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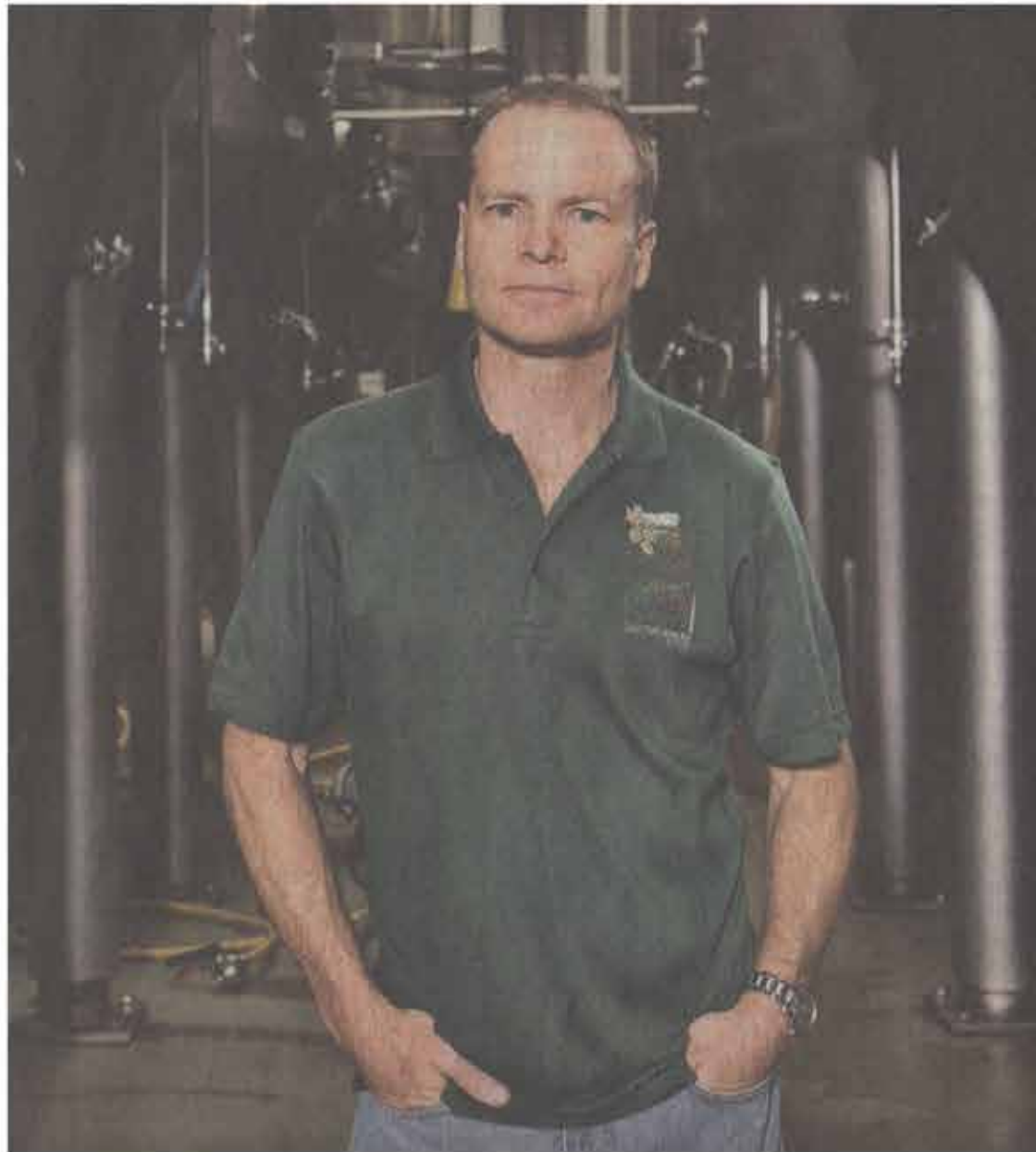
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'I've given back. If that's a crime, I'm guilty as hell.'

PLAINTIFFS' ATTORNEY ROGER WORTHINGTON, ABOVE

Mr. Worthington got into asbestos litigation as a cub lawyer at Baron & Budd, the Texas firm, in the late 1980s. He branched out on his own, starting his firm in first Dallas and then San Pedro, Calif.

He signs mesothelioma patients as clients, participates in depositions, is the attorney of record on many pleadings and

also partners with other firms to litigate the cases.

Mr. Worthington, who says he handles fewer than two dozen mesothelioma cases a year, owns a bluff-side compound in Dana Point, Calif., and kicked in more than \$5 million to start a brewing company, Worthy Brewing, in Oregon.

Mr. Worthington sent his own father to be treated by Dr. Cameron when he was diagnosed with what he said was asbestos-related lung cancer.

In 2006, after his father had died, Mr. Worthington donated \$500,000 to establish the "Punch" Worthington Thoracic Surgery Research Laboratory at UCLA in honor of his father. Dr. Cameron carries out research there on mesothelioma, lung cancer and other occupational cancers.

Mr. Worthington, a fit, avid cyclist, explained he also wanted to help mesothelioma patients and was hoping to create a foundation to raise awareness and research dollars.

The two men, along with Dr. Pass, eventually established the Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation.

The organization, known as MARF, created a website with medical information about the disease and sought donations from patients' estates and law firms.

Dr. Cameron, respected by peers as a skilled surgeon, said he cares deeply for his patients and is passionate about finding a cure for mesothelioma. But the quest has come up short so far.

Doctors engage in radical tactics to treat the disease, some shining lights on tumor areas covered in special photosensitive chemicals or dousing the opened chest with heated chemotherapy liquid. Dr. Cameron uses cryotherapy, a process of freezing tumors with liquid nitrogen.

Mr. Worthington said he wouldn't hesitate to recommend Dr. Cameron to a client in search of medical care, declaring: "He's the best surgeon in the world."

Doctors, Lawyers Join Hunt For Valuable Asbestos Cases

BY DIONNE SEARCEY

On the asbestos law firm website of Roger G. Worthington is a photo of him and Dr. Robert Cameron in an operating room, both in scrubs, hovering above the splayed chest of a gravely ill person who is the legal client of one and patient of the other.

"The hardest working man in America. Easily," Mr. Worthington, a plaintiffs' attorney, says of Dr. Cameron on his legal blog. "An American hero."

Dr. Cameron says of Mr. Worthington's devotion to clients: "He's more than their lawyer; he's almost their friend."

Together the men have helped start two nonprofits dedicated to assisting patients of mesothelioma, an asbestos-related cancer. Dr. Cameron relied on funding from Mr. Worthington to build two research laboratories. When mesothelioma patients ask Dr. Cameron to recommend an attorney, he tells them to pick one who has donated toward finding a cure for the disease,

and that includes Mr. Worthington.

The two have forged what has become an increasingly common relationship between a subset of cancer doctors and plaintiffs' attorneys, sharing what for each is an increasingly scarce but valuable resource: victims of mesothelioma.

It is an unusual alliance in the world of medicine that some ethics experts say blurs ethical lines. This is particularly true when doctors refer patients to attorneys who provide financial support for their medical research.

It "has the taste of a kickback," said Dr. Jerome Kassirer, author of a book about financial conflicts of interest in medicine and a former editor in chief of the *New England Journal of Medicine*. "This is a disgrace to both professions," he said.

Mr. Worthington rejected any notion he was seeking to profit from his donations or that there is any quid pro quo. He sees himself filling a void to support research that should be paid for by the asbestos industry.

"I've given back. If that's a crime, I'm guilty as hell," Mr. Worthington said. "The fact that I've

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The Law Office of Roger G. Worthington P.C.

Dr. Robert Cameron, left, performs surgery on a legal client of Roger Worthington, facing camera, in a photo on the attorney's website.