

**STATEMENT OF EDMISTON FAMILY ON NOLAN WELLS INVESTIGATION,
PERVASIVE DEFAMATION & THREATS**

The Edmiston family expresses its sincere condolences to the family of Nolan Wells for their tragic loss. Like so many in Ocean Springs, across Mississippi and across the nation, our prayers for answers and peace are with his parents, family and friends.

Out of respect for Nolan's family and the integrity of the investigative process we have chosen not to draw public attention to ourselves as unfettered speculation raged. Recent targeted attacks on our son, Bart Jr., now make our silence impossible.

Hundreds of Mississippi Gulf Coast residents journeyed out to Horn Island to celebrate the holiday on the Fourth of July. Home from college, Bart Jr. was among them. He piloted his own boat to Horn Island and piloted his own boat home. When a nearby boat suffered a mechanical malfunction on the afternoon of the Fourth, Bart, Jr. gave advice and direct aid to the distressed vessel. As part of this, he boarded the distressed vessel, removed its transom plug, got back onto his boat, and towed the distressed vessel for a short distance. These actions allowed water that had accumulated on the distressed vessel to drain. Bart, Jr. believes that more than 20 passengers were spread across the two boats to witness these events. Others may have also witnessed from the water or shore.

When Nolan's disappearance and death came to light, Bart, Jr. freely and fully cooperated with law enforcement investigating the tragedy. He sat for interviews, answered all of the questions he was asked, and shared all of his recollection from July 4, 2026. Bart, Jr. also compiled a list of potential witnesses, including passengers on the boat he was piloting, to share with investigators. He allowed his phone to be viewed and shared requested photographs and videos from that day with law enforcement. He also permitted the inspection of his boat and GPS device. He did all of this without counsel, without requiring warrants, and without hesitation.

Bart, Jr. has been an open book during the process. He, like so many in our community, wants a thorough, fair and impartial investigation that does not start with a pre-drawn conclusion, but seeks and finds the truth.

At no point in this process has Bart, Jr. ever been identified as a "suspect" in Nolan's death.

This has not stopped people from engaging in dangerous speculation, nor has it stopped outright fabrications. With each new name mentioned by the media, or on social media, a new mob immediately argues that person must somehow be culpable. "Facts" are invented out of thin air. AI is used to distort or create photographs, videos or audio. People begin to draw unsubstantiated conclusions and reckless threats follow.

This week, it has been Bart Jr.'s "turn" to be accused by thousands of online strangers who do not know him, do not know any relevant facts, and do not care about our community or the truth of what happened.

We grieve for the loss of Nolan, but as a family, we are also concerned for the lives of our children and the safety of others being "convicted" in a court of public opinion without facts — indeed contrary to known evidence.

We cannot allow our son to be slandered or our family to be doxxed and threatened, including threats made as recently as yesterday on Bart, Jr.'s life, without attempting to correct the record and hold egregious actors responsible for the danger they are manufacturing.

To that end, we have retained legal counsel for the purpose of pursuing recourse against those individuals fabricating lies about him or our family. The first cease and desist and spoliation letter is being issued today to an online user who originated many of the falsehoods against Bart, Jr. This user shared pictures of our home, our residential address, land plats, and information about our work, while simultaneously falsely asserting, through various videos and posts, that Bart, Jr. is a suspect, that he caused or contributed to Nolan's death, or that he is involved in a cover up of Nolan's death. It's a toxic combination in an emotionally charged environment.

None of these things are true. There is no evidence to support these claims. Let us be clear, Bart helped a boat that was in distress. He did not kill a friend, witness the death of a friend, or conceal the death of a friend. These are fictions made up by people with no actual knowledge of the events of that day. Unfortunately, those fictions are seen by millions of people and oft repeated.

Our family is working with the FBI, the Mississippi Attorney General, the U.S. Attorney's Office and local law enforcement to determine if federal and state cyberstalking crimes have been committed and to address the direct threats to our son's life.

We will continue to pursue all available legal remedies. We will not be deterred by whether offenders have the ability to compensate us for our damages. This is not about money. We are working to ensure the safety of our family, but also to push back on the very mob rule that ignores the truth, undermines the rule of law, destroys the presumption of innocence, and ultimately makes it harder for justice to prevail.

We know this moment will pass. The truth will win out. The reckless mob will move on to the next big thing. But, in their wake they will leave a grieving family, young men whose reputations have been forever tarnished, and a community of people who used to smile at each other in the grocery store, but who trust just a little less now. It is a tragic reality of a society full of internet sleuths unconcerned by the damage their lies wreak.

We would simply like to implore people to think deeply about the potential consequences of things they say without proof or knowledge. Ask yourself, "do I know this to be true? Are the things I'm saying likely to help or hurt? Am I doing this because it is right or because I crave attention?" Spreading false information does not honor Nolan's life or his family's loss. It pulls us further away from the truth. We can all be better in these moments.

For more information, please contact our attorney Russ Latino at Russ.Latino@gmail.com.