

Blood Town S1-E6

Hydrangea Ceremony

[00:00:00] **Penny:** I'm Penny Dearmin, and this is Blood Town.

[News Report] Today's commitment hearing was designed to determine if there was enough evidence for the case to move forward to a grand jury. Judge William Pryor ruled there is enough evidence for the case against Marcus Lillard to go to trial on three separate charges. Those are the murder of UGA Professor Marianne Shockley, concealing her death, and aggravated assault. The state unraveled extensive details on interviews they have made so far in their investigation. GBI special agent Michael Maybin took the stand to present evidence for the murder case against Marcus Lillard, the man accused of murdering Marianne Shockley, a UGA Professor. Maybin explained Investigators conducted three interviews with Lillard and he was inconsistent with his explanation of what happened. The state argued that bruising and rib fractures found during autopsy support an aggravated assault charge [00:01:00] and show she was strangled. Maybin also said several women claiming a romantic history with Lillard said he would choke them during sex. The defense says they will plead not guilty if, and when they are indicted.

Penny: Most of what we learned at the commitment hearing came from GBI agent Michael Maybin, who was the prosecution's only witness. And the first thing that we learned that was new was that Marcus and Marianne had actually been dating for a little over a year.

We previously were told that it was a very new relationship. So, we're talking about a couple who has known each other since Christmas, 1995. So, they've known each other for a long time.

Jim: Yeah, since they were kids.

Penny: Yeah. And there've been dating for over a year, and I think that's a significant difference from a brand-new relationship.

Jim: Yes.

Penny: So, we were told that Marianne texted Marcus on the morning of Saturday, May 11th, and that she was looking to go swimming in a swimming pool. [00:02:00] They went out in downtown Milledgeville and they ate, and they went and had drinks at a few bars, and then arrived at Clark's house around 7:00 PM that night, just Saturday, the day before Mother's Day. Things started getting pretty wild right away.

Jim: Well, you know, just looking at the things we, we were told, that there's pot smoking going on, a report that I was just looking at here in the Recorder, in the Union Recorder. States something about bongo drums, and accordions, and then everybody got naked. I guess that's kind of the narrative that was told.

Penny: Right. I can't say I've ever gone anywhere where people were playing the bongo drums and the accordion, and we then got naked and went swimming. But this is an interesting story.

Jim: I guess, so we have to, we have to assume that it wasn't pouring rain because I was in Alabama, but I was talking to a friend of mine who was in Milledgeville, Georgia that day.

And I mean, I [00:03:00] remember talking to her and she was wanting to go do some stuff, but it was pouring rain, you know, even on a hard, hard at looking for the weather report, you know, does that make sense that all this would happen in the rain?

Penny: Maybe that's why they got in the hot tub instead of the swimming pool?

Jim: Maybe so.

Penny: But then, Clark was swimming in the swimming pool when they discovered Marianne's body, so I don't know, we don't, what we don't know is whether his pool's heated or not; that kind of information would be helpful.

Jim: Well, it was May, I mean, I guess you could jump in a swimming pool without it being cold.

Penny: It was in the eighties in the day, and then the low that night was 66. That's pretty cool for the South.

Jim: Or, maybe the water was warmer.

Penny: Maybe. Yeah, it could be. So, then we learned from Agent Maybin that over the interview process with Marcus Lillard, that his story became inconsistent. That at first, he reported going into the woods for 15 minutes, [00:04:00] and then the story started to change. By the fourth time they interviewed him, Marcus was claiming that he may have been drugged by Clark, and that he was likely in the woods for 75 to 90 minutes, and he had bug bites all over him and Briar scratches that might support him being in the woods for longer than 15 minutes.

Jim: Were they on top of his legs or the top of his feet or what have you? Like almost as though he was just standing in an ant bed or something?

Penny: Right. And then, yeah, Briar scratches all over his legs as well. So, if you were, let's just say you were hypothetically at a party, and you were drinking and doing drugs, and maybe you consume something not of your own free will, and you, your body wasn't used to taking that drug; it's likely that you might not remember things that happened to you.

Jim: Let's kind of rewind [00:05:00] for a second.

And for, you know, for someone who may be in like, has never seen Milledgeville before. Okay. You could be in downtown where the nine-dollar wine came from, Metropolis—all that is either on Hancock street or Wayne street, pretty much in this little bitty Jeffersonian

square town called Milledgeville, and to get to Clark's would be approximately two and a half miles across the river.

So, you would be within five miles from the bar hopping to the swimming pool.

Penny: Okay.

Jim: I just say that's kind of important, so people realize everything's pretty, pretty local right there. So, they could feasibly have had quite a few in downtown, made it across that river to Clark, or they could have had a couple beers, a couple of drinks downtown, and then the things really wrenched up when they got to Watson Reynolds Road.

Penny: And we know that Marcus Lillard's toxicology report came back with cocaine and marijuana in his system. We still [00:06:00] don't have the toxicology reports for Clark Heindel and Marianne Shockley. So, we can't compare or confirm whether anyone was under the influence of any particular drug, just by reports of Marcus, that they did smoke marijuana, and that he had also had cocaine in his system.

As far as evidence for the concealing a death charge, Marcus Lillard called a respiratory therapist sometime around 11:20 PM asking for advice about how to do CPR. And this person told him to call 911, which he did not do. Clark eventually called 911 at 1:06 AM.

That respiratory therapist called Marcus back 19 minutes later. And again, told him to call 911.

Jim: Hey, do we know what time, approximately, when they arrived at Clark Heindel's house from downtown?

Penny: about [00:07:00] 7:00 PM.

Jim: So, bongos and accordions and hot tubs and pools at least for four hours?

Penny: For about four hours. Yeah. Then Clark and Marcus, between the two of them, they called or texted five people, and sent five Facebook messages, trying to get help to perform CPR on Marianne.

Jim: And those began a little after 11 o'clock.

Penny: Right. So, for about an hour, they reached out to people and it's been reported that the only one who was reached or responded was this respiratory therapist.

Jim: That's odd. Isn't it? The, to send messages on Facebook, on how to save a life.

Penny: Right.

Jim: I don't. I mean, I don't have Facebook. Is that normal thing to do?

Penny: No. It's definitely not normal to send private Facebook messages that are urgent, definitely not. You would never do that.

Jim: I think it's pretty clear, but you know, Heindel and Lillard were probably out of their minds

Penny: You'd have to be out of your mind to not know how long you were [00:08:00] in the woods, and be covered in scratches and bug bites, fire ant bites is my understanding. Lots of our listeners don't even know what a fire ant is and what it feels like, but it hurts like hell to get bit once.

Jim: Yeah, yeah. Nasty, nasty, nasty.

Penny: Yeah. It's so...I think we can clearly state that they were under the influence of maybe more than one thing.

Jim: So, the problem starts at little after 11 with whatever it was.

Penny: So, Clark calls 911 at 1:06. At approximately 1:20 AM, Baldwin County Sheriff's office responds. And when they arrive, Marianne is bleeding from her head. She has no pulse. Clark and Marcus are both naked although there's some reports that Marcus did have a towel wrapped around him.

Jim: Yeah, they're not clothed, whatever it is. And it's is it if they had been swimming or were swimming or were in the water or made to look like it.

Penny: Exactly. Then we [00:09:00] learn from Agent Maybin that there's body cam footage from one of the officers.

Jim: They wear the, the camera on their chest or wherever they wear it to give a visual recording of a scene.

And this is, this is where it's gonna get a little weird.

Penny: So, the inappropriate CPR was recorded.

Jim: Inappropriate CPR.

Penny: It really doesn't have a lot to do with how effectively they were administering it. It has more to do with what else was involved while the CPR was being performed.

Jim: What a few accounts that I've read in the papers, in the local papers, it was a team effort between Heindel and Lillard. Heindel's main job, I guess, was chest compression, which could, could explain the broken ribs.

Penny: The thing there is no explanation for is the report that Marcus Lillard, while administering CPR, was touching her breasts and [00:10:00] her private parts, her vagina, whatever you want to say.

And in no way, shape or form, is that related to giving CPR.

Jim: Wow. And in some reports, there was also a hydrangea branch. They tend to be all over the South, different forms. This is probably an Oak leaf hydrangea or when the had been

planted near the house, but they're shaking the flowers over Dr. Shockley. I believe it was reported that this was Heindel who was also doing this.

Penny: Yes. The reports are that Heindel was the one shaking the hydrangea branch, and petals from the flowers and leaves were found all around Marianne's body, and it was reported to be a sort of ritual or ceremony that perhaps Clark Heindel learned about in South America, during his trips there.

Jim: Wow.

Penny: It's about to get even weirder. Are you ready?

Jim: Yeah, I guess.

Penny: At some point, while administering CPR, Clark Heindel goes [00:11:00] into his house and prepares a tea with a hallucinogen called DMT, which is primarily the active ingredient in ayahuasca, which we learned in our episode about him losing his license. He had experience with when he went to South America. We can only speculate why they decided to pour that tea down her throat, but that is what they did.

Jim: You remember that interview that was done with Dr. Heindel at Metropolis Café, and he was talking about the lizard brain? What I read on DMT, it is actually produced naturally in the body. They call it often the spirit molecule, some scientists, some doctors, believe that's where the soul resides, produced in the pineal gland in your, in and around your lizard brain.

Penny: I think we're going to have to [00:12:00] do a deep dive into some research to understand the mechanisms behind it. Moving on to the death by strangulation. So, even before it was announced on Monday, May 13th, the autopsy, the preliminary results showed that Marianne Shockley was in fact strangled and she did not die as a result of drowning. One of Marcus Lillard's previous partners reported to the GBI that he had strangled her on multiple occasions during sex. And in fact, one time she passed out. Five other women then came forward and were interviewed that were also Marcus Lillard's former sexual partners, who said that he also choked them during consensual sex.

So, these women are all reporting consensual sex, but that it was [00:13:00] his practice to choke women that he was having sex with.

Jim: So now we understand why it was such a bizarre scene. I'm just, again, reading the Union Recorder. It said probably the strangest case in County history. And what's difficult is to, is to wade through these really bizarre, insane facts, the scene, and to genuinely get back to the fact that this is a person who's dead with completely inconsistent reports on how she became deceased.

Honestly, having read all the, all the newspaper articles I could get my hands on several times, I still don't know if she was actually in the pool. I don't know if she was in the hot tub. I don't know if she was on the pool deck.

I don't know if she was in near the deep end, the shallow end. Like every one of the reports are [00:14:00] inconsistent.

Penny: Correct.

Jim: Because you can't be performing CPR on a person who's in a hot tub, but I've read that when the authorities got there, they found her in the hot tub. But then I've read that when the authorities got there, there was the hydrangea ceremony with the inappropriate CPR.

And the flower petals and the bongos and the accordion. And so, which is it?

Penny: That's the question. Why don't we have the toxicology results? Why are we not receiving any further information to clear it up?

Jim: So, I'm just going to really ask this again. How did Marianne Shockley die, and who did it and why doesn't that seem to be the point?

Penny: I wish I knew why we're not getting more information, and why we haven't heard anything that shows that somebody is looking into how she died, why she [00:15:00] died, and who's responsible for her death.

Jim: A crime of passion, you know, over say a jealous that, you know, jealousy or whatever, whatever could have happened that night, because there's so much speculation that Marcus Lillard and Marianne Shockley were having this asphyxiation-type sexual intercourse and it went wrong. and she died.

There's that possibility. There's the possibility that there was a jealous rage. Did Clark Heindel kill Marianne Shockley? Did Marcus Lillard kill Marianne Shockley, or did someone else kill Marianne Shockley?

Penny: In order for us to believe that there's a jealous rage, we would have to believe that Marianne a 43-year-old woman very accomplished, successful, in a relationship for over a year with someone would

Jim: And very attractive...

Penny: very attractive would engage [00:16:00] in any kind of sexual activity with this 69-year-old man.

Jim: It doesn't make any sense

Penny: And then we would also have to believe that Marcus came upon that and it incited a violent attack. Regardless of what really did happen, we can look at the effects on her body and know that it can't just be typical sexual asphyxiation response during sex. The fractured ribs could be explained by the CPR, but what about the fact that she has scrapes all over her body and bruises that have been stated could we get the result of squeezing and grabbing below her waist? There seemed to be effects to her body that at least led them to charge Marcus Lillard with aggravated assault.

Jim: Well, I mean, I recall as we were doing our [00:17:00] homework for this particular episode, I was looking at you and going man, she was, she was really beat up.

Penny: Yeah.

Jim: Well, if so, then why? We can't know what happened, and, and we're trying to find out what happened, but whatever it was, was a severe act of violence that does not look like it was simply sex gone wrong.

Penny: I mean, I can understand the, the eye hemorrhaging being as a result of strangulation. I understand that, but what I can't account for is all of these scrapes and contusions all over her body and these bruises that are consistent with squeezing and grabbing. That seems very forceful and violent and beyond the scope of even the roughest sex.

Jim: Then you have the blood. You have the fact that she was bleeding profusely, or quite a lot from her head, which [00:18:00] was reported several times in a lot of these very inconsistent newspaper articles. But what is consistent is that she was bleeding and had bled quite a lot. This is just going to be speculation, but I think it's an informed hypothesis. It almost looks like rape.

Penny: And if they would release the results from the body, the examination, it should be very evident because Marcus Lillard claims that he did not have sex with her that night, that they only kissed. That's something that should be easy to determine whether there was rape involved or not.

Jim: And not only rape, but as if she were fleeing the assailant, perhaps fighting back. That's where I almost envisioned her running, and then everything that we know is really just window decoration. That nothing actually did happen in a hot tub and perhaps nothing [00:19:00] even happened in a pool

Penny: Right.

Jim: That, like the rain, all that water was a very convenient way to hide evidence, or to recreate a scene to make it look like a drowning, or to recreate a scene to make it look like sex gone wrong.

Penny: The other thing that's curious is that it was reported that they were smoking weed, but there were no drugs found at the scene besides the tea that had DMT in it. So, what happened to the pot?

Jim: No drugs at all.

Penny: That's what it says.

Jim: And I mean, from what everything we've heard, I mean, At least these two guys, Lillard and Heindel, should've been drugs everywhere.

Penny: Right? So, where are they?

Jim: That's the first I've heard about that, I would have assumed that they would have been paraphernalia bags, purses, you know, stuff, everywhere.

Penny: Defense attorney, Franklin Hogue, when he was cross-examining agent Maybin, posited the [00:20:00] theory that if Marianne died during rough sex, that perhaps it was not murder, but an accidental death, and agent Maybin responded and I'm paraphrasing here, so it's not a direct quote, but said that if a man puts his hands around a person that that shows intent to take somebody's life.

So, I'd like to talk about that just a little bit. I know we're going to have a further episode that talks about people who have different sexual proclivities, and not in a judgmental way, but just in an informative way, because I think the overriding opinion is that if someone chokes someone during sex, it means that they want to harm them.

However, if as was reported that Marcus Lillard engaged in that activity with all of these other women that he had sex with. And although there was one report of someone passing out, for the most part, there weren't any [00:21:00] consequences, and certainly no other reported deaths. Does that show intent in your opinion?

Jim: I mean to me, it's a sexual behavior or practice that is very foreign. And doesn't make a lot of sense to me, but what I do understand about it is that both people seem to be, I guess, in on it, you know, they're okay with it. It's a consensual thing. To me, it's like, it would be like playing Russian roulette that something could go wrong at any moment.

And it does in this situation, I don't know what happened. Or even if that's what was going on.

Penny: Right. We don't know. The defense attorney proposed or requested that the concealing a death charge also be dismissed because the Facebook messages and text messages indicated that Marcus Lillard believe that Marianne Shockley was still alive while he was, you know, placing those calls and texting and messaging at the end of the commitment hearing.

[00:22:00] Judge William Prior, Jr. found that there was enough evidence to move forward with a trial and it was turned over to superior court. And the next steps will be the da decides whether to present it to a grand jury. And the grand jury is the one who decides whether or not to indict Marcus Lillard on any of those three charges are by strangulation, aggravated assault and concealing the death of another.

Jim: If she were bleeding, when was she bleeding?

Penny: We believe the timeline that has been reported to the GBI by Marcus Lillard, which we know has also changed on more than one occasion. But the report was that after Marcus found her unconscious in the hot tub, he's jumped in the swimming pool with her, swam her across to the other side of the pool.

Took her out of the pool onto the pool deck and slipped and fell and dropped her. And that's when she was bleeding. Well, it's [00:23:00] interesting that you bring that up because we

talked about how was it possible that the EMT were able to determine that the timeline given by Clark and Marcus was inaccurate; in other words, the EMT has told the detectives that they believed that Marianne Shockley had been dead longer than reported.

Here's Robert Rainey with more information. Tell us your experience.

Robert: Okay. I've been a firefighter paramedic for 21 years.

Penny: At what point do you take over CPR? What's the procedure?

Robert: We'll check for a pulse, and if there's no pulse, depending on the age, usually 60 or below, we'll immediately start compressions, and CPR of course. We'll work it for like 20 minutes and see if there's a pulse or not.

Penny: If you arrive, and there's no pulse, what happens then?

Robert: If they're [00:24:00] warm and they're under the age of 60, we'll start chest compressions.

Penny: In this instance, the EMS inform the detectives or sheriffs at the scene that they felt as though she had been dead longer.

First of all, is that typical? That EMS would say that? And then what are some of the things that would allow you to determine that someone had been dead for a longer amount of time?

Robert: If they're cold to the touch, rigor mortis has set in.

Penny: In this case, the victim was reportedly removed from a hot tub of 107 degrees.

So, if she's not cold to the touch, is there anything else? One way to tell how long a person has been deceased is the degree to which rigor mortis has set in. So, it is possible that one of the factors that the EMTs observed was [00:25:00] that she was in a state of rigor mortis that was more advanced or possible given what time they said she was discovered unconscious.

Jim: Which goes back to Robert Rainey's thought of calling death when someone's cold and dead. And again, I'm just trying to explore, was she indeed dead at around 11 o'clock or was the CPR show, the hydrangea ceremony...exactly what I just stated it might've been as a show.

Penny: Well, in our discussions and research, one of the things that we learned about rigor mortis, kind of going back to the, was she in the hot tub at all? One of the things we discovered was that high temperature actually speeds up the rigor mortis process.

Jim: It's an interesting discovery, right?

Penny: Yep. So, if the hot tub was 107 degrees, and also why was the hot tub 107 degrees?

Jim: Which is much hotter...we've looked into most of [00:26:00] them around 103 hundred and four max. Max. Yeah.

Penny: And a lot of them have safety regulators on them, so they can't go higher than that. And it's raining.

It's in the sixties. It would take time for it to get built up to that temperature plus to stay that temperature. People couldn't have been in it.

Jim: And you see so the hot tub could have not only come into play as a way to conceal the time of death, it could have also done exactly opposite of what a person putting her in the hot tub to conceal the time of death would have been after, which would have been to delay, right, or to keep the body warm.

It may have actually sped up the process of rigor mortis.

Penny: Exactly. It's kind of like when people want to destroy evidence on a body and they use lye and they think it's going to disintegrate the body, but it actually preserves it. So, the things that we might try, I mean, we, I mean the things that...

Jim: You speak for yourself.

Penny: I'm not trying to say we, but people who are trying to cover up a crime.

They often use what they have [00:27:00] heard is, or they think is a good way to cover it up and it ends up working against them.

Jim: Well, one thing I want to bring up that it's just one of those things that when I write down all the facts, it's just, I just can't quite leave it alone. And I want to ask you: when I said that Marcus Lillard and Marianne Shockley had known each other since 1995, and said they were kids. And maybe I'm just looking at this wrong, but a lot of the way the narrative was built was that here is a UGA Professor more or less slumming it with a used car salesman drug dealer type guy, and that maybe she got mixed up with the wrong people. Which is true, I guess. At the same time, if they had only known each other for three months or six months or something like that, then this Marcus Lillard guy was unruly and could have done anything and her life would have been a lot less valuable to him, I think. But when you're talking about truly an old friend, do you think that kind of puts a snafu in the narrative that she was just kind of with the wrong people?

Penny: Way back when we very first [00:28:00] heard about the Mother's Day murder, we talked about the similarities between she and I, how it was the end of the semester, and we both wanted to let loose, have fun with our friends. And I would say that if I had known someone since I was in college and we lived very close to each other, we would see each other here and there. You would know them very well. And you would trust them. You would be able to anticipate that they would take care of you or, you know, what level of partying to expect.

It wouldn't be an unknown situation you would be walking into, and it especially wouldn't be an unknown situation you would put yourself into as a mother the night before Mother's Day. You just wouldn't do that.

Jim: So, when you were downtown with this Marcus Lillard the night before Mother's Day in 2019.

I mean, this is your old college buddy that [00:29:00] you knew since 1995, when the two of you both began, I guess, working, or I think they met at the Milledgeville Country Club. This is one of your oldest friends that you had had since college, which I think changes the narrative a lot.

Penny: Here's why I agree with you because you would not anticipate going somewhere or being taken somewhere by somebody that you trust and you believe would take care of you, that you have a history with enjoying yourselves together, knowing what your limits are, and knowing what's going to happen. You would never anticipate that you would be put in a dangerous situation with that person.

Jim: And they've been hanging out on Wayne street and Hancock street and downtown Milledgeville since Kurt Cobain was singing with Nirvana.

Penny: So, there's nothing in their history that would lead her to believe that anything like this was going to happen.

Jim: Cause all they got to do is cross the river, go to the pool and there's a hot tub there and hang out and enjoy the night. So, what went wrong?

[00:30:00] **Penny:** That's what we're trying to find out.

Jim: Does an old friend you've known since 1995, suddenly snap and kill you?

Penny: Anything is possible. I would never say that's impossible because that's exactly when you're proven wrong.

But I know for a fact that she would not put herself in that situation, if she thought it was going to happen. She trusted him or she wouldn't have gone there with him.

Jim: I want to be clear, I'm not trying to get Marcus Lillard off the hook at all. But I'm just saying what's the truth, like who killed her?

Who killed Marianne Shockley? Was it an old friend that night or was it someone she hadn't known very long?

Penny: Or someone else?

Jim: Or someone else who she didn't know at all?

Penny: Or that maybe no one knew at all? Or some people knew. We have, we don't know. We just want to know, is somebody looking for the answer or has it already been decided?

Jim: But, if we're not asking these questions, Marcus Lillard is the perfect mark.

Penny: Right. He has a criminal record,

[00:31:00] **Jim:** likes to strangle people

Penny: Yeah.

Jim: Likes to deal drugs.

Penny: Do drugs. We haven't been able to find any criminal records as far as there being violent attacks in his history, nor have we found, you know, any records of Clark Heindel being violent in his history.

Jim: Oh, we haven't?

Penny: Criminal. Well, as far as any crime, you know, crimes being committed, he definitely has been found guilty of an abuse of power, but not violent.

Jim: Right, but we don't have any history of Marcus Lillard drugging people.

Penny: We do not have that. No. It would really be helpful if we could have the toxicology results and have access to the rest of the evidence. What about the other evidence that's collected besides the rape kit, where, if she was attacked and she was fighting off her attacker, we would have evidence from under her fingernails.

Jim: Let me ask you a point-blank question. Is it possible or is it likely that Marcus Lillard and Clark Heindel were so out [00:32:00] of it that neither one of them really knew what happened that night and that maybe there was another person there?

Penny: I think it is very possible that that's the case. Thanks for listening.

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