

VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

OF

INTERVIEW

WITH

LINDA D. ADAMS

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

24 JUNE 1975

25 June 1975

VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT OF THE COLLATERAL BOARD INVESTIGATING
OFFICER'S INTERVIEW WITH MISS LINDA D. ADAMS TAKEN AT
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA ON 24 JUNE 1975.

(The interview convened at 1015 hours and closed at 1045
hours on 24 June 1975.)

Questions by Colonel Waxstein:

Q. Just for the record, would you state your name and your
address?

A. Linda Diane Adams, , San Francisco, California.

Q. All right, and would you tell us when you were born, please?

A. March 28, 1957.

Q. And you are currently staying with your father?

A. Yes.

Q. And his name?

A. David C. Adams.

Q. Do you have any brothers and sisters?

A. Two, Thomas Adams and Timothy Adams.

Q. Okay, where does Thomas live?

A. Do you mean the address?

Q. Please.

A. [REDACTED] Alexandria, Virginia.

Q. How old is he?

A. He's 20; he'll be 21 in August.

Q. Okay, and your other brother?

A. He lives in Warrenton, Virginia, and he's 19 - sometime
in July.

Q. Now, on the 4th of April of this year you were in Saigon,
Vietnam, is that right?

A. Yes.

Q. You were staying with your mother?

A. Uh-huh.

Q. Okay, and your mother's name?

A. Barbara E. Adams.

Q. Now can you tell us -- your mother evidently was employed by the United States Defense Attache Office in Saigon?

A. Yes.

Q. And what did she do there?

A. She was secretary for Colonel Fletcher plus some other -- she changed job in the middle of her -- while she was there. She was secretary for Colonel Ewing and the other colonel that worked with him, I'm not sure of his name.

Q. And when did you arrive in Vietnam?

A. Around March 21st, or between the 21st and the 25th somewhere. I was there two and a half weeks.

Q. Can you tell us the circumstances of how you happened to be there with your mother?

A. I had been in a car accident -- two of them -- and she came home because I had my cast on my leg and stuff, and she wanted me to come back to Saigon to live with her because she had to go back there. So the judge didn't -- I was just 17 then, and he didn't want me to just stay there without my mom, so I went back to live with her.

Q. Were your father and mother separated or --

A. No, they're divorced. He's remarried.

Q. And I take it you graduated from high school when -- in June of --

A. No, I never graduated.

Q. Okay, so your mother then came back here to the States in March 74, and --

A. 75.

Q. March 75, and took you back with her?

A. Uh-huh.

Q. As her dependent?

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay, now could you tell me what occurred again with regard to the orphans and so forth on 4 April, the best that you can remember it?

A. What do -- I don't understand what you mean.

Q. Well, evidently what happened, you received notice -- your mother received notice and you received notice that you were going to have to leave Vietnam?

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A. Yes.

Q. Is that right?

A. Yes. She went to work on Fri -- in the morning and as soon as she got there they told her to turn around and go home and get me and we had an hour to pack, and then we had to report back to room 17 something in the DAO building. So she came home and we packed and we met everyone else in the room at the building.

Q. Now, at that time, did they tell you what you were going to do?

A. They said that we would be evacuated, that we were leaving, that we had to go, and that there would be orphans on the plane. But they didn't really make it too clear that it was really -- until a little while later they didn't make it clear that that was our cover, you know, that we were just escorts. Until a certain time -- they said we weren't allowed to see anyone or talk to anyone once we got back to the States, but we were really being evacuated.

Q. Okay, so you and your mother then packed your bags and you were taken out to the Tan Son Nhut Airport?

A. Uh-huh.

Q. By bus or car or what?

A. By bus -- not for a couple of hours. It was -- we met like in the room at noon and we didn't get to the plane until like four.

Q. Okay. Could you describe what the scene was like when you arrived at the airport and you were boarding the aircraft?

A. Well, there were hundreds of people around there, all of the ladies that were carrying Vietnamese babies. They were putting them on the plane and then they would get off and get a couple more and go back on the plane, and a lot of newspaper reporters, photographers -- just a lot of Vietnamese people all around the plane. So we put our luggage in a big pile and they loaded it on.

Q. Did you and your mother board the airplane together?

A. Yeah, we did.

Q. Okay. Where did you go when you boarded the plane?

A. In the downstairs part. We took a seat there. She was sitting on the floor and I was sitting on a long metal bench.

Q. On the catwalks on the side? On the side of the airplane?

A. Yeah, uh-huh. Everyone was sitting on there except a few ladies who were on the floor with some of the little

babies that they had put on the floor, and then the ones that were old enough to sit up were placed - like - between ladies on the seats -- on the bench.

Q. Okay.

A. Then they took the long white strap and strapped us all in and the ladies on the floor too -- they put it around them, but then just before they closed down the doors some man asked me if I'd go up and help the babies upstairs because they needed some help. So I asked my mom if she wanted to go, she did, and so we went upstairs and then we took off.

Q. Okay. So you went upstairs then?

A. Yeah.

Q. And what was the scene upstairs as best you can remember?

A. Oh, God, there were a lot of babies in one row seats. There were like ten babies in each row and --

Q. Do you remember that there were two babies to a seat, isn't that what it was?

A. Just about - yeah, and there weren't that many people upstairs for one thing, cause it is pretty small, but we each had like three or four rows to take care of. And even before we took off, it was already mass panic because all the babies were wetting and crying at the same time.

Q. As I understand it, there were no seats for the adult escorts or any of the crew, is that right?

A. No -- yes, that's right.

Q. Where were you on the takeoff then -- what were you told to do?

A. We were told to kneel between the seats and -- takeoff -- while we took off and, then, if we heard a loud warning sound to lay on the floor, but we never heard the loud warning sound.

Q. So you kneeled between the seats then?

A. Yeah.

Q. And the airplane took off?

A. Uh-huh.

Q. Okay. The airplane took off. Then what did you do?

A. Well, we just started looking after the babies, doing their bottles, and stuff like that. We were allowed to get up and walk around, but they said, you know, don't really go down stairs yet.

Q. Now, your mother was up there with you?

A. Yeah, uh-huh.

Q. Okay. What happened next, then?

A. The next thing I remember I was just feeding a baby, like sitting on a big bag of diapers, and the next thing I knew I was standing up, you know, and my head felt really funny. I guess that's when the explosion or whatever occurred.

Q. The rapid decompression --

A. Yeah, and --

Q. What did you see and feel and hear at that time?

A. Well, there was still a lot of smoke; I think a lot of it was from the humidity system that they have. I don't know, but --

Q. A lot of condensation in the air, like fog?

A. Yeah, and it just got a little harder to breathe and just really light-headed, I guess. I felt really strange.

Q. Did you get an oxygen mask? Did anybody tell you to use an oxygen mask?

A. Yeah, there were three of them that popped down automatically and they said to put one on and then put them on the babies and to lie down, and that was pretty hard because there were two oxygen masks left, like for the babies.

Q. Did you put an oxygen mask on?

A. Yeah.

Q. Did you feel any better then?

A. Well, I couldn't really -- I didn't really feel any different. It was really strange.

Q. Where was your mother during this time?

A. She was right across the aisle from me and she was moving around getting the other oxygen masks on the other kids. And so then when I got my head back, or whatever, then I started moving around to get the other kids some masks.

Q. Okay. Did you ever have -- let's see -- in the troop compartment, do you recall that the latrines were really in the forward part of the troop compartment - the bathrooms?

A. Upstairs, where I was?

Q. Right.

A. Yeah, they were in front.

Q. Okay, in the back was the galley and the ladder that goes down to the cargo compartment?

A. Uh-huh.

Q. Okay, where were you and your mother, as best you can recall? Were you about in the middle, were you toward the galley, or were you toward the latrines?

A. I'd say we were more toward the latrines. We were about two door -- about two rows in front of the emergency doors.

Q. Did you notice any flight nurses or any medical technicians around?

A. Yeah, there were a couple of them upstairs. Three or four that I remember.

Q. Did you ever have an opportunity to look downstairs in the cargo compartment or out towards the back of the airplane?

A. No, once the decompression occurred, we were told just to stay where we were.

Q. Okay, then what happened next?

A. Then a man came upstairs and said that the cargo doors had just blown off -- open, and that there was a rapid decompression, but that we would be going back to Saigon, that they got the landing gear down and everything was okay. And, we'd be going back for a landing and then -- so we went down really fast -- really, really fast. Then I walked across the aisle and kneeled on the floor across the aisle and my mom was kneeling there to.

Q. Next to you?

A. Yeah, but on the outside of me. I was nearer to the wall. And we just came down and the next thing I know --

Q. Now, you say you were kneeling?

A. Kneeling on the --

Q. Where were you facing? Were you facing the wall?

A. I was facing the aisle. I was kneeling with my side to the seat and I was holding on with my right hand to some metal thing that was just on the back of the seat.

Q. And your mom was next to you?

A. Yeah. And then she leaned over. She was leaning over because some of the -- one of the kids I noticed, I guess evidently understood that something was going on and he was scared, and some of the other kids were just wondering what was going on, and we didn't know we were going to crash, so she was helping calm them down. And then, the next thing I know there is mud flying in and everything and I saw her go down and all, but I didn't think of it at the time. And there was the fire -- I remember some fire at first, and then the black girl opened the door and someone said we were going to blow up so we had to get out of the

plane. So we all grabbed a couple of babies and got out of the plane.

Q. Okay, now, Linda, do you remember how many impacts there were? Do you remember a first impact? Can you remember what it was like?

A. I don't -- I just -- I remember coming down really fast. It felt like we were going nose first, straight down. And, none of us knew where we were at the time either. For all we knew, we were still over the ocean. But, then after that I don't really remember the first impact. I just remember -- I guess I thought we were landing. The wheels hit the ground; that's what I thought. But then, all of a sudden, mud started flying in and I, you know, that's the last thing I remember for a minute.

Q. Now, when all this happened, where were you? Were you right in the same place?

A. Yeah, and I just held on really tight with my right arm until -- and I didn't fly around or anything.

Q. And you say your mother was outside of you to the aisle?

A. Yeah, like half in the aisle and half between the seats cause she was trying to take care of some of the other kids, cause it was pretty scary, I guess.

Q. Then, you say that the last thing you saw was that your mother had gone down the aisle?

A. Yeah, she had. It looked like she was running down the aisle, but with force cause -- I was holding so hard that I got whiplash, but she was just thrown down. I guess when I looked at her I just figured that she was just walking down the aisle for something. I don't know, that's what happened in my mind. I just thought she was walking down the aisle.

Q. Now you were kneeling all that time?

A. Yeah.

Q. And your mother was kneeling too?

A. Uh-huh.

Q. So the next thing you knew that the hatch was open and you grabbed some babies and went outside?

A. Yeah, well, I stood up for a minute and just looked around and tried to find my mom, but I couldn't find her, and some people were already out, I guess from the front -- I don't know where, but they were already out, and then I got out.

Q. Actually, there was no fire in the troop compartment, right?

A. No, I guess not. It might have been, like, outside, but

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we could feel the flames; we could see them cause I saw fire somewhere.

Q. Perhaps the wings --

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay. And then you were outside. Who -- was there anybody else outside with you at that time that came outside with you?

A. The black girl got out before me. She opened the hatch as a matter of fact, and then after I had walked a ways the girl with the hurt ear -- she was out there, and then I remembered seeing her with Dr. Starkey -- she knew him -- and she walked over there and there were about five or six men and women standing, the crew.

Q. Air Force crew type?

A. Yeah, and I think one -- she may have been in the Air Force, but I thought she for some reason was with an orphanage, I'm not sure of that. They were standing over by the plane and I walked over to see if I could get any more kids and they said no, they were just going to leave them in the plane until help comes cause the plane was okay.

Q. I imagine that very soon thereafter then the Air American and Vietnam helicopters came?

A. Yeah, very soon.

Q. And they told you to get on?

A. Yeah, I was kind of scared because I didn't know if they were ours or theirs.

Q. Now, did you notice -- were you feeling bad? Did you have any injuries yourself?

A. My neck.

Q. Your neck?

A. Right at the time, yeah, but I've had whiplash before so I knew what it was.

Q. You've had whiplash before in a couple of car accidents?

A. In a car accident I had it, yes. The same thing, from holding too tight with my right hand.

Q. When was that car accident?

A. A year or two ago.

Q. But you weren't -- evidently no scratches or lacerations?

A. Just a cut on my foot where I stepped on part of the plane or something, or something really sharp underneath the mud cause my shoes got stuck.

- Q. Were you taken to the Seventh Day Adventists Hospital, or where?
- A. Yeah, after we got out at Tan Son Nhut, we went to the hospital and then they started checking everyone. They didn't check me cause I told them I was okay.
- Q. So, as far as you know, the only thing you suffered was just a little cut on your foot?
- A. Oh, no, I found out later -- I had hurt my left knee in a car accident before I went to Saigon and after I came back from Saigon I completely collapsed once or twice, neither leg would work, and they found out now that from kneeling on the floor when we hit like that, that the pads between my knee ripped.
- Q. Which doctor have you been seeing here? Do you go to the Presidio or a private doctor?
- A. Yeah, I've been seeing, I don't know his name, he's in orthopedics at the Presidio.
- Q. Your dad is retired?
- A. Army colonel -- lieutenant colonel. But the knee pads were all mutilated or something, and they just have to be rebuilt; and the muscles in the right and the left leg are just really, really stretched out, you know, they just -- they don't work very well. Other than that --
- Q. How's your neck?
- A. My neck's okay. They gave me some muscle relaxers when I got to Clark and it went right away.
- Q. You haven't been bothered -- have you been bothered by your neck?
- A. No, no more than it ever bothered me after the first one.
- Q. Just your knees then, that is what's bothering you now?
- A. Yeah, my legs.
- Q. How about the cut on your foot? Did that heal up okay?
- A. Yeah, it's healed up fine. It will leave a scar cause I didn't get stitches, but it's okay.
- Q. Okay, now, you left for Clark the next day, right? The next morning, as a matter of fact, right? Or the next day?
- A. Afternoon.
- Q. Yes, there were people who said they saw you standing in line. They knew you. I think it was Lois Bates who did.
- A. Yeah, in fact, I saw her in the cafeteria that morning.
- Q. Okay, then you came back here to the States, to San Francisco?

- A. Yeah.
- Q. Okay. I think that's about it. I can't think of anything else. Yes, I do have one more question that I can think of now. You were talking about the little boy. How old would you say he was? The little American boy?
- A. The little boy?
- Q. The little boy. You said there was a little boy that came out with you, a boy?
- A. Oh, yeah, he was, I guess an American boy. He looked like around 10, 12, kind of fat, chubby.
- Q. Yeah, how was he after the accident? Did he look like he was hurt at all?
- A. He didn't appear to be. He was walking around, but then everyone was walking around with everything wrong, so, but he looked fine, and he wasn't in shock or anything. He was wondering what he could do to help. He was really good. But I was kind of messed up so you know he was taking it better than most everyone.
- Q. Now, again, you say that at the time of the rapid decompression, you got out an oxygen mask and you were putting oxygen masks on the other babies, right?
- A. The ones that woke up. Some of them didn't even wake up.
- Q. And you were trying to calm them down?
- A. Most of them didn't do that much. Most of them didn't understand it.
- Q. Okay, and you say your mom was doing the same thing?
- A. Yeah, everyone was.
- Q. She was giving oxygen to the kids?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Okay, and I think you said just before the impact that your mom was trying to calm down some kids over on the other side?
- A. Yeah, and like the aisle in front and the aisle on the side, because they all weren't jumping out of their seats or anything, but they were all pretty worried. But none of them said much -- none of them said anything.
- Q. Would you say that you and your mom were trying to do all you could to help keep the babies in --
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Did you make sure that the babies that you had, did you check their seatbelts so as to make sure they were secured?

- A. Yeah. I checked the row where I was sitting and everything, and she, you know, she was doing the same thing; although some of them must not have been because I saw a few babies on the floor, but they were little and they must have just slipped right out.
- Q. Uh-huh. My understanding was that they put pillows and blankets in between the babies and the seatbelts?
- A. Yeah, they did, but I still saw one or two on the floor, so they may have just --
- Q. Did it look to you, after the impact and after everything had stopped, did it look to you like most of the babies were okay?
- A. Yeah, it did. As a matter of fact, it looked like all of the babies I could see were fine. I only saw --
- (Q. Did you see any bleeding or anything on them?
- (A. On one or two, like, I saw one on the floor and I picked him up and put him back in the seat cause I didn't know quite what to do with him, and he looked like he had blood on his head maybe, but I didn't really look that close at him, or any of them.
- Q. But they looked pretty good?
- (A. Yeah, they all looked pretty -- they all looked okay. They were all seated so --
- Q. So you feel that you and your mom did the best you could do to take care of the babies while that plane was going down?
- A. Yeah, I would say so. Everybody upstairs was doing more than they could, you know, because at that point there was really nothing left to do cause we couldn't explain to them. There was really nothing we could do except try and comfort them. That's about it.
- Q. And, you said -- how many babies did you take out with you when you left the airplane?
- A. Oh, I was carrying two and then two, maybe three at the most, I think two were sort of dragging along with me, holding on to me cause the mud was really deep.
- Q. And you tried to go back in again and get some more?
- A. Well, I walked back to see what was going on, and they just said they were going to leave them all in there until the helicopters came cause they didn't want them running all over the place.

Q. Is there anything else you might want to add?

A. No, I can't think of anything.

Q. Well, thank you very much. I appreciated talking with you.

This is certified as a true
and accurate copy of the
interview.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bernard A. Waxstein, Jr.", is written over the printed name.

BERNARD A. WAXSTEIN, JR., COLONEL, USAF
Collateral Board Investigating Officer