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# Arkansas Times

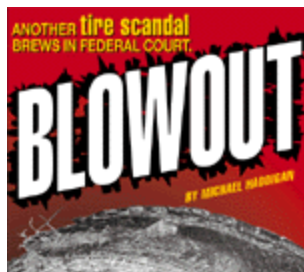
**Work of Arkansas lawyers contributed to Firestone recall**



Road Scholars: Attorneys Bruce Kaster, James F. Swindoll, Sandy Huckabee, Jerry Kelly and Paul Byrd represent families of the crash victims in the suit against Cooper Tire.

**By Michael Haddigan**  
*August 25, 2000*

FLORIDA LAWYER BRUCE KASTER bulldogged tire-failure lawsuits in relative obscurity for the last 15 years before being rocketed to prominence by the Firestone tire recall.



The *Wall Street Journal* recently called him "the nation's foremost authority on tires" and the tire industry's "public enemy No. 1."



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But if it weren't for the relentless investigative efforts of two Central Arkansas lawyers, Kaster says, the Firestone recall might not have

happened as it did.

Kaster says lawyers Paul Byrd of Little Rock and Jerry Kelly of Cabot pioneered several crucial avenues of investigation at Cooper Tire's Tupelo, Miss. factory that he later used to uncover problems at Firestone's Decatur, Ill., plant.

Kaster, who has for years served as a one man information clearinghouse for lawyers in tire litigation, is working on the Arkansas case with Byrd, Kelly, James F. Swindoll of Little Rock and Sandy Huckabee of Cabot.

Kaster's discoveries about production methods at the Decatur factory helped spur the recall.

"I went directly from Tupelo to Decatur. I just did what Paul and Jerry did," Kaster said.

Acting on advice from the Arkansas lawyers, the Ocala, Fla. lawyer said, he tracked down former Firestone plant employees and asked some of the same questions Byrd and Kelly had of former Cooper Tire workers in Texarkana and Tupelo, Miss.

Just as Byrd and Kelly documented in Arkansas and Mississippi, Kaster learned that Firestone workers in Decatur allegedly repaired tires by poking holes in them with an awl, that contamination of tires during manufacture was a common occurrence and that employees sometimes let bad tires slide through quality control checks, he said.

"They are the ones who get a lot of the credit for what we did in Decatur." Kaster said. "The whole country owes them a debt of gratitude."

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