

Suit Filed in 2018 New Mexico Helicopter Crash that Claimed the Lives of Five Passengers

DALLAS – The Dallas-based trial firm Lyons & Simmons has filed a negligence lawsuit against San Antonio-based Sapphire Aviation on behalf of the estate of Houston resident Paul David Cobb, one of five people killed in a 2018 crash of a Bell UH-1H helicopter in rural northern New Mexico.

According to reports, the group flew by private jet from Houston on Jan. 17, 2018, to Raton, New Mexico, where they transferred to the Huey helicopter for a short flight to Emery Gap Ranch for a birthday party. Lifting off just after sunset, the helicopter crashed into a plateau in a mountainous rural area 11 miles from Raton. Mr. Cobb, a 67-year-old veteran of the Pasadena, Texas, Police Department, survived the initial impact but sustained skull and rib fractures and internal hemorrhaging that left him unable to flee the fire caused by the crash. He ultimately died from his injuries.

In addition to Mr. Cobb, the crash claimed the lives of Charles Ryland Burnett III, owner of Sapphire Aviation and the helicopter; Roy Bennett, a founding member of Zimbabwe's main opposition party and his wife Heather; and pilot Jamie Coleman Dodd. The sole survivor was Mr. Cobb's daughter and Mr. Burnett's longtime partner, Andra Cobb, who was injured in the crash.

Because of the remote location, it took nearly two hours for emergency responders to arrive at the scene, during which time a hunting guide came upon the wreckage. While he rendered aid, Mr. Dodd told the guide that "it was all my fault. I flew into the terrain. ... This is all my fault," according to the lawsuit. A National Transportation Safety Board investigation listed

pilot error as the likely cause of the crash.

The lawsuit is *Martha Nell Cobb, Paula Donell O'Leary, and David Cobb v. Sapphire Aviation, LLC, the Estate of Jamie Coleman Dodd and the Estate of Charles Ryland Burnett III*. (Case No. D-101-CV-2020-02630, First Judicial District Court, Santa Fe County.)