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**P R E S S R E L E A S E**  
For Immediate Release  
June 14, 1991

OVER THE PAST 3 1/2 WEEKS, A MULTI-DEPARTMENT, BI-RACIAL INVESTIGATION TASK FORCE HAS LOGGED IN EXCESS OF 300 HOURS IN AN EFFORT TO EXPLAIN THE DISAPPEARANCE AND DEATH OF ERIC MCGINNIS. THIS TEAM HAS BEEN COMPOSED OF EXPERIENCED DETECTIVES FROM THE CITY OF ST. JOSEPH, BENTON HARBOR POLICE DEPARTMENT, BENTON TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT, BERRIEN COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT AND ST. JOSEPH TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT. TO DATE, WE HAVE NO SUBSTANTIAL INFORMATION REGARDING THE MANNER OF ERIC MCGINNIS' DEATH OR HOW, WHEN, WHERE, OR WHY HE ENTERED THE ST. JOSEPH RIVER.

THE INFORMATION WHICH HAS BEEN COLLECTED TO DATE INDICATES THAT ERIC MCGINNIS WAS DROPPED OFF BY HIS FATHER AT THE CLUB IN ST. JOSEPH AT APPROXIMATELY 9:00 P.M. ON FRIDAY, MAY 17, 1991. HE DID NOT ACTUALLY GO INTO THE CLUB ITSELF; RATHER, HE WENT TO THE ENTRANCE, LOOKED AROUND, AND LEFT. AFTER LEAVING THE CLUB, HE APPARENTLY WENT TO THE PARKING LOT BEHIND THE DOWNTOWN YWCA WHERE HE WAS TALKING AND PLAYING AROUND WITH 4 YOUNG WHITE MALES WHO KNEW ERIC FROM THE CLUB. AT APPROXIMATELY 9:30 P.M., ERIC WAS LAST

SEEN ALONE HEADING SOUTH ON STATE STREET NEAR ELM STREET, IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION FROM THE ST. JOSEPH RIVER. FROM THAT TIME UNTIL HIS BODY WAS RECOVERED ON MAY 22, 1991, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO INDICATE WHAT HAPPENED TO ERIC MCGINNIS.

THE AUTOPSY WAS CONDUCTED BY DR. E. ARTHUR ROBERTSON, DEPUTY MEDICAL EXAMINER FOR BERRIEN COUNTY. THE AUTOPSY REVEALED NO EXTERNAL INJURIES OR TRAUMA TO THE BODY. THERE WAS WATER FOUND IN THE EAR CANALS WHICH IS CHARACTERISTIC OF DROWNING. THERE WERE NO NOTICEABLE MARKS, ABRASIONS, OR ANY OTHER EVIDENCE SUGGESTING FOUL PLAY. LAB AND TOXICOLOGY SAMPLES HAVE BEEN SUBMITTED TO THE MICHIGAN STATE POLICE LAB IN LANSING AND ARE STILL PENDING.

THE INVESTIGATORS HAVE SPENT AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF TIME TRACKING DOWN RUMORS, INNUENDOS, AND OUTRIGHT LIES REGARDING ERIC'S DISAPPEARANCE. THEY HAVE INTERVIEWED OVER 90 POTENTIAL WITNESSES. BY WAY OF EXAMPLE, ONE YOUNG WOMAN WHO CLAIMS TO HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF ERIC'S DISAPPEARANCE HAS GIVEN 4 SEPARATE CONFLICTING STATEMENTS TO THE OFFICERS, EACH TIME ADMITTING THAT THE PREVIOUS VERSION WAS NOT CORRECT. ANOTHER PERSON CLAIMED TO HAVE SEEN ERIC IN A LOCAL STORE ON MONDAY, MAY 20TH, BUT THAT WAS PROVEN TO BE FALSE. THERE HAVE BEEN RUMORS IN THE COMMUNITY THAT ERIC WAS CHASED, BEATEN, AND THROWN INTO THE RIVER BY A GROUP OF YOUNG WHITE MEN. THERE HAVE BEEN ALLEGATIONS THAT ERIC GOT INTO AN ALTERCATION WITH SOME WHITE YOUTH OVER A WHITE GIRL HE WAS

DANCING WITH AT THE CLUB, AND WAS TAKEN OUTSIDE AND BEATEN. A VARIATION OF THAT RUMOR IS THAT ERIC WAS DATING A WHITE GIRL AND WAS KILLED BECAUSE OF THAT. STILL ANOTHER ALLEGATION IS THAT HE WAS IN THE COMPANY OF A WHITE GIRLFRIEND BY THE RIVER, AND WAS CHASED INTO THE RIVER BY A GROUP OF WHITE TEENAGERS. THERE ARE ALSO ALLEGATIONS THAT HE WAS STABBED, STRANGLER, AND/OR SHOT. TO DATE, THERE IS ABSOLUTELY NO EVIDENCE SUPPORTING ANY OF THOSE ALLEGATIONS. HOWEVER, THOSE ALLEGATIONS, RUMORS, AND SOMETIMES OUTRIGHT LIES HAVE TAKEN ON A LIFE OF THEIR OWN AND CONTRIBUTED GREATLY TO NOT ONLY DIVERTING THE ATTENTION OF THIS INVESTIGATION FROM ITS NORMAL PATH, BUT ALSO SEWED TO CREATE UNNECESSARY RACIAL TENSION IN BOTH THE ST. JOSEPH AND BENTON HARBOR COMMUNITIES. SUCH UNSUBSTANTIATED ALLEGATIONS HAVE ALSO PROVIDED AN EXCUSE FOR RANDOM, UNRELATED VIOLENCE BY AN ELEMENT IN THE TWIN CITIES COMMUNITY WHOSE ONLY REAL GOAL IS TO CREATE VIOLENCE AND UNREST WITHIN THESE COMMUNITIES, NOT ASSIST IN THE TRUTH-SEEKING PROCESS OF THIS INVESTIGATION.

TO THOSE WHO SEEK TO JUSTIFY THEIR VIOLENT ACTS OR CREATE TROUBLE IN THE NAME OF ERIC MCGINNIS, SUCH VIOLENCE WILL NOT BE TOLERATED, AND WILL BE DEALT WITH SWIFTLY AND APPROPRIATELY. THERE IS NO PLACE FOR VIOLENCE AT ANY TIME IN OUR COMMUNITY.

THE FAMILY OF ERIC MCGINNIS HAS BEEN APPRISED OF THE FINDINGS OF THE INVESTIGATION AT EVERY STAGE, AND HAVE BEEN

VERY PATIENT AWAITING THE RESULTS. THEY, AS DO WE, WANT TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO ERIC MCGINNIS. I AM APPEALING TO ANYONE WHO HAS ANY INFORMATION REGARDING THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ERIC MCGINNIS TO COME FORWARD WITH THAT INFORMATION, AND CONTACT LT. JIM REEVES AT THE ST. JOSEPH POLICE DEPARTMENT. AT THE TIME OF HIS DISAPPEARANCE, ERIC MCGINNIS IS DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS: BLACK MALE, APPROXIMATELY 16 YEARS OLD, SHORT BLACK HAIR, NO FACIAL HAIR, APPROXIMATELY 5' 10", 160 LBS. HE WAS LAST SEEN WEARING STONE-WASHED JEANS (BRAND NAME "USED"), AN ATHLETIC SHIRT WITH THE NUMBER "24" AND "MCGINNIS" ON THE BACK, BLUE PIN-STRIPED WITH BLUE WRITING, A 3/4 LENGTH OR LONGER GREEN "TASK FORCE" JACKET. "TASK FORCE" IS WRITTEN ACROSS THE BACK. HE WAS ALSO WEARING A PAIR OF WHITE "HI TOP" TENNIS SHOES. I AM ALSO REQUESTING THAT ANYONE WHO MAY HAVE SEEN ANYONE MATCHING THE DESCRIPTION OF ERIC MCGINNIS IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA OF ST. JOSEPH ON MAY 17, 1991 TO CONTACT THE POLICE WITH THAT INFORMATION.