

ST. JOSEPH POLICE DEPARTMENT INVESTIGATION REPORT

REEVES: Today's date is Wednesday, June 19th, 1991. We are in my office, I am speaking with Curtis Pitts. Do you go by Curtis or Kurt or what?

PITTS: Either one would be fine.

JR: Ok I'm gonna put the tape recorder there on the table and you don't have any objections?

CP: No.

JR: Would you state your name and your address? Spell you last name please.

CP: Last name, Pitts, P I T T S. Address [REDACTED] St. Joseph, Michigan, 49085. Telephone number is area code 616-[REDACTED].

JR: You go by Curtis or Kurt?

CP: Some people call me Curtis, some people call me Kurt.

JR: What do you like to be called?

CP: It doesn't matter. It really doesn't.

JR: You know Kristine Keyser correct?

CP: Yea I know her.

JR: And what is your relationship with her?

CP: Well right now not to great but..but that's more my fault than anything else.

JR: Do you date her?

CP: Somewhat. Somewhat.

JR: When did you start dating Kris?

CP: Let's see.. about 2 months ago. I don't know about a month and a half ago..2 months something like that.

JR: Had you ever heard of Eric McGinnis?

CP: Not until recently.

JR: And what do you know about him now?

CP: I know the dude's dead, that's what I know, when they fished him out of the river and I know I'm catching all kinds of slack from it.

JR: Why?

CP: Well just people talking..people running at the mouth saying "oh her boyfriend did it, her boyfriend did it". Ya know it's like uh uh.

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JR: Who's boyfriend?

CP: Well they were talking about me..they were saying that about Kris. She heard it from people in Benton Harbor that were saying "well her boyfriend had something to do with it". I don't know what they're saying..I mean that's all I heard, she came back and told me about it..about these people talking this and that..she said some guy where she works told her about these people saying this. I said "well I don't care what they say, as long as they don't come to my house and give me any problems" I said "I didn't have nothing to do with it" either way it's none of my business ya know. If it's none of my business I stay out of it. I keep myself out of trouble that way.

JR: Did Kris know Eric McGinnis?

CP: As far as I know she did.

JR: She did?

CP: As far as I know. She didn't know him much though I guess. Just a little bit.

JR: How..what is your knowledge of their relationship?

CP: Nothing. I didn't want to hear about it. That's an ex friend of hers, that's an ex guy friend of hers or something. I don't want to hear about it..I don't talk to her about guys I could care less.

JR: Where you with Kris Keyser on May 17th?

CP: May 17th, that was a Saturday.

JR: No that was a Friday.

CP: That was a Friday? Ok. Yea we were at that party.

JR: What party was that?

CP: The one in Berrien.

JR: Whereabouts in Berrien?

CP: Uh..Snow and Lower. No it's not Snow and Lower..I'm not sure. It's a the end of Lower you know where the end of Lower's at?

JR: Yes.

CP: I don't know what road that intersects with, I can't remember what it is I was pretty wasted. Pretty wasted, I couldn't even drive so..

JR: Who drove?

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CP: Well I sobered up some and finally...

JR: Who were some of the people there that would remember you and Kris being there?

CP: You ain't gonna bust these people for throwing a party are you?

JR: No.

CP: Ok you promise on that?

JR: You have my promise on that.

CP: Alright. Good deal. Well one dude I know, I know him by his first name, his name is James. I can't remember his last name. There was a few people there, in and out, I couldn't even tell you their names um...I don't know there was about probably 30 people there.

JR: Who'd you go there with?

CP: Me, Kris, Kelly and Kelly's girlfriend.

JR: Who's Kelly?

CP: Kelly Clark. You guys probably heard of him. He's not a trouble maker, he's a good guy really, he's straight on everything, he's just..he's had some bad days.

JR: He was at the party with you guys?

CP: Yea he was up there with us?

JR: What time did you pick up Kris or what time did you and Kris get together that night?

CP: Well...we got together pretty early because I had to go work on my car, I had to put a new gasket in my valves so we went over there. We were driving around looking for Kelly and finally we ran into him and then we all went out to Berrien.

JR: Who drove?

CP: I did.

JR: Where did you go after the party?

CP: Back up to Kelly's..or his girlfriends.

JR: What did you do then?

CP: Crashed. I didn't feel like going any where, I was too tired.

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JR: Where did Kris go?

CP: She stayed there with us.

JR: The whole night?

CP: Uh huh.

JR: Nobody left?

CP: Huh uh.

JR: Were you in St. Joe that night at all?

CP: Not that night no.

JR: Earlier in the day?

CP: When I left my house. My house is in St. Joe.

JR: Did you ever come downtown St. Joe?

CP: That night? No.

JR: The next day?

CP: The next day...shoot...I don't think I came into St. Joe at all. I don't like it here.

JR: Did you ever see Eric McGinnis?

CP: Not that I know of.

JR: Did you ever meet him?

CP: Nope.

JR: Did you ever have any...know of anybody that met Eric McGinnis besides Kris Keyser?

CP: Well if you want the straight..

JR: Do you want me to turn this off?

CP: Yea.

JR: Ok we turned this off for just a minute. Did you have anything to do with Eric's death at all?

CP: No not that I know of.

JR: Do you know anybody directly that had to do with Eric's death?

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CP: I doubt it.

JR: To your knowledge do you know of anybody?

CP: No.

JR: There's some talk on the streets that there may be some retaliation because people believe that Eric's death is a racial issue. Have you heard that?

CP: Yea I heard it but I'll tell you right now, I think it was a punk issue. A rip off issue that's what I think it was because out there you hear alot but when it really comes down to it, people start saying that somebody's gonna get it, people are looking for information, you'll get it, you'll get it out there, you just got to listen. That's all there is to it. What I heard was that he stole that's all I heard or that he upset somebody really bad by stealing..that's all I heard..I don't know what he stole..I don't know who he stole it from. All I know is that's what I heard.

JR: These are people from Van Buren County area?

CP: More than likely..either Van Buren or Berrien..somewhere around this area because it's small..it's really small. Everybody knows everybody around here.

JR: Have you received any threats at all?

CP: No but I've been getting eyes.

JR: Who's been eyeing you?

CP: I don't mean to sound prejudice or nothing but they all look the same.

JR: Do they come out to your work or your house or what?

CP: No they know better to stay away from there. It's just places I go..where ever I'm at.

JR: Kris told me that you had a relative that was killed by a black guy?

CP: That don't have nothing to do with this.

JR: Where did that happen?

CP: Shoot..I think it was California or maybe here I'm not sure. I think it was California.

JR: Was that an uncle or something?

CP: Yea. Why'd she tell you that for?

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JR: I don't know.

CP: She's got a big mouth. That's family business, that doesn't have nothing to do with nobody else.

JR: It had nothing to do with this?

CP: Hell no it didn't. That's bogue..that's really bogue.

JR: What did Kris tell you about Eric?

CP: I don't know. I told her to shut up I didn't want to here it. I said it's already costs enough pain and problems right now as it is. I said I got a little brother who goes to St. Joe and I said those sons of a [REDACTED] come up there and they think oh they hurt..so help me god I'll wipe out that whole god [REDACTED] school. I warn all my friends before I do it. I'll wipe that whole god [REDACTED] thing out. That's all I worry about is my family and people I care about.

JR: Has there been any threats made to your family?

CP: No not yet.

JR: No one knows that you're involved with Kris do they?

CP: People know. People know that me and Kris see each other I mean gees, how hard is it in a small community like this to figure out..people are talking it was her boyfriend that had something to do with it. How hard is it not to find that she's going out with this guy. A lot of people know me..a lot of people. They seen me with her and boom boom, one and one makes two ya know. One and one makes two that's all I'm saying I don't want the trouble I had nothing to do with it and I don't want any trouble.

JR: What happened to your uncle?

CP: I don't know. I don't want to talk about it. It's stupid.

JR: Was he shot?

CP: I think so. I don't know. I don't ask questions about it, I don't talk about it I just don't.

JR: How long ago did that happen?

CP: A couple years back, right after he got back from Nam I guess.

JR: Any of Kris's friends get ahold of you, ask you if Kris was involved?

CP: No. No. People don't come to ask me anything. I don't tell them anything. I'll tell you guys what I know but that's about it. I thought I'd be straight with you and you be straight with me. You don't hassle me or harass me or anything.

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JR: That's what we're trying to do, trying to find out what happened.

CP: Yea I know that. You guys want to know what's going on out there.

JR: And if anyone wants to have a beer party or something like that...that's secondary to what I'm looking for here. I'm just trying to find out what happened to Eric.

CP: Yea I won't beat around the bush with you.

JR: But you have no idea?

CP: You got me. All I know is what I see out there and what they told me and it's heating up bad. It's heating up real bad I can see it.

JR: What do you hear on the streets?

CP: What am I hearing on the streets? Let's put it this way, I used to be able to walk in the streets by myself, now everytime I turn around I got to watch it.

JR: Why do you think they're after you?

CP: It's not just that...they're after any white person. I don't know who he was but he had some friends and their friends had some friends. It's just a small community and everybody knows everybody. Everybody takes a side when something like that happens. If a friend of mine was done in like that, I want to know who did it.

JR: How do you think he was done in?

CP: Well that's what everyone was saying. I mean the dude comes up missing and then he's found in the river. It sure seems like he was done in to me. I read the paper and it said that the guy knew how to swim. I tell you what...that river's got a current to it. I'm a good swimmer and I got pulled under one time and was lucky to come out of it. So I don't know. It's a 50-50 chance. Your guess is as good as mine.

JR: Kris doesn't talk about it?

CP: No I don't want to hear about it from her.

JR: Did she tell you that she talked to me?

CP: Yea she told me all about that. That one dude...who does he think he is asking her was he trying to impress you. I think that's bull.

JR: What's that?

CP: That one guy asked her, he said "what do you think he's trying to impress you?" I'm like...

JR: Who's trying to impress who?

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CP: That one dude said that about me. I don't know. I don't know him I just remember that one part of the conversation. That just pissed me off. He didn't have to be like that.

JR: Well I was there and I don't remember that.

CP: I don't know. I guess that one dude was talking to Kris and she was saying something about him asking her questions about if I'd tell her or something like that. She told him "well he tells me alot" and that one guy said "what's he doing, trying to impress you". I don't have to impress anybody, I'm me and if people don't like it then hey that's the way it is. I thought that was bogue.

JR: Maybe that's not how the conversation really occurred.

CP: Well that's the way I took it. I wouldn't answer somebody's questions if they're talking like that.

JR: You work for the Chalets?

CP: Yea.

JR: What do you do out there?

CP: Groundsman.

JR: Whatever needs to be done, you do it?

CP: Mower jockey.

JR: How long have you worked there?

CP: Well let's see..I started April 1st which is really a joke because that place is funny. It's a trip out there. I like it though. It's nice. April 1st and it's June..I don't know. When I'm at work I don't check the date, all I know is I have to go to work these days and I get these days off ya know.

JR: Where'd you work before that?

CP: With Bert. Bert Valdez. We'd do landscaping, trim trees..no not trim trees..but plant tress and sometimes grass and all that stuff.

JR: You never met Eric? You didn't have anything to do with his death? You're shaking your head..

CP: Oh no.

JR: Kurt if you hear anymore on the street about why Eric might have meet his death, would you let me know.

CP: Yea I'll give you a holler.



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JR: You think..it's your opinion..that's he ripped someone off and he retaliated?

CP: That's what I heard. Something to that extent. I don't know that's what I heard. There's a lot of people out there. There's a lot of people out there that you can make enemies with. You're smallest enemy could be the one that was going to hurt you in the end and the one you did the most to might have good feelings towards you. It's screwed up out there. Everybody knows everybody out there, like I said before..

JR: Thank's for coming in.

CP: No problem.

End of tape.