

*I/V Cerro, Elaine 2009 Diskin C23:

On 10/27/09 I interviewed Elaine Cerro. The following is a transcript of that interview:

Respondent: [REDACTED].

Interviewer: Yes, can I speak with Elaine?

Respondent: Speaking.

Interviewer: Elaine, this is Detective Diskin with the Yavapai Sheriff's Office.

Respondent: Hi.

Interviewer: Hi, I know we have been playing some phone tag and you left a message for Sergeant _____00:20. He asked me to give you a call.

Respondent: Okay.

Interviewer: Do you have time to talk right now?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay, I just wanted to ask you some questions about the Sweat Lodge, if that was okay.

Respondent: Okay.

Interviewer: How did you first learn about James Ray?

Respondent: Actually he was here for a just like a free you know kind of lecture that he basically gave out speech about you know what I guess what he stands for and he does them all the time. I think there is one even, tomorrow night here in [REDACTED].

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: And just like an Intro Evening, that's when that would have been I think last January or so that I first heard for what he begins. And I have to say I actually saw him in the movie called Secret that's when I first saw him, which is why I went to the Intro Evening that I already knew from this movie who he was.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: And so that's basically how to target.

Interviewer: Okay, and how many events or seminars have you been to?

Respondent: I had only been to one weekend event so that kind of fast tracks right to the end.

Interviewer: Was that the Harmonic Wealth?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay, and where was that?

Respondent: In Jersey City, in March.

Interviewer: Okay. And have you ever attended a Sauna or a Sweat Lodge before?

Respondent: Well there is a Sauna in my building that I have used a couple of times and you know it gyms in the past, so but not a Sweat Lodge.

Interviewer: Okay, and the saunas that you ran, how does that compare to the Sweat Lodge the James Ray had?

Respondent: Not as intent but then I have talked to a lot of people who spoke that, told me that, yes it is like that. However they felt over-instructed to just come and go as they pleased. You know you leave, you jump in whatever with his water nearby, you went off and then you can go back and you feel you know up to it, that was more of the procedure that they spoke off, people that I compared notes with.

Interviewer: Okay. So, that kind of practices to kind of come out at some point and cool off a little bit and go back in.

Respondent: Correct.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: And I think to the message I am getting from a lot of people in fact there is somebody there is more connected with everyone just monitoring and I can't really say that that was this one.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: You know I know nothing works, we would have been okay, right.

Interviewer: Right, yeah, we are still trying to figure out exactly what happened and what is this like problem.

Respondent: Yeah, I think --

Interviewer: So we have been calling everybody that was there. We have been interviewing people from past events, experts on Sweat Lodges, but did you hear anyone make any kind of assurances that people conducting the sweat lodge were experts or were specifically trained to do so?

Respondent: Only that like he, James who does it himself and I think people kind of had his blind faith because he has being able to lock several times and everything that he teaches something that you know have done himself. This is the where there was that trust.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: And I think he seems of this that we think that people were developing and strengths mentally, and you know willpower and you know self realization and perhaps they put pressure on themselves especially you know the ones that really try to stick out and then in turn got injured, they just put too much pressure on themselves I think. I think you know during as well there was encouragement to stick it out from James and me, I actually, I study hearing arts and I called him before I went I guess what I am waiting there, I called in this is five angels that I was calling when I do healing treatments and whatnot and somebody said to me it's over we have done the seventh round. I don't know who said but I am really glad I heard it because I had lost before it was over.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you feel as you were going into the Sweat Lodge that it was going to be safe?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay and why?

Respondent: Otherwise I wouldn't have done it but you know what there was a girl that was in the dining room and I don't know if you know what a pendulum is. Pendulums are objects you can use to a lot of psychic visitors. People in general use it and it's like, it can be a crystal or it can be a medallion. And this girl was wearing one and she actually took it off and she asked the question should I go and the answer it indicates yes or no, the answer was no. And then she said she asked it again, she like confirmed that I should not go and to say yes it would spin, she said this thing was spinning like crazy and so she didn't go, she stayed behind. And then when she heard the first helicopter she thought oh no.

Interviewer: Oh, I heard that. What was her name?

Respondent: Her name was Elfe but she wouldn't have been interviewed because she didn't go.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: But like I said she did get that sixth sense or a feeling that there is something that I have to obtain from.

Interviewer: Okay. Where were you sitting inside the Sweat Lodge?

Respondent: I was not near Kirby and James. I actually, you know you have to crawl in clockwise so it's interesting because somebody in line said to me do you have any metal in your clothing and it turned out it was in my bra so I took it off which is a blessing because I ended up further on the right hand side as opposed to the back which would had been more intense less oxygen.

Interviewer: Okay, so when you went in clockwise you would have gone in like past where Kirby and James were and back towards the door a little bit more?

Respondent: Yeah. A little bit but not, I was still sort of I would say if you are talking directions and if you were north I was maybe east.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: If they were four exits I would be around the east exit.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: Some lodges do have four exits.

Interviewer: Okay. Were you, I understand it's really like two rows of people now you are in the front or the back row?

Respondent: I am in the front but then somebody left right, pretty right away. Then a couple of other people left so that I started, it created more room and then I had also heard that if you get too hot, lie down just because the air is cooler towards the ground. I think that could have been also I guess like coffin was there. The issue that occurred with Kirby and James and even lived is that they might have laid down and they are very quiet and this again is where the monitoring comes in and it should have been somebody watching because if somebody is lying down and quiet, you don't know, whether he is going to distract. One girl actually started, I thought she was hypothetical leading in, of course she was not suppose to do that in there because he should be slow deep come waving and another girl apparently called out and said she needs help and that's when they carried her out. I did what this occurred being carried out and she was not really all there for a while. Then she came to --

Interviewer: Do you remember who that was?

Respondent: Who was carried out?

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: I think it was Amy.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you remember who was sitting next to you on your right left behind you and in front of you?

Respondent: On my left was actually one of his employees at his office.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you remember who that was?

Respondent: I think his name is Joshua. He is married to Megan who is one of James' assistants.

Interviewer: Okay, there will be Joshua Federickson?

Respondent: Yeah. And then to my right, I believe, I know him when I see him but I can't remember his name. He actually booted. At one point he escaped underneath the flap, not flap actually, he just crawled out from where he was. He doesn't even remember doing it. Like he didn't go to the exit, he just crawled out.

Interviewer: Do you remember what round that was in?

Respondent: I think it was after me so it might have been like 6th or 7th.

Interviewer: Okay, and speaking about which round did you leave?

Respondent: See that's where I was asking Josh you know how far are we? Like we have done three and then I asked him again and he didn't answer. And I think at this point people were just really trying to focus on the sound and you know breathe properly and what not, met him either way I think probably I went, I don't know if you have heard there was a miscount. James carried four rounds twice.

Interviewer: Yeah and that's something I definitely want to talk to you about. How do you know that for sure?

Respondent: There is a girl named Gabriela and she actually I think was, she is the one that alerted people that Amy needed help. And she said she, like I just said; wow that's pretty awesome you are able keep track and you were in there the whole time. She said yes I you know went the whole eight rounds.

Interviewer: Who's that?

Respondent: Gabriela.

Interviewer: Do you remember James, what we had heard was that James had called that it was the fourth round, he had called that twice, do you actually recall that?

Respondent: Not really. I think at this point I was just so focused on calmly breathing. Maybe that's why I asked Josh because I was confused. You know I was like "where are we now" and then like I said I heard a voice say it's over, seven rounds are done. So obviously I don't know who said that but anyway.

Interviewer: People said that there were eight rounds but that didn't make sense because the rounds were supposed to be seven.

Respondent: Right. And I don't know if they were 15 or 20 minutes in length. I am not entirely sure. What did you hear?

Interviewer: The whole thing went for two hours and so it is difficult for people to remember exactly which round. I mean nobody had a timer, so we did hear that each round was about 15 minutes but they were all the same.

Respondent: Right, yeah. And they ended, what time did they say like we didn't have cells or watches because they would heat up and burn you but did people think that it was over round five?

Interviewer: Yeah it was round five like just after 5 o'clock and apparently. I think it started at 3 o'clock is what most people have said.

Respondent: Yeah, it started late. They were wanting to start at 2:30 but actually they started late because they were doing this thing called splotching which is like a purification of just this blessed earth. I use it to just it cleanses you around you know any negativity it could be through a person, just the practice. When did the call come in for assistance?

Interviewer: Well the call came in it was transferred to medical and that was shortly after 5 and I think it was around 5:15 that the sheriff's office was told to respond.

Respondent: Okay.

Interviewer: We have all that documents. I just don't have that in front of me right now but it was right after 5 o'clock.

Respondent: Yeah. Right.

Interviewer: And what did you have to eat or drink in the days prior?

Respondent: I think probably you get the same on that. There was nothing on Wednesday. No water or food. That was part of what's called the Vision Quest.

Interviewer: Some people didn't apparently participate and we thought that maybe some of the other people maybe did bring water with them?

Respondent: Oh they might have because it's not like you were checked.

Interviewer: But you didn't have any food or water at all on Wednesday?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: What's the last time you eat before Wednesday?

Respondent: It would have been Tuesday night.

Interviewer: Okay, so you had dinner Tuesday night then no food or water on Wednesday, when was the next time you had water or food?

Respondent: Thursday morning.

Interviewer: So you didn't have any water until Thursday morning?

Respondent: Correct and then salt. We were told to have a teaspoon of natural salt everyday which helps the body to retain water.

Interviewer: Okay, and how much on Thursday, how much water did you drink? Yeah, Thursday was the day at Sweat Lodge.

Respondent: I probably tried to have at least you know, I am thinking now, the container we thought was about 8 cups so maybe I had about half a dozen cups of water.

Interviewer: Okay. And the Vision Quest that you guys went on did you know what to expect on the Vision Quest?

Respondent: Yeah it was all explained but just before it. Nothing was given in advance. Just we were told what to bring on our packing list but nobody was given advance information.

Interviewer: And have you been on Vision Quest before, I think you said you have.

Respondent: No, I had not. I have only heard about one but not been on one.

Interviewer: Okay. So you couldn't compare this to one that you had gone to obviously.

Respondent: No actually I know somebody was going to do one for a week but it was is that there would be somebody on hand, he is going to be sort of in an elevated area here in Ontario. Somebody was going to be on hand at the base and put it as you make this thing called that are metaphorically constructed out of textured rocks and it's supposed to

keep you safe and it's a traditional native American practice and then you stay inside that and that's where you, you know we then move journaling and show me what it was about. With journaling, the journaling helps for people to work things out that perhaps are past issues or problems in their life. It's called recapitulate so that was really kind of a mission on that and just be one with nature. So a lot of people really enjoyed it. I didn't mind it but also can know there were trenches as in, well I think we used to call scorpions and trenches but I was reading later that they like to come out at night.

Interviewer: That would have been my concern.

Respondent: Snakes.

Interviewer: Now before going into the sweat lodge did you know what was going to take place as far as did you know what to expect?

Respondent: Yeah he actually said that no one else does more like him except the Lakota Indians and they did fallacious as far as he goes.

Interviewer: So he did mention the Lakota Indians?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Did he say that his was like the Lakota Indians, their sweat lodge?

Respondent: Yes. Part intensity and then the description of the heat would be hellacious. And then just something that I have also heard from other people is that it's an amazing trend, your skin will you know feel awesome and that you release a lot of toxins which is you know how you do when you sweat anyway, but this would be like a times whatever percent for the benefit as far as that goes.

Interviewer: And I know I am jumping around with these questions we have got a list that we are trying to make sure that we at least cover all these questions with every participant but was there any type of safety procedures discussed prior to going into the sweat lodge.

Respondent: No. I don't really think there was. More or less encouraging to stick it out and that you could leave between rounds but not during. It would have to be when the flap is open.

Interviewer: Okay. So were you told that you could only leave if the flap was open?

Respondent: Yes. I think that it was said during actually and maybe before.

Interviewer: Okay, and who said that. Was it James that said that? I don't want to interrupt your work or anything that you are doing so if you need to take care of something just let me know. We can resume again later.

Respondent: Okay, if you want you can do that, call me back later?

Interviewer: If you are busy right now.

Respondent: Wait just one second.

(On Hold)

Interviewer: Was it James that said you can only leave when the flap was open or one of his staff members?

Respondent: It was him. It was like between rounds. I was just saying he said you know you can't leave during the round. It has to be when the flap was open. I think he made that clear, yeah.

Interviewer: Did anyone explain to you how you should respond if you are having reactions in the sweat lodge?

Respondent: Not really. You know there was somebody there the year before, one of his team members that had a reaction; that I think they should have maybe used that to inform us a little better.

Interviewer: You know which team member that was?

Respondent: Her name was Barbara.

Interviewer: Okay, is that Barbara Walters?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay, and how did you find out Barbara Walters had a problem?

Respondent: She mentioned it.

Interviewer: But nothing was said like; hey last year Barbara had this problem, to avoid this you should do something different?

Respondent: Right. And she mentioned it after when we were all in the dining room later on. It was like a Thursday night or a Friday morning.

Interviewer: Okay how were you feeling while you were in there?

Respondent: It was difficult. I was feeling just bit of this really hot queue, which is so hot. But like I said I have heard that before only people would leave and come back so there is the difference.

Interviewer: Did anyone speak during the ceremony?

Respondent: James was, yeah. There was some chanting and some things that he was saying, and then each time they opened the flap and they had rocks it was like we said this greeting to the person that was bringing them in.

Interviewer: Was anybody else saying anything on their own other than James?

Respondent: I don't think so. One girl was like kind of moaning but she left early.

Interviewer: Okay and when you left the lodge did you go out the door or did you go underneath?

Respondent: I went out the door.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you hear anyone say that they were having any kind of problem?

Respondent: No. No, I didn't.

Interviewer: Did you fill out like any kind of medical questionnaires or medical forms or did anyone ask you if you had any kind of health issues?

Respondent: No. It might have been on the waivers but I didn't really agree on that early. I am sure you could probably get copies of those from the Angel Valley.

Interviewer: Yeah, we already have and also from James Ray because I guess there were two waivers that you guys had signed, one for Angel Valley and one for James Ray. Can you kind of describe what symptoms you were feeling both while you were in sweat lodge and then after you got out?

Respondent: Well I would say that it was really, of course hot, and then when I got out I was lightheaded. Actually one of workers at the Angel Valley helped me to just you know suggest that could have heavy simulation and she stuck around with me.

Interviewer: Okay, and this was when you were outside?

Respondent: Yeah, before there was that major accident where people were really

Interviewer: Do you remember which employee was it that helped you?

Respondent: Fern.

Interviewer: Do you remember anyone saying anything about a flash light?

Respondent: James was asking if someone had one and I think it's because

perhaps somebody had opened the flap. I am trying to straighten that out in my head if it was the fact that someone might have lifted the flap, perhaps, yeah. And at one point someone did actually like I said bolt it through so that would have been the same time. I am not sure.

Interviewer: Do you remember at all how many people were still inside the sweat lodge when you left?

Respondent: I would say 40 something, just out of guess, when I left.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you notice anything going on or did you see anybody in any kind of physical distress?

Respondent: Not when I was leaving. No.

Interviewer: Do you think you were pretty out of it when you left?

Respondent: Yeah. You know just to the point where it's like being more just aware of myself of instead of anything else and just getting out of there.

Interviewer: Okay, and this might sound off the wall, but did you hear anyone say that they thought that they were having heart attack or that they thought that they were going to die?

Respondent: No. I did outside. There was a guy who was yelling and I think he had, he was saying he had a near death experience so he was yelling and saying that I want to die, and actually, then I heard James say he was having an altered experience.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: And then I spoke to that guy and he said, he kind of described things the way I have read them and heard you know like what he saw and then how he felt afterwards and it was like he was saying you know I will never do this thing again you know where it's just a lot of gratitude, like, I think what people feel after an NDE, a Near Death Experience is that they, I don't need to be afraid of dying but there is something really wonderful beyond this life. That's kind of how you sounded and looked. I am trying to recall his name. I don't know, I don't think it was Denise but you might hear somebody else say your name and

Interviewer: Okay, yeah I think you have talked about that same incident. Did you hear anybody say specifically when he was saying I don't want to die, did you hear anybody say it's a good day to die?

Respondent: No, but maybe somebody heard James say that, I don't know. There was a kind of a thing that, it was about, metaphorically speaking of that in the sense of leaving an old life behind and moving into a new life but not you know in a physical sense.

Interviewer: Yes. And people made a big deal about, that I guess there was something on the Twitter about what used to die in you so there's something else coming out and people made a big deal about that but it's pretty clear that that was figurative when people are saying it's a good day to die or talking about death.

Respondent: Who was the person that was doing the yelling, was it Denise or was it another name?

Interviewer: I don't remember. I mean I don't know that anybody actually knew his name

Respondent: Yeah, I thought you would say like come to me. I think it was the same guy that he actually kind of hurt his shoulder a little bit doing this, it was like a samurai event we had where men were holding books and seeing who could hold them the longest and he kind of hurt his shoulder so that would be a way to identify who this guy is.

Interviewer: Okay. And how did James Ray react or respond to people who were in distress?

Respondent: I think at first he just didn't realize how serious everything was, and so you know at first it didn't seem like much of a reaction and maybe it was disbelief. So I can't really say, like this one girl that was my roommate who was, she was yelling out form but he came over to I think he said you know it's okay Christina, you know it is all right.

Interviewer: Okay. How did he respond to James, and Kirby, and Liz? Did you see him interact with that situation at all?

Respondent: He was just standing there watching the people who gave CPR.

Interviewer: Was he over by them?

Respondent: At one point I noticed that yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you think that Mr. Ray should have responded differently or done anything different afterwards?

Respondent: I would think that like when he was released at around 1:30 on the morning he could have come at least to the dinning room and said something but he ended up going to another property.

Interviewer: Were you guys expecting that he would come into the dinning room and talk to you guys afterwards?

Respondent: Like I said there was that thought that you know it might happen but his assistant said that he thought he was too late, you know that there wouldn't be many people around which could have just been a --

Interviewer: Okay. How did you feel about, you cannot say that you talked when it was over when he left but how did you feel about leaving the sweat lodge during the ceremony?

Respondent: How did I feel about it?

Interviewer: Yeah, in other words like if in first round you wanted to leave--

Respondent: Actually I thought it was over like I said and so it wasn't until I looked around and I thought what the hell is going on, like there is James talking and you know I had even looked over to some people who had left earlier and I said we got a victory dinner coming up, he said we are all victors because we just tried, you know. It doesn't matter if you are finished and at that point I was thinking I had finished and then I realized it wasn't over, it was still ongoing. But I also realized too that I wasn't going to go back in, wasn't that he should deal for me because I don't feel right, so.

Interviewer: Okay. Is there any reason why you didn't leave before the time that you left?

Respondent: I guess because I did want to stick it out.

Interviewer: And why was that?

Respondent: Just because we had talked about strengths and you know on physical and mental level, more on mental level so I think it was like mind over matter kind of feeling that a lot of people have, unfortunately.

Interviewer: Was anyone discouraged from helping people that were in distress?

Respondent: Actually I saw something on YouTube I know the woman that went on Good Morning America who is the [REDACTED] that tried to give CPR and she said that she was told by the team not to.

Interviewer: Do you remember hearing that or seeing that when had happened?

Respondent: No. Just that I saw her say it. I don't think she would make that up because for one thing she is not an [REDACTED] and she is trained in CPR and she said she tried to give it.

Interviewer: Actually we have done extensive interviews with Beverly and also other people and we believe that she is telling the truth because other people have confirmed what she said but you know I didn't want to say that right off to influence what you say.

At what point did you realize that you know hey something is not right here, something is going wrong?

Respondent: I suppose when they carried Amy out and her eyes weren't open and then they brought her around and then I started seeing people crawling out and then I saw carrying people, like four people trying to carry people that were just like Sydney for instance.

Interviewer: So you saw people carrying people that were clearly unconscious?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. And Sydney did she come out the front or the back?

Respondent: I think they brought her at the front. I could be wrong but what I saw was when they were actually already out so that's where I can't give you that 100% where she exited but as I said there were four people one at each arm and foot.

Interviewer: Okay. And what do you think went wrong? What do you think happened?

Respondent: I think that basically there should have been more encouragement for people to exit when they felt too hot and then return if they felt okay. I think really that was it and also having a native there on hand who was connected to the people. I don't know of somebody who is just you know people monitoring, who were not part of it.

Interviewer: Okay. And what was your response when you realized that people were in medical distress and things were going bad?

Respondent: Kind of disbelief but hopeful, just kind of thinking that everyone's going to be okay.

Interviewer: Okay. And has anyone talked to you about what to say if you are contacted by law enforcement?

Respondent: The owners of Myra at Angel Valley just said to be honest.

Interviewer: When did they say that?

Respondent: Thursday night.

Interviewer: Okay. Did James Ray tell you what his qualifications were for running a sweat lodge?

Respondent: I think, trying to think if he was him that said he had an appointment with Analda the day before but otherwise just the fact you know something he has done. I guess he did talk about his background or if he didn't. I don't have my journal here with

me but I am not sure if I even wrote much down at that point. I will have to look at it again.

Interviewer: Okay. Yeah, we are just looking at to see if he said that he was trained by specific tribe or where he received his training, kind of how he was qualified. Did he say that he had trained with any Native American tribes?

Respondent: I can't answer that 100%. So it's best if I don't answer that.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything afterwards as far as James telling people to go to their rooms or to leave the area or anything like that?

Respondent: No. The girl that didn't participate was told to go back to her cabin because she came down to help and she told me that they told her to go back to her cabin.

Interviewer: So she came down to help afterwards?

Respondent: Yeah, when she heard that helicopter she went down because she got that feeling.

Interviewer: Do you know who told her to go back to her cabin?

Respondent: I think it was James and one of his assistant.

Interviewer: Did you hear James or his assistant tell anybody else to go back to the cabin?

Respondent: I didn't hear anyone else or him say that to anyone else.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you remember the incident where Lou burned his arm?

Respondent: Yes. I didn't see him fall in but I heard that that, that is what happened.

Interviewer: Do you remember seeing that happen or you don't remember?

Respondent: I just remember seeing him on the tarp when they were applying cold water but then he wanted to go back in and in the end he was helping others.

Interviewer: Okay. Down the road we may have some more questions for you; I am just kind of working off the list right now and just you know we have developed this list from what other people told us to try and verify or confirm different things that people told us but if we have more questions is it okay if we give you a call?

Respondent: Yeah. Better time to reach me would be after 6 p.m. my time which will be around 3 your time and that would be on Mondays and Wednesdays because I work late here it would be quieter at that point.

Interviewer: And is there anything that I forgot to ask that you think will be important?

Respondent: I don't know you have asked a lot. I think you have pretty much covered it.

Interviewer: All right. Well if you think of anything else or you remember something feel free to give me a call. I would like to give you my contact information so you can call me directly if you need to. My name is Ross, my last name is Diskin and my direct line is [REDACTED].

Respondent: Okay. Great

Interviewer: Great. Thanks. I appreciate it.

Respondent: Okay. No problem. Thanks a lot. Bye.

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