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RonRico and Ashley Shutes were newlyweds but the honeymoon was quickly over. After arguing all day after 10 months of marriage, Ashley got into her car to leave. What happened next was believed to be an accident, but then RonRico's mother came forward with a new story.

I'm Charlie and Welcome to Crimelines.

MUSIC

Welcome to Crimelines. This is a case I thought was interesting from the investigation standpoint but also some legal issues. Maybe I watched too much of the Johnny Depp v Amber Heard trial because as soon as I saw hearsay was going to be an issue here, I thought we should cover it. I want to thank Nate for suggesting it.

There are not a lot of sources for this episode. This case was not widely reported on and the major coverage it got was on the TV show Deadly Women which is known for the creative license they take in storytelling. While they get the broad strokes correct, a lot of the details are dramatized for effect.

If not for legal documents posted online, I would have maybe 10 minutes of information. The few articles I could find were from Cleveland dot com and all sources are linked in the show notes.

But before we jump in, I wanted to announce that I will be at the True Crime Podcast Festival in Dallas next month. The link is in the show notes and there are still tickets available. I will be presenting a case for round table discussion as well as likely moderating a panel of podcasters. I basically volunteered to do everything and they said ok. There are tons of podcasters coming and it's a great chance to meet podcasters and other listeners.

I will also be participating in the Generation Why 10th Anniversary Live Show on September 8th. I have left a link in the show notes for tickets to that, as well. Even if you can't make it to Kansas City to be here in person, they will be live broadcasting it and the virtual tickets are just \$20 to see me, Aaron and Justin, Esther from Once Upon a Crime, Nic and the Captain from True Crime Garage, and Josh from True Crime BS. It's going to be a great show so check it out.

I believe those will be my only events for the rest of the year. I know I had said I would be doing a northeast thing but I was supposed to bring my whole family out to visit where I grew up... and then airfare spiked and flights were being canceled so we decided to postpone the trip until the economy stabilizes a bit. No word on when that will be happening so thankfully the Generation Why live show is just across town so I can easily afford to drive myself there.

Ok, onto the case.

Ashley and RonRico Shutes were both from Cleveland, Ohio. When they met, RonRico had 4 children and Ashley had two. They were both involved and dedicated parents and quickly fell in love with each other.

Ashley stood by RonRico after he was arrested for assault and burglary and ended up spending half of 2013 and most of 2014 locked up. Ashley visited him and they made plans to be together when he was released.

And that's exactly what they did. In July 2015, the two married and, a few months after that, Ashley gave birth to their daughter. Though they had been together for a while, because RonRico spent so much of it locked up, this was their first time really living together and blending their families. They were still new to striking that balance.

They lived in a home that RonRico's mother Charlotte owned with some of their kids living there full time and others part time with shared custody or visitation schedules. Ashley worked as a manager at a local store, which was going well as she was a dedicated employee and hard working. RonRico was staying home with their infant daughter and the other young children at the time.

It's not clear if having a stay at home dad was what they necessarily wanted. For one thing, it's hard to get a job after any felony conviction let alone a recent one. And the jobs you do get often don't pay very much and would barely cover the costs of daycare for an infant and after school care for the older ones. So it's possible they didn't really have any other option.

But that doesn't mean the family couldn't have used the second income. With one working parent and several children between them, there were financial stressors that kept compounding. Ten months into their marriage and the couple was fighting frequently.

May 28, 2016 was one of those days where they spent more time fighting than anything else. RonRico called his mother Charlotte and asked her to come over around 1 pm because the two were fighting. Ashley was threatening to leave with the baby, and he wanted Charlotte to help intervene.

Charlotte went over and the arguing continued for a bit but eventually calmed down. There were other people over, including RonRico's nephew, and Charlotte ended up staying over for 6 or 7 hours with the family.

After she was back home, around 10 or 11 at night, Charlotte called Ashley to check in. Ashley told her that everything was fine.

That didn't last long, though. RonRico called Charlotte back about 30 minutes later and he was hysterical. Charlotte could hear Ashley yelling and, to Charlotte, it sounded like she was trying to start a physical fight with RonRico. He said Ashley was acting crazy.

Because of this, RonRico wanted to get the kids out of the house and bring them to stay at Charlotte's house for the night. One of the kids in the house was RonRico's nephew who, I believe, lived with Charlotte at the time. The other was an 8 year old and of course there was the baby.

Of course, Charlotte told him it was fine to bring the kids to her.

After waiting about a half an hour for them to arrive, Charlotte's phone rang. It was a neighbor of RonRico and Ashley's telling Charlotte there had been an accident and she needed to come to the house immediately.

This neighbor had gone over to the house after hearing a child yelling "you're going to kill my dad!" She then saw RonRico lying in the driveway with blood around him. He was awake, though, and gave her Charlotte's number so she could come get the kids. Lying there, severely injured, RonRico's first concern was for the children.

Charlotte headed straight to the house and, as she arrived, an ambulance was leaving the home with RonRico in the back. He was alive but gravely injured.

Ashley and Charlotte drove to the hospital together and, in the car, Ashley told her what happened. She said that after RonRico had hung up with Charlotte, the argument continued and Ashley decided she was going to leave and stay at her aunt's house. Her aunt, however, wasn't home when she got there so Ashley decided to go back to her own house.

She told Charlotte that as she drove back to the house, she had a feeling something was wrong.

When she pulled up, she saw RonRico lying in the driveway, injured and a neighbor had called 911.

She told Charlotte that she didn't know what happened but that's not exactly what she told the police.

It was a little before midnight when the police were dispatched to a call of a man hit by a vehicle in his driveway. When they got there, the paramedics and firefighters were already on the scene and stabilizing RonRico for transport. Also present were neighbors, children, and Ashley.

Officer Ryan Corrigan spoke to Ashley and he had his body camera on so we know what she told the police when they arrived. Ashley said that she and RonRico had a fight and she got into her Chevy Tahoe, an SUV, to leave. She was backing out of the driveway when RonRico ran behind the vehicle to try to stop her from leaving. She said she didn't see him and she hit him with the vehicle. She had left the scene but soon came back.

This story was confirmed by RonRico himself, who was conscious. As he was transported from the scene to the hospital, he told the EMS tech that he had been drinking that night and he was behind the SUV when he was hit. He ended up being stuck under the vehicle and dragged 12 feet down the driveway while Ashley was seemingly unaware.

So we have Ashley and RonRico telling the same story but there were two witnesses who said that wasn't what happened—and those witnesses were two of the children at the house. Both of the children, who were described as hysterical, said that RonRico was in front of the vehicle when he was run over. Seeing as this happened in the driveway while Ashley was driving, she had no reason to put the vehicle in drive unless the point was to hit RonRico. The children were saying this was on purpose, and when Ashley offered to drive them back to Charlotte's house, they are heard on the body cam recording refusing to get into the car with her.

There was some evidence at the scene that made the officers pause for a moment. The back of the SUV had no damage but the front bumper did. An EMS tech described it as a round indentation. The officers noted the damage but they also saw what looked like fresh handprints on the back of the SUV. While they couldn't say they were from RonRico, you can imagine he put his hand up as Ashley backed up. They theorized that the damage to the front bumper could have been caused as the car passed over RonRico as Ashley backed over him.

In the end, they took the word of both Ashley and RonRico, the victim. Both of the responding police officers and the paramedics who responded wrote in their reports that RonRico Shutes was struck by a car going in reverse, and it was ruled an accident.

Meanwhile, RonRico was in the ICU, paralyzed from the neck down in addition to several other injuries.

Charlotte was allowed to see him in those overnight hours while Ashley waited outside the room. RonRico told Charlotte that there had been an argument and that he was in front of the SUV when Ashley hit him. She then backed up and then came at him again—in Charlotte's words "came full throttle". This time, he ended up being trapped under the vehicle and was dragged down the driveway to where he was found.

RonRico said he didn't want Ashley to get in trouble, so he lied to the police saying it was an accident and he intended to keep lying to protect her. He asked Charlotte not to say anything to anyone, and when he told pretty much the same story to another family member, he begged them not to say anything either.

Charlotte remained pretty solidly camped at the hospital while RonRico was in the ICU and her 10 year old grandson, RonRico's nephew, came up to the hospital to talk to her. We'll call him Mark. That's not his name, and his name is protected by the courts.

Mark was the nephew who had been at RonRico and Ashley's house on the night of the incident, playing with his cousin. He told Charlotte that RonRico was hanging out and drinking with some

friends but, after they left, Ashley and RonRico started arguing again. Mark said Ashley left the house at some point.

While she was gone, RonRico showered and was just hanging out playing on his phone when Ashley came back. Mark said Ashley threw money at him, said she was taking the baby, and told RonRico that he would never see her again.

They continued arguing when RonRico called Charlotte, telling her that he was bringing the kids to her house. Ashley then walked out of the house.

RonRico told Mark that he was going to bring him home, and then RonRico walked out the back door that led to the driveway, and Mark heard a car start.

Mark looked out the dining room window, which faced the driveway, and said that he saw RonRico standing in front of the SUV. RonRico yelled at Ashley to get out of the car. Mark said Ashley then drove forward, which knocked RonRico over. As he tried to get back up, Ashley backed up and then pulled forward again, hitting RonRico. To Mark, it looked like RonRico's shorts had gotten stuck on the bumper so when Ashley backed down the driveway, she dragged RonRico as he screamed. RonRico was freed from the vehicle towards the end of the driveway and Ashley drove off.

Mark ran outside to RonRico and started yelling for help. A neighbor heard him and called 911. Mark said that while they were standing there, Ashley pulled up to the house. She got out of the SUV and ran over to RonRico. Mark said that to RonRico, Ashley said "I told you, RonRico" and then yelled for everyone else to hear "who did this?"

After the police arrived, Ashley offered to drive Mark home and he refused to get in the car with her because of what he had seen.

Charlotte didn't want to believe that Ashley had done this on purpose, but here she had both RonRico and Mark telling her that's what happened. The police still believed it was unintentional based on the information they had at the time, though in fairness that information may have been limited by their own limited investigation, which we'll get into later.

Charlotte wrestled with what to do. Her son told her not to say anything, and she certainly wouldn't want any added stress to get in the way of his recovery from his injuries, whatever that recovery looked like. He was already facing lifelong disabilities, if he survived, and obviously the family wanted to focus on getting RonRico as better as he could get.

But, on the other hand, Charlotte believed her son had been intentionally severely injured by his wife and she couldn't let it go. Eleven days after the incident, with RonRico still in ICU and the prognosis not looking good, she called the police.

Charlotte then had to call a couple more times over the next two days trying to get someone to tell her what was going on with the investigation. While still waiting to hear back from the investigators, on June 10, 2016, RonRico Shutes died of multiple organ failure at the age of 35.

That same day, Charlotte called again to ask about where they were on the investigation now that RonRico was dead. This was surely a homicide investigation. Charlotte eventually had to complain to a higher up to get things moving.

And I want to take a second to point something out about Charlotte. She had already lost her husband in 1999. About 6 years later, her 15-year-old son died. And now she lost another son. Just getting out of bed in the morning had to be hard and she was having to fight for the police just to take her statement.

But if she didn't do it, RonRico's case would still be listed as an accident.

Thanks to Charlotte's pushing, a detective named Richard Cerny, a certified accident reconstructionist, was assigned the case. After he got the reports from the incident, he called Charlotte to speak with her. It was about two and a half weeks after RonRico's death that they spoke.

Charlotte told the detective what RonRico had said in the hospital and also what Mark had told her happened. Detective Cerny spoke with Mark soon after this and Mark told him what he had told his grandmother—that RonRico wasn't hit once but twice and was then dragged down the driveway.

Detective Cerny went out to the scene to take some photos of the house, the driveway, and the garage. There were still some traces of hair and skin on the driveway and he could tell that RonRico had been dragged.

Cerny also watched the body cam footage from the responding officers, and he saw that there were some inconsistencies with Ashley's story. He noticed the lack of damage to the back of the vehicle and even heard the EMS tech point it out. And he could see the damage to the front.

The responding officers assumed that the damage to the front was from the car passing over RonRico, which Cerny—who is certified in these types of scene—believed was unlikely if not impossible. RonRico was a large man. He was 6 foot 2 and 325 lbs so not only would he have left some damage to the back of the vehicle as he was knocked down, the SUV would not have been able to pass over him freely to then cause the damage to the front.

Cerny also noted the position RonRico was found in. Due to the extent of his injuries, RonRico couldn't have moved himself after being dragged by the vehicle. How he was lying was how he fell.

RonRico was found with his head towards the garage and his feet pointing towards the street.

So, let's think about it. If RonRico was hit from an SUV reversing over him, he would be knocked so his head would be towards the street.

If he was hit from the vehicle pulling forward, he would be knocked down with his head towards the garage.

Even being dragged, he would not have spun fully around. Since his head was towards the garage and his feet were towards the street, it looked like Mark's witness statement was correct.

Charlotte told Detective Cerny that the house had security cameras. One camera covered the backyard and would have caught what happened because it covered the garage and driveway. Ashley had even told Charlotte that the recording would show she didn't do anything wrong.

But the issue was, no one could get these recordings, and Ashley didn't produce them. Charlotte had tried to get them. She called the company and was told she needed an access code to get the footage from the company's harddrive, where they only stored it for 30 days.

It was 13 days from the incident to RonRico's death and then another 2 and a half weeks before the detective spoke with Charlotte and learned about the cameras. By the time the police considered pulling the footage, it may have been gone.

I say "may have been" because they didn't actually try. There may have been a few days in there where they could have gotten the recordings. They could have contacted the company and, if the company knew a subpoena may be coming, they might have held onto the footage a little longer. But the police appear to have taken that 30 day time limit as the gospel and assumed it was lost.

These cameras are an interesting unknown in this case. They had been taken down at some point after the incident and it seems the footage was erased, locally at least

We know the cameras were definitely up on the day of the incident, May 28th. Ashley's 16 year old, who we will call James, was not there that day but he did have the app on his phone that allowed him to see the cameras. RonRico had previously had him download it and showed him how to use it.

He said during the day of the 28th, though he wasn't at the house, he did check the backyard camera on the app and saw people hanging out in the backyard. He said he saw the Tahoe parked in the driveway. On the morning of the 29th, after hearing what happened to his stepfather, James checked the app because RonRico had told him that he could see past recordings on it. James thought he'd be able to see what happened but, when he checked, he said the footage wasn't there.

Even without the recordings, the witness statements had this case turn into a homicide investigation, and they found in checking Ashley's criminal record a similar crime.

In May 2005, Ashley was arrested and charged with felonious assault, assault, and domestic violence after she rammed her car into her ex-partner's car. This wasn't a minor tap. The victim, who was also the father of her son, suffered cuts, bruises, a broken nose, and leg injuries in the collision.

Ashley ended up with a plea deal where the felonious assault was dismissed and she pleaded guilty just to the two misdemeanor charges. She was given a fairly light consequence—a one month suspended jail sentence, a restraining order, and around \$200 in court costs.

I don't always find 10 year old charges terribly relevant but the fact she committed domestic assault using her car before makes it seem more relevant than most old charges.

Based on the evidence—Mark's witness statements, the statement RonRico made to his mother in the hospital, and the evidence at the scene, a warrant was issued for her arrest on July 29th, nearly 2 months after the incident. Ashley turned herself in voluntarily in early August.

She was charged with murder under four different categories under Ohio law:

1. Aggravated murder with the aggravating factor being premeditation.
2. Murder in violation of [R.C. 2903.02\(B\)](#); meaning she caused the death of another while committing a different violent felony
3. Murder in violation of [R.C. 2903.02\(A\)](#): meaning she intentionally caused RonRico's death
4. And, four, vehicular homicide. In Ohio, vehicular homicide means the person caused a death while failing to use reasonable care while driving a vehicle.

Ashley was also charged with two counts of felonious assault and tampering with evidence. The tampering with evidence charge was related to getting rid of the cameras and footage.

Ashley pleaded not guilty and her defense team tried to get RonRico's statement thrown out as hearsay. The state argued that it fell under an exception to the hearsay rule, which we'll get into later, and the judge agreed with the state. It was allowed in at trial.

The state's theory of the crime was that Ashley intentionally ran RonRico over in a rage as their marriage was crumbling.

The defense said this was an accident, the same thing the police and the EMS at the scene said it was. Their strategy to prove this largely consisted of discrediting witnesses and calling into question the integrity of the investigation.

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With Mark, the 10 year old who witnessed this awful scene, they pointed out that his story had changed. He first told the police that RonRico was hit twice and then dragged. But he hadn't told the prosecutor that RonRico had been hit twice until right before the trial. In between these two

statements, Mark had also written a letter to the trial judge stating that Ashley had, in fact, hit RonRico while backing out of the driveway and dragged him.

To further call into question Mark's statement, Mark's father LeShawn testified. LeShawn was RonRico's brother and was in prison at the time of RonRico's death. But he had been told what happened by family members. When he found out his son witnessed it, he called Mark and Mark told him what he saw.

But on cross examination, LeShawn admitted he told his daughter on a phone call that Mark was "playing" at being traumatized by the incident.

He called Mark a good actor who lied and had Charlotte and everyone else fooled.

As for Charlotte's statement, they tried to show her as a grieving mother with an inconsistent story as well. The detective who took over the case had written in a report that Mark didn't tell Charlotte about what he saw until after RonRico's death, nearly 2 weeks after the incident. But Charlotte testified that he had told her the following day. This is a pretty big discrepancy when you figure Mark's statement was part of what pushed Charlotte to contact the police, according to her. So if she called the police before Mark made the statement, that's an issue.

But if you've been in the true crime community for long, you've probably already heard about police reports having mistakes like this, particularly when they're relying on their memory of an interview and not a recording. It's possible the detective misunderstood what Charlotte said and when she said Mark told her what he saw *after the incident*, the detective may have interpreted that as *after the death*.

But there were some little things in Charlotte's story that weren't accurate. She testified that she saw the garage door open, but the police bodycam footage confirms that it was closed. She testified that RonRico said Ashley came full throttle at him when he was in front of the car, but due to the distance of where the impact happened and the garage, she couldn't have done that without also hitting the garage door, which had no damage to it.

The defense then pointed out the things not done in this investigation, like the lack of a full reconstruction, a delay in looking over the car, not getting the camera footage that would have shown what happened. To them, the reasonable doubt was in all the things the police could have pursued but didn't that would prove this was an accident.

In the end, the jury determined that this was not an accident but that it wasn't premeditated. They found Ashley not guilty of aggravated murder, the intentional murder charge, and the tampering with evidence charge, and found her guilty of the murder charge defined as causing a death while committing a violent felony, as well as vehicular homicide and felonious assault.

Because the verdicts were all for essentially different levels of the same crime, they were merged for the purposes of sentencing. She was only sentenced on the most severe crime, which was the murder count.

Ashley was then sentenced to life with the possibility of parole after 15 years.

After the conviction, the jury went a step further to write a letter to the Cleveland Police. The judge ordered the letter to be put under seal but Cleveland dot com learned about the contents of that letter from a juror.

The letter was three pages long and blasted the investigation, particularly the responding officers. It said their behavior was inadequate and a disservice to the citizens of Cleveland. But they said that the criticism of the investigation did not undermine their confidence in their verdict.

The jurors said that, from what they saw from the body cam footage, the responding officers acted in a quote “flippant, indifferent manner” and didn’t take enough witness statements.

They also criticized the detective, Richard Cerny, for not doing enough like not trying to get the security footage from the house or doing a full scene reconstruction. They recognized in the letter that the police have a difficult job and that their duty is to protect and serve yet, when it came to RonRico Shutes’s murder, all they did was respond and record.

There had been an internal investigation into the actions of the two responding officers and reports like that are not public, as far as I can tell. Both officers remained employed.

It really came down to RonRico’s mother Charlotte. Had she not come forward with what her son had told her, this would have been written off as an accident even though there was evidence to the contrary.

And it would be the statement Charlotte came forward with, actually, that was the strongest claim in Ashley Shutes’s appeal. She said the trial judge erred in allowing it in because it was hearsay.

Let’s start by talking about what hearsay is. If you follow trials, particularly ones that have light physical evidence and mostly witness evidence, you’re probably used to hearing this as an objection.

Hearsay is any out of court statement that is being offered to prove the truth of what it says.

Hearsay isn’t as simple as “someone told me this.” It’s “someone told me this and that proves that.” And it doesn’t even have to be someone else who said it. You can actually provide hearsay evidence of something you yourself said, if you are presenting that out of court statement as proof of something.

But in this case, the hearsay is a little simpler. Charlotte testifying that RonRico said Ashley hit him intentionally was hearsay. It was an out of court statement and RonRico wasn’t there to be cross examined about it.

There is no question the statement fell under hearsay. The reason the state was allowed to use it at trial was that the judge ruled it fell into one of Ohio's exceptions for hearsay.

Ohio, like every jurisdiction, has a number of exceptions to the hearsay rule and one is called an "excited utterance." That is defined as "a statement relating to a startling event or condition made while the declarant was under the stress of excitement caused by the event or condition."

The reason excited utterances are admissible is because the startling nature of the event made it more of a reaction. The person didn't have time to stop, reflect, consider the entirety of the situation, and then make a decision on what to say. Therefore, it's believed to be less likely to be fabricated.

This exception has four elements. All four must be satisfied for the statement to be admissible.

1. The event had to have been startling. Being hit by an SUV and paralyzed would fit.
2. Two, the statement had to be in relation to the event. RonRico was telling his mother what happened, so this fits.
3. Three, it had to be made by someone with first hand knowledge of the event. RonRico certainly qualified for that.
4. And lastly, the person making the statement—the declarant—had to be under the stress of the excitement caused by the event.

It's this fourth one that's a question mark. RonRico didn't say Ashley hit him on purpose while lying in the driveway, paralyzed and bleeding. He actually said the opposite in the ambulance. He didn't say she hit him on purpose until after he was in the hospital, nearly 2 hours later.

But there is no rule that the utterance has to be within a certain time frame. The time elapsed between the event and the utterance is relevant and can be used by the judge in making the decision to let the statement in or not. But it doesn't automatically exclude the statement because a few hours have passed. It isn't a deciding factor like the four listed elements.

The state argued at trial, and again during the appeal, that this was an excited utterance because RonRico was still under the stress of the incident. He was in the ICU with all the beeping machines, he was paralyzed, and he was experiencing unmanageable pain. Charlotte was the first family member he saw and he immediately told her what happened.

But, if RonRico was in pain and scared in the hospital, what was he feeling in the driveway or in the ambulance when he said he was hit from behind and in an accident?

The state really couldn't have it both ways. They wanted to say the statement made over an hour and a half later was without reflective thought... but his statement within 30 minutes was a calculated lie to keep Ashley out of trouble.

Clearly, if the state believed RonRico was able to come up with a lie while in the ambulance, they couldn't—with a straight face—call something said at the hospital later an “excited utterance.”

Well, I mean they could because they did. But the appellate court could also call them out for their leap in logic and they did. They also pointed out that RonRico asking Charlotte not to tell the police what he told her showed that he was thinking of possible consequences. That's a sign of reflective thought and makes it not an excited utterance.

So the court found that this was a trial error and what RonRico said to his mother was inadmissible hearsay. The jury never should have heard it.

And that's only step one of an appeal. They proved an error was made. Now, did that error change the outcome at the trial? The appellate court had to look at all of the charges Ashley was convicted of separately to determine that.

In regards to the vehicular homicide charge, this trial error didn't affect it at all because vehicular homicide doesn't require intent. The jury simply had to find that Ashley was reckless and indifferent to the consequences. So, even if she hit RonRico on accident, the jury could have found she was being reckless, tearing out of the driveway so quickly that she hit and dragged a man 12 feet.

So that conviction stood.

The murder and felony assault convictions did require intent to cause harm so the court had to consider how much weight the jury likely would have given the statement in light of the other evidence.

This is where I find appellate courts a little sticky. They have to decide what a jury would have ruled in a case where this evidence wasn't allowed in. Yet the jury has absolutely no role in this. They don't turn over their notes or their deliberation conversation or make statements to the court. The appellate judges basically put themselves in the role of a reasonable juror to make this determination, so it's more a matter of theory.

In this case, though, the court addressed what they felt the jury would have done by saying that the verdict showed the jury didn't take Charlotte's testimony about the statement into account much at all. The statement said that Ashley intentionally ran RonRico over yet they found her not guilty on the charges related to intent to murder.

The appellate court found that the stronger evidence was Mark's eyewitness testimony of seeing RonRico in front of the SUV and that was enough to support the conviction particularly the part where Mark said he could hear RonRico screaming. If Mark could hear it inside, surely Ashley could hear it while in the vehicle. Yet she kept going.

Though the defense tried to undermine Mark's credibility—he was a child after all—there was body camera footage from that night. Mark was clearly upset and he told the police that Ashley

had run over his uncle. And then the recording picked up Mark refusing to get into a car with Ashley, which showed he was scared of her.

Even if the trial court tossed out the hearsay statement, the jury would have come to the same conclusion. So, on this claim, the conviction was upheld.

The second point on the appeal was that the verdict was against the weight of the evidence, though as you can tell by the court's ruling on the first point in the appeal, this didn't go anywhere.

Ashley did make some good points, though, about Mark's testimony. He had given different stories about what happened and not all of his testimony was backed up by the evidence. For one thing, he said RonRico put his shirt and shoes on before going outside to the driveway but he was found without these things on, so Mark's recounting of the lead up to the incident wasn't accurate.

And as for his depiction of what happened, it wasn't entirely in line with the blood evidence. Earlier in the day the Tahoe was parked, according to witnesses, pretty close to the garage door. Not right up against it but probably 6 feet away. There was no blood, hair, or skin that close to the garage, like you would expect if RonRico was in front of the car when she hit him. Also, it made sense that RonRico would have been knocked back into the garage door. Or possibly Ashley would have hit the door, pinning RonRico between the SUV and the garage. There was no evidence any of that happened.

Mark had also testified that when Ashley arrived back at the house, she said "I told you, RonRico" to her husband and then yelled "who did this to my husband?" for everyone else to hear. Except no one else heard that. The neighbors who were gathering around didn't hear her say either of these things.

Ashley's argument was that the inconsistencies in Mark's story took away his credibility. And without that, what did the state have? Even the responding officers and EMS techs wrote it up as an accident and that's what RonRico told them happened.

But really none of this overcame the other physical evidence. The damage to the Tahoe was to the front, not the back. The accident reconstruction expert said that a man RonRico's size would not have passed freely under the vehicle if he was hit from behind, meaning he never would have gotten to the front to do the damage to the bumper unless he started there. And it's possible Ashley had backed away from the garage while RonRico was outside—before she hit him—moving the vehicle and RonRico away from the garage door.

And, in my opinion, even if RonRico was hit from behind, it doesn't automatically make it an accident. It's hard for me to believe that Ashley didn't know she was dragging a large man who was screaming down the driveway. Yet, she kept driving.

The court found that the weight of the evidence supported the convictions and Ashley's conviction was upheld.

Barring a successful appeal, Ashley Shutes will first become eligible for parole in August 2031 and she will be 47 years old. Her and RonRico's daughter, a baby when she lost her father to murder and her mother to prison, will be a teenager, and her other children will be adults. Parole for those sentenced to life in Ohio is at the discretion of the parole board. In the year 2020, only 15% of the prisoners who applied for parole had it granted. Barring a successful appeal, it's likely Ashley serves far more than the 15 year minimum.

<https://casetext.com/case/state-v-shutes>

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Season 12 episode 2 of Deadly women

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