

Vernon Bellecourt/Janice Denney Meeting:

Wednesday 14 February 2001. Time: 16:50. Location: 'Chili's Too', Minneapolis Airport. Clyde Bellecourt was scheduled to participate but didn't arrive.

Vernon wanted to know what the outcome of my meeting with John Graham was, in view of the fact that Vernon had arranged the interview with the understanding that I would help Graham and AIM by creating a plausible alibi for Graham that could be used to demonstrate that he had not murdered Anna Mae Aquash. Vernon said that John Graham had called him after I had concluded the interview with him to ask how well he knew me, to which Vernon had responded, "As well as I know most people I know," which seemingly appeased Graham's concerns.

As with the actual interview with Graham, Vernon and Janice and myself discussed each location Aquash had been taken to in the murder sequence and how Graham had reacted to each. Vernon and Janice had total familiarity with every venue and what had transpired there and the main areas of discussion were: Graham denying that he had raped Aquash and that he fell apart when it came to discussing what had happened when they arrived at Bill Means' home prior to him shooting Aquash. I expressed my incredulity that Graham thought it was plausible for him to say that he wasn't on the last leg of the journey from Bill Means' house to Amiotte's ranch where he shot her. Janice described it as "ridiculous" for him to say that, and we joked about the imaginary scene of Graham leaping out of Theda's car as she drove them up to Wanblee. Vernon didn't participate in the joke, and then said; "And Theda's involvement was so out of character with the Theda I knew."

Janice brought up Dennis Banks and how badly she thought he had conducted the CBC interview and Vernon agreed, stating, "Banks comes out with totally ridiculous things that are unbelievable." Janice and I then discussed how, even from his demeanor, it was obvious that 'the word' to kill Aquash had come from Banks, at which point Vernon bemoaned how Banks put them "in impossible positions of having to back and justify situations like this" because he was "influenced by idiots and psychopaths like David Hill and Peltier." Vernon continued, claiming that the Tent City group hadn't been anything to do with AIM but after the shoot-out, because of their association with Banks, AIM had had to support them. Vern said Peltier "had never been anything" and Janice concurred, Vernon ruing that he had "wasted 25-years" supporting him and how Peltier had become synonymous with AIM.

Both Vernon and Janice agreed that Peltier held a lot of responsibility for what happened to Anna Mae and they believed that she would still be alive had it not been for him. Vernon said, "She should have gotten out of there – and she could have – after the motor home and Pierre," and they both said that they could not understand why she stayed. Vernon repeated how out of character it had been for Theda to have participated in Aquash's murder but both agreed that "she should have known better," Janice adding that "Arlo and John Boy were just kids." I said that I hoped that if this case was prosecuted Vernon wouldn't continue to try and defend these people and Janice interjected, "Oh, he won't!" Janice explained how, publicly, Vernon "takes a position" because he is one of the few within AIM who can articulate points eloquently, but that he doesn't always believe in the argument. "God, I've defended these people and their actions for years; Banks, Peltier. Look at the position they put us in. What choice have I had?" Vern asked. Of the Tent City group he said, "They were just crazy. I don't know what the hell they were thinking! Christ, did those idiots think they were invincible or something?" Janice added, "They could have got a lot more people killed. A lot of women and children."

We talked about how Clyde had been present at the WKLD/OC house and at Bill Means' and I said I was sorry that Clyde hadn't shown-up for this meeting because I wanted to give him another opportunity to tell me about it in his own words and Vernon said, "My brother would probably have just denied it again." We discussed how worried Dennis Banks must be and Vernon insisted, "Whatever contact he had with Theda over Anna Mae Aquash did not come through me." At this juncture Vernon went into a hypothetical trial scenario to ascertain whose and what testimony would stand up to scrutiny and he said that he had no doubt that Theda, Arlo and John Boy could be found guilty on charges of abduction/kidnap but that he didn't believe Anna Mae's murder would be prosecuted because there was an "informant involved or close to it." He said that Thelma Rios would never have done anything for him and that his main concern is Clyde and that he himself is presently the visible AIM figure in this. Janice made it clear that she wants him to back-off and let, "whatever's going to happen, happen." I said that people just want it to be over, to which Vernon responded, "They want it to go away. If over means prosecutions, I don't think they want that." I described this as a cancer in the Movement and everything positive, the education programs etc. will mean nothing if this cover-up continues and Janice agreed, saying that "it needs to end".

Vernon repeated how people "still say Anna Mae was a pig." We then discussed what each participant could be charged with and he expressed a genuine concern that he could be prosecuted for 'obstruction of justice.' He reassured himself by speculating "nobody will believe Arlo" and asked, "Could it be prosecuted 25-years later? I mean, what do people remember? What physical evidence is there?" He then switched to the murder of Ray Robinson and said the "principals involved were Banks, Hill and Carter Camp." Continuing on the subject of murder victims, Vernon stated that Rocky Duanes had been killed because he was an informant and repeated the anecdote of how he gave Rocky \$5,000 from Bill Walton for Peltier's defense in late November 1975. He wanted to know when I had last discussed the Aquash murder with Dennis Banks and I told him it had been awhile but that I had no desire to do so again in the near future because Banks was such a bad liar. Vernon said he thought the last time Dennis had talked to Theda was at the Whiteclay march in June 1999. He said how Russell Means had also attempted to talk to Theda at that time and then gave a diatribe about Russ and Ward Churchill, concluding with, "So what would Russell Charles Means say if they put him on the stand?"

The meeting concluded shortly after 19:00 and soon after I boarded a flight to Rapid City.