

Scott Hartman and Alison Trowe story

California

Our mold story started on September 1, 2002, in an apartment with extensive toxic mold and negligent landlords and their corrupt insurance company. Working together, they set out to ruin the lives of any tenant who tried to get help in evacuating that toxic building.

After a steam implosion from leaking pipes, the building was declared uninhabitable and a health hazard by several parties including the Los Angeles County Health & Housing Departments, State Farm inspectors, State Farm contractors, and a third party inspector that we hired. The experts told us we were living on a giant mold petri dish. By law, landlords are required to relocate tenants when their building is uninhabitable, but our landlord refused. Because they refused to take care of the problems, we were forced to seek remedy through the legal process. We fought the negligent landlords and their fraudulent insurance company for five years.

On September 13, 2002, we received a "Release of Liability" in the mail from the landlords. This Release form was sent by State Farm's adjuster--as advised by State Farm attorneys-- AFTER State Farm's reps came to the building and declared it a health hazard from mold. The State Farm reps told all of the tenants that we had to evacuate immediately and take no personal belongings. They told us that a professional pack-out team would contact us in 24 hours. State Farm's rep, George Pondella, stated that the reason the 11 tenants and pets in the building were all ill was due to the toxic mold in the building. He said it was very bad and that the job must be handled by pros. Within 24 hours, State Farm had switched adjusters, and claimed they NEVER SENT George Pondella. That started a long-term series of lies by State Farm. From that point forward, the landlords, State Farm, and everyone they hired, systematically lied to conceal the truth. They concealed their mold testing. They hired experts to lie. They had us under surveillance for a very long time. They went out of their way to deceive us.

Finally, after four years of fighting for justice, we were offered the policy limit of \$1 million in settlement last May, 2007. Our attorney failed to follow-up on simple defense requests and chose to gamble it without telling us. State Farm withdrew their offer after our lawyer botched the negotiations. We were forced to go trial--a trial in which our lawyer prepared NO evidence, NO exhibits, NO photos, NO reports, NO witnesses. He gave the jury nothing to help them, and we ended up with nothing. A paralegal, who was fired for trying to help us avert disaster the day before trial, claims he intentionally did not work on our case. Some believe he was paid off by State Farm. I won't name this attorney, because he threatened to have me killed if I told anyone he committed malpractice.

This personal tragedy devastated our lives, health, spirit for years. We're still trying to recover, but we'll never get our lives back. We want to help others who have problems related to Environmental Poisoning, Bad Faith Insurance and Legal Malpractice. This is a public health crisis and a legal battle filled with fraud and deceit. We are doing our part to help others who have to go through this type of experience.