



EPISODE 55: What Happened to Hakeem Pinckney? Part Two

Mandy Matney 00:02

I don't know how it is possible that I continue to be surprised by how low Alex Murdaugh was apparently willing to go to allegedly steal millions of dollars from his clients. But after Liz dug up more on the Hakeem Pinckney case, I am beyond shocked not only by what Alex and Russell Laffitte apparently did in the aftermath of Hakeem's death, but also by Hampton County's Probate Court, which is supposed to be protecting people's estates from getting plundered, and yet again, we are reminded of the many many layers of corruption in this case. My name is Mandy Matney. I have been investigating the Murdaugh family for more than three years now. This is the Murdaugh Murders Podcast with David Moses and Liz Farrell. As usual, we have a lot to cover in this episode. But before we get into any of that, I want to take a moment and commend Liz Farrell for her phenomenal work on this case recently. As some of you might have noticed, I have taken a little bit of a step back covering the day to day insanity of this case that just keeps spider webbing. Before Liz came on board last year, I found myself in a really bad place mentally due to the stress of trying to stay on top of this case that just kept getting larger instead of smaller. I knew if the podcast was going to continue, I had to take a step back from some of the day to day stuff. I'm a hard worker at heart. But I also know that burnout is serious and staying strong mentally is absolutely essential to the work that we do here every week. When I say Liz is a hero in this case, I really mean it. Liz has been my ride or die in this from day one. When she took a break from journalism she was the one pushing me to expose every single monster in this case, she has always been the one screaming we can't let them get away with this and helping me find ways to drag so many vampires into the sunlight. And she doesn't get

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nearly enough credit. It truly takes a village to disrupt the good ole boy system. And we all should be cheering Liz on right now. In the last week Liz has not only published a phenomenal and shocking investigative report on the haunting details in the Hakeem Pinckney case, she also drove to Charleston and covered the Russell Laffitte federal bond hearing, all of which we will discuss in this podcast. Plus, Liz has been staying on top of the double homicide case and making sure the public officials in this case know that we are watching them, which is so important. Again, this podcast is not here for your entertainment. We are here to expose the truth, give a voice to victims and get the story straight. We are here to hold people accountable. We know a lot of the powerful men we call out in this podcast are listening. And no one wants to sound bad on a podcast with millions of listeners around the world. We hope they're all paying attention. So before we talk about the latest in the Hakeem Pinckney case, I want to update you about what's happening with Alex's murder case and the gag order that we've all been eagerly awaiting. On Monday morning FITS News was first to report that the South Carolina Attorney General's Office appears to be negotiating the terms of the gag order with Alex's attorneys behind closed doors. This is a big deal. This is the exact opposite of what we should be seeing right now. But then on Tuesday afternoon, we've learned that Judge Clifton Newman denied the gag order that Alex's attorneys and the prosecution strangely agreed to in his order, Newman said quote, the public is entitled to know how justice is being administered. Judge Newman, who is widely respected in all corners of the courtroom has shown that he is a judge who makes his decisions based on the law and the Constitution. He is not someone who's basing his decisions on whether one of the attorneys standing in front of them

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is a former frat brother or a state senator or a friend of a friend. He has been a clear champion of transparency, and he believes that public hearings should be held in public. Well, all judges should believe this. The law is clear. It says courts should be public. This is a good day for justice and we're going to celebrate that. But we are not naive to think that this is it. We know that Alex's defense team will continue to poke at the system until the very last minute, but we will be watching every step of the way. Alex's murder case is the first big test of whether South Carolina plans to turn over a new leaf and actually conduct the public's business in public. For far too long, men like Alex Murdaugh have gotten to dictate the terms of their own accountability far away from the public eye for generations across the state. But particularly in the 14th Circuit. Powerful families have been able to operate behind a very thick wall of secrecy when it comes to what goes down in South Carolina's courts. They have been allowed to negotiate terms that are favorable to them, and then only in we're afraid that what we're seeing here is already history repeating itself. So after we published last week's episode on Wednesday morning, Russell Laffitte, the former CEO of Palmetto State Bank, in one of Alex Murdaugh's alleged co-conspirators in the theft of around \$2 million from a handful of clients appeared in federal court to be arraigned on five charges of conspiracy and bank fraud. After Murdaugh's bond hearing on July 20, the US Attorney's Office announced that Russell Laffitte had been indicted for allegedly using his role at the bank to help further Alex's alleged scheme to steal millions. Liz went to the hearing, so she's gonna give you a quick rundown about what happened.



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Liz Farrell 06:48

The hearing was held at the federal courthouse in Charleston, which is about 90 minutes north of where we live in the low country. I got to the courthouse early as did Russell Laffitte. I almost literally ran into him as I rounded the corner to the courtroom five waiting room. This was a bit awkward given that I had published a huge investigative piece on him the night before, but he was friendly. I will say that I gave him a panic pillow and immediately backed away because he was alone in the waiting room and talking to one of his attorneys. I went and sat by the bathrooms and spent the next 40 minutes watching his family walk by. He had a lot of family with him by the way that stands in stark contrast to the hearings that have been held for his redheaded pal, the quote unquote bank customer. That's how the federal indictment refers to Alex; he's the bank customer. Now the hearing was short and very orderly, which is good because we were not allowed to take our recorders or any Alextronics into the courtroom. It makes it a whole lot easier to take notes when the judge speaks clearly and with the objective of being understood, which is not always a goal of state judges in South Carolina. During the hearing, Russell's attorney Matt Austin told the court that while Russell admits to doing the things he's accused of he never thought he was committing a crime in doing so. Meaning Russell's defense seems to be that he wasn't doing this to steal money from people. Eric Bland and his partners were at the hearing. They represent two sisters for whom Russell served as conservator back in the day. Russell is accused of using one of his sister's conservator accounts as a personal piggy bank in which he gave himself eight below market interest rate loans and gave Alex 14 below market interest rate and unsecured loans. According to the federal indictment. They

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allegedly pay back that money using money stolen from other clients of Alex including that of Hakeem Pinckney and his cousin during the hearing Eric and one of his partners, Ronnie Richter spoke on behalf of the Plyler sisters, one of the sisters and Iainnya attended the hearing with her husband. She's a really cool person and like with all the victims, she is now having to revisit a painful past because of what Alex and Russell allegedly did. Eric and Ronnie asked the judge for a significant bond to send a message to people serving as conservators and personal representatives in the state that this isn't their money. Ultimately, the judge decided to give Russell a \$500,000 bond secured with \$25,000 cash. He was also assigned another ankle monitor. Apparently the state ankle monitor is going to come off at some point if it hasn't already. I talked to Eric about the hearing over the weekend. And here's what he had to say and just so you can follow along better Russell's attorneys are Matt Austin, who was a former state and federal prosecutor and Bart Daniel, who was a former US Attorney for the District of South Carolina Emily Limehouse is prosecuting the case for the United States.

Eric Bland 09:45

I was very surprised on a number of fronts. One I was surprised that Matt Austin basically said that he agreed with the facts for the most part in what we said and what Emily Limehouse said, and I guess what we've said all along when we made our public statements about the Plyler sisters, but he said it was in criminal behavior. I was really taken aback by Mark Daniel, because he's really a reserved lawyer. And I think he was going, you know, a little hard defending Russ at that bond hearing, you know, don't forget, at the end of the day, if you're going to quibble with well, he borrowed money from a conservatorship account.



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And he's going to say, Well, I had some kind of approval, even though there's not a court order to do it. He did know that when Hannah Plyler turned 18 years old, if there wasn't the money in her account, and he had to have cooperated with Alex, to get that money from Arthur Badger and Hakeem Pickney. So it really is a true Ponzi scheme that was being run. And for Bart Daniel to act like that, that's not criminal, even if you're gonna get beyond the borrowing of money at two and a quarter percent. And doing it as a conservator without a court order without an independent loan committee and then loaning money to Alex when he's an extreme credit risk. And, you know, was obviously in the watch list because he had a number of loans that were non performing. If even if you get beyond that, just the sole act of taking money from other accounts to pay Hannah Plyler when she turned 18, is a crime in and of itself. So I just don't see where Russ feels like he's going to get anywhere.

Liz Farrell 11:37

At the hearing. Mark Daniel asked the judge for not a gag order, per se, but some sort of warning to attorneys not to talk about this case to the media, though he didn't say to whom he was referring, he likely meant Eric, this isn't the first time attorneys in this case have tried to shut him up. At any rate, the judge didn't go for it. Here's Eric with more about that.

Eric Bland 11:57

You know, bark, Daniel flew down the gauntlet when he tried to get the judge to admonish warriors about following the rules of professional conduct. We wake up every day and know what the rules of



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professional conduct are. And we follow the rules of professional conduct all lawyers, mostly all lawyers do. And I don't need another lawyer to throw a subliminal message. You know, we're watching you. And you know, we think you're violating the rules of professional conduct. No, this is bare knuckle litigation. Okay, this is bare knuckle stuff, and I am going to correct the record. Every single time. I hear a lawyer say, Oh, my client didn't do anything wrong. If you didn't do anything wrong, then why did you steal money from Arthur Badger and Hakeem Pinckney to pay my clients? Why wasn't the money there when they turned 18 years old? So No, nobody's gonna chill me. You know, you saw the way Bart looked. When we were outside the courthouse he walked by. I mean, I could see his eyes through the sunglasses, as he was looking at us when we're talking.

Mandy Matney 13:01

And we'll be right back. Even though the federal and state indictments have given us a lot of details about the crimes wrestler feed is accused of committing. It wasn't until we laid everything that we knew out about the Hakeem Pinckney case that we were able to truly grasp the sinister nature of what these two men are accused of doing. We're going to take you through some of the highlights from the case so you can hear for yourself what allegedly went on but I also highly recommend you to take a look at the report published on FITSNews.com. About this. This project took Liz about two months and involved a ton of reporting the story pieces together information from more than 2000 documents from social media accounts and from several interviews with key sources that help provide background. The story starts out in 2009 when Hakeem Pinckney his mother, sister and



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cousin were in a catastrophic crash on I-95 in Hampton County. Alex Murdaugh and one of his former law partners represented Hakeem, a 19-year old deaf man who was now a quadriplegic because of the crash. In 2010 Russell Laffitte, who did not have any other connection to this family began serving as a conservator for Hakeem and his cousin Natasha Thomas, who was around 13-years old when the crash occurred. for around two years. Hakeem lived in a nursing home in Aiken County, which is about two hours from his home in Yemassee. The entire time he lived there he was waiting for his case to settle so that his family could afford to hire the at-home care he would need to live at home again. In October 2011 though a ventilator reportedly became unplugged, and he ended up dying as a result, he died four days after the case settled for millions of dollars. The timing of this has always struck us as very unusual, especially when you look at the number of mysterious deaths attached to the Murdaugh family. We are not sure whether there is more to the how of Hakeem's death because his medical files are private and no police reports were ever filed. As it relates to the litigation though, here's what we think happened. Alex and PMPED refused to settle the case at mediation because they knew this case was very, very valuable. But something happened a few months after their mediation around October 7 2011. That seems to have changed their minds. Now the timeline of when Hakeem's ventilator became unplugged. And when he was taken to the hospital and how long they stayed there is not known a wrongful death suit that was later filed on behalf of PMPED never went into any details, which again is very odd. So it's important to first note that as far as lawsuits go, Hakeem's was worth a lot of money. He was going to require intensive care around the clock for the rest of his life. And he was very young

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when this happened. So he had a lot of living to do. This is all to say Alex knew he would be making a lot of money personally from this case, here is the tough part. While Hakeem's life was worth a lot of money. His death, unfortunately, was not the insurance company payout would be a lot less if the settlement occurred after Hakeem's death. In other words, his death would have meant a lot less money coming Alex way. So around October 7 2011, there appears to be some sort of rush to settle this case which they have been holding out on. Like I said, we don't know the timeline of Hakeem's death, meaning when he was admitted to the hospital, we don't know if he was on life support leading up to his death. But Facebook posts from Hakeem's friends starting around October 9 2011 seemed to indicate that he was indeed on life support and his death was imminent. He died at 1pm October 11 2011. During the lead up to Hakeem's family's case settling, Russell had quote, managed Hakeem and Natasha's estates, which were worth about \$0.00 The really unsettling thing here is that he took about \$75,000 in fees \$75,000 from Hakeem and Natasha settlements to compensate himself for that work, the work of managing no dollars and no sense for them. In the hours after Hakeem died. Russell appears to have purchased a multimillion dollar annuity on Hakeem's behalf. And it appears that he represented to the insurance company that Hakeem was still alive at this point. Russell also decided to name Hakeem's mother as the sole beneficiary of this annuity, even though state law dictates that both Hakeem's mother and father were supposed to be his beneficiaries. This is important. While it's refreshing that neither Russell nor Alex is accused of stealing the money that paid for this annuity, Hakeem's death meant that Russell had no authority to do that, nor did he have the authority to decide who Hakeem's



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beneficiaries would be. This, of course resulted in a huge mess around the time the wrongful death case settled about three years after Hakeem's death, Hakeem's father Meldrick Edwards entered the picture. Now we don't know whether another lawyer at PMPED with whom Alex was working the case. One who specializes in nursing home deaths and generally has a good reputation for working hard had contacted Meldrick because he knew the Meldrick would be entitled to half of the settlement he had just won for Hakeem's estate but this really doesn't seem likely in this presented a big problem for Alex and Russell because now they had to cover their alleged in very sloppy tracks. Mel Rick's involvement now open them up to the possibility of someone finding out the circumstances of the 2011 settlement the post mortem purchase of an annuity policy on Hakeem's behalf as well as the Liberty wrestle live fee took with naming Keens beneficiary. Oh, yeah. And as we know now, they were secretly borrowing clients money, and had allegedly stolen around \$700,000 from Hakeem and Natasha. And as we now know, there was a lot on the line here. Eric bland represents Hakeem Pinckney, his father in the case. So he's going to tell you about the situation.

Eric Bland 20:27

I mean, it's just another sad chapter in the Ross and Alex show. And that's the case of picking winners and losers. And they just decided that the winner was going to be Pamela Pickney. And the loser was going to be Melvin Edwards, Hakeem Pickney did not have any children, and he didn't have a spouse. So his money that was recovered from his lawsuit that was preserved. And then the money that was recovered from the wrongful death lawsuit against the nursing home should have been



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split equally between his natural parents Meldrick Edwards, who was his father, and Pamela Pinckney, and I get it that, you know, Pamela did not like Mel Ricky, they weren't married. And in her eyes, she didn't view that Meldrick was a good father, to Hakeem. But Hakeem died without a will. And if you die without a will, and you don't have children, you don't have spouse in our state, the money is divided equally amongst the parents, by statute. And to further compound the problem. Melbourne suffers from schizophrenia for the last 30 years of his life. And he was in and out of group homes and in and out of mental hospitals in in in a mental hospital. Since essentially 2012. Russ as the conservator, and he was the conservative for Hakeem, he bought an annuity, a structured annuity from that life, on the same day that the coroner announced the death of King. The problem is, if you're a conservator, you're only a conservator as long as your ward is alive. When your award takes his last breath, you your duty, then if you're doing something you have to do you have an obligation to finish it up, you know, if it's, you know, if you're going to the bank, and you're going to deposit some money, deposit the money or you know, but you don't do something completely new because that would be the job of a personal representative. The problem is, that after Hakeem died at one o'clock in October of 2011, on October 11 2011, rough 3:15pm What this annuity, and he named the beneficiary he picked the winner to be paid again.

Mandy Matney 22:47

After Hakeem's death, Russell Laffitte completed an application for a multi-million dollar annuity that was calculated using Hakeem's life expectancy, which he didn't have any more because he was dead.



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Hakeem's name appears to have been painted over with wideout, and Russell appears to have written his name, on top of it, noting that it was for the benefit of Hakeem.

Eric Bland 23:20

What happens is he's trying to cover his tracks. There's no place for him to write in this time, but he writes next to his name 3:15pm. And as you astutely pointed out in your article in not one single other document, it was signed, did he put the time next to his signature, except on that he used the measuring life, as Hakeem and Hakeem had already been dead. And then in November, the annuity comes through and it says the same thing that the conservator is rustler fie. The measuring life is Akeem. And this annuity is purchased, maybe MetLife would have priced the annuity differently if they knew that Hakeem was dead. I don't know that I suspect it MetLife is going to ask some questions about this after your article. I do suspect that MetLife is going to raise the specter of whether this is you know whether they were defrauded.

Mandy Matney 24:19

It seems pretty clear that Alex at least knew that he crossed a line here because almost three years later, he had to figure out a quick solution for cutting Meldrick Edwards out of millions of dollars.

Eric Bland 24:35

And Alex brings this lawsuit against the nursing home and there's a recovery again, he dies intestate, it's got to go through the probate court. And there's the PR and monies recovered. Well, all of a sudden, we start to realize, hey Meldrick is out there. In Melbourne, the father is



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entitled to 50 or set of the intestate estate of a king. And they start to realize, well, you know, if they challenge this annuity Meldrick is going to be entitled to 50% of those annuity funds. If it turns out that Russ was not authorized to purchase it post that the death of Hakeem and so I don't know the circumstances of how Melfort got to his lawyers, Kirk Morgan, and Will Walker. I know that Tyrone is brother was involved. I know that there was a fee agreement that was strangely signed with Tyrone being the client, even though he under no circumstances could he ever be the client. I know that if you look at the court record, they were moving to have Tyrone be appointed as a conservator for Meldrick. And and that failed, and then he got a power of attorney. But at the end of the day, Meldrick Edwards, I always use this expression. You know, he traded his birthright for both words he in return for settling for \$340,000.

Mandy Matney 26:16

As they were settling the case in April 2014, and this looks really, really bad, Meldrick's attorney sent an email to Alex telling him this.

DAVID MOSES 26:28

I should mention the time is of the essence on this Melvin's brother Tyrone Edwards has the power of attorney to make financial decisions on behalf of Meldrick. At this time, however, Meldrick will be released from the mental health facility in the very near future, which may complicate this settlement considerably if Meldrick decides to revoke the power of attorney upon his release.

Mandy Matney 26:51



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While he noted that Meldrick was fine with the terms of the settlement. It also seemed super suspicious for his lawyer to say this, his lawyer's job was to represent him but honestly, it's not clear whose interest millworks attorney was serving in this. We do know this attorney and his law firm worked closely with Alex, PMPED and Moss Kuhn and Fleming over the years.

Eric Bland 27:16

And Meldrick is you know, he has issues and so it is difficult communicating with him sometimes. You know, he's extremely lucid. He's extremely well spoken, very sharp, intuitive man. And then other times, you realize that he he is compromised. I think the lawyers wanted somebody that they could talk to with the claim and, and you you've published that April 2014. memo from will Walker, which is the most devastating language I have ever heard. It is absolutely selling your client down the down the pike. When you say, Hey, we got to get this done. Tyrone tells us Meldrick may be discharged in two weeks and when he gets out, he may not go along with what we're trying to do. Well, if you say that, then you know that your client is cognizant enough that he won't like that deal, selling his birthright for a bowl of porridge. And they rushed it, they rushed it through.

Mandy Matney 28:21

Even though Meldrick was entitled to half of the personal injury lawsuit from 2011. It looks like they instead gave him around half of the \$650,000 wrongful death settlement. And in doing so they had Meldrick's brothers sign a document that included a promise that Meldrick wouldn't sue Russell Laffitte in the future for anything that



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occurred while he was conservator. If you're asking how did they come up with such a low figure Alex allegedly threatened Meldrick's attorney that he'd use his power at the Hampton County probate court to disinherit Meldrick.

Eric Bland 29:01

And no lawyer that I know of. We've talked to a lot of experts, Ken Wingate, who ran for governor who is our expert witness in the Melbourne Kevin Edwards case is a probate court experts he said that there was virtually zero chance that any probate court would ever had disinherited Meldrick. You know, the threat was that Alex was going to go before the probate court and go before a judge out and get a declaration that Meldrick was a bad bad father. And he should be disinherited, quite frankly. And Wingate laughed and said it wouldn't happen. Because again, that's taking away what Hakeem may not have wanted. It may not have wanted Melbourne to be disinherited. He may have loved his father, he may have understood that his father was schizophrenic and that he wouldn't want him to be disinherited. And it's just highly offensive that people pick winners and losers when we haven't a statute that does that by law.

Mandy Matney 30:03

And we'll be right back.

Liz Farrell 30:06

One of the things I learned in reporting this story for FITS News was how important and utterly confusing probate court can be. I know we say this about every person and entity allegedly involved in Alex's



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alleged schemes really without the ability to use what and I'm going to give them the benefit of the doubt here the seemingly permissive and trusting Hampton County probate court Alex would not have been able to have allegedly stolen all this money the same can obviously be said of Russell Laffitte and Palmetto State Bank as well as Alex former law firm every person along the way who could have put a stop to this had they asked one question or taken one minute to look over the documents Alex needed them all. There are a few things to know about how it appears like used Hampton County probate court The first is that his paperwork is a straight up sloppy and haphazard. The documents filed for his clients are often incomplete and contain a lot of errors. The second thing is this in South Carolina a person's estate whether the person has died or is under a conservatorship must be opened in the county where that person lives or lives. In the Plyler case. The girls lived in Lexington County in Hakeem's case, Hakeem lived in Aiken County, and yet their paperwork was filed in Hampton County. It's not clear what Alex's relationship was with Hampton County probate judge Sheila Odom, but it is clear that this Court was Alex Murdaugh's home turf, and he treated it as such, Eric is really good at making the complexities of South Carolina law. Understandable. So I'm going to have him tell you more about probate court and how it's supposed to work.

Eric Bland 31:43

Probate Court is a guard rail against heirs and loved ones fighting and taking advantage of a dead person's family. That's the bottom line. You know, when somebody dies, it's supposed to be a stop in time snapshot. Nobody goes through the house and rifles and and snatches the, you



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know, the Renoir off the wall or the you know, the Lladro vase and walks out. It's stopping time and an inventory of that person's assets have to be done, especially if they died without a will. It's the job of the probate court judge to do an orderly disposition of somebody's estate who dies intestate. And when you have a personal representative or you have a conservator. That person is an officer of the court and they agree to follow the law and make applications to the probate court. Our Richmond County probate court is so good, Liz. I mean, when I am handling in a wrongful death claim, I get letters once a quarter from our probate court telling me Tell me what's going on with your lawsuit, what's going on with the estate? Is there anything new, and if you're going to do something, you have to make application to the probate court and Russ didn't do it. Russ did a lot of it for the Plyler girls, don't get me wrong. There were a number of applications that he made. And he got orders that said that he could, you know, give them cell phones and buy clothes for them for school and send them the summer camps and by car for them when they turn 16. But the real stuff is could even get a court approval to was the bigger money stuff, loan in \$1.4 million to himself. And now it's the job of the judge and the clerk of court is to press that personal representative or the conservator who's handling the money, what is going on. And obviously, that wasn't done in a number of the cases that came out of the Hampton County probate court.

Liz Farrell 33:48

In South Carolina. Probate judges don't have to be lawyers, nor do they need to have a college degree. But they do have to ask questions. They do have to look at the documents they're signing. They do have to make



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sure conservators and personal representatives are filing regular records of their actions.

Eric Bland 34:07

Let me explain them to you everybody, you know, notices Joe McCulloch at all these hearings. His wife Amy McColloch is a probate court judge in Richland County. Let me tell you what it's like to appear before Amy McColloch. That's a judge that does everything right. You can't just put something under her nose and say, Hey, Judge McColloch assign this. She wants to know what's being done. Why are you doing this? Why is it necessary? I want to see the invoice to match up to this exactly what you say. She holds the hearing on it. Judge McColloch does it right. Now I'm not saying Judge Bodum did it wrong. But there are some things that happened out of that probate works that should raise concerns, like automatically taking as gospel did Hakeem was Residents of Hampton County. So you know, Kim Wingate told us there's probate court judges depress you will tell me what you mean. Where did they live? In Hampton County? Are they in a hospital? Are they in a nursing home? It doesn't seem like any of those questions were asked.

Mandy Matney 35:17

Moving forward. Eric said he's hopeful that Meldrick Edwards and the Plyler sisters will see justice and will be made whole by all parties responsible for what had happened to them. He also said we might be seeing yet another investigation open because of what we found.

Eric Bland 35:40



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In fact, I got notice from the real Forge Consulting, who bought the annuity. They were the agents who bought the annuity from MetLife that they said they were duty bound to have to notify MetLife of what you and I discovered, which is this post death purchase of the annuity. MetLife was unaware of that. He told me that he was going to notify them I have not heard from them. I wouldn't be surprised if they you know, started asking questions and do something similar to what Nautilus did.

Mandy Matney 36:18

One of the things that sticks out about how Russell Laffite handled the Hakeem Pinckney case is this in early January 2012 right around when Hakeem and Natasha settlements came through Russell ended his conservatorship formally with the Hampton County probate court now, as we already know, his conservatorship for Hakeem ended the moment Hakeem died, but Natasha was still 15. According to the federal indictment, Russell misrepresented her age as 18 to the court, we're not sure why but 18 is the natural age that a conservatorship over a minor would end. So think about this before the settlement, Hakeem and Natasha had no money to manage none. But Russell paid himself \$75,000 from their settlement to compensate him for that. And then, at that very moment, when Natasha, a teenager gets money, a significant amount of money, wrestles suddenly taps out, because services are no longer needed. That seems really, really bad for Russell, how is he going to be able to explain that if he was acting as a conservator to Alex's clients to, quote unquote, help them? If that's what he was really doing, then what was the point of being conservator of someone without assets to manage and then ending the arrangement? Right when they



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do have money to manage? It makes no sense. We suspect the probate court judge Sheila Odom, who retired before her term ends this year is going to have some really hard questions to answer. What was going on at Hampton County probate court? Why were Alex Murdaugh and Russell Laffitte allowed to do the things they did. Why didn't anyone stop them? Why didn't they protect the people who they were supposed to be protecting? We have heard nothing about investigations that might be happening about the judges in the saga, the investigations that need to be happening, but now that murder charges have been filed, we're hoping a lot more attention will get paid to all of the people and all of the good ol boys in all of the systems that seem to have helped Alex Murdaugh in one way or another over the years while absolutely failing the rest of us, especially the people that hurt the system is not fine, and we will not rest until we get answers and accountability and justice for the victims. Stay tuned. Now for some positive news to end the episode on this week. Attorney Justin Bamberg confirmed that Palmetto State Bank and the Parker Law Group previously known as PMPED have reached a settlement with a number of Alex Murdaugh's financial victims who are now being represented by Justin Bamberg, including the Pinckney family details of the settlement including the amount cannot be disclosed due to terms of the agreement but we did talk to Justin about the settlement this week.

Justin Bamberg 39:55

I think it's fair to say that on you know, the Pinckney matter has resolved, you know, we reached a settlement with PMPED. And with Palmetto State Bank, which included Russell Laffitte, okay. And, you



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know, I can't talk on amounts and stuff like that. But I will say that the resolution was one it needed to happen. Everybody realized that it did happen. I mean, honestly speaking, the farm, the bank, whoever, if they wanted a long drawn out legal fight with the Pinckney family, that is something that they could have chosen to do. And they didn't. And we were able to work it out in a way that worked for everybody. And I think there's something to be said there, because they've been through enough.

Mandy Matney 40:47

Well, a settlement was reached with some of the parties Justin Bamberg was clear, he is not done yet, in this case, and Alex is up next.

Justin Bamberg 40:59

We're not done. In terms of claims, we are still pursuing Alex Murdaugh, to get the paint in the family's respective share of whatever the CO receivers can compile in terms of Alex assets. I mean, Alex, oh, so many people, I don't know that anybody will ever get everything they do from him. But again, when you when you ask yourself, What's justice, in this case with him, the terms of a settlement civil side or civil claims, it's really a half is what's going on now. You know, the criminal prosecution of him unrelenting pursuits of him, getting prison time for what he did to these people. And then on the civil side, it's, it's not even about how much you get from him. It's about how little was left for himself at the end of this process, you know, like he should have nothing.

Mandy Matney 41:52



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I don't care about the amount of money that these victims got in the settlement. That is their business, not mine. But I do care about how they feel after all of this, especially miss Pamela Pinckney, who has been a bright light in this very dark story. If you remember, we spoke to miss Pamela in Episode 28. And the interview was heartbreaking. So I asked Justin, how is Miss Pamela doing after the settlement? Does she feel like she's getting some justice?

Justin Bamberg 42:22

There's a degree of weight that lands on your shoulders when you find out something horrible has taken place and that Alex had stolen money from you betrayed you, you know, the rustle of fee was involved with Alex, you know, and Cory Fleming and there's a certain weight that that puts on your shoulders because now you're dealing with not just reliving Hakeem's, they're reliving your own, you know, bodily distortion that took place because of your injuries. And now, you know, people are lying to you. So there is a large weight, that, in part lifted off the shoulders because of being able to put this behind her, you know, because at the end of the day, it's not that any of this was really about money, as much as it was about accountability and about, you know, the right thing happening to people, her and others, the right thing happened to people who had been done wrong by Alex and Russell in court, you know, and, I mean, it's a little bit relieving a sigh of relief. They're just like, there was a sigh of relief when Russell Laffitte gets indicted by the Fed, you know, all these things that went wrong in life. And now, because of the hard work of a lot of people and reporters like you, and lawyers like Eric and me and his partner, Ronnie Richter, and



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others, you know, for a lot of these people, it's like, you know what, something good is finally happening to me.

Mandy Matney 44:01

The Murdaugh Murders Podcast is created by me, Mandy Matney, and my fiance David Moses, our executive editor is Liz Farrell.

DAVID MOSES 44:08

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PODCAST