

*I/V Shawna Bowens By Det. Parkison #C34

Second Interview with Shawna Bowens-October 13, 2009-Verde substation.

I had received a voicemail from Shawna asking if she could speak with me again. I arranged to interview her on October 13. The following is a summary.

She said she was there because the Mercer's were helping with the rocks. She said the Mercer's are associates of hers and they told her she ought to come and help. Shawna thought that would be great because she has done lodges before. She had a few clients she needed to see that afternoon and could not reschedule so she asked the Mercer's if she could come a little late which they said would be fine. She said she called them around 2 p.m. to let them know she had clients and they were just getting ready to start the lodge.

She left her office around 4:55 p.m with a 10-15 minute drive to Angel Valley. She said she was met at the gate by Debbie Mercer in a golf cart "freaking out". Debbie told her something horrible had gone wrong and that she (Shawna) needed to go help them. Shawna said she had no idea why Debbie would say that because she has done sweat lodges a long time and there is "no need to help those people". You come out of the sweat lodge refreshed; you have a drink of water and go to dinner. Debbie told her she was waiting for the ambulances. Debbie said to follow her which she did and then pointed to the lodge and told her to go over there. Debbie said she needed to back and guide the ambulances in.

Shawna said when she got there it appeared everyone was out of the lodge and people were laying on the ground with other people around them tending to them. She said the first person she came upon was the deceased person. She said as she got there the ambulance arrived and they went directly to the deceased women. She said she then helped two women take a friend of theirs to her cabin. She said this woman was in a blanket and in a golf cart wanting to go to her cabin and go to sleep. She said the women asked her (Shawna) to hold her. Shawna got into the golf cart too and held her. She said the woman had a blank stare on her face and began saying "why did James Ray do this, Why did James Ray do this", "Why did I look to James Ray, why why why". She said she was saying this over and over again. She said this woman did not appear to be fully conscious. She was shaking in fits. Shawna told the women that this lady had no business going back to her cabin and that she needed help so they turned back. They went back down (to the lodge).

They got her out of the cart and onto the ground. The lady kept saying "I died, I died, I died" over and over again. Shawna was trying to tell her she was alive and needed to stay with her. I asked who the woman was and she said Christine Bivens. Shawna said no one would help them. She said she didn't see anyone that was part of the retreat. She said there was one woman, who looked like she hadn't been in the sweat lodge, came over. She said this woman had on make up and dry clothes. This woman came over and Christine started to convulse and had foam coming out of her mouth. Shawna asked someone to bring over some water and she was able to get Christine to drink some water.

Shawna said she wondered if she was psychologically damaged because of the way she was talking. She said Christine's body was contorting and would say she was cold. They put a blanket over her. Shawna said you could see raised goose bumps all over her skin.

She said eventually a paramedic got over to them but said they had to tend to others who were more critical. Shawna said she was thinking if Christine wasn't critical there must be something else going on out there. They continued trying to keep Christine warm. I asked if Christine had been hosed down. Shawna didn't know but said her clothes were wet.

Shawna said at one point Christine began "screeching" James Ray's name and contorting her back and doing these weird things. What bothered Shawna was that she never saw James Ray tend to anyone, never got down on his hands or knees to offer blankets or water. Shawna states she wasn't there the whole time but while she was there she never saw him help. She said he just kind of stood there with two other people. She said she could tell he looked upset. She said she was on the ground getting muddy trying to help this woman. She said at one point when this woman (Christine) was yelling out James Ray's name he just looked over and then looked away. I asked if he heard her. She said everyone heard her screeching. She said she didn't motion for him to come over because she saw him as this celebrity figure and she felt intimidated to tell him what to do. She said it seemed strange to her that he didn't help in any way.

I asked where they were and where James Ray was when this happened. She said they were about 15 feet away from each other. She said he was near that tent that had the oranges and water. She said within earshot and eyeshot. I asked if she knew who the people were. She said she could describe one of them, female with her hair shaved short, she was shorter than James Ray and a little over weight. She thinks she has seen her at other James Ray events. It was her understanding that you had to do a series of his events before you progressed to this one so it is her assumption that the people there were strong followers of James Ray.

She said as much as she and her husband wanted to do this one they couldn't afford it. I asked if she still wanted to do one. She said no. I asked why. She said she has been trained by American Native elders for sweat lodge and she thinks he completely disrespected the ceremony. She does not think elders would have taught that. She said she was told by James Medicine Tree, who was told by elders, that they have gone to James Ray and told him to stop, that he wasn't doing it right and was hurting people. She said normal sweat lodge, you walk out refreshed and ready to eat a nice dinner, you don't walk out sick. She said she has talked to James Medicine Tree a couple of times since Friday (October 10, 2009).

Shawna said she will no longer be looking up to him or trusting him with her well being. She has done several sweat lodges but none with James Ray. Shawna told me she talked to a man that told her he "wiped out" on round 5 and didn't go "play full on". She said he looked really ashamed. Shawna told him that he took care of himself and questioned an authority figure and took care of himself and should be proud of himself. After he took

it in he said he was glad he did that because he was well enough and strong enough to pull the other people out.

I asked since she had been to other James Ray events if maybe she had insight as to why people stayed inside. She said she could only talk for herself. She said that the night of this incident she was telling her husband about it. She said those people were close to relief, all they had to do was to get on the other side of that tarp, get a drink of water, all they had to do was say they had enough and they were leaving. Her husband said that he knew she would have been strong enough to say she had enough and to leave. Shawna said she started crying and questioned whether or not she would have. She said she told her husband that she looked up to James Ray and how much of a fan she was and maybe would have stuck it out to impress him, and maybe her insecurities would have surfaced. She said maybe she would have played "full on" and not look like the wimp. Shawna said she wasn't sure and is grateful she never has to know what her decision would have been. She said she knows her ego can sometime get in the way especially if she is trying to impress a celebrity she may have pushed herself. She said she had to question herself whether or not she would have left.

She said she had an understanding that between round 5 and 6 one of the people running the fire heard people inside asking for help. She said the people running the fire told James Ray there were people asking for help and James Ray told them to leave them in. She said she doesn't know if it's true or not. I asked who said that. She said she heard that from Ted Mercer.

She said the two people that helped her with Christine did not appear to have participated in the sweat lodge. Their hair was dry, one had make up on and one had long brown hair that seemed to know people and had a file on them. She thinks the other woman might have been part of the dream team. She said there was a woman with an i.v. and a man kind of holding her. She said she went to tend to the man. Shawna said James Ray was right there. She said the man was cold and thirsty. He asked her to help him put his blanket back on. She asked if he would like some water and he said he would love some.

I asked if she thought James Ray was in shock or just overwhelmed. She said when she saw James Ray looking at the deceased woman it looked like shock and kind of like "what did I do". She said he walked back over towards that tent. She said it wasn't that he didn't care, the weird thing was that he didn't tend to anyone. She said maybe he was told if you don't know what to do get out of the way. She said but they let her help. She said she feels bad for James Ray, that he has a lot of good qualities. She said if the elders really did warn him that would bother her. She said her understanding, from talking to James Medicine Tree, he has met people that have had to have medical attention after attending a James Ray sweat lodge. She said the Mercer's told her that his sweat lodges are intense.

Date, Time, Reporting Officer:
Detective W. Parkison #C34

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