



EPISODE 31: 2023 Rewind, The Audacity of Alex Murdaugh + Becky Hill's Biggest Errors...So Far

Mandy Matney 00:02

I don't know how Justice Jean Toal will rule when Alex Murdaugh gets his evidentiary hearing next month but this week as we pause and reflect on the past year, it is more clear to us than ever that Team Murdaugh does not deserve a do over. My name is Mandy Matney. This is *True Sunlight*, a podcast exposing crime and corruption previously known as the Murdaugh Murders podcast. True Sunlight is a LunaShark production written with journalist Liz Farrell.

Well, Happy Holidays from all of us at LunaShark. We are incredibly thankful for those of you loyal listeners who even stick around to hear what we have to say on holiday weeks. We are excited to celebrate with y'all on Friday at the LunaShark holiday party. Members be sure to check your emails for details. There will be surprise guests and giveaways. This year was a wild one. From the six-week emotional roller coaster of Alex Murdaugh's trial to Jerrod Price's unbelievable prison release, to pulling strings in the Solomon case in Tennessee, to finally seeing accountability for Cory Fleming and Russell Laffitte and then ultimately being sucked back into Dick and Jim's madness as their over the top plot to get Alex Murdaugh a new trial unfolded. And sadly, Stephen Smith's case, once again, got pushed to the backburner which we will plan to change in 2024 with our new website answersforstephen.com for all Smith related tips. It was a year full of whiplash triumph, heartbreak, shock, horror and betrayal with a little bit of hope for humanity and justice in between. Our team was tested many times as the evil doers of the world did their best to destroy us through an awful online hate campaign. Ultimately, this year we saw the best and the worst of humanity. We saw the brave women who testified against Alex Murdaugh during his trial. We saw the financial victims who managed to show so much grace and forgiveness, all for a man who took advantage of their pain. We saw our listeners time and



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time again, show up for us and stand up for us when it mattered the most. Y'all sent us letters of praise and encouragement and reminded us 1,000 times over how important the work that we do really is and how we must keep going. We even got praise from THE Sheryl Crow this year. I still can't believe that happened. And then we saw a lot of awful people do some really horrible things. We saw Dick and Jim play mind games with the Satterfield's. We saw filthy rich PMPED attorneys cut in the lines of victims. We saw Russell and his attorneys go to great lengths to procrastinate his prison time. We saw attorneys elbowing each other out for just a taste of the Murdaugh attention. And we saw members of the media purposely spin the truth on behalf of bad people. And then there was Becky Hill, maybe the most disappointing human out of all of them this year. I say disappointing, because I allowed my personal bias to assume that she was more of a decent person simply because she was a woman being vilified for what seemed like nothing more than a scheme to get Alex Murdaugh out of prison. I feel foolish forever sympathizing with her and I feel even worse for ever leading my audience to have sympathy for her at all. While we still haven't seen any evidence of jury tampering, we have seen enough to know that Becky's reckless and egregious behavior has played right into the Murdaugh's hands. While her unethical actions certainly do not mean that Alex automatically deserved the new trial, they do make his chances greater and they make matters a lot more confusing for Justice Jean Toal's decision next month. Speaking of Justice Jean Toal replied to LunaShark shark reporter Beth Brandon's inquiry this week and confirmed that the hearing for Alex's motion for a new trial is tentatively scheduled for January 29th, 30th and 31st in Richland County. Justice Toal told us that she expects to issue an order regarding media coverage soon. I'm a little bit more hopeful about Justice Toal because, first of all, she was nice enough to respond to a reporters email during the holidays. And two, she seems to be supportive of meeting the media's needs for transparency in this hearing. But again, the situation



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just got a lot more complicated and harder to predict after more than 2,000 of Becky Hill's emails were released to the media via FOIA request. And wow, those emails were bad for Becky, bad for Becky and her credibility. However, the emails did not show any evidence of jury tampering. Let's be clear on that one.

Liz Farrell 05:43

So we're going to guess that Colleton County Clerk of Court Becky Hill had the Christmas she deserved. One filled with regret, stress and we hope, a lot of self-reflection. As well as the drafting of some apology letters because she owes a bunch of them. Specifically, she owes a big apology to everyone for the chaos she's created with Alex's case by rushing to publish her book. It's been sickening to watch people fall into Dick and Jim's trap as they continue to conflate her alleged ethical violations and her son's wiretapping arrest with the still unfounded allegations of jury tampering. She also owes an apology to us for the lie she spread about us being banned from the courtroom and to Eric Bland for saying he'd been reprimanded for taking a selfie in the courtroom. Neither of those things happened, not even a little bit. Yet, she breezily allowed members of the media, as well as some trolls she partied with during the trial believe they had. Why? Because she knew it's what they wanted to hear. Confirming their incorrect assumptions and extrapolations made her the girl with the room's attention. And she had nothing to lose with us because like we've said, we had no relationship with her. None. We were polite and professional and nothing more. Oh, and Becky owes an apology to Neil Gordon, her co-author for tainting and tanking their book. The Murdaugh case has never been a slow ride. There have always been twists and turns and revelations that are hard to reconcile with what goes on in normal everyday life. But Becky has taken it to an entirely new level and like with Alex there seems to be no bottom here. It's just getting worse and worse. And frankly, it's the dumbest thing we've seen thus far in this



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case, just extraordinarily dumb. On Tuesday morning, the second that Christmas was over Becky's co-author Neil announced to the press that he had halted sales of *Behind the Doors of Justice*, the book he and Becky speed wrote and published in July. Why? Because ole' Becky plagiarized the intro from a story written by a reporter with the BBC. She stole it. It's not clear whether Becky thought that because this was foreign press, she could get away with copying and pasting the reporter's text and no one in the United States would be the wiser. And actually, now that I think about it, she would not have been wrong. This plagiarism wasn't even discovered until Colleton County did a massive data dump of her emails from the past year last Thursday. It seems like no one noticed before that. It is beyond bizarre. Neither of us can wrap our heads around plagiarism, not just because of how easily discoverable it is in this day and age, but the idea of taking someone else's work and presenting it as your own. Even if no one were to ever find out, it is the dirtiest of dirty. In the writing world it is akin to stolen valor. It's a moral failure. Throughout her book, Becky referenced how she'd always wanted to write a book. She went into the trial with the idea of writing one on her mind. But the point of writing a book would be to write one, not steal someone else's work. According to a statement that Becky put out through her attorneys, Will Lewis and Justin Bamberg, she plagiarized the BBC story because of so-called pressures and time constraints involved with the publishing of the book. The pressure and time constraints Becky felt were self-imposed. It was a self-published book. More than that, let's be clear about what the pressure was. It was to be first, she rushed the writing of her book so she could get the book about the trial out the door before anyone else. And here we are. In our business, some reporters and news agencies and publishing houses put a lot of stock in being out there first with the information, which is great. Breaking news is really fun. But we've always believed there's no point in being first if you're also not the best. In other words, the mad dash to being first can get you in a lot of



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trouble and it can hurt people. For instance, with the release of Becky's 2,000 emails. In the rush to be first a news agency published the entirety of the FOIA release without apparently looking at them. In releasing these emails, they not only needlessly expose a woman with special needs to online harassment by publishing her personal information, which we talked about Tuesday on *Cup of Justice*, they published a link to unredacted photos of Paul Murdaugh's body in violation of Judge Newman's order. We'll talk more about what was in Becky's emails in another episode, but her plagiarism was discovered in the email dump from Colleton County. BBC reporter Holly Honderich accidentally sent Becky a draft of a story she had written about the trial. The draft was meant for her editor who is also named Rebecca. When Holly discovered her error, she told Becky to disregard the email. Becky did not disregard the email. Instead, she responded by telling Holly how well written her story was, then she lifted whole passages of it to use in her own book. It is baffling why she or anyone would do that. And frankly, it's baffling why this wasn't caught before, especially given the quote she cited in her introduction from interviews she herself never conducted. So that's another disaster with Becky sitting at the center of it. We touch on some of this in *Cup of Justice*. But going back to her lie about us being banned from the courtroom, when she told Thad Moore from the *Post and Courier* that it must be true because we weren't there. Great logic, right? We don't want to spend any more time having to defend ourselves over something so dumb, that simply did not happen. So we invite our trolls or anyone who wants to hear it for themselves to call Jay Bender, the longtime First Amendment attorney who not only is Justice Jean Toal's former law partner, served as the media liaison for the trial. Or better yet, call Judge Newman's office to find out whether or not Mandy and Liz were escorted from the courtroom and ordered not to return. We promise you had either of those things happened, we would have raised hot, holy hell over it. And more than that, had either of those things happened, it would have



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been in the headlines. That's why Thad Moore was asking Becky about the rumor. It would have been big news if we or any other reporter had been sanctioned in any way connected to Alex Murdaugh. Additionally, in what world would Dick and Jim not have been shouting that from the rooftops this entire time? The only people who have been spreading this rumor have been bloggers who have known better this entire time and a podcaster, who appears to have drawn her own conclusions when she saw me asking a bailiff if I could use the bathroom. He came over to tell me that the hallway was clear and I could now use it. Their goal was and is to destroy our professional reputations and our professional standing in the story. And it really sucks that Becky had a part in that. We have been one of the only outlets to extend compassion to her during this entire ordeal because we know that regardless of whether she's ultimately found guilty of an unrelated ethical violation, her life has been blown up in an effort to confuse people into believing Alex didn't get a fair trial, and that is wrong. And it's only happening because Alex Murdaugh has the money and power to make it happen. And because Becky made it really easy for him. Which brings us to this wild and crazy year. For today's episode, we've revisited some of the most notable moments on our show during the past 12 months, particularly the parts that are important now as Alex is attempting to get a new trial. 2023 started off with news that after nearly four years, Buster Murdaugh was tapping out of the Mallory Beach case. All of Maggie's has stayed except for the \$500,000 that they allowed Buster to keep would be going to the Beach family and the boat crash victims. It seemed promising. Like maybe Buster was trying to cut ties with Alex before the trial. Like maybe the Murdaugh family had accepted that they'd come to the end of the road with their power and influence. Like maybe it was time to forge a new path instead of relying on the previous path built by the three Randolph's. Little did we know he'd end up sitting behind Alex for six weeks and then taking part in a *Fox Nation* documentary that seemed to be nothing more than new trial



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propaganda for Team Murdaugh. Also in January, right before Alex's trial started, we got the horrible news that Judge Newman's 40-year old son Brian had died unexpectedly. A judge mourning the loss of his own beloved son while presiding over the trial of a man who had been accused of killing his. It was a stunning reminder that everything involving Alex Murdaugh seemed like a story that could have been written by John Grisham. In January, we had our eye on the Idaho case in which a criminal studies doctoral student had just been arrested for the murders of four college students. Going into the trial that case put a lot of things in perspective about Alex's case and it's interesting to revisit where our heads were right before the trial started. Here's a clip from Murdaugh Murder's Podcast Episode 75:

Mandy Matney 14:39

We have been told all along that officials were keeping the information in this case tight because they were up against Dick and Jim, the big bad wolves of SC law or so they used to seem. And the thing is, a lot of the information we have learned about the evidence has come from the defense. And because of that, it's just really hard to predict the totality of evidence here. I talk to a lot of low country locals about this case, and I've noticed a very common theme recently. A lot of people believe that he did it, but they doubt that the State can prove that. They say things like, "Look Alex looks guilty as hell. But will the State be able to prove that beyond a reasonable doubt?" They say things like, "All Dick and Jim need is one juror." They say things like, "We saw how chaotic Russell's trial was and how Russell had a pile of evidence against him. Do we really think the AG's office can convict Alex Murdaugh in the double homicide?" And they say things like, "You saw how sloppy the State was with the blood spatter evidence." And, "You sure cousin Eddie didn't do this?" These are things people say to me in restaurants and bars and public restrooms. My life is weird. Have I mentioned how badly that I want this trial to be over with? Anyway,



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from what I've gathered, Dick and Jim, who are highly experienced and media manipulation and have their fair share of friends in the press have, in my opinion, successfully planted seeds of doubt in the public. All of those cousin Eddie polygraph and DNA headlines have appeared to work in favor of the defense. By the way, the Post and Courier reported this week that cousin Eddie's attorney says his DNA was compared with the DNA at the double homicide scene and that he was excluded as a suspect. Just to put that to rest. We hope that the State's case is as good as the case in Idaho appears to be. We hope that we will be just as impressed in two weeks when the State begins to lay out it's case and call witnesses. And let's be clear too, it's very hard to judge an investigation before trial. But at the same time, we hope that state officials learn from this. We hope that South Carolina learns that transparency matters, especially when public corruption is alleged. We hope they see what we have pointed out with the two justice systems. And we hope that things change. We hope that the lack of transparency in this case where we had to constantly scrap and fight for information behind the scenes just to keep accountability at the forefront has not been because of politics. Are the people at the top the ones who work for us in the public still afraid to speak out against a Murdaugh? And if so, is it because of all of those who secretly remain and Murdaugh's corner because of whatever those people may be protecting because of wherever Alex's money really went.

Liz Farrell 18:03

It's actually chilling to hear this. It makes us look around at where we are now and think, "Are we back at square one? Please tell us we are not back at square one." Regardless, it's interesting to see where we were then and how the trial of the century wasn't always that way. We went into it thinking it would be two weeks long, maybe three. We should have known from Dick's opening statement that we were in for the longest rollercoaster ride of our lives. Here's a clip from MMP Episode 77:



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Mandy Matney 18:33

Think of Big Creighton Energy but the opposite of that. Get it? Okay. In all seriousness, I'm going to start by saying that it is very obvious that I do not like Dick Harpootlian. I think he's arrogant. I think he's over hyped and over the hill. I think he was successful in a world that was made for men like him to succeed, which I am not impressed by. But my opinions about Dick do not matter here. What will matter are the jury's opinions. And to the jury, Dick wanted them to see a different Alex Murdaugh than the world has seen. They wanted to see Alex, the family man. Alex, the loving husband. The Alex that Dick said he is honored to represent. You know, the Alex who admitted to stealing millions of dollars from his dead housekeeper's children. Honored.

Dick Harpootlian 19:32

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, my name is Dick Harpootlian and I introduce myself to y'all and our attorneys, the three other attorneys, Jim Griffin, Phillip Barber, Margaret Fox. It is our honor to represent Alex Murdaugh. Or "Murdoch" depending on how you pronounce it. I say it's our honor, because I submit to you what you have heard from the Attorney General as facts are not. Are not. They're his theories, his conjecture. Alex stand up. This is Alex Murdaugh. And Alex was the loving father of Paul, and the loving husband of Maggie. You're not going to hear a single witness say that their relationship, Maggie and Alex's relationship, was anything other than loving. You're gonna hear about how they went to a baseball game the weekend before. You're gonna hear about their relationship, you're gonna see text and emails indicating a loving relationship.

Liz Farrell 20:57

I think we can all say that we know Dick has no honor now, right? And then he was never actually honored to be defending Alex. He likes the money and the attention and the sound of his own name. By the way,



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does anyone remember hearing about Maggie and Alex's loving relationship during that trial? We seem to remember how Alex basically described his wife whom he barely mentioned as being a "woman". And when you remember during the in camera hearing how it came out that Maggie had suspected Alex of a long time affair, but sure, we'll call it loving. The thing that still makes us shake our heads, by the way, is how Dick thought that one of his best strategies would be to get as graphic as possible about the deaths. But now that he knows Becky had warned jurors of the graphic nature of photos they were about to see he's clutching at his pearls. In the lead up to the trial, we could tell Dick was going to go in that direction using phrases like, "Paul's head exploded like a watermelon." He so badly wanted this jury to believe that Alex was dad of the year and that the dad of the year couldn't possibly have butchered his own family.

Dick Harpootlian 22:00

Paul, the apple of his eye. You're going to see a video somewhere between 7:30 and 8:00, the night of the murders, with Paul and Alex riding around looking at some trees they planted. It's a Snapchat that Paul sent to other people because the trees were not planted very well. They were cantilevering over. They're laughing. They're having a good time. That would be about an hour before the Attorney General says he slaughtered them. When I say he slaughtered them, they were slaughtered, no question. Paul Murdaugh was shot twice with buckshot, 12-gauge buckshot. Once in the chest...and by the way, that shot, it would indicate it was in the chest and came out under his arm. Like somebody that might have been holding up their hands. So when he says no defensive wounds, he perhaps is being held at shotgun. I mean, I can make the same sort of speculation that the Attorney General can because that's all he's doing is speculating. What we do know is 12-gauge, fairly close range, shot to the chest. He must have



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been turned because it comes out under his arm. There's wadding if you're familiar with shotguns, under his arm.

Liz Farrell 23:25

I mean, honestly, can you guys imagine a round two of this meandering nonsense? Can you imagine another six weeks of listening to this guy?

Mandy Matney 23:41

In February, the prosecution scored one of its biggest wins throughout the entire trial by getting Judge Newman to allow evidence related to Alex's financial crimes on the record. You know, it is frustrating looking back on everything that happened during the trial and seeing just how many obvious and stupid mistakes Team Murdaugh made. Mistakes that they might get to fix if they get a round two due to Becky's reckless mistakes. One of those team Murdaugh mistakes happened in early February as Jim Griffin was cross examining one of Paul Murdaugh's best friend's, Will Loving. Jim played a birthday video showing the Murdaugh family, along with Chris Wilson celebrating Alex Murdaugh's last birthday as a free man. Griffin wanted to show the jurors that they were a happy loving family and he asked Will loving if he believed Alex had a reason to kill his family. With that question the door to the financial crimes swung wide open, allowing Creighton Waters to do this:

Creighton Waters 24:50

Go back to the, to your video if you would please. Can y'all turn that screen around for me please. Who's that guy in the green shirt? Do you know?

Will Loving 25:07

That's Chris Wilson.



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Creighton Waters 25:09

Do you know Chris Wilson's relationship to Alex Wilson...or Alex Murdaugh?

Will Loving 25:12

Yeah, they're best friends.

Creighton Waters 25:14

Best friends. Best friends should do each other right isn't that correct?

Mandy Matney 25:22

And then he did this:

Creighton Waters 25:23

Did you know anything about Alex's finances?

Will Loving 25:29

No, I did not.

Creighton Waters 25:30

Did you know anything about his law practice?

Will Loving 25:33

No, I did not.

Creighton Waters 25:35

Did you know anything about where he gets his money?

Will Loving 25:40

No, I did not.



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Creighton Waters 25:41

Did you know anything about where he was spending his money?

Will Loving 25:45

No, I did not.

Creighton Waters 25:46

Did you know anything about what his bank account balances were?

Will Loving 25:50

No, sir. I did not.

Creighton Waters 25:51

Did you know anything about the debt that he was carrying? Do you know anything about that?

Will Loving 25:55

No sir.

Creighton Waters 25:56

Did you know the specific things that were going on in the boat case the week that Paul and Maggie were murdered? Did you know anything about civil discovery and how it can expose financial information?

Will Loving 26:03

No, sir.

Creighton Waters 26:10

Do you know anything at all about him being confronted on June 7, 2021 about...



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Jim Griffin 26:16

Your honor. Object.

Judge Clifton Newman 26:18

Let me hear the question.

Creighton Waters 26:19

Did you know anything about him being confronted on the morning of June 7, 2021 about \$792,000 of missing fees from his law firm?

Jim Griffin 26:30

Objection your honor. Totally improper.

Judge Clifton Newman 26:33

Objection is overruled.

Creighton Waters 26:35

Did you know anything about that?

Will Loving 26:37

No, I did not.

Creighton Waters 26:39

Did you know any of the facts of those things that I just asked you about?

Will Loving 26:43

No, sir.

Mandy Matney 26:47

Ultimately, Judge Newman said that because Jim asked Will loving a character witness question, it opened the door for the state to present



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further evidence of Alex's financial crimes. Which then led to an in camera hearing, and then led to that evidence being allowed in. AKA it was a big mistake that Jim asked Will Loving that question. Now, that is the type of mistake combined with a ruling in favor of the prosecution that might be tough to repeat. Was it fair? Absolutely. Did it require really good lawyering on Creighton's end to seize the moment and really sloppy lawyering on Jim's part? Yes. Let's be clear, the financial crimes explain Alex's motive. Even though the State doesn't have to prove motive for its case, they do have to prove malice and they can use motive to prove malice. Despite that, however, juries are made up of human beings who tend to need a motive, especially when it comes to a crime this horrendous where a father is accused of killing his wife and son. Scott Peterson, well, he had an affair and major financial pressure. Chris watts, he also was having an affair and also major financial problems. These motives were clear cut and ultimately helped jurors find those men guilty. But Alex Murdaugh's situation was a bit more complicated. The financial witnesses were crucial because they also laid out a clear timeline leading up to the murders that pointed directly at Alex. Of course, there has been some criticism about Judge Newman's decision to allow in this financial testimony. Alex's appeal is wholly based on that decision. But people shouldn't forget why Judge Newman made this decision. It wasn't out of thin air. It wasn't made out of biased against Alex. It was made because Alex's own attorney wanted the jury to hear about Alex's character, but only the good parts. Not the part where his entire career depended on a financial scheme that was quickly falling apart at the seams. Mark Tinsley, the Beaches family attorney, was one of those crucial witnesses. He was on to Alex and his sketchy finances in the months leading up to the murders. It was no secret Mark was suing Alex Murdaugh for millions of dollars. But Alex Murdaugh was dodging him and refusing to release his financial records as a part of the case. Mark knew something was up and he knew the kind of money Alex and his law firm were raking in. Yet Alex



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was pretending to be broke with no deep pockets for the Beach family to go after. No sir, Mark Tinsley said, not buying that. Mark made it clear to the jury that June 10th, three days after the murders was going to be a big day in the boat crash case in that Judge Hall was going to compel Alex to disclose his finances which would have meant big trouble for Alex since he had stolen millions of dollars from his clients at that point and no one apparently knew about it. To make the timeline even sharper, PMPED CFO, Jeanne Seckinger testified about the confrontation at PMPED on the day of June 7th, the first time Alex's law firm ever officially confronted him about the missing \$690,000 from the Chris Wilson case. She also told the jury that Alex's father, the true powerhouse of the family, was dying that week. Was the jury really supposed to believe that on the week that his wife and son were murdered Alex Murdaugh's criminal empire just happened to be on the verge of collapsing and those two things were completely separate? Those financial crime testimonies were a lot more powerful than the talking heads on TV made them out to be. And I worry about the outcome of another trial without them. In February, we also learned just how sloppy the crime scene was. Again, this is really frustrating because sloppiness and incompetence always works out in Alex's favor. Look at Becky right now. Check out this clip from Episode 80 of MMP:

Mandy Matney 31:12

We have got to talk about SLED's investigation. I'm going to be honest, I've had a lot of questions while watching this trial especially in the last few days. Why wasn't Alex treated like a suspect initially when he was the husband and the first person to find the bodies? Why wasn't all of Moselle treated as a crime scene? Why were Alex's law partners and friends allowed on the crime scene? What happened with the blood spatter evidence? Why is it not entered into court? Why did it take until September to search Alameda? Why was this investigation so slow? Why no urgency when two people had been murdered? And why was



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Alex still allowed to carry a solicitor's office badge when he had lied multiple times to police about the murder of his wife and son when he was the only suspect? I think I know the answer. And I hate to say it because I feel like a broken record right now. I believe it's power, privilege and the two systems of justice that allow for these kinds of mistakes that gave this kind of leeway to a man like Alex Murdaugh. If Alex were an average man, I think he would have been hauled in immediately. I don't think any of his friends would have been allowed anywhere near the crime scene. I think charges would have happened a lot sooner. And I think the investigation would be a lot more complete. And if Alex Murdaugh were an average man with a public defender, I think this trial would have been over a long time ago. But Alex is not average. So here we are in the middle of week four with no end in sight. I want to be clear though, I don't think the anomalies in the investigation mean that the State has no case. If anything, the holes in the investigation have benefitted Alex. One of the questions the defense asked the lead SLED agent on Wednesday was why Alameda wasn't searched that night. That SLED agent had a quick answer, "Because there was no probable cause to do so. Alex was not a suspect yet." And that's really the issue here. SLED did not consider Alex a suspect until there was no choice. This is where the evidence took them. We keep saying it because it's true. It would have been much easier for the State if Alex was not the suspect. The other thing I want to mention is what we've been saying again and again. Solicitor Duffy Stone didn't recuse himself for more than two months. That means his office, the office Alex worked for, was calling the shots. Were agents shut down when they suggested getting warrants for the powerful and almighty former solicitor Randolph Murdaugh's home? Were agents hindered in the collection of evidence because of Duffy's involvement? We already know that his involvement caused a delay in the retrieval of Alex's phone data and that led to some information getting overwritten. So again, what we're seeing right now with the questions



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being raised about the thoroughness of the investigation, we think most of that is attributable to the deference that was being paid to the Murdaugh's and their powerful friends.

Mandy Matney 34:38

I have to point this out again, the deference. How is it that this man gets to take advantage of every mistake made by a sloppy system? A system his family helped build. How is that possible after a jury found him guilty despite those big mistakes that leaned in his favor? And now he gets to take advantage of a clerk of court's recklessness by spinning it into a confusing and unpredictable bid for a new trial. Finally, throughout the month of February we saw that the State day-by-day was inching ahead of the defense in the game of lawyering. The prosecution called powerful emotional witnesses to the stand like Maggie's sister, Marion Proctor and caretaker Shelly Smith. That raw earth shattering emotion simply was not there for the defense. For example, Buster's testimony felt flat and colorless. He could have been nervous, but it was hard for the world to relate to the son of a legal dynasty who couldn't remember his dad's birthday.

Jim Griffin 35:57

What was your dad's birthday? Do you know the exact date? It's not a test if you say you don't know if you don't.

Buster Murdaugh 36:04

No, I don't...I don't know that exactly.

Jim Griffin 36:06

It's around Memorial Day?

Buster Murdaugh 36:07

That's right. The 27th maybe.



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Mandy Matney 36:11

And then there was Alex's brother, John Marvin who failed miserably at his attempt to get sympathy for Alex when he told a very odd story about Alex messing himself:

Jim Griffin 36:24

And was able to control himself?

John Marvin Murdaugh 36:27

No, sir. I said about detail. So he, he messed himself. He, he had diarrhea. Just couldn't control it.

Jim Griffin 36:42

And then um...

John Marvin Murdaugh 36:44

And I say diarrhea, I'm not talking about in a restroom, I'm talking about in the car, in his pants.

Mandy Matney 36:50

While I think they were aiming for sympathy there, the world really just heard that and thought, "Ewww, who are these people?" It didn't get much better with the defense's other witnesses. For months, the media hyped up Dick and Jim as the holy grail of attorneys equipped with the most impressive and expensive experts in the land. That reputation quickly began to crumble when the defense called one of their very first witnesses who will forever be remembered as the armpit guy.

Coroner Richard Harvey 37:22

My initial processing was that I went and checked both bodies and I simply put my hands in their...in their armpits to determine how warm



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they are. This is one of the things we do sometimes to try and estimate a time of death. Is the body cold? Is the body warm?

Mandy Matney 37:47

Yikes. That didn't land like it was supposed to with the jury. Neither did the whole five foot two shooter theory from their expert who called himself a forensic engineer, but was actually hired as an expert to defend Paul in the boat crash and this was his first murder trial. These appear to be sloppy attorney mistakes. Mistakes that the defense team made because they believe they could outsmart the jury with their absurd distractions. Again, when we go back and analyze why the jury came to its conclusion we need to think about all of these choices that Alex's team made that the jury ultimately rejected. Decisions that had nothing to do with Becky Hill. Perhaps the biggest and ballsiest mistake they made next to opening the door for Alex's financial crimes was putting Alex Murdaugh aka liar liar pants on fire, man who swindled motherless children and the grieving and disabled on the stand. Dick and Jim claimed to do this because Alex wanted to. And because they needed a big move for the jury to get past the big lie aka the video that proved Alex Murdaugh lied when he said that he wasn't at the kennels moments before his wife and son were murdered. This was arguably the most important piece of evidence against him. In fact, a juror told *The Today Show* that she believed it would have been a hung jury without that video. And multiple jurors told *The Today Show* that Alex didn't help his case at all by testifying. But of course he testified and of course he came across as a manipulative egomaniac. Here is Jim Griffin setting Alex up to address the big lie:

Jim Griffin 39:35

In 2021, did you take this gun or any gun like it and shoot your son, Paul in the chest in the feed room at your property off Moselle Road?



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Alex Murdaugh 39:46

No, I did not.

Jim Griffin 39:48

Mr. Murdaugh, did you take this gun or any gun like it and blow your son's brains out on June 7th, or any day or anytime?

Alex Murdaugh 39:59

No, I did not.

Jim Griffin 40:03

Mr. Murdaugh, did you take the 300 Blackout such as this and fire into your wife Maggie's leg, torso or any part of her body?

Alex Murdaugh 40:18

No, I did not.

Jim Griffin 40:20

Did you shoot a 300 Blackout into her head causing her death?

Alex Murdaugh 40:28

Mr. Griffin, I didn't shoot my wife or my son anytime. Ever.

Jim Griffin 40:40

Mr. Murdaugh, is that you on the kennel video at 8:44pm on June 7th, the night Maggie and Paul were murdered?

Alex Murdaugh 40:48

It is.



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Jim Griffin 40:53

Were you in fact at the kennels at 8:44pm on the night Maggie and Paul were murdered.

Alex Murdaugh 40:55

I was.

Jim Griffin 40:57

Did you lie to SLED Agent Owen and a Deputy Laura Rutland on the night of June 7th, and tell them that you stayed at the house after dinner?

Alex Murdaugh 41:08

I did lie to them.

Jim Griffin 41:09

Did you lie to Agent Owen and Agent Croft from the follow up interview on June 10th that the last time you saw Maggie and Paul was at dinner?

Alex Murdaugh 41:19

I did lie to them.

Jim Griffin 41:23

And in the interview of August 11th, did you tell Agent Owen and Agent Crawl...did you lie to them by telling them that you were not down on the kennels on that night?

Alex Murdaugh 41:36

Yes.



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Jim Griffin 41:41

Alex, why did you lie to Agent Owen, Agent Croft and Deputy Rutland about the last time you saw Maggie and Paul?

Alex Murdaugh 41:49

As my addiction evolved over time I would get any situations and circumstances where I would get paranoid thinking. It could be anything that triggered it. It might be a look somebody gave me, it might be a reaction somebody had to something I did, it might be a policeman following me in a car. That night, June 7th after finding Mags and Paul, Paw Paw...don't talk to anybody without Danny with you. All my partners were just repeatedly telling me that. I had a deputy sheriff taking gunshot tests from my hands. I'm sitting in a police car with David Owen asking me about my relationship with my wife and my son. And all those things coupled together after finding them coupled with my distrust for SLED caused me to have paranoid thoughts. Normally when these paranoid thoughts would hit me I could take a deep breath real quick, think about it, reason my way through it and just get past it really quickly. On June the 7th I wasn't thinking clearly. I don't think I was capable of reason and I lied about being down there. And I'm so sorry that I did. I'm sorry to my son, Buster. I'm sorry to Grandma and Papa T. I'm sorry to both of our families. Most of all, I'm sorry to Mags and Paw Paw. I would never intentionally do anything to hurt either one of them ever. Ever.

Jim Griffin 44:48

Did you continue lying after that night? Did you not?

Alex Murdaugh 44:56

Once I lied, I continued to lie, yes sir. You know what a tangled web we weave. But once I told a lie, then I told my family, I had to keep lying.



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Mandy Matney 45:18

He said he lied, and lied more because he was addicted to drugs. But not addicted enough but he would murder his family in a rage spiral as his lies piled up too high for even 6'4 Alex Murdaugh to crawl out of. The defense has wanted the general public to believe that drugs were the root of Alex's problems since September 2021. The jury, like most of y'all listening to this podcast, did not buy it. And those men who should have listened to the public instead of their little echo chamber of trolls, they believe that they deserve a do over where they can scratch their bad theories and try again.

Liz Farrell 46:02

On March 1st, Dick and Jim thought it would be a great idea to take the jury to Moselle so they could see for themselves how Alex did not kill Maggie and Paul. Instead, the jury saw for themselves how he could kill them and how he did kill them. And that's after Team Murdaugh's ridiculous attempts at redesigning the set. I'm not even kidding. You remember all the weird touches they had put up at Moselle? Like having a shirt hanging in the window of the house in the hopes the jury would be like, "Oh, maybe that's the shirt he was wearing that Blanca said she never saw again." And having a bicycle parked outside, as if Maggie had just been taking a leisurely ride down to the kennels that night and had not ridden down on the golf cart with Alex. And the stuffed animal chicken in the kennel. Was that to get the jury to have a shared chuckle over Bubba? Maybe that dead chicken that was put up on top of the kennels wasn't the chicken they were talking about on the video that Alex didn't know existed when he made up his alibi. Maybe it was a stuffed chicken this whole time. It was pathetic. Their case was so weak that they needed to rely on subliminal messages, because what else did they have? They had a man who had lied about his alibi until the video proved him wrong. Lied about the existence of a 300 Blackout until a cashed-check told on him. Lied about how long he was at his



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mother's house until his mother's caretaker told on him. Lied about what he was wearing until his maid told on him. Lied about this being tied to the boat crash victims until their DNA and alibis proved otherwise. Lied about having Maggie's phone until his GPS told on him. Lied about getting shot by someone who looked like Mallory Beach's boyfriend until his slashed tire told on him. Oh, and then there was that fun little theory that Paul and Maggie could only have been killed by two 5'2 weaponless bandits who happen to show up in the tiny window of time between when Alex left the kennels and got to the house. And they want to do this again. They want to put the state of South Carolina through these antics again. The next day after this trip to Moselle the jury came back with its verdict and in Episode 83 Mandy finally got to say the words:

Mandy Matney 48:12

I now know beyond a reasonable doubt that Alex Murdaugh murdered his wife, Maggie and his son Paul, after a Colleton County jury found him guilty on all four counts. He was sentenced to life in prison. And that is a big deal.

Mandy Matney 48:30

It was such a great moment, not only for us feeling like what we do for a living matters, but we just felt so much pride in our chosen home state. In the people we weren't too sure of at first. In Episode 83, we got to talk to Creighton Waters for the first time. And naturally we asked him about the nicknames our listeners would chant online every time he came on the screen during trial.

Liz Farrell 48:58

And in case you're wondering whether he knew that people were cheering him on by calling him BCE i.e. Big Creighton energy, here's what he had to say about that:



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Creighton Waters 49:09

Well, yeah, I know that there's some t-shirts out there. And I've heard...what I've been told was that you're the one who kind of coined that term. Yeah, you know, I think, yeah, I've heard some of that. And, you know, I started...I did my first Tweet ever on Saturday. And, you know, obviously, I've seen that term used in some of the responses that people have been sending. And I think Friday you know, there were some people wearing that shirt. And I went over and spoke to them and took a picture with them. I figured I couldn't think what I was doing ahead of yourself and I couldn't just let them sit there and watch and not go over and speak to them. So, but yeah, I guess I do the thing now. Because you know, that trial was so exhausting. And I still, you know, I don't think, you know, I know I still haven't recovered yet. And I ended up losing like 10 pounds but, you know. Having that term out there you know, you know sometimes when you had to dig deep, you know you realize that you know that you had to give that energy right.

Liz Farrell 50:12

The entire team at the Attorney General's office delivered one of the most incredible professional performances we've seen in our careers. Team Murdaugh, not so much but at least they were entertaining I guess. Looking back on the final moments of Alex's trial and looking at where we are now I've come to wonder something. After the egg lady juror was dismissed it seemed like any wind that had been in the defensive sails, any internal courtroom wind that is, not the wind coming from some of the media and their pro defense coverage, or the trolls who were scrapping for their own social media territory in this, had died down significantly. There was a definite before and after energy from their table. Why was that? Team Murdaugh wants us to believe that the egg lady was just a juror who had not made up her mind yet. But according to the woman who heard the egg lady's tenants recount discussions they had had with the egg lady about the



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trial, the egg lady believed Alex was innocent. Did Team Murdaugh know that they had lost the only person on the jury who wasn't seeing the truth? Is that why Jim Griffin's closing arguments had all the energy of a clown whose balloon dog had popped. I mean, based on his performance alone, it's so obvious that what we're seeing now is a request for a do over, wrapped in a trumped up empty allegation of jury tampering. Their tricks didn't work the first time even though they had the best case scenario of juries, a group of people from a county run by Alex's family for generations. When the trial was over, and the verdict was in, we knew we couldn't stop pushing for change, because Alex's guilt and the murders was only part of the problem. Here again, is a clip from Episode 83:

Mandy Matney 51:47

Over the past few days, we've been reflecting on the magnitude of this case, and what we hope it will mean for the future of law enforcement and prosecution in our state. More specifically, what it will mean for the future of other powerful people who break the law and assume that they can pay their way out of the situation. Until we are all held accountable to the same laws, regardless of our positions of influence, our financial portfolios, our race, our age, or gender or sexual orientation or political beliefs, there will be no justice in the justice system. In our opinion, this verdict is a huge step in the right direction. We hope this outcome inspires those who work within the system and those of us who do not. Those of us on the sidelines who need to call out injustice when we see it. That said, the road to Alex Murdaugh being found guilty was not an easy one for anyone to travel. Starting with the night of the murders. Here is Colleton County Sheriff's deputy Chad McDowell about 17 minutes after he arrived at Mozelle:

Chad McDowell 53:00

Y'all familiar with this family? I wasn't until later.



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Liz Farrell 53:07

Hearing that on body camera was a stark reminder of how it is down here. Or at least how it was in June 2021. From the get go the Murdaugh name meant something to law enforcement. It meant that whatever the scenario was, their ability to do their jobs would be affected by this outside force, this undeniable influence in some way. This undeniable influence required an army to defeat it.

Mandy Matney 53:37

It's disheartening to re-listen to that knowing that the army didn't defeat the influence. It only held it back. Because here it is again rearing its ugly head. Before Judge Newman asked to be removed from hearing Team Murdaugh's motions for a new trial, Dick and Jim tried to use his words during Alex's sentencing against him. Words that still resonate with people all over the world who rightfully billed Judge Newman as America's judge. He represents the best of the justice system. And no matter how many times Dick and Jim try to throw him under the bus, we know that good people have his back.

Liz Farrell 54:22

Another important factor in this trial was the way Colleton County and the city of Walterboro welcomed the public and the media into their home. The high level of transparency and cooperation offered by clerk of court Becky Hill and her staff was fundamental to building public trust in the proceedings. And then there was Judge Newman. He was fair, he was wise and he was considerate. If the judicial system has a soul, it resides with this judge in Alex's final moments standing before the court. Judge Newman explained his reasoning behind the sentencing and in doing so he spoke the truth so real that his words continue to echo in the minds of all those who watched.



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Judge Clifton Newman 55:05

And I know you have to see Paul and Maggie during the night times when you're attempting to go to sleep. I'm sure they come and visit you. I'm sure. And they will continue to do so. And, and reflect on the last time they looked you in the eyes as you looked the jury in the eyes. I don't know, a person who's always been such a gregarious friendly person and caused their life to be tangled in such a weave...web, such a situation that you, yours has spun into. And it's so unfortunate because you had such a lovely family of such friendly people, including you. And to go from that to this. Your license to practice law has been stripped away from you. Turn from lawyer to witness. And now have an opportunity to make your final appeal as an ex-lawyer and it's almost, it's really surprising that you're waiving this right at this time. And if you opt to do so, it's on you. You're not compelled to say anything. But you have the opportunity to do so.

Alex Murdaugh 57:17

Again, I respect this court. But I'm innocent. I would never, under any circumstances hurt my wife Maggie. And I would never under any circumstances hurt my son Paw Paw.

Judge Clifton Newman 57:33

And it might not have been you. It might have been the monster you become when you take 15, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60 opioid pills. Maybe you become another person. I've seen that before. The person standing before me was not the person who committed the crime, though it's the same individual. We'll leave that at that.

Liz Farrell 58:16

Looking back now it should have been immediately cleared to us right after the trial that this wasn't the end. That losing was a contingency Dick and Jim had been preparing for on a parallel track all along. That



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they've been gathering footholds behind the scenes looking for every little crumb on the ground to zoom in on, enlarge and exploit. One of those footholds was Dick's lawyer pal, Joe McCullough sitting in the courtroom every day with the media pass on that he had gotten from Becky Hill saying that he was there to work on a screenplay. We knew then that it was fishy when the egg lady juror hired him to tell the media to leave her alone. We just didn't realize how fishy. Another sign was that one of the first post trial stories written by the *Post and Courier* was essentially a "there but for the grace of God go SLED" story about how the trial had exposed breakdowns in their investigatory practices. It wasn't so much that the PNC took this angle, it made sense when considering lessons learned during the trial. It was what the PNC didn't say. That SLED was immediately fighting an uphill battle not just against Alex Murdaugh, but Alex, his partners at PMPED, his family, his lawyers Dick and Jim and our very own solicitor, the Murdaughs chosen one and Alex's coworker, Duffy Stone. Whose presence at the scene was highly problematic. To fault the agency without noticing this tremendous influence at work was again missing the point of everything we'd all just been through. But also it further cemented an idea that Dick and Jim wanted out there. That SLED was bumbling, useless and sloppy when it came to Alex's investigation. Another thing that happened post trial was the very early release of murderer Jeriod Price, a man said to be the leader of the Blood's Gang in prison. A secret court order that had been signed and sealed in December was suddenly unsealed right after Alex was found guilty. Jeriod got this deal because his lawyer legislator Todd Rutherford, a man who sits on the commission to choose judges in this state, had been handed what he wanted by an early release deal Todd was able to get for him. And Jeriod wasn't the only prisoner who got released early because of Todd's stronghold on judges. We still believe the timing of Jeriod's release was suspicious considering the lag between when the order was signed and sealed and when it was finally unsealed and considering the magnitude



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of what happened. Meaning this case was basically a test to see if a fairly new law allowing for reduced sentencing for prisoners who provided meaningful assistance to Department of Corrections investigators could apply to convicted murderers. Who do we know that's a convicted murderer? Oh right, needless to say it was more evidence that our justice system is rotten from the inside out and that Alex Murdaugh was just one good ole boy lawyer in a state full of them.

Mandy Matney 1:01:04

After the trial, we wanted to refocus our effort on the Stephen Smith case and getting to the bottom of what happened to Gloria Satterfield. And we did get some momentum going there. Our COJ co-host Eric Bland and his partner Ronnie Richter began representing Sandy Smith and they used the money raised from Sandy's GoFundMe campaign to reopen the case forensically. At the same time, Eric and Ronnie were able to secure promises from SLED that solving this case really mattered to them. And in the meantime, we began to work on a new case for us, the Grant Solomon case out of Nashville, Tennessee. We even changed the name of our podcast from Murdaugh Murder's Podcast to True Sunlight podcast in May, with the idea that we would still be covering some of the Murdaugh cases, but we would be venturing down new paths bringing sunlight to new parts of the country where it was so desperately needed. Even as our focus shifted, we could sense that the Murdaugh story wasn't ready to quit us. Alex and his bestie co-conspirator, Corey Fleming were indicted federally bringing with it more suspicions that their power and influence still meant something. There was Cory's federal sentencing and a state sentencing and then there was Russell's sentencing. There was Alex flip flopping on whether he was going to plead guilty to his federal crimes and then a state flip flopping and then sentencing right after Thanksgiving. In August of this past year, we started to feel tremors that something was afoot. Starting with a surprise early drop of the



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Murdaugh family project with *Fox Nation* featuring the coveted Buster Murdaugh interview in which he and tabloid reporters heavily hinted that this wasn't the end of the line, that there were more questions about the jury and that there would be more to come. In early September, we found out what that meant. Dick and Jim all but wheeled boxes with blank sheets of paper in them in front of the media to say there is proof Becky Hill tampered with Alex's jury. The last four months have been nothing short of frustrating as we continue to push back on Dick and Jim's hollow narrative that Alex did not get a fair trial. And despite Becky's multitude of dumb decisions, as well as the revelations that show she isn't who she seemed to be, we continue to do our best to bring sunlight to what has been the darkest and most corrupt corner of our judicial system. Before Judge Newman sentenced Alex Murdaugh, Creighton Waters addressed the court. I want to remind you what he said:

Creighton Waters 1:03:49

And I've looked in his eyes. He likes to stare me down as he would walk by me during this trial. And I could see the real Alex Murdaugh when he looked at me. The depravity, the callousness, the selfishness of these crimes are stunning, the lack of remorse and the effortless way in which he lies, including here sitting right over there in this witness stand. Your Honor, a man like that, a man like this man should never be allowed to be among free law abiding citizens again.

Mandy Matney 1:04:27

Those words still give me goosebumps. A man like this man should never be allowed to be among free, law abiding citizens again. Let's not ever forget that. Not for one second. Alex Murdaugh got a fair trial and he is exactly where he belongs. He is a dangerous person. In just over a month, we might be back in court for Alex's evidentiary hearing to cut through Dick and Jim's nonsense maybe once and for all. To cut



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through their lies and their exaggerations and their manipulations. It is going to take the sharpest of sharp legal minds. We are told Justice Jean Toal is that person. It would be so nice not to be disappointed by someone in 2024. Stay tuned. Stay pesky and stay in the sunlight. Happy New Year from all of us at LunaShark. True Sunlight is a LunaShark production created by me, Mandy Matney and co-hosted by journalist Liz Farrell. Learn more about our mission and membership at lunasharkmedia.com. Interruptions provided by Luna and Joe Pesky.

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