

## **Paralegal Faces Criminal Charges, Civil Lawsuit Over Dead Attorney's Estate**

As an Aventura paralegal's criminal trial looms, attorneys for the family of a deceased Miami law partner say they are ready for civil litigation without...

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Litigation



Lisa Willis [↗](#)

As an Aventura paralegal's criminal trial looms, attorneys for the family of a deceased Miami law partner say they are ready for civil litigation without further delay.

In 2005, Miami law firm Fowler White Burnett ex-partner Morton Brown died, leaving behind his wife Sheila of 44 years and an adult daughter and son.

The daughter, Pamela Brown Altman, of Cooper City, was a part-time probate paralegal formerly with Fromberg, Perlow & Kornik in Aventura and was named co-trustee of her father's trust fund.

According to the complaint, a few years later financial discrepancies were discovered in the handling of the trust allegedly by Altman and her husband Rick Altman, and an investigation ensued.

In 2020 a petition to remove Altman as trustee was granted and imposed more than \$130,000 in fees, after a 3-day evidentiary hearing which she has appealed and is still pending in Miami-Dade.

Court records also show a year later Altman was arrested on felony charges of exploitation of an elderly adult, first-degree grand theft, and felony use of the identification of a person older than 60. That trial is set for March 3, court records show.

## Alleged Losses



Christopher B. Spuches of Agentis Law. Courtesy photo

Christopher Spuches, the Coral Gables attorney representing Morton Brown's wife Sheila and her son Jeffrey Brown in their civil suit against the Altman's said when the trust began there were millions in the bank.

"The misappropriations that we've alleged (are) about half a million ( dollars, but) when you

factor in interest and missed opportunities that the trust would have had to invest these funds, the damages will exceed \$1 million."

The complaint filed in Miami-Dade Circuit Court in 2021, alleges the daughter, as an appointed co-trustee, used her two decades of expertise and experience working with trusts and estates to steal her mother's money for her own means.

"Sheila and Jeffrey understood that Pamela, having a specialized knowledge of probate law and trust administration, was ensuring that the Trust was being administered in accordance with Florida law and the terms of the Trust," the complaint read.

Also alleged: Altman used her home address in Cooper City for trust account statement deliveries.

The complaint lists the additional defendant as Canes Fan Inc., doing business as Massage Envy, with locations in Broward and Miami-Dade Counties. Among the alleged misappropriations listed in the complaint was money allegedly taken from the trust to fund the couple's Massage Envy franchises.

Additionally, Spuches said, the plaintiff's legal team has been successful in a few court actions.

"We already have summary judgment on five of the 19 counts (against Altman)," he said. Those counts include breach of fiduciary duty and breach of the trust.

While the criminal trial against Pamela Altman will precede the civil trial, Spuches feels confident the final chapter of this family saga will get started soon.

"We have been completely teed up and ready to go to trial, (which) has been delayed multiple times due to Ms. Altman requesting that it be delayed, but it will get tried this year," Spuches said. "That's my inclination, because I don't think the courts are going to delay it again."

When contacted Altman's attorneys did not comment on the case.

Massage Envy headquarters was asked for comment, but did not return the email.

<https://www.law.com/dailybusinessreview/2023/01/24/paralegal-faces-criminal-charges-civil-lawsuit-over-dead-attorneys-estate/?LikelyCookieIssue=true>