

Beat: Politics

PARENTS OF DEATH ROW INMATE SPEAK OUT

Danny & Mitzie Wood Share Their Thoughts

Devine, 26.08.2016, 21:06 Time

USPA NEWS - The 6th Amendment to the Constitution is supposed to be our system of checks and balances to keep our government from growing out of control. Through our ignorance about our constitution, we now have tons of laws that don't make sense and that we don't agree with, leaving millions unduly imprisoned.

Tuesday afternoon I sat down with controversial Death Row Inmate Jeffrey Lee Wood's parents Danny and Mitzie Wood to talk to them about their son. As many of you know, Jeff Wood received a stay of execution on the previous Friday, August 19, 2016. The transcription of this interview has been edited only for punctuation, and all responses are a faithful documentation of what was said by the Woods. The responses are primarily given by Danny, and I have clearly marked where Mrs. Wood has made a statement.

Please note that this interview was visibly difficult for the Wood's. Because this is a typed transcript of the interview, you cannot hear the pain that I assure you was in their voices. You miss the long pauses and the sighs of frustration. The stress this family has undergone through these trials is astronomical and unimaginable. Their suffering is real, as is their frustration and anger.

You guys have had a few days to let the news about Jeff's stay really sink in. How are you feeling?

Relieved, but still hopeful that it will go further than the surface. That we can get Jeffrey a retrial or exonerated from some of his charges. Murder is a tough claim for anyone to have to go through. And we are worried that if they let him out right now how he's going to adjust, and get a job later with his background being tainted. What we'd like to see is a situation where he's not going to still be hounded by what's happened the rest of his life. And we are hoping he's going to get out, but that's not something that's a given. We don't know that's what's going to happen.

Absolutely understandable. Does having political bigwigs stepping up to the plate like Representative Leach and Judge Alcala, who filed a secondary opinion concurrent with the CCA listing additional reasons why Jeff should be granted clemency give you even more hope for Jeff's cause?

It does. In the end it's something that all along we've felt was kind of curious, why it's taken so long to get so much attention. And I guess part of the new media, everybody being able to send messages has helped a bunch"

But at the same time, a lot of this information is, and it seems that what we've run into when they've talked about appellate courts being able to look only into the last court process rather than being about to jump back to the beginning where everything was happening and it just seems that even the fifth circuit court of appeals made a notation on one of the issues one time that had they been able to look at everything all at once and it would have been reversed a long time ago.

What we don't understand is that if you are in the upper courts, why you have to wait on process if you have the power to reverse a decision or call for a new trial anyway. We don't understand, we still don't get the picture, but we're caught up in it. We still don't know the laws that allowed this to happen.

I'm not sure that everyone knows this, but you are actually the person who turned Jeff in to the police, is that correct?

We opened our house up, they were already looking for him. But we opened up the house so that they didn't need a search warrant, they didn't need anything.

We gave them permission to search without having to wait on anything because if there was something that was done wrong, we didn't want our family to be a part of it. Whatever went down, we felt that if Jeff, and we didn't know the circumstances at the time, but that was being not coerced but threatened into it by Danny Reneau with a gun, his family threatened. But at the same time I told all the kids, under all circumstances to tell the truth and let the chips fall where they may. But at that time we had no inkling either that the truth was going to be misconstrued and actually turned around.

Knowing what you know now, would you have done things differently? Would you have required a search warrant for the officers to enter your premises?

We didn't have anything to hide. The only thing we'd of done different was to make sure that Jeff had an attorney present before he, or any of us, opened our mouths.

What are your thoughts on the death penalty in general?

Under certain circumstances Mitzie and I both believe in the death penalty. It's supposed to be the worst for the worst, and people that have violated other people, taken their lives, rape, any number of certain circumstances which you shouldn't do...

But that doesn't constitute giving a ride to somebody under threat to you person or family from premises where a crime was committed. They misconstrued things in the paper too, and all over for the trial, making it out like Danny Reneau was Jeff's friend, and he was not. Danny was a live in brought in by Nadia's grandfather to help pay for the trailer so it wouldn't be all on him. Nadia more of a friend to Danny than Jeff ever was. That was where the acquaintance was brought into play, through Nadia, through her grandfather. Danny was not a friend of Jeff, was not even liked by Jeff, didn't have the same interests as Jeff, but they were thrown together by circumstances by Nadia's grandparents.

Do you feel that the system actually works?

If you call spending 20 years? And even then it doesn't mean that exposure is going to make it work again"| Exposure means that violations of Jeff's, not only civil rights, but the whole meaning of justice has been violated by the methods utilized by the district attorney and even Jeff's defense lawyer, who was a member of the DA's office that didn't have as heavy a caseload, who also drew salary for investigating and didn't investigate any of the stuff Jeff told him.

What do you have to say to the State of Texas, about the fact that the prosecuting attorney was allowed by the Judge in Jeff's original trial to knowingly use Dr. Grigson, AKA Dr Death as an expert witness when he had been debarred from his profession over 3 years prior to his testimony against your son?

It shows that the court had an agenda, one that they wanted to push through and were willing to allow whatever circumstances, because the jury was never told about it. The court had to have known about it, this stuff was done, and yet they used an illegal situation to further the verdict the way they wanted it. That's crooked to me. Under any circumstances.

I know that only two days before Jeff was granted his stay you guys received notice from the TDCJ about your approval status as a witness to his execution, what was your reaction to the news that Jeff was receiving a stay of execution on of all days his birthday?

Relief, especially after the turmoil we were going through, it was a load off our shoulders. Happiness, it's slowly sinking in. Of course we still haven't got to know exactly the liability, where the stay...whether it's just partial or whether it's going to be a total investigation, whether there's going to be a new trial, we still don't know what's forthcoming.

Well, we know that it was kicked back down to the original trial court, what are your thoughts on that?

Same crooks are still there, but he's going to have new representation"| but even then we're dealing with what used to be his old defense attorney being part of the prosecuting attorney's office.

You mean his former attorney is now going to be part of the prosecutorial team? Isn't that a direct conflict of interest?

Well, Isn't it a direct conflict of interest to turn around and bring someone from the district attorney's office and have a them represent a defendant, how much work are they really gonna do against the people who write their paycheck?

This case has become high profile now with the addition of prominent political figures, evangelicals, and even actors stepping forward to help with Jeff's campaign, do you think that if Jeff gets a new trial that it will be easier for him to receive a right and fair verdict?

{Mitzie Wood} I don't think it's going to be easier, and the reason I don't think that is simply that the people that were involved in this, the majority of them are already dead.

{Danny Wood} There will be nobody to go back to to try and straighten out their statements or listen to, and the amount of people going into the circumstances on how it's supposed to turn out are not only not there at that point, but who is going to keep records against theirself?

That's true.

I mean, they know that they were doing things wrong, just cause they shuttle things in like working the cattle to bring people into the chute into a tight corral or whatever to turn around and run thru a chute to get the answers they are looking for so are they going to be doing messes for cover up.

Well, that's an understandable thought to have. Tell us about the day that Jeff was born. What were your hopes and dreams for him, and how did it feel to hold your firstborn son in your arms?

I was young enough to not know what to expect. As with any child entering your life, unless you are planning for it, or you are anticipating for it, we didn't previously know whether Jeff was going to be a boy or a girl.

So you just found out when he was born?

It wasn't anticipation, it was just the fact that is was another blessing from the Lord and where to go from here. And to try and figure out, as Jeff grew up, to see things happen in his life"| To be proud of his physical prowess, he was super in athletics, but we worried about his lack of understanding in the academic world. You don't know whether to call it a mixed blessing cause your are not anticipating it as a detriment so much as a problem, and people not understanding it as they do now with attention deficit disorder, what it does to one's self confidence, and state of accomplishments"|

Of not being able to achieve certain things, how it's detrimental to their fundamental advancement, and what it leads to to find somebody else that's not as critical of their behavior. This is what happened with Jeff running with some of the wrong people"| and it wasn't the fact that Jeff was doing stuff wrong himself, but when you get caught up in situations, and you're with the wrong people, you are nailed, just like the law of parties turned out. There is an aspect of it that is true. That running around with the wrong people gets you in trouble.

But at the same time, Jeff's mental faculty, he's not understanding"| he's dealing with the principles of what's right and wrong, and he doesn't understand that if he didn't do anything wrong, how he can be punished for doing something wrong"| And if that makes you mentally unstable, then I am somewhat unstable too.

Hahaha, I think we all are"|

The variety of what it amounts to is people that have certain agendas use other people as pawns. And I refuse to use people as pawns. And now I even more so refuse to use other people as pawns, seeing what it's done to my family's life, my son's life.

There's been times it's created animosity in my own family, between my daughter and myself, where she doesn't believe in the death penalty at all and we believe in the death penalty. There's been discussion's bordering on arguments that hurt both sides. Things have been said that hurts the other and it's not a good issue. It's just been brought on by the negativity and pressure of people being caught up in what they are forced into. Not what they looked for, what they were forced into. Forced into by lies.

To have a district attorney sit up and state as truth, as gospel, supposition's that MIGHT have been, that weren't, that could have been backed out of at any time, if Jeff's court appointed attorney Scott Monroe could have just done his homework and backed up some of the things Jeff told him. Then he could of, just as well as in the first trial, part of the information was that Danny had a gun that Jeff didn't know he had, even giving him a ride, that Danny went back in to get a coat and snuck out a gun as well that Jeff never knew was even in the process of being there. And yet they wouldn't allow that information in the second trial. Cause they dismissed it saying it was hearsay.

Even though all that information was brought out at Reneau's trial?

Yeah, and they accepted it to use it to put one guy to death with it but they wouldn't use it to turn around and save another man's life. So if it's hearsay on one, why isn't it hearsay on the other?

Sounds like a double standard to me"|

There's too many discrepancies in the whole situation for there to have been a fair trial. It's not compatible with anything fair.

Do you have anything to say to all the people who volunteered their own time and resources to cause of spreading awareness about

the injustices committed against your son?

We can't even begin to thank enough all the people involved, even though we don't agree with some of their political backgrounds. The fact that they were interested in taking somebody else's part against injustices is enough to know that there are still people out there who care, and for that, we are thankful.

I'm sorry if it ruffles feathers that we can't agree with everything that they agree with, but we took a path in the road to fight against the blanket law, the law of parties. And I do believe still that there's certain instances where the law of parties has a right to be enforced with the death penalty, but not with a situation where things are unknown, things were never planned, things that didn't go down and one person only was, out of four people involved in an original talked about scheme, two of those being forced into, that Danny Reneau and Bill, that was running the station and gave all the information needed to set stuff up were the responsible parties, and Kris and Jeff were drawn into it by association.

Doesn't make it right, but Bill was let off cause he was supposedly threatened by Danny. How can you be threatened by somebody you gave all the information to to get away with it? How can you take a vacation on the time that you know this is going to happen so that you can be clear? How can you plan to get part of the money involved and then get the insurance money to cover the loss and get a double payment? Those are the people involved in it, not Kriss and not Jeffrey.

But that wasn't allowed to be brought out either, that Bill's testimony was only about being threatened. But they wouldn't let Jeff, they wouldn't enter the fact that he was threatened with a gun, his family threatened. They were looking for a verdict in their favor, and they intended to get it. And it was a collusion between the defense attorney, and the district attorney, and they all knew what was going on, and did it either through effort, or lack of effort.

What do you think about the people who knew the crime was going to take place yet did nothing to stop it like Nadia Mireles, who had foreknowledge that Danny Reneau had a gun?

{D} Again, she should of been more a part of it than Jeffrey was.

{M} She should of stood up and called the police right then and there to put a stop to what was going down. If that would of been the case, if she would have just done that, then Kriss Kereen might not have been killed, and this just would not be an issue at all. But she didn't do that, it was a choice on her part. As far as I'm concerned she's just as guilty as anybody else. By withholding information.

Do you have any final remarks?

We just hope that the people involved, from the girl who worked, to the possible courts coming up, to Governor Abbott, on analyzing the situation, we're thankful for the Representative [Leach], and the other judge [Alcala], for really delving into the transcripts and seeing what has been the travesty of justice in this case. Truthfully, I feel sorry for the State of Texas in the way they seen the way the judge railroaded Jeffrey, following him around from town to town rather than relying on a change of venue and somebody else to sit up and analyze it, they wanted a certain thing to come up for their benefit.

The people of Bandera that convicted him, I pray for them, I feel sorry for them, cause now there's many hearts hurting that had assumed they was doing the right thing, but they wasn't given the correct information, and they came up with the verdict that they came up with.

Were you aware that at least 3 jurors from Jeff's trial have come out on record stating that had they known all of the facts that it would have severely affected their deliberations?

I hadn't know that. I only heard that the last couple of days, that that was a possibility, but I wasn't sure of that being an actuality.

I promise you Mr. Wood, it is true. These jurors have gone on record and made those statements to the proper authorities.

So, whichever way it comes down, the fact that with reality getting exposed now, to me the easiest way for the state to get things corrected, is to hold the Kerr County Criminal Justice people responsible for their faulty actions.

[Mitzie Wood] In addition to that, my prayer is that through all this, not only will the remainder of our family find inner peace, and resolution but that the State of Texas will completely exonerate Jeffrey, and will release him back to the family where we can try to help

him move forward and go on. And the people in Bandera County were not informed correctly, that they can find in their hearts the peace that they need, because I know those people have to feel guilty. And there should not be any guilt on them because they didn't have the information. It's just I hope they find peace.

End of Interview.

I am grateful to the Wood family for taking the time to sit down with me for this interview. The subject matter was difficult for them to discuss, and it obviously caused a lot of pain to have to dredge everything up all over again. The saddest part is that this could be any one of us, at any time. In the State of Texas you are not guaranteed access to DNA testing, or even to have your own trial, and apparently you can't even be guaranteed a fair trial or due process of law. The pertinent question we must ask ourselves is how can a judge allow the office of the DA to present false evidence? It's bad enough the police can lie to you to gain a confession, but to present false evidence at trial? I just don't understand.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-8974/parents-of-death-row-inmate-speak-out.html>

Editorial office and responsibility:

V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDSIV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Bella Sanford

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