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Death and Justice: The Murdaugh Family Murders

📅 JULY 27, 2021 ([HTTPS://GREGGROMAN.US/2021/07/27/](https://greggroman.us/2021/07/27/)) # ARTICLES ([HTTPS://GREGGROMAN.US/CATEGORY/ARTICLES/](https://greggroman.us/category/articles/))



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Various pictures of the Murdaugh Family.

What does the Gulf Emirate of Qatar's questionable military commercial practices and illicit weapons export program have to do with the unfortunate death of a young girl, two unsolved murders, and a recent double murder in South Carolina?

Nothing, that is, except my presence in the Palmetto state to investigate the former led me to develop an interest in the latter incidents, and eventually roped me into one of the most flummoxing, tragic, and horrifying stories of 2021.

In the summer of 2020, I set out to investigate and report on Barzan Aeronautical, a closely related corporate partner of Qatar's Ministry of Defense. Their headquarters in Charleston, South Carolina led me to base my investigation into the company's business practices out of an office in Hilton Head. It was an opportunity to take my family to the state's beautiful Low Country region and escape the

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Coronavirus lockdown in my hometown of Philadelphia, all while working on a subject I have

previously reported (<https://www.meforum.org/6750/gregg-roman-on-qatar-and-the-arab-gulf-states>) on.

We arrived in Sea Pines, the southernmost part of Hilton Head, in June and took a tour of the island's backwaters the first week we arrived. Our guide, a recent graduate of the local high school, told us about the area's history, pointed out the dolphins and crocodiles to my kids, and mentioned the mysterious circumstances surrounding the death of a young girl killed in a tragic boating accident the year before. When we returned to the rental house, I read further into the tragic accounts of the girl's death and recommended that a colleague of mine from *The Investigative Journal*—known for its in-depth long-form investigative journalism—look into the story. He demurred from writing about it himself, but suggested I take up a hobby parallel to my work on Qatar and look further into the incident.

To balance the tiresome, mundane work of sifting through thousands of pages of federal documents with the joy of spending time at the beach with my family, I decided to take on the project in my spare time and considered writing about the event.

The week after we arrived, I found myself skimming across the choppy waters of the Chechessee Creek in a 21-foot center console boat, its powerful 200 HP Yamaha engine primed and at full throttle, this time on my own. I navigated my way through the coastal inlets of Beaufort, South Carolina until I came upon the Chechessee Creek plantation of Randolph Murdaugh III, the state's most well-known and celebrated former prosecutor. This was the place where my journey reporting on this story began, and where Mallory Beach's life ended a year before.

I couldn't know that the layers of metaphorical onion I was about to peel back would culminate in uncovering a web of corruption, deceit, and lies surrounding the girl's death, but also end up attracting national attention when the prime suspect charged would be murdered with a shotgun blast to his face, and his mother cut down with an assault rifle a year after I left Hilton Head.

Since the murders of Paul Murdaugh and his mother, Maggie Murdaugh, two members of South Carolina's most powerful legal family, many questions have arisen as to motive, suspects, and evidence in the case. A larger inquiry into corruption in South Carolina's low country looms over the state's 14th Judicial District. The team of volunteer investigators and concerned citizens who eventually assembled with me to look into the case would uncover two other mysterious deaths connected to the girl's alleged killer and his family.

These queries originate from the tragic death of a young college student outside of the US Marine Corps installation, at Parris Island, in February of 2019. An inebriated and underage Paul Murdaugh slammed his boat at full speed into a bridge at 2:30 in the morning. Everyone on board was injured, but one young woman, just 19 years old, perished.

Mallory Beach was riding in a boat driven by Paul Murdaugh when the craft crashed, flinging Ms. Beach into the tidewater. She was found face-down in the marsh by a search and rescue party a week later.

Four generations of Murdaugh lawyers have reaped millions of dollars from personal (<https://www.forbes.com/forbes/2002/0610/074.html#23d4ad196575>) injury and death cases (<https://www.forbes.com/forbes/2002/0610/074.html#23d4ad196575>) filed on behalf of their law practice (<http://www.pmped.com/>) clients. Three generations have also served as state prosecutors, sending thousands to jail and at least a dozen to death row. All from the sleepy, low-country community in Hampton, South Carolina, best known for its annual watermelon festival.

The Murdaughs are well connected in the legal and law enforcement community. That's something they've certainly relied upon, given their numerous brushes with the law.

Social media and various news outlets have tried to peek into the basket of the Murdaugh family's dirty laundry. But those who get too close are known to fall upon misfortune. Others are warned to keep their distance.

How does this happen? It's simple—just follow the money.

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Right to Left: Randy Murdaugh IV, Randolph Murdaugh III, Alex Murdaugh, and John Marvin Murdaugh.

Unusual dealings from the beginning

From the moment first responders arrived on the scene, the investigation into the death of Mallory Beach has moved in unusual ways. For one, the boat (owned by Richard Alexander Murdaugh, Paul's father) was quickly removed from police custody, potentially compromising an active investigation and possibly allowing the destruction of evidence.

Local judges and lawyers quickly **recused themselves from the case**

(<https://www.wsav.com/news/local-news/new-information-depositions-shed-new-light-on-the-death-of-lowcountry-teen/>), citing personal connections, and the boating under the influence charge leading to death filed against Paul Murdaugh had yet to be prosecuted despite his long history of excessive drinking.

According to court records and interviews with parties knowledgeable about past incidents, Paul had been in trouble with the law for underage drinking and involved in other alcohol related crashes that were not reported to authorities.

Bond restrictions on Paul were also removed (<https://news.yahoo.com/murdaugh-asks-less-strict-bond-090000155.html#%3A%7E%3Atext%3DMail-%2CMurdaugh%20asks%20for%20less%20strict%20bond%20conditions%2CBeaufort%20County%20boat%20crash%20c>

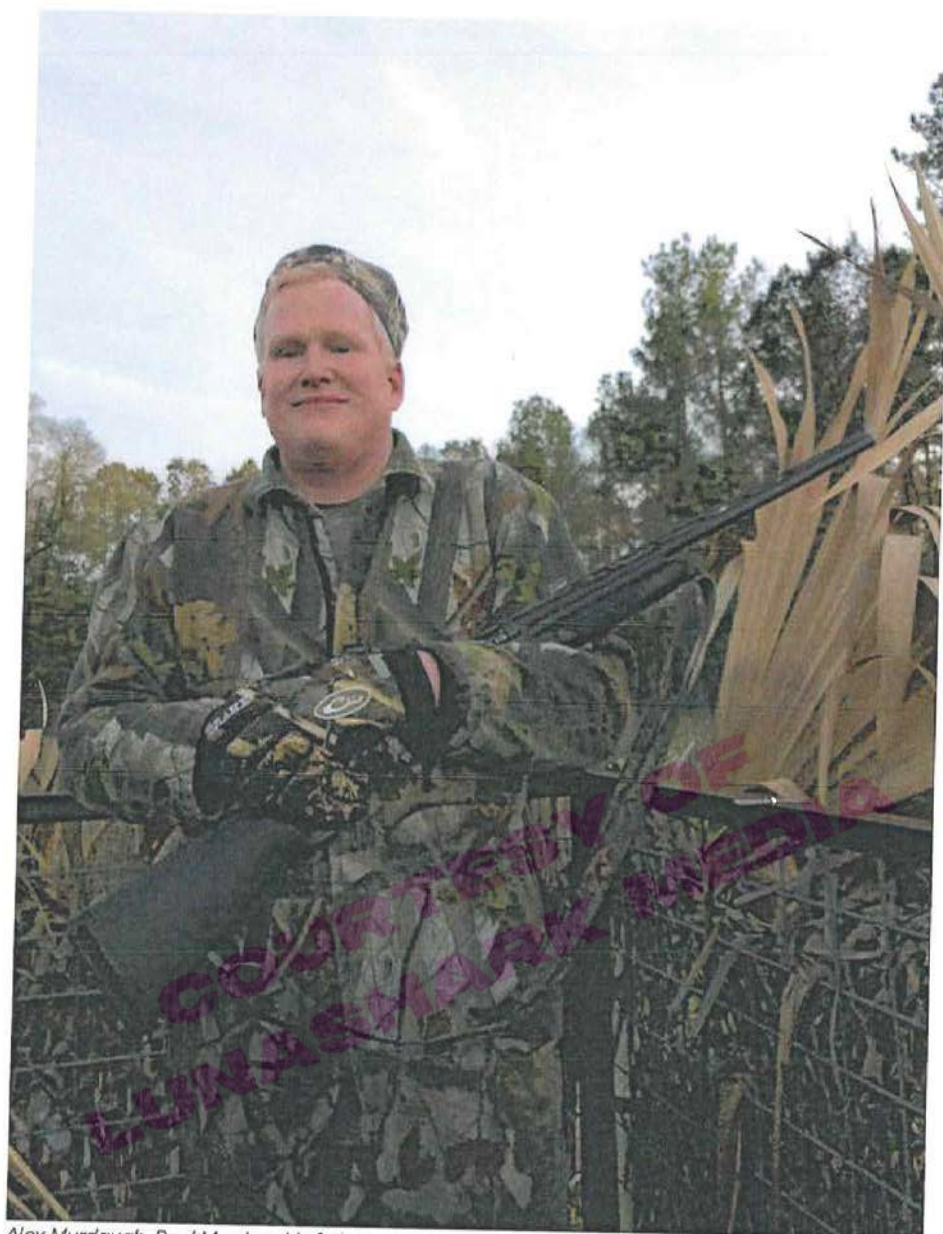
allowing him to move more freely around the state of South Carolina despite the seriousness of the charges. He resumed college, where witnesses allege he drank to the point of blacking out at several fraternities and social events in Columbia.

Similarly, his uncle Randy Murdaugh was also charged with boating under the influence in 2006. That charge was dropped and a couple of months later, he appears to have plead guilty to a lesser charge.

In another twist to the story, the only officer who named Paul as the driver of the boat (<https://www.fitsnews.com/2020/08/20/sc-cop-who-named-paul-murdaugh-as-driver-in-fatal-boat-crash-fired-for-alleged-drug-use/>) was fired for alleged drug possession (<https://www.fitsnews.com/2020/08/20/sc-cop-who-named-paul-murdaugh-as-driver-in-fatal-boat-crash-fired-for-alleged-drug-use/>). Were the drugs really the officer's? Or was he paying the price for pointing a finger at a Murdaugh heir?

Witnesses have also apparently been told to "be careful" and avoid saying anything about the Murdaugh family, potentially keeping valuable information out of the hands of investigators.

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Alex Murdaugh, Paul Murdaugh's father.

Disparities in legal investigations and outcomes

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Compare Paul's treatment to that of a different driver in a separate hearing under the

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compare Paul's treatment to that of a different driver in a separate boating accident (<https://www.wistv.com/2019/09/27/suspect-deadly-lake-murray-boat-crash-granted-bond-during-emotional-hearing/>), also in South Carolina. In September 2019, a drunk boat driver caused an accident that killed one person and maimed another. Despite no previous history of drunk driving, this driver was charged with a felony, jailed, and was only allowed bail with numerous restrictions after an appeal.

This isn't the first time the Murdaughs have received special treatment.

At the time of his death, Paul Murdaugh had yet to be prosecuted for killing a young woman while driving a boat while extremely drunk in February 2019. But if he was finally brought to trial, he would have been in a unique position.

Murdaugh is white and comes from a wealthy and powerful family (<https://www.thestate.com/news/local/crime/article227456544.html>) with long-time connections in the legal community. This gave Paul a clear advantage in South Carolina, especially in Hampton County, where the case was expected to be prosecuted—and where his family has the most influence.

Fateful night on the water

Paul killed Mallory Beach, another 19-year-old at the time, when he rammed his boat into a bridge at full throttle in the middle of the night. His blood alcohol level was nearly four times the legal limit at the time of the crash, yet Paul had only been charged with improper boating in connection to the Mallory Beach killing. His bond restrictions were (<https://news.yahoo.com/murdaugh-asks-less-strict-bond-090000155.html#%3A%7E%3Atext%3DMail-%2CMurdaugh%20asks%20for%20less%20strict%20bond%20conditions%2CBeaufort%20County%20boat%20crash%20c>) also removed (<https://news.yahoo.com/murdaugh-asks-less-strict-bond-090000155.html#%3A%7E%3Atext%3DMail-%2CMurdaugh%20asks%20for%20less%20strict%20bond%20conditions%2CBeaufort%20County%20boat%20crash%20c>) allowing him to move freely around the state of South Carolina despite the severity of the charges.

Despite being underage, Paul had a well-known history of excessive drinking and violence as others on board the boat stated in their depositions (<https://www.wtoc.com/2020/06/15/depositions-released-mallory-beach-wrongful-death-lawsuit/>). But he came from a family of lawyers that for four generations has amassed huge wealth by representing clients in personal injury and death cases. In addition, three generations of Murdaughs have served as state solicitors in the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit of South Carolina.

These connections kept him from ever having to face any consequences for his actions so far that, among other things, include totaling several cars while driving drunk according to his then-girlfriend Morgan Doughty.

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Paul and his then girlfriend, Morgan Doughty.

'Driving While Black' is a clear disadvantage

If Paul Murdaugh was African American, chances are his case would have proceeded very differently.

Take, for example, two driving under the influence leading to death cases Judge Carmen Mullen resided over. Judge Mullen was originally assigned the Murdaugh case but recused herself, citing personal connections with the family. She did not, however, recuse herself from another case even though the state's corruption probe prosecutor accused her of misdealings

(https://www.postandcourier.com/politics/judge-refuses-to-resentence-guilty-s-c-politician-chides-prosecutor-for-questioning-her-fairness/article_c6da65de-2259-11e8-8c71-473745b9f7ac.html.)

In the first case Judge Mullen presided over. Jermasha Elexus Shadane Nelson, 25, (<https://www.blufftontoday.com/news/20190411/ridgeland-woman-convicted-in-fatal-ducash-crash#%3A%7E%3Atext%3DA%20Ridgeland%20woman%20was%20found%2Cprison%2C%20a%20news%20release%20s>) killed a man (<https://www.blufftontoday.com/news/20190411/ridgeland-woman-convicted-in-fatal-ducash-crash#%3A%7E%3Atext%3DA%20Ridgeland%20woman%20was%20found%2Cprison%2C%20a%20news%20release%20s>).

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September 5, 2016 while he was driving a moped to work. The trooper and emergency personnel who responded all said Nelson appeared to be drunk and smelled like alcohol. It was determined that she was driving at 110 mph at the time she struck the unsuspecting victim. It took less than two hours for the jury to find Nelson guilty, and Judge Mullen sentenced her to 14 years in prison. Nelson had no serious previous criminal history.



Jermasha Elexus Shadane Nelson

The same judge presided over the case against **Jack Manesiotis, 23**, who killed his (<https://www.newsobserver.com/news/state/south-carolina/article210982159.html>) friend and fellow passenger on May 7, 2017 (<https://www.newsobserver.com/news/state/south-carolina/article210982159.html>) when driving at 130 mph (20 mph faster than Nelson) lost control of the car.

It is not unclear why the Manesiotis case was transferred from Beaufort County to Hampton County. But there, Judge Mullen only gave Manesiotis a 10-year suspended sentence. This light judgement was handed down despite the fact that Manesiotis is approximately the same age as Nelson and was previously charged with speeding in October 2012 and January 2013 (each settled with an \$80 fine) and reckless driving in September 2016 (settled with a \$445 fine).

Manesiotis will never go to prison if he doesn't commit a crime in the coming ten years. And part of his sentence included the caveat that Manesiotis undergo intensive in-patient substance abuse treatment at a private Atlanta facility (<https://talbotcampus.com/>) and finish his college degree.

Judge Mullen also suggested that Manesiotis, once a cross country athlete, speak to high school students about making good choices.



Jack Manesiotis

There's no doubt that Nelson would have been ecstatic if she had been offered a deal like this that included substance abuse counseling and a mandate to get a college education during her sentencing. Instead, she will be locked behind bars for years to come.

The question then becomes, would Paul have been given the same type of preferential treatment had he come before Judge Mullen? There's a good chance he would have.

Revolving judges for the Murdaugh case

Judge Mullen recused herself from the Murdaugh case, and a new judge had yet to be appointed. But if the judge—the Honorable Daniel Hall of York, SC—overseeing a wrongful death suit filed by the mother of the victim in the Murdaugh crash is any indication of what could have been ahead, Paul would certainly benefit from his skin color and family power and prestige.

In March 2020, Judge Hall **granted white nationalist Augustus Invictus bail** (<https://www.thedailybeast.com/south-carolina-judge-grants-white-nationalist-augustus-invictus-bail>) due to concerns over the Coronavirus. Invictus was charged with kidnapping and domestic violence against his wife, who said she was afraid Invictus would kill her if released.

Despite the seriousness of the crimes, Judge Hall did *not* include security measures such as ankle monitoring or check-ins with authorities for Invictus while he is out on bail, and he was allowed to leave the state of South Carolina. Invictus also continued to post on his alt-right website while awaiting trial. If the Invictus release is any indication, the fact that Paul Murdaugh was white could very well have helped him get a more favorable ruling when it was time for Judge Hall to make decisions on several motions in the civil case. Notably, Paul Murdaugh was *not* named as a party in the civil suit, even though his father and brother are both defendants.

Part of the problem in South Carolina is the lack of transparency. Judges protect each other, so being able to root out any improprieties in the Murdaugh case may be next to impossible, regardless of how obvious they seem. More than **1,000 ethics complaints** (<https://www.propublica.org/article/what-happens-when-judges-police-themselves-in-secret-not-much>) were filed against South Carolina judges over the last 20 years involving everything from courtroom disputes to serious allegations of influence peddling and **conflicts of interest**. None of the judges are known to have been punished.



Buster Murdaugh, Paul's brother, and friends.

Racial bias at the highest levels

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Racial injustice is well ingrained throughout the United States, as came to light by the many protests
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racial injustice is well ingrained throughout the United States, as came to light by the many protests that struck the country in cities across the nation last summer. The legal system in South Carolina is no exception. Black lawmakers in the state capital even staged a (<https://www.independentmail.com/story/news/2019/02/07/african-american-judge-rejections-spark-walkout-black-south-carolina-lawmakers/2802451002/>) walkout (<https://www.independentmail.com/story/news/2019/02/07/african-american-judge-rejections-spark-walkout-black-south-carolina-lawmakers/2802451002/>) in protest because they felt their white colleagues were purposefully blocking the appointment of black judges to the bench, even if that meant the only alternative was less qualified white judges.

In July 2020, the Ninth Circuit Solicitor's Office also announced a partnership (<https://www.live5news.com/2020/07/30/lowcountry-solicitors-office-partnering-with-researchers-racial-bias-study/>) with Justice Innovation Lab and researchers from Loyola University at Chicago, the George Washington University Law School, the Toulouse School of Economics and the Beeck Center for Social Impact and Innovation at Georgetown University to create a more equitable criminal justice system. This Office has been collecting data on racial bias for five years.

The partnership may have been spurred by a 2016 report (https://www.postandcourier.com/archives/racial-disparity-in-s-c-prisons-in-spotlight/article_2d2f364c-71fa-55e2-8d35-44a80ef17b9e.html) called *The Color of Justice: Racial and Ethnic Disparity in State Prisons* (<http://www.sentencingproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/The-Color-of-Justice-Racial-and-Ethnic-Disparity-in-State-Prisons.pdf>) and *Ethnic Disparity in State Prisons* (<http://www.sentencingproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/The-Color-of-Justice-Racial-and-Ethnic-Disparity-in-State-Prisons.pdf>) by The Sentencing Project in Washington, DC that pointed out that African Americans in South Carolina are imprisoned at a rate four times greater than white residents.

Another study (<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/feb/29/racial-bias-criminal-sentencing-south-carolina>) in 2016 by the University of Sheffield and published by *The Journal of Quantitative Criminology* (<https://www.springer.com/journal/10940>) looked solely at 17,000 decisions made in South Carolina. The academic researchers from Great Britain chose South Carolina because there are no sentencing guidelines in this state. Judges, therefore, have an incredible amount of discretion when handing out sentences, which also opens the door to racial inequalities and personal influences.

In fact, the Sheffield study found that for the same crimes, harsher penalties were consistently handed down to African Americans versus Caucasian individuals. Even those without any criminal history were 43% more likely to end up behind bars than white people with the same background and charges.

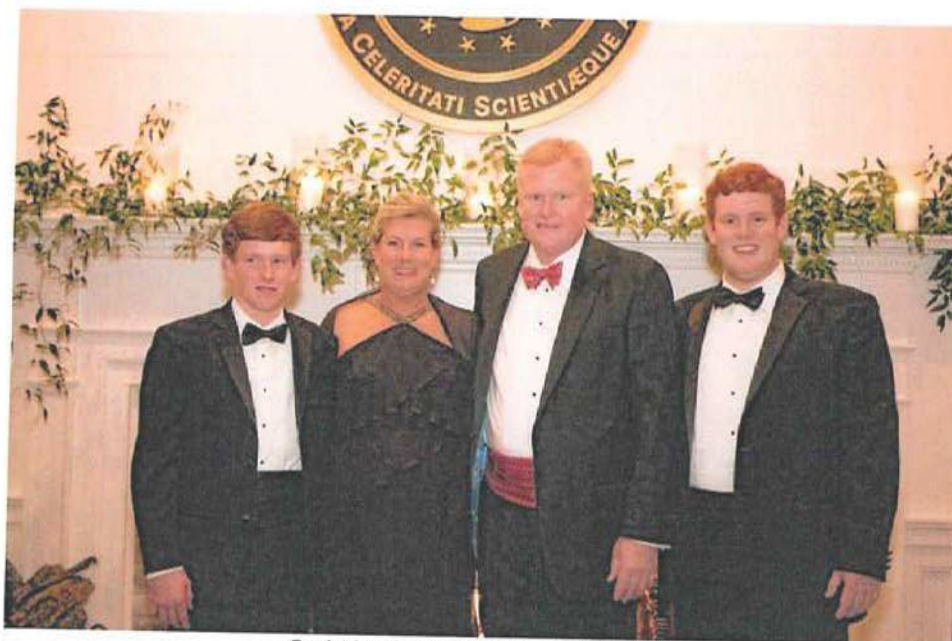
This type of legal leniency towards white people could have helped Paul Murdaugh tremendously if he were to have his day in court. Allowing this to happen would have been a great injustice. It would not serve the memory of Mallory Beach, who needlessly lost her life at his hands. Now Murdaugh is dead, slain by an unknown killer, and justice for Beach has been abandoned thanks to his untimely demise.

It's no secret the wealthy and well-connected are more privileged than everyday folks. But after decades of incidents culminating in the death of an innocent teenager and little more than a slap on the wrist as punishment, these injustices have become impossible to ignore.

Meet the Murdaugh family of Hampton, South Carolina.

Deep roots, a century in the making

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Paul, Maggie, Alex, and Buster Murdaugh.

For four generations, the highly respected Murdaugh family built their name and fortune by suing and amassing large personal injury and death settlements for their clients.

Their law practice has an unusually high success rate.

Randolph Murdaugh, Sr. founded the Hampton-based law firm now known as Peters, Murdaugh, Parker, Eltzroth & Detrick in 1910 and was appointed state solicitor in 1920. Randolph Murdaugh Jr. (known as Buster), a legend for his courtroom theatrics, assumed the position of solicitor when his father died in 1940 until 1986. Buster's son, Randolph Murdaugh III, now deceased, took over as solicitor from 1986-2005 and received the prestigious Order of the Palmetto award in 2018 for his legal contributions in the public and private sectors. Randolph Murdaugh IV (Randy) joined the family law firm in 1991, as did Richard Alex Murdaugh (Alex), Paul's father.

The patriarch of the family—Randolph Sr.—died in a train accident in 1940 in the early morning hours after a long night of playing cards. Ironically, his law firm would spend years suing the CSX railroad company that has tracks running through Hampton for millions of dollars, to the point the firm became known in legal circles as "The House that CSX Built."

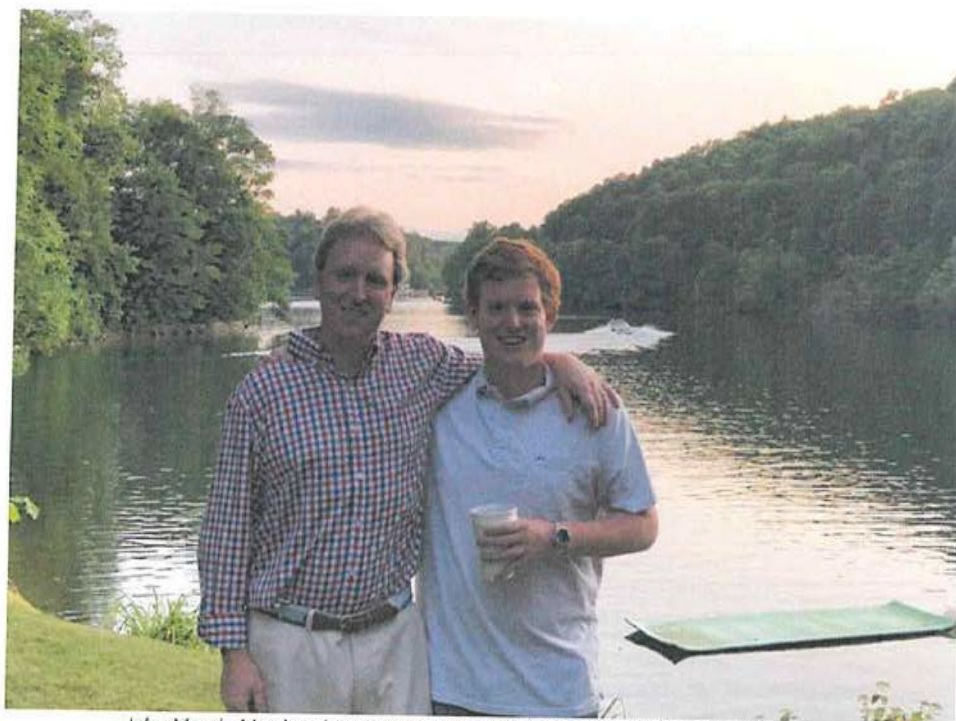
Much of the Murdaugh success was based on a loophole that allowed plaintiffs to file a lawsuit in any South Carolina county (presumably where they thought their case would receive a more favorable outcome), regardless of where the parties involved resided or where the incident occurred. The Murdaughs attracted clients far and wide thanks to their influence in Hampton County courtrooms.

After the firm won \$5 million from CSX in five different lawsuits in 1999, a CSX attorney complained during an interview, "These cases are being valued at between two and three times what they would elsewhere." The law was eventually changed in 2005, but not before sleepy little Hampton County earned the dubious title of the third biggest judicial hellhole for defendants by a public interest group.

In addition, three generations of Murdaughs served as state prosecutors, sending thousands to prison and more than a dozen to death row. Their portraits still hang on the walls of the local courthouse.

When those roots become strangleholds

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John Marvin Murdaugh and Buster Murdaugh at a 4th of July celebration, 2021.

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There is a darker side to the Murdaugh family legacy. When it comes to personal matters, they have

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There is a darker side to the Murdaugh family legacy. When it comes to personal matters, they have earned a reputation for ducking investigations and all ensuing repercussions.

Even back in 1956, Randolph Jr. (Buster) temporarily stepped down from his solicitor position when he was indicted for tipping off a moonshiner about an upcoming raid by the FBI. He resumed his public role when he was later acquitted of the charges.

The latest generation of Murdaughs seem to be particularly adept at receiving special treatment when things go awry. Most recently, underage Paul Murdaugh used a fake driver's license to buy alcohol at a Parker's convenience store. It was something he had done numerous times, and frequently with his parent's knowledge and apparent approval, according to witnesses. He also destroyed several cars while driving drunk.

Then Paul killed Mallory Beach.

Somehow, John Marvin Murdaugh, Paul's uncle, was able to remove the boat (owned by Alex Murdaugh) from the sheriff's department, compromising an active investigation. This unprecedented action made it near impossible for investigators to identify evidence that could have led to multiple felony charges. Rather quickly, a number of judges and lawyers recused themselves from the case citing personal connections to the Murdaugh family.

Rather than being charged with murder, Paul was only charged with boating under the influence leading to death. That case will never see its day in court. Previously, Paul plead guilty to a minor charge of improper boating, for which he paid a fine. It seems Murdaugh connections still count for something in South Carolina.

More details and appearances of impropriety are surfacing in the wrongful death case filed by Mallory's mother, Renee Beach. Statements show that Paul's father and grandfather dashed to the hospital, falsely claiming to represent all of the boaters, and started interfering in the case from his first moment on the scene. They prevented sobriety testing and tried to keep all of the boaters from speaking to investigators in what one of the victims worried was their typical way of "covering things up." The unlucky police officer who identified Paul as the driver of the boat was later fired for alleged drug use.

It sure looks like the Murdaughs are receiving special treatment in the Beach wrongful death case. While public records show extensive assets, the defendants were never asked to disclose any, until a year after the suit was filed, which is a routine request in these types of cases.

From their connections to local law enforcement, their apparent legal impunity and the many deaths and surreal incidents surrounding them, there's no doubt the Murdaughs are powerful, influential and dangerous.

If you lost your teenage daughter at the hands of an underage drunk driver, you would demand justice and accountability from everyone who played a role in the events leading to her death. But when the person driving the boat at the time of the crash is from the **rich and powerful Murdaugh family of Hampton, South Carolina**

(<https://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/article240514586.html/video-embed>), the same rules don't seem to apply.

A pattern of destructive behavior justifies compensation

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Mallory Beach and her friends the evening of the fateful crash.

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VICTIMS' VOICES THROUGH FOIA

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According to depositions (<https://www.wesv.com/news/local-news/new-information-https://greggroman.us/death-and-justice-murdaugh-family-murder-gregg-roman/>)

According to depositions (<https://www.wspa.com/news/local-news/new-information-depositions-shed-new-light-on-the-death-of-lowcountry-teen/>) given by other boaters, Paul was often violent and destructive when drunk. He was known to start fights with strangers, hit and spit on his girlfriend, total cars, and do drugs, all without any repercussions from the law or his family. In fact, his parents were said to know about his drinking and even supported it. On this particular foggy winter night, he acted with malice afterthought and articular disregard for other human life. And Mallory paid the price.

In most wrongful death cases, the approach to holding people liable for a tragic death would include naming the driver, the owner of the boat, the people who held the party, those who served the minors alcohol, owners of the homes where alcohol was consumed, insurance companies, and anyone else that was involved in the events that led up to crash.

Somehow, the original lawsuit failed to name Richard Alexander Murdaugh (Paul's father and owner of the boat involved in the crash), Richard Alexander Murdaugh, Jr. (Paul's brother who supplied the fake identification used to buy alcohol), and Randolph Murdaugh III (Paul's grandfather, who had been actively obstructing and interfering in (<https://www.thestate.com/news/local/crime/article227456544.html>) the investigation by law enforcement into the details of that fateful night (<https://www.thestate.com/news/local/crime/article227456544.html>)).

Renee Beach, Mallory's mother, revised the original lawsuit (<https://www.augustachronicle.com/news/20190401/new-wrongful-death-suit-names-murdaughs>) about a month later to include Paul's father, brother, and grandfather, individually and as Trustee of the Murdaugh Residence Trust 2 that owns the family island on Chechessee Creek valued at \$1.45 million (<https://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/article240444896.html>). Alcohol was consumed that night and on many other occasions with (<https://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/crime/article230705034.html>) Murdaugh family (<https://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/crime/article230705034.html>) knowledge at the island property. Others included in the lawsuit were Parker's 55 (<https://parkerskitchen.com/locations/parkers-55/>) convenience store in Ridgeland, SC and Luther's Rare & Well Done (https://m.facebook.com/LuthersRareandWellDone/?__nodl&ref=external%3Awww.google.com&_rdr) bar and restaurant in Beaufort SC, which both sold alcohol to Paul that night. Kristy Wood, the principal of Brunson Elementary School in Hampton County School District One, was also named for hosting an oyster roast at her home that the six inebriated teenagers attended.

Then, a few months later, the grandfather, Woods and Luther's were dropped from the (<https://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/crime/article231738598.html>) lawsuit (<https://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/crime/article231738598.html>). Doing this lets off defendants who allowed the boaters to drink on their properties that night. For some reason, the lawsuit also still fails to (<https://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/crime/article228682004.html#%3A%7E%3Atext%3D24%20boat%20crash>) mention (<https://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/crime/article228682004.html#%3A%7E%3Atext%3D24%20boat%20crash>) Paul was driving a boat owned by his father.

Time to follow the money



The Murdaugh family compound in South Carolina's low country.

The attorney for the Beach suit said he did not plan to include the driver of the boat because he did not believe that Paul had any assets. But a quick search on the Beaufort County Treasurer's real and personal property tax bill lookup website

(<https://www.beaufortcountytreasurer.com/Default.aspx?CCID=47146&FID=1328002&ExcludeBool=False&True&PageID=22668332>) reveals a living trust in

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Paul's name for property at 13 and 14 Hand Drive in Port Royal. If this exists for Paul's benefit, chances are there are other assets in the son's name that are worth asking about.

What is going on? Have there been private, undisclosed settlements in the case? Or has the Murdaugh family been throwing their political and financial weight around to protect their properties and holdings from rightful claims by the Beach family?

In addition to the living trust for Paul, the Beaufort County Treasure website lists a multitude of Murdaugh holdings in that county. There is no doubt the Murdaughs have properties and assets in other areas of South Carolina and a good probability of holdings out of state. All of this needs to be part of the discovery in the Beach wrongful death case.

Ironically, the Murdaugh family accumulated a fortune by representing plaintiffs in personal injury and wrongful death lawsuits and settlements. The Hampton, SC law firm now known as **Peters, Murdaugh, Parker, Eltzroth & Detrick** (<http://www.pmped.com/>) was founded by Randolph Murdaugh, Sr. in 1910. Three more generations of Murdaughs would join the firm that claims that "Our success is driven by our passionate desire to help others and (<http://www.pmped.com/results/>) by extension, make our communities and world safe and more just (<http://www.pmped.com/results/>)."

Paul's father, Richard Alexander Murdaugh, is listed as affiliated with or as the owner of numerous businesses including **Murdaugh Rental Center** (<https://www.murdaughrentalcenter.com/>), **Murdaugh Charters LLC** (<https://us.kompass.com/c/murdaugh-charters-llc/usno7461881/>), **Redbeard LLC** (https://opencorporates.com/companies/us_sc/479454), **Eclipse Landscape and Design LLC** (<https://bizstanding.com/p/eclipse%2Blandscape%2Band%2Bdesign%2Bllc-77979471>), **Medical Consultants of the** (<https://npino.com/primary-clinic/1346880317-medical-consultants-of-the-lowcountry-llc/>) **Lowcountry LLC** (<https://npino.com/primary-clinic/1346880317-medical-consultants-of-the-lowcountry-llc/>), and of course the law firm **Peters, Murdaugh, Parker, Eltzroth & Detrick** (<http://www.pmped.com/>).

Chances are he, his now deceased wife, and others in the Murdaugh family are involved in many more local businesses and real estate holdings that are not as easily identified.

Still, there is one major property that is hard to hide. The 460-acre family island where the fateful boat sojourn started that night, and where the group of six planned to stay overnight actually has **approvals for 19 homes** (<https://www.islandpacket.com/news/business/real-estate-news/article33631107.html>), which could significantly increase its value.

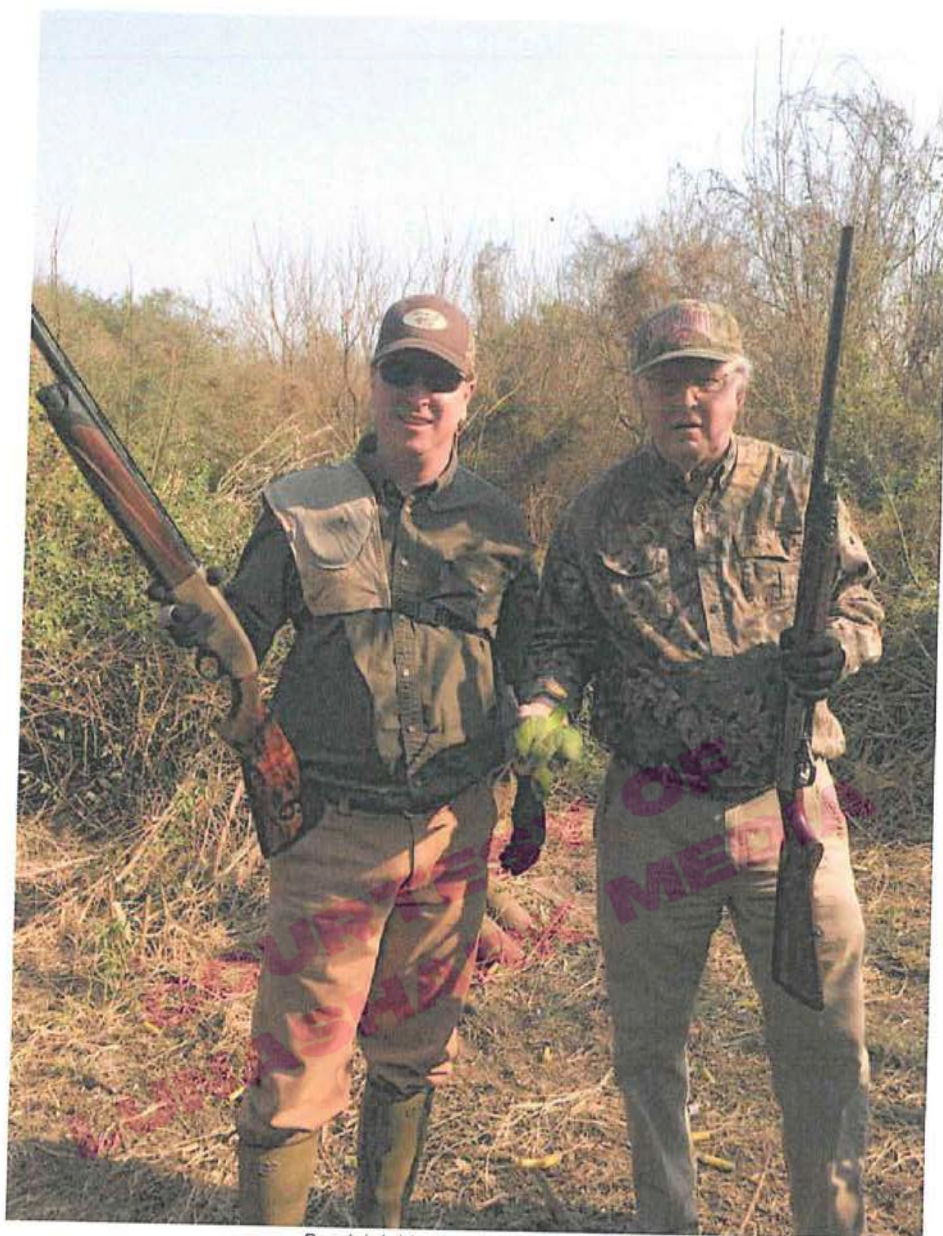
In another bizarre twist, one of the insurance companies named in the Beach wrongful death suit has asked to be released because the potential costs of defending the Murdaughs are extensive. In addition, **Philadelphia Indemnity said they are** (<https://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/crime/article235954987.html>) **not responsible** (<https://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/crime/article235954987.html>) for the boat crash because, among other things, the Murdaughs are not covered as individuals and the charges have nothing to do with any of the Murdaugh businesses, does not cover bodily injuries occurring from a boat, and two years ago, Philadelphia Indemnity paid a half million dollar settlement to the family of their longtime 57-year-old **housekeeper, Gloria Satterfield**, (<https://www.briceherndonfuneralhome.com/obituary/Gloria-Satterfield>) for a suspicious trip-and-fall death inside their home.

Again, if the insurance company is able to carve themselves out of the wrongful death case, this is yet another source of compensation that could evaporate.

It is unimaginable that the same Murdaughs who claim to be doing justice by representing those harmed by others can't somehow feel ashamed that they are now trying to protect their own assets and wealth from the family of a girl that Paul killed. It seems that the Murdaugh form of justice only applies when they are not personally at fault.

Their actions are horribly hypocritical at best; sinful regardless.

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Randolph Murdaugh III with his son.

Two more souls paid the ultimate price

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On July 8, 2015, the body of 10-year-old **Stephen Smith**
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On July 8, 2013, the body of 19-year-old Stephen Smith

(<https://www.augustachronicle.com/article/20151124/NEWS/311249889>) was found on a rural road. The police classified his death as a hit-and-run even though there was no evidence of a car being involved. The police also failed to adequately account for the lethal blunt force trauma found on the back of Stephen's head.

It has been suggested that the talk around town is that Paul and his brother may have been involved in the murder of Stephen Smith, although all newspapers and other reports have been unable to get anyone to state so on the record. South Carolina police tried to interview members of the Murdaugh family about the Smith case, but hit a brick wall. The case was reopened after the deaths of Paul and Maggie Murdaugh shed as yet undisclosed evidence on the matter.

Some locals also suggested that Stephen and Buster Murdaugh were involved romantically. According to an affidavit of a close Murdaugh family associate, Buster had invited Stephen to join him on a family vacation to Key West, where he promised to "come out" about his sexual orientation and reveal their relationship to his family. Buster changed his mind about the Florida trip, apparently worried about how the family and public would react to him coming out as gay. Shortly after Buster allegedly changed his mind, Stephen was found dead.

Little progress has been made on the Smith investigation, due to both inaction and stymying circumstances. In addition to the conflicting causes of death, photos and emails from Stephen's phone that might have proven his relationship to the Murdaugh family were taken by the police and never returned to the family.

It is also peculiar that certain members of the Hampton community knew about Stephen's death before his family was notified. The Smith family was warned not to challenge "powerful forces" by a county deputy, and a friend of the victim who intended to share what he knew about the death left the state after being threatened.

While the details surrounding the Murdaugh involvement in Stephen's death are murky, it is clear that there is enough of a connection to interest the authorities.

Tragedy also struck at the expansive family home owned by Richard Alex Murdaugh. Gloria Satterfield, their longtime housekeeper, died on February 26, 2018 (almost exactly one year before Mallory's death) after a head injury resulting from a suspicious "trip and fall accident."

Rumors in the community suggest she fell down the stairs after Paul became angry and hit or shoved her. However, the official investigation reported it as an accident, and the housekeeper's obituary (<https://www.briceherndonfuneralhome.com/obituary/Gloria-Satterfield>) mentions several Murdaughs as people she cherished as family.

Her estate received a \$500,000 insurance settlement, which experts believe is low, especially given the history of large settlements secured by the Murdaugh law firm in other cases. It's also not a closed matter—the settlement agreement states there is "a controversy concerning this matter."

According to the Hilton Head Island Packet

(<https://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/crime/article235954987.html>), "Of that money, \$177,500 was paid to the Moss, Kuhn & Fleming, P.A. law firm, where Richard Alexander Murdaugh previously worked, for attorney fees and expenses. Cory Fleming represented the woman's beneficiaries in this case. Fleming has many ties to the Murdaugh family, and spoke at Randolph Murdaugh's Order of the Palmetto Ceremony last September. Fleming also represented Paul Murdaugh when he was charged with possession of alcohol two years ago when he was 18."

It sure makes you wonder what's happening behind closed Murdaugh doors.

Going for an easy—and out of town—target

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Currently, the lawyers for the estate of Mallory Beach, the young woman killed at the

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currently, the lawyers for the estate of Mallory Beach, the young woman killed at the hands of an inebriated Paul Murdaugh (<https://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/crime/article227092609.html>) in February 2019, are focusing all of their efforts on a local Parker's (<https://parkerskitchen.com/locations/parkers-55/>) convenience store. Parker's sold 21 beers and 12 hard seltzers to Paul, who was underage but used his brother's fake ID to purchase the alcohol nine hours before the fateful boat crash.

But Paul's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) was four times the legal limit at the time of the accident, and his friend Connor Cook's BAC was two and one-half times the legal limit. There is no way that the alcohol purchased at Parker's could solely have caused these two boys to get so drunk.

So why aren't the other parties involved in the events that night being held accountable for their roles in Mallory's death?

While the Parker's chain with 54 fuel/convenience store locations (<https://www.cspdailynews.com/top-202-convenience-stores-2019/parker-cos/>) in Georgia and South Carolina might have the deepest pockets of all those involved in Mallory's death, this is a lazy and misguided approach. Or perhaps it is the course being taken because the powerful Murdaugh family (<https://www.thestate.com/news/local/crime/article227456544.html>) is pressuring the plaintiff and their counsel to stay away from their family, friends, and allies.

A quick review of the events clearly shows that there many others that are culpable in Mallory's death who are currently being let off the hook.

Sequence of negligent events leading to death

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shed-new-light-on-the-death-of-lowcountry-teen/) given by the two surviving young women, it was stated that the six friends started their night at the **Murdaugh family private island home** (<https://www.islandpacket.com/news/business/real-estate-news/article33631107.html>). Around 7pm, they climbed into the powerboat owned by Paul's father, Alex Murdaugh. They also said that both of Paul's parents knew they were going to drink, and that the parents had provided alcohol to underage drinkers countless times in the past.

Paul put the beers and hard seltzer he bought at Parker's on the boat. There was also most likely other alcohol onboard in the boat's cooler, and a bottle of Crown Royal whiskey that some of the boys were drinking.

Certainly, two of the Murdaugh family are a party named in the wrongful death suit for allowing underage drinking at their home and boat.

At 8:00pm, the boat with the six friends arrived at the home of Kristy and James Wood for an oyster roast, where they stayed for about four hours. There were approximately 20 adults present, including the parents and relatives of several of the boaters. According to the depositions, "practically all of them" were aware that the underage kids were drinking and already quite drunk.

Kristy Wood, an elementary school assistant principal, claimed she did not know the boaters were drinking, but this is hard to believe. The teenagers went back and forth between the party and the boat where the alcohol was being kept many times, according to written statements. Also, based on the hospital-obtained BAC levels of the boaters, it is impossible that the group would appear even remotely sober at this point.

If the boaters were sober at the Wood's party—which they weren't—the 140-pound Paul would have had to consume 28 beers over the next four hours (or seven beers every hour, for four hours) to reach the BAC recorded at the hospital. It's impossible.

The Woods were once included as defendants (<https://www.wistv.com/2019/03/21/family-teen-killed-lowcountry-boating-incident-files-wrongful-death-lawsuit/>) in the wrongful death suit but were later removed. Obviously, they knew the underage party was drinking on their property, and did nothing to stop it.

Instead of heading back to the Murdaugh family estate, Paul decided to stop in Beaufort for more drinks. The other boaters argued that they were tired and wanted to go to the river house where they were to spend the night. But Paul didn't listen and nearly hit the Wood's swing bridge.

At 12:45, Paul and Connor went into **Luther's Rare and Well Done** ([https://m.facebook.com/LuthersRareandWellDone/?](https://m.facebook.com/LuthersRareandWellDone/?__nol&ref=external%3Awww.google.com&_rdr)

[__nol&ref=external%3Awww.google.com&_rdr](https://m.facebook.com/LuthersRareandWellDone/?__nol&ref=external%3Awww.google.com&_rdr)) bar for about a half hour to drink Jaeger and lemon drop shots while the others waited outside on some swings. When they left Luther's, Paul nearly got into a drunken fight with another patron. According to an EMS statement, Paul's ex-girlfriend Morgan Doughty told her that the two boys also drank shots of a brown liquor at another downtown restaurant called **Plums** (<https://plumsrestaurant.com/>).

So, why isn't Luther's, Plums, or any other bar they may have gone into that night included in the Beach lawsuit?

At this point, Paul drove the boat erratically and spun it in circles on the water. The other boaters argued with him and asked that someone else drive or that he let them off at the nearest dock.

Just before the boat slammed into the bridge near Parris Island, Paul got into a heated argument with Morgan. Connor took over the wheel when Paul left to shout, spit on, and hit her. When Paul did come back to drive, he inexplicably took off his clothes, pushed the boat into full throttle, and plowed into the bridge—injuring everyone on board and killing Mallory Beach.

Even after the crash, Paul was so belligerent and abusive to EMS, he had to be restrained and a police officer accompanied him in the ambulance. Hospital staff also reported that Paul was highly intoxicated, cussing, harassing the medical staff, and rambling about doing drugs.

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A closer look at the booze

There is no way that Paul could have been this drunk if he had only consumed the alcohol purchased at Parker's. Even if for argument's sake, we assume that the girls drank the hard seltzer, and Paul and Connor drank all of the beers bought at Parker's (and Anthony had none, which is unlikely), the numbers don't add up.

By conservative estimates, if Paul and Connor consumed 21 beers over the course of eight and one-half hours, Paul would have had a BAC of 0.10 and Connor would have had a 0.076. But at the hospital, more than two hours after the crash, Paul's BAC was 0.286 and Connor's BAC was 0.172.

To have such high BAC levels, Paul would have had to drink approximately another 12 12-ounce beers, or 12 1.5-ounce shots, or 12 five-ounce glasses of wine in addition to the Parker's beer. Connor would have had to drink about another six and one-half 12-ounce beers, or six and one-half 1.5-ounce shots, or six and one-half five-ounce glasses of wine.

Paul and the other boaters obtained additional alcohol somewhere other than Parker's. We know that Luther's, possibly Plums, and other bars, as well as the Murdaughs all provided alcohol that night.

South Carolina common laws of negligence consistently hold restaurants, bars, social hosts, and others accountable for injuries and deaths caused by someone they served. Prior to his death, Paul Murdaugh and those close to his family had been getting special treatment (<https://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/crime/article237111384.html#storylink%3Dcpy>) since the start of this mess. Their meddling might also explain why some parties have been (<https://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/crime/article231738598.html>) dropped (<https://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/crime/article231738598.html>) from the case.

It is time for real justice to be served for Mallory's family and in her memory.

Paul Murdaugh should have been charged with murder

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AROUND THE WORLD OUT SPONSOR

An underage young man is in a wild carspin, drunk out of his mind, he refuses to let anyone take over the wheel of his boat and is driving so erratically that his friends beg him to stop. He hits and spits on his girlfriend moments before slamming the boat into a bridge at full throttle and killing an **innocent 19-year-old passenger** (<https://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/crime/article227092609.html>).

Paul Murdaugh, the drunken boat driver, had a history of aggressive and destructive acts. According to people who know Paul Murdaugh, when he gets drunk he becomes "Timmy," which is an alter ego for his mean drunken behavior.

According to reports, the drunk Paul was known to get violent – all without ever getting into any trouble with the law. As mentioned earlier, there were also allegations that Paul may have been involved in the death of **his housekeeper**

(<https://www.briceherndonfuneralhome.com/obituary/Gloria-Satterfield>) in 2018 and a **young man** (<https://www.augustachronicle.com/article/20151124/NEWS/311249889>) that was found dead in the street one early morning in 2015.

Yet despite that history, his clear acts of malice that night, and his complete disregard for human life, local authorities only charged Paul with boating under the influence leading to death.

The charge should have been murder.

In South Carolina, where Mallory Beach lost her life in the boat crash on February 24, 2019, **murder is defined** (<https://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t16c003.php>) as the killing of a person with malice afterthought, expressed or implied. Malice afterthought being the conscious intent to cause death or great bodily harm to another person.

Malice aforethought is also applicable if the defendant acted extremely recklessly and with indifference to the value of human life—something Paul clearly did. Paul Murdaugh made the decision to drive the boat that night, despite the objection of his friends who were terrified of his drunken recklessness.

According to reports, Paul Murdaugh repeatedly left the wheel of the boat that night to physically and verbally accost his girlfriend at the time, Morgan Doughty. Paul is alleged to have spit on her and struck her just prior to the boat crash, which he is also alleged to have done to his girlfriend in the past when drunk.

It appears he became angrier and angrier. That fateful night, it finally boiled over. In a fit of rage, Paul "Timmy" Murdaugh, threw the throttle into full gear from an almost dead stop just before slamming into the bridge, according to court information that has surfaced surrounding the case.

Paul grew up on the water and knew the risks of driving in the middle of the night, in the fog and without working lights. His blood alcohol level was nearly four times the legal limit at the time of the crash. Anyone who has ever driven a boat, ridden on a boat, or even watched a movie where a boat accelerated understands that a sudden acceleration can be deadly.

Passengers on boats are typically warned to brace themselves if the driver intends to accelerate. A safe boat driver who cares about the well-being of his passengers would only accelerate incrementally to make sure none of the passengers were thrown off balance or hurt.

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Mallory Beach

He should have paid for his actions

COURTESY OF AN ANONYMOUS FOIA

Paul killed Mallory Beach. That night in February, he was driving drunk as he often did, and he hit

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Mallory Beach. That night in February, he was driving drunk, as he often did, and he put every life on that boat in jeopardy. Everyone was injured, and Mallory paid the price for Paul's criminal recklessness and malignant heart. In many ways, it is a miracle that Mallory was the only person killed. His trial would have been the time for Paul to pay the price for his actions.

But thanks to his family name, he never had to deal with any serious consequences.

If there was ever a case of boating under the influence that leads to a death that rises to the level of murder, this is that case. The case for malice aforethought as the basis for a murder charge can be satisfied if the defendant acted extremely recklessly and showed indifference to the value of human life. It can also be defined as acting with an abandoned and malignant heart.

This was not just some tragic accident involving a few friends who drank too much one night on a boat. This was an intentional act by Paul Murdaugh that caused the death of Mallory Beach and severe injuries to the other passengers on the boat. The murder of Mallory Beach should be, and must become, the poster child for a case based on malice afterthought.

But Paul came from the Murdaugh family, a **powerful South Carolina family** (<https://www.thestate.com/news/local/crime/article227456544.html>) with deep connections in the legal community, and many worried he may never be held fully accountable. Now, with his passing, that's certainly the case.

If Mallory Beach was to receive any justice, Paul should have been charged with murder. Now his death will forever leave the question open: Who was criminally responsible for the death of Mallory Beach? And who, if anyone, will account for the deaths of Stephen Smith and Gloria Satterfield? The answer is buried in the same Hampton county cemeteries where they all rest.

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