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SUPREME COURT OF NEW JERSEY
Disciplinary Review Board
Docket No. DRB 97-160

IN THE MATTER OF
ARTHUR G. WILLIAMSON
AN ATTORNEY AT LAW

Decision
Default [R. 1:20-4(f)(1)]

Decided: November 18, 1997

To the Honorable Chief Justice and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of New Jersey.

Pursuant to R. 1:20-4(f)(1), the District IIB Ethics Committee ("DEC") certified the record in this matter directly to the Board for the imposition of discipline, following respondent's failure to file an answer to the formal ethics complaint. On July 24, 1996 service of the complaint was made by both certified and regular mail. The return receipt indicates delivery on July 25, 1996 at respondent's address: 265 Columbia Avenue, Fort Lee, New Jersey 07024. The signature of the accepting party appears to be that of a Samantha Cooley. A second letter was forwarded to respondent by regular mail on August 22, 1996 advising him that failure to answer the complaint within five days would result in treating the matter as a default. That regular mail was not returned.

Respondent was admitted to the New Jersey bar in 1981. On May 25, 1988 he was privately reprimanded for failure to carry out a contract of employment for professional services in a matrimonial matter and failure to return the file to the client. In addition, respondent was temporarily suspended by the Supreme Court on August 7, 1996, after a \$20,000 settlement check he gave to a client was returned for insufficient funds.

According to the complaint, respondent was retained to represent Richard and Lois Minkoff in the sale of a business. Following the closing of the sale on May 3, 1995 respondent failed to furnish to the Minkoffs an accounting of disbursements from the sale, failed to return documents after the closing and failed to return their telephone calls. As a result, Lois Minkoff filed a grievance against respondent on December 12, 1995. On January 5, 1996 she asserted that respondent had returned most of the paperwork, but still had not given a full explanation of how the escrow funds were disbursed.

By letter dated February 27, 1996, the DEC investigator requested that respondent reply to the grievance. Two days later, the Minkoffs notified the DEC that they had received all requested information from respondent and suggested that it was unnecessary to continue the investigation. The DEC nonetheless determined to proceed with the grievance. A telephone message left by the DEC investigator on respondent's answering machine was not returned. Respondent also failed to contact the investigator following receipt of his May 13, 1996 letter requesting respondent's cooperation. That letter notified respondent that his failure to cooperate would be the basis for the filing of a formal complaint with potential disciplinary sanctions and placed him at risk of temporary suspension on motion by the Office of Attorney Ethics. Respondent never replied to the investigator.

The ethics complaint charged respondent with violation of RPC 8.1(b), only.

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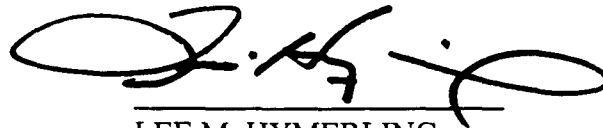
Following a de novo review of the record, the Board deemed the allegations contained in the complaint admitted, as provided by R.1:20-4(f)(1). The Board concluded that the record contains sufficient evidence of respondent's failure to cooperate with the disciplinary system, in violation of RPC 8.1(b).

This leaves only the issue of appropriate discipline. Similar misconduct would normally result in an admonition. See In the Matter of Robert P. Gorman, Docket No. DRB 94-437 (1995) (where an attorney received an admonition for his failure to submit a written response to the investigator's request for information about a grievance). Here, however, because respondent failed to answer the formal ethics complaint in addition to his failure to reply to the investigator, more significant discipline is required.

In light of the foregoing, the Board unanimously determined to impose a reprimand.

The Board further determined to require respondent to reimburse the Disciplinary Oversight Committee for administrative costs.

Dated: 11/18/97



LEE M. HYMERLING
Chair
Disciplinary Review Board

SUPREME COURT OF NEW JERSEY

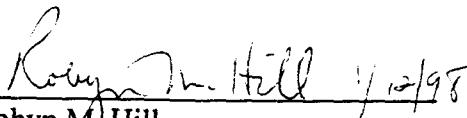
**DISCIPLINARY REVIEW BOARD
VOTING RECORD**

**In the Matter of Arthur G. Williamson
Docket No. DRB 97-160**

Decided: November 18, 1997

Disposition: Reprimand

Members	Disbar	Suspension	Reprimand	Admonition	Dismiss	Disqualified	Did not Participate
Hyerling			x				
Zazzali			x				
Huot			x				
Cole			x				
Lolla			x				
Maudsley			x				
Peterson			x				
Schwartz			x				
Thompson			x				
Total:			9				


Robyn M. Hill
Chief Counsel