EXCLUSIVE: Ryan Widmer's UNCUT notes

Never-before-released: Ryan Widmer's uncut account of the events surrounding the 2008 drowning of his wife, Sarah, as revealed in a document he prepared for his lawyers shortly afterward.

The original record is difficult to read, because it lacked paragraphs and spacing. In the transcription below, spacing, spelling and punctuation were corrected for readability; some names were withheld to protect identities of people who played no significant role in the case. Editor's notes in *italics* provide clarification and context. In addition, this account incorporates content from a separate document: text messages exchanged between Ryan and Sarah.

RYAN'S NOTES

PAGE ONE: The weekend that preceded Sarah's death in 2008.

August 7: Sarah left for St. Louis with Ruth Ann and Ruth. I worked then went to my mom's to pick up Annie as she was considering going to the Lake House and I told her I could watch her for the weekend. *Sarah was with her mother, Ruth Ann, and grandmother, Ruth, while Ryan picked up a family dog so his mother, Jill, could go to her vacation home in Kentucky.*

August 8: Worked and then came home after. I stayed home with the dogs and watched the Opening Ceremonies to the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

August 9: Woke up and went to McGees Courts 4 Sports at 7:30 a.m. We had the Ohio Senior Olympics Volleyball taking place. Competition wrapped things up around 3:00 and Ben Huffman (*co-worker at Ryan's sports marketing job at the Warren County Convention & Visitors Bureau)* and I went to Chipotle to grab some food as we did not eat the entire day. After that I headed home. I tried to take a brief nap and then Kyle *(Ryan's brother)* came over around 6:30-7:00 p.m. And Jason (*friend)* came over shortly thereafter. We had a few beers at the house and Jason wanted to watch the UFC fights that were on that night. So we decided to go to BW-3's in Lebanon. We got home sometime around 1:00 and went to bed.

From 10:53 p.m.-11:17 p.m., Ryan and Sarah exchanged these text messages:

Sarah: R u still drinking…hello

Ryan: No im done. Love u Most

Sarah: Love you more miss you most…now go home lol

Ryan: In your dreams. I still love u most.

Sarah: So r u gettin ready to leave

Ryan: Yeah I think in like 10 minutes

Sarah: K well be real careful please

Ryan: I will I love you

Sarah: k lov u too

August 10: ***Ryan's account of the day before Sarah's death***

We *(Ryan and his friend)* got up early the next morning because me and Jay were going to meet his dad (Gregg) and friend Jeff for a 7:42 a.m. tee time at Glenview Golf Course.

Sarah sent a text to Ryan at 6:15 a.m.: good morning

Then she sent another text at 7:17 a.m., reporting she was on her way home. She encouraged Ryan to have a good golf game: "We r on the road ill call u at the half way point lov u and kick some butt"

She also sent a text at 10:39 a.m.: "A lil over halfway home."

That may be the last text message Sarah ever sent to Ryan. Ryan's legal records revealed no further text messages between Ryan and Sarah.

Ryan's notes continued…

We played 18 holes and then I headed home.

Sarah arrived home shortly after me.

We laid around for a while, and then we went over to my mom's for a family dinner. Sarah was upset as she had said something to her grandma about the dog and her mom called her to tell Sarah that Grandma had called Ruth Ann crying. *(Ryan stated in 2018 that he was unable to recall further detail to better interpret*

this exchange. It could have been referring to a dog that Ryan and Sarah were planning to adopt.)

Sarah felt terrible about this and just was not herself at my mom's and everyone knew it.

After dinner, she asked if we could just go home. I said, "Of course. Are you still upset about what you said to your grandma?" She said yes, that was what was bothering her. When we got back to our house, she called her mom and then called her grandma to apologize. After this, she was feeling better.

PAGE TWO: Ryan's account of August 11, 2008, the day Sarah died.

I woke up at 7:15 a.m.; Sarah called me around 7:30 a.m. to tell me good morning. She complained of not feeling really great and said she just wanted to call to say good morning and she loved me. *(Sarah left for work before Ryan did because she had a longer commute, from Hamilton Township, Ohio, to Fort Wright, Kentucky.)*

I got ready and got to work about 8:30 a.m.

I did not talk to Sarah during the day as on Monday and Wednesdays, she worked through her lunch on those days. And I had a lunch meeting at the Kings Island Resort and Conference Center with their sales staff, Ben Huffman, *(and two more people, names withheld)* all co-workers.

She *(Sarah)* called me on her way home and I was on my way home from work as well just after 5:00 p.m. and we talked for a little while, until her friend Katie called her and she told me she would just see me when she got home.

I asked her during our conversation whether she was feeling any better and she said a little, just had a headache. She was very excited as a patient of hers, she was very interested in setting him up *(on a date)* with her friend *(name withheld)*. She always wanted to set someone up as our two friends Chris Kist and Dana Kist set us up, and she was very excited to possibly set her up.

She arrived home and changed into her lounging-around clothes. She came back downstairs and we watched television for a while and I decided to make dinner for

us. We had been over *(to)* my mother's house for a family dinner the night before, so I made leftover cheeseburgers, some cheese potatoes and corn on the cob.

While I was microwaving the food, Sarah went into the pantry where her suitcase was as she did not fully unpack from her weekend trip to St. Louis with her mother and grandma to get some *(ibuprofen)* out of her suitcase as she was complaining of a headache. (*Ryan later stated he didn't know whether Sarah actually took any of the medicine. There was no sign of it in her autopsy records.)*

She complained of headaches quite often and she was going to mention that to our family doctor (*name withheld)*. The last time she visited the doctor, she mentioned her sleeping. *(If Sarah did mention that issue, which some people suspect was a sign of an underlying medical problem, her doctor did not note it in her records.)*

We sat down on the couch and ate our dinner as we always ate on the couch watching TV. After dinner, she laid down with her head on my lap and I rubbed the back of her neck and through her hair. I did that for a while and then I got up to put the dishes by the sink. I went outside and started to water the lawn. I came back inside and Sarah was still watching TV. She DVR'd her shows and watched, "Army Wives," and "So You Think You Can Dance?"

I decided to take CJ, our dog, for a walk and asked her if she wanted to go. But she did not as she was not feeling well.

I took the dog for a walk around the neighborhood at about 7:30 p.m. and came back and went upstairs to take a shower. I came back down and sat down on the couch with her as she finished watching "So You Think You Can Dance?" I DVR'd the Cincinnati Bengals vs. Green Bay Packers preseason game on ESPN.

So around 9 p.m. I went out to stop the water (moving the sprinkler in between all this time) and she let me start watching the game.

I was fast-forwarding through the commercials and different points of the game. While we were watching the game, she fell asleep for a brief period on the couch.

A little after 10:00 p.m., Sarah told me she was going to take a bath and go to bed. I told her I was going to watch the game for a little longer and then I would be up.

She came over, gave me a kiss, told me she loved me. I told her I loved her most.

PAGE THREE: After Sarah went upstairs to bathe

She walked to the bottom of the stairs, turned on the upstairs light and she was walking, she walks on her tippy toes as she often did. I said, "Hey, what are you doing, walking on your tippy toes?" She said, "I love you. Check the doors before you come up." *(Toe-walking can be linked to a number of health conditions, but this information was never explored during any of Ryan's trials, despite the defense team's contention that Sarah may have suffered a medical problem that caused her to drown. Several people have confirmed Sarah walked like this at times.)*

She was very cautious about the doors being locked and she preferred I checked them *(because)* if I do, she knows they're locked, and if she does she would always question herself whether or not they were locked. And I would have to go back down and check. (*Ryan was saying Sarah was often forgetful about whether she locked the doors.)*

And she went upstairs.

I had two beers before she went to bed and two more after she went upstairs.

I fast-forwarded to real time of the game since it was a preseason game and I was interested in watching Michael Phelps swim in the Olympics, and he was swimming in a final that night.

It was between 10:20-10:30 p.m. when I turned it to the swimming events and as I was finishing a beer, I heard a slight noise come from upstairs, but did not think anything of it was I figured she was getting out of the tub or she had dropped something.

I drank one more beer. After I finished that, the Bengals game was in the 4th quarter and the score was 20-10, Bengals winning. I went out back on the deck to smoke a cigarette. I came in, turned off the TV and lamp in the family room, checked the front door to make sure it was locked, and went upstairs.

When I went up, it was approximately 10:45-11:00 p.m.

I turned off the hall lights, walked in the bedroom shut the door behind me and took off my pants and shirt.

Walked to go into the bathroom to brush my teeth and that is when I saw Sarah laying in the tub. She was laying motionless and pale, face up, partially submerged.

Her head was on the opposite side of where she would have originally put her head while she was in the tub. The water was still in the tub.

I pulled her above the water and with my right arm reached across her front side to turn the drain plug. I had her back facing me and she still sat motionless and I knew she was not breathing. I tapped her face and chest, screaming, “Sarah, Sarah, Sarah,” to get no response.

I tried to keep her as stable as possible and reached for my phone, which was on the chest where our TV sat. And so I briefly let go of her body and she slid slightly down in the tub. Dialed 911 and the call did not go through. I then saw her phone sitting on the sink and called 911.

The dispatcher answered the phone and I frantically told him the situation.

The dispatcher then told me during the call to get her out of the tub onto a flat surface.

I set the phone down onto the sink and stepped into the tub with my right foot. With my right arm under both kneecaps and with my left arm on the back of her neck and shoulder area, I tried to pick her up. I did not have a good grip and did not get her up the first time.

The second try, I got her up and swung my right foot out of the tub.

The dog was hopping up and barking right by us.

As I almost had her out of the bathroom my left arm was sliding down her back and I could not keep the hold.

As I was trying to get her onto the carpet, I slightly dropped her on the tile floor and the back of her head hit the floor.

I grabbed both arms and pulled her out of the bathroom onto the carpet.

PAGE FOUR: After Ryan removed Sarah from the tub

Just over half of her body was on the carpet and her legs were still in the bathroom.

This is when I noticed there was a foamy blood coming from her nostril.

I ran back into the bathroom to grab the phone and told the dispatcher I had her on a flat surface.

I was going to start with CPR and then he asked if the doors were unlocked. I told him no, and then he told me to go unlock them.

I ran downstairs as fast as I could and unlocked the front door and took off the door stopper.

Ran back upstairs, knelt down beside her and her face was laying looking the opposite way of me, towards the window (away from the door). So, with my right hand, took the top of her head and with my left hand grabbed her neck/chin area to get her head facing straight up and at this point the foamy blood coming from her nose had increased.

Once stabilized, I started with compressions on CPR just as the dispatcher told me to go ahead and start with CPR. Her head dis not stay completely up during compressions, so each time her head would slump just slightly to the one side, so I had to readjust.

I had the phone still held between my ear and head, and then I set the phone down and continued with CPR.

I did about 5-6 compressions, with my hands on top of one another, with the palm of my hand and 2-3 breaths. When I gave the breaths, I pinched her nose with my right-hand fingers and my left hand was on her chin/neck area to keep the face straight up. I did this approximately 2-3 times.

I then heard someone yell, “hello” and I went outside the bedroom and it was a police officer. He asked, “Where is she?” I said, “In here, in the bedroom,” and the dog took off running down the stairs as the officer was on the landing of the steps.

He said, “Wo, dog,” and then came up into the bedroom. He kneeled down to check her pulse and then he said, “Let’s pull her out farther.” I took her right arm and he took the left and we pulled her out, completely on the carpet. *(At trial, the officer denied taking such action.)*

Just after this, emergency crews arrived and came into the bedroom.

They went down by her and I as pulled out into the hallway by the officer.

They said they needed certain things and members of the crew ran back down to get that.

I stood at the door of the bedroom and prayed and cried for Sarah to make it.

Before I was pulled out away from the bedroom, there were 4 or 5 Emergency Medical *(workers)* attending to her in the bedroom.

The first officer to arrive then pulled me into our media game room just down the hall. *(Testimony indicated a different officer apparently moved Ryan into that room.)*

There were clean *(bed)* sheets sitting in the chair, not folded, and he threw them onto the floor and he asked me to sit down.

I sat in the chair and he asked me what happened.

I told him that I came to bed and walked into the bathroom to find her face up in the tub. He asked if she had any sort of problems and I told him no, that she falls asleep in the tub and I thought that she might have fallen asleep in the tub, and that I have warned her about that repeatedly.

He did not ask me very many questions at all and took no notes.

During this time, the EMT came up the stairs with the stretcher and then came out of the bedroom with her on the stretcher. It was difficult for them to maneuver her down the stairs as there is one landing and the stairs turn.

PAGE FIVE: Efforts to save Sarah's life

They asked me if I had a neighbor or anyone who could drive me to the hospital, or do I want to ride in the ambulance with her.

I told them I would ride in the ambulance.

So they told me to get some clothes on.

I went into the bedroom, grabbed a pair of khaki shorts and T-shirt that I had sitting on the dresser.

Ran downstairs and grabbed my flip-flops out of the pantry, grabbed my phone and wallet, and they escorted me out to the ambulance.

A woman put me into the ambulance, told me to put my seat belt on and asked had I had any alcohol tonight. I told her I had a couple beers.

The ambulance was shaking so I assumed they were continuing with CPR in the back.

A minute or so after I got into the ambulance, the driver hopped in and said we were going.

I then called my mother and Sarah's mother repeatedly while we were in progress to Bethesda Arrow Springs. *(Phone records showed that Sarah's mother, Ruth Ann Steward, was actually the FIRST person Ryan called after dialing 911. He then tried to call his own mom. He made about a dozen such attempts before succeeding.)*

I finally got ahold of my mother first and explained briefly to her what was going on and to meet me at the hospital. I then got ahold of Ruth Ann and did the same.

When we pulled up to the emergency room, I got out and followed them into the room where they took Sarah. They transferred her from the stretcher to the bed.

Multiple doctors, nurses and emergency medical *(personnel)* continued CPR and other different medical procedures. There were 7 or 8 people all around her trying to revive her.

I stood there in shock and kept praying and crying as I hoped she would be saved.

They continued to work on her for a long period of time.

They asked if I wanted to sit down or if I wanted some water. If I wanted to leave the room—and I wanted to stay.

At one point there was a guy with his knee on the bed and directly on top of her performing the compressions. They also had a tube that went down into her mouth/throat.

My cellphone rang and it was my mom. They would not let her *(come)* back *(to the emergency room).*

I asked a nurse standing right by me and she took care of that.

Then they shut the curtain; the doctor came out and told me it had been more than so many minutes and that the chances were not good and that she probably wasn't going to make it.

I leaned on the wall in the hallway and just lost it.

They walked me away after about 15 minutes and that is when I saw my mother.

They took us back to a waiting room and sat us down.

AS we were sitting in the room, a nurse came a little later and asked if we needed anything. And my mom asked if they were still working on her and if she was gone. And that is when they officially gave us the answer, "no."

I kneeled to the ground and could not pull my head up off the chair.

She asked if we wanted to call a priest and my mom told her to call Father John Tonkin and he then arrived at the hospital a while later.

Not long after *(that),* the coroner investigator came in and began asking me what had happened. The questions were brief and he was taking slight notes but not many. I was still so struck and could barely hold my head up to look at him and answer his questions.

Mike *(last name withheld)* and Daniel, his son, arrived at some point while we were in there, and Mike went to find Ruth Ann and Daniel stayed in the room with us. Mike is Ruth Ann's friend and he asked where Ruth Ann was and went to find her. When she came, she was able to make it into the room with Sarah for a little while.

PAGE SIX: The aftermath of Sarah's death

Mike finally brought Ruth Ann back to where we were sitting in the room and everyone was crying. We sat in the room for a while and since we could not see Sarah anymore, Ruth Ann said, "If I can't see Sarah, I don't want to be here," and we all agreed.

We gathered around Father John, said a prayer, then we all hugged and left.

It was around 2:00 a.m. when we left.

My mom drove me back to my house to get the dog and make sure the house was locked up.

We could not find the dog in the house so my mom called around and we started to drive around the neighborhood as we didn't know if he got out with all the commotion.

And then she got a call back and an officer had taken the dog to our neighbors' (house). So we pulled back in the driveway and she went to get him as I went back in the house.

We got back to my mother's house. My Aunt Jackie and Uncle Kevin had come over to watch my mom's dogs for her and it was around 3:00 p.m. *(apparently meant "a.m.")*

We sat up all night.

Several spaces followed by this addendum:

The only things I distinctly remember from the 911 call were the dispatcher asking me to get her out of the tub, onto a flat surface, to unlock the door and to perform CPR. *(According to Ryan's diary, he didn't listen to the recording of his 911 call until months after his wife died.)*

PAGE SEVEN: Coroner's investigator questions Ryan

A Doyle Burke came into the waiting room and introduced himself to my mother and me. He said, "I know this is a hard time for you, but I need to ask you some questions."

He first asked, "What happened tonight?" I told him that Sarah went up to take a bath and go to bed around 10:00 p.m. I then stayed downstairs watching the Bengals game and went upstairs a little before 11:00. I took off my clothes when I got into the bedroom and walked into the bathroom, to see Sarah laying face up in the tub, unresponsive.

He then asked, "What did I do?" I told him I pulled her up out of the water and pulled the drain plug to drain the water. *(Ryan's lawyers argued that the tub being drained could explain why Sarah's skin was unexpectedly dry by the time*

emergency crews touched her. Prosecutors argued that Sarah may have never been fully in the tub—or was already on the floor before Ryan called 911.)

I grabbed the phone and called 911. Told him the dispatcher told me to get her out of the tub onto a flat surface. So, I told him I set the phone down onto the sink and picked her up and got her onto the bedroom floor. I was briefly beginning CPR compressions and then I told him I had to run downstairs to unlock the front door as instructed by the 911 dispatcher. When I got back to Sarah, I restarted with CPR just as the dispatcher was telling me to go ahead and start.

He asks if I knew CPR. I told him I had been certified for one year in college, knew a little but have never had to do it. I then told him that is when the officer had arrived, and I heard someone yell, "hello." And I informed the officer she was in the bedroom. I told him that when the officer came into the room, he wanted to pull her out a little farther into the bedroom. *(At trial, the officer denied taking such action.)* And then the EMT crews arrived on the scene just after that.

He asked how long it had taken for emergency crews to arrive after the 911 call. I told him I don't know like 2 minutes or so, but it felt quick.

He asked if she took any prescriptions, medications or had any health problems. I told him no, but she had taken ibuprofen that night because she was complaining of a headache. I told him that she always fell asleep in the bathtub and I continually warned her and worried about her doing that.

He then asked where I worked and what I did. I told him the Warren County Convention & Visitors Bureau, in sports marketing.

That concluded the conversation. And during the questioning he took little, brief notes. He then said, "You seem like a stand-up guy," and he was very sorry for my loss and left the room, giving us his business cards.

PAGE EIGHT: Ryan's mom, Jill,

describes what she saw and heard at the hospital

When I got to Bethesda Arrow Springs, I went into the emergency room and asked for Sarah and Ryan. I had to wait about 15 minutes and then I was taken back to see Ryan and we were escorted into a small room to wait.

We prayed and waited to hear what was going on with Sarah.

Eventually, a nurse came into see if we needed anyone called or if we wanted something to drink. We told her to call Father John at St. Susanna's. I asked the nurse if they were still working on Sarah. She said no. I then asked if she was gone and she said yes.

Within the next ½ hour it seemed, A Doyle Burke came into the room and introduced himself to me and Ryan. He said he knew it was a very difficult time and gave Ryan and me condolences about Sarah, but said he needed to ask Ryan some questions.

He asked Ryan to tell him what happened. Ryan said Sarah went upstairs to bathe and he was watching TV. She went up about 10 and he went, too, a little before 11. When he went into the bathroom, he found her face-up in the bathtub, unresponsive.

He started draining the water and reached for the phone to call 911.

The 911 dispatcher instructed Ryan to remove Sarah from the tub and place her on a hard surface. He said he did that and then was instructed to do CPR.

The 911 dispatcher asked Ryan if doors were unlocked, and when he said no he asked him to run downstairs and unlock them.

Ryan said after he came back upstairs he began CPR again until an officer arrived. The officer came upstairs and told Ryan to grab 1 of Sarah's arms while he grabbed the other and pulled her farther into the bedroom on the carpet. *(At trial, the officer denied taking such action.)*

The EMT's arrived and began working on Sarah.

The officer pulled Ryan out into another room and asked Ryan some questions. *(It was unclear which officer moved Ryan into another room.)*

Officer Burke asked Ryan where he worked and what he did. He thanked Ryan. Gave us both a card of his and left the room.

Officer Burke wrote a few notes while interviewing Ryan.

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