

## **THE WHITE HOUSE**

**Office of the Press Secretary  
(Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam)**

---

For Immediate Release

November 18, 2000

### **INTERVIEW OF DANIEL AND DAVID EVERT, SONS OF LT. COLONEL LAWRENCE G. EVERT**

#### **At Site Excavation Outside Hanoi, Vietnam**

**DANIEL:** (In progress) -- thirty-three years is a long time to live with these kinds of things. We've always had good people to work with within the Air Force and various Department of Defense people. But this, in the last three weeks we've learned a whole lot more than what we have in the last 33 years. So what impresses us is the dedication of all the people from the Department of Defense through the Air Force through the Joint Task Force that's here -- at how hard these people are working to make this happen.

We came here yesterday, had a little private visit to this site, spent about four hours here, so we were able to have a little bit of a private visit. So it made today a lot easier that we were able to come here and meet the Joint Task Force people individually, talk to them a little bit. We're very impressed with their dedication and the emotion that they carry this work out with.

We're grateful for all the Vietnamese help, as well. These are some very, very friendly people that we appreciate, because they're giving us a great service.

**DAVID:** It's very touching to see the Vietnamese people working to push the mud through, to find the little pieces. We want them to know that we love them and we don't hold any animosity towards them at all. And we feel it's a time for healing for everybody. And we appreciate them helping us to find our father.

**Q** Can you tell us what your last memory of your father was, how old you were?

**DAVID:** I was six years old. We were at Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport as he -- as he walked up the stairs to get on to the plane, and he turned and he waved to us. That was the last time that we saw our father.

**DANIEL:** And in the old Sky Harbor Airport there in Phoenix you used to be able to walk up under the roof and watch the people walk out to the plane and up the stairs, and that was the last time we saw him.

That was on July 31, 1967, on my sister's 4th birthday. So I was 7 at the time that he left, and 8 at the time he was shot down. So there's two years between three kids -- I was 8; David was 6; Tammy was 4; and my youngest sister was born five days after my father was shot down. My father was packed, ready to come home, and that was a -- it made them easy to send home the artifacts from him, he was ready to come home for the birth of Elizabeth, who was going to be his youngest child at that point.

**DAVID:** And he was going to baptize my brother, Danny, in church.

**Q** David, what do you think your father would feel about the honor that this sort of activity pays to people like yourself?

**DAVID:** Well, my Dad was a great American. He loved the service, he loved to fly planes. He died in honor of his country. I'm sure that he's grateful that his sons are here to help bring him home.

When we were younger, about 6 and 8, we used to talk about how we would come over to Vietnam and come get him out of jail -- we thought he was alive, so we thought we'd come get him and take him home and rescue him. And we kind of feel like that's what we're doing right now.

**Q** Can you describe the process you've gone through in the last two weeks, as you have learned so much more about where your father crashed?

**DANIEL:** It was about three weeks ago that the Defense people and people from the Air Force -- Randolph Air Force Base, three individuals came to see us -- Kate Whitley (ph) was the person from the Department of Defense that came to see us. We knew that somebody coming to visit our house was not a normal thing, that something strange must be going on. We knew at that point that there was a dig site that they were interested in and would be working on.

So they flew out -- they met at my house and gave us a briefing, and they gave us a power point presentation, the pictures from that that I guess was the same presentation they gave President Clinton on this proposed site for him to visit. And it was the first time we had anything to kind of hold on to as far as a place, a possibility.

And at the end of that conversation they asked us how we felt about President Clinton coming here, and we were grateful at that point that any U.S. President would be interested in coming out here, getting involved. And we hope that will help free up a lot of other things to make this process easy for other people.

**DAVID:** There's a lot more families other than ours, and we hope this opens up doors for their families, too.

**Q** Danny, what did it mean to you when you found out this place and this possibility, emotionally?

**DANIEL:** We've known that there was a possible dig site for many years. We didn't know that the Vietnamese government didn't want to dig here. They were not going to open this site because of the closeness to the railroad. And I guess that's why it's taken so long, with everybody in the detachment to here working vigorously to try to get this site opened up to deal with the dig. They've been working very hard for us and our family.

**Q** How do you feel about normalizing -- President Clinton's normalizing relationships with Vietnam?

**DAVID:** We need to heal. Everybody needs to heal.

**DANIEL:** One of the things that's striking when you --

**Q** (From Vietnamese questioner.) -- about the people that work here in this site?

**DAVID:** We are very grateful for the Vietnamese people who are helping to bring our father back. It was -- my brother and I came out yesterday and took pictures, helped push some mud through the grates and came out to dig and put some of the mud into the pails. But to watch the Vietnamese people, it's kind of touching because they're probably related to the people who saw the actual crash of our father. And we appreciate their kindness and love to us for doing this.

**Q** Is your mother alive?

**DAVID:** Yes, our mother is still alive.

**Q** Have you had a chance to talk to many people --

**Q** And what is her name?

**DAVID:** Wanda Allen.

**Q** How old is she?

**DANIEL:** I believe -- not a good question, I have to do the math in my head, but I believe she's -- I'm 41, so she'd be 62.

**Q** Have either of you had a chance to talk to many Vietnamese people about their views of the war and --

**DAVID:** Well, they're so young. They're so young here. Most of them weren't even part of the war. You drive through the city and you drive -- you walk out here to the fields, the people working here, they're just so young.

**DANIEL:** That's what's struck us, how young everybody is here and how few people we've run into that would have any recollection of the war.

**DAVID:** When we were out here yesterday they wanted to know how old we were when our father crashed. They asked us questions through the interpreter here. So it was kind of touching to see that they kind of wondered about what we thought.

**Q** What was your sense of how they saw the war? Did you get any -- I mean, even the young ones, did you have any feedback?

**DANIEL:** No. One of the things that we wanted to do yesterday was, we put on some gear and got out and worked the screens and got out in the mud and just tried to help a little bit as a healing process for us. And that was -- it helps us to understand really how hard this work is. That clay is very, very tough to work through and to push that mud through the screens and to find the smallest of pieces.

**DAVID:** And they do that six days a week.

**DANIEL:** It's very touching.

**Q** Have you actually seen the remains of your father?

**DANIEL:** No.

**DAVID:** No.

**DANIEL:** We understand that nothing is going to happen here very quick, this is a very slow, methodical process that they need to follow, and they're in no hurry, and we support that. We know that we need to be patient as family and let them do their work. So they're still trying to prove that this is his site. We believe they've narrowed that down to definitely that it is an F-105 plane. They've identified some pieces of the airplane that would show that it's in a range of the tail numbers of the plane that my father was flying. So they are starting to narrow those things down.

But we've waited for 33 years and we're willing to wait for as many months as it takes for them to do this job correctly.

**Q** No human remains yet?

**DAVID:** We've been told that there is a possibility of some human remains.

**Q** What next? Are you planning to come back?

**DANIEL:** We don't know. We have some other family that we wish was here that may -- at some point, would like to come. And we're very supportive of the Joint Task Force people, and I think they love to see family anytime. It means a lot to them, and it would mean a lot to the family. But this is an awful long ways to come and it would take a lot of coordination. But we wish we had my mother and my two sisters here to help share in this, because this has been a tremendous opportunity for us. It means a great deal, and we're very appreciative of everybody we've run into through this process.

**Q** Where do you fellows live these days, and what do you do?

**DANIEL:** We live in Chandler, Arizona. My father, before he left, had about 14 days to move my mother back where she was from. So Chandler, Arizona is where my mother grew up. He moved her there before -- she came home, and she still lives in the same house that my father bought before he left. So we grew up there and call that home.

**Q** You all live near your Mom?

**DANIEL:** We have one sister, Tammy, who is the --

**DAVID:** Put Tamra.

**DANIEL:** Tamra -- (laughter) -- she lives up in Canada. And the rest of us all live in the Chandler, Gilbert, Phoenix area.

**Q** Is Tamra the one who was born --

**DANIEL:** No, Elizabeth was the one who was born on the 13th of November, after he was shot down.

**Q** What do you do for a living?

**DANIEL:** I work for Avnet as basically an electronic parts distribution -- I'm a service center manager there in Chandler, and spent most of this year, actually, working in Europe, helping them to consolidate all their European operations.

**Q** Why didn't your mother and two sisters come?

**DANIEL:** They had room for two people, and I think my mother felt like the sons should come. My sisters wanted to come very, very badly and I believe my mother would have loved to have been here.

**Q** Have you talked to them?

**DAVID:** Yes, we have.

**Q** How did they feel to hear you and hear what you had to say about having been here?

**DAVID:** We talked to Elizabeth last night to tell her about coming to the site and kind of tell her our feelings, what we felt. We came out and we buried some pictures of our families and a bracelet, just to honor our Dad, of all the grandkids that he's never seen.

**Q** How many grandkids altogether?

**DAVID:** 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 -- 13.

**DANIEL:** My father left on July 31st and was shot down November 8th. That was his first tour, and we

understand that was his 41st mission on the day he was shot down.

**Q** Do you have any sense of how they're narrowing this down, this plane, how they're coming to the conclusion that it was your father's plane?

**DANIEL:** Yes. They've been great on the briefing yesterday, and then the same briefing they just gave President Clinton -- is basically is they're pushing the mud through the screens, they're finding the smallest and the largest pieces they can of anything. Most things that they're finding that would correlate to the airplane would be little bits of metal, some fiberglass, some wiring, other components that would lead them to that. They've showed us some things that would narrow it down --

**DAVID:** The plate, one of the plates that has a serial number that was only on a certain plane, an F-105, within a certain series. So they're getting it narrowed down pretty well.

**Q** And they're correlating that to where they know he was flying?

**DAVID:** This bridge that's right down here was his target.

**DANIEL:** My Dad was flying fourth in formation that day, and the other three in front of him didn't know he was missing until they pulled up and out of -- they were very close, obviously, to the bombing site. Supposedly, three other planes following them saw an explosion very close to the crash site, and that's one of the things that would lead them here to this site, is he did crash very close to that bridge.

**Q** -- Americans who have opposed normalization with Vietnam and those who oppose President Clinton making this trip?

**DANIEL:** We're absolutely grateful that President Clinton came here. The political part of that -- I know that there's reasons people don't like that, but we don't want to make any -- we're not trying to make any political statements out of this. This is a very private moment for us, in some ways in a very public way. We need to heal in our own family and understand what we've gone through for the past 33 years.

One thing I'd like to share -- we have two heroes out of this in our family, my father; he gave his life for his country. He loved to fly and died doing what he loved to do. The second hero out of this is our mother, who, having to have one child shortly thereafter, and then to raise four of us, hoping every day and wondering for the 11 years, 11 and a half years or so before they declared him dead. She was very faithful to my father, waited faithfully for him until they finally declared him dead, and is just a phenomenal person with great strength that has been somebody for us that we could look up to. She played both Mom and Dad, and it was very tough for her. And we hope by being here today that we can honor our father and that we can honor our mother. And we just want to make them proud.

**Q** Did you get a chance to convey any of your thanks to the President, personally?

**DAVID:** Yes, we did. We told him how much we appreciated his support in this.

**DANIEL:** It ended kind of abruptly, so we didn't really get to say thanks there at the end. But we've had our few moments with him and --

**DAVID:** I don't think we could express in words very well how much, what this means to us, what this does for us as a family. Thirty-three years not knowing very much, wondering, worrying, has brought us into a different light here. The people have asked if we've been sad -- I can't say we've been sad. The emotions are running high. We are very happy to be here. We are honored to be able to see the people from Detachment Two, how hard they work, how dedicated they are. It's great to see the Vietnamese people helping to bring our father's remains back.

**Q** (From Vietnamese questioner.) If you had the chance to meet some people who his or her father was lost and unaccounted now, what would you tell them?

**DAVID:** Somebody else who lost their --

**Q** Some Vietnamese people --

**DAVID:** We are very aware that there are Vietnamese who are lost also, and I'm sure that we have the same feelings that they do. They want to have their family returned; we want our family returned. We hope that everybody is able to have this opportunity, both Vietnamese and American.

**Q** David, can you tell us what you do?

**DAVID:** I am a production engineer. I work doing camera. I got hit on my motorcycle and am still trying to recover from that.

**Q** Thank you.

END