



## EPISODE 64: The Curious Case of Arthur Badger

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[00:00:00] **Mandy Matney:** I don't know how many victims we'll ultimately find connected to these cases. But after diving in deeper on the Arthur Badger case, it seems very clear to me that Alex, Russell Laffitte, Palmetto State Bank, PMPED, and Judge Carmen Mullen should not be allowed to escape accountability for what happened to the Badger family. 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.

[00:00:51] Well, y'all, I have some personal news, as the kids say. This will be my last of the Murdaugh Murders Podcast as a single woman. We're getting married on October 15th. And after an incredibly stressful few months, we are finally taking a break. I've promised myself that I'm focusing on nothing besides the wedding, my future husband, keeping my stress levels down, and improving my mental health for the next two weeks. Several of you awesome fans have reached out about getting us a wedding present, which is so sweet. But honestly, we're doing a very nontraditional wedding asking for no gifts. However, if you wanna do something really special for us, please subscribe to our newsletter for the latest updates from the Luna Shark team and see the episode description for more details in that. Supporting our business, which has truly been a labor of love for both of us, is the most special wedding gift, honestly.

[00:01:49] And don't worry. While we're taking a two-week break for our wedding, we will still have a little something special for your weekly Wednesday fix. For the next two weeks, Liz Farrell and Eric Bland will be serving hot Cups of Justice bonus episodes that will hit your feed on Wednesday. And then, we will be back in action stronger than ever with MMP episodes on October 26th, which reminds me, again, I cannot stress this enough, if you truly want to be successful, I urge you to work with great teammates who truly care about your mental health and step up when you need to step away. It makes a world of difference when you're doing very hard and stressful things. And if you're really lucky in life, you get to marry your best teammate. Anyways, I'm beyond excited and lucky and proud for where we



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are right now and where we are going. And I wanna thank you, again, our loyal listeners and subscribers, who have made it to 64 episodes.

[00:02:54] We have a lot to talk about today, specifically about the Arthur Badger case, which has gotten lost in the shuffle despite how egregious it is and despite how much it has exposed the underworld of Alex Murdaugh and company. Speaking of, we're going to start with a couple updates that are happening in the world of Russell Laffitte.

[00:03:16] **Liz Farrell:** Last we talked, Russell had filed a motion to dismiss all the charges in his federal case. On Monday, Judge Richard Gergel instructed Assistant US Attorney Emily Limehouse to file a response to that motion, which he did rather quickly. To summarize, her response was: If there were mistakes in my indictments, that's Russell's fault because I just used Russell's own words and he's the one who apparently lied to the probate court. She was referencing the Natasha Thomas age discrepancy. Last week, we told you about how it originally looked like Russell had filed paperwork with the Hampton County Probate Court, misrepresenting Natasha's age as 18 when she was actually 15 years old. But really, Natasha was 18 at the time Russell submitted that paperwork. In fact, she was 19, according to online records. So like we said, that seemed like a pretty big mistake on the government's part because if Russell had misrepresented her age, then that could speak to whether Russell was aware that a crime was afoot. At the time, it seemed like Russell had dumped her the second the settlement came through, which obviously would be very suspicious.

[00:04:25] Like everything else in this case though, it's actually worse-looking than that. We've pointed out many times that Alex Murdaugh's legal filings were consistently sparse, sloppy, and filled with errors — some of them really embarrassing. Like the time he labeled a form as relating to the, quote, matter of Hampton, as in the county, with jurisdiction in the county of Hakeem Pinckney, which is not a county but rather the quadriplegic deaf man from whom Alex appears to have stolen. The Thomas situation could just be the result of that usual sloppiness or it could be an indicator that someone, whether it was Alex alone or Alex and Russell or no one, I guess, was committing a crime because here's the truth about that error: In the case of minor children without special needs, a conservator serves until the child turns 18. At age 18, Natasha would get her settlement directly. Russell's



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services, which he himself admits he didn't provide though he was paid \$15,000 for it, would not have been needed.

[00:05:25] So the issue is this. There are two forms: one to open the conservatorship, one to close it. According to online records, Natasha was born in September 1992. The conservatorship was opened in 2010, just 15 days before her 18th birthday. According to Emily's response that was filed Monday, the conservatorship was closed in January 2012, when Natasha was definitely 19. And the case was settled in October 2011, when she was also definitely older than 18, meaning the case was settled at a time when Natasha was legally entitled to her money. But again, for some reason, and I can't think of a good one, that money went to her conservatorship estate. This means we are back where we started with this, which is, look how twisted all of this is.

[00:06:14] This also explains why, at the bond modification hearing last month, Emily asked Russell a few different ways whether he'd ever met Natasha. She was asking because Natasha was legally a grown woman, an adult, for most of the time Russell served as her conservator. It's yet another way victims are preyed upon. Of course, Russell thinks he's a victim in all this, and you guys already know how we feel about that.

[00:06:39] **Mandy Matney:** Alright. The next update we have for you is about the Mallory Beach cases. On August 19th, a few days after our last episode dedicated to the Beach civil case, attorneys for Parker's convenience stores filed a motion for their case to be tried separately from the Murdaughs. For a reminder, in March 2019, weeks after Mallory Beach died in a boat crash, her mother sued a number of defendants they believed contributed to her death. Several of those defendants, including the bar where Paul Murdaugh and Connor Cook took two shots right before the fatal boat crash, have already settled. This is a fact that Parker's attorneys seem to slip in during hearings as a way to remind the judge that the Beaches already got money. That money, by the way, would be factored into any jury award the Beaches could get. So I'm not sure why Parker's attorneys keep going through this routine.

[00:07:35] So we're nearing in almost four years after this crash. And three defendants, Alex Murdaugh, and Buster Murdaugh, and Parker's, along with two new defendants, the estates of Maggie and Paul Murdaugh, are the only parties that have not settled in this case. For all intents and purposes though, the Murdaughs' end of things seem like a foregone conclusion given that



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there's a receivership in charge of calculating Alex's frozen wealth for this purpose. But it's worth noting at the last hearing, the Beaches' attorney, Mark Tinsley, mentioned to the judge that attorneys for the estates of Paul and Maggie Murdaugh have asked the receivership to pay them more than a hundred thousand dollars for the time they've spent working on those cases so far. And Tinsley basically said that those attorneys haven't done anything, and the Murdaughs' assets aren't supposed to be wasted, and that feels pretty wasted to me, but okay.

[00:08:35] So according to this new lawsuit, Parker's is liable for Mallory's death because Paul, who was 19 at the time, had gone to Parker's before setting out on the boat and purchased a bunch of cheap beer and White Claw, which he and the others drank, along with other alcohol illegally purchased at Parker's by another boat passenger that evening. The Beaches are also accusing Buster and Alex Murdaugh of enabling Paul Murdaugh's alcoholism, which ultimately contributed to Mallory's death. In Alex's case, they said he had a reason to believe that Paul would drive his boat drunk that night. In Buster's case, they say that the family, including Buster, all knew Paul was using his big brother's license to buy alcohol and, in fact, had celebrated when the fake ID had worked for them several times before. Initially, the trial was set for this week. But Alex's attorneys asked for it to be postponed, in part because his attorney, John Tiller, died weeks earlier, in part because he has a big old murder trial to prepare for that's allegedly going to happen in January.

[00:09:43] So after a hearing on August 10th, the judge agreed that the trial should be postponed and, as sort of an aside, noted this. Here's David.

[00:09:54] **David Moses:** Now, I will say that when I say it's continued there again, we're just talking out loud. If the other parties were severed, and this boiled down to the Parker involvement, it appears that part of the case is ready to be tried in October that's not before the court today. And if that's something the court needs to address in the next week or so, just let me know. There are other motions that might lead to that.

[00:10:19] **Liz Farrell:** And then nine days later, Parker's was like, "Hey. So Judge Hall, we wanna do that thing you mentioned. You know, that thing where a jury won't consider the Murdaughs and us at the same because we don't wanna get their stink on us." So basically, it seems like the judge, and actually as it turns out, the Dick Harpootlian, who was at the hearing to argue for



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postponement and suggested severing the case as an option for the Beaches, gave Parker's and their litany of presumably high-priced attorneys this idea, meaning Parker's paid these very expensive attorneys to get free advice from Dick Harpootlian. Anyway, this is a highly technical thing because of how tort law works, so we're not going to get into the ins and outs of all that. Essentially, Parker's was asking the judge to separate them from the case because of all the publicity surrounding the Murdaughs.

[00:11:13] Here is what you need to know about this. Judge Hall has extensive experience in the adjudication of crime but not as much experience when it comes to tort law, which is very procedural and complex. There are a lot of rules and conditions, and nothing seems very straightforward at all. So Parker's asked for their case to be severed from the Murdaughs due to the, quote, exceptional and unique circumstances presented by the high-profile drama now surrounding the Murdaugh name. Here's what they said in their motion to sever.

[00:11:43] **David Moses:** Most of the Murdaugh defendants, individually and/or collectively, have been or are currently being accused of misconduct in various crimes, including, inter alia, murder, intentional misconduct, obstruction of justice, computer crimes, money laundering, tampering with the investigation of the very boat crash involved in this action, theft, fraud, and extortion.

[00:12:08] **Mandy Matney:** Judge Hall's decision to grant Parker's motion to sever was a huge deal in the South Carolina legal community because it could have changed the future of certain tort cases. You know how we have been talking about lawyer lawmakers having way too much power in South Carolina and how it taints our justice system? Well, this seems to be an example of that because, guess what Greg Parker, the owner of Parker's Kitchen, wants? Tort reform that would protect wealthy convenience store owners and other purveyors of alcohol from cases like this one in the future. Last year, Parker's added a powerful lawmaker to its legal team: Rep. Murrell Smith, who is now speaker of the House in South Carolina. Murrell not only has the power to get the law to change for his client, but he has significant influence over who gets to be a judge in South Carolina. Remember: South Carolina is one of the only states where lawmakers, not the voters, elect judges.



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[00:13:09] So in early September, Judge Hall ruled for Parker's to be severed. His reasoning was basically, what difference does it make if there's a part one and a part two? The Beaches will still have the same opportunity to be made whole. But then Hall reversed his decision several weeks later after Tinsley presented a stack of case law showing that, historically, South Carolina has favored a system in which plaintiffs, i.e., the Beaches, have the right to decide how their case gets tried. To sever the case was to deprive them of that right, Tinsley maintained. He argued that Parker's and the Murdaugh family are jointly responsible for what happened that night and further blame each other, which means the rule of professional conduct that Parker's was using to argue their case does not apply. Worse, severing the case could have meant that, ultimately, the Murdaughs could have escaped accountability altogether given the way that tort law works.

[00:14:10] The long and short of it is this: The scenario on which Judge Hall seemed to be basing his decision — that the outcome could be achieved by a part one and part two — could not exist unless Parker's won their case. If Parker's lost their case, the Murdaughs could have likely argued that the Beaches have already been made whole and, therefore, they were not entitled to have another bite at the apple.

[00:14:36] Anyway, like I said, Parker's face the argument not only on case law but the rules of professional conduct. Here is North Carolina attorney PK Shere arguing that Parker's plan seems a-okay to him.

[00:14:53] **PK Shere:** There is simply no prejudice to the plan. If they get a "yes" on liability, they're gonna be made whole. If they don't succeed, either by a directed verdict or a jury goes back there, follows your instructions, follows the law, and believes that when we had a alcohol transaction that was deemed by the very investigative agency, SLED, as valid and legal, and that we were de— that partners were defrauded by Paul Murdaugh, and they believe that that is not negligence, and they believe Agent Horney who testified that this was, that Tajeaha Cohen, a native here at Hampton County who went to work that day to do her job, did her due diligence, if they believe that, and they come back with a "no," then guess what? The plaintiff gets another bite of the apple 'cause then they get to go to the murder defense and say, well, if we weren't able to prove that Parker's was negligent and eight approximate calls, this transaction, eight and a half hours before the tragic death of Mallory Beach, we don't believe that. We don't believe Parker's are



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negligent. But that's not the same, that doesn't prevent them from going against the murder defense and figuring out if the jury believes that, you know, Paul Murdaugh and all these boat riders when they were doing all the things, all the bad things that they did that night, drinking and doing all kinds of things. I mean, we have Connor Cook, who sued Parker's. He was in Luther's buying shots, goblets of Jagermeister. If a jury believes all that and they believe that those folks should be held accountable, then they can. And they can hold 'em accountable, and they can award damages as they see fit.

[00:16:43] **Liz Farrell:** Like we said last week, this case is now scheduled for January 9th 2023. And so far, it seems like that date is going to hold regardless of what happens with Alex's murder trial. One more quick thing about the Beach cases. Right after this decision was reversed, Greg Parker's other set of high-priced attorneys who are defending him in the civil conspiracy case, which is a different case, filed a 140-page motion to disqualify Mark Tinsley and have him removed from that case altogether. The motion seems to be filled with a lot of guesswork on the part of Parker's attorneys. And honestly, it seems like there's a lot of context missing when it comes to the accusations they've made against Tinsley. In addition to saying that Tinsley is a witness in this case because of a phone call he had with tabloid reporter, Vicky Ward, in which she apparently told him that she got the confidential court materials from Greg Parker's camp, Parker's attorneys basically call Tinsley a liar and paint a picture of one very shady attorney. They better hope they have their facts straight. After reading the motion, the first question we had was whether we were now going to see a third case emerge from the boat crash, meaning a defamation case. And we'll be right back.

[00:18:02] **Mandy Matney:** In other important Murdaugh news this week, "The Post and Courier" newspaper shined a much needed spotlight on Judge Carmen Mullen, whose alleged involvement in the Satterfield heist sounded alarm bells throughout the South Carolina justice system when attorney Eric Bland dug up a shocking paper trail over a year ago. But here's the thing. It's been over a year since those shocking allegations came out. And as reporter Avery Wilks pointed out, it's been over six months since attorney Eric Bland and prosecutor David Pascoe filed an official complaint with the State's Office of Disciplinary Counsel (ODC), which is the state's agency in charge of policing lawyers and judges.



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[00:18:51] Now, the ODC should be motivated to get answers from this investigation quickly. Think about it. Consider everything we found out about Mullen last October, and consider that the two other attorneys accused in the Satterfield heist, Corey Fleming and Alex Murdaugh, have both been charged in the crime. Corey has been suspended for his role, and Alex ultimately was disbarred. This is not the time for the ODC to sit and hope that this thing blows over because, newsflash: it won't. And we won't let it. And if they confirmed that she played a role and used her power to help Alex Murdaugh in any way steal from innocent people, and they continued to allow her to rule from the bench, knowing what they knew about her and allowing her to make huge decisions about people's freedom, well, that would be everything we need to confirm that the entire system is corrupt, and that the ODC cannot be trusted to police its judges and lawyers.

[00:19:59] Back to the article though. Journalist Avery Wilks reported that the two attorneys who filed a complaint about Mullen's misconduct have not heard back from the ODC, and that that investigation could ultimately take years. We confirmed this with Eric Bland, who said he has been completely in the dark when it comes to the ODC's investigation of Mullen.

[00:20:24] **Eric Bland:** You tell me. I haven't heard a word. I haven't heard a word. I haven't heard a word of, we got your grievance, and we're not gonna tell you anything. I haven't heard a word. No. I haven't heard a word that said, we got your grievance, we'll look into it, and when we get done, we'll let you know we get done. They don't even tell you what the discipline is, if any. They just tell you that our, you know, in the bar, they tell you it's concluded, and you'll see in the bar if somebody got a letter of caution, I mean, a public reprimand, if they got a private letter of caution, you never know. It's only when they get a public reprimand, a suspension, or they're expelled from being a lawyer that you would ever hear of it publicly. I have been fighting for over 30 years for transparency.

[00:21:21] **Mandy Matney:** And the thing is, there is nothing transparent about South Carolina's process for investigating lawyers. And after everything we have discovered on this podcast about how lawyers interstate have been able to use and abuse their power in this system for far too long, it seems to me like it's secretive by design. Eric says that this process is much different in other states, like in Georgia.



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[00:21:46] **Eric Bland:** I grieved. Filed the grievance against Corey Fleming in Georgia. It is the most open process. Very refreshing. They provide me with the responses from Corey's lawyers. They provide me with updates. They actually ask me to respond to the response from Corey's lawyer. What is my opinion? What is, what do you have problems with, if any? What do you wanna correct? What do you think is wrong? In South Carolina, none of it. I don't ever, when I file a grievance, I don't ever, nobody comes to me. John Nichols hasn't come to me for any of the evidence that I have against Corey Fleming or asked me about my opinions or anything when Alex Murdaugh's grievance was pending. It was my confession of judgment, my confession of judgment that got Alex Murdaugh finally disbarred.

[00:22:51] **Mandy Matney:** And again, I have to point out the fact that Corey Fleming was pretty much immediately suspended from practicing law last fall for his alleged role in the Satterfield case. So why wouldn't the ODC suspend Mullen, who holds a lot more power? What exactly is the threshold they're looking at here? We will talk about this sketchy process of policing judges in SC in a later episode of Cup of Justice.

[00:23:21] But circling back to "The Post and Courier" article, a couple things really stuck out to us. First of all, Judge Mullen did not respond to two interview requests by the reporter. That should not be an option for a public official accused of using her position to help Alex Murdaugh steal from clients. If she had a simple explanation for her involvement, why wouldn't she want to explain that to the citizens of the 14th Circuit? Again, her job is to serve the taxpayers, not the lawmakers who elect her.

[00:23:57] Also, the year 2006 stood out to us in this article. So in 2006, we have Randolph Murdaugh retiring in the middle of his term and then Duffie Stone being installed in his place — we're told "reluctantly," by Gov. Mark Sanford — and then we had Judge Mullen being put in a judicial role despite not being qualified based on where she lived at the time. All of this makes us wonder what was going on in 2006. Finally, the impression I get from the ODC in this article is basically, the investigation is going to take a long time.

[00:24:40] But here is the thing. From the paper trail and from Chad Westendorf's testimony, Mullen signed off on a \$4.3 million settlement that was full of so many red flags that have been discussed in this podcast so many times. We need to know why is that not enough to suspend her. Why



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does it appear that she has a layer of protection that others do not? And why was she able to sign search warrants in the double homicide investigation? We need answers on this now — not next year, not next month — now. And the ODC needs to realize that.

[00:25:23] And also concerning, the Satterfield case is not the only one of Alex's cases where the clients were allegedly stolen from and Judge Mullen was involved.

[00:25:36] **Liz Farrell:** That brings us to Arthur Badger, who was unfortunately a very easy target for someone like Alex Murdaugh. This case is going to sound very familiar to you guys because it involves all the same players. Alex, obviously, Russell Laffitte, Corey Fleming, PMPED, Palmetto State Bank, and Judge Carmen Mullen, along with the probate court, as well as the same game, which is stolen millions. Alex faces 16 state charges for what he allegedly did to Arthur. Russell faces 14 state charges in the Arthur Badger case and two federal counts related to the Badger case: one for wire fraud and the other for misapplication of bank funds.

[00:26:14] Okay. Arthur is from Allendale County, which is a county even more rural and even more poor than Hampton County. It is extraordinarily poor, the poorest in South Carolina. There is government corruption, there are failing school systems, there's not a lot of upward mobility. The majority of Allendale's population is African American, families who have lived in Allendale for generations, which is to say since the time of enslavement. And this isn't just long-gone history. Even today when landowners farm or clear their land, it's not unheard of for them to find objects that demonstrate the cruelty of that era.

[00:26:51] So Arthur is now in his late forties. According to public records, he has had a long history of encounters with law enforcement, mostly for lower-level, nonviolent offenses and traffic violations, like driving under suspension — there were a lot of those — not wearing a seatbelt, speeding, and driving through a stop sign. He also has a marijuana charge from 2013. And in 2020, he was charged with attempted murder. That charge was dismissed seven months later for insufficient evidence. This is where we should point out that in some of the cases, Corey Fleming is listed as Arthur's attorney. Corey's office is an hour and 20 minutes from Allendale, by the way, so that's a heck of a commute. Oh, you know Corey Fleming? The suspended



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attorney who was involved in the Satterfield case, the Pinckney case, is connected to the Smith case, and now he's connected to the Arthur Badger case. We have to say it: A seven-month dismissal on attempted murder? We don't know the details of that case because the charges were dropped, which means in the eyes of the law, he's innocent and gets to move on with his life. But we have to bring up the point that Alex still worked for the solicitor's office at that time.

[00:28:00] Also in 2020, Duffie Stone's office basically shut down because of COVID. Cases were moving at a trickle and, statewide, the 14th Circuit ranked at the very bottom of disposals for the year, despite us being ninth in terms of population. Before COVID, the 14th Circuit had a years-long backlog, but not for Arthur Badger. Either the case was truly meritless or the prosecutor in Allendale is particularly on top of their game or Alex and Corey did what Alex and Corey, according to multiple sources, apparently like to brag they could do, which is to help make charges go away.

[00:28:33] Okay. So it seems like Arthur is kind of a hapless guy who can't get out of his own way sometimes. On top of that, he didn't come to the table with a whole lot of legal literacy, which is why I say he made an easy target for Alex, which is why we would bring up the criminal past of one of Alex's victims. We look back on a lot of these charges and wonder what would his life have been like had his money not been stolen. And despite his past, what happened to him was wrong. He is a victim, and we wanna be clear about that.

[00:29:03] **Mandy Matney:** And we'll be right back.

[00:29:08] Now, let's go back a dozen years when Arthur became very, very valuable to Alex. On January 28th 2011, Arthur was driving a van with his wife Donna in the passenger seat when they got into a wreck with a UPS truck. The accident was catastrophic and Donna was pronounced dead at the scene. Arthur was injured in the crash and left a widower to raise their six children. One of the kids has special needs, and three of the children are still under the age of 18. Also, Donna died without a will. I feel like y'all are probably experts on this by now, but in South Carolina, when you die without a will, there are laws that dictate who your beneficiaries are. In Donna's case, Arthur was automatically entitled to half of her estate, and her children were entitled to the other half. And state law gave Arthur priority in being



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appointed personal representative (PR) of her estate. But according to a lawsuit that was filed on Arthur Badger's behalf by attorney Mark Tinsley this past June, Russell Laffitte ended up becoming PR for Donna's estate. How, you ask? Like this.

[00:30:21] Let me start by saying, at this point in history, Russell has been conservator for Alania and Hannah Plyler for some time. There are also several points of contrast here that I want you guys to note as we go through that I think are very telling. To begin with, Russell files the paperwork in the correct county, meaning the county where Arthur lived: Allendale. In the Plyler case, he filed it in Hampton, despite very clearly knowing that they lived in Lexington County.

[00:30:51] So on August 30th 2012, Russell signed and filed a petition with the Allendale County Probate Court to become PR for Donna Badger's estate. And a week later, Arthur, quote, unknowingly signed a statement of resignation as PR. Just one week after that, Alex Murdaugh settled the Badger cases — one for Arthur and one for the estate of Donna — for millions of dollars. And the very next day after the case was settled, Allendale County Probate Court approved Russell's petition to get appointed as PR.

[00:31:29] **Liz Farrell:** Great timing, right? Okay. It's about to get crazy, so definitely pay attention to this part. According to the lawsuit, around October 30th 2012, Russell filed a verified petition in Allendale County Court of Common Pleas to approve the settlement. In this petition, Russell swore under oath that Arthur Badger had, quote, specifically renounced his right as a statutory beneficiary, meaning Russell told the court, specifically Judge Carmen Mullen, according to sources, that Arthur didn't want the money. Didn't want the money. I would pause here for you to laugh at that ridiculous notion, but it's not even remotely funny. It seems like Mullen should have asked questions at this point, right, such as, Really, Russell?

[00:32:14] Why would Russell do something like this? Who knows? Maybe Alex told him to do it and Russell asked no questions. Or maybe it was a part of a plan to steal all of that money. That's Arthur Badger's theory: that Alex and Russell and members of the bank were planning to steal all the money, both Donna's and Arthur's, and were getting Arthur out of the way to do so. Then something stopped them, so they just ended up stealing Arthur's settlement.



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[00:32:38] According to the lawsuit, on November 19th 2012, Alex went to Palmetto State Bank to meet with Russell and, quote, other bank officials to, quote, finalize their plans to carry out the theft of the Badger money. Also on this date, the lawsuit says that Alex had Arthur sign a fraudulent two-page disbursement statement that had the financial information on page one and only a line for Arthur to sign on the second page. Pretty slick, huh? It's as if Bugs Bunny went to law school. Later that afternoon, the money was dispersed and, according to the lawsuit, Alex, Russell, and those other bank officials decided that out of all the millions from the settlement, only \$500 would be allocated as the survival claim for the estate of Donna Badger. Maybe there are times attorneys do this for a client, to help them avoid a lien on an estate. But according to the lawsuit, there were no creditor's claims against her estate and, quote, no valid justification for this allocation made.

[00:33:35] **Mandy Matney:** So why is this important? Because any money obtained by Donna's estate would have to be reported to probate court, creating a clear paper trail. And as PR, Russell would have only had to deal with the money that went into Donna's estate, meaning Russell was made PR so that he could handle \$500. Seems fishy, right? Especially because that would've entitled him to only a \$25 fee. He took hundreds of thousands of dollars in fees from the Plyler sisters. So if \$25 was all that was on the table for him here, why would he agree to serve as PR? Prosecutor Emily Limehouse established that the fees Russell was making back then were a significant portion of his income. Remember: He reported the Plyler fees, but not the others, including the \$35,000 he took from Arthur, which we will get to in a second.

[00:34:36] Okay. Now, the rest of the money should have gone straight to Arthur and his kids. Arthur was due \$1.36 million from his own settlement and half of the millions that went to Donna's estate. The kids were due the other half of Donna's estate. And real quick, as proof that Arthur never actually renounced his rights as beneficiary, the lawsuit details what happened one month after the money was dispersed.

[00:35:07] On December 20th 2012, Russell signed and filed the proposal for distribution that very clearly listed Arthur as receiving 50% of Donna's estate. And he signed and filed a receipt and release to close Donna's estate that also acknowledged Arthur's 50%. So you heard me, right? Less than two months after Russell testified to Judge Mullen that Arthur was like "No thanks" to



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Donna's money, he's then representing to the probate court that Arthur was getting 50% of the money. And this is where a person with noble intentions might have been like, "Hey, Alex. Remember when I swore in the court that Arthur didn't want his money? Do I need to update you and, you know, God, and Judge Mullen on some sort of changes here?" according to the lawsuit, Arthur was tricked into signing the December 20th receipt and release. The lawsuit also offers up what they say is further proof that Arthur had not renounced his rights to half of the money. PMPED held back about \$18,000 from Donna Badger's estate, ostensibly to pay bills. And one of those bills was nearly \$4,000 to Corey Fleming and more than \$4,200 to Palmetto State Bank.

[00:36:30] And before I say more, we need to talk about PMPED. They are not a party in this lawsuit. But there are several parts of the suit that make us wonder why. For instance, the lawsuit claims that Russell signed off on a number of fake cost, fraudulent fees, improper payments, attorney's fees, and interest fees. Our question is, was no one at PMPED responsible for verifying Alex's cost? Doesn't that make them in some way liable? Sadly, we think we're seeing a pattern across the board where lawyers, including prosecutors, in all of these cases, seem to be holding back or somehow protecting PMPED. And the more we see it, the more we're going to be questioning it and pointing it out.

[00:37:24] **Liz Farrell:** You guys might remember that he charged the Plyler sisters for a whole bunch of meals, including two that he enjoyed at a Hooters. Okay, back to that \$18,000. The lawsuit says it's further evidence that they knew Arthur had not waived his right to his half of the money because guess what? They gave him half of that money, which, after Corey and Palmetto State Bank were paid, amounted to \$583.92 for Arthur. Arthur Badger didn't know it, but he was a millionaire, with only \$583.92 to show for it, with less than \$600 to raise six kids to build a better life for himself and his family to get out of the cycle of poverty. And we're supposed to feel bad because Russell has to charge his ankles for two hours every night in his vintage at best double-wide trailer.

[00:38:15] Oh, and I hate to break this to you guys, we are so far from done here with the ugliness. So remember: Russell was the PR for Donna Badger's estate. He was not a conservator, not for Arthur, and not for any of their six kids. Weird, right? Alex made sure to get Russell on board for the Plyler sisters



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who, like the Badger kids, had a dad. But they didn't do this for the Badger kids, who probably could have really benefited from having someone oversee the money they inherited. Instead, all the kids' money was put into annuities and none appears to have been held back to cover the kids' expenses until the annuities began their payouts. And the Badger kids were sent on their way.

[00:38:51] **Mandy Matney:** "The Myrtle Beach Sun News" first reported that the Badgers ended up being targeted by a company that offered to buy their annuities for pennies on the dollar. It's sickening and predatory, and Allendale County Master-in-Equity Walter Sanders apparently allowed it to happen. Companies that do this apparently target poor people who are in desperate financial situations like the Badgers were. And like we mentioned before, Russell was really only entitled to \$25 for his role as personal representative, but he ended up getting \$35,000. That \$35,000 came from the \$1.36 million that was supposed to have gone to Arthur but instead went to Alex. Like we said, there were two settlements: one for Donna's estate and one for Arthur. Arthur didn't get a penny of Donna's estate and didn't get a penny of his settlement because he didn't even know it existed. Instead, Russell was paid that fee from Arthur's money, but Russell wasn't representing Arthur in any way, so that's weird, right? What did Russell think that \$35,000 was for? Again, we've asked this question about Russell receiving large amounts of money that he apparently did nothing for many times in this podcast.

[00:40:19] Also, Russell, as we found out from the latest federal hearing, the one where Russell testified, doesn't appear to have claimed that money on his taxes. At least, not until late 2021, which was after the tables and all of this had turned. But he did claim the fees from the Plyler case, so he clearly knew that this was something he was supposed to do. Hm. I have to think, what was different about the Badger case?

[00:40:50] Anyway, on November 19th 2012, PMPED issued a check — check number 43162 — for \$1.325 million payable to Palmetto State Bank and referencing Arthur Badger. Why was Arthur Badger's money made out to Palmetto State Bank? Great question. That money was his, free and clear.

[00:41:22] **Liz Farrell:** Worse though, Bugs Bunny the attorney and his rascally friend, Russell, told PMPED that Arthur's check was lost. You know how easy it is to drop \$1.325 million on the way to deposit it, right? PMPED, again, not a



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party to the suit, reversed the check and reissued it. Then, according to the lawsuit, at 2:50 p.m. on February 6th 2013, after talking it over with Russell, Alex sent him an email to his bank email address with instructions where he couldn't even be bothered to fully spell out the word "please."

[00:41:56] **David Moses:** P-L-S email me and ask that check number 43162 dated 11-19-12 for \$1,325,000 be recut as listed above.

[00:42:12] **Liz Farrell:** The amounts were \$388,687.50, quote, whatever the amount I owe on Hannah loan, 75K and, quote, whatever the balance would be on \$1,325,000 after these deductions. The actually funny thing here is that Alex made Russell do the math for him, which Russell mentioned in his federal hearing. Less than two hours later, Russell sent the email requesting that the check be recut into four amounts.

[00:42:42] So let's pause. What was happening here? Why was Alex having those amounts recut? And why does Russell seem to help him here? And let me first say that Russell testified that a.) He doesn't know whatever happened to the \$1,325,000 he was supposed to get on behalf of Arthur Badger though, as we said, Russell wasn't actually supposed to get any of it; b.) That bankers don't read the memo on checks so he didn't notice that all of the recut checks said "Arthur Badger" on them; c.) That he didn't notice that the recut amounts suspiciously added up to \$1,325,000. Nope. Even though he did the math, he didn't notice that Bugs Bunny was pulling one over on him. His excuse is that he was just doing what his attorney Bugs, I mean, Alex, was advising him to. That's right. His defense is, I was following my attorney's advice about my attorney's finances.

[00:43:38] Back to what was happening here. This money had a minimal paper trail. Arthur didn't know he had received it, and it was from a personal injury case, so Arthur wouldn't have had to claim it on his taxes. There wouldn't have been any forms sent to him. No income statements like a W-2 and a bonus to thieves. And I'm using the term generally here, thieves don't have to claim the money they stole as income. It wasn't until this past year that the IRS is requiring that people report money they stole, illegal funds, and money received as bribes as income, which I would love to meet the first thief who does that.



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[00:44:17] Also pertinent to what was happening here, the bank was getting its money back. Alex secretly owed money to Hannah. The Badger money allowed him to pay around \$483,000 of that back. He also owed around \$388,000 to a third-party private loan. In other words, Alex's alleged theft not only benefited him, it benefited Russell and Palmetto State Bank, too. Now, let's fast forward to 2016.

[00:44:45] **Mandy Matney:** Okay. So a woman named Barbara Williams, and oddly, there was a Barbara Williams who appeared to have been involved in the UPS crash and who was also represented by Alex Murdaugh at that time, was in the parking lot of John's Pool Hall in Allendale County when she was hit by a car. The driver of that car, purportedly Arthur Badger, then drove off, leaving her with injuries to her knees. So three years later, the day before the statute of limitations were set to expire, Alex filed one of his infamous two-page lawsuits on Barbara's behalf against Arthur. The same Arthur Badger who was driving the car when the UPS wreck happened. The same Arthur Badger whom Alex had just represented in a case against the Allendale tax collector. The same Arthur who Alex allegedly stole from. And then, according to the public index, it looks like Arthur was summoned to PMPED to be served with this lawsuit against him. And who here thinks Arthur was told the truth about why his presence was needed at PMPED that day?

[00:46:03] So in 2020, Alex handed the case over to a PMPED attorney named Chelci Avant, who, because Arthur never submitted answers to the lawsuit and didn't show up to his hearing, was able to get a judgment of \$27,500 for Barbara. We really don't know what this means, but it's weird.

[00:46:26] **Liz Farrell:** Now, we are in the present or at least the near-present when all hell broke out after Alex's so-called Labor Day shooting. This is when it occurred to Russell that, "Uh-oh! I better make sure I claim those fees on my taxes." Also, it's when Russell Laffitte says he discovered that Alex had stolen the Badger money. This is when Russell walked \$680,000, his half of Alex's alleged theft, over to PMPED. The federal government charged Russell with this transaction, saying that he did this independently of the bank board. It is around this time that Arthur Badger learned from PMPED that they, quote, discovered he had never been given the \$1,325,000 he was awarded nine years earlier. Now, can you imagine getting that phone call? "Hey, we found more than a million dollars of yours." That would be very confusing but also



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exciting and the kind of thing where you might not ask too many questions, especially if you're desperate for money.

[00:47:21] **Mandy Matney:** This case gives us a really good look at Alex's early days of apparent thievery. Was Arthur Badger a practice round for him to see just how far he could allegedly go without getting caught? We can see the patterns that started to emerge from this. Alex seemed to rely on sloppiness as a cover. And he could obviously count on everyone around him not questioning or challenging him ever. With the Badger case in particular, it is so curious to us that there could be so many opportunities for salvation, yet no one stepped up. Just one person doing the right thing or even just basic due diligence or their jobs, whether it was someone at PMPED or Palmetto State Bank or Russell Laffitte or Judge Mullen, might have stopped not only this alleged crime from happening but also every bad thing that has happened since then. It sounds crazy that we even have to think about this question. But if someone had called attention to what Alex was allegedly doing in 2012, how many victims would be alive now?

[00:48:37] And what was going on with Alex in 2012 and 2013 that sparked his apparent need for thievery? We found a large number of financial transactions going on between both Alex and his old buddy Barrett Boulware around that time, like big land deals with his company, Redbeard LLC, and those questionable real estate transactions on Moselle, which, again, we have to ask, as more pieces of the timeline come together, what were they up to? It's all like a butterfly effect. Would holding Alex accountable 10 years ago have derailed him all together? Could just one person have set him straight? We're pretty sure the answer is "no" because Randolph would've gotten him out of whatever trouble he got himself into.

[00:49:28] But back to Arthur Badger. According to the bank and PMPED, he eventually got his money back. But that's not actually true at all. The lawsuit was filed in June 2022. As we have learned in these cases, being, quote, made whole isn't simply the act of paying someone back what was owed to them at the time the money was taken. Things have changed a lot since 2012. A drink that was \$2.50 then is now \$5. Gas is not \$1.29 a gallon anymore, which is why there is an ongoing lawsuit to hold Palmetto State Bank accountable.

[00:50:07] But it doesn't seem like the defendants in this case care one bit about what happened to Arthur Badger and his family. And that's probably



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because they think that no one will care about someone like Arthur, someone poor who found himself in trouble. They think that Arthur isn't a sympathetic enough character to evoke some sort of reaction or outcry from the public. But that was Arthur's money — not Alex's, not Russell's — Arthur's. He had it taken from him. And when he finally got it returned to him, he was wronged again.

[00:50:45] Think about it. What would've happened had Arthur Badger gotten his money in 2012? How different would his life look right now? How different would his family's life look like right now? They absolutely deprived Arthur of that opportunity. And now, they appeared to have pulled another fast one on him, giving him the money that he should have gotten in 2012 and not the money that his case should be valued at. And as Martin Luther King said, injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

[00:51:29] The Murdaugh Murders Podcast is created by me, Mandy Matney, and my fiancé, David Moses. Our executive editor is Liz Farrell.

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[00:51:37] **Outro:** Produced by Luna Shark Productions.