

This interview is being tape recorded. The interview is being conducted in an interview room at Lurgan Police Station. I am Detective Inspector Michael Irwin from Portadown CID. Other police officers present are. Detective Chief Superintendent McBurney. The date is the 9th of October 1997. The time which is taken from my wrist-watch is 7.32 pm. What is your full name.

ATKINSON

Robert Cecil Atkinson.

Also present is.

SOLICITOR

[REDACTED], Solicitor, Portadown.

At the conclusion of this interview Robert I'll give to you a notice explaining what will happen to the tapes, it's a Form PACE 21, OK.

ATKINSON

Yeah I understand.

Right. What we want to continue on is from the last interview which you were cautioned in relation to criminal neglect of duty, withholding information and assisting offenders. And this relates to an incident at Portadown on the 27th of April 1997. I'm going to caution you as follows. You do not have to say anything, but I must caution you that if you do not mention when questioned something which you later rely on in court it may harm your defence. If you do say anything it may be given in evidence. Do you understand that Robert.

ATKINSON

Yeah.

OK Robert now at the termination of the last interview we had asked if you would produce your telephone bill. And what I have here now in front of me is an itemised bill me. And I'd asked you to look at that.

ATKINSON

Yeah that's the one yeah.

OK. And could you confirm that your telephone number is [REDACTED]

ATKINSON

[REDACTED] OK. This was sent to me via your solicitor. Now I'm going to mark that MI14, if that's alright with yourself. If you would just take a look at this then, and we turn the pages here on the first page, and I

would point out that, that when the bill was sent to myself there were 2 numbers or 2 areas underlined. And the first one I'll refer to is the 27th of April 1997 at 8.37.

ATKINSON

Uh huh.

OK. And again then on the 2nd of May 1997 at 1624 hrs.

ATKINSON

Yeah.

And both these numbers are [REDACTED]

ATKINSON

Yeah.

Could you tell me who underlined those 2 numbers.

ATKINSON

It wasn't me so, eh.

SOLICITOR

Actually I think they were underlined in our office.

OK [REDACTED]. Is there any specific reason why those 2 numbers are underlined.

SOLICITOR

Well Mr Atkinson might know that. They were done in our office.

OK.

SOLICITOR

Because I would have known the purpose for which the documentation was sought.

Right.

SOLICITOR

And scanned the document myself.

OK. - Very good. - Well can I put it to you that these 2 phone numbers that we refer to, which are the same, refer to the home phone number of Mr Hanvey.

ATKINSON

OK.

Of [REDACTED]

ATKINSON

Right.

Would you accept that Robert.

ATKINSON

Well, I'm not aware that's actually his number but if you say it is it is.

OK. Well as I've pointed out here they're 2 numbers and one in particular here I want to look at on the 27.4.97, 8.37 am. Can you

make any comment in relation to that number at that time of the morning.

ATKINSON

Well obviously someone in the house rang that number but it wasn't me.

OK. I'll put it to you that that is Alistair Hanvey's, the home of Alistair Hanvey's number.

ATKINSON

Well you've already said it's Hanvey's but.

Right.

ATKINSON

Well I'm not aware it was his number but if you say it's Hanvey's number I'm sure it is.

OK. Well have you discussed this with anybody.

ATKINSON

I've discussed it with my wife yes.

Uh huh. And from that discussion are you able to.

ATKINSON

Well she has given me an explanation.

Right-o. And are you prepared to give that to us at this stage.

ATKINSON

Well I think she knows the explanation better than me, I, I wasn't there when the phone call was made, when I say I wasn't present I think I was in bed at the time when the phone call was made.

Right. In particular this is the, the night of the incident in Portadown.

ATKINSON

Right it's the morning after yeah.

The morning after. And you had been called into work again, recalled to Duty.

ATKINSON

Yes.

At 6 o'clock.

ATKINSON

Uh huh.

And you had then went home.

ATKINSON

At 8 o'clock.

At 8 o'clock. Well could you run through when you arrived home then what, happened when you arrived home.

ATKINSON

Went back into the house and I think when I had arrived home the, previous time from

work, the wife had been sleeping you know it would have been 3 or 4 in the morning or whatever time it was.

That was 3 or 4 in the early hours.

ATKINSON

Yes.

Of the 27th of April yes.

ATKINSON

And I just got into bed and went to sleep, and then the phone rang, must have been maybe 10 to 6 or I couldn't say exactly but it was prior to 6 o'clock.

Uh huh.

ATKINSON

And I answered it, it was the station, and I got up and went to work. I come back and she says what was that all about, and I think I said something to her like there was a row down in the town, the ones coming from the Coach and we had to go back in and make statements, and I went to bed again.

Right. And who all lives in your house just for the purpose again, for the tape here, who all lives in your house.

ATKINSON

Myself, my wife, 2 children.

And your 2 children are.

ATKINSON

[REDACTED]

And their ages are.

ATKINSON

[REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

OK. And is it normal for your wife to be up on a Sunday morning.

ATKINSON

There was people staying with us so I think she was up to make breakfast.

Right-o. Can you elaborate who was staying.

ATKINSON

Aye Michael McKee and his wife Andrea.

Now you refer, to Michael McKee, this is the person that we had spoken to in the last interview who runs the Tae Kwon Do.

ATKINSON

That's right.

Club.

ATKINSON

Uh huh.

I must say that.

ATKINSON

Sometimes he, they would come staying maybe once or twice a month, they live in Parkmore so they don't drive home. Get a few drinks and they stay over just.

And were they staying that night.

ATKINSON

Well apparently they were. I wasn't aware when I came in from work I wasn't aware that they were there. I just got into bed.

Right. And where would they usually stay to sleep or.

ATKINSON

In the back bedroom.

And would they drive over to your house.

ATKINSON

Sometimes, sometimes they get a taxi.

Do you know how they went that night.

ATKINSON

Haven't a clue I don't recollect seeing the car so I'm not sure, I don't know.

Right. And did you wife say then when she got up.

ATKINSON

She just said Michael and Andrea's here or something like that I think. I went to bed.

Right. And for the purpose, from the last interview we have spoken to Michael McKee.

ATKINSON

Uh huh.

On 2 separate topics.

ATKINSON

Right.

And basically he said, he accepted that you did not or were not a member as such at Tae Kwon Do though you would help out.

ATKINSON

That's correct yes, that's what I told you before I just.

That's right.

ATKINSON

I just help them out with more or less travelling, hotel arrangements and keep the money for them.

Right. You also said that Alistair Hanvey was dismissed from the club.

ATKINSON

Well I was, well I still am of that opinion, I don't know whether Michael say has put him

out or he didn't go or.

Right.

ATKINSON They were still. I thought, or I still do think that he doesn't let him train, I don't know.

No, well from Michael McKee, and we can only accept what he says.

ATKINSON Right right.

He would say that he hadn't seen Alistair Hanvey from Christmas time.

ATKINSON Right.

96.

ATKINSON Well this is, I probably assumed that he.

Right.

ATKINSON Had said to him he didn't want him back you know.

So that he hadn't.

ATKINSON This sort of thing happens in martial arts clubs.

Right.

ATKINSON You find boys train and then they quit and then they start again you know.

Right. He would say that as far as he was concerned he hadn't banished him from the club but he hadn't seen him from.

ATKINSON Right.

Christmas 1996.

ATKINSON Well

Then move on just for this, for the purpose here, to the second call on the 2nd of May. Can you tell us anything about that.

ATKINSON Well I've spoken to my wife again, she says she made a call on the 2nd.

And did she tell you who she made it to.

ATKINSON Well to that same number.

And did she tell you who she was talking to.

ATKINSON

No.

She hasn't said. And did she.

ATKINSON

I just, I said to her did you make a phone call to Harvey's or something like that, and she says I did. With, again I think it's something to do with Tae Kwon Do. She runs after kids and stuff in Tae Kwon Do.

Who runs after.

ATKINSON

My mrs, she would sort of keep an eye on the youngsters.

Right.

ATKINSON

Cos she's up there all the time with my wee lassie like I don't be.

Uh huh. And Harvey's is their youngsters.

ATKINSON

They had 3 or 4 boys, young boys you know, I think that boy, the eldest boy would be, I think there's older than him but he would be the oldest one would have been doing Tae Kwon Do. There's ones down, I'm not sure now they'd be 10, 11, 12 maybe 14.

Uh huh.

ATKINSON

There's 3 or 4 young lads.

Right. And would they do it on a Sunday.

ATKINSON

Oh yes.

Practice on a Sunday.

ATKINSON

Uh huh.

What is their routine on a Sunday then.

ATKINSON

It depends, he runs various course and things you know. There's, if he's coming up to a tournament, well tournament time you know, would do classes and things on a Sunday, to get the kids sort of genned up a bit more in what they're doing.

Right. And do you know if this was a discussion that took place, what this was in relation to.

ATKINSON

I haven't a clue, I don't even, was that Sunday.

That was the night after the incident.

ATKINSON

Oh the Sunday morning.

On Sunday morning.

ATKINSON

The first phone call you're talking about.

Yes sorry the Sunday morning.

ATKINSON

Yes yes.

Is the first phone call.

ATKINSON

Well I think that. The gym normally opens between 9 and 10 on a Sunday I think. See he runs a gym as well as a Tae Kwon Do Club.

And this is Michael McKee.

ATKINSON

Aye.

And is the gym, where does the gym operate from.

ATKINSON

At the opposite end of the [REDACTED]

Right. OK. Was it your wife that made this phone call or.

ATKINSON

My wife I think.

Your wife made this phone call. OK. And you went to bed you're saying.

ATKINSON

Yeah. Well sure I was off half the night and we were on again I think at 4 o'clock.

Uh huh.

ATKINSON

You didn't take breakfast you just couped on the bed.

And what time did you get up that day at.

ATKINSON

I wouldn't have a clue I'm not sure, probably after lunch some time. I don't recall really. It's not a thing you really think about.

And have you checked this list here for any further calls to.

ATKINSON

I didn't no.

Well would it be normal for just to have 2 phone calls in a time period, and we're looking here from this time period 12th of April through until the 11th of July, 12th of July actually.

ATKINSON I wouldn't, well I don't ring Harvey's, I've no reason to ring him. Anybody that rings him it's to do with Tae Kwon Do really.

Right.

ATKINSON I'm sure if the wife rang and she was looking something to do with Tae Kwon Do.

Right. So are you saying it would be a sporadic thing as far as you.

ATKINSON It could be 3 times a year maybe I would say, I don't know I'm only guessing at that.

Right.

ATKINSON There's times when 2 or 3 years maybe go when Alistair was training a lot, sometimes there would have been demonstrations on, they might have rang each other to arrange transport and things. You know you might have got 4 phone calls in a fortnight.

Yeah.

ATKINSON But as far as those are concerned I don't know.

And [REDACTED] would, in the last interview you said [REDACTED] would phone sometimes regarding patterns.

ATKINSON Well I imagine so aye. Well they all sort of contact each other all the members of the club.

And patterns are moves within the.

ATKINSON Every belt I think has so many moves.

Right.

ATKINSON They're sort of, well they're hard to learn, you know some of them was 37 or 42 moves.

Right, in a pattern.

ATKINSON In a pattern. And they tried it to encourage each other you know.

Tell us this, what time did you sign off duty on that Sunday morning.

ATKINSON I think 8 o'clock. Well I think this one was in the notebook the last, yeah the last time we were here the notebook entry I think was 8.

Just after 8 well.

ATKINSON

Uh huh.

As a matter of interest you were saying there about, are you saying that your wife rang on the first occasion as well, is that what you're saying.

ATKINSON

No, no I didn't say that.

But you said that your wife rang.

ATKINSON

I had spoke to my wife about the phone call.

On the second occasion.

ATKINSON

Yes I think so yeah.

So your wife didn't ring.

ATKINSON

On the first occasion.

On the first occasion.

ATKINSON

No.

So then it had to be somebody else in the house.

ATKINSON

From what they told me, well yeah, from what they told me it was Mr McKee.

So you're saying it either is the daughter or the son.

ATKINSON

No Mr McKee and his wife were staying over, Michael McKee.

Yeah. So you're saying.

ATKINSON

From what my wife tells me it was Michael McKee made the phone call.

Uh huh.

ATKINSON

On, the first phone call. And she says she made the second one.

Right. Well that, that really explains it more, better.

ATKINSON

Yes.

Do you understand.

ATKINSON

Than the way yes.

Than the way he had said because the inference was.

ATKINSON

On, on the.

That it was either your wife, daughter.

ATKINSON

Or.

Or whoever.

ATKINSON

My son, oh right I understand what you're saying. No I think Michael here maybe got us a bit mixed up asking who was in the, who lives in the house, I think that's maybe where that come from.

Right. Now rather than pursue or indeed bring you in at some subsequent stage, you refer to your daughter and this Tae Kwon Do and the fact all these different movements and all.

ATKINSON

Uh huh.

And you tell us about your wife ringing on the second occasion.

ATKINSON

Yes.

And she would never have mentioned this to you. Would you not take any interest in the daughter at all, I know, I mean.

ATKINSON

Oh I do indeed like but they're running, my daughter could be out 4, 4 or 5 days a week to Tae Kwon do.

Yeah.

ATKINSON

It's only at the end of the road and it only costs £20 a month for her, and you know where she is, she's safe.

Uh huh.

ATKINSON

You know they're being looked after. It's, it's the same as letting your kid go out to a, I'd rather she'd go to it than go to a disco in the swimming pool on a Friday night, where the youngsters of 12 and 14 is drinking Buckfast you know.

Right. Now supposing.

ATKINSON

It's her, it's her main hobby outside really.

Well.

ATKINSON

School.

Supposing that police heard that you had

maybe rang Hanvey, right, and you told Hanvey and the allegation may well be or would be that you rang Hanvey and you told him look police are carrying out an investigation into this assault in the centre of Portadown on the night of the 23rd, 24th, if you've any sense you'll get rid of your clothing.

ATKINSON

Uh huh.

What would you say about a suggestion like that, or an allegation such as that.

ATKINSON

Well I didn't, I didn't make any phone call to Hanvey's house, certainly didn't.

You definitely made no phone call.

ATKINSON

I made no phone call to Hanvey's house.

What, what about the allegation, what would you have to say about an allegation like that.

ATKINSON

Well I don't know who made the allegation or where the allegation has come from. I certainly, I've no reason to ring Hanvey, know what I mean, at the end of the day those guys that were involved in, in that, that incident on the particular night have no love for me.

Yeah. Would you say you have no love for Hanvey but at the same time.

ATKINSON

I'm not saying, I've no love for Hanvey, I'm saying I've no love for those guys, the so called super prods as I classed them.

Yeah.

ATKINSON

I've had my home wrecked and I've had incendiary bombs outside my home. My wife has been in the living room and been shot at.

But you still live out there.

ATKINSON

I still live there. I live there because my wife's mother's 80 years of age and she lives in the corner house, and my own mother's touching 80 too and she lives up behind me. And the 2 of them are elderly and infirm and I think if I moved that would be the end of the 2 of them.

You live out there, how many of these people did you identify at the time, or indeed how many did you identify afterwards.

ATKINSON

I named them the last time I was here.

There were relatively few in comparison to the number of people that you'd have known.

ATKINSON

I think it might be 6 or 8.

Having lived about this town for how long.

ATKINSON

I've lived in this town all my life.

All your life.

ATKINSON

Yes.

So I mean you would have a good knowledge of everyone.

ATKINSON

Well if I could give you an example, I go to the football an odd Saturday on the reds bus. And the bus is a 53 seater, and there might be 49, 50 travelling regular.

Uh huh.

ATKINSON

And I might know 10 on the bus. I might know 10 people on the bus especially younger lads like that, if you're not, if they're not of your own generation; if you're not dealing with them all the time you tend not to know them.

Tell me this why would somebody say Robbie Atkinson rung that man and told him to get rid of his clothing.

ATKINSON

I don't know. I don't know. I get all sorts of allegations, police get all sorts of allegations made against them. I wouldn't be the most popular person ever up there now to be honest.

Why do you say that.

ATKINSON

Because I'm in the police and because I've stuck my heels in and stayed there I would think you know. Mr Hagan's well aware how many claims and things, the house has been attacked several times.

How many times has the house been attacked.

ATKINSON

Now you've asked me something. I've had em well numerous stone attacks. I had 2 incendiary bombs. I've had a gun attack. Petrol bomb. I've had my windows replaced front and back twice.

Were these carried out by.

ATKINSON

Loyalists.

Loy, I was going to ask Nationalist or Loyalist.

ATKINSON

Loyalist.

Organisations.

ATKINSON

Loyalist.

Loyalist organisation.

ATKINSON

Well I don't know about organisations or yobos but.

Whoever.

ATKINSON

Whoever anyway. In fact the last night my house was attacked.

Is how long ago.

ATKINSON

Was Drumcree not this year, last year. And em I actually saw the guys that were doing it. Although they'd put the street lights out but eh there was sufficient moonlight to see who they were, and there was at least 30 of them. And I caught, I wasn't able to get one of them.

You couldn't identify any of them.

ATKINSON

I couldn't identify any of them and I can assure you if I could have got out quick enough I could have identified them. The mood I was in I certainly would have.

Well these people obviously don't like you living in their midst. How many have you prosecuted over a period of time.

ATKINSON

Any that have come across my path. I had, well Jim, Jim Murphy and myself, the last case we talked about there were 2 guys. The last interview we talked about an assault in, or a disorderly behaviour thing in Woodhouse Street was eh Christmas Eve. There was 2 boys from, I know of they're from (inaudible) or [REDACTED] but they were prosecuted.

Very good. So really you're saying look this allegation is not correct.

ATKINSON

That's right. Well.

Has no grounds, no merit.

ATKINSON

Well I certainly didn't ring Hanvey and I didn't tell anybody else to ring him.

Very good. - And did you tell anybody else that he was involved up the street that night.

ATKINSON

No. I think the only thing I said to my wife was the ones coming home from the Coaches she says what was that all about. I think I said to her the ones coming home from the coach, there was a row down the street. Like I never thought anything of the row, at that time it was, it was an assault, it wasn't as what I know turned into a murder investigation. It was just well another assault really.

Aye at that stage.

ATKINSON

Yes at that stage.

Because there was no suggestion.

ATKINSON

No.

That he was.

ATKINSON

No.

Eh seriously ill or.

ATKINSON

No.

Anything like that there, that was the following morning. It was several days later before.

ATKINSON

Oh aye at least yeah.

That he really.

ATKINSON

Uh huh.

Became.

ATKINSON

Aye took a, took a turn for the worse.

Turn for the worse isn't that, is that correct.

ATKINSON

I think so aye I'm not sure.

Well he was unconscious and he.

ATKINSON

Yes.

He moved from Craigavon Hospital to Belfast City or to the Royal Victoria Hospital.

ATKINSON I'm not, I'm not sure now, it would have been 10 or 12 days later he died wouldn't it.

It was, but he, he moved that night.

ATKINSON Yes aye.

To the Royal Victoria Hospital and he was unconscious.

ATKINSON When I made my original statement, the statement that you showed me the last time, we all sort of drafted a statement and got it in to get the ball rolling. I expected at some stage for a CID man to sit down with me across the table and go through my statement, and to clarify points and say did you see so and so or did you. Nobody has yet up until now did that with me man to man as, as it has happened with me on other enquiries.

Yeah. To put that fair to you it has happened to a number of personalities that were with you, that the CID went through their statements with them, however.

ATKINSON Yes but they didn't do it with me.

Well however circumstances dictated em through different allegations and you know the investigation and that, em that, that didn't happen, but it certainly did happen.

ATKINSON Right I, like you're specifically sort of talking about Hanvey I, I named Hanvey at the debriefs and we talked about him openly.

Yes but not as such involved in the assaults.

ATKINSON No that he was there, you know what I mean.

Because you didn't see him doing anything.

ATKINSON I didn't see him doing anything. I saw him along with the rowdy people on the street like everybody else. But I couldn't turn round and say I saw him do it, just the same as I couldn't turn round and say, in my statement I said, I got a glance over my shoulder and I saw 3 or 4 guys round this body on the ground. I got one quick glance, I didn't hardly get time to turn my head and this other boy was trying to pull the head off me. And I can put my hand on my heart and say I can't identify those boys. I got a phone call, I think it was the, it must have been the Saturday, it was probably a week later from some of the team, it was Detective Sergeant somebody, I'm not sure who his name was. And he said to me on the phone he says

can you identify, I'm looking at your statement here can you identify some of these boys that were round this body kicking at it, and I, I said to him to be perfectly honest I don't think I could. And I was just about to say but if you want me to come in, he sort of seemed to say they'd a few boys in, before I could even speak and he set the phone down on me.

That was after people had, a number of people had been arrested.

ATKINSON

Yeah. I've already mentioned that to [REDACTED]. This was about a week, a week, 10 days later maybe.

Uh huh. Would it have been a Saturday or Friday, Saturday.

ATKINSON

I've a notion it could have been Saturday now because it would have been just before dinner time I think on a Saturday maybe.

Right. - I think really what we will do, we will terminate this interview and we'll interview the other witnesses named and at some future stage then, should it be necessary, we'll come back.

ATKINSON

Yes.

To the suspect is that alright. - Yeah.

ATKINSON

Em.

Rather than.

ATKINSON

Right.

Pursue it.

ATKINSON

That's OK. Well I've something I want, it's not regarding what we've been talking about so we could maybe talk about it when the tape ends.

Very good.

ATKINSON

It's something else that I'm not really happy with.

Can we, is your wife at home tonight.

ATKINSON

My wife's coming over tonight.

She's, she's actually coming in.

ATKINSON

I have been, I have been talking to the DI here.

Oh right.

ATKINSON And I want to get this matter sort of read up.

Yes.

ATKINSON You know what I mean.

That's OK. At what time is she coming as a matter of.

ATKINSON Eight o'clock or she's supposed to be over for about 8.

Well, that'll just suit dead on. OK. - OK we have now finished this interview with you. This is the notice here that explains the PACE 21, explains what happens to the tape. Before I switch off the tape recorder do you wish to clarify anything you've said.

ATKINSON No.

Do you wish to add anything.

ATKINSON No.

Do you wish to make a written statement.

ATKINSON No.

Eh I'm now switching off the recorder, the time which is again taken from my, eh from my wrist-watch is 7.58 pm.