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vs

JUL - 7 2016

STATE BAR COURT OF CALIFORNIA

**STATE BAR COURT CLERK'S OFFICE
SAN FRANCISCO**

HEARING DEPARTMENT – SAN FRANCISCO

In the Matter of)	Case No.: 15-O-12398-LMA
)	
GREGORY MACKEAN BENTLEY,)	
)	DECISION AND ORDER OF
Member No. 275923,)	INVOLUNTARY INACTIVE
)	ENROLLMENT
<u>A Member of the State Bar.</u>)	

In this matter, respondent Gregory Mackean Bentley (Respondent) was charged with three counts of misconduct involving commingling funds in his client trust account and failing to cooperate with a disciplinary investigation. Respondent failed to participate either in person or through counsel, and his default was entered. The Office of the Chief Trial Counsel of the State Bar of California (State Bar) filed a petition for disbarment under rule 5.85 of the Rules of Procedure of the State Bar.¹

Rule 5.85 provides the procedure to follow when an attorney fails to participate in a disciplinary proceeding after receiving adequate notice and opportunity. The rule provides that if an attorney's default is entered for failing to respond to the notice of disciplinary charges (NDC), and the attorney fails to have the default set aside or vacated within 90 days, the State Bar will file a petition requesting the court to recommend the attorney's disbarment.²

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all references to rules are to this source.

² If the court determines that any due process requirements are not satisfied, including adequate notice to the attorney, it must deny the petition for disbarment and take other appropriate action to ensure that the matter is promptly resolved. (Rule 5.85(F)(2).)

In the instant case, the court concludes that the requirements of rule 5.85 have been satisfied, and therefore, grants the petition and recommends that Respondent be disbarred from the practice of law.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Respondent was admitted to practice law in this state on May 18, 2011, and has been a member since then.

Procedural Requirements Have Been Satisfied

On December 7, 2015, the State Bar properly filed and served an NDC on Respondent by certified mail, return receipt requested, at his membership records address. The NDC notified Respondent that his failure to participate in the proceeding would result in a disbarment recommendation. (Rule 5.41.) The NDC was returned to the State Bar by the U.S. Postal Service as undeliverable.

In addition, reasonable diligence was used to notify Respondent of this proceeding. The State Bar made several attempts to contact Respondent without success. These efforts included mailing a copy of the NDC to Respondent at his membership records address, calling Respondent at his membership records telephone number and possible alternative telephone numbers, conducting an internet search for additional contact information, sending an email to Respondent at his membership records email address, and checking the Daily Journal's Directory of Attorneys for additional contact information.

Respondent failed to file a response to the NDC. On January 22, 2016, the State Bar filed and properly served a motion for entry of Respondent's default. The motion complied with all the requirements for a default, including a supporting declaration of reasonable diligence by the deputy trial counsel declaring the additional steps taken to provide notice to Respondent. (Rule 5.80.) The motion also notified Respondent that if he did not timely move to set aside his

default, the court would recommend his disbarment. Respondent did not file a response to the motion, and his default was entered on February 9, 2016. The order entering the default was served on Respondent at his membership records address by certified mail, return receipt requested. The court also ordered Respondent's involuntary inactive enrollment as a member of the State Bar under Business and Professions Code section 6007, subdivision (e), effective three days after service of the order, and he has remained inactively enrolled since that time.

Respondent also did not seek to have his default set aside or vacated. (Rule 5.83(C)(1) [attorney has 90 days to file motion to set aside default].) On May 17, 2016, the State Bar filed the petition for disbarment. As required by rule 5.85(A), the State Bar reported in the petition that: (1) it has had no contact with Respondent since the default was entered; (2) Respondent has other disciplinary matters pending; (3) Respondent has no prior record of discipline;³ and (4) the Client Security Fund has not made any payments resulting from Respondent's conduct.

Respondent did not respond to the petition for disbarment or move to set aside or vacate the default. The case was submitted for decision on June 14, 2016.

The Admitted Factual Allegations Warrant the Imposition of Discipline

Upon entry of Respondent's default, the factual allegations in the NDC are deemed admitted and no further proof is required to establish the truth of such facts. (Rule 5.82.) As set forth below in greater detail, the factual allegations in the NDC support the conclusion that Respondent is culpable as charged and, therefore, violated a statute, rule, or court order that would warrant the imposition of discipline. (Rule 5.85(F)(1)(d).)

³ The State Bar noted that Respondent recently pleaded guilty to two criminal matters. The State Bar was informed that on May 10, 2016, Respondent, on the way to an in-patient treatment program, escaped. His current whereabouts are unknown.

Case No. 15-O-12398 – The Client Trust Account Matter

Count One – Respondent willfully violated rule 4-100(A) of the Rules of Professional Conduct (commingling personal funds in trust) by depositing or commingling funds belonging to Respondent in his client trust account.

Count Two – Respondent willfully violated rule 4-100(A) of the Rules of Professional Conduct (commingling – payment of personal expenses from trust account) by issuing checks and electronic withdrawals from funds in Respondent’s client trust account for the payment of personal expenses.

Count Three – Respondent willfully violated Business and Professions Code section 6068, subdivision (i) (failing to cooperate in a disciplinary investigation) by failing to provide a substantive response to the allegations in a disciplinary investigation after being contacted by the State Bar.

Disbarment is Recommended

Based on the above, the court concludes that the requirements of rule 5.85(F) have been satisfied, and Respondent’s disbarment is recommended. In particular:

- (1) the NDC was properly served on Respondent under rule 5.25;
- (2) reasonable diligence was used to notify Respondent of the proceedings prior to the entry of his default;
- (3) the default was properly entered under rule 5.80; and
- (4) the factual allegations in the NDC deemed admitted by the entry of the default support a finding that Respondent violated a statute, rule, or court order that would warrant the imposition of discipline.

Despite adequate notice and opportunity, Respondent failed to participate in this disciplinary proceeding. As set forth in the Rules of Procedure of the State Bar, the court recommends disbarment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Disbarment

The court recommends that respondent Gregory Mackean Bentley be disbarred from the practice of law in the State of California and that his name be stricken from the roll of attorneys.

California Rules of Court, Rule 9.20

The court also recommends that Respondent be ordered to comply with the requirements of California Rules of Court, rule 9.20, and to perform the acts specified in subdivisions (a) and (c) of that rule within 30 and 40 days, respectively, after the effective date of the Supreme Court order in this proceeding.


Costs

The court further recommends that costs be awarded to the State Bar in accordance with Business and Professions Code section 6086.10, such costs being enforceable both as provided in Business and Professions Code section 6140.7 and as a money judgment.

ORDER OF INVOLUNTARY INACTIVE ENROLLMENT

In accordance with Business and Professions Code section 6007, subdivision (c)(4), the court orders that Gregory Mackean Bentley, State Bar number 275923, be involuntarily enrolled as an inactive member of the State Bar of California, effective three calendar days after the service of this decision and order. (Rule 5.111(D).)

Dated: July 7, 2016



LUCY ARMENDARIZ
Judge of the State Bar Court

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

[Rules Proc. of State Bar; Rule 5.27(B); Code Civ. Proc., § 1013a(4)]

I am a Case Administrator of the State Bar Court of California. I am over the age of eighteen and not a party to the within proceeding. Pursuant to standard court practice, in the City and County of San Francisco, on July 7, 2016, I deposited a true copy of the following document(s):

DECISION AND ORDER OF INVOLUNTARY INACTIVE ENROLLMENT

in a sealed envelope for collection and mailing on that date as follows:

- by first-class mail, with postage thereon fully prepaid, through the United States Postal Service at San Francisco, California, addressed as follows:

GREGORY M. BENTLEY
LAW OFFICE OF GREGORY M. BENTLEY
506 BROADWAY
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94133

- by interoffice mail through a facility regularly maintained by the State Bar of California addressed as follows:

ROBERT A. HENDERSON, Enforcement, San Francisco

I hereby certify that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed in San Francisco, California, on July 7, 2016.



Mazie Yip
Case Administrator
State Bar Court