

DAY 4 OF TRIAL, THURSDAY, SEPT. 24

Lots of emotions and tears

Witness describes relationship with William ‘Bud’ Ackerman Jr. and night Kenneth Davis McClendon died

By RENEE ORTIZ
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Editor’s note — Because of the arrival of Hurricane Helene, some readers might not have read the online coverage from Thursday’s trial proceedings. We are publishing that story again, in today’s print edition.

Emotions ran high on the fourth day of the murder trial of William “Bud” Ackerman Jr.

Ackerman is charged with murder in what has been deemed an intentional crash that took the life of Kenneth Davis McClendon on May 7, 2023.

Prosecutor John Meadors called Ackerman’s ex-wife, Meredith Haynie, to the stand.

Haynie began by recollecting when she and Ackerman began their relationship in 2006. The duo dated for six years before marrying in 2012. In May of 2022, the two began the process of divorce.

In December of 2022, Haynie began dating “Davis” McClendon. Meadors questioned Haynie on the nature of the new relationship.

Meadors: “Did Davis McClendon have anything to do with the separation?”

“Absolutely not,” Haynie responded.

According to Haynie, the duo kept their relationship unknown to Ackerman. She stated she and McClendon would go on dates outside of Greenwood to avoid Ackerman.

Haynie testified that Ackerman found out about her relationship on April 29, 2023. She said he sent her three messages.

Meadors: “Based on those text messages, what was his response when he found out about the relationship?”

Haynie: “He was not happy. He was very upset ... He was hurt and very mad.”

The prosecution then moved onto having Haynie describe the events that took place on the evening of May 6, and the early morning of May 7, 2023.

Haynie and McClendon arrived at Break on the Lake in Greenwood about 8:44 p.m. on May 6. Ackerman and their three children video called Haynie at 8:47 p.m.

“Davis went in so the children didn’t see Davis in the background of the video,” Haynie said.

She joined him shortly after getting off the phone. Ackerman texted again and then video called Haynie at 9:08 p.m.

Haynie: “He was trying to figure out where I was, what I was doing and who I was with. Why I was doing this to him again?”

Meadors: “When you say why ‘I was doing this again,’ what do you mean?”

Haynie: “Like not getting back together, why was I not with him, why I was moving on. At the end of the conversation, which at the time, I didn’t think anything about it. Until later, he said at the end of the conversation ‘Well, I’ll see you later tonight.’”

Meadors: “Did you worry based off that?”

Haynie: “Yes, I did worry.”

The evening continued on until the couple left Break on the Lake and went to a party at a friend’s house. A little after midnight, Ackerman made several calls to Haynie, which she ignored. She continued to get calls from Ackerman.

Haynie: “I didn’t want to talk to him.”

Haynie and McClendon made their way to Key West bar in Greenwood about 12:30 a.m. May 7.

When he called again, at 12:38 a.m., she finally answered.

Haynie: “I was tired of him calling. So I just answered to see what was going on.”

Meadors: “Based off the time you lived with him, dated him, talked to him on the phone, could you tell the difference between him sober and drunk?”

Haynie: “One thousand percent ... This was drunk, this was not sober talk. I can tell by the language he was using. Just him asking where we were, telling me he had been driving around. Asking where we were, saying he was going to find us. Again asking why I was doing this to him.”

Ackerman continued to make calls, she said. At 12:45 a.m. she answered and Ackerman then expressed that he wanted to meet McClendon and he was looking for them.

Haynie testified that she threatened on the phone to call the police on Ackerman for drunk driving. But she did not actually make the call. Instead, Haynie began calling members of Ackerman’s family. No one answered her calls. Ackerman continued to call her and she did not pick up.

Haynie: “It was getting frustrating, it was getting scary. It was getting obsessive.”

She testified she told McClendon about the missed calls, and that he was looking for them and wanted to talk to McClendon.

McClendon then left Key West afterward to meet Ackerman.

Haynie began tearing up when she testified that was the last time she ever saw McClendon alive. The plan was for the two men to meet at Ackerman’s house. The location changed because of concerns about the three children in the home.



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Greenwood resident William “Bud” Ackerman Jr., 43, is on trial for murder in the death of another Greenwood man, Kenneth Davis McClendon, 46, during the early morning hours of May 7, 2023. His ex-wife, Meredith Haynie, was joined by family for her testimony Thursday.

Haynie called McClendon at 1:08 a.m. The two spoke on the phone for about five minutes.

Haynie: “I was then put on hold.”

Meadors: “Did you ever talk to him again?”

Haynie was crying when she answered “no.”

About 1:30 a.m., Haynie and others were driving around when they spotted McClendon’s car at the intersection of Sawgrass Place and Avid Road in Hunters Creek. The car had the airbags deployed. McClendon’s body was later discovered alongside the road by Haynie and company.

Haynie: “I was scared he was still out there.” The defense objected to her last statement. Defense did not cross examine Haynie.

Before the day’s testimony began, a delay took place because of the submission of evidence of text messages between Ackerman and a friend.

Prosecutors called Lt. Matthew Womack with Greenwood County Sheriff’s Office to the stand. Womack is a criminal investigator. He testified about the digital investigation done on the phones of Ackerman, Haynie and McClendon.

Womack testified that on April 29, 2023, Ackerman texted a friend of his.

Ackerman wrote “He has been (expletive) Meredith.” Ackerman followed up with another text, “I had my suspicions but it was confirmed by her. I can’t believe he would do that to me. I have known him (McClendon) my whole life.”

His friend responded, “I don’t know what to tell you Bud.”

Ackerman responded, “Damn I don’t know either. It’s just (expletive) up.”



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Chris Reeder, owner of Fat Daddy’s BBQ, partnered with Tidwell Jewelers of Greenwood to serve barbecue and give back to the community on Tuesday.

FEED

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Reeder shared that partnering with Tidwell Jewelers allowed them to extend their reach and serve more people in need.

“Tidwell was my neighbor in the shopping center when I first opened,” Reeder said. “He was one of the first people to say hi and welcome us. We’ve partnered with them for over seven years.”

Thanks to their combined efforts, Reeder estimated they would serve over 400 people, far surpassing the 100 they could have helped on their own.

Ella Sibert, shared how heartwarming it was to witness the community coming together after the hurricane.

“It’s kind of a teary-eyed situation,” Sibert said. “It just hasn’t come out yet. I’ve never seen anything like this.”

Volunteers from Self Regional and Healthy Learners Green-

wood also joined the efforts.

Dena Campbell, a volunteer from Healthy Learners Greenwood, explained that with their offices closed and power out, they decided to make the best use of their time by serving the community.

Brenda Anderson, a volunteer from Self Regional, echoed the spirit of unity.

“I’m good,” Anderson said. “I just want everybody else to be. We got to come together and help each other, not just today but always.”

Jimmy Norris, a resident of Ninety Six, was also out picking up food for himself and his family.

Having relied on bologna and turkey sandwiches since last week, he expressed how much the hot meal meant to him.

“We appreciate all they’re doing,” Norris said.

Tracey Tidwell Herron added that she hopes this act of kindness serves as a reminder that “there is still good in the world and that God is still good.”

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