

CRA appears on 'American Greed' as Weinberger saga concludes

When camera crews showed up at Commercial Recovery Associates' office in Chicago, they were eager to learn about one thing – the Nose Doctor.

It's a topic Commercial Recovery Associates is well versed in after years of working to wind down the former clinic of disgraced physician Mark Weinberger. Weinberger, the flashy so-called "Nose Doctor," is accused of performing bogus nose surgeries on hundreds of patients at his Merrillville, Ind., clinic and is facing trial on numerous insurance fraud charges. The firm ended its involvement in the Weinberger case in November.

Commercial Recovery Associates partner Bob Handler discussed the firm's role in the case in "Nose No Bounds," an episode of CNBC's "American Greed" documentary series. You can preview the episode [here](#).

Producers asked Commercial Recovery Associates to participate in the show after Weinberger's 2009 arrest made international headlines. Handler sat down with a CNBC reporter for a wide-ranging two-hour interview about the case's bizarre details.

"I talked to our lawyer about the appearance, and we agreed that I should stick to information that was public record," Handler says.

While Handler kept sensitive details private, including patient names and conditions, he still had plenty of stories to share about the wind-down.

"It's got to be one of the strangest cases we've ever worked on," Handler says.

Weinberger abandoned his clinic and fled the country in 2004 after authorities began investigating him, only to be found five years later living in a makeshift camp in the Italian Alps. The clinic's lender called Commercial Recovery Associates for help immediately after Weinberger's disappearance, and Commercial Recovery Associates attempted to salvage the practice before ultimately liquidating it.

The firm sold off assets individually to fetch the highest prices possible, including a luxury SUV sold to be used in the 2006 movie version of "Miami Vice." Handler also worked through a backlog of requests from employees, patients and creditors. The lenders banging down the clinic's door included Weinberger's own father, Fred, who had a \$1 million claim and eventually declared bankruptcy.

"That was one of the issues 'American Greed' asked me about during the interview," Handler says. "I told them the truth: I really feel sorry for Fred Weinberger."

Commercial Recovery Associates maintained the clinic's records after selling its assets, and recently transitioned them to the Indiana Attorney General's Office and, with court approval, to Weinberger's special counsel. More than 300 civil cases are pending against Weinberger, and records requests have poured in from former patients.

Weinberger was ordered last year to pay \$13 million to a former patient's estate after the first of the civil cases went to trial. He is also scheduled to go to trial in August on criminal charges after a judge rejected a plea deal that would have sent him to prison for four years.

“We dealt with a lot of requests,” Handler says. “The wind-down took a lot of time and effort, but we offered our services for as long as necessary, until the court resolved all the parties’ issues.”