

Adam Cooper Interview Transcript

Monday, December 12, 2022 – 11:15 a.m.

Adam Cooper discovered Jackson Walker was dead.

Detectives Murphy and Parker talked to him outside Walker's apartment building.

Participants

Detective S. Murphy

Detective E. Parker

Adam Cooper

Detective Murphy: Mr. Cooper?

Adam Cooper: Yes.

Detective Murphy: I'm Detective Murphy of the Yoknapatawpha County Sheriff's Department.

This is Detective Parker. We'd like to ask you a few questions about what happened here today.

Adam Cooper: All right. I expected as much when Officer Baxter asked me to stay.

Detective Parker: Can we get your full name and address to start?

Adam Cooper: My name is Adam Allen Cooper. I live at 524 Audubon Lane here in Oxford.

Detective Murphy: What do you do for a living, Mr. Cooper?

Adam Cooper: I'm a professor at Ole Miss. I teach in the Southern Studies Department.

Detective Parker: Odd time for you to be out here, being it's a Monday and all.

Adam Cooper: I was sent out here.

Detective Parker: By who?

Adam Cooper: By my department head, Dr. Hollis.

Detective Parker: For what reason?

Adam Cooper: To find out where Jackson was this morning.

Detective Murphy: Jackson Walker?

Adam Cooper: Yes. He and I work in the same department at the university. Dr. Hollis came to my office at 9:00 or so this morning and told me that one of his teaching assistants said that Jackson didn't show up.

Detective Parker: I thought y'all were on winter break.

Adam Cooper: We are. The fall courses are over, but that doesn't mean the university shuts down. Jackson had finals to grade, and since he was going to teach in the Intersession, he had course materials to prepare.

Detective Parker: Was it unusual for Jackson to not show up for work?

Adam Cooper: Extremely. In the few years I've known him, he's never missed work without calling in.

Detective Murphy: Did you try to call him?

Adam Cooper: I didn't, but Dr. Hollis did. She said she didn't get any answer from a text. That was also unlike Jackson. He didn't care for texting. If you texted him, he'd call you right back. Then, when she called him directly, she got his voicemail. At that point, she sent me out to see if everything was okay. Things were definitely not okay.

Detective Parker: Why did Dr. Hollis send you, a professor, out here instead of one of Jackson's teaching assistants?

Adam Cooper: I don't know.

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Detective Parker: It sounds like you do know. Maybe if we asked Dr. Hollis—

Adam Cooper: All right. Look, this might sound bad, but Jackson and I have not been the best of friends.

Detective Murphy: Define "haven't been the best of friends."

Adam Cooper: I don't like him much. He's self-centered and haughty. The students felt it too. We've had our academic differences too. We didn't see eye-to-eye on the direction of the Southern Studies Program at Ole Miss.

Detective Parker: How so?

Adam Cooper: He thought the program should be emphasizing civil rights and political activism. I think we should focus on cultural expression. Dr. Hollis pushed for us to compromise. I guess we were both too headstrong.

Detective Murphy: I don't think you've answered the question. Why did Dr. Hollis send you personally to check on Jackson?

Adam Cooper: I think Dr. Hollis wanted us to work out our differences.

Detective Parker: Did she ever directly say as much?

Adam Cooper: Yes.

Detective Murphy: As department chair, does Dr. Hollis have a say in whether or not you are employed at Ole Miss?

Adam Cooper: Yes, she does.

Detective Parker: Okay, so Dr. Hollis told you to check on Jackson. When was that?

Adam Cooper: Like 9:30 or 9:45 a.m.

Detective Murphy: How did you go?

Adam Cooper: By car. It's only a mile from here to campus.

Detective Murphy: Is your car over there in that lot?

Adam Cooper: Yes. The teal Chevy Volt is mine.

Detective Parker: What time did you arrive?

Adam Cooper: A little before 10:00 a.m. I didn't really look at the clock.

Detective Parker: What did you first do when you arrived?

Adam Cooper: I drove up into the parking lot, and I saw Jackson's Audi parked there. I parked next to it—

Detective Parker: The Audi there?

Adam Cooper: Yeah.

Detective Parker: And so that's your Volt?

Adam Cooper: Yeah.

Detective Parker: Okay, then, what happened?

Adam Cooper: I looked inside his driver's side window. There were a few used tissues in the front passenger seat. I wasn't surprised. It made sense. The whole reason I was there was because Dr. Hollis and I thought he was sick.

Detective Parker: What did you do next?

Adam Cooper: I went into the apartment building, walked down the hall to his apartment, and knocked on the door.

Detective Parker: No answer?

Adam Cooper: No answer. I tried the doorknob, and it wasn't locked, so I went in. I yelled, "Jack, it's Adam. You home?"

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Detective Parker: No answer?

Adam Cooper: Nope, but I saw him sitting in a recliner in his living room. At first, I thought he was sleeping, so I called his name again. He didn't move, so I went over and shook him a little. He didn't respond at all.

Detective Murphy: Then what did you do?

Adam Cooper: I checked for a pulse at his neck. I couldn't feel one. I'm not a doctor, though, so I left the apartment to dial 911.

Detective Parker: From your cell phone?

Adam Cooper: Yes.

Detective Murphy: Why did you leave the apartment to make the call?

Adam Cooper: I don't know. I guess I thought I would need to direct the EMTs to the right apartment, so I wanted to meet them out front. That's dumb, though, because I gave the 911 operator the apartment address and number.

Detective Parker: Did you meet up with the EMTs then?

Adam Cooper: No. Officer Baxter got here first. She asked me a bunch of questions while the EMTs checked on Jackson. I never talked to the EMTs. Officer Baxter put me in her police car. I was there until y'all came to talk to me.

Detective Murphy: Did Officer Baxter ask for your cell phone?

Adam Cooper: No.

Detective Murphy: Did you have your cell phone in the squad car, then?

Adam Cooper: I had it with me. See, it's right here.

Detective Murphy: Did you make any calls in the squad car?

Adam Cooper: Uh, yeah.

Detective Murphy: To whom?

Adam Cooper: To Dr. Hollis. I told her that Jackson wasn't coming in today. That I thought that he might be dead.

Detective Parker: What was her reaction?

Adam Cooper: I heard her gasp. She asked why I thought that. I told her that he was just sitting unresponsive in his living room. She told me to come back to campus as soon as possible. I wasn't wrong, was I? Jack is dead, isn't he?

Detective Murphy: I'm afraid so, Mr. Cooper.

Adam Cooper: Oh, God. It's because he was sick, right? Maybe he had COVID, you know?

Detective Parker: We won't know until we complete our investigation.

Adam Cooper: So you think he wasn't sick? Do you think I had something to do with him dying?

Detective Parker: Did you?

Adam Cooper: No. I just found him. Seriously, Detective Parker, I just found him.

Detective Murphy: Did you call or text anyone else besides Dr. Hollis?

Adam Cooper: No.

Detective Murphy: How about social media? Did you post anything on Twitter or Facebook or otherwise communicate what happened to anyone else?

Adam Cooper: No. I swear. The thought never crossed my mind.

Detective Parker: Where were you on Saturday and Sunday, Mr. Cooper?

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Adam Cooper: I told you I didn't have anything to do with him dying! He was sick.

Detective Parker: I heard you earlier. Now I'm asking where you were this last weekend.

Adam Cooper: Um, I went Christmas shopping at the outdoor mall—you know, at Hibbett Sports and Shades. I ate at El Charro that night. Sunday, I went to church. After that, I was home watching football, cheering on the Saints.

Detective Murphy: Did you talk to anyone? Did anyone come over on Sunday?

Adam Cooper: I talked to the store clerks. I said "hi" to several strangers when shopping. I'm sure people saw me at church. I didn't invite anyone over on Sunday. I obviously didn't know I'd need an alibi for y'all.

Detective Murphy: What church do you belong to?

Adam Cooper: St. Johns here in Oxford.

Detective Parker: All right. I'm sure we'll want to talk to you again, Mr. Cooper. You don't have any problem with that, do you?

Adam Cooper: No. Uh, no problem at all. Am I free to go now?

Detective Murphy: As soon as Deputy Watson moves his squad car, we'll get you on your way.

Interview ended – 11:44 a.m.