

[Transcript] True Sunlight / MMP #84: The Latest on Stephen Smith, SLED's Investigation into the Murders and Russell Lafitte's Future

Suchst du jemanden, der dich zu deiner Bestleistung führt?
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Miro macht ihre flexiblen Arbeit so viel leichter,
mit einem virtuellen Raum für unsere Brainstorms, Projekte, Präsentationen.
Oh, das klingt so...
Also, ich brauche nicht für 6am-Ambar mit London-Office mehr zu wachen.
Jetzt bist du es.
Don't let timezones get in the way of your team working well together.
Mein Name ist Mandy Matney.
Ich habe die Murdoch-Familie für mehr als vier Jahre verheiratet.
Das ist der Murdoch Murders Podcast.
MMP ist produziert von meinem Husband David Moses
und wird von Journalist Liz Farrell geschrieben.
Hallo wieder und danke dir für deine Patienten,
als dieses Video später verheiratet wurde.
Wie gesagt, unsere Team ist jetzt in Anleitung.
Nach dem Adrenalin und dem Chaos der Anleitung,
sind wir alle noch versucht zu resenieren oder zu fokussieren.
Ich habe in dieser 4-Jährige viel gelernt.
Und eine der Dinge, die ich dir erzähle,
ist, dass du dein mentales Energie prioritierst,
wenn du nicht in dem richtigen Raum bist.
Ich konnte einfach nicht mit einem 9- bis 5-Jahr arbeiten.
Ich arbeite sehr lange und brauche viel Zeit.
Ich arbeite für mich selbst.
Ich habe die Möglichkeit zu sagen,
dass das für mich heute zu viel ist.
Oder ich bin noch nicht bereit, das zu machen.
Das ist etwas, was ich jemals gelernt habe.
Diese Geschichte hat mich geändert.
Ich bin einfach nicht der gleiche,
der ich war, als ich die Bo-Craft gefunden habe.
Ich hatte keine Idee, dass dieser Level der Evil in der Welt existiert.
Und ich hatte keine Idee, dass es so viele Menschen gibt,
die sich either protectieren oder ignorieren wollen.
Es macht mich depresiv und angreif,

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wenn man auf Social Media spielt.
Man hört immer, dass die Veränderung des Systemes schwierig ist.
Ich habe das erste Mal gelernt.
Aber es ist möglich.
Und du, unsereListener,
macht es möglich.
Und du, unsereListener,
macht es möglich.
Bitte bleiben, Pesky.
Wir brauchen dich.
Ich sage das, weil es viel zu tun ist.
Und das ist das Gefühl, was ich jetzt mitbekommen bin.
Während der Verdacht wurde,
war es nicht konklusiv,
wie ich es wollte, zu fühlen.
Es war ein enormer Moment,
aber nicht all die Panalle.
Wir brauchen noch Justice für Steven Smith.
Wir brauchen noch Konklusen
für Alex's Co-Konspirators.
Wir brauchen noch Justice für die Beach Family.
Wir brauchen noch Antworten
über die öffentlichen Offizien,
mit den Berbern,
wie die Mardak,
wie die Police Chief Greg Alexander,
Judge Carmen Mullen
und Solicitor Duffy Stone.
Wie ihr das seht,
die ersten zwei und ein halben Monate des 2023
waren eine wilde Reise hier in der Low-Country.
Die Welt muss endlich die Mardak-Familie treffen
und sich für sie,
die jemanden wie Elik Mardak
mit so viel Schmerzen für so lange wegkommen.
Und das hat für so viele Leute hier,
auch uns,
verwendet worden.
Diese Woche wollen wir ein bisschen
auf die Welt der Elik Mardak-Familie
einigen,
und starten wir mit einer großen Geschichte,
die über die Woche ging.

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Zuerst möchte ich euch über eine wichtige Faktion erinnern.

Elik Mardak

murdert seine Frau Maggie
und sein Sohn Paul.

Er war ein Jurier von seinen Vereinen
und eine Stadt, die die Mardak-Familie
für Generationen antworten.

Und nochmals, er war verletzt.

Etwas, was wir uns nicht erwähnt haben,
obwohl die Wahrscheinlichkeit klar war.
Warum hat er die Mardak-Familie getötet?

Wir werden nicht vollständig
die Antwort auf diese Frage verstehen.

Aber wir müssen es nicht verstehen.

Wie könnte er das tun?

Wie könnte er die Dinge,
die er zu tun hat,
die er zu tun hat?

Ja,

Mörder und Stehling sind zwei verschiedene Dinge,
aber sie können auch hand in hand gehen,

besonders wenn der Latterkrim
so prolific, so

inexpansiv,

und im Moment der Mörder

nur eine Sapina

von der Erfindung ist.

Die Weise, wie wir es sehen, ist das.

Ein Mann, der überreicht sein Mordkampus,
um den Weg der Elik Mardak-Familie

zu operieren,

für die meisten seiner Eltern

und die ganzen Dinge,

als er mit einem Szenario

mit dem er oder sie war.

Elik war in einer vollen

exzessiven Krise

am 7. Juni 2021,

und er hat sich selbst entschieden.

Er hat die beiden größten

finanziellen Bedenken erlaubt,

um die Gesellschaft zu reinandersetzen,

als ein Bördenfreie Witteauer

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und ein Griechenvater
mit Bester Bayerseid.
Das Ding ist,
dass der Mordkampus
unabhängig ist,
dass der Elik Mardak
ein Elik Mardak war.
Er hat sich selbst als unabhängig
als der Mordkampus
unabhängig war.
Er war sein Vater,
sein Grandfather,
sein great-grandfather.
Aber mit den finanziellen Bedenken
hat er gegen das Law Firm
den ganzen Bedenken
von seiner Familie,
als er zu weit ging.
Er und sein Partner,
Danny Henderson,
haben seine Bankrecords getroffen.
Der Elik Mardak
hat sicherlich ein Bedenken
gegeben.
Und sogar seine Anleger
bei dem Firm
hat er schwer verspürt,
um ihn zu protecten.
Es waren zu viele Bedenken.
Und das Problem
ist, dass er zu groß war.
Um Elik zu protecten,
hat er die einzige Bedeutung
von seinem Leben,
die nicht unenttäuschbar war,
wenn er ausgeführt wurde.
Sondern jetzt, dass sein Vater sterb.
Und dann,
das ist es.
Elik Mardak war nicht nur der Sonnen,
Grandson, und der Grandson
der vierten,
die stärkeren Männern.

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Er war selbst ein unabhängigem
Prosecutor.
Und dieser Unabhängige
Mann in diesem Office.
Er nahm das Bedeutung überall.
Lass mich mal repetieren,
ein Plaintiffs-Attorney,
der exakt einen Fall
von seinem eigenen,
in mehr als 15 Jahren,
und der, der eine Hälfte
von anderen Bedenken handelte,
hat eine Bedeutung
und Blüle,
als ob er ein Polizist war.
Was er nicht war.
Im Spiegel von Swarn,
war er ein Oath
für das Privileg
für das Bedeutung.
Nein, er war nur allowed
zu haben.
Und der Fall ist,
der Person, der ihm all
dieser unerwartete Power
der Solicitor Duffy Stone hat,
ist noch ein Publikum.
Wird jeder,
mit der Authority, investigieren?
Oder sind wir alle,
dass das große Problem
ist, es ist wirklich schwer,
zu verstehen, was es genau ist,
was die Leute nicht haben,
was das Bedeutung bedeutet
und wie das Bedeutung alleine
hat, den Auskommen
von jedem Enttängelmann,
Elik, in dem er sich gefunden hat.
Elik's Lineage,
das Bedeutung und seine Position
im PMPD,
machte für den Trifecta von Teflon.

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Und jeder, um ihn herum,
war trainiert, sie wussten,
wie viele times
eine single question
von den Leuten um ihn,
sogar eine single one word
question of why,
would have stopped his crimes
in their tracks.
But no one asked any questions.
No one challenged him on his answers
until
June 7th, 2021.
So we want you to keep
all of that in mind,
and tell you about this post and courier story.
On Saturday,
the post and courier published a piece
calling out Sled's investigation
into the murders of Maggie and Paul.
I'll have David read a key paragraph
from the story written by
Reporters Thadmore, Avery Wilkes
and Jocelyn Greschik.
The defense attorneys accused Sled's lead investigator
of twice giving incorrect information
to the grand jury.
That indicted Murdoch on murder charges.
Sled Chief Mark Heal
commented to the paper that this criticism
was being lodged without much needed context.
Now, as you all know,
we are all about context
here at the Murdoch Murders Podcast.
It is at the core of what we believe
good journalism should be.
This story lacked key information
and instead presented itself
as if Dick and Jim
had ordered it off of the post and courier
lunch menu.
It was cooked perfectly to their liking.
So the context.

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Well, this story is exactly
what we have been talking about for years.
It is why the podcast was created.
Because this story was too complicated
and too much to consume
in basically any other medium.
It is what we worried about
from day one in the Boat Crash case.
It is why we believe
that Stephen Smith's case
remains unsolved.
It is why no one knows
exactly what happened to Gloria Satterfield.
It is the absolute why
of everything.
Law enforcement treated the Murdochs
differently from the rest of us.
This cannot be denied.
It is the thing that needs to change.
I'll have David read this part
of the post and courier story
where they say it themselves.
The scion
of a family that ran the local solicitors office
for more than eight decades
Murdoch had a cozy relationship
with local law enforcement.
And yet, it's like we are in
crazy town.
And we're nothing we know to be true
about Ellick Murdoch. Along with everything
that came out in the trial, including
his colossal lies, gets
completely reset to zero
in favor of criticizing those
who have worked hard to bring
those lies to light
despite the odds.
Now, before we get further here,
we think it was absolutely
fair game to write a story
examining the sled investigation.
The journalists who reported this story

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are all respectable reporters.
All three reported on every
step of the trial.
But gosh, it is frustrating
that a legitimate story like this
gets presented as if sled's missteps
were the result of incompetence
without accounting for the Murdoch's influence
over the investigation.
And quite frankly, it is dangerous
for the media to push this pro-defense
narrative in a time when the tides
are changing in South Carolina.
And it's clear that the press favoring
the good old boys played a huge
role in emboldening the Murdoch's
unchecked power.
I need to say that we think that sled
worked hard on this case.
And that by and large, their agents
gave a great showing on the witness stand.
The post and couriers position
seems to be that
Ellick Murdoch was found guilty in spite of sled.
But let's look
at the paper's main criticisms of sled.
Starting with the GPS data
that got overwritten on Maggie's phone.
Remember the reason
14th Circuit solicitor Duffy Stone
said his investigators were on the scene
on the night of the murders
in the days following them?
His office had an investigator
who specialized in the extraction
of data from cellphones.
They were there to help,
Duffy said, despite
it being highly unorthodox
for the prosecutor's investigators team
to be there on the scene of the murder.
These were Ellick's
coworkers and this

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wasn't remotely their job.
Duffy refused
to recuse himself for two whole months
during which critical
information was lost from Maggie's phone.
The post and couriers story
does not mention this.
But that doesn't surprise us.
After Duffy was initially
criticized for his involvement in the case
and refusal to recuse himself,
the post and courier ran a story
that publicly exonerated
or attempted to Duffy Stone
of his bizarre and dubious decision.
A decision that Duffy himself
as the national director
of the Association of District Attorneys
had recently warned
prosecutors against making.
In fact, I have to point this out.
In a 2021
story breaking the news of Duffy's
recusal, the post and courier
defended his position
by quoting, checks
notes, University of South
Carolina Law Dean
Robert Wilcox, who
we still have questions about
considering the whole Buster
readmission scandal and everything
that we learned on the jailhouse phone calls.
He was quoted in the piece.
I want David to read this part now
because it's so crazy
given what the post and courier
is saying now about the evidence
in the murder case.
So anything involving Maggie's
phone and questions about
the data extraction needs to mention
who put himself in charge

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of that aspect of the investigation.
Duffy, who recused
himself on the same day
Elick had his third and final
interview with Sled
when it was clear that he was a suspect.
I have to wonder
if someone called Duffy's office
after that interview.
The story also criticized
Sled for allowing Murdoch's
friends and family to hang out
on the scene and clean up the family's
house before agents got to search it.
But not mentioned in the story
is how the scenario blatantly
contradicts the defense's
assertion that Sled
targeted Elick from the beginning.
Do we think Sled should have kicked
every Murdoch and every PMPD
attorney off of the property
that night? Of course we do.
But again, this is what
this entire podcast has been about.
The deference that gets
paid to Elick Murdoch and
his family by law enforcement.
A Sled agent even offered
to take her badge off
to make Elick's family and friends
more comfortable as she searched
the house. Which, what is that?
Does she do that for everyone?
We hope every law
enforcement officer in the state is
looking at this and reminding themselves
to treat everyone that they
encounter at crime scenes with the
same amount of respect.
Another criticism of the story
is that Sled didn't
immediately search Almeida.

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Were Elick said that he had gone that night?
Do we think they should have searched Almeida?
Again, of course we do.
Elick murdered his family
and likely stored the weapons and closed
their temporarily. And that is the place
where he told Police
he was when the murders happened.
That would have been super helpful to the case
if they did that at the time.
But again, Elick was not
a suspect that night. Sled
did not treat him as a suspect
and they did not have probable
cause at that point to believe
they needed to search Almeida.
And does anyone really think
that Randolph Murdoch,
the long admired Chief Prosecutor
of the 14th Circuit who was lying
in a hospital bed with pneumonia
and lung cancer, was going
to allow Sled to search the house?
Who would have signed that search warrant?
Let's say
a Sled agent actually had the nerve
that night to push the issue
and ask for that permission. Or who
somehow was able to articulate
why Elick was a suspect
beyond he found them.
And why Almeida needed to be
searched immediately. And who
somehow was able to find
a judge in Murdoch Country
willing to sign that search warrant?
Does anyone think
that that guy's chain of command
would have supported that? Does anyone
think that agent would still
have their job today? Does anyone
think that Sled Chief Mark Keel
wouldn't have had an onslaught

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of good ol boys screaming into his phone and threatening his job? This is how this stuff happens.

It is the reality of life in the low country that so many reporting on this story still do not understand and it is the context that helps us understand why Sled didn't search the house that night.

Again, this is what we've been talking about. We'll be right back.

Now, there are two other aspects of the story that we want to cover quickly because we've talked about them before at length, both here and on Cop of Justice.

One is the grand jury testimony of Agent David Owen.

The defense and their online supporters, whether real or robotic, claimed for a while that Sled had lied to the grand jury and that's not quite what happened.

There were two issues here. The first is that Sled incorrectly told the state grand jury that the Murdoch family's guns were all loaded with the same two types of ammo that were in the shotgun that was used until Paul.

That's a pretty big deal and certainly a very significant clue and God how we wish Sled had gotten this right so that we wouldn't have to have this conversation now. But the explanation for this was that Owen had simply misstated the situation. The family's guns were loaded with two different brands of the same ammo. Now, that might not be a great explanation,

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but this is a case with more than 700 pieces of evidence that got entered onto the court record and from what we understand, Owen wasn't alone in believing that the family loaded their guns in that very specific way. The second issue is the high velocity impacts batter on the shirt. The state elected not to introduce that evidence as an exhibit in this trial. Why? Because it was too complicated to explain and it opened way too many doors for the defense to easily mislead the jury. Here's the Cliff's Notes version from our reporting. There were two tests for blood done on the shirt. The first test for presumptive blood came back positive. Photos from that staining were sent to Thomas Bevel, a bloodstain expert in Oklahoma. Those photos though were not at high enough resolution for Bevel to see the misting that sled believes came from when Alex stood atop Maggie and shot her in the head. Bevel asked for the raw files of the photos and once he had those, he could see the pattern at the top of the shirt, which could have, quote, only come from one thing. Unfortunately for the state, Bevel's draft report accurately reflected what he saw in that first set of photos, which was nothing. His final report included his findings after looking at the higher resolution photos. This is very explainable but could lead to confusion and there's another problem. The second test, a test called hematrace, that test for human blood, was also

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done for some unknown reason.
I say unknown reason because
Investigators we've spoken to
have told us that this test was not
necessary in this instance.
After that first test
the stains were tested for DNA
and they came back belonging
to Maggie and that should have been
the end of the testing there because
the DNA test alone
showed that those were blood stains.
But the hematrace was applied
to the shirt nonetheless. Now because
those stains were such a fine mist,
sled had doused this shirt in the
chemicals from that first blood test
for presumptive blood. That dousing
seemed to cause a false negative
in the hematrace test, meaning
now the shirt tested negative for
human blood on the record.
That was problematic because
even though it's explainable, it's
confusing. Beyond that, Owen
Beville and the Attorney General's
office didn't know about this
hematrace test and it's not clear
why. The defense maintains that
Owen had lied to the grand jury about
the presence of blood on the shirt, but
he wasn't lying. He was stating
the facts as he knew them to be
at the time of the testimony, which
we think is important to note. Also
important to note is that the shirt had
Maggie's DNA on it
in the areas where that misting
was. The results of this
mysterious hematrace test, by the way,
were found by the defense.
No one seemed to know about it
until Dick Harputley and brought it to

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Sled's attention. And that discovery ended the high-velocity impact spatter evidence. In Episode 20 of Cup of Justice, Eric Bland told us that he wouldn't be surprised if state legislators used the Murdoch trial as a reason to open an investigation into Sled. That seemed over the top to us, even knowing what we know about how the state works. But then this story came out and it seemed like a bit of a precursor. A step one to the potential of a bigger plan, if you will. Like we said, we totally support the paper's decision to take a look at how the state's law enforcement division handled one of, if not the most expensive cases in its history. But we believe the scaffolding here should have been the lie Eric told about his alibi and the influence of his family name and how that played out at the crime scene. That is the underlying problem with this case. Eric did not cooperate with the investigation. He met with Sled three times because he wanted to look innocent and he wanted to spy on the enemy. He wanted to know what they had on him so he could adjust and head it off at the pass. By all accounts, Eric did not make a meaningful effort to find the quote real killers. And instead lied about almost every aspect of that night. Right up until he needed to reverse course and take the stand. Eric was

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found guilty.

For all the obstacles Sled had with this case, they came through.

The kennel video was obviously the most important evidence in this case and Eric's decision to testify definitely helped swagers toward their guilty votes.

But we cannot ignore the fact that Eric took that stand because Sled's investigation had painted him into that corner.

Just about every assertion made by the defense and the lead up to and during the trial has proven to be false. At what point does that matter? We just have one last thing to say about that story and again we are not criticizing these reporters but rather pointing out that we can't lose sight of the bigger issue for law enforcement to do their jobs.

The people at the very top of South Carolina's various power structures whether it's legislators, agency leaders or good old boys in far flung counties need to respect the rule of law and when they don't they need to be held accountable for that.

When it comes to the good old boys no law enforcement officer should feel like they're going to lose their job as a result of doing their job.

Speaking of people doing their jobs Alex Attorney Jim Griffin appears to still be working overtime defending his client with the intensity of a scorned woman who punches the mistress instead of the terrible husband.

But we'll get to that.

First, last Thursday Dick Harputley infiled notice of Alex's intent to appeal his conviction.

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This is the first step in what will likely be a years long process, possibly up to 8 years according to some sources. Dick and Jim have already indicated their intention to take this to the US Supreme Court. In a press conference after Alex sentencing, after making a point to tell the media that they weren't going to make a statement, Dick and Jim said they believed the strongest grounds for Alex's appeal was the judge's decision to have allowed in testimony about Alex's financial crimes, because they think that testimony did more harm to Alex's character than it did to provide explanation of the motive, which they said was ludicrous and illogical. Here's Dick on whether they would have done anything differently. No. No. I mean look, once the judge first of all, we believe if the judge is going to let that stuff in, it should have been limited to the Ferris case, which is what they were asking him about on Monday on the feed. Number two, Tinsley the person that made the motion to be compelled to be heard on Thursday. Dawes Cook, Alex's lawyer both agreed there wasn't going to be any storm or Armageddon or anything that was going to happen that Thursday. The judge might have issued an order, which once down the line might have posed a problem. So once they got that character, character information is, he's a thief, he's a liar, then dictated this jury had to think he was a despicable human being and not to be believed.

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So it was about character, it wasn't about motives.

So as a result, our options were limited. Should he take the stand?

Well, you know, we debated that, he always wanted to take the stand.

But once that information was in, I mean

he had to take the stand to explain the kennel

video, the lie, if you will.

He had to, but he had no credibility, he had been stripped away

by the financial mysteries.

Here's Jim on the family's continued support of ELEC and why Buster didn't speak on his father's behalf during sentencing.

We could have had

Mother Teresa

up there speaking on behalf of Alec at sentencing.

He was getting a double life sentence.

That was expected.

He was a very

stringent

Punisher

when it comes to crimes and sentences.

That was never in dispute.

So Buster to get up and speak on his dad's behalf would not have made a difference.

Why do you want to put that kid through more trauma than

anybody we can imagine has ever been through?

What's that?

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