

*I/V Mekosh, Brent 11/04/09 C36

On 11/04/09, at approximately 1400 hours, Brent Mekosh called me at my office for the purpose of a second interview. I attempted to record the conversation, but due to a technical malfunction was unable to get the interview on tape. The following report is from my notes.

Brent told me in either 1999 or 2000 he first learned of James Ray from reading a book written by Ray. In March of this year he attended a James Ray event with a friend and then signed up for additional events. He attended Practical Mysticism, Creating Absolute Wealth, Modern Magic and Spiritual Warrior.

Brent has been in a sweat lodge before, during survival training he attended in 2006. Brent described the differences between the two lodges as Ray's was much hotter, a lot more people and many more rocks used.

Brent told me as well as he could remember he thought the lodge was built either by James Ray's people or at his direction.

When I asked Brent if he felt the sweat lodge was safe before he went inside he did not give a yes or no answer. Brent explained that there were several over weight people and one with high blood pressure that were going inside and from his past experience the sweat lodge is managed for the weakest person present. That was not the case with Ray's sweat lodge.

Brent told me he was located on the inner circle with Taylor Butler on his left and Julie Minn on his right. James Ray was next to Taylor and they were right by the door flap. At some point he moved back from the rock pit and lay down near the outer wall of the lodge. Brent remained inside the entire time. He was not sure if they did 7 or 8 rounds as during the later rounds he was pretty out of it.

Brent described eating the vegan diet, which is not his usual diet. He participated in the Vision Quest prior to the Sweat Lodge and drank about 5 liters of water prior to the Sweat Lodge.

Brent said the Vision Quest was kind of what he expected due to his prior experiences. The Sweat Lodge was way beyond what he expected in intensity. Brent explained that it was difficult for him and he was near the door which gave him some break from the heat. Here is where Brent had a difficult time because he explained that he did get some benefit from the sweat lodge. It helped him process some difficult feelings he has from being in [REDACTED] at the time of 9/11 and losing friends in the terrorist attack that day. He explained he experienced a tremendous release of emotions and really cried during the last few rounds.

Brent said the only information given by James Ray was how to enter and when and how to leave the sweat lodge. No safety procedures were discussed or what to do or how to

respond to any reactions your body might have. Brent was surprised that Ray did not provide any cautions or information to the participants about the sweat lodge. Brent said that in past events a great deal of care was taken, preparing the participants. An example he gave was when they walked on fire and how serious Ray was in explaining the steps and watching people practice.

Brent told me that at one point, Julie held his hand and he heard people talking but mostly it was James Ray who spoke. Brent did recall hearing someone say we need to get her out, she is passed out. Someone, possible Ray, said they would get her out the next round. At one point there was a beam of light and Ray said this is a sacred space and told whoever lifted the lodge edge to put it down. Brent described what James Ray said during the ceremony as Ray's take on a blend of different religions. Brent did recall Ray saying you are not your body, you can push through it. Ray encouraged you to stay, but you could leave after any round.

Brent did not hear anyone specifically say they were having problems. He did remember hearing Lou scream when he put his hand into the rock pit. Brent did not fill out any medical forms or answer any health questions. He did sign the JRI waiver.

Brent described his experience as positive in the fact that he felt he had an out of body experience that helped him release some very emotional issues. He further did not experience any physical issues, other than being very drained and out of it when he first came out of the sweat lodge.

Brent describes himself as very physically fit and he felt he was close to the threshold of what a body can stand and he was near the door flag where he received fresh air and some relief. Brent explained that at the end he was one of the first in the outer circle to leave and was barely able to get himself out. Once he was hit with the cold water he knows he was out for a while. When he came to it was still a while before he could move. That was when he saw what was going on around him. Sydney was next to him and she was unconscious and having a hard time breathing. Brent said he started yelling to get a "fucking doctor here now" because it did not appear anyone was responding to all the people who were having problems. Brent said he did not realize at that time people were doing CPR on James and Kirby.

Brent feels James Ray was extremely reckless in what he did, conducting the sweat lodge. He said that there were too many people inside and everyone should have been checked on after every round. Brent believes Ray's ego got way out of control. Brent did not leave sooner because he hates to quit anything.

Brent, on a minor level, thought something was wrong when Lou burnt his hand. In hind sight, Brent feels the ceremony should have been stopped then to assure everyone else was not so out of it like Lou. He really realized the gravity of it all when he was looking after Sydney and heard and saw the helicopters and ambulances coming in.

Brent believes James Ray's recklessness is apparent in the way he put together a hodge podge retreat, throwing together all sorts of different processes, without having the proper qualified experts to assist. He further believes Ray's ego would not allow for him to share the stage with anyone else. Brent feels Ray should have had more help to check on participants during both the Vision Quest and Sweat Lodge, along with trained medical personnel to care for anyone experiencing a problem. Brent believes, as the facilitator, Ray has a huge responsibility to ensure the participants safety and well being and in this case he failed horribly to do either.

Brent said no specific qualifications were given regarding Ray's ability to run a sweat lodge. It was more inferred with his past experience and having done lodges with tribes in Peru.

Brent described the whole event as tragic and voiced concern that three people died and 30% of the group was hospitalized due to one man's ego. Brent further said that greater concern should have been placed on each participant's conscious state and their ability to make decisions in the hot air deprived environment the sweat lodge created.

This supplement is considered closed.

Detective S. Willingham C36

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