

STATE BAR COURT OF CALIFORNIA
HEARING DEPARTMENT – SAN FRANCISCO

In the Matter of)	Case Nos.: 11-N-15217-LMA
)	
JOHN ST. JOHN,)	DECISION AND ORDER OF
)	INVOLUNTARY INACTIVE
Member No. 54642,)	ENROLLMENT
)	
<u>A Member of the State Bar.</u>)	

Respondent John St. John (respondent) was charged with disobeying or violating a court order by failing to comply with a court order requiring him to comply with California Rules of Court, rule 9.20 and violating California Rules of Court, rule 9.20, subdivision (c) and Business and Professions Code section 6103. He did not participate either in person or through counsel, and his default was entered. The Office of the Chief Trial Counsel (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),

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

and the attorney fails to have the default set aside or vacated within 180 days, the State Bar will file a petition requesting the court to recommend the attorney's disbarment.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 December 13, 1972, and has been a member since then.

Procedural Requirements Have Been Satisfied

On August 25, 2011, the State Bar filed and properly served the NDC on respondent by certified mail, return receipt requested, and by regular mail 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 return receipt indicates that the NDC was received on October 11, 2011.

Thereafter, the State Bar attempted to reach respondent by telephone at his official membership records telephone number and at an alternate listing obtained from directory assistance. Respondent does not maintain an email address listed in his membership records.³ An internet search did not produce an alternate physical address, telephone number or email address.

Respondent did not file a response to the NDC. On September 30, 2011, the State Bar filed and properly served a motion for entry of respondent's default. The motion complied with

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(E)(2).)

³ Effective February 1, 2010, all attorneys are required to maintain a current email address to facilitate communications with the State Bar. (Cal. Rules of Court, rule 9.7(a)(2).)

all the requirements for a default, including a supporting declaration of reasonable diligence by the State Bar 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, the court would recommend his disbarment. Respondent did not file a response to the motion, and his default was entered on October 18, 2011. 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 180 days to file motion to set aside default].) On April 18, 2012, 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 no disciplinary matters pending; (3) respondent has two records of prior discipline; and (4) the Client Security Fund (CSF) has not paid any claims as a result of respondent's misconduct in this matter. 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 May 15, 2012.

Respondent has been disciplined on two prior occasions.⁴ Pursuant to a Supreme Court order filed on April 27, 2010, respondent was suspended for one year, the execution of which was stayed, and he was placed on probation for three years, on conditions including 30 days' suspension. The misconduct involved two client matters. Respondent did not perform or inform his clients of significant developments. Respondent participated in the proceedings.

⁴ On the court's own motion, the court takes judicial notice of the relevant State Bar Court records regarding this prior discipline, admits them into evidence and directs the clerk to include copies in the record of this case.

Pursuant to a Supreme Court order filed on May 11, 2011, respondent was suspended from the practice of law for a minimum of one year and until he made specified restitution. Respondent did not file a response to the NDC in this matter, and his default was entered. Discipline was imposed in this matter for his noncompliance with probation conditions imposed in the prior disciplinary matter.

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(E)(1)(d).)

1. Case Number 11-N-15217 (Rule 9.20 Matter)

Count One - respondent violated California Rules of Court, rule 9.20(c) (duties of disbarred, resigned or suspended attorneys) and Business and Professions Code section 6103 (violation of court order) by not filing proof of compliance as required by rule 9.20(c) as ordered by the Supreme Court in its January 2011 order.

Disbarment is Mandated under the Rules of Procedure

Based on the above, the court concludes that the requirements of rule 5.85(E) have been satisfied, and respondent's disbarment must be 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, as the NDC was served on respondent at his membership records address by both certified and regular mail; the State Bar attempted to reach respondent by telephone at his

official membership records telephone number and at an alternate listing; and an internet search did not produce an alternate physical address, telephone number or email address;

(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 must recommend his disbarment.

RECOMMENDATION

Disbarment

The court recommends that respondent John St. John 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 John St. John, State Bar number 54642, 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: August _____, 2012

LUCY ARMENDARIZ
Judge of the State Bar Court