

*I/V Smyser, Susan Transcript Det. Diskin and Det. Poling

On 01/20/10 Det. Poling and I interviewed Susan Smyser. The following is a transcript of that interview:

Susan: hello

Det. Diskin: Hi Susan this is Det Diskin

Susan: Hello how are you?

Det. Diskin: Good, how about you?

Susan: I'm very good thank you.

Det. Diskin: I have you on speaker phone cause I have one of our other detectives, Det. Mike Poling, is here and he's investigating the case with us and our thought was if we have both of us asking you questions then we probably won't miss anything.

Susan: Okay

Det. Diskin: Uhm, I just kinda want to start off, how did you find out about James Ray or how did you first become involved with James Ray?

Susan: I went to one of his free 2 hours events back in '07.

Det. Diskin: Okay

Susan: Obviously, I don't remember, I don't know if I found something on the internet about it or what but it was a free two hour event that he does and then from there I signed up for another event, I signed up for a paid event and from there I just kept signing up, you know for all the different events. So I've attended all the events except for the one in Hawaii where people broke their hands and wrists.

Det. Diskin: In 2008 I understand you were in the sweat lodge. Can you tell me what problems that you saw?

Susan: Yeah, inside a sweat lodge it's hard cause it's so dark. I was on the hot side, you know totally opposite the door where Kirby and James and the other people who had trouble were sitting. I didn't find much relief sitting back there but I remember one girl trying to get out and she was talking, repeating the same thing over again and James told her to be quiet but she kept talking as she was moving toward the door to get out. I stayed in the whole time and when I came out I asked one of the Dream Team members, I said somebody go get James Ray right now cause I'm gonna die. Of course my request was ignored, and from that point I was hosed down with water, I was a mess. I remember

seeing other people laying down and having problems like I was. One was a friend of mine and we were talking with each other, and just really frightened and I felt like my brain had been cooked and I felt like my body had been cooked and I was just out of it, I was just on the ground frightened and you know not knowing what to do. A lot of the participants were helping other people because there weren't enough Dream Team members to help everybody that was out on the ground having physical difficulty. In my opinion, last year James had a very, very hot sweat lodge and I remember someone telling me Megan said to him last year that he had gone way over the top with the heat and I believe last year we went 12 rounds, I think I was in for 3 hours. I think there were 12 rounds, so

Det. Diskin: When you said that there was a lady that kept saying something, and she was trying to leave and James Ray was telling her to be quiet,

Susan: Yes

Det. Diskin: did anyone try to prevent her from leaving?

Susan: No, not that I remember, no

Det. Diskin: When you got out of the sweat lodge and you thought, do you remember thinking that you were going to die?

Susan: Absolutely, absolutely, 200%

Det. Diskin: The reason I ask is cause I don't know if you're telling me what you remember or if the other participants told you what you said and what you did

Susan: No, no, no, no, no, no. I, I, I was frightened, I, I, I just felt like I had been cooked. And no, I remember telling somebody, no I specifically remember that cause I was so frightened that I was gonna die, that I wanted him to be there to help me to get over to the other side.

Det. Diskin: You thought that you were dying and you wanted him with to be there while you died?

Susan: Yes, yes, absolutely, but he had gotten in his car and had already left.

Det. Diskin: What symptoms were you having?

Susan: Oh God, more than anything I just, I felt like I was cooked, I couldn't, I couldn't think straight, all I was focusing on was how frightened I was because I thought I was gonna die; my body, my skin, my brain; I couldn't function at all. I didn't know what to do, I just laid there and people would spray water on me, I was not very coherent at all

Det. Diskin: Were you coherent enough to remember what was going on?

Susan: Uhm just for the moments that I felt like I, you know, was uhm, how do I say this, I don't know how to explain it to you. I don't know how long I actually was on the ground in distress you know feeling like I was gonna die. I don't know how long that was until I could sit up. I felt like I was in an altered state, let's put it that way. And I don't feel like I was real coherent so when I was on the ground I remember kind of looking around seeing people that were also on the ground in distress just laying out, not moving, just having trouble.

Det. Poling: What characteristics were they displaying when you were looking at other people?

Susan: I would say the same thing that I was experiencing

Det. Poling: Did you throw up?

Susan: No not that I remember. I do not remember getting sick.

Det. Poling: Do you remember anyone else getting sick?

Susan: No, I don't remember anybody in the sweat lodge getting sick. Now they may have gotten sick once outside the sweat lodge but I have also spoken to a number of people who you know were there and also were telling me about some of the people that were in distress that I don't even remember seeing were in distress. So I think there were more people than I was even aware of that were in distress cause I was so in distress myself that I was just trying to hold myself together.

Det. Diskin: Do you think you lost consciousness?

Susan: I think it's possible I did - to be honest with you, inside the sweat lodge?

Det. Diskin: Or at any time, either inside or outside

Susan: I honestly don't know I was so out of it I don't know whether I was or not. I don't know whether I came in and out of consciousness or not. I just know that I was in there for a long time. I remember maybe 6 rounds but I remember hearing there were 12 rounds. And I know that I stayed in the entire time. I remember up to about the 6th round and then I remember lying there saying to myself I'm a lawyer, I'm a lawyer and thinking I should get out of here, I should get out of here, but I didn't.

Det. Diskin: Why didn't you?

Susan: I don't know, I don't know. Maybe I was unconscious, maybe I did go unconscious for awhile, I don't know.

Det. Diskin: What made you want to stay?

Susan: I was trying to prove something to myself

Det. Poling: Why

Susan: Well just because the whole thing about Spiritual Warrior is that you are a Warrior and you can, and James would say more than your body, he encouraged us to stay in, you know just like he did to people last year.

Det. Poling: So what was the goal/achievement if you stay in long?

Susan: You know I guess it's just proving something to yourself. You know that you, that you can do something you didn't think you could do.

Det. Poling: Did James Ray say you would go into an altered state? Did James Ray tell you or any of the other participants you may go into an altered state?

Susan: I don't remember whether he said that you could go into an altered state or not; I honestly, to be honest I can't remember whether he specifically said that or not, he could have I just don't remember.

Det. Poling: Did he say you could pass out?

Susan: Oh boy, I believe that he said that you could but I'm not 100%

Det. Poling: So if you passed out in that lodge, who would take care of you?

Susan: That's a good question, nobody was assigned to anybody. It's not like he said well if you pass out, have somebody next to you pull you out. That was never, none of that was ever said.

Det. Diskin: Did you know that you could pass out or that you could be in medical distress as a result of doing this?

Susan: No, no, I absolutely did not. I absolutely did not.

Det. Diskin: You said when I asked you why you wouldn't leave you talked about that James would encourage you to stay in; what kinds of things did he say to encourage you?

Susan: You know you're more than your body, you're more than that, you know you can do this; he encouraged people to stay in.

Det. Diskin: Okay, did he tell you that you shouldn't leave early, or that you should stay in the whole time?

Det. Poling: Did he specifically say that you should stay in the whole time?

Susan: The idea was to stay in the lodge you know the entire time.

Det. Diskin: Did he tell you that though? That you should stay in the whole time, beforehand (Inaudible)

Susan: I honestly don't remember, I don't remember. I have a friend who had taken diligent notes during the entire event and she might have that in her notes.

Det. Diskin: And what is her name?

Susan: You know what? Before I give that to you, I would want to ask her, if you don't mind.

Det. Diskin: No that's fine.

Susan: Because I mean you know I would want to make sure that's okay with her cause I do have a copy of the notes and honestly in all respect to her you know I did encourage her to call you. I don't know if she did or not so if you don't mind I will give her a call and ask her if she did call and if she wouldn't mind if I did give you the notes, I mean I, I realize how important it is.

Det. Diskin: We don't want to do anything people don't want us to do or get information that they don't want us to have. You know a lot of people don't want their names used but we have to look at this from a neutral standpoint and weigh in all the factors and get all the information that we can.

Susan: Right, I understand that, I understand how important that is, I do.

Det. Diskin: By the way I talked to Amy Hall and she made me promise I would tell you she said hi. Actually right after I got off the phone with you she called and said hey have you talked to this person and I said actually I just got off the phone with her and so I told her that I was gonna call you back so that's what she said, to say hi.

Susan: Oh okay

Det. Diskin: But uhm, you had mentioned a little bit about you had heard from somebody that Megan had told James Ray that this was too hot

Susan: Yeah, I guess that he had gone over the top. I don't know whether that was in reference to the previous year or not

Det. Diskin: Who heard Megan say that?

Susan: I can't remember who it was that told me but I know it was said

Det. Diskin: When you got out of the tent and were asking for James Ray cause you thought you were gonna die, do you remember who specifically you talked to?

Susan: That's a good question, I think that I know but I'm not 100% sure, I can call her and ask her and see if it was her. I think she is more of somebody who is more on James' side so I would not want to give you her name without her permission. But I can ask her if it was her.

Det. Diskin: Do you remember if it was a Dream Team member or a staff member?

Susan: It was a Dream Team member

Det. Poling: You mentioned that you went 12 rounds or you believe that there was 12 rounds that day. Was there anything said by James Ray that in the beginning, how many rounds you'd be doing and if so why did he go 12?

Susan: That's a good question and I'm not sure I'd have to go to the notes. For some reason I remember 12 rounds. I would have to go to the notes my friend wrote and see if that was absolutely correct, him telling us that before the event. But I remember asking someone how long we were in there in the end and they said it was 3 hours so if they went 2 hours with 8 rounds, I mean it would make sense that yes I am correct that it was 12 rounds.

Det. Poling: The reason I'm asking is I want to find out why he decides to go 12 rounds. I don't know if he talks about it in the beginning or what cause normally there's 7 rounds; what is it that makes him go 12? What is he trying to accomplish by those extra few rounds?

Susan: Honestly I don't have an answer for that; because if he did say 12 rounds that anybody even asked why it would be 12 rounds, you just kind of went along with whatever he said; whatever he was doing

Det. Poling: I guess what I'm trying to figure out is what's the difference between 7 and 12; why does he extend it, does he talk about it, does he say we may go extra if, or we'll go less if. Do you know what I'm saying?

Susan: I understand what you're saying and I don't know that I really have an answer to that questions. I don't remember everything that he said before we went in the sweat lodge, that's why I'm going to refer to some notes and ask my friend if it's okay that I mention that and find out if maybe she contacted you. Because there would probably be an answer to it more if it's in those notes.

Det. Poling: You described that you had an altered state; can you tell me what an altered state is?

Susan: I just felt like I was in the clouds somewhere. I don't know how to describe it other than that. It was probably like that for a good couple weeks, I couldn't focus really that well, I just felt a difference in my being. I just felt; just didn't feel normal; didn't feel like I usually felt

Det. Poling: That's okay, are you having any affects still today?

Susan: Today? No, not that I'm aware of, I guess I'm pretty fortunate because I was in for so long.

Det. Diskin: Did you have any affects afterward like do you remember the next day or the next week if you still had any kind of problem?

Susan: I still felt like I was not real clear for a good couple weeks,

Det. Diskin: So you were still having symptoms for a couple weeks?

Susan: I'll say spacey, you know what I mean? You know just really kind of space. I mean I'm sure cause my brain had been cooked.

Det. Poling: do you know Barb Waters,

Susan: Yes I do

Det. Poling: Do you remember her in 2008 having any difficulties?

Susan: Uhm she had also stayed in the entire time, I don't remember all the people that were having problems other than the friend who was next to me and I kind of remember one of the Dream Team members was kind of out of it also. But I didn't see Barbara but I know she was in there the whole time.

Det. Poling: If you could estimate how many people were in the 2008 sweat lodge

Susan: 60 participants and I would say probably 65-68

Det. Poling: Could you give me an estimate how many people were lying around outside that you could see that were having some kind of recuperation, laying down, needing to be attended to, just an estimate of how many people were having difficulties.

Susan: Maybe 4 or 5 that I remember but I'm sure there were more than that because

Det. Diskin: cause you were one of them

Susan: Yeah, I was one of them. I remember seeing at least 3 or 4 and I know that there were more cause I've spoken to people who were helping, who came out of the lodge and were helping you know some of the participants and I, I, I at that point didn't know that

this particular person was having a problem and he was definitely having a problem. So and then there were people that were coming in and out during the entire time so because I was inside I may not have known who all those people were but I'm going to call a friend of mine cause she was outside a lot of the time and see if she would be willing to contact you and contact you.

Det. Diskin: And we would appreciate that, even if people are supporting James Ray, it doesn't matter to us. We just want to talk to everybody that was there and get everybody's opinion and their interpretation of what happened so if you can try and sell that to people for us that, that we, in order for justice to be done we need to know exactly what happened.

Susan: I know and I totally agree with you. I think it's extremely important so I will do that

Det. Poling: One more question for you if I may Susan, did you hear James Ray say to anyone stick it out, the round is almost over, or anything of that nature to get someone to stay inside that lodge

Susan: Oh absolutely, yes

Det. Poling: how many people did he tell that to about?

Susan: From my recollection, what I remember hearing, I don't know, maybe 3 or 4 times

Det. Poling: Okay, out of those 3 or 4 times, did those people stay in the lodge or did they say forget it I'm leaving?

Susan: I'm not sure I can answer that because I was laying down some of the time so I guess I would have seen some light. It certainly was not in the middle of the round.

Det. Poling: A better question, did anyone leave in the middle of a round?

Susan: Not that I remember, not that I remember

Det. Poling: And if you recall later on that someone did, the reaction is what I'm looking for. The reaction of the people that watched the person leave in the middle of the round if they were dejected, or if they said you need to come back in here, or if there was anything

Susan: No he would just say you're strong enough; you can stay here. I don't remember anybody leaving in the middle of a round. Saying, you know, forget it James I'm out of here

Det. Diskin: Do you know Michelle Goulet?

Susan: Yes

Det. Diskin: Do you remember when she left the sweat lodge?

Susan: No I don't but I know, I remember someone telling me that her boyfriend was tweaking out because he came out and I guess he was out of it and he was I guess afraid for her

Det. Poling: Do you know her boyfriend's name?

Susan: I'll give it to you as long as it's not told that I gave it.

Det. Diskin: We have a list of all the participants from 2008 and we're gonna try and contact everybody

Det. Poling: But your name wont be tossed (Inaudible)

Det. Diskin: We're gonna talk to everybody anyway, the ones that we haven't talked to yet so

Susan: Well I know. I just don't want to be the one that said well so and so gave us your name.

Det. Poling: just for our heads up is all I want to know

Susan: But you will not give my name out?

Det. Diskin: We will not tell him that you told us his name

Susan: Okay, as long as I have your word on that I will be happy to give you that name.

Det. Diskin: You have our word

Susan: Okay, John DeMartino

Det. Diskin: Is that still Michelle's boyfriend?

Susan: I don't know, that I couldn't tell you.

Det. Diskin: I want to go back to when you came out of the sweat lodge, you felt that you were gonna die and you asked for James Ray to come with you. Did you tell the staff members that you thought you were gonna die?

Susan: Yeah it was one of the Dream Team members.

Det. Diskin: Okay and did anybody call 911?

Susan: No

Det. Diskin: Did you think they should of?

Susan: Probably yes.

Det. Diskin: Uhm did you tell them that you needed help or I mean obviously

Susan: I mean they could see I was in distress. I was not in a state to say somebody call 911. I don't know why I didn't do that. I think there were a lot of people in distress last year that you know maybe they should have. I feel fortunate that I don't have permanent problems from staying in that long.

Det. Diskin: Well there are, the guy in 2005, he's still having issues.

Susan: Right, that's what I heard.

Det. Diskin: Were you ever told going into the sweat lodge that people were in medical distress or had problems in previous sweat lodges?

Susan: No

Det. Diskin: Did you go in there thinking that you would be safe and there was little to no chance that anything's gonna

Susan: Absolutely, absolutely, absolutely

Det. Poling: If you were warned that at a previous event someone got sick or ill would you have changed your mind or thought differently of what you were gonna do?

Susan: It would have depended on what was wrong with them. If they had just vomited but if somebody said well you know they were unconscious, I don't think I would have gone in.

Det. Diskin: Well Daniel was diagnosed with heat stroke in 2005, if they had told in 2005 or in a previous sweat lodge somebody got heat stroke would that have changed your decision to stay in the whole time?

Susan: Probably, yeah, because I mean heat strokes very serious

Det. Diskin: Right

Susan: People die from heat stroke.

Det. Diskin: Exactly.

Susan: So no I wouldn't have gone in. Had I'd even thought that I could possibly die, no. I mean even though the waiver says you could possibly die. I mean you think he's not gonna put you in a situation where you could die? I mean why would somebody do that? That makes no sense at all.

Det. Diskin: Right. Do you feel you should have been told there were prior problems in the sweat lodge?

Susan: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Det. Diskin: It sounds like the people in 2009 had the same reasoning for staying in as you did only they died in 2009.

Susan: You don't think you're gonna go in there and die. My opinion and the reason I came forward, is because I was there and I know what happened and I feel that he had prior notice from people getting ill that he was doing something wrong.

Det. Diskin: Okay, do you think the problems that you had in 2008 and that you saw in 2008 were significant enough that they should have done something different for 2009?

Susan: Definitely. Definitely. There's a lot of things that I wanted to go over with you guys. I went through all the white papers and I think I have a note on every single page. And I'd be happy to go over that with you too and I sent pictures to Shonna from the sweat lodge that was there last year. Did you get those?

Det. Diskin: Were they pictures of people laying on the ground?

Susan: No, no, they were pictures of the rock, of the whole area there.

Det. Diskin: Yeah, and there was no tarp?

Susan: No there were tarps, yes there were tarps. There were tarps last year. But there was not a station with the fruits and electrolytes; there was just containers of water so they did not have; when they say from 2005 they had all these changes, well no; they didn't have a nurse in 2008; they just happened to have a DREAM TEAM member who was a nurse. I mean he's making it sound like you know he had her in particularly because she was a nurse. I don't think that's the case at all.

Det. Poling: How do you know that?

Susan: From a statement that was made by a friend of mine who knows the nurse. Lisa Rondan was the nurse; she was one of the DREAM TEAM members so you could certainly ask her.

Det. Diskin: We have. The question is who knew that she wasn't a nurse or that, you know what I mean? Did James Ray and his staff know that she wasn't a nurse? Is your friend that you're talking about a staff member?

Susan: No, no, no. No, I'm not sure, what was the question you asked me?

Det. Diskin: The question is, what we're trying to determine is if James Ray's staff knew whether or not she was a nurse, Lisa I'm talking about. Prior to the sweat lodge and you had mentioned that your friend said that she thought that she wasn't a nurse?

Susan: I think she said she didn't know she was there in that capacity

Det. Diskin: If she wasn't there to be the nurse at Spiritual Warrior. I'm wondering how your friend knew that. How did your friend know that Lisa wasn't there in an official capacity to be a nurse?

Susan: Cause she knows her and I guess she told her. I don't know 100% exactly but she seemed surprised when I read something to her that was on the internet about him having a nurse there. She was surprised they had her name there as such; she said oh no, I don't think so.

Det. Diskin: I was gonna ask you for names of people that you remember being there, I would appreciate it if you would try to get these people to give me a call.

Susan: I will, I think it's important that you have the best information that you can have to make the best decision.

Det. Diskin: In your opinion, whose responsible if anybody for the 3 deaths?

Susan: In my opinion I believe, well certainly James Ray, you know, absolutely and I would say some of the staff that were there last year who saw the problems that people were having last year

Det. Poling: Would you feel it was the participant's responsibility to save themselves before this happened?

Susan: I don't think

Det. Poling: Let me ask you this question, in the condition you were in, say you were a little bit worse and you couldn't help yourself, would you be able to remedy the problem? Would you be able to get up on your own and take care of yourself?

Susan: Absolutely not and had I'd been unconscious; how the heck would I get out there? Even if I wanted to how could an unconscious person make that decision, they can't. That's the one of the problems that I have with this whole thing. They can't possibly make the decisions.

Det. Poling: If the person next to you was passed out would you have been able to pull them out of the sweat lodge?

Susan: If I was able to. I wouldn't have been able to in the condition I was in even if I'd wanted to. Not in the condition I was in, no way. Not even close. I probably wouldn't have been able to tell you my name.

Det. Diskin: So you were pretty out of it then.

Susan: Oh definitely.

Det. Diskin: Do you remember, I talked to you a little bit about Michelle Goulet. Do you remember seeing her or do you have any conscious memory of her being there or what she was doing?

Susan: No

Det. Diskin: Okay. She's telling us in 2008 she was there and there were no problems whatsoever, everything was great. That there was no issues and we're trying to figure out why she'd say that.

Susan: That is so not true; that is so not true? What does she mean by no problems? That nobody died?

Det. Diskin: We tried to get into that and she felt like everything was great. We showed her, we have pictures of people laying on the ground in the mud and we showed her pictures of that and she didn't feel like there was anything wrong with these people who were laying face down in the mud. That, that was not a problem at all.

Det. Poling: Maybe they'd been exhausted, recuperating, but they were fine.

Det. Diskin: Like if you ran a marathon.

Susan: No, no, no, no. No I mean see I don't know. Maybe that's normal to them cause that's what happened every year but I don't think that's normal.

Det. Diskin: I don't either

Susan: I mean that's absolutely not true. I don't know why she's saying that.

Det. Diskin: Would you consider yourself a friend of hers?

Susan: You know, I don't talk to her, I don't really talk to her, I don't talk to her in between the events but

Det. Diskin: Have you talked to her since Spiritual Warrior 2009?

Susan: No, no, no, but she did send me an email telling me that she enjoyed knowing me and that she'd like to stay in touch and uh so but I haven't done that

Det. Diskin: If you were to ask her why she's telling us there were no problems at all in 2008 do you think she'd tell you why she told us that?

Susan: I don't know if she would or not. I mean I haven't spoken to her, I never spoke to her in between the events other than if I was gonna volunteer at one of the free two hour events where I live or anything to do with promoting James. But other than that we never really spoke so I wouldn't say, I mean I'm not a friend but

Det. Poling: I think you told us the answer to that question anyway cause you said her boyfriend was having a bad reaction and she said everything was normal so that in itself

Susan: That's what I was told by someone who had come out of the sweat lodge kind of early and did not go back in so she saw a lot of what was going on. And you know if I remember correctly you know they said he was kinda freaking out cause she was in there and he was out so I don't know honestly, I don't know why she would say that.

Det. Poling: She told us she was out most of the time; she went out after the 4th round and didn't return until the last round. She told us she stayed in only for 4 rounds, came out and didn't go back in til round 12. Do you remember that being true?

Susan: I don't know who really went in and out cause, because it was so hot I laid down on the ground, I had my eyes closed. It was pitch black in there anyway; I had my eyes closed so I didn't know who was coming in and out.

Det. Poling: Could you see, was it that hard to see the person right next to you?

Susan: You couldn't see them it was pitch black.

Det. Poling: I just thought that they changed this to the light so that you could see inside the tent.

Susan: No, no, no, no, no, no it was pitch black and nobody last year lifted up the tent and walked out.

Det. Poling: Gotcha

Susan: Nobody. Nobody did that.

Det. Diskin: Okay

Susan: I mean and their making it sound like, in those white papers like that guy just, you know, it was okay that you did that. Well it wasn't okay that you do that. From what I

heard or what I read was that he was kind of out of it and just you know didn't even remember doing that. So no it was pitch black, you couldn't see a thing.

Det. Diskin: Okay and let me ask you this cause it's gonna get asked later probably. Did you attend any other James Ray events after this event?

Susan: Uhm yes I did

Det. Diskin: And why did you attend other events after your experience in 2008?

Susan: Because I was enjoying what he was teaching; you know it pushed me beyond my limits. And I liked that. Did I ever think that I could possibly die? Absolutely not. Absolutely not. I mean I liked what I learned, I liked what it did for me and, but I mean I can see now that you know things were not as they appeared to be, you know? He's not who he said he was, he doesn't have the credentials that he said he did. He's used mind manipulation, coercion, persuasion with (Inaudible) programming. You know, he's, he's not the person at all that I thought he was.

Det. Poling: So what was the key that you felt that you wouldn't die?

Susan: Because I trusted him. Why would this person that I'm studying with, why would he, I mean this is my thinking. Why would he ever put me in a situation that I could possibly die? I mean that would make no sense. It's a building of trust and it was obviously a false trust because I thought he had the certifications that he said that he had in order for me to feel safe doing what I was doing or what he asked me to do. You know the breath work, he wasn't qualified in that, the holotropic breathe work; I mean Dr. Sam Pavlov, you know he came out and said I never taught him this. He wasn't certified in the huna tradition, he wasn't certified in, doing that samurai game where he played God.

Det. Diskin: So basically he had no credentials whatsoever?

Susan: I'm not sure exactly what credentials mean officially but it appears not, but at the time he made it seem like he was.

Det. Diskin: And that makes sense, we've had several people explain that to us. I'm sure that there's something that we forgot to ask you. Would it be okay if we call you later if we think of a question that we forgot to ask?

Susan: Of course. Absolutely. And I have these white papers in front of me if you want me to go over some of these things here that I've marked that are absolutely ridiculous.

Det. Diskin: Alright, sure, go ahead.

Susan: Do you have them in front of you?

Det. Diskin: I don't. I could in a couple seconds though.

Det. Poling: We pretty much know what they have inside of them though.

Susan: Oh okay.

Det. Diskin: Yeah we've gone through them in detail but just, what are some of the things that stuck out for you?

Susan: Let's see, the first thing here. It says here participants in the sweat lodge ceremonies have died from accidental hyperthermia. Their saying that holding a sweat lodge ceremony by itself is not criminally negligent behavior and my note was no, but his behavior was. He was totally negligent in my opinion.

Det. Diskin: Let me ask you while we're on that topic, let me ask you this. Have you ever gone to another sweat lodge, a different one?

Susan: No I have not.

Det. Diskin: Have you ever researched sweat lodges to find out how their conducted or what to do?

Susan: Not, not, certainly not before I did it, no

Det. Diskin: So you don't even know if this really was a sweat lodge or should even be considered or called a sweat lodge. We referring it to a sweat lodge.

Susan: I assumed that's what it was cause that's what he said

Det. Diskin: Okay but you wouldn't

Susan: And I didn't know any different, you know?

Det. Diskin: Well what their saying is sweat lodges aren't inherently dangerous, which is true, their not. And that's why people don't die in sweat lodges but this was different. The whole purpose of doing this sweat lodge was different.

Susan: Right, right and I, I mean from what I understand now is you don't put that many people in a sweat lodge number one, you don't make it that hot and you don't keep them in for that long. And besides that he never asked anybody about their medical history.

Det. Diskin: Right. Do you think that would have been important?

Susan: I think that's very important. Absolutely. If I was somebody doing that and I saw that they had high blood pressure I sure would you know I don't think you should do this.

Det. Diskin: Instead of you know you need to live outside your body and mind over matter and that kind of stuff.

Susan: Well definitely. I mean there's certain medical conditions that you just don't do with that and I guess there was somebody who mentioned that they had high blood pressure and he said well you know I guess you need to make that decision yourself or whatever but when he said to her, I don't know whether she went in there or not anyway.

Det. Diskin: Okay, and what else did you see in that letter that you didn't think was (Inaudible)?

Susan: (Inaudible) JRI as well as other numerous retreat groups used this exact same sweat lodge before the recent event without recent incident. Well I made note there, that a 2005 participant that went to a hospital and they're still having trouble today

Det. Diskin: Right

Susan: That's a serious incident

Det. Diskin: Yeah and we have that and we've made similar notes and also in 2008 I think that that was a serious incident, do you agree what you went through thinking that you were gonna die?

Susan: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. The next paragraph, Neither Mr. Ray nor anyone else physically prevented people from leaving in the middle of a round. At least one participant (Inaudible) simply lifted up the side of the tent and left. Well that's a bunch of crap. He's making it sound like you know anybody could have done that. Simply lifted up the side of the tent. He doesn't even remember doing it from what I understand.

Det. Diskin: Well it was probably survival mode but

Susan: Exactly, exactly. You know and then you know I guess James didn't physically stop him from doing it but you know I don't know what he said but I just made a note there saying the guy doesn't remember even doing it. And he makes it sound like anybody could have just on their own done that if they wanted to get out. That's not true.

Det. Diskin: Yeah and he reprimanded that person and so everybody else knew that they weren't allowed to do that either but anyway what else do you have?

Susan: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Let's see, uhm, no one including Mr. Ray could have foreseen sweat lodge consequences even remotely close to what occurred here. That's not true. Last year in 2008 there were problems.

Det. Diskin: Not according to Michelle Goulet there wasn't or Megan Fredrickson.

Susan: That's not true. That's absolutely not true. I mean I can tell you my friend had a problem. I don't know if she's called in but I will call her and see if she would call in.

Det. Diskin: That would be great.

Susan: I know she had a problem and I know there were a lot of people that had problems so I don't know what she's thinking about you know, about that. Unless in their minds that's perfectly normal cause that's how people were at previous events. That's all I can think of but that makes no sense at all. Okay their talking about shortening the number of rounds in the sweat lodge ceremony since 2005. Well that's not true cause in 2008 there were close to 12 if not 12. Stationing a registered nurse and (Inaudible) personnel or experienced volunteers outside the tent. Well they didn't have registered nurses before you know in 2008 they didn't have a registered nurse stationed outside the tent. What ended up happening was unfortunately a lot of the participants who had come out of the sweat lodge before and were okay were helping participants who were having problems.

Det. Diskin: So the participants were the medical plan or the safety net should something go wrong

Susan: Well I don't know what James Ray's people were thinking but that's what ended up happening, people that were not really qualified, the participants were helping other participants and that shouldn't be.

Det. Diskin: Right

Susan: That's not their responsibility; their at the event, their participants. Their not somebody whose supposed to be helping the people.

Det. Diskin: Alright what else in that letter did you see?

Susan: Their talking about having a station set up with electrolytes, lemons, oranges and watermelons. I do not believe, there was not a tent set up for people to go sit under and there was not a tent with those lemons, and waters and oranges. And I asked my friend cause I wanted to make sure that I was correct about that and she said no, she was out at those tents after a few rounds and she doesn't remember seeing that at all. Despite the innuendo and various media accounts Mr. Ray did not pressure participants into making a choice they otherwise would not have made. That's not true. That is absolutely not true. And then I put the note there. How can an unconscious person make a decision to leave? They can't.

Det. Diskin: Right and that's our, you know, response to that also.

Susan: Also their talking about the Vision Quest and saying the people didn't have food or water for 36 hours well for some people it was more than that because when they played the God game in the afternoon people "died", and people had to "die" before like say maybe 2 or 3:00 in the afternoon when we were in the room there where he was lecturing and if you talked, you weren't supposed to talk, and if you ended up talking you had to be honorable and say I talked and then you had to play dead. So some people probably had not had food or water for way more than 36 hours because they did not have dinner; once you were "dead" you couldn't move, so you couldn't have water, you

couldn't have food. So it was that afternoon of the night that they went out for the Vision Quest that there were some people that didn't have water and food for let's see, maybe, let's see, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9; maybe 7 hours longer than other people. So I didn't know if you were aware of that.

Det. Poling: So if Kirby Brown "died" in the Samurai game, she might have missed out on some water and dinner?

Susan: Uh huh. So she missed a water and dinner before she went out to the Vision Quest as well.

Det. Poling: I just know during the Samurai game she's one that "died" and so I was wondering if maybe she'd gone without extra water and food.

Susan: Yeah, exactly. That's the point I wanted to make. Their saying 36 hours; there were people didn't have food or water for much longer than that, at least 7 hours longer than that, so maybe 42 hours.

Det. Diskin: Okay. I know there's a lot of things in there that aren't accurate in that letter

Susan: That's why I want to go over it with you and point out what I think is incorrect. There's a paragraph here that says those who chose to participate in the sweat lodge and any other event at the retreat did so voluntarily and after having been informed of the risks. The risks were not defined prior to the sweat lodge.

Det. Diskin: So you weren't told you might receive brain damage or heat stroke or any problems like that?

Susan: No, no. He did say that it's going to be very, very hot but I don't remember him saying that you could have heat stroke. Why would I go in there if I was told that?

Det. Diskin: Exactly, that's our point.

Susan: I'd be pretty stupid to do that.

Det. Poling: It's hot in Arizona, I don't expect to die.

Susan: No, even being out in the desert there you know, for 36 hours all by yourself with no phone, you weren't supposed to have a phone, no flashlight, no clock, nothing. The temperatures were never mentioned. (Inaudible) He did say about the temperature was gonna be really, really hot, he didn't say how hot it would be. It says contrary to the one sided reports from the media, Mr. Ray did not abandon the Spiritual Warrior participants. The moment Mr. Ray and the JRI team learn of the emergency situation, 911 was called immediately and the team took action. I read somewhere in the police report or somewhere that he went to his room and was eating in his room and they came up to his

room and they wanted him go back to the sweat lodge and he made a comment like what do you mean right now?

Det. Diskin: Yeah, that was in the media

Susan: I mean so he wasn't there.

Det. Diskin: Right. It was a chaotic scene for quite a bit of time so he was there for part of it and wasn't there for part of it. But we're asking you for your personal experience, for what you know and what you saw. When you were there did James Ray help anybody when they were in medical distress?

Susan: I don't know what he did. I think when they asked me, when I said to them somebody get James Ray right now, I'm gonna die and I believe that they said you know he's already gone. So I don't think he stayed around last year. Again, I could ask my friend you know who was there and really remembers everything that went on.

Det. Diskin: That would be a good person to talk to

Susan: Yeah it really would, I'm gonna call her and encourage her to give you guys a call. He lied about all the qualifications that he had so we know that he's a phony.

Det. Poling: Does he tell you though his qualifications prior to going into this?

Susan: With the sweat lodge? I don't remember exactly what he said, honestly, I wish I could but I had also heard that some of the Indians had said to him stop doing the sweat lodge and he just ignored them.

Det. Diskin: Okay, what else in that letter; was there anything else that you?

Susan: Yeah, in talking about his location he chose the location because it was reputable. This guy's talking about the frame of the sweat lodge. The lodge is essentially blankets and tarps thrown over a wooden frame. Well the other people don't use plastic tarps. I mean that's very clear, you ask the Indians, they never use plastic tarps, (Inaudible).

Det. Diskin: Have you googled how to use a sweat lodge?

Susan: No I haven't but do they use tarps?

Det. Diskin: That's what it'll tell you to do if you Google it.

Susan: Plastic tarps? No kidding? Wow. That's quite something. That's interesting. Okay, let's see, again about this thing about the guy crawling out the side of the tent. We were never told that was not an option. If we were going out it was always out the front door. They are saying the steps that they took to ensure the participants safety since

2005; shortening the number of rounds from 12 to 8. Well, I told you before, more than 8 in 2008. Said they set up a canopy for shade outside the sweat lodge to prevent further dehydration. Don't think that that was there. Putting a tarp on the ground outside to sit or lie down on; not sure they had that in 2008. Setting up a recovery station, stocked with water and all that, towels, lemons, water, watermelon. They didn't have that in 2008. Hiring an event coordinator trained in first aide, CPR, I would very much doubt that. Paying for his employees to be paid as CPR and keeping the training current, I very much doubt that. I mean I'm sure, if they did they would be able to prove that. Stationing people, including those trained in CPR as described above outside helped those who exited between rounds and at the end of the event. Yeah, I'm not sure that the Dream Team people had, I mean I know when I had Dream Teamed I never had training in CPR so I don't think that that's true either. You know unless it's something new that he implemented in 2009 but I very much doubt it. At his other events we never had that CPR training. And they never asked us if we did. Their saying that they specifically accepted an additional volunteer, Lisa Rondan, to help at the retreat because she was a registered nurse.

Det. Diskin: We talked about that

Susan: Yeah okay. In going over the waiver, he's asking people to sign off that he's not liable even if it's from negligence and my comment was, why would anyone put someone at this kind of a risk and why would he even say you're not covered even if I'm negligent? I mean that makes no sense to me at all.

Det. Diskin: But it's a standard waiver.

Susan: Even for negligence?

Det. Diskin: Yeah, people don't read those anyway, they just sign them.

Susan: That's another point that I wanted to bring up. When you sign up for an event, you have a witness sign your waiver and I believe it has to say that you know they read it; you're witnessing that they read this waiver and you're the witness to it. Well a lot of the times you never knew if somebody read it or not and you know sometimes you were supposed to come up and sign up in two's so one they could switch and witness for each other. There were a lot of times when there were maybe one person that came up and they would just grab somebody from anywhere and say here just put your signature here. So it was not really, it was just kind of a joke as far as I'm concerned. The calling (Inaudible) situation. The exercise was entirely optional and the purpose was to provide participants with an opportunity to test their resourcefulness. He's saying here that the exercise was optional but he didn't come out and say this is optional. That's not James Ray, James Ray is everyone play full on so you can get the most out of this event. So it's highly optional, give me a break, why would somebody not participant. He didn't say well this is optional, you can or you can't. It says each participant was assigned a buddy; no, we were not assigned a buddy.

Det. Diskin: Were you at that event?

Susan: Yes I was. Not that particular event, I was at one the previous year.

Det. Diskin: Okay and you weren't assigned a buddy?

Susan: No, we were not assigned a buddy. In fact I sat on the bus with my friend. I thought that we were gonna be able to be together and we weren't. We were all supposed to be by ourselves and we were not allowed to, even if we walked past each other, we were not allowed to even acknowledge each other. They were not allowed to stop and talk to each other we had to just walk past them.

Det. Diskin: Alright was there anything else that you remember?

Susan: Their saying here backup drivers were assigned to each site in the event anyone wanted or needed to leave early. Backup drivers, I'm not quite sure about that. Then they walk about Ms. Connelly was not among them, JR personnel attempted to reach her by telephone. I'm sure you probably have this noted too. What do they mean they tried to contact her by telephone? She didn't have her cell phone with her?

Det. Diskin: Right. We've got into this in detail with employees and several people too.

Det. Poling: You're supposed to have been given an emergency number. Were you given an emergency number?

Susan: Yes, they give you a little business size card that has some number to call on it. Yes that they did but we were not assigned a buddy. That is definitely not true. It says Mr. Ray is not a guru and the people who come to JRI events are not cult members. They do not meet as an ongoing group or collective. Well they do have meetings, their calls jet meetings; journey expansion theme meetings. They have different cities around the country and around the world cause he wants like minded people to meet and they can meet either on a weekly basis or on a monthly basis to talk about the things that we've learned at the events and whatever they decide they want to meet with and it's people who have been to James' events that meet up on a regular basis so for him to say they don't meet as an ongoing group, yes there are particular groups that do meet, so that wasn't true either. And I don't know how important some of these notes are but I just want to mention them to you and you can decide what's important and what's not. As far as the hair cut at the Spiritual Warrior, the buzz cut was offered during the first 30 minutes that the retreat group spent together. Well in 2008 that's true but you could do it. It was offered throughout the event, not just the first 30 minutes. You could do it anytime during the event. Then it says here, he's talking about powerful skills, brainwashing would have permitted Mr. Ray to have manipulated minds that quickly in order to compel obedience. Well I don't know, have you guys ready any information on that? On what he has done as far as manipulating people?

Det. Diskin: Yes, we don't know if we can use any of that. If that will come into court but yeah we have researched that and talked to people about that.

Susan: Okay cause I found a really good article today about a gentleman who has traveled around the country studying different people who do seminars to see how they manipulate people. And it's a really, really good article and of course he used James Ray in there as well, he went to his free two hour event. It's really compelling.

Det. Diskin: What's the name of that?

Susan: It was really pretty compelling. The website shows www.yourinstantappeal.com/blog/

Det. Diskin: Okay, I'll check that out. Anything else that you think is important?

Susan: Okay he's talking about the Samurai game. He says the Samurai game is based on a corporate exercise that Mr. Ray learned while working for AT&T. Well these people who taught the Samurai game said that he was not qualified. Mr. Ray played God merely by acting as the proctor for the exercise by answering questions about rules. That is so understated. He was intense and forceful

Det. Poling: Was he wearing a white robe?

Susan: Yes, yes he was, yeah he was definitely wearing a white robe but I mean this makes him sound so laid back. Well it wasn't, he was intense and forceful. Okay this was an important thing that I thought: it says here the participants were taken to individual locations on the retreat property. These sites and the pathways and maps for them were identified by Angel Valley prior to JRI's arrival. We did not, as participants, have access but were shown the pathways where we were taken. So it was at night, I wouldn't have known how to get back. We were not shown those pathways. I guess you could probably figure it out but that kind of is, is misleading I think. I know there was a woman in 2008 who had gone on the Vision Quest and decided that didn't want to stay and came back to the site and one of the staff members told her if she didn't go back and she decided to go back to her room, that she would have to stay in her room and if she had to go to the bathroom, she'd have to go to the bathroom in her room, she couldn't leave her room.

Det. Diskin: Who was that?

Susan: I don't know who it was, I had just heard about it that woman who had come back and was told she couldn't leave her room. Let's see, evidence would show that participants felt safe and knew that they could get help if the need arose. I don't think that that's true at all. How were we gonna get help? Nobody was there?

Det. Diskin: You were by yourself

Susan: We were alone. They were all off having drinks and food or whatever they were doing, hiking. Who was there to help? So that's not true. Participation of Vision Quest was entirely voluntary. Liz Neuman, one of the decedents did not participate in the Vision Quest at all. Well of course she didn't, I don't know why they would have even put that in there because you know. Oh I understand why they did that, she wasn't a participant so she did have food and water, okay. Let's see, oh it says here Mr. Ray ate the same food as everyone else, well he didn't always eat the same food as everyone else. The press reports also suggest the participants were sleep deprived. Again, these reports are not true, the evidence would show that Saturday evening events ended at approximately 9 PM. Sunday and Monday the events at around midnight. Well we were encouraged to, we had homework assignments that we were supposed to stay up as long as we wanted to, as long as we could. He encouraged us by saying sleep is overrated and you can sleep when you get home. And people stayed up well beyond 9:00. There was one girl who was a participant there who, in her report to you all, said that they only got one hour a night. One hour sleep a night.

Det. Diskin: Yeah, is there anything else that you can think of that you either witnessed or remember that you think is important?

Susan: Let me see, I'm still looking at this report here. I think that this could have been avoided because I think the signs were there and I think that he became a, I don't know what kind of a person he became but you know he became more about the money and not about the people.

Det. Diskin: By you saying of these signs that you know of personally with 2008 and what you experienced in the sweat lodge and what you saw, would those be signs that he should have known?

Susan: Absolutely, I know last year was too hot. Megan told him it was too hot

Det. Diskin: We still need to find out it was who overheard that cause Megan's not saying that so

Susan: I don't know who said it to me, I don't remember, I wish I could help you but I just don't remember that.

Det. Diskin: Okay well if you talk to your friends, if you could try and get that information for us that would be great

Det. Poling: And just to clear that up, when you said last year you mean 2008

Susan: I'm sorry I meant 2008 yeah,

Det. Poling: I knew 2009 was too hot, that's obvious. I just wanted to make sure you're talking about 2008

Susan: Right, right, right, yeah I keep making that mistake as I keep thinking it's 2009 but please feel free to call me for anything. I'm happy to help you with anything but I, I do believe that this did not have to happen. There were signs obviously in 2005. I'm sure you've talked to people from 2006 and 2007. From what I experienced in 2009, the signs were there, it never should have happened, it never, never, never should have happened. I will call my friends right now and see if they would be, I've got your direct number.

Det. Diskin: Perfect, yeah you can just have them give me a call.

Susan: Alright, do you have anymore questions for me?

Det. Diskin: Not yet but we might later.

Susan: Okay, I'm happy to help. As I said I've been to every event from 2007 except for the one in Hawaii where people broke their wrists and limbs or whatever. So I'm happy to help in anyway I can.

Det. Diskin: Alright, thanks I appreciate it.

Susan: Alright thank you very much. Have a good evening.

Det. Diskin: Bye.

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