

*I/V Bowen, Shawna-Transcript of Sup#15 Det. S. Willingham C36

On 10/20/09, at approximately 1100 hours, I spoke with Shawna Bowen by telephone. I audio recorded the conversation and the following is an accurate account of the interview. For additional details see CD in evidence.

(Voicemail)

Interviewer: Linda, this is Detective Shonna Willingham with the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office. I am calling to speak with you about the event from Angel Valley. I am one of the detectives following up on this. So if you could give me a call back, my direct line is [REDACTED]. Thank you. Message left for Linda Andresano.

Respondent: Well, hi Shawna.

Interviewer: I am part of the detective team that's following up on the incident that occurred at Angel Valley.

Respondent: Okay.

Interviewer: And some information came to us that you were actually at the Angel Valley Retreat that day or --

Respondent: Yeah, I was there just as everything started to unravel with, I basically got there as the paramedics did.

Interviewer: Okay. So how did you, were you part of the fire department or --?

Respondent: No, basically, a casual acquaintance of mine, I had run into that day and they had said that they were part of this James Ray Sweat Lodge thing. And I had said I was a James Ray fan and they said well why don't you come down and maybe you can help out with the lodge, with doing the sweat lodge like to tell about and maybe I could get a chance to say hi James or something like that. So I wasn't a part of the retreat and I wasn't a part of Angel Valley. I was basically kind of invited to come down to hang out.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: I came late and just drove down just as everything was just this way happening.

Interviewer: So you said that you arrived basically as the paramedics did?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: And can you tell me what role you took? What you saw and what you experienced?

Respondent: Yeah, as I got there, I came upon Kirby Brown. I saw that she was definitely not responding and had discolorment and basically the paramedics got right to her at that point. But I did see her and then I ended up helping another woman who, her and her friend were trying to get her, she was very disoriented, too back to her room. Her name is Christine Bevans I believe and we were in a golf cart trying to get her back to her room and as I was sitting with her I realized that she was not right in her head that she did not seem at all stable or well to just go to her room and go to sleep. And so I insisted that we go back to where the ambulances were and she ended up being treated by the paramedics eventually and was taken away by ambulance. At that point, I ended up just speaking around for a little bit attending to a few other people that were dizzy and sick but not so bad off that they had to go to hospital. And then I gave a statement with Wendy Parkison --

Interviewer: Okay, so you did talk to Wendy. I just we have list after list and I have been doing interviews and I didn't ever see your name on any of the lists of the people that we have talked to.

Respondent: Oh yeah. I spoke with Wendy for probably about an hour and a half and she had taped the interview.

Interviewer: Okay. Yeah. I am getting messages last week, hey, who is that Shonna Willingham, she is doing an interview and I go, well, I know Shonna because I attended one of her trainings that she did. I will call and find out.

Respondent: I have been doing interviews but I have been really, I have been staying away from any, I am not trying to smear James Ray, I am not smearing Angel Valley, people just ask me what I saw, I tell them. I was a James Ray fan and I am Sweat Lodge fan so I am trying to become this person that people want to talk to. But I try to be very respectful to the investigation and not talk about anything that could jeopardize the investigation and by the way, if anyone from the Sheriff's Department wants me to stop talking -

Interviewer: You know we would never do that. There are too many amendments involved there. There is a freedom of speech in it.

Respondent: Sure.

Interviewer: The whole nine yards and we would not temper with the witness. The only thing we would tell people is if you are going to talk to somebody tell the truth.

Respondent: Sure, definitely.

Interviewer: And so if you gave a lengthy statement to Wendy I am quite sure she covered everything.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: There maybe other things that were now aware of that might be good for us to know and have you ever attended any of James Ray's seminars?

Respondent: I have attended seminars that did not involve a Sweat Lodge.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: Or fasting or anything like that. I wanted to go to this one but I couldn't afford it but I have definitely been to other events of his. If you guys ever want me to come back and talk more about who he is or what I saw or what I was told to do or how this, I will be happy to talk more about who I understand him to be as a success leader or educator or whatever.

Interviewer: Okay. Now, so you saw the Sweat Lodge and how much experienced do you have with Sweat Lodges?

Respondent: I have attended, I am just guessing probably 50 to 60 over the past nine years.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: Probably more than that but yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Did Wendy talk to you at all about that knowledge that you have for that area?

Respondent: I don't think we talked too much about it. I will be happy to talk about what I know about it and I can also give you the names of the people who run Sweat Lodges they are the ones actually doing this ceremony that understand how Sweat Lodge you know the "Dos" and "Don'ts" basically because what that Sweat Lodge is not any kind of Sweat Lodge I have ever attended.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: I have never become sick or ill or seen anyone else becomes sick or die or anything like that.

Interviewer: Okay. So from looking at what you saw there how did it differ? What were the differences?

Respondent: The differences that I believe were was how big it was and then I mean there was that little teeny tiny sliver of a door which was the only place air was getting in through.

Interviewer: And that was only when you opened?

Respondent: Yeah, and yeah, exactly because once you bring in the hot rocks you shut that door. And you make sure that there is no light coming through so you are in complete darkness except for the glowing rocks. But yeah, I really thought that the Sweat Lodge was huge and it was not made the way I seem Sweat Lodge is made which is more like of a half circle looking thing where you basically bend willow. It looks like a half sphere and then you put like blankets on top of it.

Interviewer: Now, the door opening did the size seem different to you?

Respondent: The actual size of the Sweat Lodge was definitely way bigger than any Sweat Lodge I had ever seen.

Interviewer: Okay. And typically, in a Sweat Lodge, how many people generally are put into a small area like that?

Respondent: Basically, the Sweat Lodges I have attended I have been to ones that were between three and about 12 to 14 people.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: And I have heard from some Native American Sweat Lodge Ceremony people who actually did ceremony you never really want to have more than 20.

Interviewer: And have they said why?

Respondent: Some of the reasons they said why is because you are in-charge of these people and that is important for you to be able to know the well being of these people and to make sure that everyone is doing okay.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: And if you have names, if you want names that people who actually did Sweat Lodge maybe happy to give you, I would ask them first that if they are interested in talking with you, I could probably get you in touch with some people who do Sweat Lodge and people I have attended.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, I will you what Shawna, I am going to just note your information for the main detectives who are probably going to meet on a regular basis for a while, regarding this, pass on that information that you would be a good contact for professionals that do Sweat Lodges.

Respondent: Okay, that's great.

Interviewer: And we will just go with that route.

Respondent: Okay. And also if they want to know more about James Ray and his teachings or how he was at the Retreat I attended, I will be happy to speak one that else well.

Interviewer: Okay. And how long ago was the one you attended?

Respondent: Let's see, the actual weekend retreat I did was probably about two years ago.

Interviewer: Okay. And where was that?

Respondent: I attended it in LA.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: All right. Well, I do appreciate your returning my phone call and we hadn't spoken a while because different things were going on. So the mystery has been unraveled.

Respondent: Okay.

Interviewer: All right.

Respondent: And I am really looking forward to your guys' explanation as to why is the homicides because some of the reporters are asking me why I think it's a homicide and it's like I am going to let them tell you I had no idea.

Interviewer: Well --

Respondent: So --

Interviewer: That one of the statements that you just made previously could lead partly to your answer but at this point, it's under investigation and it's been investigated as a homicide.

Respondent: Okay. I will leave that to you guys and I will not even offer speculation or think that I know what you guys are doing, so.

Interviewer: Okay, well, I do appreciate you returning my call and it's funny how we all work together but one link out of this that might not have been here last week for a little while, little pieces of information.

Respondent: Yeah, so --

Interviewer: And there is a lot of information scattered throughout not only the United States but Canada and many other countries that were all trying to put back together. So it is what it is.

Respondent: Okay. Well, just I wish you luck with your investigation and I hope that you find what you are looking for.

Interviewer: Well, bottom line is in our job, we look for accountability and when something goes so wrong.

Respondent: And that's what I want. I want accountability, I am asking as a James Ray someone who looked to James Ray, I am asking for accountability.

Interviewer: All right, well thank you for returning my call.

Respondent: No problems. Take care.

Interviewer: And I hope that you don't mind me putting you as the person we can go to on Sweat Lodges and different information.

Respondent: No, anything I can do to help you guys is fine with me.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you.

Respondent: Okay.

Interviewer: Bye.

Respondent: Bye.

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