



EPISODE 63: Who Are They Protecting? Part One

[00:00:00] **Mandy Matney:** I don't know why it's taking so long to get the big answers in this case. But I do believe that more arrests should be coming if we truly want to fix this system. And as more time passes, we have the big question: Are certain people being protected? My name is Mandy Matney. I have been investigating the Murdaugh family for more than three and a half years now. This is the Murdaugh Murders Podcast with David Moses and Liz Farrell.

[00:00:48] **Liz Farrell:** So a lot to cover today. But for starters, on Tuesday, Mallory Beach's family got some really good news from the judge in the boat crash case. It's been a while since we've updated you on this case, and, as usual, a lot has happened since episode 57 aired. We promise we'll dive into everything in a future episode. But for now, we just wanna let you know that after a hearing last Friday, the judge has reversed his decision from earlier this month when he allowed Parker's Kitchen to be tried separately from the Murdaughs. That earlier decision would've meant two trials for the Beach family, which is a horrible thought, and the notion of two trials might have put at risk any chance the Beaches had of holding the Murdaughs accountable for the death of their daughter.

[00:01:33] So the single trial is now set for January 9th, 2023, and it will involve Parker's, Alex, and Buster Murdaugh, as well as the estates of Maggie and Paul. Even though Alex's attorneys keep saying that the murder trial will be held in January, we've yet to see any evidence of that date being set so we're not entirely sure how one might affect the other. For those of you following the Beach case, we recommend going to Murdaugh Murders Podcast's YouTube channel to check out last Friday's hearing where you can hear Parker's attorney using the absurd phrase "goblets of Jagermeister" because who is drinking goblets full of Jagermeister? We had the great Eric Alan there to film, so we'd like to thank him again for his amazing work as always.

[00:02:21] **Mandy Matney:** So last week, we issued a statement after our former employer published a hurtful rumor about Stephen Smith's twin sister and her daughter. Specifically, the story claimed that Gregory Alexander, the Yemassee police chief who was closely connected to the Murdaughs as we



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have mentioned many times in this podcast, is rumored — keyword: rumored — to be the biological father of Stephen Smith's niece, who was born years after Stephen's death. We found out this was published as we were finishing up our last episode, and we really didn't get a chance to fully address it. We want you to know that we are addressing this rumor with full permission from the Smith family. They are horrified by this and want the victim's side to be heard.

[00:03:06] But we realize from some of the feedback that we really need to clear some things up with our listeners. Specifically, we want to walk you through our editorial process when it comes to publishing incredibly private and hurtful information to the victims. First, we understand that this story is truly stranger than fiction sometimes, but a lot of people following this forget that there are real victims involved. This is not a movie, and we say "real victims" because the Smiths, especially, have been steamrolled by the system for the past seven years, and they still don't have answers as to where, why, and exactly how Stephen Smith died. Most importantly, they don't know who killed him. Unlike so many other names that we have mentioned in this podcast, the Smiths have not at all benefited from the Murdaughs or this alleged crime operation. Sandy is only in this position because the system did her family wrong, leaving her no choice but to put her son's story in the media to pressure authorities who weren't doing their jobs in the first place.

[00:04:17] While reporting on victims such as the Smiths, who did not ask for this massive worldwide spotlight that they're in and did nothing to deserve scrutiny because a.) They are not public officials; and b.) They have not been accused of a crime or any wrongdoing. The threshold for reporting highly damaging and hurtful information about them, especially when children are involved, is extremely high. Because our mission is to expose the truth wherever it leads, get the story straight, and be a voice for the victims, we always have to ask ourselves the question: Does reporting this information further that mission? How does it achieve our goal of fighting for accountability? And will it potentially help solve this case?

[00:05:05] And when we're talking about highly personal information, such as the rumored paternity of a little girl who already has a man she calls dad, we then weigh the answers to those questions against the answer to this one: Will the information only serve to hurt the victims? The answer here is yes. These are complex equations we have to do every day as journalists because



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what people consider personal is highly subjective. However, I think most caring humans can agree that the rumored paternity of a murder victim's niece, again, born years after her uncle's death, and who was already being raised by a loving mother and father, is not information that is owed to the public. And, personally, I refuse to bring an innocent child into this for no good reason.

[00:06:00] In the last week, Liz and I have gone over a hundred different scenarios that could have justified the publication of this information, and we could not think of a single one that would serve any other purpose than to cause the Smith family pain. Last week's news report did not accuse Gregory Alexander of a crime, and it did not explain why this information, if true, might be considered significant to investigators. Context is really important in what we do and this report did not provide proper context like we are doing here. And the report led to far too many people believing that this rumor was a missing puzzle piece to Stephen Smith's death.

[00:06:46] Liz and I have been reporting on the Smith case since March 2019. Trust me, when it comes to getting important information out there, we are not holding back nor have we, and we want nothing more than for Stephen's case to be solved. Not only was this little girl born years after Stephen's death and years after the case went cold, there has been no indication that Gregory Alexander had anything to do with the death of Stephen Smith. His only known connection to the case so far is that the highway patrol officer who had custody of Stephen's ray kit later became a Yemassee police officer, which, yes, we think that needs to be looked into by investigators, which is why we mentioned it a few weeks ago. There have been no complaints that we know of about Gregory Alexander related to the Smith family, and neither Liz nor I have ever seen a DNA test or a birth certificate nor has the paternity of the little girl been verified by the Smith family, which is why we continue to refer to it as a rumor.

[00:07:55] This is important. We do not publish rumors. We use public records and other primary sources, and a ton of background interviews with people close to the case to confirm information that we decide to discuss on this show. The critical thing here was for law enforcement to know about that rumor, which they do. If the paternity of Stephen Smith's niece turned out to be a key to solving his murder, and there is no indication that investigators see it that way, that is when Liz and I would've had the conversation with the



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Smith family and talked about their concerns before publishing that information. Please think of that little girl growing up and surfing her mother's name on the internet for the first time years from now. Think of her reading a rumor about who some people think her father is. Think about all the pain that worry causes the Smith family. Now, ask yourself, was publishing this worth all of that heartache? Is it worth it for you to know this information? That irresponsible report deserves every bit of scrutiny, as far as we're concerned. And we stand by our statement.

[00:09:11] We can assure you we are in no way protecting Gregory Alexander. In fact, now would be a great time to remind law enforcement and the prosecution that there are many unanswered questions about Yemassee Police Chief Gregory Alexander that are absolutely the public's concern, considering he still has the power to arrest, charge, and take people's freedom away right now. And we have a lot of questions about him. For instance, has anyone checked his patrol vehicle GPS and the locations on his phone from the night of Maggie and Paul's murders? Was he at Moselle soon after Maggie and Paul were murdered? Was he anywhere near the creek in Varnville where dozens of SLED agents were searching a few weeks ago? If he was, did he drive back to Moselle after that? And what was that \$5,000 check written to Gregory Alexander from Alex Murdaugh a few weeks after the murders really about? Which brings us to our next point. We cannot lose sight of all of the powerful people whose names have come up so many times in this and how so few of them have actually been charged.

[00:10:37] **Liz Farrell:** And since we wouldn't be talking about all this if there wasn't a corrupt system that has long supported people like Alex Murdaugh, we also have to keep an eye on the good guys here, too. The good guys, meaning the people we, as South Carolina residents, have depended on, have paid with our tax money to do the right thing. Right now, I wanna talk about Russell Laffitte.

[00:10:59] So first, a quick clarification to last week's episode. We mentioned that Russell, his father, and sister, independently made decisions apart from Palmetto State Bank's executive committee because the three of them represented a majority vote when it came to giving out larger loans. That was according to the prosecution. Russell has maintained that he and his family did not violate the board's bylaws by making those decisions. So we just wanna mention that.



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[00:11:24] Okay, last Wednesday, the federal grand jury handed down a second superseding indictment against Russell with a number of changes, which we'll talk about. First, let's talk about what happened this Monday. Russell Laffitte's lawyers filed two motions in his federal case: a motion to dismiss, which we will get to, and also a motion in limine, and that's basically a pretrial motion. It's a motion that deals with setting the rules of engagement for the trial, such as what the other side can and can't say. Then, late on Tuesday afternoon, Russell's team filed a subpoena and a signed order from the judge granting their demand for documents from the Parker Law Group, formally known as Peters, Murdaugh, Parker, Detrick, and Eltzroth, or PMPED. Here's what they asked for.

[00:12:12] **David Moses:** Documents related to any PMPED clients that were or are suspected to have been defrauded by Richard Alexander Murdaugh for the period of January 1, 2011 through the present; documents which detail any and all payments made by PMPED and/or Parker Law Group as settlement of claims reimbursed to PMPED clients that were defrauded by Richard Alexander Murdaugh through present day; documents related to any and all banking professionals that served as conservator and/or personal representative for any PMPED cases from January 1, 2011 through present day.

[00:12:53] **Liz Farrell:** Even though this late development was surprising, we're not shocked because of Russell's Monday filings, which were the shark's fin showing above the water. Okay. Let's talk about that motion in limine, which is calling for the government to produce, quote, reports. This really caught our eye because of what we were just talking about in terms of accountability and how there are so many more people involved in all this beyond the ones who are in the headlines every day.

[00:13:19] This motion is very interesting, to say the least. It's not unexpected per se. But given some of the conversations Mandy and I have been having recently about Russell, PMPED, and other players in this, it did pique our interest because it's not only asking for Brady material, the evidence that's favorable to Russell's case, but it quite pointedly asks for something else. Here's David with the closing paragraph from that motion.

[00:13:45] **David Moses:** Due process necessitates that all Brady-Giglio material evidence should be provided to Mr. Laffitte as soon as possible. To the extent any allegations have been made that any of the government's



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witnesses have engaged in crimes of moral turpitude, including fraud, the government must produce any reports or associated documents to Mr. Laffitte so that he may adequately prepare to defend himself at trial.

[00:14:12] **Liz Farrell:** The government's witnesses, you say? Crimes? Hm. So obviously, we know that Hampton County Probate Judge Sheila Odom is expected to testify against Russell. At Russell's hearing to modify the conditions of his bond earlier this month, prosecutor Emily Limehouse all but said this when she questioned Russell on whether the judge had okayed taking loans from Hannah Plyler's account. First, Emily asked Russell, "Would it surprise you to learn Judge Odom has told us you never requested permission?" Then Russell's lead attorney, Bart Daniel, was like —

[00:14:46] **David Moses:** Your honor, I'm going to object to what Judge Odom said to the government. Judge Odom, it's just hearsay.

[00:14:55] **Liz Farrell:** The judge responded, quote, the way the question was phrased. I don't think she's eliciting. She asked if it would surprise him to know. I will allow that question. But counsel, please be mindful. So Emily asked Russell again: "Would it surprise you to know?" Russell was like —

[00:15:11] **David Moses:** No. It does not.

[00:15:14] **Liz Farrell:** Now, as you guys know, we have a lot of questions about how Judge Odom ran Hampton County's Probate Court because, say what you will about old Russell, and we've said a lot, when it came to the Plyler case, anyway, he did file several promissory notes with Odom's office — the office that's responsible for checking this information, approving it, and filing it with the estate. These promissory notes clearly showed that Russell and Alex were taking loans from her account. Also, Russell filed annual reports that showed all the money coming into and out of Hannah's accounts. Those reports clearly had the words "loan" and "Alex" on there. To be clear, none of that makes it right in our eyes. Obviously, we think Russell and Alex were being self-serving and it was gross what they did to Hannah Plyler. Russell had a duty to protect her money, and, of course, that's what he is arguing he did here. But the federal government isn't charging Russell with taking secret loans from Hannah's account. They're charging him in part with crimes



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related to how those loans were paid back, which was with money allegedly stolen by Alex from clients.

[00:16:21] **Mandy Matney:** And we'll be right back.

[00:16:25] Okay. So there's Sheila Odom. She's a possible and likely witness. Obviously, if I'm Russell's defense team, I'm going to want to know whether the federal government was investigating her and, if so, what kind of things did they find. For instance, did they look at her real estate transactions over the years? Her bank accounts? Any large purchases made over the years that were not commensurate with her salary? We're not saying that there would be anything there necessarily, but all is fair in love and Hampton County. So these are all things that we'd want to know about her and her family if we were the federal government.

[00:17:08] Who else do we think the government might call as witnesses? So there's the fact that Russell deposited money that came from PMPED's client trust account into Alex's personal accounts — money that was meant for people Russell represented as conservator and meant for the husband of a woman whose estate was represented by Russell. And then there's the matter of the \$680,000 check from Palmetto State Bank that Russell allegedly walked over to PMPED sometime last fall to cover his half of the \$1.325 million that was meant for Arthur Badger but instead ended up being spent on everything but Arthur Badger. That's why it's not surprising that multiple sources have told us to expect someone from PMPED to testify, likely a partner and possibly a paralegal or two. Obviously, after seeing the PMPED subpoena for 11 years of documents, Russell's defense team is getting ready for that eventuality.

[00:18:17] Which brings us to this: What is happening with PMPED? Which, by the way, is now technically Parker Law Group, but we're gonna call them as we know them, which is PMPED. We are certain that the Office of Disciplinary Counsel (ODC) is looking into what went on in that firm because how could they not? But the thing is, ODC investigations take years. That office is persistently understaffed because few lawyers in South Carolina want to investigate people who might be in a position to hire them at some point in their career. And so, their investigators are often inexperienced and sometimes timid, from what we've been told anyway.



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[00:19:00] Here's what happens when an investigation into lawyers takes years: It gives the more powerful people in these situations — ones who probably, most definitely did something wrong — plenty of time to weasel their way out of the more serious consequences. And because the process is so beyond secretive, a huge time delay also allows for whatever the wrongdoing is to disappear quietly into the night, never to be heard from again, except for at cocktail parties, because lawyers love to gossip about the ones who get away with things. And by the way, we will talk about this ODC process of lawyers policing lawyers in a bonus episode with Eric Bland. So this is all to say, we hope the ODC is moving the Murdaugh-related investigations to the front of a line because of the severity and scope of this whole thing.

[00:19:55] But back to the criminal case. Could Russell's motion in limine mean that members of PMPED are being investigated by the Feds? There are so many contradicting facts when it comes to PMPED. Like last September, they issued a statement saying that they were shocked and dismayed to learn that Alex, their former partner, had stolen funds from their firm. They acted like this was something they had just discovered.

[00:20:25] **David Moses:** He lied and he stole from us. No member of PMPED was aware of Alex's scheme. When we learned he betrayed our trust, we requested his resignation immediately. We have yet to speak to anyone who was aware of his addiction to opioids.

[00:20:42] **Mandy Matney:** As you'll remember, Alex resigned Friday, September 3rd 2021. Well, according to his lawyer's unreliable timeline of events. Obviously, the Murdaugh camp would've wanted to keep all issues that could in any way have been construed as a motive for the murders or a testament to Alex's state of mind in June 2021 to a minimum. So it's really hard to trust him on that stuff. But according to the South Carolina Supreme Court's allegations against Alex in his disbarment, PMPED knew as early as May 2019, 2021, that there was almost \$800,000 in fees missing in a case handled by Alex and his friend Chris Wilson. Last year, we heard from sources close to the situation that PMPED was not actually forthcoming with investigators and instead had hired their own team of forensic accountants to look into Alex's alleged thefts. So what, if anything, do they have to hide?

[00:21:47] Behind the scenes, there has been a lot of whispering. The real question, though, is this: Would PMPED be willing to turn on Russell,



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especially in exchange for saving itself? We ask this because there is no sign that we've seen that the federal government has the stomach for investigating PMPED, which even if they haven't done anything wrong in the way of fraud, they should still be investigated given the firm's history with Alex, their reputation across the state for their alleged control of Hampton County juries, and their prolonged failure to protect clients from one of their own. So why would the federal government not have the stomach for investigating PMPED? Here is what we're seeing.

[00:22:37] **Liz Farrell:** So let's start with a man named Jim May. Up until around July 2021, Jim was a federal prosecutor, a highly regarded one. He is known behind the scenes as someone who relishes his reputation as an aggressive jerk, for lack of a better word, meaning when he's on a case, he's ready for a fight. Formally, though, he's called tough and cerebral. On August 1st 2021, John Monk of *The State* wrote a profile of Jim. According to the story, a week earlier, Jim May had celebrated his move to the private sector with a party at the River Rat Brewery outside of Columbia that was attended by former prosecutors, FBI agents, and at least two federal judges — US Judge Sherri Lydon and US Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Jay Richardson. We'll have David read some passages from the story so you can kind of get a feel for this guy.

[00:23:31] **David Moses:** South Carolina Federal Prosecutor Jim May, who over his career helped win hundreds of guilty pleas against high-profile criminals at the former utility SCANA inside the Irish Travellers community and the Hells Angels biker gang, is stepping down and going into private practice with a statewide firm.

[00:23:55] **Liz Farrell:** That statewide firm is Wyche, by the way. It's known as a heavy hitter firm that only hires the most serious and accomplished of attorneys. Like we're talking Ivy Leaguers, the lawyers with pedigrees who edited their school's law reviews, and who clerked for US Supreme Court justices, not the lawyers known for getting in bar fights at strip clubs during law school. They call themselves a firm with, quote, intellectual firepower, and they're known for taking on the biggest of big clients. Here's more from John Monk's story about Jim May from David.

[00:24:27] **David Moses:** In May's nine years as Assistant US Attorney, he rose to the top ranks of South Carolina's federal prosecutors and led prosecutions



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of some of the state's major complex federal crimes, from human trafficking to white-collar fraud. Two prosecutions May led had national significance and involved billion-dollar crimes. One case involved the downfall of SCANA, the former Fortune 500 energy company that was once one of South Carolina's corporate jewels. For four years, May led a four-person prosecutor team with FBI agents. In another case, dubbed "Operation Brace Yourself," May coordinated a national team of prosecutors from 20 other US Attorney's Offices across the country, along with a Department of Justice Healthcare Task Force, to dismantle a major international Medicare healthcare fraud and kickback scheme. It was one of the FBI's largest health fraud investigations.

[00:25:29] **Liz Farrell:** So, yeah. Great hire for Wyche, right? Well, guess who one of his first clients is. That's right: PMPED. And guess who Jim May worked with on some of his biggest cases when he was with the US Attorney's Office: Emily Limehouse and Winston Holiday — the two federal prosecutors handling Russell's case. Now, that relationship doesn't mean that Emily and Winston aren't fighting the good fight here. But it raises questions for us.

[00:25:55] Let's set the scene first, though. Up until late last year, there was a lot of behind-the-scenes talk about how the US Attorney's Office was butting heads with the South Carolina Attorney General's office in the Murdaugh cases because of possible maneuvers on the part of the Feds that some might have construed as maybe creating a softer landing with the Murdaugh cases. We don't have the details of those possible maneuvers. We just know that there was a fight and that Interim US Attorney Rhett DeHart abruptly resigned around that time.

[00:26:24] So first question, Jim May doesn't seem to have all that much experience handling civil cases, so his involvement in the PMPED cases is interesting, particularly as it concerns Russell Laffitte's case. And in what ways, if any, could his relationship with his former coworkers influence the outcome for PMPED when it comes to any federal investigations that might be happening? Again, we're not suggesting that there's anything improper happening here, but these relationships are important to know and consider. You know how people say that when it comes to copperhead snakes, you have to watch out for the babies — the newest members of the copperhead family — because their bite is more toxic? Jim May is a baby copperhead. His relationships are current, they are fresh, and they are significant. Other important relationships we need to consider?



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[00:27:12] **Mandy Matney:** Well, there's Carra Henderson, who works for 14th Circuit Solicitor Duffie Stone's office as a liaison for the US Attorney's Office in Charleston, which I know is confusing in itself. So Carra Henderson is the daughter of PMPED/Parker Law Group partner Danny Henderson. According to sources, she attended Russell Laffitte's last hearing for some reason. Also, according to several sources, Henderson's position as a cross between a solicitor and a US attorney, and the first attorney in the state to do so, has raised a lot of eyebrows over the years. Like why are local funds paying her to do work at the federal level? Why would Duffie's office need a lawyer working for them at the US Attorney's Office? But also, Carra Henderson and Emily Limehouse have worked multiple cases together, according to press releases from the US Attorney's Office. So it'd be important to know the nature of their relationship. Are they personal friends and, if so, how close? Would it be a conflict of interest for Carra to be involved with this case in any way?

[00:28:23] The 14th Circuit Solicitor's office has recused itself from the Murdaugh cases, so it's not a great look for them. And not that they care about what looks good because they continue to look terrible, to be honest. Also worth noting is that Emily Limehouse is married to Thomas A. Limehouse Jr., the son of former State House Representative Thomas A. Limehouse Sr. Thomas Jr. is currently chief counsel for Gov. Henry McMaster, who is the South Carolina governor right now and was the US Attorney for South Carolina during "Operation Jackpot," which we had brought up several times in this podcast. And in 1990, when Thomas Sr. was a lawmaker, Russell's lead attorney, Bart Daniel, who at the time was the US Attorney for South Carolina, secured a guilty plea from Thomas Sr. for his role in a bribery scandal. That was a part of "Operation Lost Trust," which was one of South Carolina's biggest corruption investigations in history. By the way, we're told that whatever this is with the Murdaugh case is much worse than that.

[00:29:33] So Thomas Limehouse Sr. was sentenced to 20 months in prison and lost his law license as a result. Again, this isn't to say these relationships mean anything, but they're also important to know and consider when we're talking about the Murdaugh case and who is and who isn't being held accountable at this point. Again, we need to remind you of how small these circles are. We also think it's really important to consider whether Russell is the main focus in federal court right now because his case is simplest for the government to prove since there is a paper trail. Or is he the fall guy of some sort, either intentionally or unintentionally? Because if Russell is convicted, it



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would be the first major win for investigators in the Murdaugh cases. We just don't want them to think that it's okay for them to stop there. We also don't want the others who might be involved in this case to think that Russell is distracting us from holding them accountable, too. And we'll be right back.

[00:30:46] **Liz Farrell:** Okay. Now, let's talk about that motion to dismiss. Russell's attorneys came out of the gate swinging with this one. They want all his federal charges to be dismissed because they say that the federal government's indictments — there have been three versions of them since July — contain errors that affect Russell's ability to defend himself.

[00:31:04] The motion is actually kind of funny and definitely persnickety to a degree. Bart Daniel and Matt Austin apparently ran the second superseding indictment from last week through one of those programs that catches plagiarism. The program detected 258 total changes between the first superseding indictment and the second superseding indictment. The program even points out the smallest and funniest of places where the government corrected their typos. For instance, changing "law fin" and "law film" to "law firm." As former editors, we're here to tell you that the law of pointing out someone's typos is that you, too, will soon make an error yourself. And that's what happened here. The first motion to dismiss that Daniel and Austin filed contained these confusing sentences:

[00:31:52] **David Moses:** This motion does not seek dismissal of all the charges against Mr. Laffitte. It merely seeks dismissal of the second superseding indictment for the reasons set forth above.

[00:32:05] **Liz Farrell:** The old "we don't, we do" mistake. At any rate, here are the issues with the indictments and they're concerning to us because we do not want to see this case dismissed because of dumb mistakes. To begin with, the original two indictments consistently mixed up the terms "conservator" and "personal representative." This is important because those are two different roles but also not so important in the sense that Russell had a fiduciary duty to both types of clients. And in our opinion and apparently his own opinion, according to the transcript from the last hearing, he did not uphold his sworn duties to them no matter what the government calls them.



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[00:32:43] Then, and this is a much bigger issue to us, there's the matter of the government originally claiming that Russell had lied about Natasha Thomas's age on his paperwork to close out her conservatorship account. Here's the problem: Russell has admitted to a lot of the accusations that the Feds are making but maintains he wasn't conspiring to commit crimes here. The government is going to have to prove that he was, meaning that he knew what he was doing was wrong and that money was being stolen from his and Alex's clients. So that part about Natasha Thomas where the government claimed Russell had lied about her being 18 when she was really 15 seemed really damning to us because if Russell had lied about her age, then that could indicate he knew he was doing something wrong. Turns out she really was 18, though. So, yeah. That's concerning.

[00:33:34] The other problem Russell's team has with the second superseding indictment is this: According to the defense's motion, Emily Limehouse told them and Judge Richard Gergel, who will be presiding over this case in November, that she had one minor change to make to the first superseding indictment. Instead, the government changed 16 paragraphs, according to the motion. The government changed the number of loans made from Hannah Plyler's account to Alex from 14 to 16. They changed a few of the dollar figures.

[00:34:04] **Mandy Matney:** And my favorite part, when talking about Alex allegedly stealing Arthur Badger's \$1.3 million settlement, they changed it from Alex "demanding" Russell send an email to Alex "requesting" Russell send an email to him. They just changed one word, which is interesting.

[00:34:25] Anyways, like we said at the beginning of the episode, we have to keep an eye on everyone involved in this, including the, quote, good guys. The system needs to be kept honest. Too many times we've heard about important cases getting dropped because of small mistakes. In fact, several of the good ol' days stories we hear about Buster Murdaugh and Randolph Murdaugh's days as prosecutors include the conclusion "We always thought he intentionally tanked that case." Again, we are not saying that about Russell's case, but we need to talk about these things in the open. All of these cases demand transparency about who was involved, about how people are connected to each other, and what is happening and what is not happening.



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[00:35:18] We are definitely not defending Russell Laffitte's actions. But when we look at the bigger picture of this case through his lens, we could understand him. We could understand why he might be asking himself: Why am I the only one the Feds are going hard on? Since July, the Feds have nailed Russell three times to the same cross, which, if he deserves that, then fine. But until all of these other questions we've raised, especially about public officials, have been answered, as far as we're concerned, this is coming way too close to Corruption 101, meaning pick a guy suitable enough to the public who can serve as the major symbol of the overall corruption in the case, make 'em take the heat, and get 'em out of the way. And then get the public off your back by convincing everyone that everything is fine, and the system is great, and that justice has been served. And the culture of corruption continues.

[00:36:20] Obviously, Russell's charges getting dismissed is a long shot, but it's worrisome. If they do get dismissed because of sloppy mistakes, then there is no choice but to wonder why that happened because the system has not earned anyone's trust at this point. Until we see some major forward momentum when it comes to holding everyone accountable in this, not just the easiest or the obvious or the least empowered, then we have no choice but to believe that nothing whatsoever is changing and the good ole boys are still calling the shots.

[00:37:17] The Murdaugh Murders Podcast is created by me, Mandy Matney, and my fiancé, David Moses. Our executive editor is Liz Farrell.

[00:37:25] **Outro:** Produced by Luna Shark Productions.