

The 2024 Mock Trial Case



IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF FONDREN COUNTY STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

State of Mississippi,

v.

LANE KING,

Defendant.

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CRIMINAL ACTION NO: 2024-MT

NOTE: All characters, names, events, places and circumstances in this mock trial case are fictitious or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to any person (living or dead), place, thing or event is purely coincidental.

The 2024 Mississippi High School Mock Trial case, *State v. Lane King*, has been adapted from the 2019 South Carolina Bar Law Related Education (LRE) High School Mock Trial case, *State v. Lane Hill*. The Mississippi High School Mock Trial Committee would like to thank the South Carolina Bar LRE for making its case available.

INTRODUCTION

*This introduction is of **no legal consequence** in terms of the trial and is **not admissible** for impeachment purposes or for any other purpose.*

The defendant, Lane King, has been charged with murdering his/her business partner, Conner Hastings. Conner Hastings apparently had a gambling problem and had been unlucky for some period of time. Thinking his luck would change, Conner borrowed money frequently from a local loan shark Lou Christoff. However, Conner's luck didn't change and, under pressure from Lou, Conner started stealing money from the business.

With skyrocketing interest and continued gambling losses, Conner's debt to the loan shark was still over \$200,000, even after he drained the business dry. Christoff had already given Conner several physically violent "messages" indicating the debt was to be paid – "or else."

In the meantime, Lane hired an accountant to determine why the business was in red. When Lane learned Conner had been stealing from the business and had driven it to the point of bankruptcy, Lane allegedly became enraged and threatened to kill Conner. A few days later, Conner was found dead. Through a Buy-Sell Agreement and insurance policy, Lane would become a half million dollars richer. Who murdered Conner?

STIPULATIONS

1. All exhibits included in the problem are authentic and accurate in all respects, and no objections to the authenticity of the exhibits shall be entertained.
2. Stipulations cannot be contradicted or challenged.
3. There are **NO** costume options permitted as an exception to Rule 18(b) this season.
4. The Indictment is valid. The Defendant may not challenge the Indictment as deficient.
5. Chain of custody for evidence is not in dispute.
6. The jury charges are accurate in all respects. No objections to jury charges may be raised.
7. The signatures of the witness statements are authentic and signed under oath by each witness. All statements were constitutionally obtained.
8. The **Introduction** provided is **of no legal consequence** in terms of the trial and **is not admissible** for impeachment purposes or for any other purpose.
9. The autopsy of Conner Hastings concluded that Hastings died as a result of hypothermia. Hypothermia causes the body to be pale and waxy, not cyanotic, because the blood withdraws from the skin by the body's defensive mechanisms to avoid loss of heat.
10. Time of death could not be determined from typical physical examination of the body, i.e. body temperature, because the body was chilled to 35 degrees F.

11. The autopsy results dated the cigarette burns found on Hastings to have occurred two weeks prior to death, and strangulation of neck, non-threatening, to have occurred a week prior to death.
12. Fingerprint analysis shows that King's fingerprints are on the padlock to the cooler, cooler door, and kitchen knife. Christoff's fingerprints were not detected on the padlock to the cooler, cooler door, or doors to the restaurant.
13. Exhibits 2, 3, 4, and 5 were made at or about the time of the events by a person with knowledge of the events and are kept in the course of a regularly conducted business activity, and it is the regular practice to make such records. Exhibits 2, 3, 4, and 5, do not need to be introduced through the custodian of the records.
14. Exhibit 7 is the original photograph taken by Detective Finch at the scene of the crime and accurately depicts the victim and the surroundings at the time of Detective Finch's investigation.
15. Exhibit 9 is a true and accurate copy of the original note from Conner Hastings provided by Defendant King shortly after being charged with the murder. The handwriting contained in Exhibit 9 has been confirmed to be that of Conner Hastings, per expert handwriting analysis. The original note disappeared from the evidence room prior to analysis. Therefore, the dating of the handwriting on the note cannot be determined. Exhibit 9 is admissible, without objection.
16. A spreadsheet was obtained from Conner Hasting's residence that confirmed money was owed to Lou Christoff. Neither side may contest that this document existed or that this document contained anything further. The remaining balance on the spreadsheet owed to Lou Christoff was \$208,500.
17. The financial audit prepared by Jo Walker showed Conner Hastings stole \$273,958 is not in dispute nor is the Supplies Unlimited invoice. Examples of the types of theft are included as exhibits and may be used.
18. Following the closing of Magnolia's, John Croswell accepted a sous chef position at a restaurant in Ontario and is unavailable to testify. John Croswell is not a suspect.
19. For purposes of Mock Trial allowing roles to be gender neutral, no issue will be raised if Lou Christoff and Jamie Kennedy are performed by opposite genders in reference to sharing a prison cell.

PRE-TRIAL RULINGS

Because the parties have stipulated to the cause of death of the victim, the judge has sustained the Defendant's objection to showing photos of the victim's body and injuries on the grounds that those photos would be unnecessarily cumulative of the testimony of Detective Alex Finch and that, as a result, those photos would be substantially more prejudicial than probative. Exhibit 7 is not part of the photo exclusion.

WITNESSES

The following witnesses are available to be called by the parties. Prosecution witnesses may not testify or be called on behalf of the Defendant. Defense witnesses may not testify or be called on behalf of the Prosecution. See Rules 3, 5 and 12(f) for more details on witnesses.

For the Prosecution

Jo Walker
Detective Alex Finch
Lou Christoff

For the Defense

Lane King, Defendant
Jamie Kennedy
Sideny Young

EXHIBITS

Teams in competition may use the following exhibits. Teams should only print and use exhibits in a black and white (grayscale) format; some exhibits are presented in the case materials in color to give teams a better view of the exhibit. They are pre-marked and are to be referred to by the assigned number, as follows:

Exhibit Numbers and Title/Descriptions

Exhibit 1: Walker's Curriculum Vitae
Exhibit 2: Ticket Order and Cash Register Tape
Exhibit 3: Deposit Slip and Cash Register Tapes
Exhibit 4: Check and Check Register
Exhibit 5: Buy-Sell Agreement
Exhibit 6: Investigation Report
Exhibit 7: Photo Inside Magnolia's Cooler
Exhibit 8: Padlock Receipt
Exhibit 9: Menu Notes
Exhibit 10: Young's Curriculum Vitae
Exhibit 11: Autopsy Report for Connor Hastings
Exhibit 12: Diagram of Magnolia's

INDICTMENT

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
COUNTY OF FONDREN

CRIMINAL ACTION NO. 2024-MT

The GRAND JURORS OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, taken from the body of the good and lawful citizens of Fondren County, duly elected, empaneled, sworn and charged to inquire in and for said State and County, in the name and by the authority of the State of Mississippi, upon their oaths charge and accuse LANE KING with following offense:

COUNT ONE: FIRST-DEGREE MURDER (Miss. Code Ann. § 97-3-19)

On or about March 25, 2023, in Fondren County, State of Mississippi, LANE KING did, commit the crime of First-Degree Murder in that the Defendant, Lane King, with deliberate design, cause the death of Connor Hastings, at the Magnolia's Restaurant located at 38 State Street, Fondren County, Mississippi, in violation of Miss. Code Ann. § 97-3-19.

TRUE Bill

Filed in office this 16th day of June, 2023.

/s/ William Sherwood
Foreperson

/s/ Tammy Ryan
(Deputy) Clerk, Circuit Court of
Fondren County, Mississippi

Defendant, on October 25, 2023, being in open court, pleads **NOT GUILTY**

/s/ Lane King
Defendant

/s/ Kye Jefferson
Attorney for Defendant

/s/ Briana Rivers
Prosecuting Attorney

STATEMENT OF JO WALKER

1 My name is Jo Walker. I am 59 years old. I am a certified public accountant (CPA) in private
2 practice in Fondren, Mississippi. A copy of my curriculum vitae is marked as Exhibit 1. I graduated
3 summa cum laude from the University of Mississippi (UM) in 1981 with a Bachelor of Science in
4 Accounting. I was recognized as the top student in my class.

5 After graduating from UM, I was highly recruited by what were then considered the Big Eight
6 CPA firms. I went to work for Arthur Andersen in Chicago as an auditor; which was well before its
7 demise from the Enron and WorldCom debacles. And in case you missed the headlines back in 2002,
8 Arthur Andersen was convicted for obstruction of justice for shredding documents relating to its audit
9 of Enron, and the firm agreed to surrender its licenses. Although the United States Supreme Court
10 unanimously reversed Arthur Andersen's conviction in 2005, the firm had already lost nearly all of its
11 clients. I hate to even mention my prior association with Arthur Andersen. However, when I was at the
12 firm, it had the reputation of supporting the highest standard in the accounting industry. I was quickly
13 recognized as a star at Arthur Andersen. I was promoted quickly and assumed the role of manager
14 after only three years. The usual track for a manager position there was four to five years.

15 I left Arthur Andersen in 1984 to establish a firm of my own, Account-Abilitee, ironic given my
16 Arthur Andersen connection. We are a six-member firm, offering our clients full-service accounting
17 expertise. In addition to audit work, I specialize in forensic accounting. Forensic accountants are
18 trained to look beyond the numbers and deal with the business reality of the situation. According to
19 research conducted by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE), U.S. organizations lose an
20 estimated seven percent of annual revenue to fraud. Based on the estimated U.S. Gross Domestic
21 Product for 2016 - \$18.57 trillion – this percentage indicates a staggering estimate of losses around
22 \$1.29 trillion among organizations, despite increased emphasis on anti-fraud controls and recent
23 legislation to combat fraud. My mission as a fraud examiner is to reduce the incidence of fraud and
24 white-collar crime and to assist the client in detection and deterrence.

25 Lane King contacted me on February 27, 2023, to employ my services. I made a presentation
26 that afternoon at the local Chamber of Commerce entitled "Realizing Your Full Potential." The
27 presentation touched on various business and financial practices to increase profitability, including
28 stronger internal controls to prevent or deter employee theft. Lane came up to me after the meeting
29 and asked if I would undertake a financial investigation and make recommendations for increasing
30 profitability for the business. I learned that Lane King and Conner Hastings were partners in their
31 restaurant, Magnolia's. At the time, there was no suspicion of fraud or wrongdoing. Lane wanted to
32 know why the business was in the red when customers were steady, and it seemed business was good.
33 Lane and Conner had been in the restaurant business for three years.

34 A study conducted by the University of Central Florida in 2011 concluded that the highest
35 failure rate in the restaurant industry was during the first year. Approximately 26 percent of
36 restaurants fail in the first year; 19 percent fail in the second year; and 14 percent fail in the third year.
37 While it is not unusual for a restaurant to fail in the first three years, it was a bit surprising to hear
38 Magnolia's was in the red because I was aware of some "good buzz" for them in the community and
39 positive critic reviews in *The Reservoir Press* newspaper.

40 I toured the restaurant facilities the following day, Tuesday, February 28th, to get a feel for the
41 day-to-day management and an overview of the financial records and record keeping of the business.
42 I advised Lane that in order to do a complete financial review, audit, and forensic investigation, I would
43 need complete access to all accounting records. I could start the audit on March 7th at the restaurant.
44 The audit would take up to two weeks. I would charge a flat fee of \$6,500. I would work on the
45 premises, so I could have access to all of the records and Magnolia's could continue business as usual.
46 The arrangement also gave me the opportunity to make observations of suspicious activity I might not
47 otherwise see. Lane agreed to the arrangement. I typically start audits on Mondays, but since the
48 restaurant was closed on Sundays and Mondays, I started Tuesday, March 7th. Also, because this was
49 a young restaurant, I required advance payment. Lane paid me out of personal funds.

50 During my brief discussions with Lane, I could tell Lane was accounting challenged. Lane has
51 great creativity with food preparation, restaurant style, and service, but more or less left Conner
52 Hastings to handle the financial matters of the business. I was not present when Lane informed Conner
53 about me being hired to do the forensic investigation, so I cannot state what his reaction was. I did
54 not notice anything particularly suspicious about Conner's behavior when I was performing my
55 forensic accounting work for the two-week period. Well, maybe there were two times I recall when
56 Conner was back in the office area with me. At the time, I had some cancelled checks, bank statements,
57 and ledger cards on the desk. Conner accidentally spilled coffee all over the records, twice. At first, I
58 thought it was an accident. The second time, I thought Conner was either especially clumsy or perhaps
59 was doing something more sinister in obliterating the records. Also, I did overhear a few conversations
60 with Conner on the phone – once the first week I was there, and then two or three more times the
61 following week. Conner told the person on the phone "I promised you I would get the money, please
62 give me time." And "There is no need to use threats. You will get your money." And "Yes, I remember
63 what happened last time when the payment was not timely, please don't, that won't be necessary. I
64 will pay you, I promise." Conner was upset by the calls but did not seem scared. Initially, I thought
65 Conner's conversations were with a vendor. In the restaurant business, if you cannot pay your bills,
66 the deliveries stop, and the business will go belly up. In retrospect after learning about Conner's
67 gambling problem and that he stole from Magnolia's, I think these telephone conversations were
68 probably between Conner and Lou Christoff. Lou was probably threatening Conner if he did not pay
69 his gambling debts. I never heard who was on the other side of the conversation or what the caller
70 said. Conner never spoke about it with me. During the first week I was there, Conner came into the
71 restaurant and had a burn mark on his arm. Another time he had bruising around his neck, like
72 someone had grabbed his neck hard. I did not ask any questions, but I do notice details others might
73 miss.

74 During the two-week period I was at the restaurant, I frequently saw a person in the shadows
75 in the alley across the street from the restaurant's back door. At the time, I assumed it was a person
76 who worked at the business across the street taking a smoke break. I now recognize the person lurking
77 in the alley was Lou Christoff. Despite the darkness in the alley, there was a light right above the back
78 door entrance to the restaurant.

79 Restaurants are notorious for losing money due to employee theft. The most common cash
80 fraud scheme is skimming. Skimming is the process by which cash is removed from the company
81 before it enters the accounting system. Retail establishments where cash is used frequently –

82 particularly restaurants – are vulnerable to this type of scheme. A related type of scheme is to ring up
83 a sale for less than the actual amount. The fraudster then pockets the difference between the actual
84 sale and the amount on the register tape. Employees may also ring up a sale and then void the same
85 sale, thereby pocketing the cash from the register.

86 An employee who collects the cash and also makes the bank deposit has an excellent
87 opportunity to misappropriate company funds. For example, an employee in the food services industry
88 might receive the daily receipts from the cashier, along with the cash register tapes. The employee
89 would then mutilate the register tapes, so the tapes could not be read. With the evidence now
90 destroyed, the employee would pocket a portion of the day's receipts and deposit the balance. If the
91 daily deposit amounts are not compared with the cash register tapes, the fraud can go undetected.

92 Checks can also be an instrument for fraud. Employees with signature authority on a company
93 bank account can make checks payable to cash or to themselves personally. Someone with check
94 signatory authority can simply write a check to himself or to cash, mark the check void in the
95 company's check register and then write an inflated amount of another check written in the check
96 registry to offset the amount of the voided check. When the bank statements are received, the
97 employee merely removes the print out page showing the cancelled checks.

98 In performing my forensic investigation, I reviewed the following financial and business
99 records: general ledger, journal entries, adjusted journal entries, trial balances, checking accounts,
100 cancelled checks, deposit slips, cash register tapes, order tickets, and vendor invoices. I also personally
101 interviewed Lane King and Conner Hastings, as well as a couple of the restaurant employees to
102 understand the flow of money and internal controls used by the company. Although both Conner and
103 Lane had authority to sign checks, Conner primarily assumed that role. Lane managed the kitchen staff,
104 the menus, ordering food supplies, scheduling employees, reservations, and keeping the customers
105 happy. Conner primarily operated the cash register during business hours, ordered food and supplies,
106 and managed the financial aspects of the business.

107 During the second week of my investigation, I started to strongly suspect Conner Hastings had
108 been stealing from the restaurant. I do not believe I mentioned my suspicions to anyone. I seem to
109 recall both Conner and Lane asking me how the investigation was proceeding, but I typically do not
110 make any comments until my investigation is complete. In my view, it is important to have all your
111 facts and figures together before any conclusions are announced.

112 After I had completed my two-week forensic investigation, it was evident Conner had been
113 taking cash from Magnolia's for some time. I found evidence of each of the typical theft schemes
114 mentioned previously. For example, skimming had occurred. There were several instances where one
115 of the waitstaff had a carbon copy of an order ticket in their book, but the order was not included on
116 the cash register receipt for the day. An example of this is shown in Exhibit 2. The check marks on the
117 cash register tapes are my notations for cross-checking the order tickets for that day. I cannot say for
118 certain the skimming is attributed to Conner. Someone else could have been managing the cash
119 register at the time. However, in looking at the events as a whole, there are events I can directly
120 connect to Conner. For example, certain daily cash register tapes did not match the deposit made.
121 These deposit slips were written in Conner's handwriting and were part of his normal job
122 responsibilities, not the responsibility of any other employee. Thus, as you will see from Exhibit 3, the
123 deposit slip for Friday and Saturday's sales was in the amount of \$587.93 on Monday, February 13,

124 2023, even though the cash register tapes show receipts from Friday, February 10th in the amount of
125 \$2,299.61 and Saturday, February 11th for \$3,089.57. Finally, I found checks written to cash or to
126 Conner that were shown as void in the check register but cleared the bank. In order to balance the
127 account, another check in the check register and ledger accounts was manipulated to increase the
128 payment to cover the amount of the “voided” check to Conner. Exhibit 4 is an example of this
129 occurrence. There is a check register entry for check #1098 paid to Supplies Unlimited in the amount
130 of \$3,093.45. However, I found the Supplies Unlimited invoice paid with check #1098 written in the
131 amount of \$93.45.

132 In total, I uncovered 67 instances of theft committed by Conner Hastings totaling \$273,958
133 over the past two years. It appears no theft occurred from the restaurant during the first year of
134 operation. Of the 67 instances of theft, more than half occurred in the six-month period prior to March
135 2023. Unfortunately, the theft has left Magnolia’s with little to nothing. Magnolia’s was operating at
136 a net loss of \$164,554 and had a negative cash flow.

137 I broke the news to Lane on Friday, March 17, 2023, about 4pm. I informed Lane that my
138 forensic investigation revealed Magnolia’s was insolvent due to numerous occasions of theft by
139 Conner Hastings totaling \$273,958. At first, Lane appeared to be in shock, repeating several times,
140 “How could this happen?” The more I explained to Lane the specifics of the theft and gave Lane
141 examples of the skimming, check fraud, and deposit manipulation, the more I saw pure rage on Lane’s
142 face. Lane seemed consumed by rage saying, “Well, I’ll make Conner pay for this. He won’t make a
143 fool out of me. “You have done your job. You can leave. I will confront Conner alone.”

144 On that same day, I left the building when I realized I had left behind my favorite mechanical
145 pencil on the desk in the office area. When I went back to retrieve my pencil, I overheard Lane talking
146 to Conner in strained but controlled hush tones. I could not hear everything being said clearly because
147 I was standing near the kitchen door to the hallway by the office and the kitchen employees were
148 making loud noises as they pulled out pots and pans in preparation for the dinner crowd. But I am
149 pretty sure I heard Conner say something about gambling and that Lane and Conner had to come up
150 with the money right then. I also recall hearing Lane threaten to kill Conner. I do not know the exact
151 wording Lane used because of the background noise. And then I heard Lane say quite clearly, “You’ll
152 get your just desserts.”

153 While I was reviewing the company records, I had also come across a buy-sell agreement for
154 the restaurant. The buy-sell agreement states in the event of death of either partner, the other partner
155 shall be the beneficiary of a \$500,000 insurance policy. A copy of the buy-sell agreement is attached
156 as Exhibit 5. So, upon Conner’s death, Lane was to receive a \$500,000 payout from the insurance
157 policy. It is not unusual, however, for partners in a business to have a buy-sell agreement in place,
158 funded by insurance. Actually, it is smart business to plan for contingencies of someone’s death and
159 what happens to a partnership interest in the business. You do not want the family coming in and
160 trying to manage the business too. You want to be able to buy them out.

161 Following the horrible death of Conner Hastings, Detective Finch with the Fondren Police
162 Department interviewed me for further information about the financial audit. Lane disclosed the audit
163 to Finch, which is why Finch came to me.

164 I believe I have an excellent reputation among my peers in both audit work and forensic
165 accounting. All of my peer review examinations have yielded outstanding results. I did have one

166 malpractice action filed against me about five years ago relating to tax preparation work I had
167 performed, specifically with a car dealership's inventory. My insurance company paid a small nuisance
168 settlement to make it go away, but the settlement papers specifically state that I deny liability.

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WITNESS ADDENDUM

171 I have reviewed this statement, given by me, and I have nothing of significance to add at this time. The
172 material facts are true and correct.

173

Signed,

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Jo Walker

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Jo Walker

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178 SIGNED AND SWORN to me at 4:45 PM, May 15, 2023.

179

180

C.M. McCormack

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C.M. McCormack, Notary Public

STATEMENT OF ALEX FINCH

1 My name is Alex Finch. I am 43 years old. I am an investigator with the Fondren Police
2 Department. I am a twenty-year veteran of law enforcement and hold a bachelor's degree in criminal
3 justice from the University of Southern Mississippi. During my career, I have been involved in every
4 type of criminal investigation at the local, state, and federal levels. For six years, I served as a member
5 of the Mississippi Attorney General's Task Force on Organized Crime, working in an undercover
6 capacity. I use the information I learned during my time as an undercover agent to investigate crimes
7 where there is a suspicion of organized crime involvement. I currently work closely with the Metro
8 Gang Task Force, the Fondren Police Department, and the MS FBI offices. Besides my duties at the
9 Fondren Police Department, I am an adjunct instructor at the MS Criminal Justice Academy and the
10 Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) in New Orleans, Louisiana. I have also been a guest
11 lecturer at the National Advocacy Center.

12 As an investigator for the Mississippi Attorney General's Task Force on Organized Crime, I made
13 countless arrests and testified against many men and women connected with organized crime. I have
14 received numerous awards for my work including the Police Medal of Valor, Meritorious Service
15 Medal, and the MS Law Enforcement Officers Association Officer of the Year Award in 2008. My efforts
16 have also been the focus of a story in Newsweek, ABC Television News Program 20/20, and Dateline
17 NBC.

18 I get irritated when people bring up the two times I was investigated by the Office of
19 Professional Responsibility (OPR) for possible corruption and connections to the mob. OPR used to be
20 called internal affairs. I was accused of evidence tampering and rigging the case involving Lou Christoff
21 and Lou's brother Diamond Joe, so they could avoid conviction. Nothing could be further from the
22 truth. I swore to myself there would be another day when I would bring them down. Bringing up the
23 OPR investigations is an underhanded attempt by defense counsel to discredit me and let a guilty
24 person go free. It was a long time ago and nothing came of the investigations. I was never indicted,
25 never suspended, and never reprimanded. Naturally when you have infiltrated the mob, there is
26 always a blur in the public or outsider's view as to where your loyalties are. If you are going to play the
27 part of an undercover agent, you have to be convincing or you do not survive, and I was pretty good
28 at acting. Truth be known, I wanted nothing more than to nail Lou Christoff for the heinous crimes
29 Christoff orchestrated. Yes, I developed connections with Lou Christoff, but only to use them against
30 Christoff and other violent loan sharks.

31 On the morning of March 28, 2023, I was called to the scene of a homicide by the initial
32 responding patrol officer. Co-owner of Magnolia's Restaurant, Conner Hastings, was discovered
33 padlocked in the kitchen's walk-in cooler. The officer on scene correctly identified it as a homicide.
34 The body was inside the cooler, which only locks from the outside with a padlock. Upon my arrival, I
35 automatically thought this was a mob hit.

36 The restaurant was closed on Sundays and Mondays, which explained the long exposure in the
37 cooler without earlier discovery. John Crowell, the sous chef, discovered the back door of the
38 restaurant unlocked at 07:15 on Tuesday, March 28, 2023. Crowell then discovered the body locked
39 in the cooler 15 minutes later and immediately called 911 and then called co-owner, Lane King. When

40 Croswell was interviewed, there was nothing else of value to add. Upon my inspection of the kitchen
41 and office areas in the restaurant, nothing was out of place or disturbed to indicate a struggle.
42 Hastings's bookbag with cell phone, wallet, and keys was undisturbed in the bottom right drawer of
43 his desk. After charging and powering on Mr. Hastings's cell phone, it did not have a passcode and it
44 reflected a missed call at 22:04 on Saturday, March 25, 2023. Upon further interviews of kitchen staff,
45 it was noted a person had been lurking in the alley across from the kitchen's back door to the
46 restaurant for a couple of weeks. No further relevant information was discovered.

47 The crime scene techs finished documenting the evidence on hand and photographed the
48 position of the body and the word "Killer" along with the start of another letter spelled out in bacon,
49 marked as Exhibit 7. The coroner's office took possession of the body and transported it to the morgue.
50 As the Coroner's van was leaving, I spoke with Lane King. King seemed to have been the last person to
51 talk to the victim at 22:30 on Saturday, March 25, 2023. Hastings was going to stay later according to
52 King because he wanted to jot down some additional menu ideas for the following week. No notes to
53 that effect were found in the investigation; however, King's legal team later turned over the original
54 menu note to the police department while keeping a copy. Also, I am not in control of the evidence
55 room, so the accusation that I tampered with the evidence is ridiculous.

56 King stated the cooler was unlocked at the time King left the restaurant, and Hastings was going
57 to lock up the cooler after checking the inventory for the following week's menu, shut off the lights,
58 and lock up the restaurant for the night. Further, King revealed the results of a forensic audit of
59 Magnolia's books and showed me the final report dated March 17, 2023. King had confronted Hastings
60 that day about the results of the audit. Hastings admitted to King that he had stolen money from the
61 restaurant. King told me the imminent closing of Magnolia's would ruin King both professionally and
62 personally. This would be caused by not only the loss of revenue from Magnolia's, but also King's
63 personal loans from the startup of the restaurant. After Hastings's admission, King was trying to come
64 up with a way to help Hastings pay back the loan shark. King did not know to which loan shark the
65 money was owed, but Hastings had referenced someone named Lou. That is when I thought the
66 suspect was local loan shark/mobster, Lou Christoff. King also mentioned having seen a person in the
67 alley across from the restaurant's back door upon leaving on the evening of March 25th. I asked King
68 to look at a photo array on my tablet and attempt to identify the person seen in the alley. From the
69 photo array I set up, King positively identified Lou Christoff.

70 After the interview with King, I went to Hastings's home. It was apparent he had not been home
71 since Saturday, March 25. He had not retrieved his mail or collected his Sunday, Monday or Tuesday
72 newspapers. At Hastings's residence, I also found a printout of a computer spreadsheet showing that
73 Hastings owed Lou Christoff over \$200,000. It was then I knew that even if I did not have Christoff for
74 murder, I was going to nail Christoff for loan sharking.

75 As noted in the autopsy report, marked as Exhibit 11, Conner Hastings died of hypothermia
76 due to prolonged exposure to 35-degree temperatures inside the locked cooler. The coroner could not
77 tell me exactly when Mr. Hastings died from hypothermia, only that it likely took more than 20 hours
78 before the hypothermia was severe enough to kill him. Based on the actual body temperature at time
79 of discovery, it was likely Hastings had been in the cooler for more than 50 hours. In the autopsy
80 report, the coroner noted that Hastings's weight, height, and age were factors to consider with
81 hypothermia. For example, a person who is 35 years of age and say 150 pounds in weight would lose

82 1.5 degrees per hour of core temperature when exposed to a cold environment. The type and amount
83 of clothing would also impact heat loss as well. In this instance, Hastings weighed less than average
84 and so it is likely that his body temperature loss per hour would have been increased. When Hastings
85 was discovered, he was wearing a thin workout tank, shorts and sneakers.

86 It is ironic for anyone to accuse me of trying to pin this murder on Lane King as a scapegoat to
87 let Christoff go free again. The reason I was called into this case is because it initially appeared like a
88 mob hit. We had an eyewitness identify Lou Christoff outside Magnolia's on the Saturday evening of
89 March 25, 2023. According to King, Hastings admitted threats on his life by Lou and showed evidence
90 of violent physical "messages," such as cigarette burns on his arms and bruising around his neck from
91 choking, which happened when Hastings had not come up with the last two payments. Being iced in
92 a cooler is a typical mob hit because it sends a message to others who owe loan sharks money. Not to
93 mention, being locked in a cooler is an agonizing way to die over a long period of time. Based on that
94 evidence, I arrested Christoff for loan sharking and the murder of Conner Hastings. My investigation
95 report documents my findings and conclusions, marked as Exhibit 6.

96 After obtaining counsel and making a deal with the solicitor's office, Christoff made a
97 statement admitting to tailing Hastings for two weeks for money owed. While keeping an eye on
98 Hastings, Christoff witnessed Lane King pointing a knife at Hastings in what looked like a heated
99 discussion. Lane forced Hastings back into the restaurant at knife point. Christoff witnessed King
100 leaving the restaurant around 22:30 and waited an additional hour for Hastings before leaving.
101 Christoff never saw Hastings leave the building.

102 My first and foremost responsibility is to uphold the law. I had to maintain my objectivity
103 throughout my investigation regardless of how much I might have wanted to implicate Christoff. Once
104 the information began to lead me away from Christoff as a suspect, I interviewed Jo Walker, the
105 forensic accountant who investigated Magnolia's financial records. Walker told me the audit had been
106 completed and clearly showed that Hastings stole \$273,958 from the restaurant. Magnolia's was
107 essentially out of cash and would have to close. Walker also told me about the buy-sell agreement for
108 a deceased partner's interest in the business, which named King the beneficiary should Hastings die.
109 Finally, Walker disclosed overhearing an argument between King and Hastings about the theft of
110 money, which occurred after releasing the results of the audit to King on March 17, 2023.

111 After my interview with Jo Walker, I went to Magnolia's to ask King some follow-up questions
112 and to look for additional evidence including the knife referenced by Lou Christoff. I located a knife
113 that matched the description given by Christoff and took it into evidence. King agreed to go to the
114 police station to provide fingerprints for comparison with those taken from the cooler, padlock, and
115 knives. King's fingerprints matched those taken from the knife, padlock, and cooler door.

116 Two things gnawed at me. First, I would have expected to find some additional physical
117 violence to have occurred prior to Hastings's hypothermia. Typically, mobsters like to rough up the
118 victim before pronouncing the death sentence. A strong message to other potential deadbeats is
119 paramount. In this case, there were no signs of struggle with another individual or physical violence.
120 According to the coroner's report, there was no physical abuse associated with the cause or timeline
121 of death. Although there were signs of previous abuse visible, none were recent enough to be
122 associated with Hastings being assaulted or forced into the cooler. He did, however, have bruising on
123 his hands most likely from banging on the door to signal for help. Second, according to my interview

124 with King, Hastings had been making payments to Christoff. So, Hastings continued to be a source of
125 income for Christoff. Loan sharks typically do not cut off a source of revenue unless it dries up
126 completely or if the loan sharks feel threatened. I did not see that to be the case for Hastings.

127 Upon completing my investigation, it became clear to me that King, not Christoff, murdered
128 Conner Hastings. Motive was clear. Walker informed King that Hastings was stealing money from the
129 restaurant. Hastings's death was a payback in more ways than one – not only for vengeance, but also
130 to collect \$500,000 through the buy-sell agreement. King was angry when first learning about the theft
131 and the company's bankrupt condition. More than one witness heard King threaten Hastings. Plus,
132 King had the opportunity. Christoff had staked out Magnolia's the night of March 25 and overheard
133 the two arguing outside the restaurant. Christoff also witnessed King brandishing a kitchen knife and
134 forcing Hastings back into the restaurant right after a sudden rain shower.

135 Unfortunately, there is no accurate way to establish time of death merely by observing the
136 body since it was chilled to such a low temperature. Thus, as a police detective, I am trained to use
137 other means, such as witnesses, neighbors, unopened mail, or other testimonial or physical evidence.
138 The last person who was with Hastings was King. It is obvious this was no accident. The padlock to the
139 cooler was locked from the outside. Plus, Hastings told us what happened through his own words. He
140 identified his assailant's name on the cooler floor using bacon strips stored in the cooler. Before he
141 died, Hastings spelled out "Killer" with the start of another letter as seen in the photograph marked
142 as Exhibit 7. As you can also tell, another piece of bacon was starting to be laid out. Had Hastings not
143 succumbed to the hypothermia, he would have finished spelling the killer's name.

144 Additionally, it became quite evident this murder was not committed in the heat of passion,
145 but rather was premeditated. Magnolia's had been operating for three years prior to this incident.
146 King purchased a lock for the cooler upon learning Hastings was stealing from the business. King
147 contemplated and planned the whole thing out, forcing Hastings into the cooler, locking him in over
148 the weekend, and making it appear the loan sharks were making a typical mob hit. But King was
149 careless. King's fingerprints are all over the lock to the cooler, the cooler door, and the kitchen knife.
150 In addition, King did not realize there was a witness lurking in the dark shadows in the alley facing the
151 back door of the restaurant. We did not find Christoff's fingerprints anywhere in the restaurant, but
152 several places around the lock and cooler were smudged. At that point, I had enough evidence to
153 arrest Lane King for the murder of Conner Hastings. After Christoff met with the prosecutor and
154 provided the statement implicating King, all Christoff's charges were dropped.

155 Jamie Kennedy might have tried to reach me to tell me about something with this case, but I
156 never spoke with Kennedy. Sure, I know a detective generally follows all leads, but not in this instance.
157 I knew every minute I spoke with Kennedy was a minute wasted of my life I would never get back.
158 After all, Kennedy has given false testimony or a false tip in the past in an attempt to get a lesser
159 sentence. Kennedy is a notorious con-artist, always looking for another angle to play. Kennedy was
160 not worth my time.

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WITNESS ADDENDUM

I have reviewed this statement, given by me, and I have nothing of significance to add at this time. The material facts are true and correct.

Signed,

Alex Finch

Alex Finch

SIGNED AND SWORN to me at 10:15 AM, May 16, 2023.

C. M. McCormack

C.M. McCormack, Notary Public

STATEMENT OF LOU CHRISTOFF

1 My name is Lou Christoff. I am 41 years old. I never needed college. I learned what I needed to
2 know on the streets of New Jersey, where I was born and raised. I dropped out of high school at the
3 age of 16 to go into the family business. Our business is all up and down the east coast. I moved to
4 Mississippi to take on more responsibility for the family. I have been in the family business for about
5 25 years. The family business is your garden variety regular, ordinary sanitation company. You offer a
6 service, you get paid for that service just like any other service provider.

7 I occasionally loan money to people. Those loans are interest bearing loans like a bank loan. I
8 do not see the need for promissory notes. People know they owe me when I loan them money and I
9 expect them to pay. I do not need a piece of paper to get them to pay me. That is not how I do business.
10 If someone does not pay me, I firmly remind them their payment is due and then bada boom, bada
11 bing – they find a way to come up with the money. Yeah, Conner Hastings needed a reminder or two.
12 I can be very persuasive. I am not a loan shark – that would be illegal. I am not a member of the mob
13 or organized crime. All I know about the mob I learned from the movies. I know nothing about how
14 the mob kills people.

15 I am testifying in this case because the prosecutor made me an offer I could not refuse. By
16 testifying and telling the truth, the prosecutor agreed to drop the charges against me for loan sharking
17 because of my “business deal” with Conner Hastings.

18 This is not my first scrape with the law. The cops have had it in for me for a while – always
19 looking to nail me with something. Now and then they have busted me for some petty crime to flex
20 their muscles. I am not scared. I never did time for more than a year. My rap sheet started back when
21 I was in juvey. In 1994, I was convicted of theft of less than \$1,500 and had to do some road crew
22 work. In 1995, I was convicted of assault in the second degree. I got a suspended sentence and was on
23 probation for a year. In 2002, I was convicted of extortion. Then, in 2011, I was charged with bribery
24 and never convicted, which is the case involving Detective Finch. Finch was accused of tampering with
25 evidence, but the case was a sham. In 2012, I was charged with criminal threat. The state said I
26 threatened this guy I loaned money to. The case got thrown out because the state’s key witness
27 disappeared. In September 2023, I was charged with assault in the second degree, which is still
28 pending. The state said I strangled some guy. Can you believe it? I am not worried about that charge
29 either. These things have a way of going away.

30 The state also tried to pin Conner Hastings’s murder on me. No way. I may not be squeaky
31 clean, but I am not a murderer. You can ask anybody. Why would I kill Conner? He was making good
32 on what he owed me. Sure, I was keeping tabs on him. Sometimes folks who owe me some dough
33 think about skipping town. If Conner left town, it would be to look for a big score. He always wanted
34 to get in on some action. Mostly he would go to goulash joints looking for a live game. A goulash joint
35 is a restaurant or bar running a regular card game hidden in a back room. A live game is a game with
36 lots of betting action. He was often playing the rush – he enjoyed a short run of good luck by winning
37 a very large pot of money in one hand. Before Conner started the business, he would, at times, gamble
38 for six days straight in a week, eight hours a day for several weeks, losing thousands of dollars.
39 Recently, Conner had become a desperate gambler looking for a big score to erase his many personal

40 and business debts. He frequently was tapping out – you know, losing his entire gambling bankroll and
41 then having to stop playing. But he was not a pigeon, you know, an unsophisticated gambler. I would
42 have stopped him if I thought he was dead money. Dead money is an inexperienced player who has
43 virtually no chance at winning. I believed he still had a few aces up his sleeve. It is not smart business
44 if I invest in losers, now, is it?

45 At the time of his untimely death, Conner owed me over \$200,000 due to his gambling losses,
46 but he had made good on nearly \$300,000 of gambling losses before then. I never concerned myself
47 much with where Conner got his money. It is not my problem where the money comes from as long
48 as I get my money. Time was running out on the balance Conner owed, so I started keeping closer tabs
49 on him. I wanted to make sure payments were coming. I have been accused of burning and choking
50 Conner, but that never happened. Conner was a smoker. He could have burned herself accidentally. I
51 did not threaten him. Sure, I asked him about when he was going to pay me, but that was the extent
52 of our conversation.

53 I tailed Conner for the two weeks before he died. On the night of March 25th, I staked out
54 Magnolia's across the alley from the back door to the restaurant sitting in my black Caddy starting
55 around 9:00 p.m. You can see the alley I was parked in on the diagram marked as Exhibit 12. Conner
56 was outside in the alley smoking a cigarette. The restaurant closed at 10:00 p.m., so it was after hours,
57 and I thought everyone else had left. To my surprise, Lane King, who I later identified, came storming
58 out of the restaurant's back door and started arguing with Conner. King was in a fit of rage. I did not
59 hear the entire conversation because my cell phone vibrated and distracted me, but I heard almost all
60 of it. King said Hastings had ruined the business, the restaurant was going to be bankrupt, and was
61 going to have to close, yadda-yadda-yadda, all because of his gambling debts. It was then that I realized
62 the money paid to me most likely was coming from Magnolia's all along. Then I saw King brandish a
63 kitchen knife and point it at Conner, forcing him back into the restaurant. I could see everything pretty
64 clearly – that is until the very end as they were going back in the restaurant when we had a quick rain
65 shower. The alley is only 15 feet wide. And there is a security light that beams directly over the
66 restaurant's back door to the restaurant. I know it was a knife I saw because it glimmered when the
67 overhead security light shone on it when it was at an angle. The knife blade was about ten inches long.
68 I was parked in the shadows, so I am sure King did not see me. At the time of my release from jail, I
69 identified King in a line up at the Fondren Police Department as the person I saw arguing with Conner
70 that night and forcing him back into the restaurant at knife point. I did not do anything or say anything
71 at the time because, as you can tell from my rap sheet, me and the cops do not always get along so
72 great. I later saw King leave alone that same night around 10:30 p.m. I waited for another hour and
73 then left, but I never saw Conner leave the restaurant. I later told the same thing to Finch.

74 I was charged initially with killing Conner and loan sharking. Like I said before, I did not do it.
75 Finch was hoping it was me. I still did not say anything about what I saw because I did not know at the
76 time how Conner died or where he was located. So, I did not realize how relevant my observations
77 might be. Plus, until I had my attorney with me to make a deal on the loan sharking charge, I was not
78 about to say anything about tailing Conner because he owed me money.

79 While in jail, I shared a cell with Jamie Kennedy. Whatever Kennedy is saying I said while we
80 were in jail together is a flat out lie. It has to be Kennedy's way of getting some deal. Kennedy is a con
81 artist. Kennedy probably thought I would be willing to pay some hush money. Kennedy got stuck in

82 the lie when the charges against me were dropped. Why would I confide in Kennedy? That makes no
83 sense.

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WITNESS ADDENDUM

86 I have reviewed this statement, given by me, and I have nothing of significance to add at this time. The
87 material facts are true and correct.

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Signed,

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Lou Christoff

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Lou Christoff

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94 SIGNED AND SWORN to me at 12:12 PM, May 16, 2023.

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C.M. McCormack

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C.M. McCormack, Notary Public

STATEMENT OF LANE KING

1 My name is Lane King. I am 29 years old. I grew up on a farm in rural Mississippi where life was
2 pretty simple. We were self-sufficient and made a lot of our own food on the farm including butter,
3 cheese, sausage, and ice cream. I suppose making food from home is what got me interested in the
4 culinary arts. After high school, I made the giant leap and moved to New York to attend the Culinary
5 Institute of America (CIA). Moving to a big city from a rural community was an eye-opener. I was pretty
6 naïve, and I probably still am today. At the CIA, I trained with world-renowned, classically trained chefs.
7 It was the time of my life. After 38 months in the program, I received my bachelor's degree. It was my
8 dream to one day open my own restaurant, but I was only 21 and I needed to gain more experience
9 and raise some funds. I moved back to Mississippi to be closer to my family yet be in a city that could
10 offer me a decent wage and experience. I was thrilled when I landed a position at Lou's, one of
11 Fondren's top-rated restaurants. I worked there for four years and developed my skills in a variety of
12 areas. I initially started as a pantry chef, making salads and cold appetizers such as elaborate fruit
13 plates. I also worked as a fish chef, and as a pastry chef, which was my passion. After those first two
14 years, I was asked to step in as a saucier, the person who is responsible for sautéing and making all of
15 the sauces for the restaurant. The next year, I became sous chef, which is the second in command. If I
16 took any time off, I used it only to further my skills. I enjoyed entering culinary ice sculpting
17 competitions. I worked long and hard during those years – six days a week, usually ten-hour days. But
18 the sacrifices were worth it, especially if it would help me reach my goal of owning my own restaurant
19 one day.

20 I met Conner Hastings at a conference of the Southeastern Culinary Association. The
21 conference was about owning your own restaurant. Conner was one of the speakers. He seemed very
22 knowledgeable about the management and finances of owning a restaurant business. He graduated
23 magna cum laude from Johnson and Wales University with a double major in Food Service
24 Management and Accounting in 2010. He was extremely bright and energetic with an air of
25 sophistication. He came from money and was well connected. You could tell he had already started to
26 make his mark on the culinary world. After the conference, I made a point of meeting him. He was
27 looking to open a fine dining restaurant in Fondren. He needed a co-partner who could focus on the
28 food preparation aspects of the business. This was the perfect opportunity to further my dream of
29 owning a restaurant. He convinced me Fondren was the best place to start. He knew what he was
30 doing. If we started somewhere in a busier part of the state, we would be one of a thousand places
31 and the rent would be high. Instead, we would have a niche in Fondren and we started a fine dining
32 restaurant.

33 We found a great place off State Street and Magnolia's was born. We planned everything for
34 the restaurant from theme, layout, menus, staffing, ordering, keeping the books, etc. We agreed we
35 wanted to be closed on Sundays and Mondays since those were the two slowest days for restaurants.
36 When it came to funding the restaurant and the profits, we agreed to a 50-50 split on everything. We
37 each were bringing our respective talents to the table, excuse the pun. We agreed we would both
38 contribute the same working capital. He already had a substantial bankroll of cash to contribute for
39 the start-up. It was like nothing for him to come up with the \$100,000. I suppose to be perfectly honest,

40 in a way I resented him for already having so much money on hand for the start-up. I have never been
41 in a position where cash was so readily available to me. I grew up modestly and had been skimping
42 and saving while working at Lou's. I emptied my savings of \$40,000 and had to take out personal loans
43 for the other \$60,000 of my share of startup funds. As a result, everything I owned in my entire life
44 and for some time into the future would be invested in this restaurant. I had invested sweat equity,
45 too. Of course, I knew it was a risk. With the start of a new business, especially a restaurant, there is
46 always the risk of failure. And if it failed, I would probably have to file bankruptcy for not only the
47 business, but personally as well.

48 Conner took care of all the financial aspects of the business. In hindsight, I should have paid
49 more attention to what he was doing, but I trusted Conner and we each had our own area of expertise.
50 I handled all aspects of the food preparation and presentation, including menu selection, working with
51 vendors to order food products, and preparing the food or directing the food preparation. While
52 Conner was fully in charge of finances and management, he also had creative ideas for food
53 presentation or preparation. Every now and then he would jot his menu suggestions for the following
54 week on a piece of paper and leave it for me or John Crowell, our sous chef. On the other hand, I have
55 never understood financial statements or accounting, which Conner took care of for us. When we
56 were starting up the restaurant back in June of 2020, it was his suggestion to put in place a buy-sell
57 agreement funded by insurance. Initially, I did not understand its purpose, but I agreed to sign because
58 he said it was good for both of our protection. The buy-sell agreement was in place in the event one
59 of us died, paying out \$500,000 to the surviving partner. He said the income flow from the restaurant
60 would pay for the policy. Now, I am thankful he had the buy-sell agreement in place because it will
61 save the business and me personally. I think of it as his way of making things right after stealing from
62 the business. I plan on re-opening after I am cleared.

63 When we opened in June 2020, Magnolia's took off right from the start, soon becoming the
64 talk of the town. We had rave reviews from food critics in *The Reservoir Press* paper, *The Fondren*
65 *Journal* and *MS Today*. We were even featured in *The Jacksonian*, a local magazine. The restaurant
66 continued to grow over the next three years. We had a steady flow of customers – some loyal
67 customers from the beginning and new customers every day. Often it was difficult for our customers
68 to get a reservation for a Friday or Saturday evening unless they called weeks in advance. Conner and
69 I were contemplating opening a new dining experience near the Manning Theater in downtown
70 Fondren where we would serve desserts exclusively for the after-theater crowd. Conner had already
71 worked up the business plan and we decided to call it "Just Desserts."

72 I was surprised when Conner told me we were running in the red, because business was going
73 so well. My initial thoughts were perhaps our prices were not covering our expenses sufficiently. So,
74 when I saw the Chamber of Commerce presenting a seminar on February 27, 2023, on the topic
75 "Realizing Your Full Potential" talking about making your business more profitable, I thought I could
76 sharpen my business sense. The timing was perfect for me to attend the seminar. Conner had told me
77 about our financial woes the week prior, and the seminar was on a Monday when the restaurant was
78 closed. I attended the presentation and spoke with Jo Walker, an accountant, immediately after the
79 presentation. Walker was one of the speakers at the seminar. A copy of Walker's curriculum vitae,
80 marked as Exhibit 1, was included in the presentation materials. I hired Walker to do an audit of the
81 business to see where we could improve – perhaps negotiate with vendors more or change our pricing.

82 I also learned during the seminar that restaurants and retail business have a lot of opportunities for
83 employee theft. I wondered if our food inventory was “walking off” with some of the employees in
84 the evenings. So, the following day I purchased a key and padlock to secure the food inventory in our
85 cooler. Exhibit 8 is a copy of the padlock receipt. The only ones who had a key to the padlock were
86 Conner, John, and me. Conner told me he thought it was a good idea to use the padlock to protect our
87 inventory in case the employees were helping themselves.

88 Jo Walker came out Tuesday, February 28th and did an overview of the restaurant and the
89 financials. I agreed to hire Walker for the two-week audit starting Tuesday, March 7th. Walker required
90 payment in advance. I paid the fee of \$6,500 out of my personal funds since the restaurant did not
91 have the cash on hand. When I told Conner about doing the audit, he did not seem nervous or act
92 suspicious. In retrospect, he always was cool as a cucumber regardless of the situation. I suppose
93 having a poker face was a practiced skill from his gambling experiences. Or maybe he thought he had
94 hidden his tracks well enough that I would not find out he had stolen so much money from the
95 business. I had seen him gambling in action on a dinner cruise once. Later, Conner played it off as
96 family money lost and it was no big deal. Family money or not, it was hard watching Conner being
97 urged on by a “friend” known as Lou, who was causing him to lose more money.

98 Business went on as usual those next two weeks during the audit. Conner came in regularly to
99 do his work as he had in the past. Walker continued to do the audit. When I would ask how it was
100 going, Walker would say, “It is a work in progress.” Then on Friday, March 17th, I got the shock of my
101 life. Walker informed me the audit was complete and Conner had been stealing from the business –
102 nearly \$300,000! I was stunned. I could not imagine why he would steal from me – from us.

103 I asked Walker for some examples to show me how the theft took place. Walker indicated
104 Conner was stealing from Magnolia’s in a variety of ways. The first way was skimming. There were
105 several instances where one of the waitstaff had a carbon copy of a ticket order in their book, but the
106 order was not included on the cash register tape for the day. Walker showed me an example of this,
107 which is marked as Exhibit 2. Walker showed me check marks on the January 14, 2023 cash register
108 tape showing the ticket orders. Walker found a ticket order for that day not entered. Walker was not
109 sure for certain if the skimming was attributed to Conner because someone else could have been
110 managing the cash register at the time. However, when Walker looked at all of the stealing events as
111 a whole, there were events Walker could directly connect to Conner. For example, certain daily cash
112 register tapes did not match the deposit made. These deposit slips were written in Conner’s
113 handwriting and were part of his normal job responsibilities rather than the responsibility of any other
114 employee at Magnolia’s. Walker showed me a deposit slip, marked as Exhibit #3, in the amount of
115 \$587.93 on Monday, February 13, 2023. The problem was that the deposit slip did not add up to the
116 cash register tapes from Friday, February 10th in the amount of \$2,299.61 and on Saturday, February
117 11th for \$3,089.57. Lastly, Walker found checks written to cash or to Conner that were shown as void
118 in the check register but cleared the bank. In order to balance the account, another check in the check
119 register was manipulated to increase the payment to cover the amount of the “voided” check made
120 out to Conner, which is what Walker showed me in Exhibit 4. The Supplies Unlimited entry was for

121 \$3,093.45 when it should have been entered as \$93.45 according to the invoice. I could not figure how
122 Conner learned to do this.

123 Sure, I was angry at the time when Walker first told me the news. Who would not be angry? I
124 probably even said some things in haste, but I was not angry enough to kill him. It did not even cross
125 my mind! Sure, I said, I was going to make Conner pay for this – but I meant financially. Conner would
126 have to find the money to make it right. He had lots of rich relatives to help come up with the money.

127 I confronted Conner about the thefts after Walker left the restaurant. I was angry but
128 controlled. I asked Conner where the money had gone. He admitted to me he was a gambler and was
129 in a temporary slump the past six months. He said he was in serious debt to a loan shark he called
130 “Lou.” He never mentioned a last name for Lou. Conner told me he owed Lou over \$200,000 and he
131 had already paid over \$300,000, most of which came from the restaurant. He also had borrowed
132 money from his rich folks to pay off some of his other gambling debts, but his parents told him that it
133 was the last time they were going to bail him out. Conner explained to me he had become desperate
134 because Lou had threatened to kill him if he did not come up with the money. Conner described
135 instances where Lou had choked him or put a lit cigarette to his arm. I saw the burn marks on his arm
136 and the bruises on his neck. I do not know how I did not notice them before. This was a whole new
137 world that was foreign to me.

138 Yes, I felt betrayed by Conner, but at the same time, I felt scared and sad for him. He was in
139 serious trouble. His addiction to gambling ruined a promising career in the restaurant business. Conner
140 said he could string Lou along a little longer. And in response I said, “No, you need to come up with
141 the money right now, or you could get killed.” Maybe my naïveté was still working overtime, but I
142 thought there might be a way to help him and get the business back on track. I told him I would loan
143 him the money to pay off the debt, and in exchange he had to agree to seek professional help for his
144 gambling addiction. Conner agreed. I said I would also give him the “Just Desserts” partnership
145 interest. Honestly, I was not thinking everything through at the moment because all of this took me
146 off guard. I do not even know how I was going to come up with the \$200,000 to help Conner out of his
147 jam. I was broke. I had put everything into the business and according to Walker, we were going to
148 have to file for bankruptcy.

149 You can only imagine how worried I was the week following my conversation with Conner on
150 the 17th. I kept trying to come up with solutions. I did not sleep a wink after that. I was trying to
151 brainstorm ways to get money for Conner to get him out of this nightmare. I thought maybe Conner’s
152 best way to get out of this mess was to turn Lou over to the police for loan sharking. I went on the
153 internet and Googled “loan sharking” and found out his contract with Lou was void under the law. I
154 thought he could go to Lou and say if the loan was not voided according to the law, he would have no
155 choice but to turn Lou into the police department.

156 On Saturday, March 25th, after the dinner crowd and the kitchen staff had gone for the evening
157 around 10:00 p.m., I decided to tell Conner my solution to his problems. Conner stepped out of the
158 kitchen door to smoke a cigarette and ignored his cell phone ringing as we walked outside together. I
159 told him I could not think of a way to pay Lou because he had taken so much money out of the
160 restaurant. Magnolia’s was bankrupt and would have to be closed. I explained the idea of Conner
161 telling Lou to void the contract or be turned over to the police. Conner did not think Lou would be
162 receptive to the idea and we argued over it. Finally, Conner came to his senses and agreed. I did not

163 see anyone in the alley when we were talking. Besides, we had a quick downpour of rain and were
164 soaked before we got back inside. I never reported this conversation to the police after Conner was
165 murdered because I was afraid if I said anything, Lou would come after me to collect on Conner's loan.

166 Early April, Detective Finch asked to meet me at Magnolia's to ask me some follow-up
167 questions and to see the place again. Finch confronted me with Lou Christoff's statement. Christoff is
168 lying about me threatening Conner and "brandishing a knife" – that is ridiculous! Christoff obviously
169 does not want to be nailed for Conner's murder. Of course my fingerprints would show up on the
170 kitchen knife, the padlock, and the cooler door. Magnolia's is my restaurant. My fingerprints are all
171 over the restaurant. I worked in the kitchen and would touch all of those things numerous times
172 throughout the day. The kitchen knife would have been washed that evening and run through our
173 sanitizer. I do not know if washing the knife would have eliminated my fingerprints, but I might have
174 picked up the knife after it was washed for food preparation. I do not remember now. If I were going
175 to murder Conner, why would I do it at the restaurant where we work and leave my fingerprints on a
176 knife? I also never hesitated when Detective Finch asked me to go down to the station to give my
177 fingerprints. Does willingness to help sound like someone who is guilty? I was arrested on April 6, 2023
178 for Conner's murder.

179 The last time I saw Conner was about 10:30 p.m. on the night of March 25, 2023. I was ready
180 to lock up for the evening, but Conner was going to stay later and jot down some ideas for next week's
181 menu. Days after Conner's death I found the note he wrote marked as Exhibit 9, which had slipped
182 behind one of the kitchen work stations. The note had his menu ideas for the following week. Back to
183 that night – I started to lock up the cooler, but Conner told me he would do it because he had to check
184 and see if we had the necessary ingredients for next week's menu. He said he would lock up the cooler
185 and the back door when he left. As I was leaving through the kitchen back door, I saw a person in the
186 shadows in the alley about 50 feet away next to a black Cadillac. The next Tuesday, I returned to the
187 restaurant after a frantic call from Crowell that Conner had been found dead in the cooler. I provided
188 the investigator on the scene, Detective Finch, a diagram of Magnolia's, marked as Exhibit 12, which
189 is an accurate representation of the restaurant's layout, as well as the street and alley. When Conner
190 was found murdered, I told Detective Finch about the person I saw. As a result, Finch showed me some
191 pictures on a tablet, which is when I was able to identify the person I saw as Lou Christoff.

192 My legal team was smart to keep a copy of Conner's note before turning over the original to
193 the police, which was lost in the evidence room and now Exhibit 9 is the copy and not the original
194 note. Given Detective Finch's prior history of evidence tampering, which had been all over the news, I
195 know now why Conner's original note, Exhibit 9 disappeared. The folks at the police department
196 probably could have done scientific testing to figure out when Conner wrote the note on the night of
197 his death or gotten his fingerprints. Who knows? Either way, the original note could have provided
198 evidence pointing to my innocence. I am certain Lou Christoff is responsible for Conner's murder. I
199 would not and did not kill Conner. We made amends and were going to figure out a solution together.

200 I know the insurance policy for the buy-sell agreement is \$500,000, as noted in Exhibit 5. The
201 insurance money has not been issued yet because there is a clause in the buy-sell agreement if a
202 beneficiary under the policy intentionally caused the insured's death. I did not kill Conner and that
203 money should be mine. The restaurant never re-opened after Conner's death and I am in the hole for
204 substantially more money than ever before. I should have never been arrested for Conner's murder. I

205 am the "fall guy" for a mob hit carried out by Lou Christoff and covered up by the corrupt investigator
206 Alex Finch.

207

208 **WITNESS ADDENDUM**

209 I have reviewed this statement, given by me, and I have nothing of significance to add at this time. The
210 material facts are true and correct.

211

212

Signed,

213

Lane King

214

215

Lane King

216

217 SIGNED AND SWORN to me at 2:35 PM, May 15, 2023.

218

219

C.M. McCormack

220

C.M. McCormack, Notary Public

STATEMENT OF JAMIE KENNEDY

1 My name is Jamie Kennedy. I am 27. I grew up in Hartford, Connecticut. I had a rough home
2 life, so I ran away when I was 17. I have moved around a lot since then – mostly down south – and
3 used my charming personality to make ends meet. I am not going to lie to you. I have definitely had
4 my run-ins with the law. In 2011, I was convicted of credit card fraud. I also served time for check fraud
5 in Louisiana in 2012 and again in 2014. In 2015, I was charged with insurance fraud, but the charges
6 were later dropped. About a year or so ago, I left Louisiana because it was getting a little hot for me
7 with the law and some people thought I had scammed them. I swapped one hot place for another and
8 came to Mississippi. I came to Fondren looking for a new life. I thought I could put the past behind me
9 and start over. I am shooting straight here – I stole someone’s identification information and got
10 busted for it on March 20th.

11 I am serving my time in the county jail because the identity theft charges were not serious
12 enough to land me in the MS Department of Corrections (MSDOC). When you do time in the local jails,
13 there are always people coming and going for various reasons. My last cell mate got convicted of a
14 third DUI and got transported over to MSDOC to do some serious time, which left me with an empty
15 bed. Lou Christoff got arrested for loan sharking and murder of Conner Hastings. My cell was open,
16 which is where Christoff landed. We had run into each other several times before at some of the clubs.
17 I was looking for an easy target and Christoff was shaking someone down for some money owed. You
18 see, Christoff had a reputation around town as a loan shark – someone who lends money at an
19 excessive rate of interest. I stayed out of Christoff’s way. I could be trusted because I never turned
20 Christoff in.

21 Sometime after Christoff was put in my cell, we are chatting you know, like “what are you doing
22 time for” and yadda yadda yadda. Christoff mentions being in for the murder of Conner Hastings. I
23 knew Conner from some riverboat gambling cruises where we had been at the same tables but did
24 not know he had been killed. Conner had one foot in two different worlds, the business world and the
25 gambling world, and he walked a fine line between the two. I met Conner a while back when he started
26 talking to me on one of the gambling cruises in the bar. He was distraught about some of his losses
27 and had noticed how I was working some of the tables over the evening. One thing led to another and
28 I was telling him about the different ways to scam money from people and businesses without them
29 even knowing. He lit up when I explained how easy it was to skim cash from a business, especially if
30 you knew or controlled who did the bookkeeping. We must have talked for three or four hours that
31 night about various ways to get rich without working – or at least how to pay off your bookie without
32 a lot of hassle.

33 I had watched Conner. He was a maniac. In poker, maniac means a player who plays very loose
34 and aggressive, often raising with almost anything. In the jail cell, Christoff called him a “fish,” a poor
35 player. Christoff said, “I should have had Conner swimming with the fish a long time ago.” Conner was
36 on a “tilt,” according to Christoff. A “tilt” is a poker term for a player who has played too long, lost too
37 much money, and no longer has any sense of judgment. Christoff said, “Once you are on a tilt, you are
38 making bad decisions and putting yourself in bad situations.” Well, from my experience with Conner,
39 he was on a tilt every time I was at a table he played. He had no sense of self-preservation or knowing

40 when to walk away from a losing table. Lady luck never stays long at a table, so you have to know
41 when the house is going to take you for everything.

42 Another time I ran into Conner on a casino dinner cruise out on the Mississippi. Conner and
43 Lane King were in town for a hospitality and restaurant conference. I kept my distance during the
44 dinner. It looked like they were having a good time. After dinner, I sidled up to Conner at a Texas Hold
45 'em table. I do not know where King was at the time. Conner was on a tilt as usual. I might have been
46 cheering him on that each new hand was going to be his winner. King must have walked back up while
47 I was not looking. Suddenly, King spun me around and started yelling at me to stop and Conner had
48 lost enough money. I said, "Hey back off," and then King threw a drink in my face. How rude.

49 Sometime later, I made a stop at Magnolia's. I was hungry and thought maybe I could get a
50 free meal. Conner recognized me and looked around like he was worried for a second. When he saw
51 his business partner was not in sight, he gave me a hug and seated me in a back-corner table. I asked
52 how business was. Conner sighed and said business was good, but not good enough to keep up with
53 his "little problem." I assumed he meant the money owed to his bookie. Conner may have been
54 dramatic, but he told me he was out of options and thought Christoff was going to kill him for the
55 money. I could tell he was scared and physically shaken. His statements made me think Christoff was
56 going to kill him. Turns out I was right to think that. I did get an amazing steak dinner out of it. Conner
57 wondered if going to the police would help in order to get out from under Christoff. I told him going
58 to the police was a bad idea and if he did, Christoff would be even more angry with him than if he
59 simply had trouble making payments. From where I was sitting, I could see into the kitchen area,
60 including the cooler where he later died – what an awful way to go. The restaurant is laid out like the
61 diagram marked as Exhibit 12. When I was heading out of Magnolia's and back up State Street, I know
62 I saw Lou Christoff's car parked at the edge of the alleyway overlooking the back of Magnolia's.
63 Christoff's car was a black Cadillac clearly identifiable with custom wheels and racing exhaust. Christoff
64 was never subtle. Christoff always had a habit of staying around where the people who owed money
65 could easily see Christoff was watching over them.

66 So anyway, in the jail cell, Christoff starts telling me the whole story about how Conner was
67 into it with Christoff for some big money. Christoff mentioned recently learning that Conner had "bled
68 his business dry and was worthless." Conner could not even make payments for the "juice" – the
69 interest on Christoff's loan. Apparently Christoff overheard Conner say he was going to threaten
70 Christoff with going to the cops if Christoff did not walk away from his debt. Going to the cops would
71 have been a stupid thing to do. Like some loan shark is going to say, "I'm scared. Please don't turn me
72 in, and I won't make you pay me the money you owe me." Christoff says to me, with no emotion or
73 nothing, like it was another day in the park, "So, I had Conner iced." And when Christoff "iced," it did
74 not mean go to the refrigerator to cool down, if you know what I mean. Christoff stated that the idea
75 was to make Conner suffer too, because it was no longer about money since Conner was thinking
76 about turning Christoff into the cops. So, Christoff described forcing Conner into a cooler for a slow
77 and cold death.

78 Christoff also talked about doing a good job of "cleaning" referring to covering up any tracks
79 left behind to make sure it did not lead back to Christoff. Christoff further described to me how gloves
80 were worn so there would be no fingerprints found. Christoff was not worried at all. Christoff dropped

81 a hint about "having a connection on the inside." Christoff never said who it was, and I knew better
82 than to ask.

83 Christoff did mention that Finch was the detective investigating Conner's murder. Finch had
84 been my arresting officer on some previous charges, so I knew who Christoff was talking about.
85 Anyway, I never turned Christoff in for loan sharking in the past, but murder is something else. I tried
86 calling Detective Finch twice to report what Christoff told me, but Finch never took my calls. Finch
87 probably did not return my calls because one time I ratted on someone else in jail and I might have
88 gotten some facts mixed up.

89 Eventually, after the charges against Christoff were dropped and Conner's business partner
90 was arrested, I saw some newspaper articles about the upcoming trial and who the attorneys were for
91 Lane King. I reached out to King's attorneys who came to meet me in jail to hear what I had to say. The
92 better side of me came out. I thought I should help an innocent person. King was going to take the rap
93 for this, which I could not let happen when I knew the truth.

94 You know, I have no reason to lie. What do I get out of this? It is not like I am testifying for the
95 prosecution and getting a reduced sentence. And it is not like King has some dough to pay for my
96 testimony. There is no reason for me to make this stuff up. Plus, how would I know so many details?
97 And this lame story about me having to stick with a story once I started down this road is crazy. I am
98 in enough trouble as it is – I do not need perjury on my rap sheet, too.

99 I know you have to wonder why Christoff would blabber all of this to a low-life like me. I am a
100 nobody. I think I was a pawn for Christoff. Christoff probably wanted to get the word out on the street
101 that Christoff meant business to instill fear so people would pay their debts and not go to the cops.
102 When you are in the racket, the thing you have going for yourself is the fear factor. I realize now why
103 Christoff was not worried about saying anything to me about killing Conner. Turns out Christoff was
104 right to be confident about "connections on the inside."

105

106

WITNESS ADDENDUM

107 I have reviewed this statement, given by me, and I have nothing of significance to add at this time. The
108 material facts are true and correct.

109

110

111

112

113

114

Signed,

Jamie Kennedy

Jamie Kennedy

115 SIGNED AND SWORN to me at 11:40 AM, May 15, 2023.

116

117 *C.M. McCormack*

118 C.M. McCormack, Notary Public

STATEMENT OF SIDNEY YOUNG

1 My name is Sidney Young, and I am 54 years old. I am a criminology professor at the Mississippi
2 State University (MSU). I have been back at my alma mater for more than a decade now. After
3 graduating from MSU in 1986, I went on to earn my master's degree in Sociology at the University of
4 Pennsylvania, as well as my Ph.D. in Criminal Justice. I am also a licensed private investigator in
5 Louisiana and Mississippi. A copy of the abbreviated version of my curriculum vitae is marked as Exhibit
6 10. Of course, I have had many more publications, such as journal articles, chapters written for books,
7 book reviews, and a host of seminar presentations and lectures. I presume the abbreviated version of
8 my curriculum vitae will demonstrate I am well-recognized as an expert in the study of organized
9 crime.

10 Reliable information about organized crime is not always easy to obtain. However, I have
11 devoted my research and teachings to organized crime, including the historical background, theories
12 and research, specific crime groups and their operations, and law enforcement strategies to counter
13 organized crime. I am currently a co-director of the International Association for the Study of
14 Organized Crime (IASOC), which is a professional association of criminologists, researchers, teachers
15 and students. Founded in 1984, IASOC holds meetings in conjunction with the American Society of
16 Criminology. IASOC works to promote greater understanding and research about organized crime in
17 all of its manifestations.

18 A significant portion of my research and study has been on the type of crimes – particularly
19 murder – committed by people within organized crime. The underlying crimes in organized crime are
20 the typical selection of preferred mob rackets and methods: loan sharking, sports betting, extortion,
21 income tax evasion, income tax fraud, narcotics, and human trafficking. Intimidation, violence,
22 murder, and obstruction of justice are used to further the goals of people in organized crime. The wise
23 guy life is a sharp and cocky, cash-driven subculture. Sure, they can come across as good fellas, and
24 some are not complete strangers to doing some good, but ultimately gangsters do their deeds through
25 deception, intimidation, violence, and murder.

26 Men and women within organized crime have a particular signature when committing crimes,
27 which takes one of two avenues: either committing the crime in such a heinous fashion so as to send
28 a message to other would be wrong-doers against the mob/mafia or skilled use of hiding the crime or
29 their connection to it. An example of the former is with a public warning, such as the public hit on a
30 sidewalk of Paul Castellano allowing John Gotti to become head of the Gambino family.

31 Organized crime's use of hiding the crimes or their connection to the crime definitely has its
32 own signature. Each mob group has their own preferred style, but often word spreads of another
33 group's style and sometimes there are copycats among the mob. And, compared to a non-career
34 criminal, it is far more sophisticated and skilled. We have probably all heard of "swimming with the
35 fishes" in which the mob would tie the victim to a cement block and throw them in a body of water.
36 Another popular "signature" method of the mob is to hide a corpse in a false bottom of a casket of
37 another person. Other disposal methods include dismemberment, burial, or placing the body in the
38 trunk of a car and having it crushed in a junkyard.

39 One of the more notorious mob men is Richard Kuklinski, who earned the nickname "Iceman"
40 following his experiments with disguising the time of death of his victims by freezing their corpses in
41 an industrial freezer. The condition of the body is sometimes the only means available for the coroner
42 to estimate the time of death. Generally, body temperature is used as an indicator of the post-mortem
43 interval during the first 12 to 24 hours of death. Kuklinski himself claims he used a Mister Softee ice
44 cream truck for this purpose. Later on, he said he got the idea from a hitman named Mister Softee,
45 who drove a Mister Softee truck to appear inconspicuous. Kuklinski's method was uncovered by the

46 authorities when Kuklinski once failed to let one of his victims properly thaw before disposing of the
47 body on a warm summer's night, and the coroner found chunks of ice in the corpse's heart. This
48 methodology gained some popularity among those involved in organized crime in the late 1990's and
49 into the 21st century. It is still fairly common today to find mob victims frozen in industrial freezers.

50 I have reviewed Detective Finch's Investigation Report, marked as Exhibit 6. I have also
51 reviewed the autopsy report marked as Exhibit 11 and the diagram of Magnolia's marked as Exhibit
52 12. In addition, I have seen the receipt for the padlock marked as Exhibit 8 and a copy of the menu
53 notes left behind by Conner marked as Exhibit 9. It is my understanding that due to the gruesome
54 nature of the photographs of the decedent, these photographs are not part of the evidence of this
55 case with the exception of the photograph of the victim's dying message to identify her killer, which
56 is marked as Exhibit 7. I did not go to the crime scene, nor have I undertaken any independent physical
57 examinations of the victim or fingerprint analysis. I have, however, been to Magnolia's prior to Conner
58 Hasting's murder. While I agree that Conner Hastings stole funds from Magnolia's, I am not convinced
59 it is the only reason Magnolia's is in such financial trouble. On the night I was there, I saw some guests
60 in my own dinner party experiencing problems with their meals. To my surprise, Lane King, one of the
61 owners, came over to our table and comped the entire table and not just the ones having a problem.
62 Comping entire tables can create large revenue losses and shows a lack of business sense. If King
63 handled issues like ours every time something minor happened with a meal, Magnolia's would be out
64 of business quickly.

65 Based upon my review of the foregoing, and my extensive knowledge and expertise in studying
66 criminal behavior in organized crime, it is my opinion Conner Hastings was murdered by a person
67 involved in organized crime. The spreadsheet found by police at the home of Conner Hastings showed
68 payments made to Lou Christoff. Injuries on Conner Hasting's body reinforce having received previous
69 "warnings" to pay. Late payments were punished in typical fashion by the mob with cigarette burns
70 and strangulation, both known signatures of Lou Christoff. Lou Christoff somehow must have found
71 out that Hastings's restaurant was going bankrupt. Hastings became a liability for Christoff, rather than
72 a source of revenue, and even more so if Christoff thought Hastings would turn Christoff into the cops.

73 I am familiar with Lou Christoff, who denies being a part of organized crime even though this
74 is clearly not the case. While Christoff is a money collector and/or minor enforcer, Christoff is not
75 important enough to order a hit or to follow through on a hit. Killing someone would come from
76 further up in the organization. In addition, organized crime tends to keep money collectors far
77 separated from those who carry out the hits.

78 The methodology used in this crime is also consistent with a mob hit. The use of an industrial
79 freezer or cooler to hide the victim's time of death and the "cleaning" of the crime scene is indicative
80 of a sophisticated skill level of crime inherent in organized crime. This method is completely
81 inconsistent with the method and mode of a person committing a crime in the heat of passion. Had
82 King murdered Hastings in rage over, say, theft of funds from the business, a quick death would be
83 more likely at the sharp end of a knife. This is what happens when a person snaps in the moment –
84 picking up the closest available weapon and killing another person. In the case of a restaurant, knives
85 are both plentiful and available. The average person committing a crime of passion or in the heat of
86 the moment would not lock someone in a cooler, because said person would then have ample time to
87 cool off (no pun intended), calm down, and let the victim back out of the cooler before death became
88 imminent. With most people, "in the heat of the moment" is just that, not rational thought but rather
89 done on murderous impulse. Once the impulse is gone, regret and anguish take over. Had King locked
90 Hastings in the cooler in rage over the theft of funds from the business, King would have had a clear
91 cool down period in which to reevaluate the situation and let Hastings out of the cooler prior to her
92 death. In addition to that, a heat of the moment argument would only be valid for March 17th when
93 King first confronted Hastings about the theft of funds. A full week later, the impulse to kill would not

94 remain, and especially not in such a slow and agonizing way. This is the type of killing meant to send a
95 message to others, and the message is pay up or suffer horrifically.

96 I am also extremely critical of the police investigation in this matter. I have done a significant
97 amount of research in the study of corruption in law enforcement. One reason the mafia and mobs
98 have survived and thrived for so many years is, in part, because of a few corrupt police officers, who
99 have lost or tampered with evidence, or tipped off the mob. Detective Finch should never have been
100 assigned to investigate this case. Detective Finch was previously accused of tampering with evidence
101 involving a bribe from Lou Christoff, which on its face value makes Finch suspect in my mind for any
102 case in which Christoff and Finch could intersect. I am unconvinced Finch exerted independence when
103 first arresting Christoff. The charges were later dropped and, I believe, it could have easily been a ruse
104 to throw us off. This entire murder investigation was compromised due to Finch's involvement.

105 I have been paid \$3,000 to render an expert opinion in this case. I came into the case with no
106 preconceived notions, and strictly looked at the facts as presented. I have spent a total of four hours
107 reviewing evidence, and then I have additional time incurred in providing this statement as well as my
108 testimony in court. I have testified in numerous cases in which organized crime may be a factor. I have
109 testified both for the prosecution and the defense. Normally, my rate is \$5,000 to render an expert
110 opinion, but because I went to school with one of the attorneys for the defense, I have discounted my
111 rate as a professional courtesy.

112

113

WITNESS ADDENDUM

114 I have reviewed this statement, given by me, and I have nothing of significance to add at this time. The
115 material facts are true and correct.

116

117

Signed,

Sidney Young

118

119

Sidney Young

120

121

122 SIGNED AND SWORN to me at 9:15 AM, September 1, 2023.

123

124 C.M. McCormack

125 C.M. McCormack, Notary Public

LEGAL AUTHORITY

The following excerpts of a statute to address the legal issues raised in this mock trial case. Only those portions of the statute provided may be used in the course of the trial.

Statute

Miss. Code Ann. § 97-3-19. “Murder” and “capital murder” defined

- (1)** The killing of a human being with the authority of law by any means or in any manner shall be murder in the following cases:
 - (a)** When done with deliberate design to effect the death of the person killed, or of any human being, shall be first-degree murder[.]

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF FONDREN COUNTY
STATE OF MISSISSIPPI**

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI,)	
)	
v.)	CRIMINAL ACTION NO: 2024-MT
)	
LANE KING)	
)	
Defendant.)	

JURY INSTRUCTIONS

The Court hereby approves the following preliminary jury instructions in the above captioned case. It notes the presentation of evidence at trial may warrant additional instruction, and it will consider those instructions at a later date.

A. The Jury: Finders of the Facts

Under our Constitution and Code of Laws, only you – the jury – can make the findings of fact in this case. I am not permitted to tell you how I feel about the evidence which has been presented. And, throughout this trial, I have intended to be fair and impartial toward each of the parties involved.

To determine the facts in this case, you will have to evaluate the credibility – or believability of witnesses. You are the sole judges of the credibility of the witnesses, and, in passing upon their credibility, you may take into consideration many things, such as:

- (1) How would you describe the appearance and manner of the witness on the stand, sometimes referred to as the demeanor of the witness?
- (2) Was the witness forthright or hesitant?
- (3) Was the witness's testimony consistent, or did it contain discrepancies?
- (4) What was the ability of the witness to know the facts about which he or she testified?
- (5) Did the witness have a cause or a reason to be biased and prejudiced in favor of the testimony he or she gave?
- (6) Was the testimony of the witness corroborated or made stronger by other testimony and evidence, or was it made weaker or impeached by such other testimony and evidence?

You can believe as much or as little of each witness's testimony as you think proper. You may believe the testimony of a single witness against that of many witnesses – or just the opposite.

Of course, you do not determine the truth merely by counting the number of witnesses presented by each side. Throughout this process you have but one objective – to seek the truth, regardless of its source.

B. Circumstantial Evidence

There are two types of evidence generally presented during a trial – direct evidence and circumstantial evidence. Direct evidence is the testimony of a person who asserts or claims to have actual knowledge of a fact, such as an eyewitness. Circumstantial evidence is proof of a chain of facts and circumstances indicating the existence of a fact in issue. The law makes absolutely no

distinction between the weight or value to be given to either direct or circumstantial evidence. Nor is a greater degree of certainty required of circumstantial evidence than of direct evidence.

You should weigh all the evidence in the case in arriving at a verdict.

C. The Judge: Instructor of the Law

The same Constitution and laws which designate and make you the finders of the facts also make me the instructor of the law. You must accept the law as I give it to you. If I am wrong, there is another place and time for that error to be corrected. But for now, you must accept the law as I give it to you – and I caution you that it does not mean what you think the law should be, but what I tell you it is.

D. Instruction:

You have been selected and sworn as the jury to try this case of the State of Mississippi against the Defendant, Lane King. The Defendant is charged with First-Degree Murder in violation of Miss. Code Ann. § 97-3-19. The Indictment in this case is the formal method of accusing the Defendant of the crime. The Indictment is not evidence and you should not allow yourselves to be influenced against the Defendant by reason of the filing of the Indictment. The Defendant has pled not guilty to the charge. A plea of not guilty puts at issue each element of the crime with which the Defendant is charged. A plea of not guilty requires the State to prove each element of the crime beyond a reasonable doubt. The Defendant is presumed innocent of the crime and this presumption continues unless and until, after consideration of all the evidence, you are convinced of the Defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. The Defendant must be found not guilty unless the State produces evidence that convinces you beyond a reasonable doubt of the existence of each element of the crime. It is your responsibility as jurors to determine the facts from the evidence, to follow the law as stated in the instructions from the presiding judge, and to reach a verdict of not guilty or guilty based upon the evidence.

We will now have opening statements of counsel. Statements and arguments of counsel are not evidence. The purpose of opening statements and closing arguments is to assist you, the jury, in making a decision in this case; however, that decision must be based upon the evidence in this case, which consists of the testimony delivered under oath in this trial, any documents or other items introduced into evidence during this trial, and the stipulations of the parties.

E. Closing Instructions:

(1) Introduction:

Now that all the evidence has been presented, it is my duty under the law to give you the instructions that apply in this case. The instructions contain all rules of the law that are to be applied by you and all the rules by which you are to weigh the evidence and determine the facts at issue in deciding this case and reaching a verdict. You must consider the instructions as a whole. All the testimony and evidence that is proper for you to consider has been introduced in this case. You should not consider any matter of fact or of law except that which has been given to you during the trial of this case.

It is your responsibility as jurors to determine the facts from the evidence, to follow the rules of law as stated in these instructions, and to reach a fair and impartial verdict of guilty or not guilty based upon the evidence, as you have sworn you would do. You must not use any method of chance in arriving at a verdict but must base your verdict on the judgment of each juror.

(2) Elements of the Charge:

In this matter, the Defendant has been charged with:

- (a) First-Degree Murder, under Mississippi Code Section 97-3-19.

To this charge, the Defendant has entered a plea of not guilty. I will now define the elements of the charge.

Murder – State Code Section 16-3-10:

The Defendant is charged with First-Degree Murder. The State must prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the Defendant killed another person with deliberate design.

Deliberate design is when a person decides to unlawfully kill another person, and there is no legally justifiable or excusable reason for doing so. The decision to kill a person can be formed very quickly and may occur only moments before the actual act of killing. However, deliberate design cannot be formed at the exact moment of the act of killing.

Deliberate always indicates a full awareness of what one is doing, and generally implies careful and unhurried consideration of the consequences. Design means to calculate, plan, and contemplate. While it is no doubt true that a deliberate design to kill a person may be formed very quickly, and perhaps only moments before the act of consummating the intent, it is contradiction in terms to state that a deliberate design can be formed at the very moment of the fatal act.

Malice is synonymous with deliberate design and is the most important element of murder. Malice may be express or inferred. These terms, “express” and “inferred” do not mean different kinds of malice but merely the manner in which malice may be shown to exist. That is, either by direct evidence or by inference from the facts and circumstances that are proved. Express malice is shown when a person speaks words that express hatred or ill will for another or when the person prepared beforehand to do the act that was later accomplished; for example, lying in wait for a person or any other acts of preparation showing that the deed was in the Defendant’s mind express malice.

Malice may be inferred from conduct showing a total disregard for human life. Inferred malice may also arise when the deed is done with a deadly weapon. A deadly weapon is any article, instrument, or substance which is likely to cause death or great bodily harm. Whether an instrument has been used as a deadly weapon depends on the facts and circumstances of each case.

In this case, the State has alleged that the murder involved the intentional killing of Conner Hastings. Therefore, in order to prove the Defendant guilty of Murder, the State must prove the following:

The Defendant took the life of Connor Hastings with deliberate design.

If, after considering all of the evidence, you conclude that the State has proven beyond a reasonable doubt that the Defendant committed the crime of first-degree murder in violation of Mississippi Code Section 97-3-19, you must return a verdict of guilty as to this charge on the jury verdict form. If, on the other hand, you conclude that the State has failed to meet its burden of proving beyond a reasonable doubt that the Defendant committed the crime of first-degree murder in violation of Mississippi Code Section 97-3-19, you must return a verdict of not guilty as to this charge on the jury verdict form.

(3) Presumption of Innocence and Reasonable Doubt:

The Defendant is presumed innocent, and the presumption continues unless, after consideration of all the evidence, you are convinced of the Defendant’s guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. The State has the burden of presenting the evidence that establishes the Defendant’s guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. The Defendant must be found not guilty unless the State produces evidence which convinces you, beyond a reasonable doubt, of each and every element of the crime alleged.

“Beyond a reasonable doubt” is defined as “proof of such a convincing character that you would be willing to rely and act upon it without hesitation in the most important of your own affairs.”

(4) Evidence – Definition:

Evidence is the testimony received from the witnesses under oath, stipulations made by the parties, and the exhibits admitted into evidence during the trial.

(5) Evidence – Inferences:

You should consider only the evidence introduced while the court is in session. You are permitted to draw such reasonable inferences from the testimony and exhibits as you feel are justified when considered with the aid of the knowledge that you each possess in common with other persons. You may make deductions and reach conclusions that reason, and common sense lead you to draw from the facts that you find to have been established by the evidence in this case.

(6) Indictments Not Evidence:

Again, the Indictment in this case is the formal method of accusing the Defendant of a crime. The Indictment is not evidence of guilt. You should not allow yourselves to be influenced against the Defendant by reason of the filing of the Indictment.

(7) Judicial Rulings:

The Court has made rulings in the conduct of the trial and the admission of evidence. These rulings should have no bearing on the weight or credit to be given any evidence or testimony admitted during the trial, nor should they be considered by you in any manner to indicate the conclusions to be reached by you in this case.

(8) Objections:

From time to time during this trial, the attorneys have made objections that I have ruled on. You should not speculate upon the reasons why objections were made. If I approved or sustained an objection, you should not speculate on what might have been said or what might have occurred had the objection not been sustained by me.

(9) Credibility of Witnesses:

It is your responsibility to determine the credibility of each witness and the weight to be given the testimony of each witness. In determining such weight or credibility, you may properly consider: the interest, if any, that the witness may have in the result of the trial; the relation of the witness to the parties; the bias or prejudice of the witness, if any has been apparent; the candor, fairness, intelligence, and demeanor of the witness; the ability of the witness to remember and relate past occurrences; and, the means of observation and the opportunity of knowing the matters about which the witness has testified. From all the facts and circumstances appearing in evidence and coming to your observation during the trial, aided by the knowledge that you each possess in common with other persons, you will reach your conclusions. You should not let sympathy, sentiment, or prejudice enter into your deliberations, but should discharge your duties as jurors impartially, conscientiously, and faithfully under your oaths and return a verdict as the evidence warrants when measured by these instructions.

(10) Punishment:

You are only concerned with the guilt or innocence of the Defendant. You are not to concern yourselves with punishment.

F. Verdict Instructions:

After you have retired to consider your verdict, a member of the jury is selected as your foreperson and then you begin your deliberations. The foreperson is to maintain orderly deliberations but should have no greater influence on the deliberations than any other member of the jury. Your verdict must be unanimous. When you have agreed on a verdict, your foreperson will sign the verdict form, and you will, as a body, return the verdict form in open court.

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF FONDREN COUNTY
STATE OF MISSISSIPPI**

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI,

v.

LANE KING

Defendant.

)
)
)
)
)
)
)
)

CRIMINAL ACTION NO: 2024-MT

JURY VERDICT FORM

We, the jury, empaneled and sworn in the above-entitled cause, do, upon our oaths, find as follows:

As to indictment 2024-MT, for **First-Degree Murder**, Miss. Code Ann. § 97-3-19, we the jury find the Defendant:

Guilty

Not Guilty

Foreperson

EXHIBIT #1: Walker's Curriculum Vitae

JO WALKER, CPA, CFE

513 South Main Street, Fondren, Mississippi

EDUCATION

University of Mississippi

B.S. in Accounting – May 1981

Beta Alpha Psi - Accounting Major Honorary, Treasurer

Beta Gamma Sigma – Business Honorary

Cum Laude, 3.75

Top Accounting Student

Patterson Award

CERTIFICATIONS

Certified Public Accountant

June 1981 to present

Certified Fraud Examiner

June 2003 to present

EMPLOYMENT

Account-Abilitee, CPAs (owner)

June 1984 – present

513 South Main Street, Fondren, Mississippi

Full service accounting firm, providing a variety of accounting services to our clients including, bookkeeping, general accounting, audit, tax management and preparation, personal financial planning, and business valuation. Specialization in forensic accounting, conducting forensic investigations, utilizing my accounting, auditing, and investigative skills. Instrumental to numerous investigations detecting accounting fraud.

Arthur Andersen CPA

May 1981- May 1984

33 W. Monroe, Chicago, Illinois

Manager. Consumer and Business Products Auditing Division. Audited financial statements of clients and responsible for management of audit team. Promoted rapidly.

MEMBERSHIPS

Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE)

American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA)

MS Association of Certified Public Accountants (MSCACPA)

CONTINUING EDUCATION

E-Fraud: Preventing and Detecting Technology-Based Crimes (ACFE; July 2010) Co-presenter

Money Laundering: Tracing Illicit Funds (ACFE; July 2010)

Advance Fraud Examination Techniques (ACFE; July 2006)

Computers in Fraud (ACFE; July 2006)

Contract & Procurement Fraud (ACFE; July 2005)

Auditing for Internal Fraud (ACFE; July 2005)

Fraud Prevention (ACFE; July 2004)

Investigating by Computer (ACFE; July 2004)

Conducting Internal Investigations (ACFE; July 2003)

Auditing for Internal Fraud (ACFE; July 2003)

Principles of Fraud Examination (ACFE; July 2002)

Building Your Fraud Examination Practice (ACFE; July 2002)

EXHIBIT #2: Ticket Order and Cash Register Tape

Magnolia's	
1/14/23	
1 Tuna Tartar	\$8.95
1 Bruschetta	\$4.95
1 Lettuce Wedge Salad	\$4.45
1 Lettuce Wedge Salad	\$4.45
1 Pork Medallions	\$19.95
1 Chilean Sea Bass	\$21.95
1 Roasted Asparagus	\$5.95
1 Glass House Merlot	\$6.95
1 Glass House Chardonnay	\$5.95
1 Mini Baked Alaska	\$5.95
1 Chocolate Cake	\$5.95
Sub-Total	\$95.45
MS Tax	5.73
Total	101.18
Tip	_____
	-
Total	_____
	-

01-14-23	
✓	96.34
✓	83.24
✓	164.32
✓	54.80
✓	97.66
✓	123.76
✓	114.93
✓	82.54
✓	66.44
✓	79.91
✓	85.56
✓	99.33
✓	58.75
✓	93.99
✓	65.00
✓	74.45
✓	92.34
✓	123.98
✓	78.78
✓	116.43
✓	224.56
✓	95.87
✓	183.24
✓	48.56
✓	64.34
✓	114.56
✓	2583.68

EXHIBIT #3: Deposit Slip and Cash Register Tapes

DEPOSIT		
Magnolia's Acct# 34533245	Coins	<i>43.00</i>
	Cash	<i>325.00</i>
	Checks	<i>219.93</i>
	Sub-Total	<i>587.93</i>
Date:	Less Cash Received	<i>0</i>
<i>Feb. 13, 2023</i>	Total	<i>587.93</i>

Fast South Bank Mississippi

Friday, 02-10-23	
✓	39.65
✓	92.34
✓	99.00
✓	114.32
✓	178.67
✓	154.36
✓	86.45
✓	119.60
✓	45.54
✓	92.34
✓	136.45
✓	78.84
✓	91.70
✓	85.16
✓	123.55
✓	48.56
✓	78.84
✓	93.25
✓	44.21
✓	116.87
✓	46.78
✓	90.91
✓	143.22
✓	99.00
2299.61	

Saturday, 02-11-23	
✓	36.54
✓	46.78
✓	86.98
✓	99.00
✓	78.84
✓	83.45
✓	92.34
✓	77.44
✓	154.36
✓	178.67
✓	183.77
✓	92.34
✓	144.68
✓	114.32
✓	86.45
✓	48.56
✓	93.25
✓	87.36
✓	136.45
✓	119.60
✓	98.46
✓	85.16
✓	48.56
✓	92.34
✓	178.67
✓	123.98
✓	91.70
✓	67.18
✓	93.25
✓	45.54
✓	123.55
3089.57	

EXHIBIT #4: Check and Check Register (Page 1 of 2)

Magnolia's 38 State Street, Fondren, MS 39049	#1099
Date	<u>02/28/23</u>
Pay to the Order of: <u>Conner Hastings</u>	\$ 3,000.00
<u>Three thousand and 00/100</u>	Dollars
Memo _____	<u>Conner Hastings</u>
•:548200• 648752• 01099	

EXHIBIT #4: Check and Check Register (Page 2 of 2)

CHECK REGISTER						
Number	Date	Transaction Description	Payment Fee/Withdrawal	✓	Deposit, Credit	BALANCE
						11,345.22
1094	02/28/23	Let Us Produce	165.00			11,180.22
1095	02/28/23	Meat Market	465.00			10,715.22
1096	02/23/23	Vineyard Wines	455.85			10,259.37
	02/23/23	Deposit			825.36	11,084.73
	02/24/23	Deposit			923.45	12,008.18
1097	02/24/23	Laundry Time	122.35			11,885.83
	02/25/23	Deposit			654.92	12,540.75
1098	02/28/23	Supplies Unlimited	3,093.45			9,447.30
1099	02/28/23	** Void **				9,447.30
1100	03/01/23	Let Us Produce	128.00			9,319.30

EXHIBIT #5: Buy-Sell Agreement

PARTNERSHIP CROSS-PURCHASE WITH BUY-SELL AGREEMENT

This Agreement is made June 14, 2020, by and between Lane King and Conner Hastings.

WHEREAS, the above-named individuals are partners doing business under the incorporated name of Magnolia's, LLP at 38 State Street, Magnolia, MS 39049, the respective partnership interests of the partners being divided equally; and

WHEREAS, the partners desire to ensure the continuity of harmonious management of the partnership by providing for the purchase of a partnership interest by the other partner in the event a partner dies;

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the premises and mutual covenants contained herein, it is agreed by and between the parties as follows:

FIRST: Upon the death of a partner, the surviving partner shall purchase and the legal representative of the estate of the deceased partner shall sell to such surviving partner, the partnership interest owned by the deceased partner for the price established in accordance with the provisions of the SECOND and FOURTH Article.

SECOND: Unless and until a new value is established as herein provided, the value of the respective partnership interest of the partners for purposes of this agreement is \$100,000 each. At the end of each fiscal year, the partners shall agree upon the value of their respective shares. If the partners have not made such determination within two years of the death of a partner, an independent certified public accountant shall determine the value of the deceased partner's interest.

THIRD: In order to assure the availability of funds for the purchase of the partnership interest of a deceased partner by the surviving partner, the partnership has purchased insurance on the lives of each partner. The value of insurance on each of the partners shall be set initially at \$500,000. Payment of these policies shall be made from the LLC corporate accounts. The partners may purchase additional insurance as deemed necessary.

FOURTH: Upon the death of a partner, the other partner may immediately collect the proceeds of the policy on the life of the deceased partner. If the proceeds of all the policies on the life of the deceased partner are not sufficient to purchase the deceased partner's interest, the surviving partner shall be obligated to pay the remaining balance to the deceased partner's estate. If the proceeds of all the policies on the life of the deceased partner are in excess of the purchase price of the deceased partner's interest, the surviving partner shall be entitled to any excess funds.

FIFTH: Should the death of one partner occur at the hand of the other partner, then the surviving partner shall be excluded from any benefits laid out herein.

UPON PAYMENT of the purchase price of the partnership interest of the deceased partner the legal representative of the estate of the deceased partner shall execute and deliver to the surviving partner such instruments as shall be necessary to transfer complete title to the surviving partner.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the partners have executed this agreement the day and year first herein above written.

Lane King 6/14/20

Conner Hastings 6/14/20

EXHIBIT #6: Investigation Report (Page 1 of 4)

AGENCY ID SC04719		FONDREN POLICE DEPARTMENT Fondren, Mississippi (803) 555-1234				INCIDENT # 47-108290911		
INCIDENT REPORT PRINT OR TYPE ALL INFORMATION								
EVENT	INCIDENT TYPE			COMPLETED	FORCED ENTRY	PREMISE TYPE	UNITS ENTERED	
	Homicide – Body located in locked cooler			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	Bus.	1	
				<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO			
	INCIDENT LOCATION (SUBDIVISION, APARTMENT AND NUMBER, STREET NAME AND NUMBER)					ZIP CODE	WEAPON TYPE	
	38 State Street – Magnolia’s Restaurant					39049	N/A	
	INCIDENT DATE		24 HOUR CLOCK		TO	DATE		24 HOUR CLOCK
03/27/23		07:30			03/28/23		12:45	
VICTIM’S NAME (LAST, FIRST, MIDDLE)				DATE OF BIRTH		HEIGHT	WEIGHT	
Hastings, Conner (deceased)				05/13/88		5’10”	140 lbs.	
ADDRESS				CITY		STATE	ZIP CODE	
169 King Charles Road				Fondren		MS	39049	
SUBJECT NO.1	NAME (LAST, FIRST, MIDDLE)			AKA				
	FACIAL HAIR, SCARS, TATOOS, GLASSES, CLOTHING, PHYSICAL PECULARITIES, ETC.							
	ADDRESS		CITY		STATE		ZIP CODE	
	SUBJECT (NO.1) USING: ALCOHOL <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> UNKNOWN DRUGS <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> UNKNOWN		ARRESTED NEAR OFFENSE SCENE <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		DATE / TIME OF OFFENSE		DATE / TIME OF ARREST	
	3/28/23 – 08:00 - Called to the scene by Fondren PD’s patrol office because of suspected homicide. Victim’s body discovered lying on floor of restaurant’s cooler by restaurant cook, John Croswell.							
NARRATIVE	03/28/23 – 08:30 – Arrived on scene. Controlled and assessed scene. Diagram of restaurant is a separate document.							
	Body does not appear to have been moved or compromised. Victim appears to have died from hypothermia; the body is pale							
	and waxy. There appears to be no recent outward signs of physical trauma to victim or evidence of physical disturbance in							
	cooler or restaurant. Will wait for conclusions of autopsy. Body lying on floor of restaurant cooler next to bacon spelling							
PROPERTY	TYPE (GROUP)						TOTAL VALUE	
	STOLEN							
	DAMAGED							
	BURNED							
	RECOVERED							
SEIZED								
ADMINISTRATIVE	SUBJECT IDENTIFIED <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO		SUBJECT LOCATED NO		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ACTIVE <input type="checkbox"/> ADM. CLOSED <input type="checkbox"/> UNFOUNDED		<input type="checkbox"/> ARRESTED UNDER 18 <input type="checkbox"/> ARRESTED 18 AND OVER	
							<input type="checkbox"/> EX-CLEAR UNDER 18 <input type="checkbox"/> EX-CLEAR 18 AND OVER	
	REASON FOR EXCEPTIONAL CLEARANCE: 1. <input type="checkbox"/> OFFENDER DEATH. 2. <input type="checkbox"/> NO PROSECUTION 3. <input type="checkbox"/> EXTRACTION DENIED 4. <input type="checkbox"/> VICTIM DECLINES OPERATION 5. <input type="checkbox"/> JUVENILE NO CUSTODY							
	REPORTING OFFICER		DATE	24 HR CLOCK	APPROVING OFFICER		DATE	UNIT NUMBER
	Inv. A. Finch		04/06/23	17:23	Lt. Solomon		04/06/23	4618
FOLLOW-UP INVESTIGATION REQUIRED <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO								

EXHIBIT #6: Investigation Report (Page 2 of 4)

AGENCY ID SC04719	FONDREN POLICE DEPARTMENT Fondren, Mississippi (803) 555-1234	INCIDENT # 47-108290911
SUPPLEMENTAL INVESTIGATION REPORT PRINT OR TYPE ALL INFORMATION)		
DATE	03/28/23	
"Killer" and the start of another letter. Victim holding an additional slice of bacon in hand next to bottom of last letter ~		
appears to attempt to spell another letter. Victim shows signs of non-recent physical trauma - 1/4" round burn marks on inside		
of right arm; bruising on neck consistent with someone grabbing him at neck. Victim also shows bruised hands from attempting escape from the locked cooler. No evidence of break-in at restaurant. Inspected the premises and nothing was		
out of order. Bookbag, keys, wallet, and cell phone of the victim were in his desk drawer. Nature of death, use of cooler, is		
consistent with mob hit.		
03/28/23 - 09:20 - Interviewed Croswell and other kitchen staff. Victim was co-owner of restaurant. Witnesses state victim's body had not been moved prior to my arrival. Croswell arrived at restaurant through an unlocked kitchen back door at		
07:15. No sign of disturbance noted by witness. Approximately 15 minutes later, Croswell unlocked padlocked door to cooler and discovered body and called 911 and Lane King. Only Croswell and restaurant owners, Hastings and King, have keys to lock doors to restaurant and cooler. Padlock is new to cooler and staff. Some inconsistency in remembering to		
lock cooler at the end of the day. Croswell and kitchen staff do not know who would want to harm Hastings. Kitchen staff		
observed someone lurking in alley across the street frequently, and most recently on Saturday, March 25 th . Victim was seen		
and heard from last on the evening of Saturday, March 25 th at Magnolia's up until closing time. Several witnesses observed (now identified) Lou Christoff in alley across from back of restaurant door for a couple of weeks.		
03/28/23 - 10:00 - Interviewed Lane King, co-owner of Magnolia's. King was last to see Hastings at 22:30 on March 25 th at Magnolia's. According to King, on Saturday, Hastings stayed behind to make notes for the following week's menu.		
No such note was located. Hastings was going to look at inventory in cooler and then intended to padlock cooler door when		
leaving. King states the cooler door was not locked before leaving. King recently purchased a padlock for the cooler, due		
to concerns of employee theft. Keys for the restaurant and cooler padlock were distributed only to Croswell, Hastings, and		
King. As King was leaving the restaurant March 25 th , King noticed a person standing in the shadows in the alley across the		

SUPPLEMENTAL NARRATIVE

street next to a black Caddy. After being shown a photo array on investigator's tablet, King identified the person as Lou

Christoff. King stated about recently hiring a forensic accountant, Jo Walker, to determine cause for company's financial struggles despite steady business. Walker's investigation revealed Hastings was skimming from the business. King

questioned Hastings about thefts on Friday, March 17th. Hastings explained he liked to gamble, but had been unlucky lately, and thus, had borrowed money from a loan shark, Christoff. Hastings owed Christoff over \$200,000. According

to King, Hastings had been physically accosted with cigarette burns on the arm, and had been choked by Christoff to come

up with past due payments. So, Hastings took money from the business. According to King, Hastings said he had become

REPORTING OFFICER	DATE	24 HOUR CLOCK	SUPERVISING OFFICER
Inv. A. Finch	04/06/23	17:23	Lt. Solomon

EXHIBIT #6: Investigation Report (Page 3 of 4)

AGENCY ID SC04719	FONDREN POLICE DEPARTMENT Fondren, Mississippi (803) 555-1234	INCIDENT # 47-108290911
SUPPLEMENTAL INVESTIGATION REPORT PRINT OR TYPE ALL INFORMATION)		
DATE	03/28/23	
	desperate to pay off the debt because his life had been threatened by Christoff. King offered to give Hastings a personal loan to pay off the debt if Hastings sought help for his gambling addiction.	
	03/28/23 – 11:30 – Interviewed remaining restaurant staff. Consistent statements as offered by kitchen staff. No one had seen Hastings since Saturday evening, since the restaurant was closed on Sunday and Monday.	
	03/28/23 – 12:45 – Went to victim’s residence. No disturbances to residence. Unopened mail from Saturday, March 25 th	
	and newspapers from Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday were lying on front steps undisturbed. Voicemail messages	
	unretrieved on cell phone and home phone from Saturday thru present. No unusual calls or mail. Saw printout of computer	
	spreadsheet of debt owed specifically to Lou Christoff showed balance of \$208,500.	
	03/31/23 – Autopsy results show death caused by hypothermia. Bruising to hands noted. Likely from banging on cooler	
	door. No other physical trauma relating death noted. Exact time of death cannot be determined through physical	
	examination of the body since it was not frozen. Autopsy dates cigarette burns to have occurred two weeks prior to death	
	and strangulation of neck, non-life threatening, to have occurred less than one week prior to death.	
	03/31/23 – 13:30 – Christoff was read Miranda rights. Christoff refuses to make statement, and requests to have lawyer	
	present. Christoff was arrested for loan sharking and murder.	
	03/31/23 – 17:20 – There were some smudged and clear fingerprints found. Christoff’s fingerprints were not found on padlock to cooler, cooler door, or doors to restaurant, per fingerprint analysis.	
	04/01/23 – 11:00 – Christoff, in presence of counsel, provided statement. Hastings owed Christoff over \$200,000	
	due to	
	gambling losses. Christoff says Hastings was making payments and had been tailing Hastings to make sure he did not	
	skip	
	town. Christoff was present the night of March 25 th in alley across the street from Magnolia’s back door to restaurant	
	starting from about 21:00 until 23:30. Christoff observed King arguing with Hastings and telling him he ruined the	
	business, and Magnolia’s was bankrupt and would not be able to continue to operate. Then Christoff saw King brandish a	

SUPPLEMENTAL NARRATIVE

kitchen knife and point it at Hastings making him go back into the restaurant. Christoff later saw King leave alone at 22:30.

Christoff waited for another hour and left. Hastings never left while Christoff was there.

REPORTING OFFICER

DATE

24 HOUR CLOCK

SUPERVISING OFFICER

Inv. A. Finch

04/06/23

17:23

Lt. Solomon

EXHIBIT #6: Investigation Report (Page 4 of 4)

AGENCY ID SC04719	FONDREN POLICE DEPARTMENT Fondren, Mississippi (803) 555-1234	INCIDENT # 47-108290911	
SUPPLEMENTAL INVESTIGATION REPORT PRINT OR TYPE ALL INFORMATION)			
DATE	04/06/23		
SUPPLEMENTAL NARRATIVE	04/02/23 – 10:15 – Interviewed Jo Walker. Confirmed had undertaken forensic accounting investigation at the request of King due to financial struggles in the restaurant business. Walker stated the audit began on March 7, 2023 and completed the work on March 17th. Walker discovered Hastings had been skimming from Magnolia’s. Total sum stolen by Hastings was \$273,958. Walker stated King appeared enraged when learning of the theft and King said “Hastings would pay for this.” Walker overheard King confronting Hastings later on the 17 th and Hastings would get his “just desserts.” Walker also overheard parts of a phone conversation between Hastings and unknown person making promises for payments and threats being made.” Walker was questioned further about financial aspects of Magnolia’s. The restaurant is insolvent. Walker advised King the business would need to be closed. Walker stated that King is the beneficiary of a \$500,000 insurance policy for a buy-sell agreement for a deceased partner’s interest in the business.		
	04/03/23 – 14:30 – Met King at Magnolia’s for additional questioning. Confronted with Christoff’s statement. King was adamant it was all lies, and it was Christoff’s way of escaping murder. Several paring knives and one 10” knife were located in the kitchen. Knives were collected and sent to the lab for fingerprint analysis. King consented to go to the station to provide fingerprints on the same day.		
	04/04/23 – Additional fingerprint analysis results received. Fingerprint analysis shows King’s fingerprints are on padlock to cooler, cooler door, and the kitchen knife with a ten-inch blade.		
	04/05/23 – 16:00 – Christoff released. King arrested.		
REPORTING OFFICER	DATE	24 HOUR CLOCK	SUPERVISING OFFICER
Inv. A. Finch	04/06/23	16:50	Lt. Solomon

EXHIBIT #7: Photo Inside Magnolia's Cooler

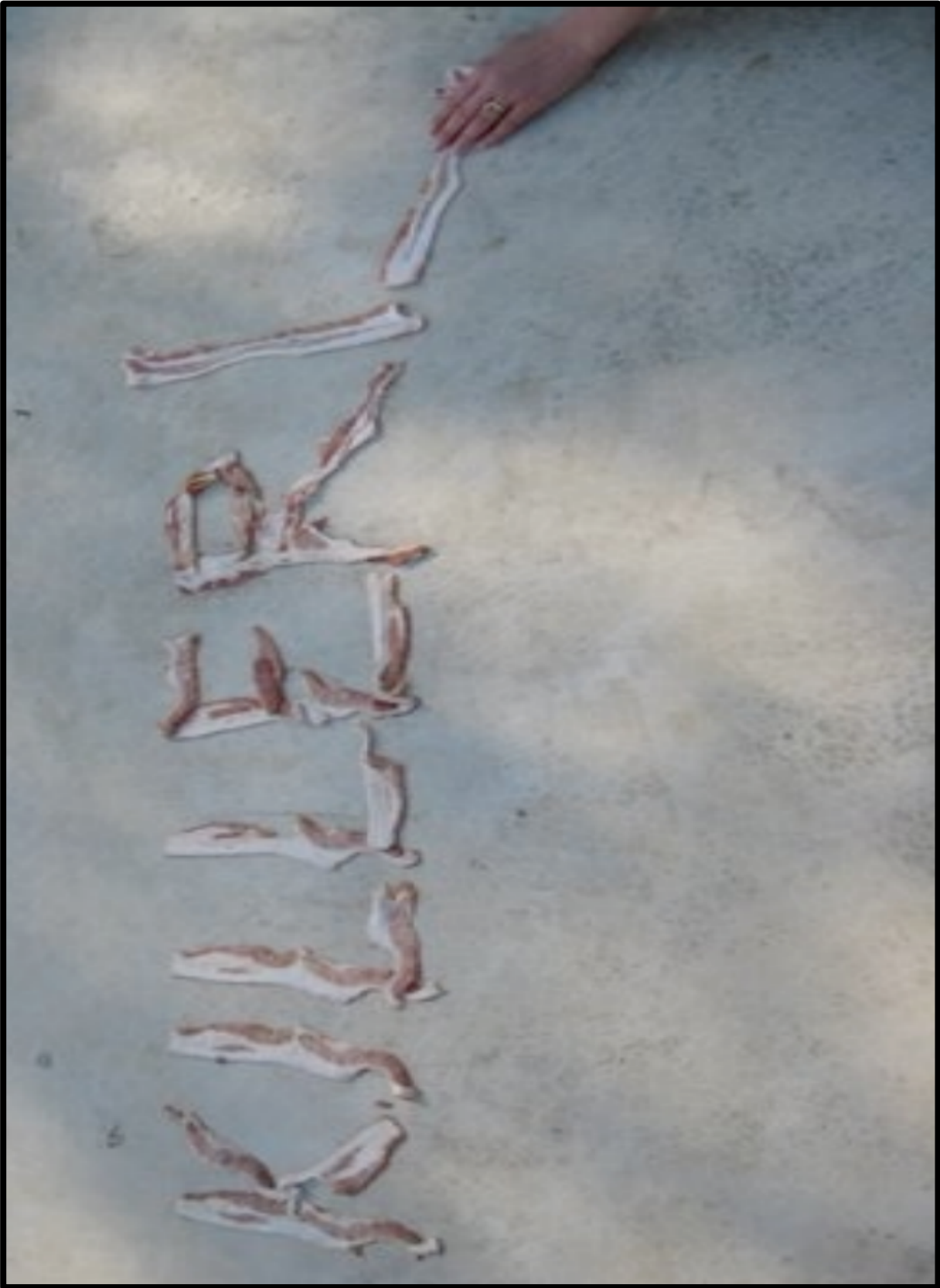


EXHIBIT #8: Padlock Receipt

Fondren Lock & Key 531 Veterans Highway Fondren, MS 39049	
02/28/23	12:33 pm
1 Lg. Padlock w/ Key	\$ 19.49
2 Extra Keys	\$ 1.98
Subtotal	\$ 21.47
Tax (7%)	\$ 1.50
Total	\$ 22.97
Cash Paid	\$ 23.00
Change	\$.03
Thank you for letting us serve you. Come again.	

EXHIBIT #9: Menu Notes

Stuffed eggplant with house Pomodoro sauce

*Jumbo lump crab cakes and marinated
portobello mushroom stacks*

*Beef tenderloin medallions tartar drizzled with
balsamic cream sauce and blue cheese crumbles*

*Parmesan crusted sea scallops with
with a garlic butter and white wine reduction
sauce*

Conner

EXHIBIT #10: Young's Curriculum Vitae

SIDNEY YOUNG, PH.D. CURRICULUM VITAE

Education

University of Pennsylvania
Ph.D. in Criminal Justice 1990
M.A. in Sociology, 1988

Mississippi State University
B.A. in Sociology, magna cum laude 1986

Present Positions

Criminal Justice Professor, Mississippi State University
Mississippi State University, 2006 – present, Department Chair, 2016 – present

Co-Director International Association for the Study of Organized Crime
New York, New York 2007 – present

Prior Academic Appointments

Professor, Department of Criminal Justice
University of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania 1995 – 2006

Assistant and Associate Professor, Department of Criminal Justice
Temple University, Pennsylvania, 1990 – 1995

Memberships and Positions:

International Association for the Study of Organized Crime (IASOC), 2007 – present
Consultant, National Criminal Justice Commission, 2012 – 2014
American Society of Criminology, President 2009 – 2012
Task Force on Law and Enforcement, President's Commission on Organized Crime, 2004 – 2012

Honors and Awards

Distinguished Leader in Criminal Justice, Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences
American Society of Criminal Justice, Fellow 2006 – present
Fulbright Research Fellowship, 2000 - 2001
Special Dissertation Research Grant, University of Pennsylvania 1990
Graduate School Fellowship, University of Pennsylvania 1988 - 1990

Publications

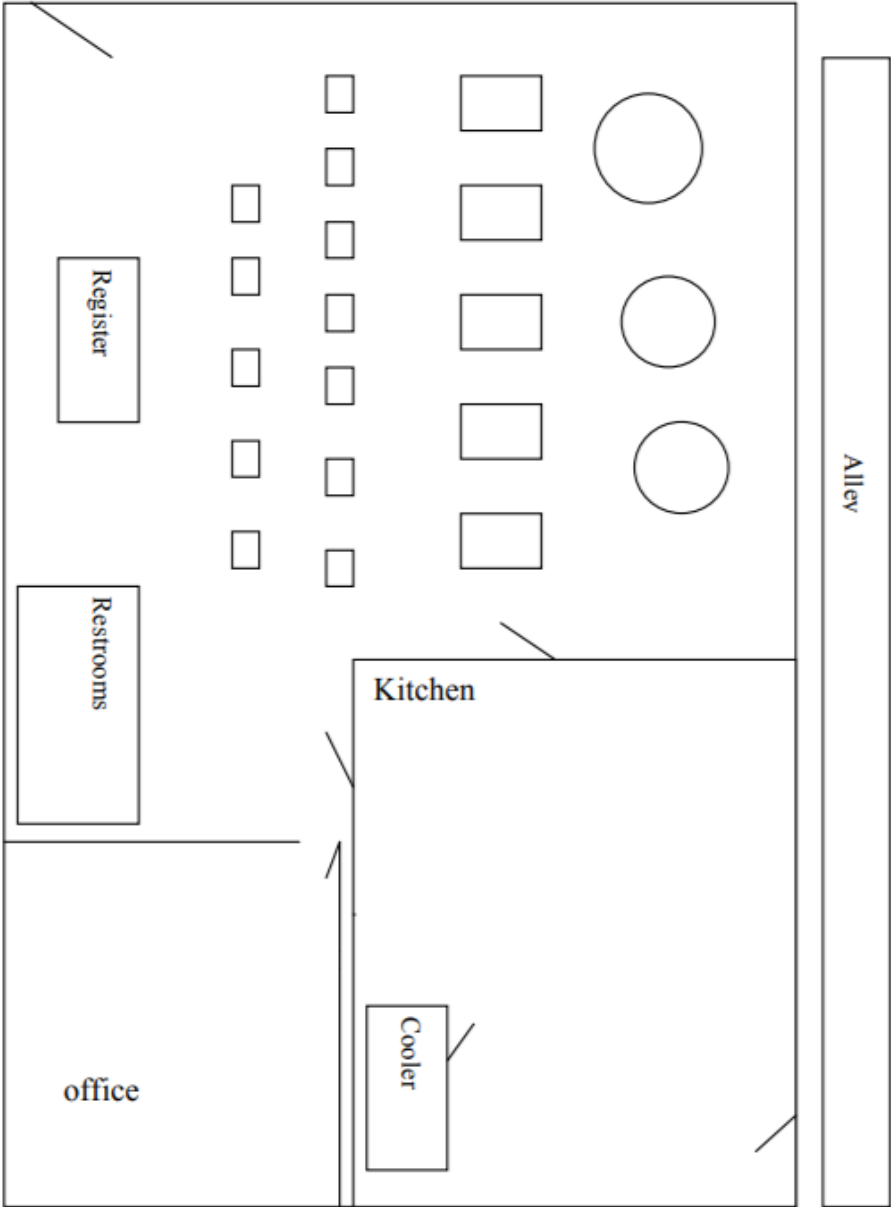
No Law and Order: Organized Crime New York: John Wiley, 2016
Wiseguys Finish First New York: John Wiley, 2011
Kuklinski: The Iceman Cometh New York: Harper & Row, 2008
Organized Crime: A Study in Methodology of Crimes Simon and Schuster, 2006
Bent Cops and Tampered Evidence Indiana University Press, 1990

EXHIBIT #11: Autopsy Report for Conner Hastings

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI - MISSISSIPPI BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION OF FORENSIC SCIENCES - RECORD OF CORONER							
Name of Deceased		Conner Hastings		County		Fondren	
Age	35	Height	70"	Weight	140 lbs.	Date of Birth	05/13/88
Time of Death		Undetermined				Date of Death	03/27/23
MANNER OF DEATH							
<input type="checkbox"/> Natural		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Homicide		<input type="checkbox"/> Suicide		<input type="checkbox"/> Accident	
						<input type="checkbox"/> Undetermined	
						<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
PURPOSE OF REPORT							
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Autopsy		<input type="checkbox"/> Limited Dissection		<input type="checkbox"/> External Exam		<input type="checkbox"/> History Review	
PERFORMED BY		Chandler Covington, M.D.		Date	03/29/23	Hour	12:05pm
APPROVED		Stephan Bonner, M.D.		Date	03/30/23		
CAUSE OF DEATH							
<p>Initial Examination: The body is that of a male adult, approximately 70" in height, and weighing 140 lbs., consistent with the stated age of 35 years.</p> <p>Autopsy Findings: In careful review of the body, there were no signs of struggle with another individual or physical violence. The body did appear pale and waxy. Upon collection of the body, the body temperature was at 35 degrees Fahrenheit. Based on the temperature of the body and location of where the body was found in a restaurant cooler, it is determined that Mr. Hastings died as a result of hypothermia. Hypothermia is the reduced body temperature that happens when a body dissipates more heat than it absorbs. In humans, it is defined as a body core temperature below 95 degrees Fahrenheit. For Mr. Hasting's weight, it most likely took more than 20 hours before the hypothermia was severe enough to kill Mr. Hasting. And, based upon the body temperature at time of discovery, it was likely Mr. Hasting had been in the cooler more than 50 hours.</p> <p>Additional Notes: Previous injuries were noted to include cigarette burns on inside right arm in the healing process occurring approximately two weeks prior to death along with fading bruises from what appears to be forced choking around the base of the neck occurring approximately a week prior to death. Neither the cigarette burns, nor the choking occurred in relation to his death. He did; however, have bruising on his hands, which were most likely from banging against a blunt object such as the door to the cooler in which he was found.</p> <p>Cardiovascular: The heart is normal size and weight for patient's age and appears structurally normal.</p> <p>Respiratory: The lungs appear to be normal size/weight. Tissue is abnormal due to smoking.</p> <p>Hepatobiliary: The liver appears to be normal.</p> <p>Gastrointestinal: The typically formed tongue, esophagus, gastroesophageal junction, serosal stomach and gastric mucosa are without note. The stomach, large bowels, and small bowels appear normal.</p> <p>Toxicology: Nothing abnormal found in blood system.</p> <p>Other Procedures:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Documentary photographs obtained. 2. Blood, urine, bile, and vitreous are submitted for toxicological analysis. 3. Head and body hair is submitted. 4. Clothing is submitted for volatile determination. <p>Autopsy Findings: At the time of death, this was an otherwise healthy 35-year-old except for smoking.</p> <p>Cause of Death: Hypothermia / Homicide</p>							

EXHIBIT #12: Diagram of Magnolia's

38 State Street



Key:

/ denotes door

Not to Scale

Name Conversion Table

Old Name	New Name				
Lane Hill	Lane King	Alex	Austin	Rivers	Thai
Zoe Caine	Conner Hastings	Bobbie	Cam	Billie	Harley
Lou Carboni	Lou Christoff	Charlie		Corey	Leighton
Detective Dee Haiden	Detective Alex Finch	Danny	Lee/Leigh	Aubrey	CHRISTIE
Jo Walker	Jo Walker	Ryan	Andy	Ari	HASTINGS
John Crowell	John Crowell	Aaron/Erin	Jamie	Kayden	MARPLE
CJ Morgan	Jamie Kennedy	Swayze	Morgan	Conner	STYLES
Davis Young	Sidney Young	Riley	Terry	Dallas	ACKROYD
		Ashton	Cameron	Brooklyn	BANTRY
Southberry's	Magnolia's	Avery	Eddie	Dylan	STOKES
38 Southberry Square	38 State Street	Jerry	Shea	Ray	FINCH
The State	The Reservoir Press	Kennedy	Sidney	Sammy	RAYMOND
Winston Police Department	Fondren Police Department	Nikki	Joey	Casey	ARTHUR
Tarnowski, Minnesota	Pearl River, Mississippi				
Star Tribune	Choctaw Tribune				
Pioneer Press	Reservoir Press				
Ramada	Eastover Inn				
Hermantown	Littletown				
Duluth	Magnolia				
Tarnowski	Jackson				
Hennipen	Brooks				
	Monday, December 19, 2016	12/19/20			
	Monday, January 9, 2017	1/9/21			
	Sunday, October 30, 2016	10/30/20			
	Wednesday, November 2, 2016	11/2/20			
	Monday, October 17, 2016	10/17/20			

Handy
Frankel
Jess
Corey
Bailey