

REEVES: Ok Janet today is August the 3rd, 1993. This is Jim Reeves and I am at the Berrien County Jail and I am speaking with [REDACTED]. You want me to call you [REDACTED] or what?

JR: [REDACTED] Spell your last name for me.

JR: [REDACTED] And I've placed a recorder, tape recorder on the desk in front of us. You and I had a lengthy conversation yesterday is that correct?
[REDACTED] Yes sir.

JR: [REDACTED] And we went up to Paw Paw after you showed Detective Abbott Taylor and I the layout as you remembered along the St. Joseph River and the Pier is that correct?
[REDACTED] Yes sir.

JR: [REDACTED] I want you to tell me please the events that led up to Eric McGinnis' death as you remember them.
[REDACTED] Um I'll try to use times..

JR: [REDACTED] Use times and I will try to interject once in awhile to clarify it alright?
[REDACTED] Alright we went to the Club, I wasn't with Curtis, I showed up at the Club and Curtis was there.

JR: [REDACTED] Curtis...
[REDACTED] Pitts. Curtis Pitts.

JR: [REDACTED] Who were you there with?
[REDACTED] I went to the Club with a guy named Dallas.

JR: [REDACTED] Dallas?
[REDACTED] Yea.

JR: [REDACTED] Do you know Dallas' last name?
[REDACTED] No I don't.

JR: [REDACTED] Is Dallas white or black?
[REDACTED] He's black. Um..

JR: [REDACTED] Can you describe Dallas for me?
[REDACTED] He's about 5 foot 9, brown eyes, brown hair..

JR: [REDACTED] Now did you and Dallas go with anyone else?
[REDACTED] No. We went to the Club by ourselves.

JR: [REDACTED] Who drove?
[REDACTED] Dallas did.

JR: What kind of car did Dallas have?

■: Uh if I'm not mistaken it was a Bonneville but I don't think it was his car.

JR: What time did you and Dallas go to the Club?

■: Uh right after it opened so it'd be about, it'd say it opened for teenagers at about nine, we got there about 9:15, 9:30.

JR: And did you see Eric McGinnis there?

■: Uh...not right away. I seen him there, we danced for, ya know we were dancing and I seen him for a split moment arguing with Curtis Pitts' girlfriend and then I seen Curtis Pitts and him get into it an argument and this would have been about..ok say the Club closes at one, this would have had to have been about 12:25.

JR: Was the Club crowded?

■: Yes it was.

JR: If you had to guess how many people were there, how many would you guess?

■: Couple hundred.

JR: And this was in May?

■: I told you I don't know exactly what month it was.

JR: You said Curtis Pitts' girlfriend, do you know what her name was?

■: No sir I don't.

JR: Can you describe her to me?

■: She was about 5 foot 7, um..I don't know what color her eyes were, I didn't really pay attention, and if I'm not mistaken her hair was lighted, light brown, light brown, kind of sandy blonde.

JR: How long had she been Curtis' girlfriend?

■: By then probably at least five or six months.

JR: So you were at the Club with Dallas and you were dancing with some girls...

■: Uh huh.

JR: ...and you got there after they opened, at about 12:25 you saw Eric McGinnis and Pitts' girlfriend talking.

■: Yea. Well they weren't exactly talking, they were arguing, you could tell they were arguing..

JR: And then later on you saw Curtis and...

█: Not even five minutes later I seen Curtis, it was right, it was like 45 minutes before it closed and I seen the same thing with Curtis and uh Eric, because Curtis had found out...I guess had found out, had seen and found out about Eric and his girlfriend were arguing, or Eric and Curtis' girlfriend so Curtis confronted him in the video game room of the Club.

JR: How do you know Eric McGinnis?

█: Uh I seen him like once or twice up at school, like I said cause I haven't spent much time in school, up at King Preparatory, and maybe once or twice at the Club I'm not real sure on that one.

JR: Can you describe Eric?

█: Not right off hand no.

JR: So after you saw this confrontation between Eric and Curtis what happened?

█: Eric walked out of the Club, some..one of Curtis' friends that I guess had showed up with Curtis uh come down and said something to Curtis and Curtis went upstairs. If I'm not mistaken, I'm not for positive but if I'm not mistaken it was something to do with Eric outside. When Curtis got upstairs, when Curtis headed upstairs I came across the dance floor and went upstairs as well.

JR: Why?

█: To see what was going on because I was a good friend of Curtis' at the time, or so I thought. Um...he headed upstairs, he got about as far as the corner of Schu's Restaurant when I came out the door and then he crossed the street and got into a conflict with Eric.

JR: Where was Eric?

█: He was across the street from the restaurant, uh by the bluff kind of but on the sidewalk.

JR: Then what did you see happen?

█: Uh they exchanged words rather loudly and uh..

JR: Do you remember what was said?

█: A lot of, excuse my french but a lot of █ you's and so on and Eric took off down the bluff there was a walk way, which you seen, and I took off following him down the walk way.

JR: So after you parked the car and Leelee got out....
█: And Curtis and two other guys..of which I don't know, two or three other guys and they all, we went, me and Dallas got out the car and they headed down after Eric down the pier. They got down there, they were exchanging words, again a lot of █ you's and so on, cussing each other out..

JR: About how far away were you from them?
█: Well like I said yesterday, I wasn't real good on judgement, but you said it would have been about 40 feet maybe. I don't know if that's proper or not but that I guess would be..

JR: It wasn't as far away as a football field?
█: No it wasn't at all.

JR: And about half the length of a basketball court?
█: Yea about that.

JR: Ok.
█: They were exchanging words and Curtis ended up kicking him in the head and then it looked, it looked to me like he fell in the river.

JR: Did you see him fall in the river?
█: I seen him fall towards the river and then I seen them throwing what appeared to be the rocks they had picked up.

JR: How big were the rocks?
█: Uh big enough to fill your hand.

JR: Ok.
█: But all the time they did this they were yelling and stuff at him.

JR: Was Eric ever yelling back?
█: No.

JR: Did he ever yell don't, help..
█: No the only thing he ever yelled was the █ you's and so on in between him and Curtis. After Curtis kicked him I didn't hear nothing out of him that's why I told you I think Curtis might have knocked him out when he kicked him, Curtis is a pretty good, he's got a pretty good kick on him and he's pretty big too. So when it looked like they were throwing stuff, me and Dallas took off, we ran and that's all I seen.

JR: Did you ever see Eric after that?
█: No I did not.

JR: Did you ever see Curtis after that?
█: Yes I did.

JR: Did you and Curtis talk about this?

█: Yes we did.

JR: What did he tell you?

█: He just confirmed everything I just told you. He just basically told me what he did again, he was like, man why'd you take off, cause he was made cause I took off at first and then we discussed it and he just replayed the whole thing for me.

JR: Is he afraid of getting caught?

█: No. He doesn't think you guys will ever catch him?

JR: Why?

█: Cause he doesn't think it can be connected to him in any way, shape or form. That you guys are, excuse please, he said quote, unquote, stupid, can't figure nothing out when it comes to that case.

JR: Would you say that Curtis is prejudice?

█: A little bit yea. He's got, I'd say he's a choosy prejudice person, he's got, like Arthur was black, but yet you hear him talking he'll refer to black people as █. So he's, yea he's pretty prejudice.

JR: Did you have anything to do with Eric?

█: As in?

JR: Were you friends with Eric or anything?

█: No I didn't really know him like I said, I just had seen him a couple of times.

JR: Did you have anything, did you help Curtis, bird dog so to speak, Eric? Follow him?

█: Yea I helped follow him but that was it and then I didn't want no part of it. Curtis was just suppose to fight him, I didn't want no part in the kicking and the throwing or nothing.

JR: Why were they suppose to fight?

█: Because, I don't know the exact story behind it but it had something to do with Curtis' girlfriend. Like I said Eric had confronted her in the Club...

JR: Eric had what?

█: Had confronted her in the Club and they were arguing so it had something to do with that?

JR: What kind of car did Curtis drive?

█: Uh..see he drives a white Mustang now and I'm not for sure if back then he had the white Mustang or, he had a big car, which he kept shotguns in the trunk of. So I'm not for positive, if I'm not mistaken it was the white Mustang.

JR: When was the last time you saw Curtis?
█: Oh man...beginning of this summer.

JR: And is Curtis friends with your sister?
█: Yes he is. Well he's friends with my sister's wife, which in turn makes him friends with my sister. Or my sister's husband.

JR: What's your sister's husband's name?

█: ██████████

JR: And what is your sister's maiden name?

█: ██████████

JR: And where did she use to live?

█: She at one time had an apartment on ██████████

JR: And did she ever live in Eau Claire?

█: Uh Berrien Center.

JR: Berrien Center.

█: Out at my house for awhile.

JR: Where is that located?

█: On ██████████

JR: And did she used to have get togethers out there, parties sort of like?

█: We had parties yea I threw parties.

JR: Did you and her ever invite Curtis Pitts and his girlfriend out there?

█: Not that I can remember off hand.

JR: You don't know Curtis' girlfriends name?

█: No I don't. At the present time I think he's going with someone named Jacqueline Rogers, the previous one I do not know her name. As I told you I only knew Curtis through partying at the beach and other parties but not, I don't think he ever came to any parties at my house, he may have.

JR: Can you describe to me Leelee again?

█: He's about, like I said about 5 foot 10, and he's got brown eyes and brown hair.

JR: And Dallas?

█: He's about 5 foot 8, 5 foot 9, same description pretty much.

JR: Did Dallas have a street name?

█: That's what we call him, Dallas.

JR: What's his real name?

█: I think his name's Anthony cause I don't see how his real name would be Dallas but I'm not for positive on that cause I know he's got two brothers and one of his brothers might be Anthony.

JR: Where does he stay?

█: He lives in Benton Harbor somewhere. I think he lives over by Hull Terrace.

JR: If you had to get ahold of him how'd you do that?

█: Go to Benton Heights.

JR: And get him where?

█: Find his brother and his brother'd find him for me.

JR: Where's his brother?

█: His brother used to live over on Byrd and I could find him over in that area.

JR: What was his brothers name?

█: Wayne.

JR: Wayne what?

█: Gibson.

JR: Ok is he white or black?

█: Black.

JR: Now how'd you find Leelee?

█: Um..he was just around..he's just, I seen him one time with Curtis and another time with Curtis. He hangs out with Curtis or he used to, I don't know if he still does. But he used to hang out with Curtis and then I found him by talking to him on the phone one day because I talked to Curtis and Curtis had me talk to Lee cause Curtis was gonna get in another fight supposedly with someone who involved, was at my cousin's house and they were exchanging words over the phone so I talked to Curtis over the phone and Leelee over the phone.

JR: Ok Dallas' brothers name is what?

█: Wayne Gibson.

JR: And how old is Wayne?

█: He'd be about 18 or 19 now.

JR: And he lives over on Byrd some place?

█: He used to live on Byrd.

JR: In the Heights.

█: Yea.

JR: And that's Dallas' brother?

█: Yes it is but Dallas said that he stayed on the other side of Benton Harbor with his dad. That was his mothers house so I'd have to, like I said, find Wayne and Wayne would have to tell me where Dallas lives.

JR: Yesterday you said that you and Pitts are pretty good friends.

█: Yea party friends.

JR: And...

█: He'd done me a favor before.

JR: You thought that he would tell you what happened?

█: Yea...in fact I'm almost 100% positive he would.

JR: Why would he tell you?

█: Because we are friends...and he trusts me not to say anything.

JR: What makes you think he'll even discuss what he did to Eric?

█: Because he has previously and again he has that amount of trust in me, if I brought the subject up he'd discuss it with me. He wouldn't avoid it.

JR: When did you and Pitts have this last conversation.

█: Over the phone oh about...now I seen him like I said right here at the beginning of the summer.

JR: And you talked about Eric's death then?

█: Oh no. The last conversation about Eric's death was last year in like October.

JR: When this whole thing happened between Pitts and McGinnis, what was the weather like?

█: It wasn't exactly warm but it wasn't really cold ya know what I'm saying, it was just kind of mediocre weather, it was like, it was no higher than seventy but it wasn't too much lower than sixty. See that's why I said I don't know the exact month and time and all that but I know that the weather wasn't real cold and it wasn't real warm but it was chilly enough to wear a jacket of some sort.

JR: What do you remember Eric wearing?

█: Off hand the only thing I can think of would be a starter coat.

JR: Well did you see him wearing a starter coat?

█: Uh the time I seen him before he had one on so I don't know.

JR: What color was it?

█: If I'm not mistaken he had, he had a Raiders one and a Bulls one.

JR: He had a Raiders and a Bulls?

█: Yea.

JR: What does the Raiders coat stand for, starter coat stand for?

■: It can tend to stand for gang, the gangsters and so on and so forth cause our colors are black, white and blue so it would tend to stand for that. Other than that a lot of people wear them just to wear them but..

JR: What about the bull?

■: That would tend to stand for vice lords or old school and no gangster will wear a bulls coat because it's got red on it so..again to normal people, not street gangs and so on it's nothing, but to street gangs it would be vice lords, old school, mickey cobras and so forth.

JR: Can you tell me a little bit about five?

■: Yea. Boy five or just five?

JR: Who's that? Who's boy five?

■: Boy five is a guy from Benton Harbor who is, if I'm not mistaken, a vice lord or an old school, well I know he's one of the two but I don't know which one for sure cause he belongs to these gangs and so on and so forth.

JR: What's his name?

■: I don't know his real name. I really don't. I know his name's Boy five and that's all I know about him.

JR: And who's five?

■: Five would be the nation that I was referring to, the five point nation, the fives.

JR: What's this boy five look like?

■: Uh he's kind of skinny, he's a black young gentleman, not really a gentleman but he's black, and he can't be more than 5 foot 9, 5 foot 10, he's not real tall and he tends to have weird hair cuts.

JR: Like what?

■: Well as I told you he has had a five in his head, he had a five slash upside down six in his head, he's had boy five in his head, so on and so forth, he's had zig zags so on in his head too.

JR: You went to school with Eric?

■: When I was there yea. I skipped most of the time.

JR: That was a King Preparatory?

■: Yes sir.

JR: When did you go there?

■: Right after I got kicked out of St. Joe, I don't know exactly when that was. I got kicked out of St. Joe, went to Juvenile and when I got out of Juvenile I went and started going to King because I couldn't go to any St. Joe school so we moved to Benton Harbor.

JR: Anybody else know about Curtis Pitts' involvement with Eric McGinnis?
■: I can't say for sure but I think Kelly Clark might know and my sister might know, I can't say for positive but anybody else I don't think would know because...

JR: In dealing with your sister in the past...
■: She won't talk to the cops, police..

JR: She never has and probably never will?
■: She never has and definitely never will, she's just..and plus she's married to Kelly and Kelly would beat the crap out of her if she said anything to you all because I don't know he's just nervous about police.

JR: Is Kelly gang affiliated?
■: Huh?

JR: Is Kelly gang affiliated?
■: No he's just...he's a bully basically.

JR: Is Curtis?
■: No he hangs out with a certain bunch of friends he has and I guess they all look up to him and respect him so if he was he would be considered the leader.

JR: Where does Curtis work?
■: I don't know, I think he used to fix cars for his dad but I don't know what he does.

JR: Do you remember the lake being rough or calm the night that your describing?
■: It was kind of in between really, it wasn't real real rough but it was there, you could tell it was there.

JR: Now yesterday you took us out on the south pier..
■: Yes I did.

JR: ..and that's by Silver Beach.
■: Yes.

JR: And you said that the kicking incident happened on the pier just past the blue railing is that correct?
■: Yes.

JR: Ok that'd be out in the water past the blue railings?
■: Yes.

JR: About how far past that blue railing?
■: Just right past it like I showed you.

JR: And who was out past the railing?

■: Curtis, Eric, Leelee and two or three other dudes.

JR: ■ what do you want out of this?

■: If it goes through, I just want to be able to get out of jail without any tie downs so I can leave state and go and start over somewhere because I don't really want to have any later involvement with these people. Other than that I just want to be put on trustee.

JR: Are you involved in the death of Eric McGinnis?

■: As such no. I seen it. I didn't help it out along any. I don't know if that makes me involved or not. I was told before that I didn't have to worry about that cause of the situation. I did not do anything to him no. Physically nothing except for keep track of him when Curtis lost track of him.

JR: Is there anything else that you can think of that you've forgotten to say or forgotten to mention?

■: No just that Curtis seems like he's proud of it ya know he doesn't show no remorse or no fears.

JR: After you and Dallas left where did you go?

■: We went to Benton Harbor, Dallas dropped me off at the Orchard View Trailer Park and I don't know where he went from there.

JR: How did you hear about Eric's death?

■: Um there was some tension up at King because of it amongst the white people and the black people because it was a racist thing to them because it happened in St. Joe and it was supposedly a band of white guys that did it. So it was all over King Preparatory.

JR: Ok I want to remind you that the tape recorder was right in front of you and it was on.

■: Yes sir.

JR: And is there anything else that you want to say?

■: No just um..I wanted to talk to the Prosecutor about what I said about the case, ya know if it goes through because I do want to be able to skeet as soon as possible I don't want to have to deal with any of these people. Unless if it comes down to testifying, I will testify, get that on tape so it's known, I will testify if I have to.

ADDITIONAL

On Friday, August 20, 1993, I met with [REDACTED] at the Berrien County Jail and presented him two pictures, one of which was Antwon Harlon Gipson and the other being Wayne Gibson Jr.

I asked [REDACTED] to see if he could identify either one of them. [REDACTED] was able to identify Antwon as Antwon Gipson, stating that he knew him from an altercation they had in Benton Township some years ago. Other than this, [REDACTED] could make no other identification.

In the presence of Det. Sgt. Abbott Taylor, I asked [REDACTED] to tell me everything he knew about Kris Keyser and he said "Who?", I said "Kris Keyser". We wanted to know if Kris Keyser had any contact with Eric McGinnis and [REDACTED] said he remembered Kris' sister, Heather, but really didn't know Kris Keyser very well at all. When [REDACTED] was asked if Kris Keyser had any dealings with Eric McGinnis he said "I don't know."

At this time we asked [REDACTED] to step out of the room and Abbott Taylor and I discussed the possibility that Thornton was not being truthful with us. [REDACTED] claimed that he was just a few feet away from Eric and his "girlfriend" had an argument and this was an old girlfriend that was now seeing Curtis Pitts.

Since [REDACTED] could not identify that female as being Kris Keyser and it's now known that he does know Kris Keyser, this is just another point that leads us to believe that [REDACTED] is not legitimate in his eye witness accounts.

WAYNE GIBSON

On Wednesday, August 18, 1993, I found Wayne Gibson Jr., at the Berrien County Jail doing community service work. I approached Gibson and asked him if he had a brother by the name of Dallas and he said he didn't, stating all of his brothers were older.

I asked Gibson if he knew [REDACTED] and he said he did not. I asked Gibson if he knew Eric McGinnis and he said Eric and himself were classmates in school but he didn't know him very well.

I then asked Abbott Taylor to talk to Gibson to see if he could obtain any other information and Taylor reported that he received basically the same information I did. Both Taylor and myself felt that Wayne Gibson was being truthful with his remarks.

ST. JOSEPH POLICE COMPLAINT #1906-91

I've attempted to contact Benton Harbor Jr. High or King Jr. High in an attempt to talk with the Assistant Principal, Ruby Wilder, at 927-0682. Thus far I have been unable to make any contact with Wilder but I will continue trying so she can verify with her records that Eric did not attend King Preparatory during the time that Danny Thornton claims that he was a fellow student.

KRIS KEYSER INTERVIEW

On Friday, August 20, 1993, I asked Keyser to come to the police department for an interview. At this time Keyser said she remembers being with Curtis Pitts the weekend preceding the time that she read about Eric's death in the newspaper. Kris said that she stopped going to the Club many months prior to Eric's disappearance and later discovery of his body. Kris said she didn't remember seeing Eric for at least two months prior to the discovery of his body. I asked Kris if Curtis ever said anything about Eric and Kris said Curtis didn't know anything about Eric McGinnis until after his body was discovered in the river.

I asked Kris if she and Curtis ever discussed Eric or any of her boyfriends prior to Eric's disappearance and Kris stated that to the best of her knowledge Curtis Pitts did not know anything about Eric McGinnis. Kris said that Curtis did not know that she had gone to the Club a lot or about the incident inside the mens bathroom involving her and Eric and maybe a few other people.

Kris Keyser said that all of this came to light after the discovery of Eric's body and it was not her nor was she anywhere around the Club the weekend or several other weekends preceding the discovery of Eric's body.

I asked Kris Keyser if she ever went by the name of Teresa and she said she did not. Keyser said that the only person she knew as Teresa was a young girl that was living with Brian Koch's sister. Kris Keyser further said that she doesn't know where Brian is, she doesn't know the name of the sister, however, Brian's father lives on Lake Street by Silver Beach. I remember John Koch II and I will be contacting him to find out if he can supply us with any information so we can contact either Brian Koch or Brian's sister to verify or add credibility to what information we have so far.

Respectfully,

JIM REEVES
Detective Lieutenant

JR/jo

ST. JOSEPH POLICE DEPARTMENT INVESTIGATION REPORT
COMPLAINT #1906-91

MEETING

On July 19, 1991, a meeting was held in the Council Chambers. Present at this meeting was Jim Reeves, Stan Lapekas (FBI Agent), Will Branscumb, Mary Defoe, Mrs. Carter, Rev. James Child and Bernice Brown.

The death of Eric McGinnis was discussed and it was asked of the people present if they had any facts that have been overlooked or if they had any direct information that would support the investigation of Eric McGinnis and the circumstances surrounding it.

The only thing that came out of this meeting was that questions were answered pertaining to the rumors and no facts were brought forward.

Mrs. Carter indicated that her son heard certain things and it was found that her son was Ben Carter, who was interviewed by Det. Soucek and Det. Elliott. Mrs. Carter said that Ben only told her a little bit and didn't really want to talk about anything else or couldn't offer anything else but Mrs. Carter felt that something else was there. Stan Lapekas pointed out that if Ben Carter won't tell Mrs. Carter, how could she expect him to tell the police or how could she expect the police department to solicit information from her son.

It was pointed out that this was the problem that the police have been faced with. In all likelihood there is someone that saw Eric McGinnis after 9:30 p.m. on May 17th, however that persons identity is unknown, they have not come forward and information has not been provided to the police department.

Other questions were answered at the meeting, as far as rumors pertaining to the condition of the body and the possibility of a noose or handcuffs being involved. It was explained that this was not the case and all the people present realized that this was just rumor.

Stan Lapekas will be forwarding a copy of his report to the Justice Department for their review.

Respectfully,

JIM REEVES
Detective Lieutenant

JR/jo