



EPISODE 19: Alex Murdaugh Charged with 27 New Felonies and Why That Is A Big Deal

Mandy Matney 0:00

I don't know how many crimes Alex Murdaugh will be charged in. But this week the disgraced South Carolina attorney was hit with 27 felony charges, and that is a very big deal. My name is Mandy Matney. I'm the news director at FITSNews.com. And I've been investigating the Murdaugh family for the last two and a half years. This is the Murdaugh Murders Podcast.

So this is the week of Thanksgiving, and I have a lot of people to thank this year starting out with our supporters, both of FITSNews.com and of the Murdaugh Murders Podcast. You all have helped lead us to this incredibly exciting moment that is honestly a dream come true for me. Today — live from the kitchen table studio — I want to introduce you to our new Murdaugh Murders Podcast co-host Liz Farrell. Liz is my best friend, role model, former work wife and forever partner in true crime. Liz taught me everything I know about investigative journalism. She was there with me at the beginning of the story on Day One, which was February 24, 2019, the day that Mallory Beach died. Together we started pulling at strings as we investigated the tangled web of the Murdaugh family in Hampton County. Liz was sitting across from me on the day that we now know was so important. The day that I found the one public document connected with the Satterfield settlement.

Liz Farrell 1:39

We had heard a lot about the Murdaugh family and their influence. We were told by our law enforcement sources, yes, there are good cops in the Lowcountry that it was already looking like the fix was in on the boat crash investigation. When Mandy first found that filing, the words "wrongful death" obviously rang alarm bells. And it was exciting from a journalist's perspective that our team had discovered a new angle. But more than that, it was another example of why Mandy is such a good journalist and stands apart from most. She will go the distance and look under every rock to make sure she is getting to the truth of a situation. Mandy's immediate instinct was that something wasn't right with the filing. As we learned more about Alex, there was a clear conflict of interest in who was representing the Satterfield family, Alex's friend Cory Fleming, but we had no idea at that time just how much this one document would end up changing the entire course of Alex Murdaugh's story.



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Without that moment of Mandy discovering that filing — and writing about it — this past Friday never would have happened.

Mandy Matney 2:43

Friday was a pivotal moment in the Murdaugh Murders Saga, and a day that many of us weren't sure would ever come. We ended the last episode that came out just a few days ago on a cliffhanger about how the South Carolina Grand Jury was convening in Columbia, South Carolina, to discuss matters related to the Murdaugh murders. And that was a story that was exclusively reported by my boss at FITSNews, Will Folks. And then Friday came, and Alex Murdaugh was indicted on more than two dozen counts. He stands accused of stealing a total of nearly \$5 million from the family of Gloria Satterfield and three clients, including a South Carolina Highway patrolman, who was injured in the line of duty, according to indictments released on Friday. So when I first heard the news on Friday, of course, one of the first people I spoke to was Eric Bland, the attorney who has represented Satterfield's family since September and uncovered a paper trail that blew the story wide open.

Eric Bland 3:42

Lady Justice has been busy this past month for him. Since 2015, he's been practicing stealing, not practicing law and you, he has, because you got to work to do that. That, that takes some thought, that takes some work. And he can't be a lawyer and a thief like that, and do them both well. So he, he chose to do thievery well,

Mandy Matney 4:05

Alex Murdaugh faces 27 new charges and five indictments that were handed down by the South Carolina Grand Jury this week. Those new indictments include: seven counts of money laundering, seven counts of obtaining a signature or property by false pretences, eight counts of computer crimes, one count of forgery, and four counts of breach of trust with fraudulent intent. The 27 counts are a result of a multi-agency state-level investigation involving the South Carolina State Grand Jury, the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division, the FBI and the South Carolina Attorney General's Office, but these are all state charges, which is interesting because the financial crimes are usually investigated by the Feds and prosecuted by the Feds. I asked Eric Bland about this.

Eric Bland 4:55

He gave such a black eye to the state, I think it's a combination of his, you know, prosecutorial background. It's a little bit of a payback, you know, probably against,



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you know, in a way, his law firm and how they have, you know, created this with what's called "the judicial hellhole" there. There's there, there, you know, whether there's payback, or I think it's just the state saying, "We don't want the lawyers stealing like this, and certainly not a prosecutor who comes from a long line of prosecutors. We're going to establish law and order, the way it should be." And it's happening. I mean, it is, you know, like we said in our statement this morning, you know, when the dam of justice breaks, it starts to come like a mighty river.

Mandy Matney 5:51

In a lot of ways the charges were shocking. And they made me and Eric Bland, really sit back and realize that this is much deeper than anyone could have ever imagined. And that this is just the beginning.

Eric Bland 6:05

I can tell you that the charges are not the end. There, there are so many more victims. Victims that I've seen. I've seen the checks. So there are more victims there. There are more charges coming. And, you know, it's, it's a strong statement that should really cause Harpootlian and Griffin to really stop because the state is not expending all of these resources and all these, all this time. Just to turn it over to the Feds at the, at the end of this. The state of South Carolina is making a statement here.

Mandy Matney 6:54

So we'll go over the five indictments, and Liz will explain the meaning behind them. One of the alleged schemes took place in Bamberg County, South Carolina, between March and July 2021. We will go over why those dates are significant. In this scheme, Murdaugh is accused of convincing an attorney from another law firm, who was working on a case with him, to write three checks totaling nearly \$800,000 for his share of legal fees in the lawsuit. Murdaugh told the attorney that he was going to structure the fees because of his civil liability in the Mallory Beach boat crash lawsuit, according to the indictment. He lied to the attorney, according to the indictment, and said that PMPED was aware of this and ultimately Murdaugh never structured the fees. He just took the money himself.

Liz Farrell 7:46

This indictment gives us a little more insight into Alex's unraveling between March and July of 2021. And around the time of the murders of Maggie and Paul in June. Attorney sources have told us that law firms like PMPED have tight controls over



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their accounting and that it would have been very difficult for Alex to have stolen from the firm for a long time without getting caught. It appears PMPED had reason to know of Alex unorthodox financial practices in July at the very least. This indictment however only gives us a small view of what was happening while Alex's life was collapsing around him. We don't know the full scope of what the law firm knew and what they did with that information when they knew it. And we don't know yet how many more cases there are like this.

Mandy Matney 8:30

This brings us to indictment No. 2. Between January and May of this year, Murdaugh is accused of convincing South Carolina Highway Patrol Trooper Thomas E. Moore who was injured in the line of duty to sign over his settlement proceeds to the Murdaugh law firm PMPED. He's also accused of falsely telling Moore that the money would not be available until the lawsuit was complete. Murdaugh is then accused of depositing \$125,000 in settlement proceeds into the Forge account that he allegedly created to steal money from clients and others. Of all the indictments perhaps this one speaks the most to Alex's character, or lack thereof, in the months leading up to the double homicide of Maggie and Paul this year.

Eric Bland 9:15

Listen, like I said, I said it to you a couple of weeks ago, there's no bottom to him. He's, you know, morally decrepit and proves it again today. He stole money from a policeman. He's a solicitor stealing money from a client that, that's not bad enough, let's just go a little deeper and steal from a policeman — who doesn't make a lot of money to begin with. He's gonna go, you know, you, everybody talks about Larry Gene Bell and all these other people, PeeWee Gaskins and, and they're killers. There's no question about it and there is a difference, right now, but he's as morally bankrupt as they are.

Liz Farrell 9:54

That Alex got away with this for so long shows us just how impenetrable the Murdaugh's' position in the criminal justice system has been here. The South Carolina Highway Patrol is the same agency that was bizarrely tasked with investigating the homicide of Stephen Smith, just a few years prior to this alleged theft from one of their own. This should send an important message to the rumored Murdaugh enablers in law enforcement. The ones who have allegedly received cash payments in exchange for their off-books services, the ones who are said to have assisted them in clouding up crime scenes and criminal investigations, the ones who gave them



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prosecutorial credentials to flash around the 14th Circuit, the ones behind the gavel who broke the rules for them or looked the other way, the ones who have allegedly bullied people from speaking their truth: This is what he thinks of you.

Mandy Matney 10:53

Now we are at the third indictment. Between August and September 2016 in Colleton County, South Carolina, Murdaugh allegedly used his prestige and reputation as a lawyer to defraud one of his clients, who was being compensated \$70,000 for his injuries. According to the indictment, Murdaugh convinced this man to make a \$70,000 check out for, again, his structured settlement to the infamous Forge account. And we all know what happened then. Alex allegedly deposited the money into his own bank account. The fourth indictment is from the Gloria Satterfield settlement, which we all know about. Nine of the new charges are related to the botched Gloria Satterfield settlement. That brings us to the fifth indictment, which is in Allendale County between October 2015 and October 2016. Murdaugh is accused of defrauding his client, a man named Deon J. Martin, out of almost \$400,000 through again the Forge scheme that was uncovered during the Satterfield settlement.

Liz Farrell 11:56

There are a few big takeaways in these indictments. One is that the public is getting an even better view of the heads-or-tails reputation of the Murdaugh dynasty, where on the heads side, the Murdaughs are known for treating people with humanity and generosity. But on the tails side, they're known for seeing people as nothing more than disposable servants to their needs, people who are not worth another thought after they've served their purpose to this family. Another is that four of the five indictments handed down November 18 involve money that was allegedly stolen from clients. Three of those clients had amounts taken from them that were far less than the million-dollar settlements Murdaugh's law firm was famous for. The smaller amounts are actually much more typical of regular day-to-day insurance settlements, the kind of meaningful money you might get after setback, money that makes a difference in your life, provides some relief in the face of injury or loss, fills a need in the family budget and helps you get back on your feet so you can get back to work. That Alex is accused of picking pennies from the pockets of ordinary people, most of whom didn't have the opportunities or privileges or automatic access to power that were afforded to him, shows us just what kind of selfish, dismissive and destructive person he is.



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Mandy Matney 13:06

So this is obviously a lot of new information, and it's really jaw-dropping, even for those of us who have thought of Alex as a bottomless pit for a very long time. Now, just an hour before details of the indictment were announced by the South Carolina Attorney General's Office on Friday, Alex Murdaugh's attorney Jim Griffin told The Island Packet, "This doesn't appear to add anything new to the case, other than additional charges." I'm sorry, what? The depth of the new charges filed against Alex Murdaugh clearly contradict Griffin's assessment. And this is yet another confusing move on behalf of Alex Murdaugh's defense team quote-unquote "the Bulldogs," Jim Griffin and Dick Harpootlian. On November 17, Dick Harpootlian and Jim Griffin filed a shocking motion asking the court to dismiss the Gloria Satterfield lawsuit. Harpootlian and Griffin, who are now representing the disgraced attorney in multiple criminal cases and lawsuits, argued in a motion to dismiss the lawsuit saying that Gloria Satterfield's sons have been fully compensated for their alleged losses. Therefore, Alex Murdaugh, who was allegedly the ringleader in the scheme, should not have to pay any money back. Now, for a reminder, Satterfields' sons have settled with five parties connected to the botched wrongful death settlement since their attorneys filed a lawsuit in September. Alex Murdaugh is the only remaining party in that case who has not paid them a dime. And their attorneys, since they filed the lawsuit, have recovered more than \$6.5 million from five other parties allegedly connected to the scheme. And this week, Harpootlian and Griffin have the, as Eric Bland puts it, balls to file this motion claiming basically that Alex Murdaugh deserves to escape civil accountability in this case because he is entitled to a credit for more than the \$6 million paid by all the other alleged settling tortfeasors end quote. So it probably feels like we're rewinding here, but this was such a big moment on Wednesday. People were furious after everything that's come out in the Gloria Satterfield settlement in the last few months. And then Alex still wants to escape fault and not admit that he's wrong and not be held accountable. And of course, one of those people who was extremely furious on Wednesday was Eric Bland ...

Eric Bland 15:37

As you can tell, I'm a little bit upset here. Pissed. Not surprising, not surprising. I told you he was going to do it. But I didn't expect the first argument that "I get to keep the money because I'm declaring that the Satterfields had been fully paid." I didn't think anybody had a set of balls to actually put that in a pleading. "Yes, if I took the money, I get to keep it because somebody else repaid it for me."

Mandy Matney 16:05



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Bland was blown away by this motion and confused as to why Dick and Jim, two previously highly respected lawyers in South Carolina, would stick their necks out for someone like Alex Murdaugh.

Eric Bland 16:17

It's just another action that you're scratching, you're left scratching your head and saying, "Is there a master strategy here? Or are they just winging it?" The bail ... you know, the habeas corpus before the Supreme Court ... or going into Magistrate Court and the deal was already cut for the bail. All this stuff, you're wondering, you know, is he that much smarter than everybody else? He sees this battlefield differently? Or is it really they're just winging it? I could see him laughing saying, "Hey, this is great. I'm gonna make a motion that says, 'Plaintiff doesn't have any damages because they've been fully paid.'" What he didn't really think about is, what I'm really saying is, "My thief gets to keep the money."

Mandy Matney 17:04

We were all puzzled at FITSNews, coming up with theories as to why Dick and Jim would make such a brazen ballsy move as the eyes of the world were on this case. Here's Liz ...

Liz Farrell 17:16

OK, so there are a couple of theories here. The first would be the most obvious and perhaps most despicable, and that is Alex actually believes he doesn't owe Gloria's sons any money. Another theory would be that the charges are piling up now, and this is another sign they may be exploring ways to pin the missing Satterfield money on someone else like Alex's best friend Cory Fleming, and they want to create some space for Alex's innocence in the future. Yet another theory is one that is very puzzling to us. A researcher and several lawyers who spoke with FITSNews believe the filing could be a Trojan horse, in that state Sen. Harpootlian and Mr. Griffin know that their arguments to dismiss Alex have no legal standing. And their real objective here is to delay the case. The reason this seems so bizarre to the both of us is that it's akin to lighting your face on fire to get out of gym class when you could save everyone the drama and just say you have cramps.

Mandy Matney 18:16

Is there a plan here? Because every move Dick and Jim have made in the last month has appeared to be self-inflicted? I asked Eric Bland this question ...



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Eric Bland 18:25

Mike Tyson said, "Everybody has a plan until they get punched in the face." They got punched in the face last month when their bail got denied. They got punched in the face when Judge Hall granted the motion for a receivership. They got punched in the face when Judge Newman denied bond for the second time. They're getting punched in the face at every turn. It's not their fault. They didn't make up the facts. Now, they chose to dive into this, uh, deep end. They didn't have to. They could have just as easily have said, "Hey, we're representing Alex Murdaugh on a limited basis on this criminal charge dealing with the Labor Day shooting or even the Gloria Satterfield stuff." But they chose to dive into these civil cases. And now that they're in, it's gonna be difficult for them to get out. I don't think there's a plan, by the way. I don't think there's this grand strategy that, you know, Dick sees this field at 30,000 feet and everybody else is down here at the 5,000 foot level. He, there are certainly cases that he does, and there are certainly cases that I've seen that he has pulled monkeys out of a hat and you know, really gotten an amazing result. It just isn't going to happen here. It isn't going to happen because he can't do what he does best, which is leverage relationships and, and good deeds that he's done over the years and, and a good work. You're not getting credit for that here. There's too much sunlight. You're not ... Mandy Matney is not going to let that happen. No judge is going to be the judge that signs off on stuff that happens in the darkness of a judge's chamber. It's not going to happen. He's not going to be able to plead to just one count of obtaining money by false pretenses, and one count of, you know, money laundering, and he's going to get three years. It's not going to happen, Mandy. The outrage, forget the rank and file people, the bar is not going to let it happen. We as lawyers are on trial right now. And I can't tell you how many lawyers, defense lawyers they used to hate me and still do. Because I sue lawyers, Mandy. I get phone calls and emails, "Keep up the good work. Keep up the fight." They want to clean it up. They're not happy with what happens in Hampton County when their corporations and defense clients get sued. They're not happy with Alex Murdaugh stealing money. I'm not. No lawyer is. It's a pollution of our profession.

Liz Farrell 21:32

The thing that doesn't get talked about enough in this case is the magnitude of state Sen. Dick Harpootlian's influence, not only legally and legislatively, not only locally and federally, but in the mainstream media too. They love them some Harpo. When you're paying for Sen. Harpootlian to represent you as your attorney, you are paying for that power. He has influence over who becomes a judge, how much money SLED gets in its budget. And most of all, he has access to information about ongoing



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investigations involving his clients that other attorneys — and public defenders especially — simply do not have. On the surface, it appears that Sen. Harpootlian and Mr. Griffin were blindsided by these indictments. That now-famous quote in a Lowcountry newspaper just an hour or so before the details of the indictments were announced to the public sure seems like they didn't know what was going on. Their audacious and desperate-seeming tactics of late also seem to point to an increasing inability to execute the same old tricks that have brought them this far in their careers. If that is the case, if Alex's attorneys were truly not aware of what was happening, this is encouraging. And it could be another sign that the good old boy system might fall to its knees for good this time.

Mandy Matney 22:47

So Eric and I had a moment on Friday, as we looked back on all the dominoes that had to fall in order to get to this moment where Alex is facing a lifetime of charges. Now the story of the Murdaugh Murders Saga is going to be told over and over by Netflix people and documentary douchebags — I will talk about them later — and helicopter journalists from The Wall Street Journal, etc. etc., but none of them are going to include in their stories what Eric said to me today, no matter how many times he tells them. And I don't want to toot my own horn here, but I do want other small town journalists to know that all of this started out with a couple local reporters at a dying newspaper who just shared a common instinct that something was wrong.

Eric Bland 23:35

But you did it. You. You uncovered the petition. You wrote the article. You were the spark that lit the fire. Eric Harriott saw your article, and went to his sister Ginger and started asking questions. And then the family asks questions and then they went to Mark Tinsley, and then Mark Tinsley sent them to me. But Mandy Matney, you lit the spark. You took down Alex Murdaugh.

Mandy Matney 24:05

I couldn't have done it without you.

Eric Bland 24:06

Oh, I know. I know. I know

Mandy Matney 24:07



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You definitely helped (laughs) a whole lot. But yeah, it is crazy. And ... but also I mean, I do give the credit. A lot of credit —

Eric Bland 24:17

It's heavy it's a it's a lot. It's a heavy thought ...

Mandy Matney 24:21

It is ...

Eric Bland 24:22

That in your life, in your lifetime, you did something that will be transformative. That will be generational. That was the right thing to do. You changed the world. Because you, you're taking a guy off the street that was not just harming one person. He was harming a lot of different people. This is a serial criminal. A serial thief. A serial pen-slinger. I call him a "pen-slinger." You could call him a "gun-slinger," I call him a "serial pen-slinger." You do not know that when people don't get money and they don't get treatment for their injuries in personal injury cases that they're not physically or ... but now, but now, you know, I was with them yesterday. And I will tell you this, money has a way obviously making, of salving wounds, but they're smiling because they do realize that their sister, this quote housekeeper that everybody likes to just call a "housekeeper," didn't die in vain. Mallory Beach didn't die in vain. They were responsible, their deaths, for bringing down Alex Murdaugh. How many more people would he have continued to victimize?

Mandy Matney 25:43

Yeah, absolutely. And again, I'm not sharing this because I want praise. I'm sharing this because oftentimes the good old boys make people like me feel like bringing down an entire system is so impossible and way too complicated. But at the heart of it, it isn't. And I say this because I know a lot of journalists are out there listening. And I want them to know that they too can change the world. Every day journalists have choices. They can take the easy route, the stories spoonfed by a defense attorney, because you know you will need him for quotes and other spoonfed stories later on. Or you can take on the story that makes you proud when you go to bed every night, the story that you can't shake until the truth is out, the story that can change an entire justice system and make people's lives better, the story that can change the world if you don't give up. I hope you take the hard story. I hope that you too change the world through the goodness of your heart and the power of your voice. There are so many questions that we have to answer in this never-ending Murdaugh Murders



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Saga. Who killed Maggie and Paul? Who killed Stephen? What happened to Gloria? How many victims are out there?

Eric Bland 27:04

He's loaded up to, you know, hundreds of years of time. This is even before you get to the end of the white collar crimes. There's other victims, Mandy. I have seen the checks that have come from the Murdaugh law firm to Forge. There's individual bank accounts that have not been publicly discussed. So we haven't gotten to the end of the white collar stuff. You haven't gotten to Cousin Eddie. You haven't gotten to, to the point of OK why is he receiving all these payments? What are they for? Is that, are those crimes? Are there, are there laundering crimes going on there? You haven't gotten to the Maggie and Paul killings. Not that he had anything to do with it. But somebody is going to have to determine and make a final statement on how they occurred. It's just not gonna sit out there that they, they got shot and killed, and there's, you know, their crimes are going to go unsolved. This is really serious stuff. And I believe, after talking with Creighton Waters, that it's a lot of information this grand jury was processing and, and they're being given it to them in increment meals. Instead of just throwing it all at them at once. You know, it's a lot to process when you when you process, you know, obtaining the money by false pretenses, a computer crime, and a money laundering for this, you know, for each separate victim.

Mandy Matney 28:49

It can all really be daunting when I stop and think that we're just scratching the surface here, but because you all believed in us and because you invested in accountability journalism, we now have another truth seeker, which is Liz Farrell, working for us around-the-clock to find answers to these questions, and I'm more confident than ever that we will get answers in this, no matter how long it takes. Happy Thanksgiving to all the Murdaugh Murders Podcast fans out there. And again, subscribe to FITSNews.com and check out MurdaughMurdersPodcast.com so you too, can support our mission.

David Moses 29:35

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 MurdaughMurdersPodcast.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



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Mandy Matney 30:22

And don't forget to leave a five-star review unless you're going to be nasty and talk about my vocal fry. The Murdaugh Murders Podcast is created by me, Mandy Matney, and my fiance, David Moses. Produced by Luna Shark Productions.

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