



EPISODE 24: Who Killed Stephen Smith? Part Five

Mandy Matney 0:02

I don't know who killed Stephen Smith. But I know his mother Sandy recently hired a new attorney and I have a renewed sense of hope that the Smith family will finally get justice after waiting 2359 days. My name is Mandy Matney. I'm a journalist at FITS news.com. And I've been investigating the Murdaugh family for almost three years now. This is the Murdaugh murders podcast with David Moses and Liz Farrell.

Previously on The Murdaugh motors podcast, we took you through every detail of the 2015 investigation into Stephen Smith data. If you haven't listened already, we highly suggest you going back and listening to episodes 249 and 17. Before listening to this episode, it'll make a lot more sense trust me. To recap, Stephen was found dead in the middle of a rural Hampton County Road in July 2015. His death still remains unsolved. Stephen's death was mysteriously ruled a hit and run by pathologists Aaron personnel at the Medical University of South Carolina in this is despite the fact that investigating agencies reported that there was no evidence to support this claim his injuries, mostly to his head, were not consistent to those from a vehicular homicide. The ruling sent the entire investigation wildly off course in the South Carolina highway patrol, an agency not equipped to investigate murders of this kind was put in charge of the investigation. So from early on, the Murdaugh name was brought up over and over and over again.

Witness 1:59

I told her that another friend of mine had picked me asking me if Lester and these will work together. And I told him no, I said, not that I knew of. And then I asked him why? He said, Because he had heard that. And then I asked him where he heard it from and he said, You didn't know he just heard it.

Stephen's Relative 2:21

Once you people are coming up and you know like he's you know, the model was behind

Sandy Smith 2:25

me, everybody keeps coming up to me.



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Witness 2:29

But if your names are heard a name, my name was Bob foster murder.

Mandy Matney 2:33

And yet South Carolina Highway Patrol troopers never interviewed anyone from the family

Todd Proctor 2:39

Buster was was on our radar. Before you were, you know, the Murdaugh's know that they know that he's, he's on our radar. I don't have anything against them. But if it happened, like you said, I mean, if it happened,

Mandy Matney 2:56

Perhaps the most mysterious thing about the Stephen Smith case was how it ended.

Officer 3:02

I'm not calling you. I'm not saying you're guilty, nothing right now. All right. But if you know something, or something comes up in the future is that this is by no means a closed investigation. Yes or No? No. I'm saying. Yeah. So you know, if something comes up in your future, you know, and we have leads that go on and we discover new information about case, even if you didn't do it, I mean, if you were tied in with it, and didn't cooperate with us, you know, to get in trouble, you know, I'm saying this, this is pretty light.

Mandy Matney 3:40

And as we said in the previous episode on Stephen Smith, that interview that you just heard was the last interview in the case file, it appears to us from the files that we see the Highway Patrol allow the case to go cold right after that interview, which is really weird, because this is a case of a 19 year old man who had a really bright future who was suddenly found dead with his face bashed in on a rural road in a very small town. How could they just give up? How could they just accept that this was going unsolved? After so few interviews? Do they even try to get to the truth? These are the questions that we need answers to. In this episode, we're going to take you through all of the significant events that took place in this case between 2016 and now but before we get into all of that, we want to remind you of the person that all of this is about Stephen Nicholas Smith, here is his incredible mother, Sandy Smith.

Sandy Smith 4:44



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He was amazing. It was intelligent. He was a clown. When he walked in the room, all eyes are on you. But he loves trying to help people pay love trying to make his own medication on Earth because they didn't trust anybody. But yeah, he loved his room. It was a library, we had to put shelves on all four walls to hold all his books. And he would not put that book down until he was finished. He wanted to be a doctor. But he said that he didn't, because it costs so much money to be a doctor that he would start out in nursing, after he finished a nursing degree, get a job and then put himself through medical college and become a physician for needy children that don't have insurance.

Mandy Matney 5:43

Sandy Smith knew something was wrong at the time in 2015, when this case was going cold, she sensed it.

Sandy Smith 5:52

They just stop. And I would call the nature in which really walked in. And sometimes she would call that and sometimes I would. I was calling the environment.

Mandy Matney 6:08

And she says, Well, let me check and see what's going on and then nothing ever gets another call.

Sandy wasn't getting any answers from anyone in South Carolina. At this point. She even reached out to South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley for help and the investigation into her son's death appeared to be at a standstill as far as she could see.

Sandy Smith 6:31

At that time, I was devastated. And I was getting no contact from any law enforcement. It was just like Stephen, just wiped out. And then his name is Kay. Everything was just it all stopped and I was trying to get it started back so he wouldn't be forgotten.

Mandy Matney 7:00

Sandy Smith refuses to accept that the investigation was over. In September 2016. The grieving mother made one final plea in a heartbreaking letter to the FBI. My family is in desperate need of your help. She wrote my 19 year old son Stephen Nicholas Smith was murdered on July 8 2015 in Hampton County, South Carolina. It



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has been apparent from the first week of the investigation that authorities are covering up critical evidence and we no longer know who to trust. In the letter. She said that authorities flip flopped between theories when they told this miss of the news of Stephen's death on July 8 2015. In her letter, Sandy wrote that first police told her that Stephen was shot after he ran out of gas and then was x being his vehicle. And then after that, she was told that her son was killed in a hit and run accident and that the motorist fled the scene. And then investigators told her that he was beaten to death by unknown assailants. And to add tragedy on top of tragedy Stephen's father died suddenly in October 2015. She explained in the letter, she said that her son Stephen was a text so violently that his entire side of his face was rebuilt with putty for his funeral. To make matters worse, Sandy said in the letter that she was getting mixed messages from authorities in the immediate aftermath of Stephen's death. She said that Hampton investigators actually asked them at the time to continue to publicly say that Stephen was killed in a hit and run. And they claimed to her that they didn't want the killer to know that they were looking for him, which is really, really weird. In the letter, Sandy said that investigators have failed to access Stephen's phone, a critical piece of evidence that would likely shed light on a lot of the rumors surrounding the investigation. She said that at the beginning of the investigation, they were told that they would not have access to Stephens texts for at least a year. She said that investigators told her that they'd have to send the phone to Apple to get the security features unlocked. And then months after they told her that they found out that the phone was never sent to Apple. According to the investigation file. The highway patrol didn't attempt to access Stephen's phone until Todd proctor obtained a search warrant for the phone from Verizon Wireless in January 2016. That was the last mention of anything happening with Stephen's phone and there was never any conclusion in the case file about if they found anything was Stephen's phone in the conclusion of Sandy's letter that she sent in September 2016. She pleaded with the FBI to open an investigation into Stephenston We desperately need your help. She wrote this investigation is being deliberately drew railed, we need to hold the investigators accountable to access Stephen's phone. And Sandy did get a response from the FBI. We'll be right back. I recently asked Sandy what happened after she mailed this letter to the FBI back in 2016.

Sandy Smith 10:31

They sent two agents to my house. And they asked me what I thought the holdup was. And I said, it's all about this phone. They keep saying they can't get the phone on law. And so they went and got the home and the phone out, took it to Virginia to Quantico, and got it unlocked, and took it back to me. And then they offered to



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process the clothes and all the other evidence. And then what did they do? That was because they had it. They weren't invited in they have to be invited in. And they weren't invited in, show them at all. So

Liz Farrell 11:17

Sandy is saying here that the South Carolina highway patrol, which had been questioning its own involvement in this case, from the very start, did not seek the assistance of the FBI, for the FBI to have had jurisdiction over this investigation. For them to have taken this case without getting invited by state investigators. Stephen's death would have had to have occurred on federal property, such as a national park or reservation, or would have had to involve some other federal crime or ongoing federal investigation. Sandy literally had no one in law enforcement to turn to especially no one she could trust had the FBI been involved, though, it's not clear this would have led to a suspect. While it's generally assumed that the FBI has agents who are highly and specifically trained for cases like this, there were just so many problems with this investigation. But what we have here, and what Sandy experienced over and over again, appears to be a shrug and the constant reassurance from law enforcement from the professionals whose literal purpose is to protect and serve the people that there's nothing amiss here. What's crazy about this and all the Murdaugh related investigations actually, is how often we've been told that the things we are seeing or aren't seeing are not signs of corruption, but rather incidents of incompetence. If we believed every law enforcement agency that has told us the anomalies in their Murdaugh related investigations are due to Officer error, then we'd have to tell everyone in South Carolina to move because we have a big problem.

Mandy Matney 12:48

While authorities apparently managed to forget Stephen's case, Sandy did everything so she could find answers. Over the next few years. She filed several Freedom of Information Act requests to get as many records as she could on Stephen's case. She left messages with investigators to remind them that Stephen's case still needed attention. And she talked about her son's case to anybody who would listen, she truly never stopped fighting for her son. And that brings us to February 2019. And the weeks following the horrific bow crash that killed Mallory beach, I kept seeing a meme online that said justice for Mallory and Stephen, as we started to piece together who Stephen Smith was and his skeleton of the story about what happened to him. Liz remember that she got a tip from law enforcement about Stephen's case before the boat crash happened.



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Liz Farrell 13:46

In the summer of 2018, around the time of the annual Trial Lawyers Association meeting, when all the Murdaughs descended on Hilton had to attend a continuing education courses and host lavish dinner parties for judges and politicians. A law enforcement source of mine who knows the Murdaughs well told me about a story he'd heard that he wanted me to expose. The only problem was that the story was about a gay teenager who had been beaten to death in Hampton County, which might as well have been in Iceland because it is an hour and a half away and wasn't in our coverage area. And I just didn't see how I was going to be able to convince my editor to allow me to spend time investigating it. The Murdaugh family was well known but had somewhat faded into the background and Buford county after Randolph retired in 2006. A quick aside about Randolph's retirement party, it was apparently held at the high school in Hampton County and more than 1000 people attended it. And they had it catered by the Hampton county jail with uniformed inmates serving the food. Nice, right. The law enforcement source who told me about Stephen's case also told me the Murdaugh boys did it and that their family and other law enforcement agencies were conspiring to cover it up. He was disgusted by this and by the behavior of Alex in general. Alex allowed his kids to drink underage and public at restaurants and other events, even ones attended by law enforcement officers. That is how low his regard was for following the law and how sure they were that they could do what they wanted when they wanted no matter who saw it. At the time, I was working on another project and put it on hold some time in very early 2019. Mandy and I were talking about stories we wanted to do. And I told her about this case, not long after the boat crash occurred and my law enforcement source reminded me of who Paul Murdaugh was. When the memes featuring Mallory and Stephen came out, it gave us the green light to pursue Stephen story without worrying about our quote unquote, coverage area. And I also just want to say thank God for the bravery of these very first people who posted those memes because without them, I don't think the pressure on the Murdaughs and law enforcement would have mounted the same way it did. It was Mandy, who first reached out to Sandy for source at the time, and still to this day, people were very reluctant to speak about the Murdaughs over the phone or even at all, they certainly wouldn't go on the record about them. When we first met Sandy in March 2019. It was clear that she had no such fear of them. She was willing to show us everything she had tell us everything she'd been through. I think it's important to note that when people first meet Sandy, they often comment on how taken they are by her. She is just a really smart, rational and very collected person who has also experienced a lot of sadness and a lot of hardship. She wasn't on a mission against



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the Murdaughs she was on a mission to get answers on what happened to her son. At the time of our first meeting, there were rumors going around Hampton county that Sandy had been paid off by the Murdaugh family. And that's why nothing ever happened in Stephen's case. Obviously, this wasn't true, but it certainly gives you insight into how people think things are normally handled in Murdaugh country.

Mandy Matney 16:53

So back in March 2019 We left Sandy's house and felt determined to help her but we didn't know where to start. Over the next few months. On our own time, we chipped away the case files months later, both Liz and I left the newspaper we were at due to management issues, and we never published a story about Stephen but Stephen story stuck with both of us. It was a weight we carried knowing that we never fulfilled a promise to Sandy. And during that time, something weird happened in 2020 that we need to talk about two private investigators named Henry Rosado and Max for Tati for allegedly hired by Parker's in the Mallory beach lawsuit. According to Sandy, two investigators showed up at our door in the summer of 2020 and said they were interested in Stephen's case.

Sandy Smith 17:43

But they just showed up at my house and told me that and this was after Mallory died, I think it was that June. They said there was a lot of people interested in Stephen's case and had hired them to help with Stephen's case. But they never said who they work for.

Mandy Matney 18:05

Sandy said she was desperate for answers at the time. And she gave them Stephen's iPad, the one that the Highway Patrol apparently didn't find much evidence on, aside from the fact that at last paint at Orangeburg Technical College on the night before Stephen died, but the weird thing is that Sandy said those two private investigators never gave her the iPad back. And that brings us to June 7 2021, when Maggie and Paul Murdaugh were murdered in college and County, South Carolina. In the days after the double homicide, I noticed the same thing was happening online that happened in the aftermath of the 2018 Boat crash. Lots of people from Hampton County were commenting about the Stephen Smith case and connecting the dots between the two. I knew that it was time to tell the world about Stephen Smith. So three days after the murders, I finally worked up the courage that I never had before to write about the Murdaugh family in the three deaths that were connected to Mallory Beach, Stephen Smith and Gloria Satterfield. In that article that was honestly



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two years in the making. I was first report that the Murdaugh name was mentioned more than 40 times in the investigation vial of Stephen Smith. And then the week after I wrote that story, Sandy hoped and prayed that the new momentum would prompt a new investigation into our son's death. On Thursday, June 17 10 days after the double homicide, an agent from the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division called Sandy she was hoping to hear that they had open a case into her son's unsolved. I wish I recorded this conversation. I remember hearing the devastation and Sandy's voice when she told me that SLED called her back and said they were only looking at a Stephen Smith case, because they had to see a Stephens family was involved in the shooting of Paul and Maggie Murdaugh. What a slap in the face. Sandy Smith told me at the time, Sani was so heartbroken and publicly called out SLED in an article that I wrote it fits news that day. And I didn't know what to tell her at this point. I too, was devastated and angry. It was the first time I cried at my desk while working at FITS news. Four days later, Sandy called and told me she had gotten the news that she had waited almost six years for the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division was finally opening an investigation into Stephen Smith's death. Thankfully, I recorded that conversation which will go down honestly as one of the best phone calls I've ever had.

Sandy Smith 21:01

I've been shaking. I got chills all over me. I'm able to grab and I cried. I mean, you've weighed it down. What they said was the the SLED is working the Murdaugh case and stuff like that. They don't even know who they are. They don't know anybody on the meat team. This is like fresh, okay. It's like starting from the beginning.

Mandy Matney 21:27

Good. We'll be right back. After I got off the phone with Sandy, I called a spokesperson at the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division who told me that SLED had opened up the investigation based on information gathered during the course of the double homicide investigation of Maggie and Paul Murdaugh. Sandy was filled with so much hope on June 22 2021. But as much as she had always wanted the eyes of the world on Stephen's case, she soon felt the brunt of the media storm that hit Hampton County this summer.

Sandy Smith 22:15

Every day, I'd come home from work. And it would be reporters in the yard dirty notes on my door. My phone is full of voicemails, and I will erase them because that way they can't leave me alone. But no, it's basically everybody was trying to make



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money off of Stephen story. And it just got so hectic that I just started avoiding them never played into running out from a friend's house. We wouldn't be home. And we drive by my driveway. And if there was a car in the RV, we just keep going. One of them not know my door at 130 in the morning, New York Times or something New York, somebody from New York. Well, it's gotten to the point where Mercedes was getting scared, you know? Because you had all these strangers in our yard all the time. And yeah, pretty much that's why I had to go get I got AMD to take the media away from us.

Mandy Matney 23:09

As Sandy was so overwhelmed with media request and didn't know who to turn to a friend of a friend recommended that she reached out to Charleston attorney Andy savage for help. Andy Savage is a prominent Charleston South Carolina Attorney who has taken on several famous cases. Most recently Andy Savage is known for representing victims of the Charleston church shooting along with Alex Murdaugh's attorney decarb boolean and a whopping \$88 million settlement with the federal government this summer Andy agreed to represent Sandy for \$1. But he was very clear about one rule that he had for her she could not take any media interviews without his permission. First, he threatened to drop her as a client if she broke this rule. Keep in mind this is a time when Stephen's case had more media momentum than ever before. every media outlet in the country wanted to talk to Sandy Smith. And this was a six year old Cold Case the best chance that they had to solve this was someone coming forward who witnessed Stephen's death or knew someone who did why wouldn't Annie savage one his client speaking to any media who could help them solve Stephen's death? Apparently just before Sandy hired Andy in July 2021 Andy savage happened to hire an investigator named Stephen Peterson, who was appointed to work on the Smith case this summer. Over the next few months, Sandy said she communicated a lot more with Peterson than she did with Andy savage. She said that she almost never heard from our own attorney Andy savage then on October 27 2021, just a few days before Stephen's first ever Memorial fundraiser Sandy checked Phone and couldn't believe what she saw. It was a headline and ABC News for that said focus on the Murdaugh's and Stephen Smith death may the unfounded attorney says with a photo of Andy savage next to Stephen, that attorney who was saying that was her own attorney, Andy Savage, and Sandy had no idea that Andy was going to say this to media. Sandy could not believe it. Her attorney was speaking to media and apparently absolving the Murdaughs without her consent.

Sandy Smith 25:33



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Was he I don't know if he was trying to throw the media off. I don't know exactly what he was doing. It just was very heartbreaking to have to read something that your lawyer says in the media.

Mandy Matney 25:45

With no warning. Stephen Peterson did speak to her before the story was published and said that they believed that they had a suspect in the case. And they didn't think that the Murdaughs were connected, but he told her that he didn't want to say anything until he knew for sure.

Sandy Smith 26:02

So my thing was, I guess you would, I thought that they would wait until they knew for certain before they put it all over the news. It's always a different slap in the face of another cheek, I guess.

Mandy Matney 26:14

Sandy Smith was crystal clear. She was not mad about the conclusion that Savage and Peterson apparently reached in the investigation to apparently absolve the Murdaughs. And also, I want to point out that Savage specifically stated that his comments were about Paul Murdaugh, but he did not add that much clarity.

Sandy Smith 26:35

All I've ever wanted was a truth. I don't care who did it, what their name was. I want to know who killed my son.

Mandy Matney 26:44

After I published the story, Savage replied to my media request and told me that all he did was provide a written statement that said that the media seems to be focused perhaps obsessed on the Murdaugh link to the Smith case. He said our investigation has not eliminated other possibilities. He said he believed that the SLED investigation continues to explore all possibilities and good for them.

Liz Farrell 27:16

So Stephen Peterson before I started a FITS news a few weeks ago, I worked for the Buford County Sheriff's Office as the assistant Public Information Officer for just over a year. I was at the office when I got a call from Peterson who told me he was an investigator with Sandy's attorney, and was working to get to the bottom of the Stephen Smith case. I had a Google Doc with 100 pages of my notes from the Smith



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case, including a very detailed timeline. And I had already shared that with an attorney friend of mine who passed this on to savages team I figured Peterson was calling me about that, but it turned out he wanted something else. In 2019. Mandy was given an unredacted copy of the Highway Patrol investigation. This included hours of interviews with witnesses, investigator notes and photos. Peterson wanted a copy of what we had, he said SLED wouldn't give it to him. I would do anything to help Sandy. So I told him I would but then I started talking to Peterson and how, where to start I asked him if he was certified with SLED he wasn't asked him what his thoughts were on the case and he shared them. Now, day before this again in October 2021, Mandy had learned that law enforcement was starting to float the idea that Stephen really had been killed in a hit and run and the Murdaughs had nothing to do with it. So it struck me as odd when Peterson began telling me the same details that Mandy had learned. I want to be very clear here we do not care whether the Murdaugh's had anything to do with Stephen's death, and we certainly are not saying that they did. What we are saying, however, is that no one no one can claim the Murdaughs quote, had nothing to do with the case when their names and metaphorical fingerprints are all over the case file. If they had nothing to do with it, then they are a very unlucky family on his own and according to him before SLEDded interviewed this person Peterson told me he had visited Sean Connolly, who was named in the original investigation as a potential person of interest in Stephen's death. You might remember from the last Stephen Smith episode, Sean Connolly is one of two teenagers who suddenly emerged as potential suspects right after Sandy Smith was on the cover of the Hampton Guardian insinuating that people in Hampton County were covering up for the Murdaughs in November 2015. Sean his friend Patrick Wilson was facing attempted murder charges at the time they were brought to law enforcement's attention and was being represented by Corey Fleming. You know, Alex best friend and Paul's bad father. Neither boy appears to have been questioned by highway patrol and Stephens case at the time, and Mandy and I have always found their appearance in the file strange, also a little strange, the 14th Judicial Circuit Solicitor's Office of which Alex Murdaugh was a member at the time dropped the attempted murder charges against Patrick Wilson also together shortly after this, Peterson told me he was a former DEA agent and that he had used one of his super special DEA agent skills to interrogate Sean who according to Peterson started to come undone under his questioning. Peterson told me he lied to Sean and told Sean that he had photos of the damage done to his truck the night Stephen died. He told me Shawn got quote unquote squirrely and told him that he had hit a deer that night and that the damage to his truck was from that when I asked Peterson what he made of the fact that Darryl Williams the man who came



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forward about Sean Connolly and Patrick Wilson in 2015, had told the Highway Patrol investigator that Randy Murdaugh had urged him to contact police and tell them about Connolly and Wilson. Peterson told me that he had also interviewed Daryl and guess what Darrell now swears that Randy never told him this and that he didn't know why it was in the investigators report. During our reporting. Mandy and I had been told the names of three kids who allegedly witness Stephen's killing, along with Buster and Paul again. Allegedly when I brought up these names with Peterson, he seemed to dismiss the idea altogether. Again, we do not care who killed Stephen Smith, we care about finding out who killed Stephen Smith. In that moment and talking to Peterson I got a sick feeling and immediately called Mandy afterward, we ultimately decided we would not share the investigation with Peterson until we got the okay from Sandy. In the meantime, though, we cut off all access to my notes and timeline. And shortly after. This is when a TV station reported that Andy Savage was declaring that the Murdaugh's had nothing to do with the case.

Mandy Matney 31:32

And what's even weirder, a source close to the investigation told me she was interviewed by Stephen Peterson this fall, she told me like Liz that she felt sick while speaking to Peterson. She said that Peterson only seemed focused on information that could clear the Murdaughs name and seem to ignore all the other details that she was giving him. She said that he had a list of suspects in front of her during the interview and literally crossed off Buster and Paul's names in front of her despite what she was saying. So essentially, Annie savage apparently did three things for Sandy Smith, he appointed a Pio on her case, who appeared to have conducted a botched investigation that apparently concluded that the Murdaughs were not involved in Stephens Mr. He silenced Sandy during a time when her son's case needed momentum and the public's attention. And he made a public statement without her consent that attempted to clear the Murdaughs name from the case. So yes, we should be questioning Andy Savage's intentions in this case.

Sandy Smith 32:46

I was devastated that he had made a public announcement. without consulting me first. I felt betrayed. And I felt very betrayed. You know, because I feel if you're an attorney in your work in my son's case, it wasn't for my son, that all information needs to go through my birth so I can prepare my children from the devastation. You know, it was just, I just felt betrayed, very betrayed.

Mandy Matney 33:18



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After that story, Sandy Smith and Andy Savage split ways. At that point, Sandy told me that she felt like she was better off doing this on her own. She was worried that she would never be able to trust an attorney again. Just when she was giving up hope on all South Carolina attorneys. She met Attorney Mike Hemlepp.. Mike Hemlepp has over 30 years of legal experience on both sides of the law. He was the first police advisor for the Columbia police department and a prosecutor for several years who handled dozens of murder cases. He's also recently worked as a private attorney handling litigation for car accidents, civil rights issues, personal injury and and other areas. Mike that Sandy at the standing for Stephen fundraiser in Columbia, South Carolina on October 30. And just like me, Mike was immediately impressed with Sandy Smith when they first met and he felt compelled to help her and help Stephen's case. However he could. Mike relates to Stephen on a level that most attorneys don't.

Mike Hemlepp 34:24

You know, I think part of I think one of the things I bring to the table is that, you know, being part of the LGBT community, Stephen's story is very much the reason why young men and women all over the country don't come out of the closet. Many women all over this country don't come out of the closet cuz they're afraid of violence. And we don't know, motive, or even the meanings of how people passed away. But the implication is scary. We need to solve this. And I've spent 30 years helping victims To get to the bottom of their case and helping them fill in the blanks, mysteries, criminal and civil liability. I wanted to do that for them, even to serve it.

Mandy Matney 35:14

In November, Sandy officially hired Mike as our new attorney. And Mike has one goal for his new client. That's getting justice for Stephen Smith.

Mike Hemlepp 35:25

Justice for Stephen. Justice for this family. You know, this family went through a horrific experience. I mean, it was one after the other, right. I mean, it was as a family had to deal with Stephen's death. And then right on the heels of that Joel dies, and they had to deal with that as well. And, nobody heard of it. Nobody knew about it. Very few people in Colombia knew about it, and we're an hour away from Hampton, well, then, a bunch of other murders happened and then a bunch of other things happened in Hampton County, a bunch of things that seemingly, you know, they just popped up. And now Stephen's national topic. Why was he a national health before it



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wasn't a national topic before because it was their money and he deserves justice. Everyone deserves justice.

Mandy Matney 36:22

Mike told me that he couldn't get into specifics, but he feels confident that SLEDs investigation is headed in the right direction.

Mike Hemlepp 36:31

For far too long stories and investigations into Stephen's death have blurred the truth, filled it with speculation and clouded the evidence. But finally, after many frustrating years, in fact, the family is building a healthy partnership with law enforcement, Sandy Stephen's mother is being treated by law enforcement exactly the way that crime victim's mother should be treated. She sat down and met with agents in the South China Law Enforcement Division and the agents of the state law enforcement division and Sandy and the family have been meeting and sharing information with each other. And because of that, we are closer to answers than we have been, since this began in July of 2015. But it still remains unsolved. And there's work to be done.

Mandy Matney 37:18

Danny's new attorney believes that this case can be solved

Mike Hemlepp 37:24

by practicing law for 30 years. And the first chunk of it I had the honor of working for solicitor John justice in the Sixth Circuit. I've had cases like this, there are people out there who know what happened. There are people out there who know parts of the puzzle. And for whatever reason, in Hamilton County, people didn't come forward. And we're now in an environment where Kenton County has a bright light on it. And those people who didn't come forward for whatever reason, those reasons don't exist anymore. And I think people are going to start talking and telling us what they know.

Mandy Matney 38:03

So let's be clear here. Hampton locals I am speaking directly to you. I know how scary it was to speak up years ago. But things are different. Now. You do not have to take these secrets to your grave. Whether or not the Murdaugh's had anything to do with this, your tip could help alleviate a whole lot of pain in the Smith family. Your tip could mean that this is the last Christmas Sandy Smith has to spend wondering what happened to her son, and you didn't have to witness the crime for your tip to



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be worth it. We have heard there are people out there who have heard directly from witnesses who drunkenly confessed to them what happened, and the police need to hear from you. Or maybe you are an investigator who could come forward about what happened during this case. The time to speak is right now, this story is not going away. And the guilt that's inside of you is not going to go away until Sandy gets justice. Please come forward. Please help Sandy.

Sandy Smith 39:16

If anyone knows anything big or small, about Stephen Smith homicide, please I beg you to please call crimestoppers and just tell us what you know, the people who do know something by now. They're probably mothers or fathers. And how would they feel? If it was the same thing happens to their job? If people don't talk then you can't stop the violence.

Mandy Matney 39:48

We are begging you. If you know any information that could help SLED solve the Stephen Smith case, call crimestoppers at the low country at 843 Five Five for 1111 or at their website, which is in the description of this podcast. It's important to know that when you call crimestoppers with a low country, you can stay anonymous.

Unknown Speaker 40:14

In all my work with law enforcement of different agencies, the competent police departments if you're attending Sheriff's Department, the Chester County Sheriff's Department and one of the things that I don't think the public understands is that when you call crimestoppers with a tip, they're followed up their read, this is not some, you know website where you send them an email or you make a phone call and nobody even pays attention to it anymore. They're followed up on and when you know, get in touch with Crimestoppers and Lowcountry if you have information about Stephens, you don't have to give your name. It can be anonymous. It's not recorded. The phone call does not record the IP address, it's not saved, by Crimestoppers. It is a truly truly safe place where you can give information about a horrific crime and, and you can stay fake. And by the way, while we're talking about crime, stopping to look at a 435541111 Stephens case is so different from a lot of the other things that have been happening in Hampton. In there there, it is a mystery. I mean, it is a mystery. But in real life. I mean, this isn't fiction. It's not a movie. It's not. It's not television, live streaming. This is real life. And in real life, people who don't come forward with the information that they know, don't come forward because of



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some fear that they have. And we need to make sure that in the court of South Carolina, that fear doesn't exist.

Mandy Matney 41:53

And we hope that the people who know things, including law enforcement officers, who were part of this case will reach out to us the Murdaugh murders podcast and FITS news. As we work to solve this, reach out to us at info at Murdaugh motors podcast.com. This case is just beginning and we're just getting started.

Sandy Smith 42:15

I'll be here no matter how long it takes. I'm still gonna fight.

Mandy Matney 42:35

Finally, we want to say Merry Christmas from the Murdaugh murders podcast crew, Tis the season to be giving. And for all of you in the giving mood, we urge you to donate to the standing for Stephen GoFundMe. Check the link in our description.

David Moses 42:49

And while it's the holidays, the news never stops. So be sure to follow us on Facebook at Murdaugh murders podcast and Instagram at Murdaugh murders pod. Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year from our family to yours.

Mandy Matney 43:06

We'll see you next Wednesday.

David Moses 43:07

Stay tuned

There's so much to unpack in this case and Mandy works tirelessly to expose the truth but the truth is she works hard and she does get tired. If you believe like I do that Mandy is the best in the business and I'm a little biased, visit Murdaugh murders podcast.com and click the support the show link to learn how you can help leave a five star review to offset the haters refer an advertiser and get a finder's fee or advertise your company product or service we can geo target across the globe and find the right audience to suit your needs. Help us get Luna some treats so she doesn't interrupt the show as much. And absolutely subscribe to FITS news.com Mandy and Will are revolutionizing journalism and your subscriptions are invaluable to that mission. Plus you get awesome content every day.



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Mandy Matney 44:02

And don't forget to leave a five star review unless you're going to be nasty and talk about vocal fry. The Murdaugh murders podcast is created by me Mandy Matney and my fiance David Moses produced by their nest shark productions

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