

FAWN [REDACTED] FENTON

VS

JEFFREY RYAN FENTON

Hearing

August 29, 2019

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IN THE CHANCERY COURT FOR
WILLIAMSON COUNTY, TENNESSEE

FAWN [REDACTED] FENTON,)
)
)
Plaintiff,)
) No. 48419B
vs.)
)
JEFFREY RYAN FENTON,)
)
)
Defendant.)

HEARING
Before Judge Michael W. Binkley
August 29, 2019
11:20 a.m.

Reported by:
Harpeth Court Reporters
Franklin, Tennessee
Emily L. Sipe, RPR, LCR

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APPEARANCES:

For the Plaintiff:

VIRGINIA LEE STORY
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Franklin, Tennessee 37064
(615) 790-1778
Virginia@tnlaw.org

For the Defendant:

Pro se

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 00:42.2 THE COURT: I want that to be in the
3 Order because it's best that we put everything in the
4 Order. This gentleman, he's going to share and pay
5 one half of the per diem plus any expenses that he may
6 incur as a result of asking for all or a portion of
7 the transcript that will be ordered by him. Okay?

8 All right. Ms. Story?

9 01:19.4 MS. STORY: Your Honor, the motion that
10 we are here on today is a motion for violation of the
11 order of the court that was August 14th of '19. And
12 after the order was entered, there was a pretty scary
13 communication from Mr. Fenton. I am not here today to
14 argue about that motion necessarily. The more
15 pressing matter -- and that was his response, that is
16 the lengthy response we received this morning. It
17 deals more with the issues of why he made those
18 statements and those type of things.

19 02:05.7 But the more pressing issue, Your Honor,
20 was the deadlines for getting this house sold. So
21 having leased the property, 1986 Sunnyside Drive in
22 Brentwood, you ordered that it be sold by auction.
23 You ordered the attorneys to select an auctioneer,
24 which we did, and we got a referral from the chancery
25 court clerk's office. And it ended up it was Pat

1 Marlin, who was actually a Realtor, but he does
2 auctions and he used the services of Clyde Anderson.
3 You know Clyde. He had done auctions for many years
4 around here. And his son, Tommy Anderson, is now in
5 the business. So Mr. Anderson went out to the
6 property with Ms. Fenton, Mr. Fenton. We had some
7 difficulty with the scheduling date, but we were able
8 to get into the house. And Mr. Anderson, Mr. Duke,
9 who was Mr. Fenton's previous lawyer, and Ms. Yarbrow
10 from my office went to the property. Ms. Fenton
11 tagged the items like your Order told her to, and it
12 was our understanding that Mr. Fenton would be out of
13 the house by September 1. He said he was going to
14 Michigan and that's where his, I think, his mother
15 lives. I ~~think~~^{know} his father has a lake home in
16 Tennessee. That's where we thought maybe it would be
17 more logical for him to go, but that is up to him
18 where he wants to go.

19 03:49.1 What is obvious, Your Honor, is you're
20 going to have to set a date for him to be out. The
21 order said it would be auctioned 45 days from
22 August 1st, and so that would be -- this is in your
23 order of August the 16th. It would be 45 days from
24 the date of August 1st, the marital residence would be
25 sold by auction. And I have the auction contract here

1 for Mr. Fenton to sign, and I'm asking him to do that
2 today. If for any reason he refuses to sign, I'm
3 asking the court to put in the order that Ms. Fenton
4 have the authority to execute any and all documents
5 necessary for Mr. Anderson to get his property sold.

6 04:45.4 The other thing I think is important,
7 Your Honor is --

8 04:48.5 THE COURT: What do you suggest as a
9 deadline again?

10 04:49.8 MS. STORY: It was in the Order already.
11 It was September 15th. He said that he was moving
12 September 1st. That is Sunday.

13 04:59.8 MR. FENTON: That was my tenants move out
14 by then, and then I had 45 days was for me.

15 05:05.4 MS. STORY: That is not true. He said
16 that he had 45 days after September 1st to move, but
17 that wouldn't even make sense.

18 05:12.0 THE COURT: Okay. Well, what does the
19 Court Order say? Because I'm going to stick with
20 that.

21 05:15.6 MS. STORY: The Court Order says, "The
22 motion to sell marital residence by auction is granted
23 and the same shall be auctioned within 45 days from
24 the date of August 1st."

25 05:27.9 THE COURT: Okay.

1 05:29.5 MS. STORY: So he's got to be out for
2 them to get this place ready to go.

3 05:34.1 THE COURT: All right. What date do you
4 suggest?

5 05:36.7 MS. STORY: I have seen correspondence
6 where he said September 1st. Now he's saying he
7 can't. So I would suggest September 3rd, which is
8 next Tuesday. And I would like the Order to reflect
9 that the Williamson County sheriff's department will
10 accompany him. And at this point --

11 05:58.5 THE COURT: You mean off the property?

12 06:00.5 MS. STORY: Off the property. And I
13 don't think he needs to take any property.

14 06:04.4 What he did, Your Honor, in this response
15 he filed, they had a TV that -- a Sony TV, a big
16 screen, that my client's brother had given her. He
17 now tells me in this response that he sold it for
18 \$1,000. And then the other thing, there was a
19 dehumidifier in the basement that was like a \$2,500 to
20 3,500 dehumidifier for moisture. He sold that. So if
21 you let him take anything out at this point it's going
22 to be sold and he's dissipating marital assets, which
23 would be in violation of the restraining order.

24 06:45.5 And at this point Mr. Anderson, he can
25 tag everything, they can video everything. We will

They can video all the property

1 not disturb anything. If we have to use proceeds to
2 get a storage unit, we will do that for Mr. Fenton's
3 belongings. Mr. Fenton, in his response says he has a
4 fear of heights. And so driving to Michigan, he has
5 to drive over the Cincinnati bridge.

6 **07:12.5** MR. FENTON: Yeah. That's really hard
7 for me.

8 **07:14.4** MS. STORY: And so he says he can't drive
9 a U-Haul over it. So if we can just let him take his
10 clothing, his jewelry, his personal effects, whatever
11 he needs that he can pack in his car, and not have to
12 drive a U-Haul of furniture at this point, that might
13 be the best thing to do.

14 **07:33.1** MR. FENTON: Where is my furniture going
15 then?

16 **07:36.1** THE COURT: Wait a minute. We're doing
17 this one at a time. *Laughter*

18 **07:39.3** MR. FENTON: I'm sorry.

19 **07:41.5** THE COURT: Go ahead.

20 **07:42.1** MS. STORY: If he will tag the items that
21 he wants, like my client tagged the items per your
22 order, if he'll just put a tag on items he wants,
23 we'll make sure that those get stored, and then we can
24 use the proceeds from the sale. We're going to
25 deposit those into the clerk's office. And we can use

1 those to pay the next storage unit and then when he
2 gets ready to come here and get his things, or maybe
3 he wants to use some of his proceeds to have them
4 shipped to him since he, you know, does have a fear of
5 driving the U-Haul.

6 08:16.4 So I'm trying my best to be as
7 accommodating to him and considering his condition
8 that, you know, this is going to be a simple process
9 for him. He can take his clothes, his personal
10 property, be out September 3rd. We will tag
11 everything, take care of it. Mr. Anderson is not
12 going to destroy property. That's all I'm asking for.
13 And if he would sign the listing agreement today and
14 we put in the order that it be -- that she have the
15 authority to sign any other necessary documents in
16 case he does go to Michigan. It would be a little
17 bit, logistically, difficult to do that.

18 08:56.6 THE COURT: What do you want me to do
19 with this violation of the Order?

20 08:59.8 MS. STORY: Just continue it. We can
21 just reset that portion of the motion. He just filed
22 a response today. I'm fine to -- the ex parte remains
23 in effect anyway under the Order of the Court, and I
24 have not seen any further violations of that Order.
25 The selling of the marital property is a concern to me

1 but I can deal with that at final hearing. One of the
2 things, too, is you might want to waive mediation in
3 this case. I have requested in my motion that
4 mediation be waived. There is an Order of Protection
5 where they are not to be around each other. It would
6 be difficult for a mediator to accommodate that. And
7 I think that it really is just settling personal
8 property. They don't have any -- and then whatever
9 comes from the proceeds. They have no children.

10 09:45 THE COURT: That's granted.

11 09:48.2 Okay, sir, let me talk to you about one
12 thing. We're narrowing the issues before the Court
13 today.

14 09:56.6 MR. FENTON: Okay.

15 09:57.5 THE COURT: We're not going to be talking
16 about the violation of the Order of Protection.
17 That's going to be reset. So all of these documents
18 you have don't apply to today.

19 10:06.5 MR. FENTON: Well, the back portion of
20 them does talk about the marital residence but there
21 is a lot of it about what you're saying, yes.

22 10:13.5 THE COURT: Now, let me just ^{say} ~~tell~~ you
23 this -- and I just want to be clear about this. I
24 don't want to get into an emotional discussion about
25 what I will do and what I won't do. Let me just tell

1 you how it, works. Once I put a Court order down, I
2 really expect people to obey it.

3 10:34.4 MR. FENTON: Yes.

4 THE COURT: And so the only way a judge
5 can enforce a Court order if someone refuses to do it,
6 and we're seeing it more and more, people are doing
7 what they want to do and not really paying attention
8 to a Court order. And I'm taking the time to tell you
9 this because I don't want you and me to have problems
10 with this.

11 10:55.3 MR. FENTON: No.

12 10:56.5 THE COURT: And let me tell you, my
13 personal feeling is, as a judge, a judge who does not
14 back up his or her Court order is worthless.

15 11:06.2 Now, if you have a reasonable excuse for
16 disobeying an order, I will certainly hear it. And
17 the last thing I want to do is put someone in jail for
18 violating an order.

19 11:18.4 MR. FENTON: Yes. And that's the last
20 thing I want, too.

21 11:20.6 THE COURT: Sure. Right. And so you and
22 I have an understanding. And so you don't know me but
23 I do mean what I say.

24 11:26.8 MR. FENTON: I believe that.

25 11:28.7 THE COURT: Okay. Good. And so we can

1 dispense with the rest of that.

2 11:32.1 MR. FENTON: And just as a question, were
3 we saying that I disobeyed ^athe Court order? Because I
4 had ~~to~~ tried ...

5 11:38.9 THE COURT: No, no, we don't have
6 anything like that really in front of us but --

7 11:43.5 MR. FENTON: Okay.

8 11:44.9 THE COURT: But let me tell you what I'm
9 going to do here because we have to get moving.

10 11:48.9 MR. FENTON: Right. Can I still tell a
11 little bit of my side before you rule on all of that?

12 11:52.9 THE COURT AH...
13 11:56.6 THE COURT: Briefly.

14 11:58.0 MR. FENTON: Okay. So basically on my
15 side, the narrative that has been brought to the Court
16 so far is completely fraudulent about my person, about
17 who I am, about me being violent. All of this stuff.
18 The documentation that I provided you with shows that
19 my wife is a highly skilled handgun instructor who
20 owns assault weapons, has 5,000 rounds of ammunition
21 under her bed. I mean, she is trained by the NRA,
22 certified by the State of Tennessee to do rape
23 prevention, pepper spray, everything. So the whole
24 guise of feeling physically endangered was not -- she
25 tried to do that with her first attorney -- she called the
police....

12:43.1 THE COURT: We're not dealing with that
(interrupted)

1 today.

2 12:44.2 MR. FENTON: I know. But that's
3 basically the tone under which everything else is laid
4 and that's --

5 12:50.2 THE COURT: I practiced law for 35 years.
6 Long, hard years in the trenches.

7 12:55.1 MR. FENTON: Right.

8 12:55.7 THE COURT: I am trained to separate
9 things in my mind that are important --

10 12:58.4 MR. FENTON: Okay.

11 THE COURT: -- and things that are
12 unimportant. And I'm not trying to be rude to you,
13 but you've got to trust me here. If you were a
14 lawyer, I would be telling you the same thing. I
15 would be saying, "Lawyer, that's not relevant to me
16 right now."

17 13:15.1 MR. FENTON: Right.

18 13:14.0 THE COURT: I don't really care about all
19 that. That's for another day. But let me just tell
20 you this.

21 13:18.4 MR. FENTON: Okay.

22 13:19.6 THE COURT: These are real easy issues.
23 I have got to put an order down for you to be out of
24 that house.

25 13:27.6 MR. FENTON: I understand that.

1 13:28.7 THE COURT: On September 3rd.
2 13:30.0 MR. FENTON: Can I speak a little more
3 first?
4 13:31.8 THE COURT: Nope, no, no, no....
5 13:33.6 MR. FENTON: I can't be out that quick,
6 Your Honor. Everything that I own is left in personal
7 property. To say that I just take my clothes and lose
8 everything I've owned all my life is not fair. That
9 is not at all fair. And I don't mean to be hard. I'm
10 willing to do things as quick as possible, but I
11 cannot possibly move out without a two-week's time to
12 do it. And I need to have some time where I know that
13 there is not going to be anymore litigation for a
14 while because I can't -- with the ADHD -- and one of
15 the things I provided you is something from my
16 psychiatrist on the different disorders I have, but I
17 cannot physically do -- be a lawyer, play a lawyer,
18 and packing at the same time. For example, ~~that's~~ I spent the last
19 week...
20 14:17.5 THE COURT: Sir, I respect that. But we
21 all have burdens.
22 14:21.8 MR. FENTON: Well --
23 14:21.9 THE COURT: Let me talk. We all have
24 burdens. Everybody in this room has things going on
25 in their lives to one extent or another, just like you
do.

1 **14:31.6** MR. FENTON: Right.

2 **14:32.8** THE COURT: I can't make excuses for
3 that. Listen to what I'm saying. I don't want you
4 and I to get crossways with each other. We have to
5 get a date set. I'm not going to make it two weeks.

6 **14:46** MR. FENTON: Well, originally we had said
7 the 45th, and that's when I understood that date that
8 I had to be out. And I never communicated with her
9 anything other than that. You had said 30 days for my
10 roommates and that's what I always thought it was.
11 And originally my understanding was I was staying
12 there while I was selling the property so I could stay
13 there till closing. Now, I understand that's not my
14 preference and I understand it's not their preference.
15 I'm willing to do that different, but I need to
16 have -- I have 3,000 square feet of stuff.

17 **15:16.9** THE COURT: What about another day in
18 September? The first week in September?

19 **15:23.0** MS. STORY: And, again, we're not going
20 to dispose of any of his personal items.

21 **15:26.8** THE COURT: They're not taking anything
22 out of there. Do you understand that, sir?

23 **15:28.6** MR. FENTON: My understanding is --

24 **15:29.5** THE COURT: Whoa, whoa.

25 **15:30.5** MR. FENTON: No, I don't understand.

1 15:30.2 THE COURT: Your personal property. Your
2 clothes. Personal property being like your watch.

3 15:39.2 MR. FENTON: Furniture. That's all.

4 15:39.7 THE COURT: No.

5 15:40.1 MR. FENTON: We already agreed when me
6 and my wife split it up that ^{what was left at} the house was mine. What
7 she came and tagged is ^{what's} hers.

8 15:47.5 THE COURT: This isn't working. What you
9 want to do is be a lawyer.

10 15:55.8 MR. FENTON: No, I don't. I can't afford
11 a lawyer.

12 15:58.7 THE COURT: I'm talking right now. This
13 is not a barroom. I have to maintain order.

14 16:06.2 MR. FENTON: Uh-huh.

15 16:06.9 THE COURT: I don't want you to get your
16 feelings hurt, but if you get your feelings hurt,
17 that's your business. I have got to maintain the
18 integrity of this hearing. You need to quit
19 interrupting me. And I'm going to make a ruling and
20 you're going to have to stick with it.

21 16:20.4 MR. FENTON: Yeah.

22 16:22.4 THE COURT: All right? You are going to
23 have to.

24 We are not touching any of the furniture
25 and furnishings. You are to tag the items that you

16:28.9 MR. FENTON - So what happens...

1 would like to have. Go buy some little tags, you
2 know.

3 16:37.6 MR. FENTON: But I wanted to take them
4 with me so I'm only going over the bridge one time.
5 That's what I was saying.

6 16:42.8 THE COURT: Well, I know that you would
7 like to do that but we're not doing that. Okay?
8 That's not the fair way to do it. And I'm not going
9 to sit here and explain to you why it's not because
10 it's part of the law that you assume when you stand up
11 and start representing yourself. Assume that you
12 know.

13 16:57.1 MR. FENTON: Okay. Then I would
14 rather → stay in the house while it's on auction

15 16:58.3 THE COURT: I can't talk while you're
16 talking.

17 17:05.1 MR. FENTON: Okay. I'm sorry. I would
18 rather stay in the house during the auction with that
19 being the case. But the only reason I was going to
20 leave ahead of time → is because

21 17:10.6 THE COURT: You're not going to stay in
22 the house.

23 17:12.1 MR. FENTON: I'm not going to stay in the
24 house?

25 17:13.3 THE COURT: No, sir. You're going to

1 leave by September 3rd noon, and you've got to be out
2 of there or the sheriff will escort you off the
3 property.

4 17:20.6 MR. FENTON: So^{what} have I done wrong to
5 receive that kind of treatment, Your Honor? I mean,
6 my wife had two months to move out. *I mean we made a*
bunch of trips

7 17:30.1 THE COURT: Sir, we have already talked
8 about all that. We had a previous hearing. We have a
9 previous Court Order. You're representing yourself.
10 You're assuming^{ed} to know everything we've already
11 talked about. I'm not going to go over it with you
12 and spend four hours --

13 17:42.9 MR. FENTON: I understand.

14 17:43.9 THE COURT: Excuse me. Trying to be nice
15 to you when you are presumed to know and understand
16 what we have already done. I'm trying my best to be
17 patient with you and you're trying my patience. I'm
18 just letting you know.

19 17:59.1 MR. FENTON: I'm not trying to -- my last
20 counsel had told me --

21 18:01.9 THE COURT: Sir, I'm not interested in
22 what your counsel told you. I'm sorry. It's not
23 important to me at this point.

24 Now, let's go back to what I was saying.
25 I want you out of the house by 12 noon September 3rd.

1 If you're not out, the sheriff will escort you off the
2 property. Do you understand that?

3 18:21.4 MR. FENTON: Yeah.

4 18:22.2 THE COURT: Number two, you are not to
5 take with you any furniture, any furnishings, anything
6 like that. All of that is going to remain in the home
7 for now. You are to tag the items that you would like
8 to have. That doesn't mean you're going to get them,
9 but that you -- may I finish, please?

10 18:42 MR. FENTON: Uh-huh.

11 18:43.6 THE COURT: Is that a yes?

12 18:44.1 MR. FENTON: Yes, sir.

13 18:45.3 THE COURT: You are to tag the items that
14 you would like to have.

15 18:48.8 MR. FENTON: Uh-huh.

16 18:51.8 THE COURT: In addition, you're to sign
17 this contract today.

18 18:59.6 MR. FENTON: On the last Court Order you
19 said that I could take my stuff with me after the
20 ten-day walkthrough. That's what your last Court
21 Order said, and I would like to be able to do that.

22 19:11.3 THE COURT: The day that you leave or
23 that you have -- you have between now and
24 September 3rd to get your personal items and you out
25 of there.

1 19:21.2 MR. FENTON: Yeah.

2 19:23.0 THE COURT: Do you understand that? Your
3 19:25.7 MR FENTON: My Furniture, too?
4 personal items, sir. You're not stupid. Listen,
5 please. Your personal items are your clothes, your
6 personal jewelry, and that's it.

7 19:36.9 MR. FENTON: My bed or my furniture?

8 19:38.9 THE COURT: No, sir. I'm going to say it
9 for the third time. No furniture, no furnishings, no
10 nothing.

11 19:46.7 MR. FENTON: That's not what you said in
12 the last order.

13 19:49.3 THE COURT: Sir, you're not paying
14 attention. You're not listening to what has happened.
15 You're not paying attention to anything. And I'm not
16 going to spend three or four hours here at the -- just
17 trying to be nice to you and go through everything
18 again. I'm just not going to do that. You're
19 expected to know all of this.

20 Now, you're choosing to represent
21 yourself. There's not a thing that I can do about
22 that.

23 20:14.1 MR. FENTON: I -- don't have any other money.

24 20:17.1 THE COURT: Excuse me. I'm talking.
25 When you choose to represent yourself,
 you take it upon yourself to know all of the rules,

1 the law, everything.

2 **20:31.1** Now, that doesn't sound fair but that's
3 part of why we have to do it. We can't sit here and
4 be your lawyer for you and start explaining things to
5 you.

6 **20:38.8** MR. FENTON: Okay.

7 **20:39.2** THE COURT: I will try to be as
8 accommodating and as nice to you as I possibly can. I
9 don't think you're accepting that very well.

10 **20:47.1** MR. FENTON: I'm not trying to be
11 stubborn.

12 **20:49.4** THE COURT: You're trying to fuss with me
13 and argue with me and that's not what we're going to
14 do today.

15 **20:53.1** MR. FENTON: I'm not trying to fuss and
16 argue with you. It's not what I understood your last
17 order to be. *and it wasn't....*

18 **21:01.5** THE COURT: I'm going to go over it one
19 more time. *and then this is the last time.*

20 **21:04.3** MR. FENTON: I heard you, *Your Honor, you don't*
have to

21 **21:54.4** THE COURT: No. I don't want there to be
22 any misunderstanding because you have interrupted me
23 several times.

24 **21:09.8** MR. FENTON: Can I say one thing?

25 **21:13.1** THE COURT: No. Listen. Don't try my

1 patience.

2 21:17.2 MR. FENTON: I'm not trying to.

3 21:18.5 THE COURT: Yeah, you are.

4 21:19.3 MR. FENTON: No, I'm not.

5 21:20.5 THE COURT: Well, quit being rude. This
6 is what we're doing. You're going to sign this
7 contract now. Give it to him, Ms. Story.

8 21:45.1 You are to be out of the house. Do not
9 take any furniture, furnishings, or anything. But
10 you're to be out September 3rd at noon. The only
11 thing you can take with you -- I'm saying this for the
12 fourth time because I don't want there to be a
13 misunderstanding. This is going to be a court order.
14 Now, items that you would like to have, that doesn't
15 mean you're going to get them, tag them. Put a tag on
16 them. Go to the 5 and 10 store, get some red tags,
17 whatever, and say I want this. Post it. Or just put
18 "H" on it, or something like that. Just commonsense.

19 22:22.2 Wait a minute. I'm not through.

20 22:26.5 There will be a deputy there to make sure
21 that you followed the Court Order and do what you're
22 supposed to do. That means -- let me finish. You
23 keep wanting to interrupt. You're not listening to
24 what I'm saying. You're thinking about what you're
25 going to tell me. And then I don't want you coming in

1 and say, Judge, I didn't really understand that.

2 **22:53.6** Because I've been down this road with
3 folks who represent themselves. They don't get it.
4 They don't understand, and then they whine and
5 bellyache and come back and say that just wasn't fair.

23:04.8 6 Fair is something you do in the fall. This is a
7 courtroom. You are expected to know the rules. I am
8 trying to be as cordial and as nice to you as I can
9 **MR. FENTON: Thank you** but you're not letting me. All right.

10 **23:21.4** You signed the agreement, you understand
11 that you're to be out September 3rd at 12 noon, no
12 later. Not one minute later. You're to tag the items
13 that you would like to have before you leave. Do you
14 understand that?

15 **23:35.4** MR. FENTON: Yes, sir.

16 **23:38.7** THE COURT: Do not, in the meantime, move
17 anything else out of that house. Do not sell
18 anything. Do you understand me?

19 **23:45.6** MR. FENTON: Uh-huh.

20 **23:47.3** THE COURT: Is that a yes?

21 **23:47.9** MR. FENTON: Yes. Yes, Your Honor.

22 THE COURT: Well, "uh-huh" doesn't --

23 **23:50.2** MR. FENTON: I'm sorry. Yes, Your Honor.

24 **23:51.9** THE COURT: We're not in the bar. We're
25 in the courtroom.

1 23:53.3 MR. FENTON: Okay.

2 23:57.9 THE COURT: All right. What else,
3 Ms. Story?

4 23:58.1 MS. STORY: That'll do it. We can
5 account for the items he sold at a later time and
6 address that.

7 24:03.3 MR. FENTON: Can I make a comment about
8 those, Your Honor?

9 24:05.2 THE COURT: No.

10 24:05.3 MR. FENTON: That is before this was in
11 Court.

12 24:09.4 THE COURT: No, sir. I'm sorry. I've
13 got to have a tight rein on this case. I knew that
14 there were going to be problems at the beginning and
15 I'm going to keep a tight rein and whatever I need to
16 do to maintain the integrity of these Orders to
17 maintain the integrity of this lawsuit, and for you to
18 understand what your role is as a litigant
19 representing themselves. I'm going to have to keep a
20 tight rein on you. I would love to be nice --

21 24:35.3 MR. FENTON: ~~I'm not~~ -- I just want it to
 be FAIR.

22 24:38.8 THE COURT: Let me finish. Let me
23 finish.

24 24:40.6 That would be much easier but you won't
25 let me do it. So anything else, Ms. Story?

1 24:45.4 MS. STORY: Since he probably will be
2 moving to Michigan, I would be amenable to him
3 attending the final hearing by telephone if he doesn't
4 want to drive back. And I can tell you, I will try to
5 accommodate him in any way I can.

6 25:02.5 THE COURT: I know you will. You already
7 have.

8 25:06.3 MS. STORY: And, also, the order probably
9 needs to say that Ms. Fenton can execute any other
10 documents that need to be executed because he might
11 not be here to sign anything, that Mr. Anderson might
12 need signed. So I would like to be able to put that
13 in the Order.

14 25:20.6 THE COURT: All right. Then if you'll
15 prepare the Order, that'll take care of us. That's
16 what we're doing. That's the Order of the Court.
17 Thank you very much.

18 25:22.4 (Proceedings were adjourned at 11:44 a.m.)
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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, Emily L. Sipe, Court Reporter and Notary Public, do hereby certify that I recorded to the best of my skill and ability by machine shorthand all the proceedings in the foregoing transcript, and that said transcript is a true, accurate, and complete transcript to the best of my ability.

I further certify that I am not an attorney or counsel of any of the parties, nor a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel connected with the action, nor financially interested in the action.

SIGNED this 18th day of September 2019.

Emily L. Sipe

Emily L. Sipe, RPR, LCR
Tennessee LCR No. 608
Expires: 6/30/2020

\$	A			
\$1,000 6:18	a.m. 24:18	auction 3:22 4:25 5:22 16:18	care 8:11 12:18 24:15	court 3:2,11,25 5:3,8,18,19,21,25 6:3,11 7:16,19 8:18,23 9:10,12, 15,22 10:1,4,5,8, 12,14,21,25 11:3, 5,8,12,14,25 12:5,8,11,18,22 13:1,4,19,22 14:2,17,21,24 15:1,4,8,12,15,22 16:6,15,21,25 17:7,9,14,21 18:4,11,13,16,18, 20,22 19:2,7,12, 23 20:7,12,18,21, 25 21:3,5,13,21 22:16,20,22,24 23:2,9,11,12,22 24:6,14,16
\$2,500 6:19	accepting 20:9	auctioned 4:21 5:23	case 8:16 9:3 16:19 23:13	crossways 14:4
1	accommodate 9:6 24:5	auctioneer 3:23	certified 11:21	D
1 4:13	accommodating 8:7 20:8	auctions 4:2,3	chancery 3:24	date 4:7,20,24 5:24 6:3 14:5,7
10 21:16	accompany 6:10	August 3:11 4:22,23,24 5:24	children 9:9	day 12:19 14:17 18:22
11:44 24:18	account 23:5	authority 5:4 8:15	choose 19:24	days 4:21,23 5:14,16,23 14:9
12 17:25 22:11	addition 18:16	B	choosing 19:19	deadline 5:9
14th 3:11	address 23:6	back 9:19 10:14 17:24 22:5 24:4	Cincinnati 7:5	deadlines 3:20
15th 5:11	ADHD 13:14	bar 22:24	clear 9:23	deal 9:1
16th 4:23	adjourned 24:18	barroom 15:13	clerk's 3:25 7:25	dealing 11:25
19 3:11	afford 15:10	basement 6:19	client 7:21	deals 3:17
1986 3:21	agreed 15:5	basically 11:13 12:3	client's 6:16	dehumidifier 6:19,20
1st 4:22,24 5:12, 16,24 6:6	agreement 8:13 22:10	bed 11:20 19:6	closing 14:13	department 6:9
3	ahead 7:19 16:20	beginning 23:14	clothes 8:9 13:7 15:2 19:4	deposit 7:25
3,000 14:16	amenable 24:2	bellyache 22:5	clothing 7:10	deputy 21:20
3,500 6:20	ammunition 11:19	belongings 7:3	Clyde 4:2,3	destroy 8:12
30 14:9	Anderson 4:2,4, 5,8 5:5 6:24 8:11 24:11	big 6:15	comment 23:7	diem 3:5
35 12:5	anymore 13:13	bit 8:17 11:11	commonsense 21:18	difficult 8:17 9:6
3rd 6:7 8:10 13:1 17:1,25 18:24 21:10 22:11	apply 9:18	Brentwood 3:22	communicated 14:8	
4	argue 3:14 20:13, 16	bridge 7:5 16:4	communication 3:13	
45 4:21,23 5:14, 16,23	assault 11:19	Briefly 11:12	completely 11:15	
45th 14:7	assets 6:22	brother 6:16	concern 8:25	
5	assume 16:10,11	brought 11:14	condition 8:7	
5 21:16	assuming 17:10	burdens 13:20, 23	continue 8:20	
5,000 11:19	attending 24:3	business 4:5 15:17	contract 4:25 18:17 21:7	
	attention 10:7 19:13,14	buy 16:1	cordial 22:8	
	attorney 11:24	C	correspondenc e 6:5	
	attorneys 3:23	car 7:11	counsel 17:20, 22	
			County 6:9	

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difficulty 4:7	22:7	furnishings 15:25 18:5 19:8 21:9	hurt 15:16	lawsuit 23:17
discussion 9:24	expenses 3:5	furniture 7:12,14 15:3,24 18:5 19:6,8 21:9	<hr/> I <hr/>	lawyer 4:9 12:14, 15 13:17 15:9,11 20:4
disobeyed 11:3	explain 16:9	fuss 20:12,15	important 5:6 12:9 17:23	leased 3:21
disobeying 10:16	explaining 20:4	<hr/> G <hr/>	incur 3:6	leave 16:20 17:1 18:22 22:13
disorders 13:16	extent 13:24	gentleman 3:4	instructor 11:18	left 13:6
dispense 11:1	<hr/> F <hr/>	Give 21:7	integrity 15:18 23:16,17	lengthy 3:16
dispose 14:20	fair 13:8,9 16:8 20:2 22:5,6	Good 10:25	interested 17:21	letting 17:18 22:9
dissipating 6:22	fall 22:6	granted 5:22 9:10	interrupt 21:23	life 13:8
disturb 7:1	father 4:15	guise 11:23	interrupted 20:22	Listen 14:3 19:3 20:25
documentation 11:17	fear 7:4 8:4	<hr/> H <hr/>	interrupting 15:19	listening 19:13 21:23
documents 5:4 8:15 9:17 24:10	feeling 10:13 11:23	half 3:5	issue 3:19	listing 8:13
drive 3:21 7:5,8, 12 24:4	feelings 15:16	handgun 11:18	issues 3:17 9:12 12:22	litigant 23:18
driving 7:4 8:5	feet 14:16	happened 19:13	items 4:11 7:20, 21,22 14:20 15:25 18:7,13,24 19:3,4 21:14 22:12 23:5	litigation 13:13
Duke 4:8	Fenton 3:13 4:6, 10,12 5:1,3,13 7:3,6,14,18 9:14, 19 10:3,11,19,24 11:2,7,10,13 12:2,7,10,17,21, 25 13:2,5,21 14:1,6,23,25 15:3,5,10,14,21 16:3,13,17,23 17:4,13,19 18:3, 10,12,15,18 19:1, 6,10,22 20:6,10, 15,20,24 21:2,4 22:15,19,21,23 23:1,7,10,21 24:9	hard 7:6 12:6 13:9	<hr/> J <hr/>	lives 4:15 13:24
<hr/> E <hr/>	Fenton's 4:9 7:2	he'll 7:22	jail 10:17	logical 4:17
easier 23:24	filed 6:15 8:21	hear 10:16	jewelry 7:10 19:5	logistically 8:17
easy 12:22	final 9:1 24:3	heard 20:20	judge 10:4,13 22:1	Long 12:6
effect 8:23	fine 8:22	hearing 9:1 15:18 17:8 24:3	<hr/> K <hr/>	lose 13:7
effects 7:10	finish 18:9 21:22 23:22,23	heights 7:4	kind 17:5	lot 9:21
emotional 9:24	folks 22:3	highly 11:18	knew 23:13	love 23:20
endangered 11:23	fourth 21:12	home 4:15 18:6	<hr/> L <hr/>	<hr/> M <hr/>
ended 3:25	fraudulent 11:15	Honor 3:9,19 4:19 5:7 6:14 13:6 17:5 22:21, 23 23:8	laid 12:3	made 3:17
enforce 10:5	front 11:6	hours 17:12 19:15	lake 4:15	maintain 15:13, 17 23:16,17
entered 3:12		house 3:20 4:8, 13 12:24 15:6 16:18,22,24 17:25 21:8 22:17	law 12:5 16:10 20:1	make 5:17 7:23 14:2,5 15:19 21:20 23:7
escort 17:2 18:1				marital 4:24 5:22 6:22 8:25 9:20
excuse 10:15 17:14 19:23				Marlin 4:1
excuses 14:2				matter 3:15
execute 5:4 24:9				means 21:22
executed 24:10				
expect 10:2				
expected 19:18				

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meantime 22:16	order 3:3,4,11,12 4:11,21,23 5:3, 10,19,21 6:8,23 7:22 8:14,19,23, 24 9:4,16 10:1,5, 8,14,16,18 11:3 12:23 15:13 17:9 18:18,21 19:11 20:17 21:13,21 24:8,13,15,16	point 6:10,21,24 7:12 17:23	<hr/> Q <hr/>	restraining 6:23
mediation 9:2,4		portion 3:6 8:21 9:19	question 11:2	result 3:6
mediator 9:6		possibly 13:11 20:8	quick 13:5,10	road 22:2
Michigan 4:14 7:4 8:16 24:2		Post 21:17	quit 15:18 21:5	role 23:18
mind 12:9		practiced 12:5	<hr/> R <hr/>	room 13:23
mine 15:6		preference 14:14	rape 11:21	roommates 14:10
minute 7:16 21:19 22:12	ordered 3:7,22, 23	prepare 24:15	ready 6:2 8:2	rounds 11:19
misunderstandi ng 20:22 21:13	Orders 23:16	pressing 3:15,19	real 12:22	rude 12:12 21:5
moisture 6:20	originally 14:6, 11	presumed 17:15	Realtor 4:1	rule 11:11
months 17:6	owned 13:8	pretty 3:12	reason 5:2 16:19	rules 19:25 22:7
morning 3:16	owns 11:19	prevention 11:22	reasonable 10:15	ruling 15:19
mother 4:14	<hr/> P <hr/>	previous 4:9 17:8,9	receive 17:5	<hr/> S <hr/>
motion 3:9,10,14 5:22 8:21 9:3	pack 7:11	problems 10:9 23:14	received 3:16	sale 7:24
move 5:13,16 13:11 17:6 22:16	packing 13:18	proceedings 24:18	red 21:16	scary 3:12
moving 5:11 11:9 24:2	part 16:10 20:3	proceeds 7:1,24 8:3 9:9	referral 3:24	scheduling 4:7
<hr/> N <hr/>	parte 8:22	process 8:8	reflect 6:8	screen 6:16
narrative 11:14	Pat 3:25	property 3:21 4:6,10 5:5 6:11, 12,13 8:10,12,25 9:8 13:7 14:12 15:1,2 17:3 18:2	refuses 5:2 10:5	select 3:23
narrowing 9:12	patience 17:17 21:1	Protection 9:4, 16	rein 23:13,15,20	sell 5:22 22:17
necessarily 3:14	patient 17:17	provided 11:17 13:15	relevant 12:15	selling 8:25 14:12
nice 17:14 19:16 20:8 22:8 23:20	pay 3:4 8:1	psychiatrist 13:16	remain 18:6	sense 5:17
noon 17:1,25 21:10 22:11	paying 10:7 19:12,14	put 3:3 5:3 7:22 8:14 10:1,17 12:23 21:15,17 24:12	remains 8:22	separate 12:8
NRA 11:20	people 10:2,6		represent 19:19, 24 22:3	September 4:13 5:11,12,16 6:6,7 8:10 13:1 14:18 17:1,25 18:24 21:10 22:11
Number 18:4	pepper 11:22		representing 16:11 17:9 23:19	services 4:2
<hr/> O <hr/>	person 11:15		requested 9:3	set 4:20 14:5
obey 10:2	personal 7:10 8:9 9:7 10:13 13:6 14:20 15:1,2 18:24 19:3,4,5		reset 8:21 9:17	settling 9:7
obvious 4:19	physically 11:23 13:17		residence 4:24 5:22 9:20	share 3:4
office 3:25 4:10 7:25	place 6:2		respect 13:19	sheriff 17:2 18:1
	play 13:17		response 3:15, 16 6:14,17 7:3 8:22	sheriff's 6:9
			rest 11:1	shipped 8:4
				shows 11:17
				side 11:11,14

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sign 5:1,2 8:13, 15 18:16 21:6 24:11	stubborn 20:11	thought 4:16 14:10	understanding 4:12 10:22 14:11, 23	<hr/> Y <hr/>
signed 22:10 24:12	stuff 11:16 14:16 18:19	tight 23:13,15,20	understood 14:7 20:16	Yarbro 4:9
simple 8:8	stupid 19:3	till 14:13	unimportant 12:12	years 4:3 12:5,6
sir 9:11 13:19 14:22 16:25 17:7, 21 18:12 19:3,7, 12 22:15 23:12	suggest 5:8 6:4, 7	time 7:17 10:8 13:11,12,18 16:4, 20 19:8 20:19 21:12 23:5	unit 7:2 8:1	
sit 16:9 20:3	Sunday 5:12	times 20:23	<hr/> V <hr/>	
skilled 11:18	Sunnyside 3:21	today 3:10,13 5:2 8:13,22 9:13,18 12:1 18:17 20:14	video 6:25	
sold 3:20,22 4:25 5:5 6:17,20,22 23:5	supposed 21:22	told 4:11 17:20, 22	violating 10:18	
son 4:4	<hr/> T <hr/>	Tommy 4:4	violation 3:10 6:23 8:19 9:16	
Sony 6:15	tag 6:25 7:20,22 8:10 15:25 18:7, 13 21:15 22:12	tone 12:3	violations 8:24	
sound 20:2	tagged 4:11 7:21 15:7	touching 15:24	violent 11:16	
speak 13:2	tags 16:1 21:16	trained 11:20 12:8	<hr/> W <hr/>	
spend 17:12 19:15	taking 10:8 14:21	transcript 3:7	Wait 7:16 21:19	
split 15:6	talk 9:11,20 13:22 16:15	treatment 17:5	waive 9:2	
spray 11:22	talked 17:7,11	trenches 12:6	waived 9:4	
square 14:16	talking 9:15 15:12 16:16 19:23	true 5:15	walkthrough 18:20	
stand 16:10	telephone 24:3	trust 12:13	wanted 16:3	
start 16:11 20:4	telling 12:14	Tuesday 6:8	wanting 21:23	
State 11:21	tells 6:17	TV 6:15	watch 15:2	
statements 3:18	ten-day 18:20	two-week's 13:11	weapons 11:19	
stay 14:12 16:18, 21,23	tenants 5:13	type 3:18	week 14:18	
staying 14:11	Tennessee 4:16 11:21	<hr/> U <hr/>	weeks 14:5	
stick 5:19 15:20	that'll 23:4 24:15	U-HAUL 7:9,12 8:5	whine 22:4	
storage 7:2 8:1	thing 5:6 6:18 7:13 9:12 10:17, 20 12:14 19:20 20:24 21:11	uh-huh 15:14 18:10,15 22:19, 22	whoa 14:24	
store 21:16	things 3:18 8:2 9:2 12:9,11 13:10,15,23 20:4	understand 12:25 14:13,14, 22,25 17:13,15 18:2 19:2 22:1,4, 10,14,18 23:18	wife 11:18 15:6 17:6	
stored 7:23	thinking 21:24		Williamson 6:9	
Story 3:8,9 5:10, 15,21 6:1,5,12 7:8,20 8:20 14:19 21:7 23:3,4,25 24:1,8			working 15:8	
			works 10:1	
			worthless 10:14	
			wrong 17:4	

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**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN**

JEFFREY RYAN FENTON,

PLAINTIFF

v.

VIRGINIA LEE STORY ET AL.,

DEFENDANTS

CASE NO. 1:23-cv-1097

**DECLARATION CERTIFYING THE AUTHENTICITY AND ACCURACY OF
8/29/2019 TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE AND AUDIO RECORDING OF HEARING**

Plaintiff brings this testimony pursuant to F.R.Civ.P. 26(c).

I, Jeffrey Ryan Fenton, declare under oath as follows:

1. My name is Jeffrey Ryan Fenton.
2. I am the plaintiff in this federal lawsuit.
3. I am 54 years of age.
4. I am a citizen of the United States of America.
5. I am domiciled in Genesee County, Michigan.
6. My mailing address is 17195 Silver Parkway, #150, Fenton, MI 48430-3426.
7. Ms. Fawn Tiffany Fenton (hereinafter “Ms. Fenton”, “wife”, and “ex-wife”) and

I were together for fifteen years, thirteen of which we were married.

8. To reduce duplicity in the documentation filed with the court in this case, please

see my “List of Declarations by Jeffrey Ryan Fenton”, available both on the record in this federal lawsuit, as well as on the Internet¹. Each of my declarations named and linked from this list are incorporated into this document by reference.

9. This list of declarations shall be updated as I am able to complete more, to provide the most robust and complete set of facts which I am capable of producing at each moment and time, considering the other challenges which I must simultaneously face and manage, due to my need to represent myself *pro se* in this lawsuit.

10. These facts are related both to the precipitating cases in the State of Tennessee, as well as my numerous attempts to obtain a cure through the courts, their oversight boards, and both state and federal law enforcement agencies.

11. To date, absolutely zero relief has been within my reach, despite the egregious felonies committed against me by the defendants in this case.

12. I am an ADA party², qualified under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1994, recognized as a vulnerable party, for consideration and accommodations to help me be able to realistically participate in, receive adequate protection from, and obtain justice through the federal judiciary of the United States of America.

13. Due to my disabilities (including both communication disabilities as well as my lack of education), further compounded by the extreme level of fraud committed in the precipitating actions by numerous powerful members of the court, I am literally unable to concisely articulate

¹ <https://rico.jefffenton.com/evidence/fenton-list-of-declarations-to-date.pdf>

² <https://rico.jefffenton.com/evidence/fenton-declaration-of-disabilities.pdf>

the depth and breadth of the crimes that have been committed against me and the damages which I have and continue to daily suffer, in a single “linear” document format, such as in a long all-encompassing declaration or affidavit.

14. A more in-depth explanation is provided in my “Declaration of Disabilities³”.

15. My August 29th, 2019 hearing in docket #48419B took place inside the “Historic Williamson County Courthouse” found on Main Street (U.S. 31) at 3rd Avenue South in Franklin, Tennessee.

16. On information and belief, the street address for the Historic Williamson County Courthouse is believed to be 305 Public Square, Franklin, TN 37064. (It is within walking distance of the County Judicial Center found at 135 4th Avenue South, Franklin, TN 37064.)

17. In attendance at this hearing were Chancellor Michael Weimar Binkley, opposing Counsel Attorney Virginia Lee Story, and myself, Jeffrey Ryan Fenton.

18. I represented myself *pro se* as of the start of this hearing, because I could no longer afford legal counsel after my home was ordered to be auctioned during my very first hearing in docket #48419B, prior to the start of discovery.

19. At the beginning of this hearing Chancellor Binkley exited the Court Room and procured the services of Emily L. Sipe, RPR, LCR, Tennessee LCR No. 608, with Harpeth Court Reporters for the purpose of recording our hearing.

20. After which I requested to hire her, and Attorney Story agreed to split the per diem

³ <https://rico.jefffenton.com/evidence/fenton-declaration-of-disabilities.pdf>

with me for her services.

21. Chancellor Binkley put his arrangement on the record at the top of the transcripts, stating: *“I want that to be in the Order because it's best that we put everything in the Order. This gentleman, he's going to share and pay one half of the per diem plus any expenses that he may incur as a result of asking for all or a portion of the transcript that will be ordered by him.”*

22. I also asked Chancellor Binkley for his permission to allow me to record the audio from that hearing, with a voice recorder I had brought with me. Chancellor Binkley openly approved in court, prior to me turning the device on. After which it continued to record the entire hearing, uninterrupted.

23. My mother and I meticulously and repeatedly compared the official transcripts of evidence prepared by licensed court reporter Emily L. Sipe, RPR, LCR, Tennessee LCR No. 608, with the audio recording from that same hearing, recorded with the permission of Judge Michael Weimar Binkley.

24. My mother and I carefully synchronized the audio recording with the written transcript, by writing the timestamps from the audio to the left of each new paragraph in the transcript (except when extremely short).

25. We methodically did this throughout the roughly 30-minute-long hearing.

26. This transcript consists of 25-typed pages, not counting the index.

27. My mother and I also made very minor language and grammatical corrections to Ms. Sipe's typed transcripts (to match what was said, having the exact audio clearly recorded, by which to verify it).

28. To easily differentiate the certified original transcripts from any corrections or timestamps which we made on the documents, we performed our work by hand, using bold red ink.

29. No pages or original text was removed, deleted, covered-up, or made illegible.

30. Beyond what is clearly recognizable, notated with red ink, using manual handwriting (instead of by any digital or typed process), I hereby provide my sworn declaration and oath, under the penalty of perjury, that no other modification⁴, addition, or subtraction was executed upon this certified original transcript⁵ of evidence from this 8/29/2019 hearing in Williamson County Chancery Court.

31. Similarly, audio recording “2019-08-29_chancery-hearing-audio-recording.mp3”, is the original, authentic, true verbatim audio recording⁶, of the same August 29, 2019 hearing in Williamson County Chancery Court.

32. This recording was performed with the permission of Chancellor Michael Weimar Binkley, granted immediately prior to starting my recording device.

33. This audio recording was created in good faith, and has been retained in its entirety, as is evidenced by the content matching nearly perfectly with the certified original transcript of evidence, recorded by licensed Tennessee court reporter, Emily L. Sipe, RPR, LCR No. 608.

⁴ Publishing exceptions: I've added a footer throughout showing the document and case information, as well as the URL to where both the written transcript and the audio recording can be found online. I've also redacted my ex-wife's middle name for her privacy.

This declaration has also been appended to the transcript for simplicity, authentication, and ease of use.

Documentation regarding the violations of law, the federal rules, and the rules of professional conduct may also be added.

⁵ https://rico.jefffenton.com/evidence/2019-08-29_chancery-hearing-transcript-audio-markers.pdf

⁶ https://rico.jefffenton.com/evidence/2019-08-29_chancery-hearing-audio-recording.mp3

34. I believe that this audio recording is necessary to establish, determine, and prove the context, tone, respect, abuse, forcefulness, harassment, manner, concern, coercion, and care shown by defendants Binkley and Story during this critical hearing.

35. I do not believe that the above characteristics can be accurately determined and gauged by reading the typed transcripts alone, without hearing the actual words spoken.

36. I believe that the evidentiary value of this audio recording, increases the evidentiary value of the certified original transcript of evidence⁷.

37. I conversely believe that the evidentiary value of the certified original transcript⁸ of evidence, validates and increases the evidentiary value of this audio recording.⁹

38. On information and belief, I believe that it is self-evident that through cross-referencing and examination, that both this transcript of evidence combined with this audio recording from the same hearing, provide a far more comprehensive, complete, and accurate record of evidence from this hearing.

39. On information and belief, the conduct of the court and counsel during this one hearing is one of the most critical pieces of evidence I have for demonstrating the excessive foul-play between defendants Binkley and Story.

40. The only editing performed on this audio recording was to remove noise while attempting to balance and clarify our voices. The metadata was also populated to provide

⁷ https://rico.jefffenton.com/evidence/2019-08-29_chancery-hearing-transcript-audio-markers.pdf

⁸ https://rico.jefffenton.com/evidence/2019-08-29_chancery-hearing-transcript-audio-markers.pdf

⁹ https://rico.jefffenton.com/evidence/2019-08-29_chancery-hearing-audio-recording.mp3

contextual information.

41. I Jeffrey Ryan Fenton hereby provide my sworn declaration and oath, under the penalty of perjury, that this audio recording has not been added to, subtracted from, or modified in any way to change the factual contents of the testimony given in court on 8/29/2019.

42. I further certify and swear that this audio recording¹⁰ is an authentic, true, and complete audio recording of my hearing in Williamson County Chancery Court on 8/29/2019.

43. On information and belief, this audio evidence, when tested and verified against the true facts of the matters herein, the supreme law of the land, the judicial canons, the federal rules, the State of Tennessee's Rules of both Judicial and Professional Conduct, the record to date in docket #48419B, and the claims, demands, and orders by defendants Story and Binkley herein, prove that significant criminal misconduct was performed during this hearing by defendants Story and Binkley. At the same time a level of bias and collusion were demonstrated by defendant Binkley which clearly exceeded any tolerable threshold, by which defendant Binkley was stripped of all lawful authority prior to any valid orders being issued by this court.

44. Because defendant Binkley refused to recuse himself despite his obvious bias against me and his unlawful and even unethical actions in favor of defendant Story and her client, not only was every order of this court without lawful jurisdiction and authority due to him having been automatically disqualified by 455(a), but the lawless demands by defendant Story and the lawless orders by defendant Binkley were performed without legal authority and are in fact void.

¹⁰ https://rico.jefffenton.com/evidence/2019-08-29_chancery-hearing-audio-recording.mp3

45. Said orders constituted felony crimes committed against me, my life, my property, and my person, by defendants Binkley and Story, under the color of law, office, and official right, though wholly repugnant of the law.

46. On page-6, lines 20-23 of this transcript of evidence, defendant Story stated, *“So if you let him take anything out at this point it's going to be sold and he's dissipating marital assets, which would be in violation of the restraining order.”* **This is a bold face lie.**

47. On page-2, section IV of attorney Story's divorce complaint filed in #48419B, it states, *“Plaintiff would show that the parties have no assets other than personal property which has been divided with the exception of a few items. Husband and Wife have lived separately since April 2018.”*

IV.

Plaintiff would show that the parties have no assets other than personal property which has been divided with the exception of a few items. Husband and Wife have lived separately since April 2018.

Husband refuses to work and has not paid the mortgage payment or assisted with the mortgage payment in the bills of the house. Wife has spoken to Husband and made every attempt to have the house sold

**Wife's Complaint for Divorce, Page 2, Section IV
Case 1:23-cv-01097-PLM-RSK, ECF 1-17, PageID.648**

48. Hence the claim that I was “dissipating marital assets” wasn't even physically possible in any meaningful capacity.

49. In the previous court order from the 8/1/2019 hearing, while I had the benefit of counsel, before I was financially forced to represent myself pro se in this court, the order of the court from the 8/1/2019 hearing stated in part, *“Husband will take such actions as necessary to*

move items of personal property that he would like to retain and tag, price or do whatever steps are necessary to sell the remaining items of personal property. The remaining items at the house that Husband does not take and Wife does not take shall be sold at auction.”

50. I did no more or less than I was allowed to per the express order of the court from the 8/1/2019 hearing by defendants Story and Binkley.

51. Yet I was chastised, harassed, and harshly punished under the false, fraudulent, and substantially impossible claims by defendant Story, “*So if you let him take anything out at this point it's going to be sold and he's dissipating marital assets, which would be in violation of the restraining order.*”

52. This was the clear crime of “**obstruction of justice**”, while I have evidence from both before and after that hearing, which clearly prove that Attorney Story was well aware that her claims were false. She intentionally “cried wolf”, with deceptive claims, for the specific purpose of having my wrongfully evicted from my home, and subsequently the State of Tennessee.

53. On information and belief, I believe that in this intentionally obstructive act by defendant Story, she committed both State and Federal felony crimes against me, while she also violated a multitude the State of Tennessee’s Rules of Professional Conduct.

54. On information and belief, I believe that defendant Story committed at least the following violations of Professional Conduct, by exerting these fraudulent claims:

Tenn. R. Sup. Ct. 8.4 – Misconduct:

- It is professional misconduct for a lawyer to:

- (c) engage in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation;
- (d) engage in conduct that is prejudicial to the administration of justice;

Tenn. R. Sup. Ct. 3.5 – Impartiality and Decorum of The Tribunal

- A lawyer shall not:
- (e) engage in conduct intended to disrupt a tribunal.

Tenn. R. Sup. Ct. 3.4 – Fairness to Opposing Party and Counsel

- A lawyer shall not:
- (e) in trial,
 - (1) allude to any matter that the lawyer does not reasonably believe is relevant or that will not be supported by admissible evidence; or
 - (2) assert personal knowledge of facts in issue except when testifying as a witness; or
 - (3) state a personal opinion as to the justness of a cause, the credibility of a witness, the culpability of a civil litigant or the guilt or innocence of an accused; or
- (g) request or assist any person **to take action that will render the person unavailable to appear** as a witness by way of deposition or at trial

55. During the 8/1/2019 hearing, the Court and Counsel evicted my tenants, who paid me \$1,400 per month in rents.

56. My rental income was my only stream of income¹¹, at that moment and time, due to the secret betrayal by my ex-wife and her counsel without lawful or ethical notice.

57. On information and belief, the result of my 8/1/2019 hearing was the court ordered auction of my marital residence, with no minimums.

58. On information and belief, the court knew that I was not employed at that moment, nor was I capable of immediately obtaining employment due to my disabilities combined with defendant Story's aggressive litigation. The changes which were being forced upon me during that month and a half demanded all of my attention to simply survive while trying not to lose more of my life, my freedom, or my property than was required by the circumstances and parties involved.

59. On information and belief, the events which took place and the testimony that was recorded during this 8/29/2019 hearing, are of critical value and consequence to my life and liberty, in my pursuit for justice without discrimination or bias.

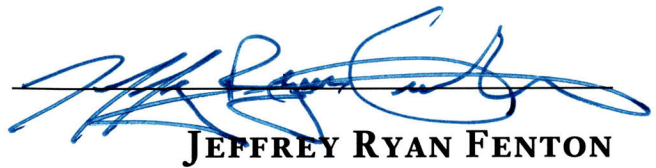
60. None of this has been provided for any improper purpose.

¹¹ https://rico.jefffenton.com/evidence/2019-03-26_fenton-sunnyside-roommate-lease-merriman.pdf
https://rico.jefffenton.com/evidence/2019-04-09_fenton-sunnyside-roommate-lease-garcia.pdf

DECLARATION

Pursuant to 28 U.S. Code § 1746, I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct, except as to matters herein stated to be on information and belief, and as to such matters, I certify as aforesaid that I verily believe the same to be true.

Executed on January 10, 2024



JEFFREY RYAN FENTON

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FENTON, MI, 48430-3426

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A list of all my published declarations of fact and testimony can be found online at:
<https://rico.jefffenton.com/evidence/fenton-list-of-declarations-to-date.pdf>

Tenn. R. Sup. Ct. 2.11

Rule 2.11 - Disqualification

(A) A judge shall disqualify himself or herself in any proceeding in which the judge's impartiality might reasonably be questioned, including but not limited to the following circumstances:

(1) The judge has a personal bias or prejudice concerning a party or a party's lawyer, or personal knowledge of facts that are in dispute in the proceeding.

(2) The judge knows that the judge, the judge's spouse or domestic partner, or a person within the third degree of relationship to either of them, or the spouse or domestic partner of such a person is:

(a) a party to the proceeding, or an officer, director, general partner, managing member, or trustee of a party;

(b) acting as a lawyer in the proceeding;

(c) a person who has more than a de minimis interest that could be substantially affected by the proceeding; or

(d) likely to be a material witness in the proceeding.

(3) The judge knows that he or she, individually or as a fiduciary, or the judge's spouse, domestic partner, parent, or child, or any other member of the judge's family residing in the judge's household, has an economic interest in the subject matter in controversy or is a party to the proceeding.

(4) The judge knows or learns by means of a timely motion that a party, a party's lawyer, or the law firm of a party's lawyer has made contributions or given such support to the judge's campaign that the judge's impartiality might reasonably be questioned.

(5) The judge, while a judge or a judicial candidate, has made a public statement, other than in a court proceeding, judicial decision, or opinion, that commits or appears to commit the judge to reach a particular result or rule in a particular way in the proceeding or controversy.

(6) The judge:

(a) served as a lawyer in the matter in controversy, or was associated with a lawyer who participated substantially as a lawyer in the matter during such association;

(b) served in governmental employment, and in such capacity participated personally and substantially as a lawyer or public official concerning the proceeding, or has publicly expressed in such capacity an opinion concerning the merits of the particular matter in controversy;

(c) was a material witness concerning the matter;

(d) previously presided as a judge over the matter in an inferior court; or

(e) previously participated in a judicial settlement conference in the matter. Prior participation in a judicial settlement conference does not prohibit the judge from disposing of any uncontested issues in the matter.

(B) A judge shall keep informed about the judge's personal and fiduciary economic interests, and make a reasonable effort to keep informed about the personal economic interests of the judge's spouse or domestic partner and minor children residing in the judge's household.

(C) A judge subject to disqualification under this Rule, other than for bias or prejudice under paragraph (A)(1) or for participation in a judicial settlement conference under paragraph (A)(6)(e), may disclose on the record the basis of the judge's disqualification and may ask the parties and their lawyers to consider, outside the presence of the judge and court personnel, whether to waive disqualification. If, following the disclosure, the parties and lawyers agree, without participation by the judge or court personnel, that the judge should not be disqualified, the judge may participate in the proceeding. The agreement shall be incorporated into the record of the proceeding.

(D) Upon the making of a motion seeking disqualification, recusal, or a determination of constitutional or statutory incompetence, a judge shall act promptly by written order and either grant or deny the motion. If the motion is denied, the judge shall state in writing the grounds upon which he or she denies the motion.

Tenn. R. Sup. Ct. 2.11

Comment

[1] *Under this Rule, a judge is disqualified whenever the judge's impartiality might reasonably be questioned, regardless of whether any of the specific provisions of paragraphs (A)(1) through (6) apply. In many jurisdictions, the term "recusal" is used interchangeably with the term "disqualification."*

[2] *A judge is obligated not to hear or decide matters in which disqualification is required, even though a motion to disqualify is not filed.*

[3] *The rule of necessity may override the rule of disqualification. For example, a judge might be required to participate in judicial review of a judicial salary statute, or might be the only judge available in a matter requiring immediate judicial action, such as a hearing on probable cause or a temporary restraining order. In matters that require immediate action, the judge must disclose on the record the basis for possible disqualification and make reasonable efforts to transfer the matter to another judge as soon as practicable.*

[4] *The fact that a lawyer in a proceeding is affiliated with a law firm with which a relative of the judge is affiliated does not itself disqualify the judge. If, however, the judge's impartiality might reasonably be questioned under paragraph (A), or the relative is known by the judge to have an interest in the law firm that could be substantially affected by the proceeding under paragraph (A)(2)(c), the judge's disqualification is required.*

[5] *A judge should disclose on the record information that the judge believes the parties or their lawyers might reasonably consider relevant to a possible motion for disqualification, even if the judge believes there is no basis for disqualification.*

[6] "Economic interest," as set forth in the Terminology section, means ownership of more than a de minimis legal or equitable interest. Except for situations in which a judge participates in the management of such a legal or equitable interest, or the interest could be substantially affected by the outcome of a proceeding before a judge, it does not include:

- (1) an interest in the individual holdings within a mutual or common investment fund;
- (2) an interest in securities held by an educational, religious, charitable, fraternal, or civic organization in which the judge or the judge's spouse, domestic partner, parent, or child serves as a director, officer, advisor, or other participant;
- (3) a deposit in a financial institution or deposits or proprietary interests the judge may maintain as a member of a mutual savings association or credit union, or similar proprietary interests; or
- (4) an interest in the issuer of government securities held by the judge.

[7] The fact that a lawyer in a proceeding, or a litigant, contributed to the judge's campaign, or supported the judge in his or her election does not of itself disqualify the judge. Absent other facts, campaign contributions within the limits of the "Campaign Contributions Limits Act of 1995," Tennessee Code Annotated Title 2, Chapter 10, Part 3, or similar law should not result in disqualification. However, campaign contributions or support a judicial candidate receives may give rise to disqualification if the judge's impartiality might reasonably be questioned. In determining whether a judge's impartiality might reasonably be questioned for this reason, a judge should consider the following factors among others:

- (1) The level of support or contributions given, directly or indirectly, by a litigant in relation both to aggregate support (direct and indirect) for the individual judge's campaign and to the total amount spent by all candidates for that judgeship;
- (2) If the support is monetary, whether any distinction between direct contributions or independent expenditures bears on the disqualification question;
- (3) The timing of the support or contributions in relation to the case for which disqualification is sought; and
- (4) If the supporter or contributor is not a litigant, the relationship, if any, between the supporter or contributor and (i) any of the litigants, (ii) the issue before the court, (iii) the judicial candidate or opponent, and (iv) the total support received by the judicial candidate or opponent and the total support received by all candidates for that judgeship.

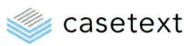
[8] Trial judges sometimes sit by designation on courts of appeal, and vice versa. Such judges should not hear cases over which they presided in a different court, and paragraph A(6)(d) makes that clear. This Rule, however, applies only to judges who have heard the case in "an inferior court," and does not apply to a judge who decided a case on a panel of an appellate court subsequently participating in the rehearing of the case en banc with that same court.

[9] There are several bases upon which a judge should determine whether to preside over a case. These include this Rule, Tennessee Constitution Article VI, Section 11 (incompetence) and Tenn. Code Ann. Title 17, Chapter 2 (incompetence, disability and interchange). This Rule requires judges to employ constitutional, statutory and procedural rules to determine motions for issues related to whether the judge should preside over a case. For example, Tenn. Sup. Ct. R. 10B governs the filing and disposition of motions for disqualification or recusal, as well as appeals from the denial of such motions.

[10] In rare instances, a motion for recusal might seek the recusal of all judges sitting as a multi-judge court (i.e., an intermediate appellate court or the Supreme Court). Paragraph (A) of this Rule provides that "[a] judge shall disqualify himself or herself in any proceeding in which the judge's impartiality might reasonably be questioned[.]" Also, the specific grounds for disqualification listed in this Rule necessarily apply to individual judges. For both reasons, a motion seeking to recuse all members of a multi-judge court must be treated as an individual motion as to each judge of the court; each judge therefore must rule upon the motion as to the alleged grounds pertaining to that individual judge.

[11] In courts not of record, such as general sessions and municipal courts, a written notation on the judgment, warrant, citation or other pleading before the court is sufficient to meet the requirements in paragraph (D) that the judge file a "written order" and, if denying the motion, that "the judge shall state in writing the grounds upon which he or she denies the motion." In those courts, no separate order regarding the motion need be filed by the judge.

Rule 2.12



28 U.S.C. § 455

Section 455 - Disqualification of justice, judge, or magistrate judge

(a) Any justice, judge, or magistrate judge of the United States shall disqualify himself in any proceeding in which his impartiality might reasonably be questioned.

(b) He shall also disqualify himself in the following circumstances:

(1) Where he has a personal bias or prejudice concerning a party, or personal knowledge of disputed evidentiary facts concerning the proceeding;

(2) Where in private practice he served as lawyer in the matter in controversy, or a lawyer with whom he previously practiced law served during such association as a lawyer concerning the matter, or the judge or such lawyer has been a material witness concerning it;

(3) Where he has served in governmental employment and in such capacity participated as counsel, adviser or material witness concerning the proceeding or expressed an opinion concerning the merits of the particular case in controversy;

(4) He knows that he, individually or as a fiduciary, or his spouse or minor child residing in his household, has a financial interest in the subject matter in controversy or in a party to the proceeding, or any other interest that could be substantially affected by the outcome of the proceeding;

(5) He or his spouse, or a person within the third degree of relationship to either of them, or the spouse of such a person:

(i) Is a party to the proceeding, or an officer, director, or trustee of a party;

(ii) Is acting as a lawyer in the proceeding;

(iii) Is known by the judge to have an interest that could be substantially affected by the outcome of the proceeding;

(iv) Is to the judge's knowledge likely to be a material witness in the proceeding.

(c) A judge should inform himself about his personal and fiduciary financial interests, and make a reasonable effort to inform himself about the personal financial interests of his spouse and minor children residing in his household.

(d) For the purposes of this section the following words or phrases shall have the meaning indicated:

(1) "proceeding" includes pretrial, trial, appellate review, or other stages of litigation;

(2) the degree of relationship is calculated according to the civil law system;

(3) "fiduciary" includes such relationships as executor, administrator, trustee, and guardian;

Tenn. R. Sup. Ct. 3.4

Rule 3.4 - Fairness to Opposing Party and Counsel

A lawyer shall not:

- (a) unlawfully obstruct another party's access to evidence or unlawfully alter, destroy, or conceal a document or other material having potential evidentiary value. A lawyer shall not counsel or assist another person to do any such act; or
- (b) falsify evidence, counsel or assist a witness to offer false or misleading testimony; or
- (c) knowingly disobey an obligation under the rules of a tribunal, except for an open refusal based on an assertion that no valid obligation exists; or
- (d) in pretrial procedure, make a frivolous discovery request or fail to make a reasonably diligent effort to comply with a legally proper discovery request by an opposing party; or
- (e) in trial,
 - (1) allude to any matter that the lawyer does not reasonably believe is relevant or that will not be supported by admissible evidence; or
 - (2) assert personal knowledge of facts in issue except when testifying as a witness; or
 - (3) state a personal opinion as to the justness of a cause, the credibility of a witness, the culpability of a civil litigant or the guilt or innocence of an accused; or
- (f) request a person other than a client to refrain from voluntarily giving relevant information to another party unless:
 - (1) the person is a relative or an employee or other agent of a client; and
 - (2) the lawyer reasonably believes that the person's interests will not be adversely affected by refraining from giving such information; or
- (g) request or assist any person to take action that will render the person unavailable to appear as a witness by way of deposition or at trial; or
- (h) offer an inducement to a witness that is prohibited by law; or pay, offer to pay, or acquiesce in the payment of compensation to a witness contingent on the content of his or her testimony or the outcome of the case. A lawyer may advance, guarantee, or acquiesce in the payment of:
 - (1) expenses reasonably incurred by a witness in attending or testifying;
 - (2) reasonable compensation to a witness for that witness's loss of time in attending or testifying; or
 - (3) a reasonable fee for the professional services of an expert witness.

Tenn. R. Sup. Ct. 3.4

Comment

[1] The procedure of the adversary system contemplates that the evidence in a case is to be marshaled competitively by the contending parties. Fair competition in the adversary system is secured by prohibitions against destruction or concealment of evidence, improperly influencing witnesses, obstructive tactics in discovery procedure, and the like.

[2] Documents and other items of evidence are often essential to establish a claim or defense. Subject to evidentiary privileges, the right of an opposing party, including the government, to obtain evidence through discovery or subpoena is an important procedural right. The exercise of that right can be frustrated if relevant material is altered, concealed, or destroyed. Applicable law in many jurisdictions makes it an offense to destroy material for the purpose of impairing its availability in a pending proceeding or one whose commencement can be foreseen. Falsifying evidence is also generally a criminal offense. Paragraph (a) applies to evidentiary material generally, including computerized information. Applicable law may permit a lawyer to take temporary possession of physical evidence of client crimes for the purpose of conducting a limited examination that will not alter or destroy material characteristics of the evidence. In such a case, applicable law may require the lawyer to turn the evidence over to the police or other prosecuting authority, depending on the circumstances.

[3] Although paragraph (f) broadly prohibits lawyers from taking extrajudicial action to impede informal fact-gathering, it does permit the lawyer to request that the lawyer's client, and relatives, employees, or agents of the client, refrain from voluntarily giving information to another party. This principle follows because such relatives and employees will normally identify their interests with those of the client. See also RPC 4.2.

[4] With regard to paragraph (h), it is not improper to pay a witness's expenses or to compensate an expert witness on terms permitted by law. The common law rule in most jurisdictions is that it is improper to pay an occurrence witness any fee for testifying and that it is improper to pay an expert witness a contingent fee.

DEFINITIONAL CROSS-REFERENCES "Knowingly" See RPC 1.0(f) "Material" See RPC 1.0(o) "Reasonable" and "reasonably" See RPC 1.0(h) "Reasonably believes" See RPC 1.0(i) "Tribunal" See RPC 1.0(m)

Tenn. R. Sup. Ct. 8.4

Rule 8.4 - MISCONDUCT

It is professional misconduct for a lawyer to:

- (a) violate or attempt to violate the Rules of Professional Conduct, knowingly assist or induce another to do so, or do so through the acts of another;
- (b) commit a criminal act that reflects adversely on the lawyer's honesty, trustworthiness, or fitness as a lawyer in other respects;
- (c) engage in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation;
- (d) engage in conduct that is prejudicial to the administration of justice;
- (e) state or imply an ability to influence a tribunal or a governmental agency or official on grounds unrelated to the merits of, or the procedures governing, the matter under consideration;
- (f) knowingly assist a judge or judicial officer in conduct that is a violation of applicable rules of judicial conduct or other law; or
- (g) knowingly fail to comply with a final court order entered in a proceeding in which the lawyer is a party, unless the lawyer is unable to comply with the order or is seeking in good faith to determine the validity, scope, meaning, or application of the law upon which the order is based.

Tenn. R. Sup. Ct. 8.4

Comment

[1] Lawyers are subject to discipline when they violate or attempt to violate the Rules of Professional Conduct, knowingly assist or induce another to do so, or do so through the acts of another, as when they request or instruct an agent to do so on the lawyer's behalf. Paragraph (a), however, does not prohibit a lawyer from advising a client concerning action the client is legally entitled to take.

[2] Many kinds of illegal conduct reflect adversely on fitness to practice law, such as offenses involving fraud and the offense of willful failure to file an income tax return. However, some kinds of offenses carry no such implication. Traditionally, the distinction was drawn in terms of offenses involving "moral turpitude." That concept can be construed to include offenses concerning some matters of personal morality, such as adultery and comparable offenses, that have no specific connection to fitness for the practice of law. Although a lawyer is personally answerable to the entire criminal law, a lawyer should be professionally answerable only for offenses that indicate lack of those characteristics relevant to law practice. Offenses involving violence, dishonesty, breach of trust, or serious interference with the administration of justice are in that category. Although under certain circumstances a single offense reflecting adversely on a lawyer's fitness to practice - such as a minor assault - may not be sufficiently serious to warrant discipline, a pattern of repeated offenses, even ones that are of minor significance when considered separately, can indicate indifference to legal obligation.

[3] A lawyer who, in the course of representing a client, knowingly manifests, by words or conduct, bias or prejudice based on race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status violates paragraph (d) when such actions are prejudicial to the administration of justice. Legitimate advocacy respecting the foregoing factors does not violate paragraph (d).

Tenn. R. Sup. Ct. 3.5

Rule 3.5 - Impartiality and Decorum of The Tribunal

A lawyer shall not:

- (a) seek to influence a judge, juror, prospective juror, or other official by means prohibited by law;
- (b) communicate ex parte with such a person during the proceeding unless authorized to do so by law or court order;
- (c) communicate with a juror or prospective juror after discharge of the jury if:
 - (1) the communication is prohibited by law or court order;
 - (2) the juror has made known to the lawyer a desire not to communicate; or
 - (3) the communication involves misrepresentation, coercion, duress, or harassment;
- (d) conduct a vexatious or harassing investigation of a juror or prospective juror; or
- (e) engage in conduct intended to disrupt a tribunal.

Tenn. R. Sup. Ct. 3.5

Comment

[1] Many forms of improper influence upon a tribunal are proscribed by criminal law. Others are specified in the Tennessee Code of Judicial Conduct, with which an advocate should be familiar. A lawyer is required to avoid contributing to a violation of such provisions. For example, a lawyer shall not give or lend anything of value to a judge, judicial officer, or employee of a tribunal, except as permitted by RJC 3.13 of the Code of Judicial Conduct. A lawyer, however, may make a contribution to the campaign fund of a candidate for judicial office in conformity with RJC 4.4 of the Code of Judicial Conduct.

[2] During a proceeding a lawyer may not communicate ex parte with persons serving in an official capacity in the proceeding, such as judges, masters or jurors, unless authorized to do so by law or court order. Unless such a communication is otherwise prohibited by law or court order, paragraph (b) of this Rule would not prohibit a lawyer from communicating with a judge on the merits of the cause in writing if the lawyer promptly delivers a copy of the writing to opposing counsel and to parties who are not represented by counsel because that would not be an ex parte communication.

[3] Paragraph (b) also does not prohibit a lawyer from communicating with a judge in an ex parte hearing to establish the absence of a conflict of interest under RPC 1.7(c). In such proceedings, the lawyer is of course bound by the duty of candor in RPC 3.3(a)(3).

[4] A lawyer may on occasion want to communicate with a juror or prospective juror after the jury has been discharged. The lawyer may do so unless the communication is prohibited by law or a court order entered in the case or by a federal court rule, but must respect the desire of the juror not to talk with the lawyer. The lawyer may not engage in improper conduct during the communication. As the Court stated in *State v. Thomas*, 813 S.W. 2d 395 (Tenn. 1991): "After the trial, communication by a lawyer with jurors is permitted so long as he [or she] refrains from asking questions or making comments that tend to harass or embarrass the juror or to influence actions of the juror in future cases. Were a lawyer to be prohibited from communicating after trial with a juror, he [or she] could

not ascertain if the verdict might be subject to legal challenge, in which event the invalidity of a verdict might go undetected." Id. (quoting Tenn. Sup. Ct. R. 8, EC 7-291). The Court went on to state in Thomas that "Rule 8 therefore allows post-trial interviews by Counsel with jurors on these matters without the prior approval of the trial court." Id. at 396. Although the Court's analysis in Thomas was based on an earlier version of Rule 8 (i.e., the Code of Professional Responsibility), the foregoing principles quoted from Thomas remain valid in the context of RPC 3.5.

[4a] A communication with, or an investigation of, the spouse, child, parent, or sibling of a juror or prospective juror will be deemed a communication with or an investigation of the juror or prospective juror.

[5] The advocate's function is to present evidence and argument so that the cause may be decided according to law. Refraining from abusive or obstreperous conduct is a corollary of the advocate's right to speak on behalf of litigants. A lawyer may stand firm against abuse by a judge, but should avoid reciprocation; the judge's default is no justification for similar dereliction by an advocate. An advocate can present the cause, protect the record for subsequent review, and preserve professional integrity by patient firmness no less effectively than by belligerence or theatrics.

[6] The duty to refrain from disruptive conduct applies to any proceeding of a tribunal, including a deposition. See RPC 1.0(m).

DEFINITIONAL CROSS-REFERENCES "Known" See RPC 1.0(f) "Tribunal" See RPC 1.0(m)

EXHIBIT #2

2020 FEB 19 PM 1:10

FILED FOR ENTRY

FAWN [REDACTED] FENTON

vs

JEFFREY RYAN FENTON

Hearing

August 29, 2019

H

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