



EPISODE 30: Who Was Maggie Murdaugh And What About Buster?

Mandy Matney 00:02

I don't know who killed Maggie or Paul Murdaugh. But I do know a lot of stories about the Murdaugh family that have helped shape my reporting over the years. I haven't shared those stories that I think are very telling with y'all until now. My name is Mandy Matney. I've been investigating the Murdaugh family for almost three years now. This is the Murdaugh Murders Podcast with David Moses and Liz Farrell. So we have been drinking through a firehose in the last eight months with constant breaking news updates. Literally every week. Since this podcast started last June, we thought our 30th episode would be best spent taking a step back from the new information coming in and getting a better understanding of all of the twists and turns in the case that have taken place since last June. We still don't know much information about the double homicide investigation because of procedural red tape, silent witnesses, closed records and sources who don't feel comfortable coming forward. However, there are a lot of you who have pressing questions that we can answer. We asked our social media followers to submit questions in the last week. And by the way, this is a great time to remind listeners to follow us on Facebook at Murdaugh murders podcast and Instagram at Murdaugh murders pod to stay up to date on everything related to this case. So David lives and I have gone through hundreds of questions over the last couple days and we noticed a trend. A lot of us have questions about the Murdaugh family history: who Maggie was, who Buster is, what's in Paul's criminal past? What about Alex's criminal past? How do these people have so many wells, power and privilege become the family in the center of a snowballing crime ring? As you know by now, the Murdaugh murder story is a complicated one. Every question leads to more rabbit holes. So we're going to focus this episode on the questions about who these people were before it all came crashing down. In we're going to save the other questions for later episodes as more information comes to light. So let's get into it. Later this month will mark the anniversary of Mallory Beach's death. This will mean three years of me doing late night deep dives on the Murdaugh family. It means three years of answering phone calls to start with. I want my name nowhere near this but I wanted to tell you something important about the Murdaugh family. Those phone calls have helped direct my reporting over the last three years. Those phone calls are why I knew the day we found out about Paul and Maggie's death that this would be one of the biggest crime stories in South Carolina's history. Now as time has passed, it's still tough to get people to talk on the record about the Murdaugh family or even give us



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information that we can report. But we have found a few and we wanted to share with you some of these backstories that helped give us a better idea of who the Murdaughs were and why the dynasty collapsed when it did. So let's begin. So who was Maggie Murdaugh? What was she like? A lot of you have asked this question in the last eight months and there's a reason we've been avoiding it. I have spoken with dozens of people about Maggie Murdaugh and the type of person she was. So I will start with the good things. One person told me Maggie was likable and kind in college. That person described her as too good for that jerk Alex Murdaugh. Others described her as a good hostess, polite and cordial. Another person told the New York Post that Maggie was a sweet person who never met a stranger but there's a lot about Maggie that hasn't been covered. So here is what we know. Margaret Kennedy Branstetter was born in the Nashville area in 1968. Our parents Kennedy and Terry Branstetter moved the family several times when Maggie was growing up. According to The New York Post, Maggie went to Unionville high school in Pennsylvania before she made South Carolina her forever home. She attended the University of South Carolina and Columbia in the 1980s where she met Alex Murdaugh an undergrad she was a Kappa Delta at the University of South Carolina and very proud of that Maggie had one sister Marian proctor who lives in Charleston. Her parents still live in the Charleston area. Her family hasn't issued a statement or spoken to reporters since the murders as far as we know. According to my sources, Maggie was always competing with their sister Marian about wealth and possessions. Her sister and her sister's husband had more money than the Murdaugh's and that always bothered Maggie. According to my sources, when Maggie and Alex moved to the small town of Hanson in the 1990s. Maggie did not like it, but she did Love Alex and the status associated with his name here is Ken Brandt, a Hampton local in New the Murdaughs for decades.

05:07

They seemed very happy she loved him. She was always I won't say bragging but yeah, sort of. I mean, she was happy with her life. She was happy with her husband. She was content with that relationship. She was not content to be in Hampton. But she was content to be married to Alex Murdaugh, she thought she had a real prize there. She really did.

Mandy Matney 05:41

According to several sources, Maggie was much closer to Buster than she was Paul Kim remembers Maggie suffering from postpartum depression when Paul was born. And now she wonders if Paul had detachment issues because of that.



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05:55

Well, Maggie, I think when Paul was born, was depressed. And for a while, I know, it happens a lot of times. And so maybe with Paul, because Paul was always a little different. Maybe that bonding didn't occur and like it does normal children's normal relationships, but postpartum you know, that's something that people need to talk about. And I think that that could be I thought over the years, many, many times I've gone back to that situation in very, very early months. You know, how he came to be the way he was. And that was, what I attributed to the fact that she had, they didn't have that bond that most other mothers and children have. Now she, I've never seen her. I can't really let me just go back because I don't want to sound like she was totally detached. I mean, she talked about her children and she, you know, she appeared to love them. But it's just that element, maybe where it went off the rails with Paul.

Mandy Matney 07:04

Several sources have told me that Paul was a troubled child, and there were signs early on that he had major mental health issues. Kim told me that Maggie was in a playgroup in Hampton with other stay at home mothers and Paul's behavior scared other moms to the point that several of them left the playgroup

07:24

Hi, wow, that's troublesome child and then the other children in that playgroup weren't, you know, Paul, and Buster were roughhouse or they like to play rough. They'd like to fight and squabble. And my niece and nephew weren't that way, I guess, because they were girl, boys. Maybe if they were both boys, it would have been more roughhousing. But the other children as well in the group, there were children. One of the members had two boys. And then it was mostly boy girl, and there were boy twins with an older sister. So the other children just did not. I'm not saying they didn't play with them, but certainly not like Ron Paul, they were just sort of a little rough. Paul was a little rough. Man, he thought that Paul's behavior was funny, and cute. And it wasn't really after a while it wasn't cute anymore.

Mandy Matney 08:20

Multiple sources have told us that Maggie would not discipline her children, no matter how bad their behavior was,

08:28



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Paul, and I've said before that Paul and Buster want to play rough, and they like to play rough. And they like to call each other motherfuckers. I mean, before school before you didn't. That's not a word you learned in school because you haven't started school yet. But when your brother makes you mad, just call him a motherfucker.

Mandy Matney 08:44

Several people have told me this, that they have heard Paul saying awful curse words around his mother when he was very little multiple Hampton. locals have told me that Paul had some serious mental health issues that were ignored very early on. And perhaps those issues ran in the family.

09:03

Something had to be done with Paul, something had to be done. You couldn't depend on the justice system or the Murdaughs. To see that he got the help that he needed. It's just unfortunate. But he was on a crash course. I mean, he didn't keep, I don't know that he had the ability to be sorry. And I don't think it was us. I don't think I don't think Alex is probably upset that he is still incarcerated. And it looks like he may be incarcerated. But I don't think he's sorry for anything. He may be sorry. I don't think he's capable of being sorry. I don't think Paul was either. According

Mandy Matney 09:45

To my sources, Maggie very much values the Murdaugh name and the power that came with it. And she taught her children that

09:52

I heard her tell her children, they were murdered. They were murdered. What does that mean really when you tell your child I'm a brand. I knew what she meant. It wasn't just a solicitor's badge. I knew what she meant when she told them they were murdered. You know, the same rules don't apply to you that apply to these other people. You're a murderer.

Mandy Matney 10:13

Kim and several other Hampton locals told us that status meant everything to Maggie Murdaugh, she valued status over money, power, loyalty, relationships, everything. Absolutely, that

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that she. She was Maggie Murdaugh, and they had a fabulous lie.

Mandy Matney 10:38

While Maggie did have friends, I think she had a hard time relating to most people in the very poor country of Hampton, her personality did not clash well with a lot of locals.

10:49

She didn't care much for the people there. And I didn't think that there was much love lost. Because I didn't think anybody cared much for her. She thought she was better than 99% of the people there. Just right off the bat. She could just look you up and down and decide she was better than you. And that's what she did. She just sort of, she just took a look and made a decision that she was better. You know, maybe because she was a murderer, or maybe because she had had the opportunity to have an education beyond public school. And I don't know, but probably because she was Maggie Murduk. And she really put her on a different level than than everyone else around. She did have friends. I mean, she had a few friends there in the community, but for the most part, it didn't you know, most people weren't on her level.

Mandy Matney 11:55

Kim told me that while it appeared like Maggie was content in her marriage, she was also possessive over Alex

12:02

He was very concerned when it was time to hire any Secretary about who this was. And we know her and could she be trusted with her husband? And yeah, so yeah, she was insecure.

Mandy Matney 12:13

So many of you have asked about the status of Maggie and Alex relationship and whether there's any truth to the reports that Maggie allegedly hired a divorce attorney out of Charleston before she was murdered. According to my sources, their marriage had been on the rocks for years. However, we also know that status meant everything to Maggie; divorcing Alex in the Murdaugh family meant leaving behind all the power and privilege associated with the Murdaugh name.

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I don't believe that they were getting a divorce. And I don't believe that their marriage deteriorated to the point where she was doing anything but trying to protect her status. They're not going to allow their son to go to jail. And they certainly aren't going to allow anyone to take all of their money and property and protect our status mode.

Mandy Matney 13:07

Kim told me that she wouldn't be surprised if Alex had an affair, but she doesn't see that ending their marriage

13:13

as an affair that he may not have had some little piece on the side because it would follow the app not falling far from the tree.

Mandy Matney 13:22

Around the LowCountry rumors have swirled about Murdaugh's cheating on their wives for decades. It was well known that Alex grandfather Buster and father Randolph had mistresses. In November 1976, an obituary ran in the state newspaper that said Libby Murdaugh Alex's mother was dead. The problem was that she wasn't she wasn't sick either. I have heard a lot of rumors about why this obituary was published. Some say that Randolph was cheating and Libby wanted attention, so she wrote it herself. Some say that Libby was cheating and the obit was written by Buster Randolph's Father to send a message to her,

14:04

and that obituary was shown to her because markets don't divorce.

Mandy Matney 14:10

The Maggie divorce rumor originally came from an unreliable source, and then was reported again by People magazine. None of our sources have ever confirmed it between Liz will and I. We know a lot of attorneys in the low country and we have a lot of law enforcement sources. We know that they've been trying to find evidence that she consulted with a divorce attorney prior to her death. At this point, we're pretty sure someone would have had more concrete information or even evidence that she was filing for divorce, but you never know. Maggie was on the website Poshmark selling some of her personal items before she was murdered. Selling \$27 code shoes is kind of out of character for someone like Maggie Murdaugh. Maybe she was trying to make a point to her husband or maybe she actually needed the money.



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15:00

What I remember about Maggie is that she just couldn't be happy. She was unhappy, not unhappy, but to be content with what she had. It was more so. So I can sort of see that. Ellen, you know, we were running through all these millions of dollars that he had stolen from his clients. And I have to wonder how much of that was just to try to keep Maggie happy. And that's, that's very, I don't mean, that sounds awful, because Maggie's gone, and she can't defend herself. And I have this perception of who I believed Maggie was based on what I could see, and what I knew from her relationship with my sister. So this is just my point of view. But I'm wondering, knowing what I knew then, and sort of pulling from that, with what I know now is unfolding and wondering if he just because she knows, I know that there are attorneys in that law firm that one huge verdicts, because they did they had they were representing clients, but yet, product liability claims and, and wrongful death claims that I didn't know of Elliot really pulling in large verdicts in his cases. Now, I don't know how they divide things. But I'm just sitting back and wondering, knowing all that they had, and all that they did, the trips that they took, and the vehicles that they drove and, and education because Buster went to a private university, and all went to private school after he was kicked out of white Hampton. So you're talking about private schools and college tuition and vacation homes and funding lodges and Range Rovers and big trucks and that's a lot of money.

Mandy Matney 16:59

According to the Daily Mail, a source close to the family said that Maggie was worried about their financial situation in the months leading up to the murders. The source told the Daily Mail that Maggie was upset because a check that she wrote to a local charity bounced a few months before the murders. So now looking back Alex is accused of stealing a lot of money 8.4 million in about 10 years, and we don't know where that money went. What did Maggie know about their finances? And did it get her murdered and we'll be right back

Liz Farrell 17:49

a lot of you wanted to know more about Paul's brother Buster. Personally, I have had a hard time with this guy because I know he's been through a lot. And there's sort of a comical aspect to the Where's Buster memes out there. But also I can't get past this alleged connection to Seton Smith's death. For now though, let's just talk about who he is obviously, because his mother and brother were killed and his father is in jail last year as the only member of his immediate family left and that can't be easy



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for him as far as what he was like before the murders. Sources had previously told us that Buster is basically nice to people and reasonably friendly but also incredibly arrogant and sort of clueless like his father. He appears to be happiest when he's reaping the benefits of being the Murdaugh. Yes Murdaugh at the party. Literally today. Someone who knows him said, quote, there's something wrong with that kid. He's not all there. I should stop here and note from what we've been told about Buster over the years. We do not believe he has anything to do with his mother's and brother's deaths. We don't think he has it in them. Also, sources told us that Buster was in Rock Hill at the time of the killings. Those of you who are following the Murdaugh discussion groups on Facebook might have picked up on Buster's love of his last name over the weekend. Because you likely saw the picture of Buster that was posted. Buster was at a black tie optional wedding at the cedar room in Charleston on Saturday being Buster Murdaugh he of course opted to wear the black tie. He also opted to wear a cummerbund with his giant monogram on it, which is either a sign that he only owns that one cummerbund or further evidence that he's incredibly proud of his family name, even in the face of the recent revelations Busters girlfriend, whose name we're not going to mention, because it's not her fault that any of this is happening was in the wedding party in the picture Buster standing with a young woman wearing a fur coat indoors. The girl's back is to the camera so we can't fully confirm whether it's his girlfriend, but the appearance of Buster and a tuxedo standing next to a woman in a fur coat. Which by the way is not a look you see too often down here even in the winter. It's pretty extraordinary given that the most circulated photo of the Murdaugh family so far has been Maggie and her and the boys and their tuxes. One of the things that has been said to us a lot is that Maggie and Alex brought Buster and Paul everywhere with them even to adult events such as perfect Shall functions and dinner parties. Buster and Paul were often the only kids at some of these events and according to sources, they openly drank alcohol even though they were wildly underage. As you probably know, Buster was Paul's only sibling and older brother. He was born in 1996 and graduated from Wade Hampton High School in Hampton, who's mascot is the Red Devils. I am not making that up a town that has been terrorized by a red headed family for more than 100 years named their mascot, the Red Devils. I'm sure someone out there is going to tell me this is civil war related, but even so it's a heck of a coincidence, Buster played baseball and football in high school and hosted a lot of parties at Moselle. He then went off to Wofford College, which is a private school in South Carolina that is sort of seen as the more elite school when we're researching the Murdaugh family. In 2019. We came across a little gem of a homework assignment that Buster did in college, it appears he was in a course that required him to write little essays about photos that



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caught his eye. Here's Buster, in his own words, as read by our favorite male narrator, David.

DAVID MOSES 20:57

This is a picture of the Hampton County Courthouse. I chose this picture, because Hampton is a really small town with a small population of 2837. So the courthouse is quite the iconic building. I also chose this picture because the courthouse plays an important role within my family. My entire family is in the law business. So I have spent a fair amount of time within this building. It's also very important because one day I wish to be a lawyer and a good portion of my career will take place within the building. I also think that the character of this building presents good lines and a lot of photographic potential.

Liz Farrell 21:36

He ended that last sentence without a period so I'm not sure if there was more Buster wanted to say about his promising legal career. But speaking of law school Buster went to law school at the time of the boat crash in February 2019. This is when five foot seven inch 145 pound Paul U six foot two inch 225 pound Busters driver's license to buy alcohol Buster was in his first year at University of South Carolina School of Law. He did not return for a second year because of an alleged cheating scandal in which sources say he submitted work that was not his but the work of someone very close to him. To our surprise, sources told us that Buster was not allowed to return to the school. I say surprise because this is the School of Busters for fathers and Mandy and I have heard countless stories of the elder Murdaugh's putting young men through law school young men who later came to work for them or who later became judges. We've also heard stories about the cheating that went on there that apparently got swept under the rug back in the day but Buster's alleged scandal happened in 2019 when the family was in the media almost daily and under much more public scrutiny than ever before, so times had changed for them. After the murders. We heard from sources who told us that Buster was living in the Upstate and working for the corporate offices of Wildbrain Cafe. This is a local chain restaurant that originated on the home that Buster's girlfriend graduated from USC School of Law last year and sources have told us works at an all women law firm on Hilton Head. According to online documents. It appears that she passed the bar exam but she does not appear to have been admitted to the Bar Association. From what we're told this likely means she has to have a hearing in front of the South Carolina Supreme Court. We're not sure if this is in any way connected to her relationship with the Murdaugh family or Buster's alleged cheating scandal but



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several sources have indicated that it does. This summer after the murders Busters girlfriend purchased a condo on Hilton Head. Since then there have been a number of Buster sightings on the island including at bars, stores like home goods and Christmas parties. You might remember this past fall. According to his dad's lawyers, Buster can't even afford to buy groceries, which no one believes but his assets have been frozen as a result of the boat crash case and his father's alleged financial crimes. counter to the reports that Buster like his dad is flat broke. And as his family photos were being plastered in newspapers and magazines across the world last year was popping up at bars and parties in places like Tennessee, North Carolina, and in Columbia. Charleston Helton had been in Beaufort, right after his father was first denied bond and October last year was pictured at a blackjack table in Las Vegas, but that doesn't mean he hasn't remained close with his father. According to Richland County Detention Center phone records obtained by FITSnews Buster has been a frequent recipient of Elux phone calls. So in short, there's really not all that much more depth to Buster from what we've been told. He's basically just the guy who seems happy to have been born in Murdaugh, and content to walk down the road that was paved for him from the beginning.

Mandy Matney 24:33

And we'll be right back. So really, as we take a deeper look at the Murdaugh family, it's clear that Maggie and Buster were alike in a lot of ways; they both value the status associated with the Murdaugh name and have been routinely described as full of themselves. We don't know exactly why Buster's name came up so many times in the Steven Smith investigation, but it's far from his personality traits, we haven't heard that Buster had a violent streak in him or history of violent criminal activity, at least not like his brother Paul or his father Alex.

25:13

I mean, he just had that reputation of being arrogant. Didn't he? No, no. Just no compassion or whatever. Like he just didn't. He didn't care. He didn't feel bad about it. And he was just very, you know, he was just Alex Murdaugh. He knew what he was. He was a jackass. He was. It was kind of like if you ran his group, and he was buddies with us, and it was all good. But if you weren't, he just, he just thought he was better than everybody else. I mean, he, he would be like, my name is Alex Murdaugh. I can do what I want to wear my dad. He's Randolph. You know, he's a solicitor, and my granddad. He was who He was very much. So from the get go.

Mandy Matney 25:53



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That's a former classmate of Alex, and an upcoming episode. You'll hear a lot more from him. As we're going to dig deep into the details of Paul and Alex's troubled histories and run-ins with the law before it all came crashing down last year. What we found was troublesome in the same way that Buster and Maggie were a lot like Paul was a lot like his father. But there was one big difference during Alex's life, there were a lot of warning signs that his behavior would lead to where we are now because no one held him or anyone in his family accountable. At any point. During Paul's life. There were those same warning signs. And honestly, those signs were even worse, even though they tried the family couldn't contain the fallout from the boat crash. The legal system was finally doing the right thing in holding Murdaugh accountable for his actions for the first time and that's when everything spun wildly out of their control. We know a lot of you asked about Alex's alleged co-conspirators. We want to remind everyone that we have not forgotten about solicitor Duffie Stone and his questionable involvement in the double homicide investigation. We haven't forgotten about Judge Carmen Molan and her alleged involvement in the botched Satterfield settlement. We haven't forgotten about Corey Fleming and his questionable involvement in the boat crash case, the Steven Smith case, the Hakeem Pinckney case and the glorious Satterfield case, we haven't forgotten about Russell Laffitte in Palmetto State Bank in their alleged role in the Alex scheme. And we haven't forgotten about PNP Ed, or whatever the Murdaugh law firm is calling itself these days and how they're treating the alleged victims. Doing the reporting that holds powerful people accountable takes a lot of time and appreciates your patience and support while we do the work. There are two more questions I wanted to answer before we end this episode. A lot of you asked about my safety and if I have felt unsafe while reporting on a story, and the answer is yes, there are several unsolved homicides and deaths associated with this story. And that is scary. There is a network of powerful people who have been exposed due to my reporting. And that is scary, but I do believe a lot of those people are smart enough to know that getting rid of me or scaring me into silence will not work. Besides from one threatening email that was sent from one of Buster's friends on the week of the double homicide. I have not received any direct threats from the Murdaugh family or their associates. But to be completely honest, I really wasn't concerned for my safety until a couple of weeks ago. There is a group of horrible people hiding behind fake social media accounts, who have been steadily harassing me and spreading complete lies about me in the last month. I've already identified several other people behind some of those troll accounts and honestly, I feel bad for them because they can't be in a good spot mentally. As a woman, I'm really disturbed by their behavior. It is so troublesome to watch people dedicating several hours of their day to attack me. One of those trolls



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really freaked me out when they sent me a cruel email making disgusting references about my brother's death. And another one of those trolls wrote a horrible post on a really gross Murdaugh group about my relationship with Sandy Smith. I don't know if the people I identified making troll accounts are working for others or not. But if you're in this group, find a hobby, something that makes you happy, anything gang, I truly hope you find joy in something else. And for those of us supporting me, I am blogging accounts that are following these troll accounts because I'm so concerned at this point, I would ask you to please not engage with these troll accounts that are harassing me, block them, report them and don't give them any troll food. There is no winning and fighting with internet snakes. I am never backing down from the story. I'm on a mission to report the truth wherever it leads. Remember that I believe that where there is sunlight, there is safety, which is why I'm addressing this right now. Finally, there was a question that stuck out to me that I want to address.

DAVID MOSES 30:44

We heard how you were treated in court. How has it been in town? Is there support for the truth now or do you still feel the deep Murdaugh ties when trying to investigate?

Mandy Matney 30:55

Yes, Dick Harpootlian AND as a crowd of media buddies laughed at my expense back in September. But I have to say aside from that, I have received nothing but positive support from Hampton locals and my neighbors where I live in Beaufort County, which is about an hour and a half from Hampton. On the day after the 2020 episode aired. Two random neighbors of mine stopped me to tell me they were proud of my work while I was walking Luna. Often when we walk Luna now or when we're at restaurants in Hilton Head random people will stop David and I and say things like we love the podcast, keep going. Even local law enforcement have gone out of their way to tell me that they love the podcast. So many people have told me different stories about how the good ol boy system has ruined South Carolina and how they are ready for a change. These messages of support mean everything to us. The community here has our back, and we have theirs. Thank you again for listening to the Murdaugh murders podcast. Stay tuned to FITSnews.com and the Murdaugh murders podcasts on Instagram and Facebook for the latest updates in this case. We'll see you next week.

DAVID MOSES 32:10



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The Murdaugh manners podcast is created by me, Mandy Matney, and my fiance David Moses. Our executive editor is Liz Farrell,

DAVID MOSES 32:52

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