



## EPISODE 09: Who Killed Stephen Smith? Part 3

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### **Mandy Matney** 00:00

I don't know who killed Stephen Smith, but I know his family has waited 2258 days to get justice, and I'm determined to expose the truth and get answers for them. My name is Manny Matney. I'm the news director for FITSnews.com. And I've been investigating the Murdaugh family for more than two years now. This is the Murdaugh Murders Podcast. There have been a lot of shocking developments in the strange shooting of Alex Murdaugh. From my reporting, it's fair to call the shooting suspicious due to his attorneys' strangely inconsistent statements about what happened on September 4 2021. In the days following, everything got weirder, Alex issued an apology and admitted to having a drug problem and admitted to having money problems. A few hours after that his law firm blamed him for misappropriating millions of dollars, and he has apparently entered rehab. I say this because there's no proof he's in rehab, but his lawyer who has provided lots of false statements recently claims that he is in rehab. He was also suspended from practicing law, he pretty much admitted to misappropriating millions of dollars. Also the knife that was used to puncture Alex's tires before he was shot has been linked back to Alex Murdaugh, according to FITSnews sources, so it's safe to say it's been a very bad week for Alex Murdaugh. A lot of people say this is like watching a dynasty fall in real time. But we're going to wait for the 911 call to come out to do a full episode on the Alex Murdaugh shooting. So I recommend you guys to go to FITSnews.com for the latest crazy updates in this insane saga. And today we want to talk about Stephen Smith's death in this episode because his story matters too. Previously on the Murdaugh Murders. On June 22 Huge news broke in this case, I was the first to report that the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division also known as SLED, the same agency investigating the Murdaugh murders opened an investigation into the Stephen Smith death. Sled told me that this was based on information gathered during the course of the double homicide investigation of Paul and Maggie Murdaugh. We don't know what information led them to that decision, But it's important to look back on the 2015 case and see what went wrong. So what happened to Stephen Smith? Like the probe of the 2019 boat crash that killed Mallory Beach, the 2015 investigation into Smith's death was chaotic from the beginning, derailed by jurisdictional perplexity and suspicions of investigative interference. Smith was found dead just before 4am on July 8 2015. He was found in the middle of Sandy Run Road in Hampton County, South Carolina.

### **911 Operator** 03:20

All right, we're getting off. We're headed out that way.



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### **Mandy Matney** 03:23

Whatever time deputies arrived, what they found was horrific. I know this because I've seen crime scene photos, Stephen's face was covered in blood. The bright young nursing student was dead. Stephen had a seven inch gash on the right side of his forehead, his head was warped by blunt force, the family kept the casket open so that people could see what was done to him.

### **Police Officer** 03:45

Evidence here there is only evidence of where the body was found. There's no car parts . No any type of parts of car or parts of truck, or any other vehicle.

### **Anonymous Source** 03:58

A bunch of people, I just left the house. The first official time yesterday was short and a bunch of people kept coming up to me like, "Did you know the Murdaugh boys are behind it. Because it's kind of weird. No lawyers (incoherent) you could have whatever money you want.

### **Anonymous Source (2)** 04:17

The rumors that's going around hampton. Everybody keeps coming up to me and saying it was the Murdaugh boys.

### **Anonymous Source (3)** 04:23

This name people associated with this name had been going around kinda threatening or putting the heat on people saying you know if you heard something whatever.

### **Kevin** 04:33

First I heard he was shot. Then we heard it was a hit and run but recently probably a week ago, week and a half ago, I'd say something like that. I heard that these two maybe three young men were in the vehicle. They were riding down 601 and saw the car on the side of the road. I guess I saw a boy walking. They turned back around. I guess they were intending to, I don't want to say, you know, mess around with him or something like that and stick it out the window and hit him in I don't know if they hit him in the head or the back or where it hit him. And then that's pretty much all I heard, I didn't hear names, I heard a name and that name was, he goes by Buster Murdaugh.

### **Mandy Matney** 05:25

So that's where we left you. Now we're going to continue into the Stephen Smith investigation. A plucky investigator named Todd Proctor is speaking to a man who we are calling Kevin, the date is September 1 2015,

### **Kevin** 05:40



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I've known Buster pretty much my whole life, kind of out of character to who I knew. But I did also hear from the same source that he could possibly have been on some type of drugs. So whether that's true or not, I don't know. It's just strictly hearsay from All I knew. And I only be able to give you hearsay but.

**Todd Proctor** 06:03

Well, I mean, at that point, it's kind of you know, we'll take whatever we can get.

**Kevin** 06:07

That's right. And I hate it. Because the main thing is whether that is the case or not the case. There's still somebody that lost a child, lost a brother, lost a family member. And that's just not, that's not right.

**Todd Proctor** 06:20

Did Did Did they happen to say where they were coming from? Because the infinite story that I got was they were coming from like a softball tournament, and, you know.

**Mandy Matney** 06:33

It's clear here that Proctor has talked to other people about this rumor, but it's really nowhere in the files. So where did Proctor get this information that these kids were headed from a softball game when they saw Stephen Smith.

**Kevin** 06:46

What he heard was that they were coming from the Murdaugh house, which was- would be in Moselle, which would have to take 601 to get from Moselle to Hampton, which is where there will be any type of food, restaurants, things like that. That's the only inclination or idea I would have as to why they were traveling that road.

**Todd Proctor** 07:10

Do you know? What could have been Buster driving?

**Kevin** 07:15

I would, I would have imagined so I wouldn't? I wouldn't know. But to know Buster, usually he drove himself around, you know what I'm saying? He was always the one. They were in his vehicles. He always had friends with him in his vehicles when he was driving around. But that's how it was in school.

**Todd Proctor** 07:31

Man, it could be a whole gamut of people. The other two people that could have been in the car with him.

**Kevin** 07:36



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Really, Yes, sir. I have no idea. The only name that was given to me was the Murdaugh name. And of course, everybody's kinda shy to say, to say that out, you know what I mean, because of the, I don't want to say power but of the, name, you know, it brings a certain standard when you say Murdaugh in Hampton County, it was like that all through, you know, school, and also, it's kinda that's why I feel like it's kind of a horror show that's why nobody's really

**Todd Proctor** 08:05

Well, and that's the thing, too, is that I've heard that they have gone to certain people and told them, you need to kind of keep your mouth closed. Have you heard anything like that? I mean,

**Mandy Matney** 08:19

Again, there's no record of Proctor talking to anyone else before Kevin about this rumor. So why wasn't this reported in the file?

**Kevin** 08:29

It wouldn't surprise me just because I feel like they wouldn't want anything to happen to their reputation or name or anything like that.

**Mandy Matney** 08:37

This interview is over an hour long. As you can tell, we change Kevin's voice here. And his name isn't Kevin. And we cut out a lot of pieces that mentioned other names. However, we included highlights that we felt were the most important parts of this interview.

**Kevin** 08:53

Especially for, even for small towns. Stuff like that is not stuff that you know happens everyday in Hampton. It's weird.

**Todd Proctor** 09:02

Well, you know, I mean, the thing about it is, you know, when you're in a small town, like that, everybody there knows. And like you said, it doesn't happen often. So rumors, the story is gonna eventually come. And Buster was on our radar. Long before you were, you know, the Murdaughs knew that. They know that he's, he's on our radar.

**Mandy Matney** 09:31

How do the Murdaughs know that Buster is on their radar? What does that even mean? And why isn't that in the files? There's nothing about Buster being on their radar in the investigation files. It's very strange.

**Todd Proctor** 09:45



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He's on our radar. He has been on our radar. They know that he's on our radar. Matter of fact, I mean, I talked to one of their guys yesterday and told him you know I'm gonna talk to Buster here soon, you know, and they said, Okay, that's fine. So they're aware of it. And, you know, it's a situation of you know, I don't have anything against them. But if it happened, like you said, I mean, if it happened.

**Mandy Matney** 10:21

Kevin and proctor go back and forth about why this case is different. They talk about how small Hampton is and how rumors fly in a town like that, especially when the rumors involve the most prominent family in the county. And then Kevin starts talking about Moselle, the Murdaugh family hunting lodge, where Paul and Maggie were found murdered six years later on June 7 2021.

**Kevin** 10:43

Was the merge they threw at every party that they held. Once again, that was never part of which I went to one, one time. But they threw parties every other weekend, big parties, kids from (Incoherent), kids from (Incoherent). Anywhere, anywhere you could think of I mean, that was where the party spot was in Hampton, a lot of fights, alcohol, drugs, kind of thing and they all happened at the same time. And when I originally heard this, I was thinking to the younger Murdaugh boy, Buster's little brother Paul, because Paul is more of a troublemaker,

**Mandy Matney** 11:32

As Proctor and Kevin continue to chit chat. Kevin tells proctor about Buster's little brother, Paul.

**Kevin** 11:37

With the last name Murdaugh, you know, you could do whatever.

**Todd Proctor** 11:41

He's had a lot more here?

**Kevin** 11:43

He was more than that type of kid. And he's, I don't know how old he is. Now I just remember him when he was younger. So when I first heard it was Buster kinda kind of caught me off guard. He's never been the type of person bugging him again like say more alcohol and drugs. I'm sure things can go way out a way out of control when you mix all that together

**Todd Proctor** 12:08

Paul, is he like 15, 16? Or is he like?

**Kevin** 12:14



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Uh no, I want to say he's, Paul is either a junior. I think he's a junior, possibly a senior in high school.

**Todd Proctor** 12:23

Okay. He's not that much younger.

**Kevin** 12:25

No he's not that much younger. Now that I think about it because when we were younger, but now that I think about it, he goes to private school in Ridgeland, originally Tom Seyward. But actually, he's 17 I would say probably 17.

**Mandy Matney** 12:42

Kevin asked a few questions about the investigation. And Proctor says something interesting.

**Todd Proctor** 12:48

You know how much I don't know how much you know about law enforcement, things like that. But typically, you don't see the Highway Patrol working a murder. And that's why there's there's no doubt we're not classifying this as anything other than a murder. You know, I mean, some people were trying to tell away but he got hit by a car and this and that.

**Mandy Matney** 13:03

So why is the Highway Patrol investigating this? The Highway Patrol does not investigate murders. This shows how mucked up this investigation is.

**Todd Proctor** 13:13

There's a reason why the Hampton County Sheriff's Department is not handling this. I'll leave it at that. But you go back to your like you said the Murdaugh name and you know their ties in that community and that doesn't matter to me. They don't bother me in the slightest. So what we've done is we've taken the investigation out of that, you know, reach and because they back I don't care what you got. I don't care. You know what your name is or how much money you got, it doesn't matter to me.

**Mandy Matney** 14:06

So we know why the Hampton County Sheriff's Department isn't handling this investigation. Typically, a lot of small town law enforcement agencies give their big murder cases to the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division, which is also known as SLED because smaller police departments don't have the resources to investigate murder. So it makes sense as to why the Hampton County Sheriff's department didn't get this case. But why didn't the Highway Patrol give the case to SLED?

**Kevin** 14:34

Like what you're saying, and I'm saying is, I can't help if it's the truth.



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**Todd Proctor** 14:43

I'm not saying that the Murdaugh boy did it because I don't know yet, but if we're gonna start throwing out names I'm not withholding his name. Because of who he is, his name is gonna be out there just like anybody else's name. That is on my radar. And I don't care who knows it.

**Mandy Matney** 14:59

During Kevin's interview, he listed a group of people who he heard the Buster rumor from. One of those people was Jack, who was previously interviewed by Duncan of the Highway Patrol. Jack is the only person to be interviewed more than once by the Highway Patrol and his investigation. He is also facing two lawsuits from the Murdaugh law firm at this time, the date is September 2 2015. This is Proctor calling Jack whose real name isn't Jack as we explained in a previous episode,

**Todd Proctor** 15:31

Just go ahead and tell me you know what you heard in this version of the story that you heard.

**Jack** 15:37

(Incoherent) We don't know who did it, We just heard that Buster did it, and they just kept talking about it.

**Mandy Matney** 15:55

Proctor then asked Jack where he heard the rumor, and Jack gave him names.

**Todd Proctor** 16:00

Buster Murdsugh was on our radar long before we ever got this information. that you know I'm calling you about now, my offices out of Charleston, okay. I don't work around Hampton. And I know that the Murdaugh's are highfalutin, around Hampton and, you know, some people say they have a lot of power or whatever, but that name did mean anything to me. Okay, so my job is to find out what happened.

**Mandy Matney** 16:40

After hanging up with Jack, Proctor cause a girl who Jack named as a person who told him about the rumor, we will call her Kayla, Kayla seems nervous to talk to Proctor and he gives her the same spiel as he gives everybody else Kayla then says that another guy who we will call Isaac said he heard that Stephen was beat up and thrown out of a truck. This is a different story from what proctor heard previously. She then said that she doesn't know Isaac's number but gave Proctor another contact as he attempts to run down the rumor mill.

**Todd Proctor** 17:09



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And like I said, You're the ninth person that I've talked to so far about this. So hopefully, some people are gonna start talking. So if you hear anything, this is my number, you know if you would pass on any information whatsoever,

**Mandy Matney** 17:23

According to the case file, Proctor has only spoken to two other people before Kayla. So where are the notes from the other interviews? Or was he lying to try to get people to talk next Proctor calls Kayla's friend who will refer to as Mia, Mia also seems nervous to talk. But Proctor gets right to the point,

**Todd Proctor** 17:40

The information that was first given to me was that Buster Murdaugh. And maybe one or two other people were out that night and they had seen Stephen's car, or whatever. So they went down a road and they actually saw him walking, and they were going to kinda play or they were going to kind of like play around with them. And they held something or swung something out of the car and accidentally hit him. Does any of that sound familiar to you?

**Mia** 18:14

I do remember something about it didn't really go into detail. Because we were speaking about somebody told me that it was Buster, and I was like nothing was going to be done about it because of who he was.

**Todd Proctor** 18:35

Buster had something to do with it then I liked to you know, to be able to prove that. But you know the information that I'm getting. It's kind of like it started out strong because I had an individual that really stepped out against the Murdaughs and was willing to talk and then it seems like as I keep you know, continuing on trying to get other people it's getting watered down. You know,

**Mandy Matney** 19:05

It seems Proctor is circling the rumor and not getting any closer to the source.

**Mia** 19:10

Here so they can play that cord of all we care about everybody else, No they don't. They care about protecting themselves.

**Mandy Matney** 19:18

At the end of the interview in an attempt to get closer to the source of the rumor Proctor asks for Isaac's number and she gives it to him. But there is no record of Proctor ever calling Isaac. In fact, according to the investigation file, the Highway Patrol didn't touch the case between September 2 2015 and October 20 2015. So what happened on October 20 2015? Proctor calls Buster Murdough, but the note said he didn't answer voicemail fully, Parker then emails him there's no audio recording of his phone call. And that's it. That's the only time that highway





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patrol attempted to talk to Buster Murdaugh. Fast forward to November 17 2015, Sandy Smith called the Highway Patrol and said she heard a rumor on the local radio station about an arrest being made in Stephens case two days later. Proctor calls the radio station and interviews the host. The host really doesn't remember the rumor and doesn't take it seriously.

**Todd Proctor** 20:24

Have you heard just from rumors being around and being in that business, about anybody being involved in this thing?

**Radio Host** 20:31

I did, somebody told me, a good friend somebody I went to school with. Murdaugh kid down Hampton, just a rumor I heard. And that was yesterday now. But again, you gotta remember. This was a rumor.

**Todd Proctor** 20:47

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely.

**Radio Host** 20:49

I heard yesterday and again, like I say street talk was somebody heard. They asked me if somebody said that they've confiscated a car and the kid was on house arrest. There are a thousand rumors flying about this. Because like I say, it's a prominent family in Hampton county. Some people don't like his family. I mean, they're friends of mine, but I mean, I'm sure people don't like them. I'm sure they're gonna try and take any shot they can take.

**Mandy Matney** 21:10

So that brings us to December 21 2015, Corporal Duncan of the Highway Patrol interviews Nick Ginn, of the Hampton police department, in reference to quote a tip that came in from Sergeant Burns. This is about Patrick Wilson. And that's pretty much the interview. It's a dead lead, which brings us to November 24 2015, the Hampton county Guardian, the local newspaper published a story by Matt Popovich about Stephen's death. Sandy Smith told The Guardian that she heard rumors about an older man stalking him, but she heard other rumors that she believes more. quoting directly from the article here she reiterated several times her opinion that her son was killed for being gay by several local Hampton county youth from prestigious families, which she believes have sworn to protect their children no matter what heinous crime they committed. Sandy would not give the reporter names but she said that she believed that Stephen would not have been walking on Sandy Run road in the middle of the night. She didn't buy the hit and run theory at all. She said boys, some of whom were Stephen's classmates, were coming home from a baseball game that night and they took him from his car, quote, I hear the same story but from different people. Everybody knows what happened to my son, but nobody wants to tell me who is responsible. She said two weeks later on December 7 2015, the South Carolina Highway Patrol receives an anonymous tip and I'm quoting directly from the case file here quote Dontario Agen along with another black male and a white male parenthesis Murdaugh are the ones involved in



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death and quote, and I'll just say right here in this whole section, we are not changing any names because these names have already been in the media. According to the case file. Duncan then contacted four other South Carolina troopers and advised them of the situation. One of those troopers is Todd Proctor, according to the case file. They haven't done anything about this tip for a long time. And nothing happens until December 18 2015 When Proctor receives information from Duncan about a man named Darryl Williams who says his stepson Patrick Wilson told him that Shawn Connelly struck and killed Stephen Smith. In Proctor's notes. He said that William said his stepson told him this in confidence. Proctor then attempts to go to the school where he thinks that Patrick Wilson attends but he's not there. And then Todd proctor writes something very interesting. In the case file, Mr. Williams stated that the reason that he was passing this information along was because Randy Murdaugh told him to call.

**Corp. Duncan** 24:05

I will be calling him from my office phone here in Charleston, the number to the Hampton Police Department will be 803.

**Mandy Matney** 24:13

So here Duncan lists off a number which he says is the Hampton Police Department's number, but it's not it's not even close to the Hampton Police Department's phone number. I looked at this number. That number is actually a local law firm's number but it's not the Murdaugh's law firm. This is just really weird. And I only know this because I'm a thorough reporter. I look up each piece of every detail. This takes a lot of time. And it gets very frustrating and often leads me into dark rabbit holes with no results. But sometimes it's worth it and it gets me closer to the truth.

**Corp. Duncan** 24:44

Hey, man, how are you doing? good. I'm calling you and refuse to believe somebody will come to you about a case we have there in Hampton County. In reference to a hit and run or possible hitting run somebody claiming that information is that correct?

**Nick Ginn** 24:59

That's Correct.

**Corp. Duncan** 25:01

Have you got just a minute and talk to you about that?

**Nick Ginn** 25:04

Sure. Let me get a piece of paper here. I'm at somebody else's desk right this way if I need to write something back and right, give me one sec. (Phone Beeping.) Corporal you there?

**Corp. Duncan** 25:17

Yes, I am.



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**Nick Ginn** 25:19

Some of our phones have line one. Some of them don't.

**Corp. Duncan** 25:23

All right, Okay

**Nick Ginn** 25:23

Basically Daryl called me and he said, Look, he said, this was what I was told. He said Patrick, come over here to the house. He said he told me that Sean Connolly was drunk and hit something. He said he went back the next day to see what it was he had hit. And he saw a lot of police out. So he talked to one of the cops and then he left. And then he learned, I guess, by the media, that somebody had been killed in that same area. That's why the police were there,

**Corp. Duncan** 25:25

Okay. Well, you think Patrick has, does he have a criminal background as far as that goes as well? I mean, the only reason why I'm asking.

**Nick Ginn** 26:11

He was charged with attempted murder. But I'm not exactly sure what the circumstances behind that was, I want to say that it was one of them times that they may have charged him a higher charge to work their way down.

**Corp. Duncan** 26:25

Yes, I understand.

**Nick Ginn** 26:29

But uh, I mean, do you ever have any dealings with him, I mean, he's very respectful and stuff like that, but he was a little a little shady.

**Mandy Matney** 26:38

To recap, a few weeks after a newspaper story mentioned the possibility of a prominent Hampton county family being involved with Stephen's death. Randy Murdough supposedly told this man to call the Highway Patrol and tell them a story that suspiciously fits into the police narrative that is supported by no evidence, and that is that Stephen was hit by a car now, the Highway Patrol finds out that one of the kids who was supposedly involved in killing Stephen was recently charged with attempted murder. There's a lot more to the Patrick Wilson case and this interview, but we're going to save it for the next episode. Check out my story at FITSnews.com in the description for more information.

**DAVID MOSES** 27:23



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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 [murdaughmurderpodcast.com](http://murdaughmurderpodcast.com) and click the support the show link to learn how you can help leave a five star review to offset the haters refer an advertiser and get a finder's fee or advertise your company, product or service, we can geo target across the globe and find the right audience to suit your needs. And absolutely subscribe to [FITSnews.com](http://FITSnews.com). Mandy and Will are revolutionizing journalism and your subscriptions are invaluable to that mission. Plus you get awesome content every day. Huge thank you to Madison for connecting us to awesome people who are going to help us tell the story. And a big thanks goes out to Neil for helping to take the pressure off. Special thanks to Lauren Taylor, Jim and Meredith Bannon, Rick the Gilstrap team and Maven real estate. Thank you to Susanna Todd, Ronald, Danielle, Elizabeth and Jamie for supporting the show. And a special thanks to Jill and Jennifer and others for the mimosas. It's going to be a great Sunday.

### **Mandy Matney** 28:36

Yeah it is, thank you guys so much for the mimosas. So for the latest developments on this case, visit [FITSnews.com](http://FITSnews.com) or follow me on Twitter at [twitter.com/mandymatney](https://twitter.com/mandymatney). 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. Our executive editor is Liz Farrell,

### **DAVID MOSES** 29:15

produced by Luna Shark Productions.