

\*I/V Sidney Spencer by Det. Parkison #C34

This interview took place on October 13, 2009. Sidney had just been released from the hospital and was staying in a hotel room with plans to go back home the following day. Also in the room was a friend of Sidney's and Sidney's daughter Alexis Reynolds. The following is a summary.

She said she has been to other James Ray events and each one is different. She said that is because he is trying to teach different things. She has never done his sweat lodge before. She did participate in the Vision Quest at this event (Sedona 09). She said she had dinner Tuesday night and then they were taken out to individual sites. She had no food or water again until Thursday morning. She said this was not a problem for her. She said they had been told to hydrate and to take a teaspoon of sea salt every day. She said she doesn't know if everyone followed the rules but she did.

I asked if she remembered what time they actually went into the sweat lodge. She said not exactly 3 or 4 o'clock. She said she remembers they had done a pretty big session as a group, one on one and a lot of questions going on and it went over. She said the lodge had been prepared and there was a little bit of pressure because he had gone over. She said they had 5 or 10 minutes to get down there and get prepared. She said that meant putting on something that could get wet and dirty and shoes that would protect your feet.

I asked if the meeting prior to the lodge was to discuss the lodge. She said it was for three things. She said to talk about the Vision Quest and what people had experienced. She said James' whole "thrust" is to help business people, individuals of all walks of life to push themselves forward. She said the challenge is for "you". She said the hair shaving thing was for people who worry too much about what others think about you then you really need to get over it so you can expand. She said for her that was an issue and there were a lot of people that didn't cut their hair, no one was forced to.

I asked, if during that time if he talked about the sweat lodge, what the rules were, what the protocol was. She said yes and there was a lot of things in that context. She said James has done a lot of esoteric work and studies with Shaman and a lot of studies about the healing aspect of the sweat lodge. She said the sweat lodge is another place where the heat and your capacity to challenge and where you wanted to go with it. She said it was where you could reach your levels. I asked if it was discussed what you were to do once you reached your level. She said you can leave.

She said there was a lady two people down from her. She said the lady was immediately frightened and had claustrophobia. She said there were a lot of people that had that fear. She said that was another reason for them to go in if they chose to go in. She said one of the things James Ray would say is "This is about your challenge, you can either not face it or maybe you don't have it and this isn't going to be useful to you". She said this whole aspect is what she thinks is not going to get represented correctly about what James is about. She said this lady immediately began crying, whimpering and moaning and he

(James) said "sweetheart, be a little stronger, be just a little stronger". She waited maybe another 5 minutes then she said, I can't do it anymore. He kissed her and said that is good and she left. When he opened the flap she left.

I asked if there was any discussion about people vomiting, passing out or getting sick during the lodge. She said James Ray said those things could happen. She thinks they assumed that if you threw up you would be let out and if anyone passed out they would be pulled out. She said James Ray talked about it being a possibility. I asked her if James Ray said that if they passed out they would be pulled out. She said he didn't say that, it was her assumption.

I asked other than the vomiting or passing out if there was any other reactions James told them about and she said not that she remembers. I asked if he told them why they might pass out or vomit. She said because of the extreme heat. She said the purpose was to reach that level where you have had enough.

I asked if there was any safety plan discussed before the lodge as to what to do if there was a problem. She said yes, that you would help your neighbor out. She said James Ray told them if your neighbor needs help to get out, to take care of it. I asked how that was to happen. She said if you think about it, there is a hole and you just find the closest way to the exit. I asked about some instructions about if you wanted to leave, when you could do that. She said there was a man that brought in the rocks, each level (round), James would tell him how much to bring in. The door would close and James would put water on it, then they would meditate. She said it was amazing for her because while she was dealing with the heat she found solutions to some things.

Sidney said that a good friend of hers was next to her. She thinks James (Shore) was to the right of her. She said on phase one he put in 12 rocks and closes the door. On phase two he opens the door and he says to the man how many new rocks he wants added to the pit and closes the door. James talks a little bit and asks for the door to open. James tells the guy how many rocks he wants in and the door is closed. She said they got to four and she thinks James might have miscounted. She said then he got to round 5 and closed the door. She said she had her knees up and her head down because the air (next to her chest) was cooler and that is the last thing she remembers. She doesn't remember anything else.

I asked where she was sitting. She indicated she was on the Northeast side about a 1/3 way from the flap. She indicated James Shore and Kirby were to the side of her. She did not change places during the time she was in the lodge. She said James Ray encouraged them to change places if you could see the person in the second ring wanted to move back. She said they were encouraged to lie down because the cooler air was at the bottom. She said James Ray was at the flap.

Sidney said that James Ray miss numbered one of the rounds so hers was six. She said he duplicated either round 3 or 4. She said she lost consciousness at 6 and not too long after the rocks had been put in. The next thing she remembers is waking up in the ICU.

I asked if she experienced any symptoms prior to losing consciousness. She said she didn't feel nauseous, to endure the heat she put her head down and meditated. She said while your mind was working on things the heat kind of went away.

I asked if anyone told her how she got out (of the lodge) and she was told that she had been dragged out. She does not know when she was drug out. Alexis said they spoke to Marta who is a staffer who told them no one was allowed in or out until the flap was open so once the flap was open then they would look in and maybe see if someone had gone down. She said Marta wasn't clear if it was at the end of the level that mom (Sidney) had gone or the next one that they got her, but they saw she had gone down, so they pulled her out. Marta told them Sidney was convulsing and foaming at the mouth. Then the ambulances arrived and they intubated her and flew her out.

I asked if before she lost consciousness if she saw or heard anyone that she thought was in distress. She said no. I asked if she heard anything from James (Shore) or Kirby and she said no. I asked if she heard them talking. She said no, "this wasn't for talking". She said James Ray didn't tell us not to talk he told them about introspection.

I asked if she heard anyone say anything about a flashlight and she said no. I asked if she saw any light other than the flap opening and she said no. She did not know of anyone going out of the lodge under the tarp (not the flap) or lifting the tarp to get air. She said no one around her did that. I asked how Kirby and James were positioned. She said just as she was. She thinks James' legs might have been out. She said at one point he sat "Indian style". She said Kirby was sitting like she was, but then changed her position at one point "Indian style", then changed back. She thinks when Kirby had her legs up to her chest they may not have been as close together as hers.

I asked Sidney if she had any concerns about James Ray's sweat lodge and how it was constructed. She said she thought it was different than others she had seen. She said the Chippewa sweat lodge would have been smaller, oval and covered with lots of things. She said they use 3 very thick blankets each representing something. She said there is 4 doors not one. This comes from her association with the Chippewa people.

I asked if she felt any air circulation while she was in the sweat lodge. She said no but she didn't expect any. She said when the flap was open you could feel the fresh air. She doesn't know what everyone else felt. She said it took time to bring in the new rocks so the flap had to be open for awhile. She doesn't know how long, maybe 5 minutes.

I asked if she filled out any waivers, paperwork or waivers or anything about medical conditions. She said that included the sweat lodge. She said prior to doing the lodge James Ray told them not to do this if (inaudible), if you have health problems. It was left to the individual to decide if they were healthy enough to do this. She said the waivers were signed before hand and they were given a long time to look at them. She said the packets are sent out prior to the event.

I asked if she heard anyone saying they thought they were having a heart attack or thought they were going to die. She said no, everyone was fine before she went unconscious.

I asked her what she thinks happened and she said she was clueless. She was fine then she wasn't. She thinks she made the decision that she had enough after the 6th round and she probably wouldn't have done 7 and would have opted out. She thinks she made that decision after about 3 minutes into round 6. She had already determined that when the flap opened she was going to leave.

I asked if she knew what the hoses outside the lodge were for. She said they are there to cool the body down immediately. She said once you get that toxicity out then your pours are open. She said that is a Native American tradition that they build their lodge close to water so they can jump in afterwards.

She said she was able to breathe okay while inside the lodge. She said it was just James Ray doing the leading and talking. I told her I had heard that some people left and others encouraged them to stay. I asked if she heard anything like that. She said she thinks she heard one person, she doesn't know who, exiting saying something about don't be a wuss. She thinks it might have been one of the bigger guys being macho.

I asked if she would do it again. She said she would do it a traditional way not this way. She said the Chippewa's do an all women's lodge and she would definitely do that one.

She remembers being concerned about the ring of people in front of them. She thinks there was a guy named Randy in front of Kirby and she remembers thinking at some point she would trade with them. She said the inner ring was close to the rocks and more heat.

Alexis asked her mom if James Ray had ever talked to them about the heat and his special way of doing it. She said yes, he did say his was one of the hotter ones because you could get to this level, transcending, so you could go to the place of introspection. Sidney said James Ray had told them that the Native American, who had done it for him in the past year, had told him he didn't believe white people could do the lodge. She said there were two reasons that white people couldn't do it, one was the heat and the other was the prayers that needed to be said that created the environment so people could release and look at their souls. She said James Ray was creating this environment that was hotter to get to this transcendence but the Native American said he wasn't saying the right stuff. She said this is something James Ray said prior to them going into the lodge. She said James' is to get to the transcending faster and accelerates that by more heat. I asked who it was he was consulting about that. She said Bear Cloud or something like that.

Sidney said that through this time they have been trying to piece things together and the name Bear Cloud has come up several times. She said Bear Cloud had predicted that it would go wrong and he wanted to do the first one so he could see and that so they

wouldn't be in trouble. Bear Cloud had admonished James and wanted to do the rocks so it wouldn't get out of control. She said this was told to her by one of the workers who were there that year that helped them construct the lodge. She said there was a guy, his wife, and their daughter there, who live there (Mercers), and he is the one that told her about Bear Cloud.

Alexis said she heard from Julie Min (a participant) that stayed on after the incident. Julie told her that a Native American had come to Angel Valley (believed to be 10-10-09) to see the lodge and to see what their "intentions" had been. He wanted to speak to the participants. He wanted to know why they had been doing what they had been doing. He learned the intentions of the participants were to let go etc. According to Min, Bear Cloud wanted to do a ceremony to help healing, the spirits and the energy of the place. He led them in a ceremony that helped shift the energy. Alexis said she doesn't know where Bear Cloud came from.

Alexis said that she remembers her mom telling her (sometime after the incident) that James told them that his sweat lodge is the hottest and some of the Native American's he has worked with were surprised by the heat and wondering why he would need it so hot. Alexis said one of the participants that came up to visit her mom in the hospital told them she had also heard that from James Ray. Alexis cannot remember the name of that participant.

I asked when she got her paperwork for this event if there was any mention of the sweat lodge or the vision quest and what to expect. She said yes, there always is. Alexis asked her mom again because she said there is always a surprise at these events. Sidney said, Alexis is right, there is always a surprise. Sidney said sweat lodge and vision quest were mentioned. I told her that I had talked to several people that did not know those things would be happening. Alexis said that is what she understood as well. Alexis said if you read the waiver liability very carefully you might be able to figure out what is going to happen. She said they don't spell out exactly what you are doing. Sidney said that is right but anyone could decline. She said it was described in detail at the time.

Alexis said she has been to several of these events and it is encouraged that you push yourself, it is encouraged that you play "full-on". I asked her what that means. Sidney said for example she was terrified of walking over the coals (different event) but she worked through the fear because she felt that fear surfaces in other areas of her life. I asked again about the full-on. Sidney said that is a James Ray term. Sidney said that means to her to go for it, face yourself, and step into that thing. Don't come in here "half-assed". don't come in here if you don't want to truly experience these things (Sidney's opinion).

Alexis said this was more of his "pinnacle" events. Harmonic Wealth, Creating Absolute Wealth and Quantum Leap are more of his lower level "softer" events. She said they are an introduction to the way that he thinks. She said once you get into Practical Mysticism and Spiritual Warrior usually you have gone to a couple of his events and know the thinking. Sidney said "you've chosen", "nobody asked you to sign up, it's not a cult".

Alexis said everyone expects that they will be safe. She said like the coals although your mind tells you can't, scientifically you can and it's actually a fairly safe thing, where you can face your fears.

Sidney offered another example, she said in each event James Ray has a subject. There was an event where they wore "rubbishy" clothes that were "dreadful". They were bag people and let off on the street. She said it was an interesting thing for those that have placed money at a pretty high level of their value system and personal identity. She said for some people it was life changing. Then they got scrubbed up and taken down to a boys club and played with the kids. Then they went back and had a black tie dinner. She said in one day he gave people those three experiences that should or could give them a reference point. She said she is not going to defend the negligence or what she thinks he should have done, all she can do is tell about the good he has done. She said she walked in there, it was her choice, and "he didn't make me do it". Alexis interjected that it wasn't her (Sidney) choice to be drug out. Sidney said, "yeah thank God somebody else did it". She said she was dead and had stopped breathing.

Interview concluded.

Recordings made into a c.d and will be placed into evidence.

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