

Mayday over the Mississippi: The Interview

Q. What was the first clue that something was wrong?

A. The explosion. My number six cylinder blew.

Years of safety courses came in handy when Mick Gutttau made a "dead stick" landing to bring he and wife, Judy, down after losing power.

The April 2010 ABA Banking Journal debut of its new column, "First Person," featured the story of Mick and Judy Gutttau when things went very badly over the Midwest. The couple—the chairman and CEO of \$187.4 million-assets Treynor (Iowa) State Bank and former Iowa state banking commissioner and she an experienced senior staff member of the family owned and run bank herself—survived the in-flight catastrophic engine failure of Gutttau's Cessna Centurion airplane.

The article, limited to the essentials by space constraints, didn't include many details that the many avid flying bankers and other banking students of aviation would find interesting. Hence we are offering an edited transcript of the interview with Mick and Judy Gutttau below. [To read the magazine article, [click here](#). To read more about the "First Person" column and how to suggest bankers for the column, [click here](#).]

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Executive Editor Steve Cocheo heard about the Gutttaus' experience during a cocktail party at the 2009 ABA National Conference for Community Bankers, and did two things.

First he tracked down the Gutttaus at the hotel pool, where they were trying to relax during the conference's off afternoon.

Second, knowing that he was no aviation expert and anxious to get the details right, and the right questions asked, he located banker Frank Breazeale, of First Gilmer Bankshares, a \$298 million-assets three-bank holding company from Texas. Breazeale is himself an experienced pilot and past subject of an article in ABABJ—“Wings Over Texas”—that told the story of how Breazeale turned his own flying into a business line for the bank.

Guttau flew a Cobra combat helicopter during the Vietnam War, shipping over there in 1970. He flew missions nearly every day. Getting shot at was part of the job. One particularly hot mission was a raid over Laos, where Guttau and his team attacked a key enemy supply point along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. It was so critical that heavy anti-aircraft guns had been moved in, and the American pilots took flak “like in a World War II movie,” according to Guttau.

“It was a pretty tense day,” said Guttau, with typical understatement. (Click here for a February 1992 profile, with Guttau and an earlier plane on the cover.)

In the years since, the Guttas have faced financial challenges, running a family bank in the midst of farm country through several financial crunches; family health crises; and more. Although not a rated pilot, Judy’s long been Mick’s “co-pilot”, in all senses, including at the controls of his various planes over the years. The differences in how they both processed the experience, towards the end of the transcript, are as interesting as the experience itself.

Mick says today that his life’s experience, including the story you read in the Journal and will read more about below, have confirmed beliefs about life he wants to pass along.

From Mick:

“My perspectives on combat, life, and banking:

- Evaluate the risks

- Follow established/proven procedures (the checklist)

- Evaluate the procedures and determine if they are really appropriate in this situation

- If not, adapt. If there is one thing I have learned in farming, combat, and banking, it is you have to think and adapt “on the go”.

(The weather changes, the enemy changes, and the economy changes/everything changes!)

Frequently, Plan “B”, “C”, or “D”; end up much better than plan “A”.

You’ll see elements of this in the transcript.

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Mississippi” story.

ABA BJ: Mick, this is Frank Breazeale, the pilot I told you about. I had a feeling that maybe a fellow pilot might ask some things that I wouldn’t think of, as a “groundling.” Why don’t we start at the beginning? You were taking off from where to where?

Mick Gutttau: We were leaving from Council Bluffs, Iowa , heading to Dulles International.

ABA BJ: What date was this?

Mick Gutttau: April 27, 08. (This interview was conducted February 2009)

Breazeale: And what were the weather conditions?

Mick Gutttau: We wound up in instrument flight conditions.

ABA BJ: And what were you flying?

Mick Gutttau: Cessna Centurion, pressurized Cessna Centurion.

Breazeale: And you filed the flight plan ending where?

Mick Gutttau: Dulles International.

ABA BJ: And so that’s normally how long a flight?

Mick Gutttau: Four hours and twenty minutes.

ABA BJ: And you were going on for how long and things were normal?

Mick Guttau: We were about 20 miles from the Mississippi River and at 23,000 feet. It was cold.

Breazeale: And you were pressurized at the time, right?

Mick Guttau: Pressurized, yeah. And the inside of the windshields were all frosted because it was so cold outside, but that's normal when it's that cold out.

ABA BJ: And what was the first clue something was not right?

Mick Guttau: The explosion. Number six cylinder.

ABA BJ: This kind of engine has eight?

Mick Guttau: No, six.

ABA BJ: Six cylinders. Did something come up out of the cowling?

Mick Guttau: Nothing did the first time. The first explosion was just that. But then I started losing RPM. So I set up for a glide and declared an emergency with [Federal Aviation Administration's] Chicago center. I went through my standard emergency procedures. I pulled my air speed back to 85 knots air speed. And I popped the autopilot back on and set it up for a glide.

ABA BJ: Now, at what point, how much altitude did you lose over this period?

Mick Guttau: I was probably losing, well, I wasn't losing much when I was dissipating air speed. But once I got to 85 knots I was losing about, I think it was about 1,700 feet a minute.

Breazeale: Now to your knowledge were there any other aircraft in your immediate vicinity?

Mick Guttau: No, they kept them out of my way. They cleared the airport. I tell people that for 15 minutes I owned Quad City International Airport [Moline's airport].

ABA BJ: Moline is how far from Chicago? Like a couple hundred miles?

Mick Guttau: It's on the other side of the state, so right on the Mississippi River, across from Iowa.

ABA BJ: Okay, I've got the picture now.

Mick Guttau: So we got across the Mississippi and had about 1,500 feet of altitude to go, over the runway. So I did a nearly 360 degree turn to lose altitude.

ABA BJ: So, now this is completely without power, right?

Mick Guttau: Right, right.

ABA BJ: Now, what did you do?

A closer look at Mick Guttau's trouble:

The first explosion he heard was the piston, above, disintegrating.

The second explosion was the connecting rod punching through the top crankcase, below.

Mick Gutttau: Something we haven't covered yet. You asked about the first explosion. The first explosion was a piston disintegrating (see photo). The second explosion was the connecting rod coming out on the top crankcase and blowing off my left magneto. [Note: The magneto is a self-powered spark distributor.] (See photo)

Now, that's the only time anything visible happened. It looked a little like I took a round through my engine cowling, not a big round either, just pushed the magneto up and broke it off.

Breazeale: Any vapor or oil?

Mick Gutttau: Yeah, there was a little, and for some reason I just happened to have my head up, when I spotted it. We were still in the clouds so there wasn't anything to look at but I just happened to have my head up and I could see it coming over the windshield. To this day, I still don't know for sure whether that was oil or just air pressure, water vapor, or whatever. The windshield was clean upon landing, so it probably was not oil.

It turned out that I didn't lose much oil. Only lost a quarter of a quart.

Breazeale: Okay, good. Now, the plane's not pressurized? But your engine didn't totally stop. You were windmilling. Your pressurization system was still working for you?

Mick Gutttau: No, it wasn't working.

Breazeale: Oh wow.

Mick Gutttau: So that was another decision I had to make.

Breazeale: That's quick because 13,000 or above, if you don't have oxygen …

Mick Gutttau: When it first happened I looked at the pressure and my cabin altitude was still at 12,500 feet, which is of course where it should have been. And then I was going through all my other stuff, and going through emergency procedures, and the next time I came back to the cabin altitude it's up to 20,000 feet as I'm going down through 20,000 feet so they both met. And so I had a decision to make whether to "pop" the oxygen out or

not.

ABA BJ: "Pop" the oxygen? Why was that an issue?

Mick Gutttau: Well, the oxygen is chemically generated and done at an extremely high temperature and I thought you know, at the rate I'm going down, I feel fine. Maybe we don't need it.

Breazeale: You'll get down okay, you're thinking.

Mick Gutttau: Yeah, and you'll get a chuckle out of this, Frank, because, as you know, the symptoms of hypoxia [oxygen deprivation] are "Everything's cool." And I'm thinking, "Well I feel like everything's cool. But is everything cool or do I just feel like everything's cool?"

So this keeps going on in my mind.

Breazeale: Right, you wonder, "Am I really responding to the altitude instead of reality?"

ABA BJ: Is it kind of like a euphoria?

Mick Gutttau: Yes, it is. Yeah. And by then I had the autopilot all set up and I had the glide set and I thought, you know, worse case scenario if I would pass out, but I felt fine all the way down. So did she (nodding towards Judy Gutttau).

Breazeale: Oh, your wife was with you?

Mick Gutttau: Yep, yep she was.

Now, the engine was still in motion, because the prop was windmilling. The connecting rod and wrist pin were still intact, though the piston had disintegrated. So, you've got to picture this, they were still moving in there, so they just beat that hole in the engine crankcase bigger and bigger.

Breazeale: How old was the engine?

Mick Gutttau: All I had was 515 hours on it since the last major overhaul.

ABA BJ: Nearly brand new isn't it?

Mick Guttau: Perhaps a third of the life, actually.

Breazeale: I know that engine. It's a really good engine.

ABA BJ: What's the make?

Mick Guttau: Continental TSI0-520-RcP.

Breazeale: I fly Bonanzas, so I'm not familiar with the specs. Was it 550, 540, 510?

Mick Guttau: (To ABA BJ) The numbers, by the way, are cubic inches. Mine is 520 cubic inches.

ABA BJ: When you lose the engine what happens to your instrumentation?

Mick Guttau: Oh I still had vacuum, and I still had electrical because I was still windmilling. That continues to drive the vacuum and electrical systems.

ABA BJ: So the dashboard's still working.

Mick Guttau: Everything's still there, yeah.

Breazeale: A lot of us have redundant electrical systems so if you lose vacuum there's an electrical system backup.

Mick Guttau: I've actually got two vacuum pumps. If I lost all my vacuum then my plane has backup instruments also. Which are electrically driven instead of vacuum driven. Then, if I have electrical (alternator) failure, I also have a backup alternator.

ABA BJ: Is that standard?

Mick Guttau: No, that's not real common, no.

ABA BJ: Okay, so you're windmilling and have you changed the propeller pitch at all at this point?

Mick Guttau: No.

Breazeale: So, we're back to "everything's cool."

Mick Guttau: Everything's cool and I, as I was telling you this yesterday, I go through the checklist, and something strikes me.

The Iowa farm boy in me came out and I thought, "I don't know what's blown under there, if something blew it came out through a fuel line or injector line and I'm dumping raw fuel, I don't want to be playing with that fuel."

So I immediately reached over, cut the fuel off, and committed to the ground.

Breazeale: You did all the things you're supposed to do

Mick Guttau: Yeah. And then that's about the time, Judy put her hand on my forearm and she said in her microphone, "Honey, I love you."

Well, I didn't say a word, but I was thinking, "You know, I love you, too, but I'm a little busy right now!"

Breazeale: She was sitting over there praying.

Mick Guttau: The other part is then a moment after I got everything kind of tweaked and everything was under control and we were committed, I finally looked at her and she's got just these little tears in her eyes. But she's not crying.

I just looked at her and I said, "Honey, don't cry, pray!" And she said, "I am!"

ABA BJ: Judy, what were you thinking about all this time?

Judy Guttau: We didn't know if we were going to do a nose dive. We didn't know if we were going to lose the propeller.

Mick Guttau: Judy's right, that was part of it too.

The first probably half second I instantly, instinctively, thought I was "taking fire"; I knew it wasn't small arms or 50 cal because I'd been hit by that. So I'm thinking 23, 37 mm or something like that. And like I say, it's all in a half a second and then I'm thinking, "This is low!"

Breazeale: That high?

Mick Guttau: Oh, they get you at 22,000 feet with that stuff.

Breazeale: You've been in Vietnam obviously.

Mick Guttau: Yeah, so then, so then I know that's not it. So then the next half second I'm thinking is the engine staying on? OK, now, if the engine and prop stays on I think I'm going to be okay. And everything was pretty smooth at that point, you know, and so then I just started isolating the situation. I figured out what it was and going through a check list and that was it.

I skipped part of the checklist, actually. That's because to do the full checklist you've got to induce fuel in the system. There was no way I was going to do that.

Breazeale: Did ATC [Air Traffic Control] give you any other airport options.

Mick Guttau: They just gave me Moline, and said Moline was 20 miles away.

Breazeale: You might want to tell Steve about a glide ratio on the airplane.

Mick Guttau: Yeah, in my mind I use a mile per thousand, the loss you have.

ABA BJ: Land miles?

Mick Guttau: Nautical miles is what I use in my head. Actually it's more than that. But if you do the mental calculations with nautical miles you're pretty safe.

Breazeale: And so he knew at that altitude that he had so far that he could glide regardless of what his engine did.

ABA BJ: That's basically kind of trigonometry?

Mick Guttau: Yes. And once you're set up and you've got that glide, it doesn't change other than for headwinds or tailwinds.

Breazeale: You got the autopilot doing it for you.

Mick Guttau: The vertical speed indicator had that loss on there and just nothing really changed all the way down. And the other thing was, of course, Chicago Center comes on and asks about fuel on board, passengers on board, I can't remember what else they asked.

ABA BJ: So they wanted to know how much you got in your tank more or less?

Mick Guttau: Yes.

ABA BJ: Why, to decide how big a fire truck to bring out?

Mick Guttau: Who knows? It's something they have on their checklist. I assume it's to know how big a problem they'd have if something went wrong. Obviously, my Centurion's fuel would be a drop in the bucket compared to an airliner coming in there.

ABA BJ: Now what little I know about actually flying, usually the choice of runways is a matter of which way the wind is blowing. Under these circumstances do they just give you the one you're oriented towards?

Mick Guttau: No, I picked my runway. I picked the one into the wind like you normally do, because I had enough altitude to do it. I mean, if you didn't have enough altitude you'd just get it down however you could. But I had the choices, it was a perfect situation … for an emergency.

ABA BJ: What number did you land on?

Mick Guttau: I've got to look that up. I think it's 2-7.

ABA BJ: 2-7?

Mick Guttau: Either 2-7 or 2-9. [Later he confirmed it was 2-7.]

ABA BJ: What direction was that?

Mick Guttau: That's to the West (270 degrees).

ABA BJ: To the West. And, when you're gliding, a normally powered aircraft you can't climb, you just, it's a matter of how

Mick Guttau: The only way you can get altitude is to trade air speed for altitude. But when you're back to 85 knots you don't have a lot of air speed. You don't have a lot of air speed to exchange for altitude. So, effectively, no, you can't climb.

ABA BJ: There's no such thing as riding a thermal or anything like that.

Mick Guttau: My plane, well, it would be similar to a rock with wings on it. Frank's airplane, something in the Bonanza family that would be probably much better than mine.

ABA BJ: This Cessna Centurion is heavy for a personal aircraft, right?

Mick Guttau: Yeah, it's about 4,000 pounds. And we were full with fuel to go to Washington and we'd been in the air for only a bit more than an hour.

ABA BJ: In an airplane like that, would you ever dump fuel?

Mick Guttau: No. You can't dump fuel from that kind of plane.

ABA BJ: So it's going to be with you for the duration.

Mick Guttau: Yes. And it's all in the wings,.

ABA BJ: Now so when you're lining up for your landing, I mean are the controls heavier than during powered flight?

Mick Guttau: No, you do have a little drag on the prop when it isn't powered. But it's not markedly different.

ABA BJ: So at this point you're just going with the math, coming in and at this point you're visual right?

Mick Guttau: Right, we broke out into visual flight conditions at 7,000 feet.

Breazeale: That was a relief too wasn't it?

Judy Guttau: Yes, it was. We still did not know precisely where we were. They still thought we had ten miles to go to Moline.

Mick Guttau: (Elaborating) At one point, Chicago Center gave me the wrong distance to the airport and I thought, "We're not going to make it." Because everything was working out perfectly in my mind and all at once he says you got, I think at one point, it was eight miles to go and down to 3,000 feet, and I've got the Mississippi River in front of me and I thought, "Oh, no." And then we came right back on, and, "Could you say that distance again?" because it didn't look right.

Breazeale: You were looking for that airport, weren't you?

Mick Guttau: I couldn't see it.

Breazeale: Oh, you couldn't see it.

Mick Guttau: Because it's behind the trees and the river you know. Finally, when we got three miles in I could see it and felt pretty comfortable at that point.

Judy Guttau: At one point we were actually three and a half miles southwest of it. We had thought it was still ahead of us.

Guttau: We thought Chicago Center had us vectored right onto it. And it was over to the left (gesturing with hands) a little bit.

ABA BJ: Okay, at 7,000 feet you got visual so you're basically gliding, the field is cleared, there's nothing at all in your airway.

Guttau: Yeah, everything is shut down for me.

ABA BJ: And that's like, Quad City International would be like a medium-size airport?

Guttau: Well, runway-wise it's 10,000 foot runway. That's a pretty good size runway. About a two-mile runway.

Oh, something I was going to tell you before … It was the spring of 2008 and all that flooding had happened in eastern Iowa. Cedar Rapids was wiped out and I knew that. And I had told Judy, because I could tell she was worried, that, worst-case scenario, we'll hope for an airport, next is a road, if the road looks good. And I said, “If we don't do that, we're going in the field.”

And I said, “As soft as the ground likely is, then the worst-case scenario is we might flip over. But we'll be going so slow at that point that we're going to walk away from it. We'll survive.”

But obviously we didn't have to do that.

ABA BJ: Plane like this do you carry parachutes?

Guttau: No. You've got to remember I was an army pilot. Army helicopter pilots are the only pilots in the inventory of the military that are expendable. No parachutes. You can't parachute out of a helicopter very easily.

ABA BJ: That's true.

Breazeale: Just as a side note. They are making some airplanes, Cirrus has a design with a whole-plane parachute and then another company or two. But it's the parachute of the plane rather than the individuals.

ABA BJ: The whole-plane parachute.

Breazeale: Yeah, they got a parachute deployed.

ABA BJ: Now, Mick, when I mentioned those gadgets the other day you gave me a funny look like, "Real men don't use whole-plane parachutes."

Mick Guttau: Well, as long as you've got your wings, I wouldn't want that.

Breazeale: The reality is you've got a glide ratio set up and your approach is going to be just like it would be if you had the runway in front of you or the highway. Just like you were landing at an airport.

We practice such power-off landings in training. But not to the extent that Mick did. He wasn't practicing, this was real life. And it's a whole different deal.

Mick Guttau: Frank, you're exactly right. And for 41 years this is what I'd trained for. And for 41 years it never happened. And when it did, you just, your thought is, as opposed to fear, your thought is committed to getting this thing on the ground safely.

Breazeale: It's what we've been practicing to do.

Mick Guttau: Exactly, exactly.

ABA BJ: Okay, you land, you're coasting, I guess you didn't go too far when you came in.

Mick Gutttau: Actually, I had enough inertia that there's a taxi lane right where you get it off the main runway. And the fire department, police, and an ambulance were all there.

And Judy says to me, "Mick, that's the smoothest landing you've ever made."

I said, "You know, ever since I bought this bigger plane, I always had power management problems on landing. But now I've solved it. You just have to cut power at 23,000 feet."

ABA BJ: What did they do when you came in? I mean, someone must have come in and asked you some questions. They don't just say, "Park it over here, we'll see ya"?

Judy Gutttau: They asked me if I was okay. I said, "Yeah!"

ABA BJ: This was airport police or local police?

Mick Gutttau: It was the city, Moline police and the ambulance and the fire truck.

Judy Gutttau: Then I said, "From now on, my husband can go to all the flight-safety-training courses he wants to."

Mick Gutttau: No matter what it costs.

After we stopped. I needed to see what it looked like on the outside, you know. I expected to see oil all over the place. Surprisingly there wasn't, only lost a quarter of a quart, as I said earlier. And the plane was in great shape other than that little "bullet hole" on the top of the cowling.

Then, there's another part of the story.

We had been on our way to the Federal Home Loan Bank Council meeting. And a meeting of our own Federal Home

Loan Bank Board of Des Moines was in D.C. , too. I had to chair both those meetings.

Let me backup a minute. Before it all happened, I looked at the GPS and we're not even out of Iowa and we've got two hours and 47 minutes to go, to Dulles and I'm thinking, "This is really cool, this is why we fly, right?"

So, when we get on the ground and we get towed over, get towed in, and I go in the FBO …

ABA BJ: FBO is?

Mick Gutttau: Fixed Base Operation. The guy who pumps the fuel and maintenance and everything. And I do a Mapquest search from there to the hotel in Washington, D.C., and it's thirteen and a half hours and I think, "oh no, we won't make it." And Judy said, "Can't we just rent another plane?"

They didn't rent planes out there, but she was ready to go.

Breazeale: Judy, you are wonderful! After you made that best landing, you were ready to fly again!

ABA BJ: Right back on the horse.

Judy Gutttau: It's much safer than driving.

Mick Gutttau: You know what she said to me? She said, "I can't imagine it happening twice in one day."

ABA BJ: Now, so you had to drive it.

Mick Gutttau: So we drove to the meeting, and I missed the dinner the night before the meeting, and the next day, I think it was MSNBC and CNN are there taping this meeting which I'm chairing. There's like, I don't know how many people were there, 300 people, whatever. Maybe 200, I don't know what it was.

And all these people are asking me, I missed the dinner and they kind of knew what happened, so everybody was asking me questions.

So, I said, "I'll just tell everybody once." So I get up to the podium and said, "You know, not all of you know me, but those of you who do know me know that I'm a helicopter pilot and an airplane pilot. But what you don't know is that as of Sunday afternoon I'm also a glider pilot."

So then we were going to go down to Savannah, Ga., for ten days where I graduated flight school back in the 1960s. We love Savannah and we're celebrating our 40th wedding anniversary. And then we got this call from Judy's Mom [age 90]. She'd broken her hip and leg and so we had to turn around and come home right after the meeting. We drove all the way back home to Iowa. She's fine, by the way.

ABA BJ: So you had to drive it?

Mick Gutttau: So we drove all the way home

ABA BJ: In the rental car

Mick Gutttau: Yes, a Chevy Impala. Like I told her, last time we rode into Savannah we were in a Chevy Impala, too, so what was going to be different about this time?

We got home and went to the hospital right away to see her Mom on Saturday and spent the day with her. On the way home to our house Judy dropped me off at the hanger to get the car out, because my plane's going to be in Moline for quite a while.

And just then this Medevac chopper landed, flown by Doyle Miner, a friend of mine.

And, now, Doyle's an old Vietnam helicopter pilot, too. I pull over and talk to him because he'd flown in this new equipment that he just got. We're talking about that. Judy drove on home.

And he says, "Mick what are you guys doing at the hanger on Saturday night?"

So I told him the whole story.

And I said, “You know, Doyle? Some people, including some pilots, think this is a really big deal, but I said you and I know better than that.”

And he said, “Hell, Mick they weren’t shooting at you were they?”

I said no.

He said, “You didn’t have to escape and evade once you got on the ground?”

I said, “No, the cops and the ambulance and fire department were waiting for me.”

Breazeale: Very interesting, good story.

ABA BJ: So what happened with the plane? How long did it take to get it fixed?

Mick Guttau: It had to have a new engine built.

ABA BJ: And that’s built to demand right?

Mick Guttau: Yep. In Western Skyways in Montrose, Colo., and they shipped it to Moline and Elliott Aviation in Moline put it in. So it took me, I think, six weeks to get it back.

And then I had hired a test pilot to get it flown, but they didn’t get it done before I got over there.

So I did my own test flight and stayed over the airport for about 30 minutes before I landed. Checked everything out and I flew it home. Been flying great ever since.

ABA BJ: What happens with something like that in terms of, is there a warranty period with an aircraft engine you can go back to them?

Mick Guttau: No, not in 500 hours, no.

ABA BJ: Do you carry any insurance for that kind of thing?

Mick Guttau: It doesn't cover your engine.

Judy Guttau: No, it was expensive.

Mick Guttau: Out of pocket, \$62,000.

Breazeale: Hey, if you're flying, it's just money.

Mick Guttau: \$62,000. That's less the trade-in for the other block. It's not a great deal.

ABA BJ: Oh, you get something for a little scrap metal?

Mick Guttau: They give you a little credit. Oh, they can re-use some of the parts.

ABA BJ: But I mean the block itself is shot?

Mick Guttau: No, it's like two clam shells that bolt together, so the one half and the other cylinders are fine.

ABA BJ: The other side still has some life to it.

ABA BJ: So you've flown how many hours since, roughly?

Mick Guttau: Well, let's see it's been eight months, so I suppose maybe...

Judy Guttau: You went to San Antonio.

Mick Guttau: Maybe 65 hours.

ABA BJ: You're definitely back up on the horse.

Mick Guttau: Yeah, I went to the Vietnam helicopter pilots' reunion and showed the guys the pictures of my only "forced landing." Some of those guys had real ones, over there. I never got shot down.

ABA BJ: Well, I can't remember where it was you, when I went, did the story about you years ago, there was a particular attack you were in on where you said that was the hottest day as a pilot.

Mick Guttau: When we invaded Laos, I was the first ship over the objective of Tchepone. And they were using, that's where there's 23-37 mm stuff was coming at us, you know, just like World War II. Stuff blowing off around us.

ABA BJ: Blowing up all over.

Mick Guttau: I was trying to burn off a landing zone for the troop insertion and so I had white phosphorus on board and I just kept climbing. I was forgetting how high those anti-aircraft projectiles go. I knew I, I figured out I can't outclimb these things, you know. But I was firing rockets from I think, we went to 14,000 feet, when I remembered that they go to 20-something thousand and I can't go that high. And so I was shooting these white phosphorus rounds you know of course easier when the range of firing a Cobra those rockets just go boom! Like that straight into the target, you know. Well at 14,000 they go "puu-chuuu!" It just, by the end they are just going straight down towards the ground. Well we finally got fire started, got it burned off.

ABA BJ: When they land they still do their job though.

Mick Guttau: Yeah, they still do the job when they hit the ground.

Judy Guttau: Going out to Washington D.C., talking about Vietnam is, I mean his experiences of facing the possibility of death everyday definitely influenced his, the way he reacted to this.

But it took me a few days for me to realize that was why we were handling it differently.

And so we are on the way out to Washington, D.C. I was processing this. And I asked Mick, "Why am I feeling certain things, you know?"

And we really communicated about it and that helped me, it helped me a great deal.

I was definitely, I wasn't afraid of dying. That was the interesting thing because of my Christian faith, it's so real to me. I really wasn't afraid of dying, but I was just feeling great grief, over leaving my family, and then the possibility that one of us might die in a crash and all the things you would expect would go through one's head at a time like that.

Mick Guttau: Because she was afraid I was going to live and she was going to die. (Guttau said jokingly)

Judy Guttau: So that was, I was processing all that and I was thinking, "Why am I feeling this way as a Christian, you know? Why am I not joyful about leaving?"

Breazeale: Well, there's still things for us to do, you know?

Judy Guttau: That's exactly right.

ABA BJ: There are more pleasant ways to go than others.

Judy Guttau: That's exactly right.

Mick Guttau: It was, I mean it was behind me, you know, because you develop that in war. Pilots, but especially combat pilots, you develop a certain mentality, you got through it and then it's behind you. So you got to go do the next one. And so that was kind of behind me and I'm on to the next thing and I'm thinking about chairing this meeting in D.C., etc. and really thinking about the ten days in Savannah.

But she was struggling. I called the kids right away. [Mick and Judy's son, Joshua, is president and CFO back at the bank, and their daughter, Heidi Fox-Gutttau, an attorney in Omaha, Neb., and a director at the bank.]

Judy Gutttau: I couldn't even talk to them for a few days. Finally by Wednesday or Thursday, whatever day it was I was able to call and I told them you know what, how I felt about the whole thing and what happened and what it was really like. You know, what they got from Mick, well, it made it sound like it was just kind of like an everyday experience, you know?

Breazeale: As if it were like, "We landed in Moline, we're going to have some engine work done."

Judy Gutttau: Yeah, that's right.

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