

*I/V Ronan, Sean Transcript of Sup#4 Det. S. Willingham C36

On 10/14/09, at approximately 1515 hours, I conducted a telephonic interview with Sean Ronan. I audio taped the interview and the following is an accurate transcript of said interview. A CD of the recording has been placed into evidence.

At the beginning of the interview recording I had left a message requesting a call back from another witness.

(Voice Mail)

Respondent: Hi, I am Ami Grimes. I am unavailable right now but if you will leave your name and number and a brief message, I will return your call as soon as possible. Thank you.

Interviewer: Hi Ami, this is Detective Shonna Willingham with the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office. When you get a chance, if you could, please call me back, I am at [REDACTED] Thank you.

(Voice Mail)

Respondent: This is Sean.

Interviewer: Hi Sean, this is Detective Shonna Willingham with the Sheriff's Office.

Respondent: Hi Detective, what's up?

Interviewer: I don't know if you were ever interviewed from this event, I am trying to just find that out first.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Who did you talk to do you remember?

Respondent: Dark-haired guy came to the hospital, I mean he actually called me the other day.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: Just said, he wanted to talk to me again with some of the further questions, so I called him back and left him a message I think yesterday.

Interviewer: Well, is now a good time and could I go over those questions with you?

Respondent: Sure yeah, I am getting my oil changed to my car, that's fine.

Interviewer: Okay. My first question is, how did you learn about James Ray and his events?

Respondent: Through a friend.

Interviewer: Through a friend, okay. How many of his events have you attended?

Respondent: All of them.

Interviewer: All of them?

Respondent: Since April, '06, I have been participating in his events.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. How many of them a year does he usually have?

Respondent: Well, he has a series of events that he does. So there is Harmonic Wealth Weekend which is usually the one you will do first and then there is the Absolute Wealth weekend, Quantum Leap, Modern Magick and Spiritual Warrior and then Modern Magick there is 4 series. Of those, I have done two.

Interviewer: Oh, okay.

Respondent: And then I would go and assist and volunteer to produce his events with them.

Interviewer: Oh, okay. So, were you part of the Dream Team or as it was referred or --?

Respondent: No, this was my first event, the Spiritual Warrior event was my first time participating.

Interviewer: Oh, okay.

Respondent: I was a participant.

Interviewer: Okay. So this was the first time you had participated in the Spiritual Warrior event?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Have you ever been in a sauna or a sweat lodge environment before this?

Respondent: I have done Bikram yoga.

Interviewer: And I am not sure what that is?

Respondent: It's the 104 degrees for an hour and a half yoga routine, but other than that, no, I have never experienced the sweat lodge before.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: I have been in the sauna before, I have been

Interviewer: Okay. How was this different?

Respondent: It was a lot hotter.

Interviewer: Much hotter?

Respondent: Yeah. And you were in the dirt, you were sitting down, whereas in Bikram yoga, you are doing stretches and sauna, you are sitting comfortably on something in a nice spa like environment.

Interviewer: Okay. Anything else different about this particular sweat lodge comparing to saunas or the yoga?

Respondent: I can't compare, I wouldn't compare it to either.

Interviewer: Okay. Why not?

Respondent: It's something totally different, it's just totally different.

Interviewer: Okay. During your experience in there, who was talking and what was, could you tell what was going on?

Respondent: James was talking and he was leading in prayer and ritual.

Interviewer: Okay. Was anything else being said or --?

Respondent: Was anything else being said.

Interviewer: Other than the prayer and the rituals and

Respondent: Oh yeah, there were all kinds of people talking in the support of each other, we can do this, you can do it. James supporting each other, you know you are more than your fears, you are more than your doubts or you are more than this and that and stuff like that. If that what you mean?

Interviewer: Okay. Did you feel prior to going into the sweat lodge that it was safe?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Tell me why?

Respondent: Because I am semi-familiar with sweat lodges or because I have friends who do sweat lodges and I have seen a couple of them put together, but hadn't participated in. And I have done some extreme things with James and I have always felt safe doing events with James.

Interviewer: Okay. What was your position inside the lodge?

Respondent: Position within the organization or position where I was located?

Interviewer: The location of where you were sitting within the interior of the lodge?

Respondent: Sure. I was exact north of the door, opposite of the door.

Interviewer: Okay, north. Okay, who was sitting, can you tell me who was sitting directly behind and front to the right to the left of you?

Respondent: Behind me was I think Mark Rock.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: And on my left was James that passed.

Interviewer: James Shore?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: On my right, I think was Christine, I think her name was and behind her was Tess.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you note any other people around you having difficulties or experiencing distress?

Respondent: No, you weren't really able to feel, I mean for this, for probably the last half of that, I was lying on my back or on my belly, so I wasn't really up and looking around too much.

Interviewer: Okay and why was that?

Respondent: Because it was hot and I wanted to get oxygen.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: I was told that if you get hot, you can put your face down towards to the ground and it's much cooler.

Interviewer: And who told you that?

Respondent: I don't remember.

Interviewer: Okay. How long did you stay inside?

Respondent: I think I was the last one out and they had to drag me out, I was unconscious.

Interviewer: Okay. So you were one of them then that was transported to the hospital I believe, right?

Respondent: Yeah, I was one of the first 10 that went or I think I was the first one out in the ambulance.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: I was there in the same ambulance as Lou Caci was.

Interviewer: Okay. The days prior to the sweat lodge, what did you eat or drink?

Respondent: We had a vegetarian diet.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: In the morning, I had, I got a handful of eggs, some fruits, peanut butter toast with honey and toast with jelly and about four or five liters of water.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: And before that as you know we were on a fast, so I didn't have anything to eat.

Interviewer: Okay, fast that was most prior to that morning?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: And then that night before, we started our fast, I had a good and healthy meal.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you know what to expect from the sweat lodge?

Respondent: I did not. I knew it was going to be extreme and it was going to really test and challenge us or me that it was going to be difficult.

Interviewer: Okay. Why did you know that?

Respondent: Because that's my experience of hearing others talk about sweat lodges.

Interviewer: And have they been sweat lodges put on by Mr. Ray or they have been other sweat lodges?

Respondent: No, other sweat lodges.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: My friend Joe does the sweat lodge. He was not at this event. My friend Alan does sweat lodges and I hear that you have even, most times, I have heard people lie on the floor, they had the passing out, it's like your opportunity to find God.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: It's a spiritual process that you go through in the sweat lodge, my understanding is they are all like that, they are very intense and very challenging and difficult.

Interviewer: Okay. What if anything was discussed for safety procedures if there were problems inside the lodge?

Respondent: It was, if you get too hot to switch from the person in front to the person in back, maybe I did hear them saying lie down, if you need to.

Interviewer: Okay, all right. And did anyone before you went in, tell you what to expect in the sweat lodge?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: Not that I can recall.

Interviewer: And you kind of answered this, the people talking in the ceremony, did anybody seem specifically in distress like they needed assistance or needed to get out?

Respondent: Not that I can recall.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you know of anyone leaving the lodge other than through the door?

Respondent: I did not know of anyone leaving lodge other than through the door.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: So after I had heard that I was pulled out through the back and I think they pulled James and Kirby out through the back and so I thought I heard, that was after it had ended.

Interviewer: Okay. But during the ceremony, do you remember of segment where it appeared that either someone had a flash light or a flap was lifted and light came in?

Respondent: Well, the flap was at the entrance.

Interviewer: No, I mean a part of the bottom of the lodge being lifted maybe like somebody was trying to lift it up to get air or something and it allowed light in.

Respondent: I don't recall.

Interviewer: Okay. You may have been unconscious longer than you thought. Did you fill out any medical form or were you asked health question type issues before going in?

Respondent: I am sorry, ask the question again.

Interviewer: Did you fill out any medical forms or did you provide any health information before going into the sweat lodge?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Okay. And I take it, you are a fairly healthy, energetic type of person?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. Can you describe your symptoms that you had while you were in the sweat lodge and afterwards?

Respondent: While I was in the sweat lodge, I felt a little disoriented, extremely hot, towards the end anyway.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Do you know how many rounds?

Respondent: I was in for the whole time.

Interviewer: Okay. You were in for the whole thing, but do you know how many rounds the whole thing consisted of? Do you recall?

Respondent: I thought it was going to be seven.

Interviewer: And because you were unconscious, you don't know if there was anybody left inside, the information you had on that came afterwards, is that correct?

Respondent: Information on, what, I am sorry.

Interviewer: On how people got out, it came from, it was provided to you afterwards because you don't, do you recall actually getting out of the lodge?

Respondent: No, I do not.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you ever remember hearing anyone say something about having a heart-attack or thinking they were going to die?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you ever hear anyone say something like it's a good day to die?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Okay. And probably you wouldn't know that one because you were unconscious. Is there any reason that you didn't leave the lodge sooner?

Respondent: Yeah, because I wanted to get the most out of the experience and I wanted to achieve what I wanted to achieve.

Interviewer: Okay. So personal reasons?

Respondent: Yeah. And I trusted that everything was going to be fine.

Interviewer: Okay. How are you feeling now?

Respondent: I have got an infection in my prostate and sinuses and I have got a very slight fever, little tired, little sluggish.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you think there was anything wrong or any problem with what took place?

Respondent: I am sorry.

Interviewer: Did you think there was anything wrong or problem with what took place in the sweat lodge?

Respondent: While I was in the sweat lodge, no I thought it was all part of those, I thought it was what it supposed to be.

Interviewer: How do you feel about it now?

Respondent: That's for me to contemplate.

Interviewer: Okay. What do you think happened that made this one go so wrong?

Respondent: I think people engaged their egos and really wanted to just stay in to get the maximum benefit on the ceremony and chose not to go out.

Interviewer: Okay. Has anyone ever talked to you about what to say to law and enforcement if anything?

Respondent: No, I haven't receive any phone calls from anybody.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you participate in the conference call today?

Respondent: Excuse me.

Interviewer: Did you participate in the conference call today?

Respondent: I did.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, I thank you for answering my questions. I thank you for speaking with me. Is there anything, I know I have asked you a lot of different things, is there anything that's extremely important that you think that I should know about this event?

Respondent: Anything extremely important, I would just like to know what, if anything went wrong, what went wrong, is there anything important I think you know about this event. I don't know what you are looking for.

Interviewer: You know you seemed to be have been someone who you know has participated in Mr. Ray's events in the past. Have they all been this extreme?

Respondent: No, this was, this was the most extreme that he does.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: That's why there is only, we have like 60 participants, I think there was only 45 at this one.

Interviewer: Okay, all right. Well, anything that you don't deem really important that you think I should know about.

Respondent: I don't think so.

Interviewer: Okay. If you think of something that would be really important for me to know, can I give you my name and number?

Respondent: Sure.

Interviewer: Okay. Are you ready?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay, I am Shonna Willingham. My direct line to my desk is [REDACTED]

Respondent: All right.

Interviewer: Alright Sean, thank you.

Respondent: Okay, Shonna, take care.

Interviewer: Bye-bye.

Respondent: Bye.

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