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Beverly Hills man says he didn't get his fair share of his wife's ashes

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A Beverly Hills plastic surgeon has filed a multimillion-dollar lawsuit against a mortuary and crematorium alleging they colluded with his in-laws to deny him half of his late wife's ashes after she died of stomach cancer this year.

The lawsuit, filed Friday in Los Angeles County Superior Court, alleges that despite having paid more than \$7,000 for cremation of his late wife's remains, Dr. Alexander Sinclair was only given 2 ounces of Kyoko Yonezawa's ashes while his in-laws — Seiji Yonezawa and Yoriko Yonezawa — received the bulk. The lawsuit alleges Kubota Mortuary and Evergreen Cemetery breached the contract they had with Sinclair over the disbursement of his wife's ashes.

"Not only did Dr. Sinclair lose the love of his life much earlier than the two had ever expected, but he has also now been cheated and deprived ... of significant remains of Kyoko," the lawsuit states.

Sinclair filed a separate lawsuit against his in-laws, who live in Japan, in August. They are expected to appear in court for a case management conference in February. The Yonezawas could not immediately be reached for comment on Tuesday.

A representative for Evergreen Cemetery said they had not received any notification about a lawsuit and could not comment. Gene Shioda, an attorney representing Kubota Mortuary, said the situation "took place when a different person was in charge of the mortuary."

"The mortuary will be thoroughly investigating," he said. "At this time, the mortuary will deny the allegations."

Sinclair's issues with his in-laws allegedly started long before his wife's death. Sinclair and Kyoko lived together for many years before marrying at the West Los Angeles United Methodist Church in October 2016. Kyoko's family attended the wedding but did not approve of the marriage, according to the suit.

Despite their disapproval, the suit alleges "they were not shy about taking all they could from Dr. Sinclair and using Dr. Sinclair's good character and reputation and vast resources to their personal and business advantage." Sinclair financially supported his in-laws, housed them in his home in Pacific Palisades for prolonged periods of time, provided them with food and gave them money, the lawsuit states.

Sinclair has been a licensed plastic surgeon since 1985 and has offices in Beverly Hills and Whittier, according to his website and state medical board records. He alleges in the lawsuit that Kyoko's parents saw the marriage "as nothing but an avenue to take advantage of a well-to-do Beverly Hills plastic surgeon and to strip

Dr. Sinclair of his personal finances and to deprive [him] of enjoying the true love he had for Kyoko.” Still, Sinclair contends he continued to treat them as family.

In February 2017, his wife was diagnosed with stage four stomach cancer. She died roughly two years later. After her death, Sinclair’s interactions with his in-laws continued to sour, according to the lawsuit.

He alleges they refused to let him participate in making funeral arrangements and agreed to reimburse him for the cost of the services and cremation, but never paid him. In a written agreement with the mortuary, Sinclair was supposed to receive half of his late wife’s ashes with his in-laws entitled to the other half. Instead, he got two mini urns with “nothing more than, a combined two ounces of remains,” the lawsuit states.

Sinclair is seeking an injunction ordering the defendants to provide him with half of Kyoko’s ashes and punitive damages in excess of \$5 million, according to the filing.

“Mr. Sinclair has been greatly traumatized by this whole ordeal,” his attorney Keven Steinberg said.

While disputes between families and crematoriums, hospitals and coroners over a loved one’s remains are fairly common, it’s more unusual for issues between family members to rise into the public view unless the person is a celebrity.

In 1996, The Times wrote a story about a portion of Grateful Dead guitarist Jerry Garcia’s ashes being spread across the sacred Ganges River in India. Garcia’s children, who had planned to spread their father’s ashes in the Pacific Ocean in San Francisco, were furious. The band’s spokesman at the time called the dispute “a very painful family matter.”

News researcher Julia Franco contributed to this report