



## Worker Sues Asbestos Plant For Wife's Death Due to Mesothelioma

Bystander asbestos exposure

A NJ worker is suing his World War II employer for damages in connection with the death of his wife, claiming that she died from asbestos particles from his job. In what [Jon Gelman](#), a Wayne lawyer, said was the first action of its kind, James D. Parker filed suit yesterday in Superior Court in Paterson, seeking damages from the Union Asbestos and Rubber Co. for the estate of his wife, Angelina, who died of cancer last year at age 61.

Parker, 63, worked at the company's plant in Paterson's Riverside section in 1940, 1942, and 1943 and made asbestos tubing under a United States government contract. Parker lives at 415 Morrissee Avenue. At least 10 other wartime workers at the plant have filed negligence suits against the company in federal court in Newark since January.

Those suites, each of which seeks \$75 million in damages, contending that the men contracted serious lung ailments because they worked with asbestos during the war. Four principals in the 11 suits have died, Jon L. Gelman, Parker's lawyer, said yesterday.

The 933 wartime employees of the Union Asbestos plant, which closed in 1954, are the subjects of a continuing survey by Dr. Irving Selikoff of Ridgewood. The doctor found that of the plant workers who had died by 1976, more than 300 had died of asbestos-related diseases.

The federal suits, which name more than 20 defendants, including the United States and the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co., also ask for damages for the men's wives or their widows. Parker' suit is the first to place liability on the asbestos plant for the death of a worker's wife, Gelman said.

Last night, Dr. Selikoff said that it has been known for 15 years that family members of asbestos workers have contracted asbestos-related diseases. The relationship, first described in Great Britain, is being studied in his laboratories,

the doctor said. "Oh yes, there are many such cases known."

Dr. Selikoff said, adding that he couldn't comment specifically on the case involving Parker's wife. Parker's suit charges that the Union Asbestos, now located in Texas under the name UNARCO Industries Inc., failed to warn employees of the hazards of asbestos, failed to prevent against the "escape" of asbestos from the Paterson plant, and failed to provide workers with protection.

Referring to Parker's wife, the suit maintains that the defendants knew that the asbestos Parker carried home on his clothing and skin "would quietly assault... and batter her body, causing millions of invisible and microscopic fibers and particles of asbestos to be inhaled and ingested...." The suit also claims that the company covered up a 1930 investigation of the hazards of asbestos in the workplace, the probe concluded asbestos was a danger to the health of workers.

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[Jon L. Gelman](#) of Wayne, NJ, is the author of [NJ Workers' Compensation Law](#) (Thomson-Reuters) and co-author of the national treatise [Modern Workers' Compensation Law](#) (Thomson-Reuters). For over five decades, the [Law Offices of Jon L Gelman 1.973.696.7900 jon@gelmans.com](#) have represented injured workers and their families who have suffered [occupational accidents and illnesses.](#)

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