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SUPREME COURT OF NEW JERSEY

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September 30, 1997

Certified Mail - R.R.R. and Regular Mail

Santo J. Bonanno, Esq.
127 East Ridgewood Avenue
Ridgewood, New Jersey 07451

Re: In the Matter of Santo J. Bonanno
Docket No. DRB 97-238
LETTER OF ADMONITION

Dear Mr. Bonanno:

The Disciplinary Review Board has reviewed your conduct in the above matter and has concluded that it was improper. Specifically, on June 7, 1993 you were retained by Phyllis Moore to represent her in a civil rights suit. Before that, Phyllis Moore had filed a complaint pro se, but had not served it on the defendants. After you were retained, the matter was dismissed on June 28, 1993 for failure to serve the complaint. Thereafter, you took no action in the case until September 21, 1993, when you wrote to Ms. Moore indicating that you were slowly closing your practice and that you did not wish to take on any new cases. Given the matter's procedural posture and its imminent dismissal for failure to serve the defendants, your conduct in not communicating with Ms. Moore for three months constituted lack of diligence, in violation of RPC 1.3, and lack of communication, in violation of RPC 1.4(a).

Additionally, by court order dated August 23, 1995 you were required to notify the court and Ms. Moore of payments of \$200 per week to be made by John Searles, your client, and to be deposited in your trust account. The purpose of the weekly deposits was to protect Ms. Moore's ability to recover funds in the event of the ultimate success of her lawsuit. Ms. Moore was acting pro se in that litigation. Despite your duty to comply with the court order, you failed to disclose to the court and to Ms. Moore that two checks tendered by Mr. Searles had been returned for insufficient funds. Your conduct in this regard violated RPC 3.3(a)(5) and RPC 3.4(c).

I/M/O Santo J. Bonanno
DRB 97-238

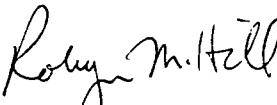
In imposing only an admonition, the Board considered that the dismissal of Ms. Moore's civil rights claim caused no actual damage to her, as she had no viable cause of action. The Board also noted that your failure to comply with the disclosure requirements of the court order did not cause any economic harm to Ms. Moore.

Your conduct adversely reflected not only upon you as an attorney, but also upon all members of the bar. Accordingly, the Board has directed the issuance of this admonition to you. R. 1:20-15 (f) (4).

A permanent record of this occurrence has been filed with the Clerk of the Supreme Court and the Board's office. Should you become the subject of any further discipline, it will be taken into consideration.

The Board has also directed that the costs of the disciplinary proceedings be assessed against you. An affidavit of costs will be forwarded under separate cover.

Very truly yours,


Robyn M. Hill

RMH:ms

- c. Chief Justice Deborah T. Poritz
- Associate Justices
- Stephen W. Townsend, Clerk
- Supreme Court of New Jersey
- Lee M. Hymerling, Chair
- Disciplinary Review Board
- David E. Johnson, Jr., Director
- Office of Attorney Ethics.
- Steven R. Rubenstein, Chair
- District IIA Ethics Committee
- Robert P. Contillo, Vice Chair
- District IIA Ethics Committee
- Morton R. Covitz, Secretary
- District IIA Ethics Committee
- Phyllis Moore, Grievant