

JEAN B. COURTNEY - February 08, 2022

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF ARIZONA

Kimberly R. Sweidy,	)	
	)	
Plaintiff,	)	
	)	Case No.
v.	)	CV-21-08013-PCT-SPL
	)	
Spring Ridge Academy, an	)	
Arizona corporation, Jean	)	
Courtney, Suzanne Courtney,	)	
Brandon Courtney, Erin Smith,	)	
Leslie Filsinger, Justin Zych,	)	
Kate Deily, Veronica Borges,	)	
and Does 1 through 20,	)	
	)	
Defendants.	)	
	)	

VIDEOTAPED DEPOSITION OF JEAN B. COURTNEY

February 8, 2022

1:44 p.m.

711 Whipple Street, Suite C
Prescott, Arizona 86301

Shelley E.D. Pearce, RPR, CR No. 50301

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1 enter when you went back to work?

2 A. I actually went through a workshop with
3 Lifespring and then became a family enrollment person in
4 the Lifespring organization in January of 1979.

5 Q. And can you describe what Lifespring is?

6 A. Lifespring was part of the human potential
7 movement, along with Echelon and a variety of other
8 things, and the purpose was for people to actually realize
9 more of their greatness.

10 Q. What attracted you to Lifespring at that time?

11 A. My husband had been given that as a gift, and he
12 went through it.

13 Q. Was it a weekend?

14 A. Uh-huh.

15 Q. Is that a yes?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Can you describe what he went through?

18 A. This is a five-day workshop, three nights and
19 two days; and when he came out, he said -- we were on the
20 verge of divorce, and he said I realize my mistakes, to be
21 honest with you. I've learned a lot about me and what I
22 do. That's what he said. So he wanted me to go through,
23 so I did.

24 Q. And what did you do?

25 A. I went through the same thing, taking a look at

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1 myself and my relationships.

2 Q. You went to a five-day event?

3 A. Uh-huh.

4 Q. Is that a yes?

5 A. Yes. That's hard.

6 Q. Did you do this more than once or was it just
7 one event?

8 A. There were -- there were three. There was one
9 that was -- two that were five days, and one that were
10 weekends.

11 Q. So you did one weekend. You didn't go on more
12 than one weekend?

13 A. There were three weekends.

14 Q. So you went to two Lifespring programs that each
15 lasted five days each and you went to three weekends?

16 A. Uh-huh.

17 Q. Is that a yes?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. What year did you go to those?

20 A. 1979 -- 1978 was the first one. No, actually,
21 1978 is when I went, the end of 1978.

22 Q. And after 1978, did you continue on with
23 Lifespring?

24 A. I worked for them part time.

25 Q. What was your job?

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1 A. I was an enrollment person --

2 Q. What --

3 A. -- for family workshops. They had family
4 workshops as well, and the adults who wanted to go to the
5 family workshops would call and register with me.

6 Q. Did you have an office?

7 A. I was in an office. I was -- yes.

8 Q. And where was that located?

9 A. 16th Street and Camelback in Phoenix, Arizona.

10 Q. And this was in 1978?

11 A. This was 1979.

12 Q. 1979.

13 How long did you work in that capacity?

14 A. I worked in that capacity for about a year or
15 so.

16 Q. Did you leave Lifespring at that time?

17 A. No, I left Lifespring in August of 1980.

18 Q. Why did you leave Lifespring?

19 A. I left Lifespring because I was discouraged with
20 some of the things that they were doing, quite frankly.

21 Q. What were they doing that discouraged you?

22 A. There was way too much confrontation for me in
23 their workshops.

24 Q. What do you mean by "confrontation"? What --
25 what -- can you give us an example?

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1 A. They would at times intimidate people by getting
2 too close to them, raise their voice sometimes. There
3 were new people who would come into that office, and I was
4 discouraged with what was going on.

5 Q. Was there a particular event that was --

6 A. No.

7 Q. -- traumatic?

8 A. No. I had actually questioned some of it along
9 the way.

10 Q. Who did you voice your concerns to?

11 A. I didn't.

12 Q. You just -- this was an internal questioning?

13 A. This was internal for me. I was there just part
14 time.

15 Q. Are you aware that Lifespring was the subject of
16 numerous lawsuits where people --

17 A. I am. I am.

18 Q. Are you aware that -- that they were pretty much
19 shut down because of those lawsuits?

20 A. Uh-huh.

21 Q. Is that a yes?

22 A. Yes, it is.

23 Q. Isn't it true that Lifespring and some of its
24 methodologies continue to date with certain organizations?

25 A. Yes, it is.

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1 Q. And what organizations would you say you --

2 A. I don't know. I do not know.

3 THE COURT REPORTER: One at a time, please.

4 THE WITNESS: Oh, sorry.

5 I know that it has continued. I do not know
6 what it is. I have had parents come through our workshop
7 versus going through those workshops that were concurrent,
8 so to speak, or at the same time, and there was a marked
9 difference.

10 BY MS. ALLARD:

11 Q. Is Lifespring operating right now?

12 A. I have no idea.

13 Q. So when you say you have parents describe a
14 workshop that they had gone to, what organization did they
15 report to you that they had attended?

16 A. I do not remember.

17 Q. Are there features that are similar between
18 Lifespring weekends and any of the workshops done at
19 Spring Ridge Academy, since you were conducting them at
20 Spring Ridge Academy?

21 A. Would you explain "similar"?

22 Q. Well, you described your attraction to
23 Lifespring based on, I think, some sort of human potential
24 movement.

25 A. Actually, my attraction to it was to save my

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1 marriage.

2 Q. And what about your experience at Lifespring led
3 you to feel that it was helpful in your marriage?

4 A. Short-term, it was helpful, and my husband began
5 to be more responsible and forthright and a variety of
6 different things.

7 Q. What did you credit to Lifespring as far as his
8 changes?

9 A. More responsibility.

10 Q. What kind of activities went on at Lifespring
11 that you think inspired him to become more responsible?

12 A. He would have to answer that for you. Not me.
13 I have no idea.

14 Q. Well, based on your recruitment of people to
15 Lifespring, what did you tell them they could expect as a
16 benefit from attending?

17 A. There is benefit in looking at yourself and
18 looking at your patterns of behavior, the way you think,
19 and beginning to ascertain what in life works and what
20 does not work.

21 Q. Working and nonworking behavior?

22 A. Uh-huh, that came along before Lifespring, those
23 two terms. That came in trainings that Lifespring -- that
24 John Hanley and Werner Erhard both, when you study the
25 history, they stole a lot from another guy by the name of

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1 Alexan- -- I don't remember his name. It's a whole
2 history of that.

3 Q. So there was a self-inventory component of
4 Lifespring --

5 A. Uh-huh.

6 Q. -- that you believed was positive?

7 A. Uh-huh.

8 Q. Is that a yes?

9 A. Uh-huh. Yes, yes, sorry.

10 Q. Can you describe the exercises that were done at
11 Lifespring for the self-inventory and which of them were
12 used at Spring Ridge Academy?

13 A. I can't recall a lot of those exercises at this
14 time. One of those -- one of them was to have a talk with
15 your mom and your dad and write a letter.

16 Q. And would these be an internal talk?

17 A. Uh-huh.

18 Q. Is that a yes?

19 A. Uh-huh, yes. I'm sorry.

20 Q. And you would have to write a letter to your
21 mother or father?

22 A. You could have that opportunity to do that.

23 Q. And did you use that in any workshop at Spring
24 Ridge Academy?

25 A. Yes, part of it, partially.

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1 Q. What parts did you use?

2 A. Have the girls talk to their parents.

3 Q. And what parts did you not use?

4 A. I'm trying think. We -- it was -- it was
5 somewhat similar, somewhat similar, but not exactly that
6 way. We didn't write letters to the parents about that.

7 Q. At Spring Ridge Academy, there was no --

8 A. But we also talked about the importance of --
9 I'm sorry.

10 We talked about the importance of communicating
11 with parents and that -- at Spring Ridge, but not in this
12 particular organization. Remember, we're talking the
13 difference between teenagers and adults.

14 Q. So at Spring Ridge Academy, you talked about
15 parents, but at Lifespring, that wasn't discussed?

16 A. Not in a group, no. They are two very different
17 workshops and trainings that have changed -- that I have
18 changed, actually.

19 Q. Well, you mentioned one component that you
20 took -- borrowed from Lifespring and incorporated at the
21 workshops at Spring Ridge Academy. Were there any others?

22 A. I'm trying to think. The Red Black Game.

23 Q. What is the Red Black Game designed to inspire
24 or accomplish?

25 A. The purpose of our workshop -- I can talk about

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1 my workshop -- is different than what they were doing in
2 Lifespring, and Lifespring's been a long time ago for me.

3 The purpose of the Red Black Game and all the
4 experiences in the workshops that I do provide a safe,
5 supportive environment where, in fact, people can begin to
6 look at their patterns of thinking, feeling, and beliefs
7 that come up for them. And so it's the way we set up an
8 exercise and the way we talk about that exercise is
9 strictly for people to see what is it that works and
10 doesn't work in their life.

11 Q. Well, the Red Black Game is where, I think, the
12 adults are broken into different groups?

13 A. Uh-huh.

14 MR. GRUSE: Is that yes?

15 THE WITNESS: Yes, and the purpose -- and it's
16 really for people to look at themselves.

17 BY MS. ALLARD:

18 Q. Well, what are the rules of the game?

19 A. Okay. The first one is count the number of
20 people on your team. So the purpose of doing that is that
21 we feel and part of that exercise is that everybody's
22 voice counts, so -- and everybody needs to vote.

23 The second one is to choose a team captain. The
24 team captain's responsibilities were to, in fact, lead the
25 discussion and making sure that there is an accurate vote,

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1 making sure that everybody does vote.

2 The third rule -- and these are maybe different
3 than Lifespring. I don't remember the Lifespring -- is
4 everyone on your team must vote in every frame for either
5 red or black. The purpose is -- and we talk about this
6 afterwards -- everyone's voice counts, and that's part of
7 the philosophy at Spring Ridge Academy.

8 Q. How does a team win?

9 A. Hold on. Hold on. There's two more.

10 The fourth is the vote must tally. That means
11 the red -- the red votes and the black votes must tally to
12 the number of people on the team. This ensures what?
13 That everybody on those teams vote. That is one of the
14 things that's very important in this particular exercise,
15 because how you can stop the game is by not voting. So
16 you have the power to do that.

17 The fifth rule -- ground rule is in relationship
18 to the other group, which is you must wait for the vote --
19 "vote" meaning red or black -- of the other team without
20 going forward. Now, what that is is a very open exercise
21 asking people to think outside of the box. How are they
22 going to go about doing that? Within each time, people
23 can discuss their strategy back and forth during that
24 particular time.

25 Now, the game itself, if you looked at the board

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1 in Red Black, there are six frames, and you do one frame
2 at time because you can't vote ahead. You have to wait
3 for the vote of the other team before going ahead in the
4 vote. It's a win/win. There are three or four fathers
5 who took this game and used it in their corporations, as a
6 matter of fact, because they felt it was so valuable.

7 All right. So let me go over to -- all right.
8 Number one, if people look -- people usually look -- look
9 at the board and say, let's vote red the whole time.
10 You'd have to see the board, to be honest with you, the
11 whole Red Black board. If both teams vote red, both teams
12 get a negative three. If one team votes red and one votes
13 black, the one that votes red gets a plus five and the
14 black team gets a minus three. It goes down until --
15 basically, the bottom line, there's four ways to vote.
16 All right.

17 The bottom line is black black. If you vote
18 black black in the game, both teams get plus three. This
19 is that win/win that people don't go into when you say the
20 word "game." They don't go into thinking that way and,
21 yet, in almost every one of our trainings, they figure it
22 out. Someone figures it out on some team. But we added
23 to this. That was not in Lifespring at all.

24 One is that you can leave the room. No one ever
25 said you couldn't leave the room. So that's thinking

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1 outside of your box. So if you and -- Brandon was the
2 runner. My son was always the one going back and forth.
3 He would get the vote, i.e., red or black, from one team
4 and then he'd go give the other team red or black. Then
5 they go on to the next one. That's all he would say.

6 And, then, what almost all of the teams figure
7 out, you know what? We can go and we can talk to the
8 other team. The girls don't figure it out, but the adults
9 usually do. Sometimes, though, they figure it out, and
10 the other team says we don't want to do it that way. It's
11 a very dynamic, very interesting game to play in this way.
12 So it's valuable in corporations where people begin to
13 look at their patterns, and we talk about this later --
14 what are some of the patterns in your life where you play
15 Red Black, where everything is about I'm right, I have to
16 win? What are some of those patterns that work for you?
17 What are some of the patterns that don't?

18 One of the students one time when she was -- she
19 got a roll and she said, you know, I realized we can go
20 into the other room, and then she walked over to the door
21 and went through and, of course, nobody stopped her, and
22 she was thrilled. Well, the moment we began thinking
23 outside of that nine dots, she came back, they were
24 already on the third frame, and she turned around and
25 looked at me and pointed her finger at me. You never said

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1 we couldn't start over. I never even thought of that. So
2 that was -- became part of it, too, that these girls were
3 a lot better than the parents.

4 So it's a very interesting game. So,
5 afterwards, we talk about it and, you know, how to win and
6 how did you feel in the game? Some people get -- so each
7 person in the room has an opportunity -- now, this is not
8 what happened, I can tell you right now, in Lifespring.
9 In Lifespring, they would scream, holler, yell, and
10 lecture the people on how bad they were. That's their
11 technique.

12 In -- at Spring Ridge, we talk about what did
13 you learn about yourself? That was our question to people
14 over and over and over again. What did you learn about
15 yourself in this game? How did you play this game? And
16 then we go into groups and talk about it.

17 Q. Do you know --

18 A. Does that make sense to you?

19 Q. No. I'm going to be honest; it does not. I did
20 not follow.

21 A. Okay.

22 Q. I don't understand the rules of the game. I'm
23 not participating in it.

24 A. It's -- it's --

25 Q. And I'm not in a room full of people.

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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

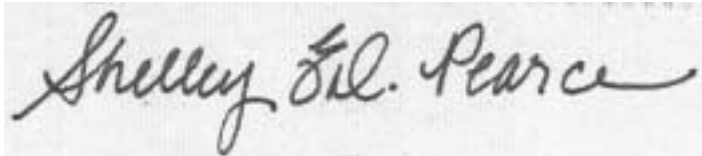
I, SHELLEY E.D. PEARCE, RPR, a Certified Reporter within and for the State of Arizona, do hereby certify:

That the foregoing deposition was taken before me; that an oath or affirmation was duly administered to JEAN B. COURTNEY, pursuant to A.R.S. 41-324(B); that the questions propounded to the witness and the answers of the witness thereto were taken down by me in shorthand and thereafter reduced to typewriting; that the transcript is a full, true, and accurate record of the proceedings, all done to the best of my skill and ability; and that the preparation, production, and distribution of the transcript and copies of the transcript comply with the Arizona Revised Statutes and ACJA 7-206(J)(1)(g)(1) and (2).

The witness has requested transcript review and signature.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not related to any of the parties, nor am I in any way interested in the outcome hereof.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 23rd day of February, 2022.



Shelley E.D. Pearce, RPR
Arizona CR No. 50301



Registered Reporting Firm No. R1210

Assignment No. 158557