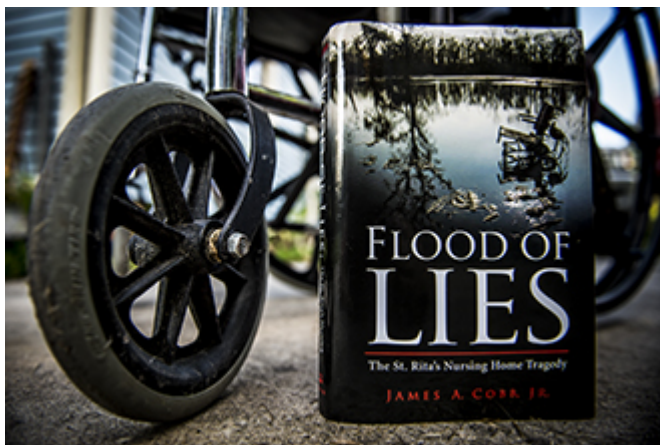


## Lawyer defends nursing home owners in infamous Katrina case

September 09, 2013 11:00 AM Mary Ann Travis  
mtravis@tulane.edu

Among the saddest stories in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina was news of the drowning of 35 nursing home residents in St. Bernard Parish, La. The deaths of the elderly victims stirred up a frenzy of media attention and public outrage.



*Flood of Lies* is the saga of James A. Cobb Jr.'s legal defense of Sal and Mabel Mangano, owners of St. Rita's nursing home, where 35 residents died after Hurricane Katrina. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Louisiana Attorney General Charles C. Foti Jr. accused Sal and Mabel Mangano, owners of St. Rita's nursing home where the tragedy occurred, of negligent homicide.

In [\*Flood of Lies: The St. Rita's Nursing Home Tragedy\* \(Pelican, 2013\)](#), [James A. Cobb Jr.](#) tells the wrenching story of his successful legal defense of the Manganos. The book also is Cobb's personal story of the demons with which he wrestled after the Katrina flood destroyed his own house and uprooted his family. Cobb is a 1974 College of Arts & Sciences and 1978 Law School graduate of Tulane University. He is the former longtime co-director of the trial advocacy program at Tulane Law School.

In the Manganos' jury trial, held in 2007 in St. Francisville, La., 100 miles away from where the flood occurred, Cobb and his defense team shifted the blame for the St. Rita's residents' deaths to the government, especially the Army Corps of Engineers and local and state officials who failed to issue a mandatory evacuation before the hurricane struck.

Cobb says that his decision to take on the defense of the Manganos ? the little guys ? goes back to a youthful dream of his to help the oppressed and helpless. As Cobb became busy with his career in maritime, insurance defense and corporate law, he had become separated from that dream.

But then Katrina happened. "Everyone is broken by life, but sometimes we get stronger in the broken places. Katrina shattered our lives along with hundreds of thousands of other lives," writes Cobb. "In taking up the defense of the Manganos, I got stronger in the broken places."