

*I/V Wright, Richard-Transcript Det. S. Willingham C36

On 10/31/09, at approximately 1010 hours, I spoke with Richard Wright by telephone. I audio recorded the interview on my digital recorder. The following transcript is an accurate report of the conversation. The CD of the recording has been placed into evidence.

Please enter your personal identification number.

Respondent: Hello, this is Rick.

Interviewer: Hi Rick, this is Detective Shonna Willingham and I am with the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office. How are you this morning?

Respondent: I am doing very well. It's actually afternoon here but I am doing well either way. How are you?

Interviewer: I am good. Before I get started, I am just going to ask you real quick, have you had a second telephonic interview with anybody from the Yavapai County Sheriff's Office?

Respondent: No. My fiancee did but --

Interviewer: Yeah, I believe I am the one that talked to Sylvia. That would be me. Do you have a few minutes now? Is it a good time or can I schedule something with you today or tomorrow?

Respondent: No, this is good.

Interviewer: Excellent.

Respondent: I am just sitting here relaxing, watching a little football.

Interviewer: And see here I am working.

Respondent: I know, well, I needed a day off after everything that's been going on.

Interviewer: Yes, I don't doubt it, I do not doubt it.

Respondent: It's a little crazy because you know I was real quiet and low key like most of us for a while but I was watching what was going on on Facebook and everything like that and I just blew a gasket one morning because I got fed up, I got tired of seeing everybody fighting and bickering and attacking each other over their opinion. They were all speculating oh James did this and this person did that and this was that, and I just blew up and then I am like you people don't know your ass from a hole in the ground. I said

that didn't happen, that didn't happen, that's not true and I mean the Associated Press picked it up, CNN picked it up, People Magazine picked it up, I mean it's just been nuts.

Interviewer: I know. I have followed it a little bit but I am just mostly going okay. I am talking to the people that were there. I am getting --

Respondent: Well, that was my point.

Interviewer: Their perspective and that's all I want to have is what you recall taking place, what you experienced what was there. And did you do an initial interview with anyone at the scene?

Respondent: Yeah, when we were asked the question in the dining hall and I did an interview there.

Interviewer: You spoke with either Detective Surak or Detective Parkison?

Respondent: It was a lady, I don't remember her name.

Interviewer: That would have been Detective Parkison. All right, I have some questions and these have been developed through our team. Also, we have kind of a weird address on the paperwork that we got for you. All it says is [REDACTED] with a couple of question marks, [REDACTED]?

Respondent: No, I wrote my address down, maybe they couldn't read it, I don't know.

Interviewer: That might have been what the problem was. Would you mind giving it to me?

Respondent: Sure, it's [REDACTED].

Interviewer: Okay, very good. And of course I have your phone number. And what's your birth date?

Respondent: [REDACTED].

Interviewer: Okay. All right, if you are ready, I will go ahead and get started.

Respondent: Sure.

Interviewer: Okay. How did you learn about James Ray?

Respondent: You mean initially?

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: From watching the Secret but again there were so many characters in that movie that a couple of things did resonate with me but I really started my, Sylvia bought me a book that Jack Canfield had written and it's actually a funny story, he had written, and I finished reading and there is a long reading list in the back and I went to, we went to Barnes & Noble, I couldn't find any of the first few books that he had listed. And then she found James Ray's Harmonic Wealth. And I read it and I was like I am hooked, it was amazing, it was exactly what I needed at that time in my life. And it started from there, I read his book, I went to a couple of his free seminars and then we went from there.

Interviewer: Okay, and when was that, what year?

Respondent: That would have been about almost two years ago.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: I don't remember exactly when but it has to be almost two years ago.

Interviewer: And since then, how many of his events have you attended?

Respondent: I went to two-free events and three paid events including this last one.

Interviewer: Okay. And so that one is included in the three?

Respondent: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay. So what two did you go to prior to Spiritual Warrior?

Respondent: Harmonic Wealth and then we were at the Creating Absolute Wealth in San Diego in July the ill-fated Creating Absolute Wealth that we just found out. The lady that had died, we were there and didn't have a clue, never heard a word about any of that.

Interviewer: Okay. Have you ever been in a sweat lodge before?

Respondent: No, never even heard the word, I had no idea what it was or anything.

Interviewer: Have you ever been in a sauna?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: How do they compare?

Respondent: There is none. And again I want to be fair because from what I have read and learned since this, this was not what a typical sweat lodge is supposed to be like either.

Interviewer: You have done as a lot of people at this point when I am calling them self educated themselves.

Respondent: How do you mean?

Interviewer: Researching sweat lodges and looking into it.

Respondent: You mean after the fact --

Interviewer: Yes, not prior to but after the event.

Respondent: Yeah, after we did.

Interviewer: Right. And did you hear anyone talk or make assurances about the personnel that were building this sweat lodge being trained or experienced?

Respondent: No. We didn't know anything. Like I said, we got there in the morning after having been out on the Vision Quest and literally seven minutes before, we were just to go down to the sweat lodge is when we found out we were doing it. We had ever seen the people that were building it. When we got there to the site, we met them and we saw them doing the rocks and heating them up and everything, but that was really it.

Interviewer: Okay. So, the same ones that were heating the rocks were the ones that built the lodge, right?

Respondent: Well, remember we didn't see who actually built it because it was being built while we were inside that morning session. So when we walked down to the site, it was already built. So we don't know where James's staff did it or those other people did it or Angel Valley did, we don't know who physically erected it.

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

Respondent: Yeah, absolutely.

Interviewer: Tell me why?

Respondent: Because I trusted him and I can't speak for everybody else but I would believe that's what everybody would say, nobody would knowingly put themselves at risk of dying if you thought there was a chance that it would happen. And I trusted him, he had done this event several years, I mean several hundreds of people have been through this, I had never heard of anybody dying or being sick or injured. And he had put us in challenging situations before and we looked at it that way that it was just another challenging situation.

Interviewer: Where were you located inside?

Respondent: At first, when I first went in, I was in for the first two rounds and then I went out for one round and then came back in for the remaining five rounds. But when I went in for the first two rounds, I was sitting in the back next to James and Kirby, there was one person between James and Kirby and I. And then when I came back in the second time, I was sitting next to door to the left of James Ray, on the other side of the door.

Interviewer: Who is the person between you and James and Kirby?

Respondent: There were actually two people, I take it back. It should be Mark Rock, I believe it was his last name which was one of the Dream Team members, and then a girl named Dawn which was Sylvia's roommate actually, but I don't know her last name and then I was sitting next to Dawn.

Interviewer: Okay, and then where was Sylvia?

Respondent: Next to me.

Interviewer: Next to you.

Respondent: On my left.

Interviewer: On your left. And were you on the back row or the front row?

Respondent: On the back row leaning against the wall.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you know who was in front of you?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: I don't remember. It was really, really dark and most of my focus was on Sylvia because she was already panicking. She didn't want to go in. She is very claustrophobic. So my focus was on her, she had to relax and everything.

Interviewer: She only stayed one round, right?

Respondent: Right.

Interviewer: Yeah, and then she did not go back in?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Yeah, I remember somebody describing that the Dream Team people were trying to encourage her to go back in but she just, --

Respondent: Yeah, there was a point probably around the fifth or sixth round where Sylvia actually came to the door and was wanting to come back in and she just couldn't do it and she told me that some of the Dream Team members were physically trying to push her in. And so, she is one of those people that if you push her to do something, she is just going to dig in harder and not do it.

Interviewer: That's exactly her description she had heels dug in then.

Respondent: Yeah, well, I've known her well and I was trying to encourage her to come back in.

Interviewer: Sure.

Respondent: She was going to come back in but she didn't.

Interviewer: We already talked about how long you stayed inside in and out, okay. What did you eat in the days prior to the sweat lodge?

Respondent: Nothing, just that breakfast. You want to know specifically what I ate or just that week?

Interviewer: Well, like on Tuesday, what did you have? Did you have three meals or --

Respondent: Yeah, I don't remember the day now. Yes, but dinner was a very, very light, if I remember correctly. We were told to eat light because we were playing that game, the battle game that was coming up. Again we didn't know that's what we were going to be doing. We were told we would be going out and doing the Vision Quest, so we were told to eat light so that you wouldn't have lots of bowel movements while you are out there.

Interviewer: Sure.

Respondent: I mean literally that's what we were told and after, go ahead I am sorry.

Interviewer: I believe, okay go ahead, I want to hear what you experienced.

Respondent: No, yeah light dinner and then nothing until Thursday morning's breakfast.

Interviewer: And was it what you typically eat or was it different?

Respondent: No, it was typically, it was different and I didn't eat well, I mean there was plenty of food while we were there but I am not a vegetarian by any means, I need my meats. I am a very thin guy but I still like my chicken and fish and my proteins and it was a very strict vegetarian diet. So there were a lot of things that I didn't eat. I ate mostly salads the entire time I was there.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: And that's the only thing I could eat that I would enjoy.

Interviewer: Okay. And that morning, you had had a breakfast. Was it a filling breakfast, a light breakfast?

Respondent: Again, you want to know what I ate or what they offered?

Interviewer: What you ate.

Respondent: Breakfast was amazing every day but it was light compared to what I had been eating because for some reasons, I wasn't the least bit hungry and I found that for most people. Even though we hadn't eaten in 36 hours, I wasn't the least bit hungry. So that normally what I had were scrambled eggs and some oatmeal and maybe a piece of bread. And that morning, I maybe ate half of my normal amount because I wasn't hungry.

Interviewer: Okay. And what kind of quantities of liquids?

Respondent: Tons of water, typical usually orange juice for breakfast and then they had various kinds of teas but lots and lots of water, and that was on that we were told, drink water, drink water, drink water.

Interviewer: Okay, and did you do the salt?

Respondent: Yeah, one teaspoon each day.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you know what to expect from the Vision Quest?

Respondent: No, I had never heard of a Vision Quest. No, that we weren't really told what to expect, I mean we kind of felt like they were trying to put a little fear into it, not to make us afraid and scared, but maybe kind of preparing us for it. But no, I had no idea, I thought we were going to be incredibly, that was my big fear was that I was going to be incredibly bored. But I had been 18 years in the military too, so I was concerned about you know wild animals and getting bit by snakes and spiders and things like that, but again tired too. But no, did you ask me if I was concerned or if I knew what to expect?

Interviewer: If you knew what to expect?

Respondent: No, not at all, I didn't really expect anything because I just thought we were going to be really bored, and we were.

Interviewer: Okay. How was it that you knew what to take or what not to take? How was that presented?

Respondent: We were told. You really couldn't take anything, your sleeping bag, what you were wearing, and your journals, that was it, that was all you were allowed to take.

Interviewer: Okay. Now let's talk about sweat lodge. Did you know what to expect?

Respondent: No. Even though they gave us a little, he gave us a little talk beforehand and said it was going to be brutally hot, it was going to be excruciatingly hot, you are going to feel like your skin is burning off. There are no words that could have possibly prepared you for it. I had no idea, I thought it was just going to be like a really hot sauna.

Interviewer: Okay. So, the little talk before, he just said brutally hot, anything else said, any other information given?

Respondent: Yeah, lots of information given. You can tell I have been interviewed by lots of reporters, so I am trying to be very careful about what I say, he may not have used the word "brutally," I mean he did say it was going to be extremely hot. Yeah, I mean he had told us that he was quite proud of his sweat lodge and he had other native Americans tribe men or shamans or whatever, I don't remember what word he used that have come and seen his and said his was the most extreme sweat lodge they had ever seen. That's very incriminating but it's true, I mean you know --

Interviewer: That's all I am asking for is the truth.

Respondent: Yeah, I know, and that's one of the reasons why I did come forward and start talking to these people because I don't hate James, I am not angry at James, I am more upset the way he's handled the situation afterwards as far as the families and the rest of us were concerned. But I got accused of being his cult follower and his disciple and whatever and I stood up for him and said no, that did not happen and I got accused of speaking up for him. So if he goes down, he gets arrested, he gets arrested by his own fruition but I don't want him to get in trouble for something that he didn't do.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: He's in enough trouble as it is I think, so --

Interviewer: Well, and whether it's believed or not, law enforcement wants to get to the bottom of the truth, we want all the facts, that's all. We don't want to cast any light one way or the other, we want to get to the bottom of the truth to what happened, so we can explain to the families of the people that died, these are the things that happened.

Respondent: Yeah. To be honest with you and again this is just Richard Wright's opinion, I don't think anybody would ever really know what happened, I mean you will know what happened but if you were to ask why we did it and we trusted them because there were several people in the audience who were Dream Team members that had done this even several times including Liz Newman who I got to be very close with. She had

done this event four times. So she was there raving and couldn't wait to get back in, so I would have no reason to worry about doing it. Again in my opinion, I think different people's bodies just process things differently and I think some people may have pushed themselves further than they thought their bodies were capable of or maybe they did allow the intimidation factor to play into it. That's one of the things that's come up that I really am bothered by because people have eluded to or insinuated that James didn't let people leave and he stood at the door and physically restrained people. That is not true, not even remotely true. Yes, we were all encouraging others to stay that wanted to leave, all of us, not just James. And if I thought my life was in danger, I would have gotten out, I would have gone through the door no matter what, I mean they couldn't have stopped me and I don't think they would have.

Interviewer: Was it explained though, and this is just a question, was it explained that you enter clockwise and you leave clockwise, and you can leave whenever the door is open?

Respondent: As far as entering and leaving clockwise, yes, that's correct. I don't remember it being discussed about when you could or couldn't leave. I don't remember that being discussed.

Interviewer: Okay. Well to me, it makes the most sense because you have enough light to see to get out and not get into the hot rocks.

Respondent: I knew that was the case but I can't say that I remember him telling this or it being discussed. You knew when the door opened, you were able to leave.

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

Respondent: None, nothing, that's one of the problems I have, nothing was said.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: Other than being careful about not falling in the pit that I do remember.

Interviewer: Okay, and that seems to be --

Respondent: Which is one of the reasons why, go ahead I am sorry.

Interviewer: Go ahead.

Respondent: Yeah, which is one of the reasons why and again entering and leaving clockwise is a traditional thing but you need to say that it is a safety thing, you can't have people trying to come barraging out of the door all at once because people would fall in. so it was an orderly exit, you were supposed to leave orderly so that you didn't fall in.

Interviewer: Right, okay. Did anyone tell you what to expect inside the sweat lodge and how to respond to any reactions you might have?

Respondent: No, nothing. I ended up developing that on my own, like I said, I had been in the military 18 years so I had worn chemical warfare suits, I had been to the desert several times, so I knew how to handle my body in a heated situation and you had to properly breathe, I mean that's one of the issues, I knew I am kind of going way off tangent but I think that's one of the things that we should have been told. I knew because of my military service. I knew most of the people that when their throats and lungs were burned just because they were breathing heavily through their mouth trying to suck in as much air as they could. Had we been told breathing through your nose out your mouth, that kind of thing, just that simple thing may have saved their life.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: Because I think what happens is in addition to the extreme heat, lack of oxygen, they may have hyperventilated themselves which is why I think most people passed out.

Interviewer: That's always good possibility where we are sorting threw them one piece at a time.

Respondent: Yeah, I wouldn't want your job for anything right now.

Interviewer: I have a year to retire.

Respondent: There you go, this may still be going on when you retire.

Interviewer: Well, I am also going to do the drop program so I will still be around. Let's see we talked about how long you stayed in. What did you feel?

Respondent: It was miserable, you mean physically?

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: It was miserable. It was hot and I couldn't breathe. But for me, it was a test for me. I didn't feel, I guess it was a part of me that felt like I didn't want to let him down, I want to do this. But I had asked him in the morning session about courage, developing courage. And I even joked with him before we went in about this being the ultimate test of courage for me. So, I mentally was okay. I knew I was going to make it. There were no times that I would feel like I was going to die or my health was in danger or anything like that. But physically, yeah, it was really, really hot and it was hard to breathe. But again I just kept focusing on my affirmations and the things that we were saying and I kept my face low to the ground, I knew that's where the oxygen was. But it was miserable.

Interviewer: When you left and of course you got hosed down when you were outside, is that right?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: So, that provided you some relief and then you came back in and you were closer to the door. Did it seem as hot there as it did when you were in the other location?

Respondent: It's hard to say. I want to say yes because you know hot is still hot and once the door is closed, and I think I told one of the reporters this, it's like having a nonsmoking section in an airplane. Eventually the entire plane is a smoking section. So I think once that door is closed, remember once the door was open, the heat was able to dissipate and then they put the rocks in, we closed the door and then the water went on the rocks. So the steam was emitted when the door was closed. So I personally believe we were all exposed to the same level of heat, because if you are in a closed environment together, it doesn't matter where you are sitting, it's still hot, it's the same heat actually especially when you are in a circle.

Interviewer: Okay, but how about air, air quality, amount of air coming in?

Respondent: What do you mean?

Interviewer: Okay, the door is open, air is going to flow through that opening--

Respondent: Yes, I think that was a bit different because I was at the door, I was able to get more air than the people in the back would have.

Interviewer: Okay. And then the less air, the more they struggle. I am trying to, as I talk to different people and their different locations and their perspective, put myself there and see what they are seeing and see how this is affecting the other people.

Respondent: Yes, I still see it as if I was there this morning and I told Sylvia. I dream about it every night, not necessarily nightmares, I just dream about being there and reliving everything that happened. So no, I see it perfectly clear from my perspective. That's one of the other things too. People went on the Facebook and they were saying well maybe Beverly and Sydney lied and her mom lied no, you have to understand, this scene was extremely chaotic and we were all in different places at different times, like Beverly was outside the lodge when I was still inside the lodge. So she would have seen things differently than I would have, it doesn't mean that either one of us are wrong or lying, we just saw different things.

Interviewer: Absolutely.

Respondent: So, I think that's what's going to muddle your investigation as well. You have 61 people that all saw and felt different things.

Interviewer: Well, and there are some additional people that never were inside so we have got different accounts there too. So you are right, it's like you have this car crash and you ask five people and you get a different perspective from all five people. Did anyone speak during this ceremony?

Respondent: Inside?

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: Yeah, absolutely, we all did. James led this ceremony, he would do his chants and his things, but then we all did our own individual affirmations or what was the word, I don't remember.

Interviewer: I've heard proclamations, I have heard different descriptions.

Respondent: Well, it's the same thing, it's just they call a different word, it was a C word I can't remember, your intention, with our intentions.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: We had the bags, the seven bags filled with tobacco and each one was supposed to represent a new intention for our new life. So every one of us had our own intention. And then James would say you know proclaim your intention and we would all do it at the same time. So I have had people ask me, the press reporters, did you hear other people talking, no way. When you are in a room full of 64 people all yelling at the same time, there is no way you can discern one person's voice over another, all you can hear is your own.

Interviewer: Right, and there was chanting, okay. And that's what's difficult who and what were they saying, what could you make out other than your own voice.

Respondent: Nothing really.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: Because I was focusing on my intention on what I was saying.

Interviewer: Right.

Respondent: I was leaning on people, I had people leaning on me, we were that close and I couldn't tell what anybody was saying and I wasn't really trying to.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: I was doing this for me, I mean I know that sounds somewhat selfish but I wasn't trying to listen to anybody else because their intention was their business, it was none of my business what they wanted for their life.

Interviewer: Right, no, that's not selfish. That was the purpose of why you were there.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did anyone leave the lodge other than through the door that you know of?

Respondent: Not that I know of, no you mean during the ceremony?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: No, not that I know of, but in fact, I would say no, not during the ceremony at all, no.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you ever hear specifically someone saying I'm having problems, I can't breathe, this person's passed out, any of those pressures?

Respondent: In between the rounds, yeah, because that's when we opened door, we had light, that's when we checked on each other. People that wanted to leave would leave and then we would all check on each other and anybody that would pass out, we took out, we carried out to the outside. But in between, it was dark so you couldn't tell if anybody has passed out. I kind of told Sylvia or one of the reporters it's not like somebody announced so I am passing out. You just went to sleep, you just passed out. So you would not know until the doors opened that somebody had passed out unless they were laying on you. But otherwise, you wouldn't have known.

Interviewer: Did you help move anybody out that had passed out?

Respondent: I helped but I never left the lodge, I mean because you couldn't stand up so it was very difficult to move somebody. They were practically, literally dragging people out because you couldn't pick them up. So I helped that way but I never lifted anybody to get them out of the lodge because I never left the lodge.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you know how many people were helped out and at what round, can you give me any details about that?

Respondent: No, because it was varied. You had several people that went out during the round but you had people that came back in too. I was the first one that went out and came back in, but then after me, I guess you know people came back in as well. And remember, in between each round, it was still quite chaotic. People were leaving, people were coming in, you heard people outside yelling, we were encouraging people to not leave. So you couldn't keep track of who was coming in and going.

Interviewer: Okay. And what were you saying to encourage people to not leave?

Respondent: You can do it, be strong. James was saying this is not your body, work through the pain, things like that.

Interviewer: Okay, encouragement to --

Respondent: Yeah. Because that's human nature is to quit anytime you are faced with any kind of difficult situation, so yeah, but nobody was physically restrained from leaving, no. But one of my favorite things that James loved, he may never remember but it's an old Navy saying that pain is nothing more than weakness leaving the body.

Interviewer: Oh yeah, I have heard it all my career.

Respondent: Yeah, so that was one of my mantras that I was saying and I guess James had never heard of it, he liked it so much.

Interviewer: Did you fill out any medical forms or were you asked any health-related questions?

Respondent: No, again one of my issues. I went through a seminar this last weekend and there were health questions on there and it was just a seminar which was --

Interviewer: Different seminar or James Ray or a different?

Respondent: No, different.

Interviewer: Okay. What if any symptoms did you have while you were in the sweat lodge and then afterwards?

Respondent: Well obviously the heat could be, extreme sweating, shortness of breath, it's hard to breathe, but from that, it was really just lightheadedness. We did kind of feel a little delusional, a little disoriented, kind of like if you are hyperventilating, you get that lightheaded kind of out of it.

Interviewer: Little dizzy fog --

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. And once you were outside, how long was it before you kind of felt a little better?

Respondent: Probably, it's hard to say, we didn't have watches or anything but say I don't know maybe 15 minutes to half hour before I was actually able to stand up. I tried standing up a few times because I wanted to help other people, but I couldn't stand up.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you remember anyone saying something about a flashlight or a light during the ceremony?

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: What was that about?

Respondent: Yeah, and again that was one of the other things that you look on Facebook, that pissed me off, that what did happen was yeah, evidently, and again this was when I was in the front next to the door, somebody was lifting up the tent in the back. Now we didn't know if it was somebody from the outside lifting it up or somebody from the inside lifting it up because remember it was extremely dark, so you couldn't see who was doing what. We couldn't imagine why somebody from the outside would be trying to lift tent, but yeah that was it. And James yelled out to turn it off. He thought somebody had turned on a flashlight and I know that because he asked for the light to be passed to the front where he was. So, I am assuming it could only be a flashlight or some kind of a mechanical light that he thought it was, that in no time did we know or realize at that moment that it was the actual tent, I mean somebody did say that, it was no flashlight it was tent that was lifted up, but we didn't know it at the time.

Interviewer: And what did James say about that, do you remember?

Respondent: No, and again I know you've heard the comment about it being sacrilegious, but I don't recall whether it came before that or after that. It was regarding that incident but I don't know if he was referring to lifting the tent was sacrilegious or lighting a flashlight was sacrilegious.

Interviewer: Okay, but he did make the comment of whatever it was, was sacrilegious to the ceremony.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Was there anyone still inside when you left?

Respondent: Oh yeah, several people.

Interviewer: How could you tell?

Respondent: Well, because it was light now, I mean I sat there for a few minutes just trying to gather my bearings a little bit and then remember I was at the front by the door on the left so I had to crawl all the way around. And I had left Sylvia and I remember we were originally sitting in the back and we had left our little bags, we were supposed to hang our bags our, little tobacco bags from the structure so I wanted to get those for us. So I crawled around and stopped and pulled those down and then crawled back out the front of the way. But yeah I was crawling over people and there were people that were

sitting there and people in front of me that weren't moving. So yeah there were several people still in there.

Interviewer: Okay. And did you tell anyone that there were people still inside or --

Respondent: No, they knew, I mean there were people still coming in and out trying to help those that needed help.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: And again I was very disoriented, I was really kind of focusing on me and getting me out and you know getting to Sylvia. At that point, I was so elated and proud of myself because I made it through, that was a big challenge for me. So I was still kind of euphoric and so proud of myself for having made it through something so difficult.

Interviewer: Sure.

Respondent: Not physically, I mean it was physically challenging but mentally I faced a big fear and I did it. So at no point did we realize anybody was dying or was dead or even seriously hurt for that matter.

Interviewer: Okay. So it wasn't at that point that you realized that?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you ever hear anyone say something about I died or I can't breathe or I am having a heart attack, anything like that?

Respondent: Not the part about the dying and the heart attack, I did hear him yelling and screaming, but remember at that point, I was laying on the ground myself and water being hosed off and wrapped in blankets. So I could hear it in the distance but it's kind of like a faint memory kind of thing. But I could not discern any word. What was the other thing you asked, the dying, heart attack --

Interviewer: Can't breathe.

Respondent: Yeah, that I could hear, yeah there were people next to me that were having a hard time breathing, people that were throwing up, yeah people just trying to get themselves back together.

Interviewer: And can you tell me who was experiencing some of these things that you can recall?

Respondent: No, I mean I remember seeing people's faces but I don't remember all their names. The one that sticks out for me is really her name is Julie, but I remember that

because I looked over and she was the one throwing up and somebody was kind of caressing her back so that she could throw up.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: It was just a really chaotic scene, so it was really hard to kind of focus on any one thing, especially in the condition that I was in.

Interviewer: Sure, okay. Did you hear anybody say something like it's a good day to die? And I am referring to this, I think I now know how that statement came to be, but did you share something along those lines?

Respondent: I don't know, not that I remember of.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: I remember that common scene throughout the week that we were going to die and that's been taken out of context too, that we were going to spiritually die, our old selves were going to die. But that was a common scene throughout the week --

Interviewer: Yeah, that's what I am saying. We have now come to realize that this was for something new to live, something old must die. It's that kind of context, not a murder type context and that's what I am asking is and you are telling me what I have heard all along, is this is the new growth, the new life.

Respondent: Yeah exactly.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: That's why I kind of blew up with the public because they hear these things and take it completely out of context, and it wasn't anything like that.

Interviewer: Okay. Did you happen to see how James Ray was reacting or responding to the people once it was over that were in distress or needing help?

Respondent: Yeah, because he was sitting right behind me. When I was laying on the ground, he was sitting on a chair right behind me, a little bit like two feet behind me. I remember looking up I mean I broke down in tears and I looked him up like James, I made it, I made it. He is like he was so proud of me. But he was really kind of sitting there just watching everything. And t again, I know some of this is my opinion but people have made a big deal that he just sat and did nothing. And they lost side of the fact that he just came out of that thing with us, so he was probably a little disoriented as well. But from physically what I remember, he was sitting there kind of watching the whole scene while everybody was, I guess his Dream Team people or whoever, they were taking care of everybody else. And then I do remember him getting up. I didn't know that James and Kirby were in the back of the tent or outside the tent, but then I do

remember seeing him over there, tending I wouldn't say, tending to them but he was watching the scene of what was going on. I don't remember and I am not sure this is what you are asking, but I don't remember him physically taking care of anybody himself, he was more kind of watching the whole scene.

Interviewer: Okay. Do you feel he should have responded any differently?

Respondent: Well, no, not really, because I think he should have been a little more directing, a little more telling hey we need to help over here, we need to help over there. He is not a doctor so he wouldn't physically know what to do. I think his attitude was a little more, we have got a nurse over there, so let her take care of them. But I kind of thought that he was more afraid of somebody not knowing what they were doing causing more harm than just leave them alone kind of thing. He said we've got a nurse, let the nurse take care of them.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: In my opinion, there should have been medical staff there anyway so he shouldn't have had to do anything.

Interviewer: Well, I want to give you an opportunity to give me all of that and just a few more questions because I think there is a lot of concerns about what should have been in place. How did you feel about leaving the sweat lodge during the ceremony?

Respondent: In what regards?

Interviewer: What were your feelings? Was it something I need to do this, what were your feelings about?

Respondent: Yeah, I felt I needed to do this, I needed to do it for me. It was a test for me and it was a challenge and I felt like yeah I needed to do it, I needed to stay, I needed to fight through it.

Interviewer: Okay. And I think that answered the next one also. So the next one, is there any reason you didn't leave sooner and I think you just answered that, you felt that it was a challenge and you needed to fight through it.

Respondent: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: Yeah, because I did leave when I felt that I couldn't go through it but then somehow when I was laying in there, I got the second wind and mentally said no, I can't quit because my whole life I've quit a lot of things and this was a challenge I didn't want to quit, I didn't want to be a quitter. That was the old part of me that I felt I was dying. It was the quitter inside me, the coward inside me.

Interviewer: No, I don't think you are a coward. Did you see anyone being discouraged from helping anyone?

Respondent: Yeah, I could hear it, remember I couldn't really see but I could hear, yeah, Sylvia was discouraged, told to leave people alone.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: And then I did hear that repeated to other people, although I don't remember who they were talking to.

Interviewer: And what was that, how was that said?

Respondent: Leave them alone, let them have their own journey, let them have their own experience, which I know you've heard that a dozen times, so yeah that part was true.

Interviewer: And you heard it, do you know whose voice that was coming from?

Respondent: No, because it was probably a few different people that said it.

Interviewer: Okay. When did you first realize that something was wrong?

Respondent: You mean seriously wrong?

Interviewer: Yes.

Respondent: When the ambulance had showed up.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: Because remember I was laying down kind of getting myself together and I knew that they were taking care of, I mean because they were performing CPR on a lot of people but I knew James and Kirby were on the other side of the tent but I couldn't see them. But I just thought they were being just taken care of like I was, I mean before hosing me down and comforting me I thought that was what was going on. And then when the ambulance had showed up, I still didn't think anybody had died. I just thought people were being taken to the hospital for precaution reasons.

Interviewer: Okay. Rick, what do you think happened that caused three people to die and so many people to get sick?

Respondent: Well, I think I mean I have been asking myself that same question but like I said before, I think different people's bodies process different stimulus differently. I know there has been a lot of speculation about was this sweat lodge any different than the ones years passed, I don't know I wasn't there. I know I referred back to Liz, I know she

had been through this four times, why did this one take her life. I don't know, I mean I have no frame of reference. I know it was extremely hot, I know it was probably over, from again what I have seen or heard about it or read, that was overcrowded, they weren't supposed to be more than 10 or 15 people and there we had 64 people in there. I am an intelligent person so I know that 64 people fighting for the same oxygen is not a good thing. And then I think really though, probably the lack of medical personnel there because maybe had somebody been there and checked everybody in between rounds or maybe checked them immediately after the whole thing was over, maybe a doctor could have saved their life. I think that was probably the biggest thing is not having maybe any kind of medical questionnaire or any kind of medical say hey if you've got a heart condition, you shouldn't do this or if you've got high blood pressure, you shouldn't do this, maybe a little research on their part to know how this is going to affect different people physically. A heavy person is probably going to affect differently than somebody like me, I mean I am an athlete, I had been 18 years in the military. My body is going to react through something like this much differently than somebody who's 100 pounds over in weight and smokes.. So I think they should have done a little more research for each person, a medical history.

Interviewer: Maybe a better screening.

Respondent: Yeah or some screening, it was not at all.

Interviewer: Exactly.

Respondent: But I think, yeah, prevention is worth whatever they say but --

Interviewer: An ounce of prevention and a pound of cure.

Respondent: Yeah, taking that extra step beforehand and then having proper medical equipment and medical personnel there afterwards, and maybe a little more time in between rounds to evaluate people, because Kirby and James may have died 30 seconds into that last round and then you know I know that brain can only go six minutes without oxygen before it's dead. So each round was 15-20 minutes and they died at the very beginning of the round, we didn't know they died or had passed out until the end of the round. So maybe there should have been a little more time and attention taken to each person, so hey look, I've checked your dialect, make sure you've dilated properly, how are you feeling, that kind of thing.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: That would probably have been a big thing because I don't think nobody (Inaudible 50:02) made it through one round, so if you can make it through one round and then you've got appropriate timing between the recuperating which is I think what happened for me. Yeah, you could have easily done it.

Interviewer: I think there were several and I have talked to mostly men that went out, cooled down and came back. The women that went out, it didn't seem that they went back. So it's just, yeah --

Respondent: And maybe the level of heat. Again I don't know anything about sweat lodges so I don't know how hot they are supposed to be. I know like I said according to him, maybe before we went, this was the hottest sweat lodge ever conceived supposedly, I mean I don't know how many rocks were supposed to be in there and how many are not supposed to be and how hot it's supposed to, I don't know.

Interviewer: Have anyone talked to you about what to say if questioned by law enforcement?

Respondent: Oh no. I haven't heard from anybody, from James Ray.

Interviewer: Okay. Did James Ray or anyone else tell you what his specific qualifications for any sweat lodge were?

Respondent: No, not really, I mean it's kind of all insinuated. He has been doing this for 20 some years and not this particular even but he is trained and dealt with the shamans and the Indians and all this training and education that he's done. So it's more assumed and more inferred than specifically told.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: I think he could have told me anything because I never heard of a sweat lodge so I didn't know what it was so I didn't know what qualifications you would have needed, and then eventually, I guess that probably most people there didn't either.

Interviewer: I heard something about some Holotropic Breathwork, what's that?

Respondent: Again something else I had never heard of but basically they did that one of the earlier nights, I think it was Monday night we did that. It was in the big tent and basically you lay down. And that we were coached on well, I feel well, how to breathe and what to expect. The basic is really kind of a breathing thing. And again I think basically what you are doing is a self induced hyperventilation and just hyperventilation the way you are supposed to breathe, I mean you breathe that way, you are going to have to ventilate. So it's basically I guess designed to put you in somewhat altered state so that you can kind of guess face whatever stuff is going on inside you. There is music or chanting going on, and music and things like that going on.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: That's pretty much it, just breathing.

Interviewer: But that one was monitored that people were around you checking on you?

Respondent: Oh yeah, that was very well conducted. People were constantly walking around checking on you, talking to you, I mean people were literally on their hands and knees whispering in your ear. Yeah, that one was very well monitored.

Interviewer: Okay. Were you ever checked on during the Vision Quest?

Respondent: No. Yeah I had an issue with that. Again being in the military, I have done survival training. And that you asked what I had experienced or what I expected it to, that was one of my issues having been in the wilderness I kind of knew little things and Sylvia is a little upset with me for not telling her about tucking in your pants into your socks so that snakes don't crawl up your pants, things like that. But no, you would ask there was no safety precaution, but no there was nobody there to check on you and that was one of the things that I had a big issue with, because it took us around in the middle of the night so you had no idea where you were and you had no idea where anybody else was because you were completely isolated and alone. Well, what would have happened if I got bit by a snake or I got attacked by an animal, I wouldn't have known how to get home, I had no first aid. If I got bit by a rattlesnake, by the time I would have found my way back to the lodge, I would have been dead. So that was my big concern afterwards. Yeah, somebody should have checked on it or we should have whistles or something like that where we could have alarmed people that we were in trouble. I knew Sylvia was near by, I guess we were numbered so I knew, but I was thinking well if she gets attacked by a lion or something, what am I supposed to do about it.

Interviewer: Okay. Anything else you think would be important for me to know?

Respondent: No, well I think you really covered it. I don't know I think you've got most of it. Again I'm probably not telling you anything you haven't already heard it anyway.

Interviewer: That's okay, right we want to hear it from every one of you.

Respondent: Is there anything that you might be able to share with me that you are allowed to share?

Interviewer: No.

Respondent: Okay. I know that because a lot of people are speculating, I mean do you have an idea when this might be wrapped up or if and when formal charges are going to be filed or anything like that?

Interviewer: That is a very difficult question to answer but I will give you the best answer that I can, and that is, we are working just as fast as we can work. There is a team of us assigned to it. And we have got a couple more people that we want to speak to before we go to our county attorney and present it, and that's the deciding factor. But time frame, I don't even know if you will know we are going to make charge, if we would be able to do charges before the 1st of the year, I mean this is one of the most labor-intensive cases that I have ever seen in my career.

Respondent: Yeah. Again I don't want to get into a legal thing, I mean I am very educated so I know some things. I had been talking to Sylvia, I said you know the police are not going to announce something as a homicide without you can't say something as a homicide and then not say somebody did it. But I know and I am not rushing you at all, I appreciate the fact that you guys are taking your time and doing it right and you know covering the basis and you want to make sure that everybody that's negligible or involved is included, that it's done thoroughly and correctly. So I applaud you for that.

Interviewer: Bottom-line, we want to do the most thorough investigation that we can and that may include involving people with a whole lot more expertise and intelligence and knowledge into areas that detectives and law enforcement, we don't have. So that is going to take time.

Respondent: Can I ask you, have you guys talked to him yet, I mean I know he hasn't cooperated, but has he spoken to you guys now?

Interviewer: I can't say.

Respondent: Okay. Can you give me or Sylvia any advice as far as because we disputed the charges with our credit card company and I am sure you may have gotten this question a dozen times too? I know I have read stories where people have tried to get refunds back from James Arthur Ray and they have been denied to take them to court and lost, but I don't think anybody has experienced anything like this before. So, I could not get anybody on the phone over there for a while and nobody responded to e-mails, I think their offices were closed. And then we finally did get an e-mail back from them saying they are looking into refund request and maybe giving us an answer early next week. Our concern is we paid for future events that we don't honestly believe are going to take place. I love James as a person and for what he's taught me, but I don't see how he is going to get out of this legally. And even if he doesn't go to jail, I think the lawsuits alone are going wipe him out, so we are concerned --

Interviewer: You know you are probably very right that this is going to be snarled up for a long time.

Respondent: Yeah, I mean look at OJ got it off but he was wiped off because of the lawsuits afterwards. People died and people spent days in jail and people were in hospital, people are going to want restitution for that, but we are concerned about the future events that we don't believe are really going to take place. So my question is do you have any suggestions or advice or anything we can do to ensure that we get our money back from those events?

Interviewer: That would be a legal advice and I am not allowed to give that.

Respondent: Okay. All right, well like I said I am hoping that they just give us the money back but in the meantime, we were in dispute at the charges with the credit card company anyway.

Interviewer: Good, and I wish you the very, very best. And Rick, I want to thank you very much for speaking to me. If you like, I can give you my e-mail address. If you think of something that we did not cover, shoot me an e-mail, or I can give you my phone number, you can give me a call, whatever you would like to do.

Respondent: Go ahead, whatever you need.

Interviewer: Okay, my phone number is [REDACTED], that's my direct line. And I have a rather long e-mail address but I can give that to you if you would like it.

Respondent: Sure, go ahead.

Interviewer: Okay, it's [REDACTED]

Respondent: Like my military ID. One thing I would like to add, and again you probably have heard it, but one of the things that really bothered me, that I had seen online or through Facebook what have you, has been they accused James's staff of taking so long to notify the families and people, the people that were in the hospital were admitted Jane Does or John Does and the only thing that I could say is we didn't fill out any kind of emergency contact forms. So in this event, they had no idea who to contact, so there is no way they could have possibly contacted anybody to let them know people had died over in the hospital. So, that may have been a little precautionary measure that could have been taken as well. Yeah, nobody thinks about these things but yeah if they had, of course it took them, I didn't even know how they figured out how to contact James or Kirby's family or Liz's family for that matter. You know what I mean, I mean if I had died -- Interviewer: Yeah, the Angel Valley Retreat fortunately had a little bit more information on some of their forms, which kept digging, found cell phones you know just --

Respondent: Yeah, but if you fill out that one little form, it takes three seconds to figure out of form and in the case of emergency contact, my wife, here is her cell phone number, through the e-mail here is her address, it would have avoided all of this. And the same thing, I mean I thought that as the helicopters were taking them away, some of them are like t-shirts and shirts, they have no ID, when they get there and the hospital was like 45 minutes away, how are they supposed to know who these people are, they just know they have got somebody that's unconscious coming to the hospital. Since it was a 45-minute drive, it took you know staff 45 minutes to get there to tell the hospital who these people were. That was the only other thing I could have added. Maybe an emergency contact form could have --

Interviewer: So that family could have been contacted a little faster, yeah, absolutely.

Respondent: Because I think I did speak Liz's brother and I mean that's one of things he was upset about because he found out when he saw the news report, that's how he found out. That's a pretty crappy way to find out his sister was in a coma.

Interviewer: Yeah, and even for us, law enforcement was having a little bit of a hard time getting information and I will just leave it at that.

Respondent: Yeah, because there is none, I mean anyway.

Interviewer: All right. Well, enjoy your football game and thank you again. If you think of something, please give me a call.

Respondent: Thank you, no problem.

Interviewer: All right, bye-bye.

Respondent: All right, bye-bye.

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