

*I/V Susan Issaacs 10-27-09 C36

On 10/27/09, at approximately 1140 hours, I spoke With Susan Issaacs by telephone. The interview was audio recorded regarding her participation in the 2007 Spiritual Warrior event. Below is the transcription of that conversation. For additional information regarding this interview please see the digital recording that is in evidence.

I reviewed the below transcript and made some language and grammar corrections and completed most of the inaudible areas of the transcript.

Interviewer: This is Detective Willingham.

Respondent: Hi, Detective Willingham, this is Susan Issaacs. We were going to try to speak this morning around 11:30 about the James Ray thing, you had call me back about a week, week and a half ago.

Interviewer: Yes. And I have had non-stop phone calls so I apologize I was just getting to it.

Respondent: That's okay. I have a client coming in at noon and I am booked until 08:00 p.m. tonight so it was sort of now or never. So I thought I would try to get hold of you and answer the questions you might have.

Interviewer: So glad you did, I am glad you did. How did you learn of James Ray?

Respondent: A friend of mine who I met ballroom dancing she had a thing for bringing a friend for free to one of his weekend sort of beginning seminar thing, it was the two day. That was back in early '07.

Interviewer: Okay so early '07.

Respondent: March and so I went and then I signed up for several other of his events one of those package things because you get a substantial discount. So I ended up going to the Sedona event that September '07.

Interviewer: Okay. And I guess what I am going to ask is just tell me what happened at that event if anything?

Respondent: Well, for me, it was the most disappointing of the events I have been to, was the one I got the least amount of benefit from. A lot of his stuff I have used with clients because I am a psychotherapist and I found some of the tools that I learned to be really useful with clients. But that event was sort of a waste of time and money as far as I was concerned. Part of the disappointment for me was I had gone to the July event at Lake Tahoe and that was probably the best event he does in my opinion.

Interviewer: Which one is that?

Respondent: Practical Mysticism, and for all my friends that I met through James Ray, that's pretty much been their absolute favorite as well. But when we got to Sedona he did his crocodile tears and oh I am so grateful that I get to do this work and he cries every time it's like he's skilled at pretending to cry. And his role was then to become the first person who does what he does to become a billionaire and that's when everything shifted in my experience of dealing with him. He was less interested in the people, he was less available, he was less engaged; you could just really feel that he was much more standoffish and distant. And at that event I think the first thing that really was a shock to me was he does this game that he does based on that movie The Last Samurai and people die, and he has all these rules. And there was a gentleman in his 70s, he was a child psychiatrist somewhere in the Midwest, delightful man, and early on in this game, he died and when you die, you have to lay on the concrete floor and not move or your team dies. So then we all went to lunch and we all couldn't talk at this point there was no communication allowed. And the next day and a half later when we got back from that 36 hour alleged Vision Quest what I had heard was this man had started having seizures on the floor by mid afternoon, and I assumed his dream team helped him because the rest of us weren't in the room at the time and we weren't allowed to talk so I am assuming that he was helped by them. And I was shocked and then when we went into this Sweat Lodge, I had never done a Sweat Lodge before and I have never done once since based on that experience. One woman became unconscious and she was taken out and James just took off in his golf cart and his dream team kind of just took off and did their thing and we all went and got shower and cleaned up and went to dinner and it was sometime during toward the end of dinner that this woman regained consciousness. So I don't know if it was like closer to an hour and a half or closer to two and a half hours that they had her submerged in cool water and this doctor who had been in seizure two days before and another woman named Nancy who is a veterinarian in [REDACTED], they were monitoring her vital signs but nobody called 911. I talked to Nancy a week and a half ago and I don't even know Nancy's last name but she said that they were monitoring her vital signs and then when she came to, the woman refused medical care, she refused to go the hospital, she did not want paramedics coming out to look at her or anything. And I just said to Nancy, I said what the hell are you guys doing taking liability, you are a veterinarian; if this woman had died, you guys would have been stuck with that and who gives somebody who's been unconscious for almost 2-3 hours permission to determine whether they need medical treatment.

Interviewer: Right. By that point, as soon as they had stayed out more than a few minutes, someone should have been calling.

Respondent: I agree but I always air on the side of caution. I am a therapist I deal with insurance companies and malpractice everyday.

Interviewer: Well yeah and they kind of have set the stage for when we react to stuff but still someone unconscious and not responding and coming around, that's a concern.

Respondent: I know.

Interviewer: Do you know who the person was that was out for that long?

Respondent: No, I don't. I don't remember, I don't even know her name. Other people know. If you ever get hold of who attended that event, I can't remember Nancy's last name. We have this call, this group of people I met at Practical Mysticism in July '07 and every Sunday night we have a call together and Nancy was on the call two Sundays ago and I don't her home phone number but I mean I am sure you could find her, she's probably one of the only veterinarians in [REDACTED] and Nancy, she would know the woman's name.

Interviewer: Okay.

Respondent: She was there monitoring her vital signs but I was wondering that the woman might call you.

Interviewer: Did anyone else have any distress or problems or lose consciousness?

Respondent: One woman tripped and fell and the sand was so hot it scraped the skin off of half of her face. The next day she looked like a monster, it was horrid but it just took all of the flesh off of her face on the one side that she fell on skinned it across the sand. And I don't remember her name either but it was pretty bad. I am not a medical doctor, I don't claim to be an expert in any of that but common sense; I was alarmed when I thought medical intervention needed to be provided just to cover James's liability and I was shocked that that didn't happen, I was shocked that there wasn't any acknowledgment about this man having seizures playing James's game and I was concerned about this woman who was unconscious but nothing was even said. I was at a event this summer in San Diego called Creating Absolute Wealth and one of the women at the event committed suicide, we didn't even know about that; I found out two Sundays ago on the phone call.

Interviewer: There is a lot of stuff that gets kept hidden just to promote, I think the word you just said, wealth.

Respondent: Right. And I mean I don't even understand people not using their intellect to objectively review this experience and this information. I was raised in a family that encouraged critical thinking and do not take anything for granted and don't follow somebody.

Interviewer: Just blindly follow, think for yourself.

Respondent: Yeah, I have never been attracted to cult stuff and I don't ever drink the Kool-Aid of any group I am a part of.

Interviewer: It's one thing to belong to groups, lots of us do that, it's a social thing but then some just go way beyond that though.

Respondent: I have met wonderful people through James Ray and I love the people that I have met but I have never been an admirer of James I just kind of laugh at him when I am not disgusted with him.

Interviewer: You said he had given you some tools that work well with your clients to pass on; is it a certain amount of linguistic abilities, a certain language that he uses that gets people to buy in or?

Respondent: I don't know. I think he is a very skilled communicator and I think if you are not really conscious and aware and very good at critical thinking, it would be easy to get sucked in at an emotional level whether that's his crocodile tears that he pulls out all the time or some other skill. So I have found myself saying wow that's really great you know that's a really wonderful idea and finding myself having an emotional response but then I take a deep breath and sit back and say well how does that apply to my life, how was that practical but I always think very critically and objectively.

Interviewer: Yeah and that's going to make the biggest difference.

Respondent: Yeah because I just don't get sucked into stuff I don't care how skilled somebody is. He has the capacity to communicate in a way that draws people in although I think he can also be very harsh and cruel in the way he relates to people. Like people will share what their dream is and he will laugh at them and tell them that's a stupid dream and that's not what they really want and I am horrified that he does that to a person standing up in front of a room of several hundred people.

Interviewer: And he does that?

Respondent: Yeah. He did that this summer in Creating Absolute Wealth in San Diego. What he does is he goes through and has them process out loud with him to get to what the real dream underneath the wanting to build a hotel in Georgia because he says that's not what's going to make you happy, what is it about that what's underneath that. But the way he does it feels very disrespectful.

Interviewer: Wow. Yeah, because I had another lady tell me he called her names.

Respondent: Yeah. Well a lot of what I am sharing with you is subjective. Objective is the stuff about the Sweat Lodge and I would have thought he would have changed his ways after that, I didn't know people had been unconscious two years before. And I know last year, there was stuff that went on, I had friends that were there last year.

Interviewer: And I know you told me after going in there, you would never go into one again. Can you describe the atmosphere what was it like?

Respondent: Well it was like being a sardine in a can. There were 60 of us and we were shoulder to shoulder and I was against the outside wall and the person in front of me was

so close they were leaning against my legs. There were so many people, it was hard to breathe. I finally found a way to wiggle down to the bottom and lift the bottom of the tent so I could get some fresh air and then I left after about four rounds because I couldn't breathe anymore I was getting sick. But there is a lot of pressure to stay in.

Interviewer: What kind of pressure? What's being said?

Respondent: Well James says you are not going to die, you may feel like you are going to die but just push past your fear and trust that you are not this bag of flesh that you think you are, you are stronger than that and you are bigger than that. And when people would want to leave, he would let you leave between rounds and then I just stayed out the whole round because I couldn't hack it.

Interviewer: Did you go back in?

Respondent: I went back in, I think there is one more round and I went back in. But I have a friend in Colorado who poured sweat and I was describing this to her and she was so angry she said sweat lodge is only half four rounds one for each of the four directions and James was breaking, sometimes he goes to 12 rounds and his are hotter and more intense than any sweat lodge you will ever be in almost like, did you ever see that show Home Improvement with Tim the tool man Tailor?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Respondent: He reminded me of that.

Interviewer: More power, bigger tools.

Respondent: Yeah. Like am I dealing with a 50-year-old man or a 19-year-old adolescent who's gone away to college his first year and is trying to go on the dorm floor.

Interviewer: Yeah, or wants that hot rod down the street you know.

Respondent: Right. And it was like how old are you, that was sort of my objective sense. But I wasn't enamored with him, I wasn't waiting for every word to come out of his mouth.

Interviewer: And do you feel lot of people, was that set going on, enamored you know?

Respondent: Well I saw some people like that. There is a level of charm he can use.

Interviewer: Okay. Well I think what you just told me just few minutes ago about it being hot and being told you are not going to die, to push past this, you are more than your body those are all other things that are said time and time again to encourage people sometimes to do great things but not when it's a setting where you have got 60 people inside this small diameter where you have barely room for 10 or 15 people really.

Respondent: Right. And the other thing is my friend who pours sweat, she is a shaman she said that you always have the sweat lodge set for the person who is the most vulnerable so that they can have a beneficial experience and if you have people that are medically vulnerable and you are building it for someone like James Ray that he could survive, you are putting all those people more vulnerable than him at risk.

Interviewer: So the facilitator, the one building it if they are building it for just themselves rather than taking into consideration all these others then there is a problem. When you went, did you ever fill out a health questionnaire or were you asked any medical questions?

Respondent: No, not that I recall. I had to sign a bunch of stuff to cover his legal butt that I wouldn't sue if something bad happened to me that I was taking on the full liability of the experience.

Interviewer: Right. And you already described how he reacted he just got in his golf cart left even though there was someone unconscious.

Respondent: Yeah, I was just so surprised. If you elevate yourself to that kind of status, why would you be so uncaring when somebody was harmed by trying to participate in your experience.

Interviewer: Right. Did he ever give you any information about what his qualifications were to run a sweat lodge other than it sounds like he is bragging that he is hottest, most intense?

Respondent: No, he didn't give me anything in writing that I recall. He said that he's been trained by all these people and all these shamans and blah-blah-blah so he has all these qualifications because of all of the (Inaudible 00:6:57) the people that have trained him. But now I am reading on the Internet, these people are disowning him and saying he doesn't have the proper training or they separated ways with him before I had ever met him.

Interviewer: Wow interesting.

Respondent: So my concern is I don't know what Arizona law is and I don't know that even if you guys file charges against him, I don't know that any of it's going to stick my concern is he is going to get off.

Interviewer: Well, and that is a concern. That's why we have to gather all the facts, that's why we are asking did James Ray or anyone else when you were there tell you what his qualifications are or were to run this and what his safety procedures were did he talk about those?

Respondent: No, I don't remember anything at any of these events about safety features.

Interviewer: So, you were never told what do to if there was a problem in the lodge or how to respond?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Were you ever told other than what he's telling you it's hotter and most intense and all of this what to expect?

Respondent: No, not that I recall. At this point in the week, I had been eating a vegetarian meal all week, I was 36 hours without food or water and that whole day before we left, I was sicker than a dog and throwing up and I couldn't sleep much the night before so I hadn't eaten for two and a half days.

Interviewer: Now I was told people may have been encouraging people to stay up and not sleep right in there?

Respondent: Yes, there is this process you put people through and you were encouraged to write and write and write and it's one of the skills I use with clients but I use it on a much more small scale. And I am one of those people that has to get my sleep or I am not going to be able to function so midnight I go to bed and I would sleep until 07:00 in the morning, I didn't care if I didn't please James but I wasn't hotter than his stuff that he was doing.

Interviewer: Why do you think so many people chose to want to get his approval?

Respondent: I don't know. I don't know. I mean I am a licensed therapist and I do therapy for a living but in terms of that subjectivity, I don't know. Perhaps they felt special, perhaps it gave them a kind of sense of belonging that they longed for and hadn't experienced to the degree that they wanted to at this point in their life. But I have a friend in LA that called me last couple of weekends ago and he said hey have you been following what happened with James and I said a little bit and he was pretty actively involved in, he said well I am not wild about James but I am still going to go to his stuff. I said why, why Trent, you don't need this.

Interviewer: Yeah wow.

Respondent: I know and this is the professional tennis player who travels the world playing tennis games to make a living; I mean this is something--

Interviewer: Well and that's the thing, that is the thing. So, many of these people are very intelligent, very well schooled, very professional doing well in their lives. So, from that point of it because in law enforcement we try to figure out what happens currently but there is also that psychological aspect to it.

Respondent: Yeah, you probably have to assign people who are expert witnesses and do expert kind of evaluations to look into all of that.

Interviewer: Oh, yeah. This one's well beyond, we are definitely getting some experts and lots of different things to assist.

Respondent: Yeah because I want James held accountable. I don't know that he will go to prison for this but I want him held accountable because too many people have gotten hurt and he has taken no responsibility for it.

Interviewer: And I don't disagree. It's not simple though, it just not a simple case but the people that help like you and people that were there, I have talked to people in '08 that were there and it sounds like it's gotten increasingly worse.

Respondent: Yeah I think like every year he turns the heat up metaphorically speaking. In '08, none of them were even allowed to leave.

Interviewer: Yeah, and that's a serious mind control what you said he said you know you are not going to die, you are more than this, you are more than your flesh, push past it.

Respondent: Right yeah. Well I am going to have to run I have a meeting but if you have further questions at any point down the road, you are more than welcome to call me I will be happy to talk with you.

Interviewer: Okay I will keep your number you will stay as part of this. But I think I covered a lot of the basic questions that I would have needed to know as far as looking towards what kind of credentials, what qualifications he had to do this and this type of stuff so.

Respondent: I just don't want my name being turned over and have the media contacting me or anything.

Interviewer: No names come from us absolutely. We are keeping this as far from the media as we can right now while it's an active investigation and your name won't be, I know they are pursuing participants and stuff. But hang in there and thank you for your information. If I have questions, I can also Email you I think if you would leave me your Email address so.

Respondent: Okay I can give it to you. It's [REDACTED]

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you.

Respondent: You are welcome.

Interviewer: Bye Susan.

Respondent: Bye-bye.

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