Murder on Birchleaf Drive: Trial Strategy for True Crime Lovers

LIVE and WEBCAST
Friday, January 10, 2020
North Carolina Bar Center
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Murder on Birchleaf Drive is a novel based on the true crime story of the Michelle Young murder case. As the back cover reads: “To the outside world, Jason and Michelle Young lived a storybook life—an attractive couple with great jobs, a beautiful home, a precocious two-year-old daughter, and a baby boy on the way.

Soon after the 29-year-old pregnant mother’s brutally beaten body was discovered on their bedroom floor, a very different picture emerged. Of a marriage crumbling at its foundation. Of a meddlesome New York mother-in-law whose running critique left Jason frustrated and angry. Of a 32-year-old man who behaved like a frat boy rebelling against adult responsibilities.

Was Jason the monster who bludgeoned his beautiful wife to death, leaving his toddler alone for hours to walk through her blood? If so, would he get away with it?

Following intense law enforcement and forensic work focused on solving the crime, the case of State v. Young was tried twice, each time producing a different result: a hung jury in 2011 and then a unanimous guilty verdict in 2012. Prosecutors Howard Cummings, Becky Holt, and David Saacks from the Wake County District Attorney’s Office faced off against Bryan Collins and Mike Klinkosum from the Wake County Public Defender’s Office. Both trials involved carefully crafted trial strategies and excellent lawyering.

Through examination and analysis of those trial techniques, Steven B. Epstein — author of Murder on Birchleaf Drive: The True Story of the Michelle Young Murder Case — offers invaluable insight and skillful tactics for winning your case. Epstein teases out several lessons, focusing on trial strategy, opening statements, cross-examination of lay and expert witnesses, closing arguments, and winning trial themes that can be applied to both criminal and civil trial work.

Still have a burning question? This is your chance to get the answer and spark further discussion during the interactive Q&A.

Please visit [www.tinyurl.com/CLE863TSP](http://www.tinyurl.com/CLE863TSP) for more details on how to purchase a copy of Murder on Birchleaf Drive.
FRIDAY, JANUARY 10, 2020 | 8:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

8:30  **Registration and Continental Breakfast**

8:55  **Welcome and Introductions**

9:00  **Trial Strategy**
A short excerpt from *Murder on Birchleaf Drive*, actual clips of the opening statements from both trials, and portions of the cross-examinations of prosecution witness Gracie Dahms Bailey and defense witness Cindy Beaver, set the scene for our case study of the Michelle Young murder trials.

Through the examination and in-depth analysis of the *State v. Young* trials, Epstein illustrates the importance of a carefully constructed trial strategy and highlights some effective techniques to consider for opening statements and cross-examination of lay witnesses.

10:30  **Break**

10:45  **Winning Themes**
As we continue to dissect the Michelle Young murder trials, actual clips of cross-examinations of SBI crime lab witnesses and closing arguments offer insight into effective trial themes. Learn how to build and execute your own powerful, persuasive, memorable themes to achieve a winning verdict at your next trial.

Finally, you’ll not only have the opportunity to engage in further discussion on the topics that interest you most, but also to pose that question you have been dying to ask!

12:15  **Adjourn**
Steven B. “Steve” Epstein, a litigation partner at Poyner Spruill LLP, has been practicing law for nearly 30 years. He has tried many jury and non-jury trials in courtrooms throughout North Carolina and has argued numerous appeals. He is a former chair of the NCBA’s Litigation Section and CLE Committee and served on the Board of Governors for the Association and Board of Directors for the Foundation from 2014 until 2017. He is a frequent CLE presenter on a variety of topics, including trial strategy and practice.

The true crime story, Murder on Birchleaf Drive — released on June 1, 2019 — is Epstein’s first commercial publication. He is currently hard at work on his second.
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