G. Meade, Md. Peter joined the Air Force to continue his famed uncle's legacy. Peter is the director of operations with the 34th Intelligence Squadron. (U.S. Air Force photo/Airman 1st Class Samuel Daub)



Maj. Peter Gruters introduces his famed uncle, Capt. (ret.) Guy Gruters, prior to Guy's speech at Airman Leadership School Jan. 22, 2014, at Fort George G. Meade, Md. Guy sat for nearly five and a half years as a prisoner of war at the notorious Hanoi Hilton. Peter is the director of operations with the 34th Intelligence Squadron. (U.S. Air Force photo/Airman 1st Class Samuel Daub)photo/Airman 1st Class Samuel Daub)



Guy Gruters speaks to an Airman Leadership School class Jan. 22 2014, at Fort George G. Meade, Md, about his experience as a prisoner of war in North Vietnam. Gruters, a former pilot, was shot down in 1967 and sat for nearly five and a half years at the notorious Hanoi Hilton. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Zachary Vucic)



