

*I/V Riemma, Angela 2008 C23 Diskin:

On 10/20/09 I interviewed Angela Riemma. The following is a transcript of that interview:

Interviewer: Yes I am trying to remember why I called you. Did you call and leave a message for me to call you back?

Respondent: No. I guess you had gotten my name and number from somebody else about the sweat lodge incident at Angel Valley Sedona.

Interviewer: Yes and I am not sure, I don't recall what was said, what information you would have. Were you a participant?

Respondent: I was not a participant this year I was a participant last year.

Interviewer: Okay. That might be why your name was mentioned. What can you tell me about it?

Respondent: Well I mean it's a week long event and there are many different types of activities that we do throughout the week and the sweat lodge is the last activity on the last day that is done. I had done several sweat lodges prior to going to this particular event and so I was pretty sure it was going to be a piece of cake for me. But it was hotter than I had encountered at other ones. I know that at other ones we were told in between doors or in between segments there is four segments four doors that you go into, you come out and you take a little breather and you get some water and then you go back in. I do know that some people at the event that I was at did not come out between doors, how come they didn't come out. I couldn't answer them, I know that it was suggested that it might be more of a challenge physiologically and maybe they felt they were up for the challenge. I don't know. I do know that I was uncomfortable enough to make the decision to come out in between doors. In fact I stayed out during the third door, I didn't even go back in because I felt that overwhelmed with the heat. So I mean I can tell you that. I know that afterwards lots of people were kind of just laying around getting hosed down because of the heat and trying to bring the body temperature down. There were two women that I was with that were a little out of it afterwards. It's interesting because after this incident happened, I said gee I wonder why we never called anybody. They seemed out of it but they were able to rally and got together for dinner you know we all had dinner together. And we did some hiking in the next day but they were still a little bit confused or kind of in a brain fog state but nothing that was, we didn't seem too concerned about it at the time. But now I am thinking maybe if we had said something at the time, we could have prevented this next incident.

Interviewer: Yeah. I don't think there is anything that anybody could have done to prevent it.

Respondent: I mean I don't know anything about the construction, I do know past sweat lodges that I had been to there were like 12 people, tops twenty, and we were a group of over 60 when we had gone in but it was a larger sweat lodge than I was accustomed to. So I know nothing about the construction, I don't know what it needed to be, I don't know what he had in there, I don't know how they put it together so I don't know if my information is actually helpful to you but.

Interviewer: Well it is you know everything is helpful. We are just talking to everybody who has ever attended any of the sweat lodges to find out if people were in medical distress in the other sweat lodges, what was done to take care of them things like that. So the people that were having a hard time when they get out there were hosed down?

Respondent: Yeah they were hosed down, most of them were laying in pools of water because the water would collect at certain point. And I had gone up to at the time one of the, I don't know if she was a dream team member or part of James Ray and just said I am a little concerned about my friend, and she reassured me that they would be okay and as it turned out they were, thank god. Now I can also check with those two women and see if they want to give you their personal account because they were the ones. I felt okay. I also made a point of hydrating that morning. That was the one thing he kept telling us during the entire week, you need to keep hydrating, you are in the desert, we are going to be doing some challenging things you have to make sure you take your salt, you need to make sure you drink the water. And we had come out of two days in the desert without water and food which was the event before that, it's kind of a modified Vision Quest which is done again that's a ceremony that's done in a lot of different traditions. And I think that if somebody wasn't cautious about really loading up with water, the next morning they could have had some problems. But he did tell, I mean that was one thing he did and his staff did was always tell you, you got to drink your water, you got to hydrate, you got to make sure you get the water in so.

Interviewer: Okay. When you were inside the sweat lodge was there anything done or said to keep people inside, to keep people from leaving?

Respondent: No, no. Before we went in, it was just suggested that if you could stay in, I am just trying to think of how I perceived it because again everybody is going to perceive what was said differently. But it was just kind of like well if you could stay in, it would be a challenge and you might feel that then you could raise to challenges coming up in your life more easily because you can say I have been through this, I have done this so now something else will be that much easier. But nobody was forced in there, nothing was said during sweat lodge. I just personally came out because that's the way I have always done it and I just didn't feel the need to have to push myself to that point.

Interviewer: And afterwards the people that were being hosed down and then the people that were having more trouble than other people, do you feel that they should have been given medical aid?

Respondent: I think if I really felt that way at the time I probably would have forced the issue. It was something I had not seen before and so I was a little bit concerned but as I said they pulled out of it by dinner, they were able to make dinner, we had conversations at dinner, they just seemed the little bit out of it. But physically they seemed okay. Now maybe being a little out of it meant that they were not physically, I am not a doctor so I couldn't really assess that but I think certainly if they had not pulled out of it by dinnertime, we would have called somebody in to have a look at them.

Interviewer: And have you been to any other James Ray events?

Respondent: Yes. I have been to his Practical Mysticism in Salt Lake City, it was in Utah, I don't remember where it was. It was Practical Mysticism and his events, they push you, they push you and that's the point to get beyond feeling kind of controlled by external events, feeling that you can rise above it, and I will say that they have been challenging I don't think any of them were ever dangerous. And I think my life has certainly changed since then learning what I have learned through his events. You know what, I don't know what happened at this sweat lodge and I certainly would like to be a part of finding the solution and I don't know if I can be, I just wish there were more answers.

Interviewer: Well just by talking to us helps, we can kind of piece it together and see what was different about this sweat lodge than the one that you attended.

Respondent: Well I mean if you want, I can contact Susan and Chris and give them your number and have them give you a call because as I said they were the ones that were more physically affected by it than I was.

Interviewer: Okay yeah if they would be willing to talk to me.

Respondent: All right. I know there was also a pregnant woman who was at the event I was that and she was able to go through the sweat lodge she seemed to be okay also at that time. So again I don't know if it was the construction, I don't know if it was the number of doors they went through, I don't know what could have been different.

Interviewer: Yeah it seems like the sweat lodge was the same as the one from last year but you never know. I mean we are attesting to everything that we can think of to see if there was some kind of chemical or anything like that. And at any of the other James Ray events was anybody ever injured?

Respondent: Not that I know of, I didn't see anybody that had gotten injured.

Interviewer: Okay. All right well thanks for returning my call and if anybody else you can think of that might be able to help us, see if they think give us a call.

Respondent: Alright. And how do you spell your last name just so I can?

Interviewer: It's D-I-S-K-I-N.

Respondent: Okay. And I will get in touch with them and leave them a message and hopefully they will give you a call back.

Interviewer: Well great, thanks I appreciate it.'

Respondent: Alright, have a good day.

Interviewer: You too.

Respondent: Alright bye-bye.

Interviewer: Bye.

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