# FAYETTE LEGAL JOURNAL

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# FAYETTE LEGAL JOURNAL

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Notice is hereby given that letters testamentary or of administration have been granted to the following estates. All persons indebted to said estates are required to make payment, and those having claims or demands to present the same without delay to the administrators or executors named.

#### **Third Publication**

#### SOPHIA MARIE DURATZ, a/k/a SOPHIA

**M. DURATZ**, late of Uniontown, Fayette County, PA (3)

Personal Representative: Carla DellaPenna c/o Davis & Davis 107 East Main Street Uniontown, Pa 15401 Attorney: James T. Davis

#### BARBARA H. GEORGE, a/k/a BARBARA GEORGE, a/k/a BARBARA HITCHCOCK

**GEORGE**, late of Bullskin Township, Fayette County, PA (3)

Personal Representative: Michael George c/o Watson Mundorff & Sepic, LLP 720 Vanderbilt Road Connellsville, PA 15425 Attorney: Charles W. Watson

#### EDWARD W. HARRY, a/k/a EDWARD

WILLIAM HARRY, JR., late of Bullskin

Township, Fayette County, PA (3) Personal Representative: Gladys LaPorte c/o Watson Mundorff & Sepic, LLP 720 Vanderbilt Road Connellsville, PA 15425 Attorney: Charles W. Watson

#### PHILLIP M. JONES, late of South Union

Township, Fayette County, PA (3) *Executor*: Phillip Bruce Jones *Executrix*: Jennifer J. Falcinelli c/o Webster & Webster 51 East South Street Uniontown, PA 15401 *Attorney*: Webster & Webster

#### ELSIE KOWASIC, late of Washington

Township, Fayette County, PA (3) *Executrix*: Kyra L. Kowasic 5460 White Oak Avenue Apt. A305 Encino, CA 91316 c/o 823 Broad Avenue Belle Vernon, PA 15012 *Attorney*: Mark E. Ramsier

# SUSAN LYNN SNYDER, a/k/a S. LYNN SNYDER, a/k/a LYNN SNYDER, late of

South Union Township, Fayette County, PA (3) *Executor*: Larry D. Schupp c/o Fitzsimmons and Barclay 55 East Main Church Street, Suite 102 Uniontown, PA 15401 *Attorney*: James N. Fitzsimmons

#### STANLEY E. TABAJ, late of Dunbar

Township, Fayette County, PA (3) *Executrix*: Irene C. Tabaj c/o 815 A Memorial Boulevard Connellsville, PA 15425 *Attorney*: Margaret Zylka House

#### **Second Publication**

#### GERTRUDE D'AURIA, a/k/a GERTRUDE ANN D'AURIA, late of Dunbar Township,

Fayette County, PA (2) Personal Representative: Marianne E. Germeyer c/o Watson Mundorff & Sepic, LLP 720 Vanderbilt Road Connellsville, PA 15425 Attorney: Charles W. Watson

#### HAZEL M. GALLO, a/k/a HAZEL MAE

GALLO, late of South Union Township, Fayette County, PA (2) *Executor*: Randy Stuart Gallo c/o Webster & Webster 51 East South Street Uniontown, PA 15401 *Attorney*: Webster & Webster

#### PATRICIA LUBITS GUMP, a/k/a

PATRICIA GUMP, late of Masontown, Fayette County, PA (2) *Executor/Attorney*: Joseph M. Standish 100 Center Street Masontown, PA 15461

#### MICKEY F. JOSEPH, late of Dunbar

Township, Fayette County, PA (2) Personal Representative: Michele Joseph Colbert c/o Watson Mundorff & Sepic, LLP 720 Vanderbilt Road Connellsville, PA 15425 Attorney: Charles W. Watson

#### SARAH NURMINEN, late of Bullskin

Township, Fayette County, PA (2) *Executrix*: Kristin L. Olexa 134 Maple Road Acme, PA 15610 c/o 749 North Church Street Mt. Pleasant, PA 15666 *Attorney*: Paul E. Toohey

#### **First Publication**

# HARRIET MAE COX, a/k/a HARRIET M. COX, a/k/a HARRIET B. COX, late of

Jefferson Township, Fayette County, Nation *Co-Executors:* Jon Paul Cox and 411 Mutich Street Belle Vernon, PA 15012 Leah Rae Ackinclose 141 Williams Road Fayette City, PA 15438 c/o 823 Broad Avenue Belle Vernon, PA 15012 *Attorney:* Mark E. Ramsier

#### BARBARA T. DALSON, late of Luzerne

Township, Fayette County, PA (1) *Executor*: Chad M. Dalson c/o Webster & Webster 51 East South Street Uniontown, PA 15401 *Attorney*: Webster & Webster

#### EILEEN FALCO, a/k/a EILEEN W.

FALCO, late of Connellsville, Fayette County, PA (1)

Personal Representative: Ralph A. Falco 813 McCormick Avenue Connellsville, PA 15425
Personal Representative: Beverly A. Enoff 208 Gacek Road Greensboro, PA 15338
c/o Moore Becker Smarto & Ciszek, P.C.
121 West Second Street Greensburg, PA 15601
Attorney: Lawrence F. Becker, III

#### IWILDA FENIELLO, late of Bullskin

Township, Fayette County, PA (1) *Executrix*: Burnice Feniello c/o Casini & Geibig, LLC 615 West Crawford Avenue Connellsville, PA 15425 *Attorney*: Jennifer M. Casini

#### HARRIETTE HARPER, late of South Union

Township, Fayette County, PA (1) *Executor*: Robert R. Harper 431 Independence Court Uniontown, PA 15401 c/o Harper & Mikluscak 111 East Main Street Uniontown, PA 15401 *Attorney*: Robert R. Harper, Jr.

#### JUDITH NARDONE, a/k/a JUDY NARDONE, a/k/a JUDITH S. WORK, late of

Connellsville, Fayette County, PA (1) *Executrix*: Kathryn Poggi 815 Wellington Drive Seven Fields, PA 16046 c/o 9380 McKnight Road, Suite 106 Pittsburgh, PA 15237 *Attorney*: James S. Vergotz

#### JOSEPH STEVENS, a/k/a JOSEPH

STEVENS, JR., late of Fayette City, Fayette County, PA (1) *Personal Representative:* Wesley J. Stevens c/o Nathan J. Zarichnak & Assoc., LLC 601 ½ Broad Avenue Belle Vernon, PA 15012 *Attorney:* Nathan J. Zarichnak

#### PAULINE STRAUSS, a/k/a PAULINE H.

STRAUSS, late of South Union Township, Fayette County, PA (1) *Executrix*: Linda L. Ford c/o Higinbotham Law Office 45 East Main Street, Suite 500 Uniontown, PA 15401 *Attorney*: James E. Higinbotham, Jr.

# **LEGAL NOTICES**

#### NOTICE OF TRUST ADMINISTRATION RE: Esther Sabol, Deceased /Sabol Revocable Family Trust

Notice is hereby given that Norma J. Martin is Trustee of the Sabol Revocable Family Trust. All persons indebted to Esther Sabol are requested to make payment and all those having claims against Esther Sabol are directed to present same without delay to: Esther Sabol Revocable Family Trust, c/o Michael S. Butler, Esquire, Heritage Elder Law & Estate Planning, LLC, 318 S. Main St., Butler, PA 16001 (20f4)

#### IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA CIVIL ACTION NO. 2:18-cv-00241-MRH

#### UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, Plaintiff vs. PAULA J. MURPHY, Defendant

**MARSHAL'S SALE**: By virtue of a Writ of Execution issued out of the United States District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania and to me directed, I shall expose to public sale the real property located at and being more fully described at Fayette County Deed Book 2684 Page 302.

SAID SALE to be held at the Fayette County Courthouse in the hallway outside of the Sheriff's Office, 61 East Main Street, Uniontown, PA 15401 at 10:00 a.m. prevailing standard time, on September 13, 2018. ALL that certain tract of land, together with the buildings, and improvements erected thereon described as Tax Parcel No. 33-08-0132 recorded in Fayette County, Pennsylvania, commonly known as: **1727 Fourth Street**, **South Connellsville, Pennsylvania 15425**.

IDENTIFIED as Tax/Parcel #: 33-08-0132 in the Deed Registry Office of Fayette County, Pennsvlvania. HAVING erected a dwelling thereon known as 1727 FOURTH STREET, SOUTH CONNELLSVILLE. PA 15425. BEING the same premises conveyed to Paula J. Murphy, dated February 21, 2001, and recorded on February 26, 2001 in the office of the Recorder of Deeds in and for Fayette County, Pennsylvania. Seized and taken in execution as the property of Paula J. Murphy at the suit of the United States of America, acting through the Under Secretary of Rural Development on behalf of Rural Housing Service, United States Department of Agriculture, to be sold on Writ of Execution as Civil Action No. 2:18-cv-00241.

TERMS OF SALE: Successful bidder will pay ten percent (10%) by certified check or money order upon the property being struck down to such bidder, and the remainder of the bid within thirty (30) days from the date of the sale and in the event the bidder cannot pay the remainder, the property will be resold and all monies paid in at the original sale will be applied to any deficiency in the price at which the property is resold. The successful bidder must send payment of the balance of the bid directly to the U.S. Marshal's Office c/o Sheila Blessing, 700 Grant Street, Suite 2360. Pittsburgh, PA 15219. Bidder must have deposit funds immediately available and on his person in order to bid, bidder will not be permitted to leave the sale and return with deposit funds. Notice is hereby given that a Schedule of Distribution will be filed by me on the thirtieth (30th) day after the date of sale, and that distribution will be made in accordance with the Schedule unless exemptions are filed thereto within ten (10) days thereafter. Purchaser must furnish State Realty Transfer Tax Stamps, and stamps required by the local taxing authority. Marshal's costs, fees and commissions are to be borne by seller. Michael Baughman, Acting United States Marshal For additional information, please contact Cathy Diederich at 314-457-5514 or the USDA foreclosure website at www.resales.usda.gov. (4 of 4)

### JUDICIAL OPINION

# IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF FAYETTE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA CIVIL DIVISION

HRANEC SHEET METAL, INC.,	:	
Plaintiff,	:	
V.	:	
METALICO PITTSBURGH, INC. t/d/b/a	:	
METALICO ASSAD IRON AND	:	
METALS also t/d/b/a METALICO	:	
BROWNSVILLE, and METALICO	:	
NEVILLE REALITY INC.,	:	
Defendants and	:	
Third-Party Plaintiffs	:	
V.	:	
KENNETH (aka "KENNEY") A.	:	
KEENER, ROBERT SHOWMAN,	:	
TIMOTHY J. DEVINCE, and	:	
TIMOTHY R. SMOUSE,	:	No. 390 of 2013, G.D.
Third-Party Defendants.	:	Honorable Gerald R. Solomon

#### **OPINION AND ORDER**

SOLOMON, S.J.

August 23, 2018

Before the Court are (1) Defendants' Motion for Summary Judgment on the statute of limitations; (2) Plaintiff's Motion for Summary Judgment on the Conversion Claims; (3) Plaintiff's Motion for Summary Judgment on the Malicious Prosecution Counterclaim; (4) Plaintiff's Motion for Summary Judgment on Fraudulent Concealment and Concerted Tort; and four Motions to Strike Affidavits filed by Defendants as to (1) the Affidavit of Plaintiff as to Malicious Prosecution; (2) the Affidavit of Steve Hranec; (3) the Affidavit of Raymond C. Stewart; and (4) Plaintiff's Supplemental Affidavits.

#### STANDARD OF REVIEW

Summary judgment may be granted only in cases where it is clear and free from doubt that there is no genuine issue as to any material fact and that the moving party is entitled to judgment as a matter of law. Kafando v. Erie Ceramic Arts Co., 764 A.2d 59,61 (Pa.Super. 2000). Pa.R.C.P. 1035.2 states:

After the relevant pleadings are closed, but within such time as not to unreasonably delay trial, any party may move for summary judgment in whole or in part as a matter of law

(1) whenever there is no genuine issue of any material fact as to a necessary element of the cause of action or defense which could be established by additional discovery or expert report [...].

In deciding a motion for summary judgment, the court must examine the record in a light most favorable to the non-moving party and resolve any doubt in his favor. Swartley v. Hoffner, 734 A.2d 915, 919 (Pa.Super. 1999). The non-moving party may not rest on averments in its pleadings and must demonstrate by evidence that there exists a genuine issue for trial. Younginger v. Heckler, 410 A.2d 340, 342 (Pa.Super. 1979).

Summary judgment is proper if an action is barred by the applicable statute of limitations. Devine v. Hutt, 2004 PA Super 460, 863 A.2d 1160 (2004). Summary judgment may be granted based upon the procedural defense of the statute of limitations, where it can be determined as a matter of law, based upon the allegations in the pleadings and the factual material in the record, that the action is barred as being untimely brought. Mangino v. Steel Contracting Co., 427 Pa. 533, 235 A.2d 151 (1967).

#### DISCUSSION

#### Defendants' Motion for Summary Judgment Statute of Limitations

Plaintiff, Hranec Sheet Metal, Inc. ("Hranec") is a business that fabricates ductwork from metal materials in Uniontown, Pennsylvania. Hranec alleged that its employees, identified herein as Third-Party Defendants, stole new stainless steel coils and aluminum between September, 2010, and May, 2011, and sold them to Defendants ("Metalico"). See, Second Amended Complaint, ¶6. Hranec instituted this action by Complaint filed on March 1, 2013. Hranec alleged Metalico acted in concert with the thieves who stole the metals as a result of Metalico's failure to comply with the Scrap Material Theft Prevention Act, 73 P.S. § 1943.1, and that the fraudulent concealment by Third-Party Defendants as permitted by Metalico's noncompliance with the Act prohibits Metalico's assertion of the statute of limitations.

In support of the Motion, Metalico alleged the thefts occurred in Hranec's plain view dating back to 2009 and that the strict application of the statute of limitations would lead to expiration of the claims in 2011. Metalico also alleged Hranec did not exercise due diligence to toll the statute of limitation through the discovery rule.

The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania has opined on the standard for summary judgment when a statute of limitations defense is raised in conjunction with the applicability of the discovery rule. Gleason v. Borough of Moosic, 15 A.3d 479 (Pa. 2011). Finding the discussion to be dispositive, we will incorporate the high court's synopsis of the law from the Gleason opinion herein:

Generally, a statute of limitations period begins to run when a cause of action accrues; i.e., when an injury is inflicted and the corresponding right to institute a suit for damages arises. Wilson v. El–Daief, 600 Pa. 161, 964 A.2d 354, 361 (2009). It is the duty of the party asserting a cause of action to use all reasonable diligence to properly inform him or herself of the facts and circumstances upon which the right of recovery is based and to institute suit within the prescribed period. Hayward v. Medical Center of Beaver County, 530 Pa. 320, 608 A.2d 1040, 1042 (1992). Generally, once the prescribed statutory period has expired, the complaining party is barred from bringing suit. Id. at 1043. However, the discovery

rule acts as an exception to this principle, and provides that where the complaining party is reasonably unaware that his or her injury has been caused by another party's conduct, the discovery rule suspends, or tolls, the running of the statute of limitations. Fine, supra at 858–859.

Pennsylvania's formulation of the discovery rule reflects a narrow approach "to determining accrual for limitations purposes" and places a greater burden upon Pennsylvania plaintiffs vis-á-vis the discovery rule than most other jurisdictions. Wilson v. El–Daief, supra at 364. The commencement of the limitations period is grounded on "inquiry notice" that is tied to "actual or constructive knowledge of at least some form of significant harm and of a factual cause linked to another's conduct, without the necessity of notice of the full extent of the injury, the fact of actual negligence, or precise cause." Id. The discovery rule operates to balance the rights of diligent, injured plaintiffs against the interests of defendants in being free from stale claims, in furtherance of salient legislative objectives. Id. at 366 n. 12. The balance struck in Pennsylvania has been to impose a relatively limited notice requirement upon the plaintiff, but to submit factual questions regarding that notice to the jury as fact-finder. Id.

Additionally, it is not relevant to the application of the discovery rule whether the prescribed statutory period has expired. Fine, supra at 859. The discovery rule applies to toll the statute of limitations in any case in which a party is reasonably unaware of his or her injury at the time his or her cause of action accrued. Id. The point at which the complaining party should be reasonably aware that he or she has suffered an injury and its cause is ordinarily an issue of fact to be determined by the jury due to the fact intensive nature of the inquiry. Wilson, supra at 362; Hayward, supra at 1043. Only where the facts are so clear that reasonable minds could not differ may a court determine as a matter of law at the summary judgment stage, the point at which a party should have been reasonably aware of his or her injury and its cause and thereby fix the commencement date of the limitations period. Id.

The sine qua non of the factual inquiry into the applicability of the discovery rule in any given case is the determination whether, during the limitations period, the plaintiff was able, through the exercise of reasonable diligence, to know that he or she had been injured and by what cause. In this context, we have clarified that reasonable diligence is not an absolute standard. As we have stated:

"There are very few facts which diligence cannot discover, but there must be some reason to awaken inquiry and direct diligence in the channel in which it would be successful. This is what is meant by reasonable diligence." Put another way, "the question in any given case is not, what did the plaintiff know of the injury done him? But, what might he have known, by the use of the means of information within his reach, with the vigilance the law requires of him?" While reasonable diligence is an objective test, "it is sufficiently flexible ... to take into account the difference[s] between persons and their capacity to meet certain situations and the circumstances confronting them at the time in question." Under this test, a party's actions are evaluated to determine whether he exhibited "those qualities of atten-

tion, knowledge, intelligence and judgment which society requires of its members for the protection of their own interest and the interest of others."

Therefore, when a court is presented with the assertion of the discovery rule's application, it must address the ability of the damaged party, exercising reasonable diligence, to ascertain that he has been injured and by what cause. Since this question involves a factual determination as to whether a party was able, in the exercise of reasonable diligence, to know of his injury and its cause, ordinarily, a jury is to decide it. Where, however, reasonable minds would not differ in finding that a party knew or should have known on the exercise of reasonable diligence of his injury and its cause, the court determines that the discovery rule does not apply as a matter of law.

Fine, supra, at 858-859 (citations and quotations omitted).

Nevertheless, the party asserting application of the discovery rule bears the burden of proof, Wilson, supra at 362, and Pennsylvania courts have not hesitated, where appropriate, to find as a matter of law that a party has not used reasonable diligence in ascertaining his or her injury and its cause, thus barring the party from asserting his or her claim under the discovery rule. Cochran v. GAF Corp., 542 Pa. 210, 666 A.2d 245, 248 (1995).

Gleason, supra at 484-487.

As the Supreme Court held in Gleason, the interplay between summary judgment principles and application of the discovery rule requires us to consider whether it is undeniably clear that a plaintiff did not use reasonable diligence in timely ascertaining their injury and its cause, or whether an issue of genuine fact exists regarding the plaintiff's use of reasonable diligence to ascertain their injury and its cause. Whether Hranec should have acted with greater diligence to investigate the loss of metal more thoroughly can only be seen as an issue of fact. Reasonable minds could differ regarding whether Hranec's loss was ascertainable through the exercise of reasonable diligence during the limitations period and, accordingly, the entry of summary judgment based on expiration of the statute of limitations is inappropriate.

#### Plaintiff's Motion for Summary Judgment Conversion Claims

Hranec first moves for judgment on its conversion claim contending that since Metalico "admitted they paid cash for the stolen metal coil" and "discovery has produced nothing to contradict these admissions," and therefore, according to Hranec, no material fact remains in dispute to preclude the entry of judgment. Hranec also cites the Opinion of the Superior Court of Pennsylvania reversing this Court's dismissal of Plaintiff's Second Amended Complaint upon which Hranec alleges "res judicata" that the Superior Court "holds that Defendants are liable to Hranec for the intentional tort of conversion as a matter of law." Hranec Sheet Metal, Inc. v. Metalico Pittsburgh, Inc., 107 A.3d 114 (Pa. Super. 2014).

Hranec's reliance on the Superior Court Opinion as having "decided" any of the

pending claims is misguided. Pending before the Superior Court for determination was only the legal sufficiency of Plaintiff's Second Amended Complaint following preliminary objections lodged by Metalico. At the time of the Superior Court's decision, Metalico had not yet filed an Answer to the Second Amended Complaint. Notably, with regard to the conversion claim, the Superior Court stated only that Plaintiff's Second Amended Complaint had "established a prima facie claim of conversion." The Superior Court's holding that a prima facie case had been sufficiently pled by Hranec did not, in any manner, rule on the merits of the action and the burden now rests on Plaintiff to prove all pleadings to a fact-finder.

Hranec further requests the Court to take judicial notice of alleged "admissions" in Metalico's Answer. What Plaintiff is now calling "admissions" does not comport with the legal definition of a "judicial admission." For an averment to qualify as a judicial admission, it must be a clear and unequivocal admission of fact. Jones v. Constantino, 631 A.2d 1289, 1293–94 (Pa.Super. 1993). Judicial admissions are limited in scope to factual matters otherwise requiring evidentiary proof, and are exclusive of legal theories and conclusions of law. Id. The fact must have been unequivocally admitted and not be merely one interpretation of the statement that is purported to be a judicial admission. Id.

A review of Metalico's Answer to Hranec's Second Amended Complaint reveals responses far from "admissions." For instance, Hranec cites Paragraph 6 as an admission by Metalico to having "paid cash for the stolen metal coils." Contrary to this contention, the Answer to Paragraph 6 specifically denies that Metalico knew or had any reason to believe that the products in question had been stolen. By way of further Answer, Metalico contended the transactions were in accordance with a course of dealing between the businesses and that Third-Party Defendants, Hranec's former employees, acted with apparent authority to transact business on his behalf.

Defendants' Answer, New Matter, Counterclaims, and Third-Party Complaint raise numerous defenses that contest the material facts which Hranec incorrectly alleges are uncontested, specifically legal justifications that would deny recovery on a conversion claim. Since our summary judgment record must be viewed in the light most favorable to the non-moving party, we must deny Hranec's motion for summary judgment based on the pending issue of whether Third-Party Defendants were vested with apparent authority since this determination must be made by the fact finder.

> Plaintiff's Motion for Summary Judgment Malicious Prosecution Counterclaim

In its Counterclaim, Metalico asserts a count for malicious prosecution against Hranec alleging that Hranec omitted material facts regarding its business dealings with Metalico when it "instituted, or was the precipitating factor in the institution of, criminal proceedings against Metalico.

Hranec moves for summary judgment to dismiss the counterclaim for malicious prosecution alleging it "has an absolute defense at law" being first, that he consulted with an attorney and relied on that legal advice and, second, that Hranec did not commit

the acts alleged in that he did not file a private criminal complaint. In support of its Motion for Summary Judgment, Hranec filed affidavits by President Steve Hranec and by Plaintiff's counsel, Gary N. Altman, Esquire. Hranec request this Court to hold that criminal proceedings initiated upon the advice of counsel are presumed to be supported by probable cause when the advice of counsel is sought in good faith and the advice was given after full disclosure of the fact to the attorney. Although true, Metalico pled that Hranec did not disclose all pertinent information.

Defendants initially moved to strike the affidavit of President Steve Hranec as failing to comply with the personal knowledge requirement of Pa.R.C.P. 1035.4 when he averred "the facts set forth in the foregoing Affidavit of which he has personal knowledge are true and correct, and as to those facts of which he has no personal knowledge, he believes them to be true and correct to the best of his knowledge, information and belief."

Rule 1035.4 of the Pennsylvania Rules of Civil Procedure provides, "Supporting and opposing affidavits shall be made on personal knowledge, shall set forth such facts as would be admissible in evidence, and shall show affirmatively that the signer is competent to testify to the matters stated therein."

In response, Plaintiff filed Supplemental Affidavits changing the language of the verification for Steve Hranec and Gary N. Altman, Esquire. However, Metalico continued its objection arguing that Affidavits must be based solely on "personal knowledge." As to Plaintiff's Supplemental Affidavits, we find that they sufficiently complied with Rule 1035.4; however, the Affidavits are testimonial in nature and authored by a representative of a litigant to this action. As such, reliance on the Affidavits in deciding summary judgment would violate the Nanty-Glo rule which prohibits the entry of summary judgment based on a party's own testimony since the credibility of that testimony is a matter reserved for the fact-finder. Accordingly, Plaintiff's Motion for Summary Judgment on Defendants' Malicious Prosecution Counterclaim must be denied and Defendants' Motion to Strike these affidavits is granted.

Plaintiff's Motion for Summary Judgment Fraudulent Concealment and Concerted Tort

In its third Motion, Hranec requests "summary judgment be entered stating that:

a. Defendants engaged in acts of fraudulent concealment so that the defense of the statute of limitations asserted in Paragraphs 128 through 143 inclusive of the Answer is not available to the Defendants in this case;

b. Defendants engaged in a concerted tort with the Additional Defendants, holding that Defendants acted in concert with the thieves in stealing these coils; and that thus

c. Defendants are liable to Plaintiff for the value of the stolen metal coils and that trial shall be on damages only."

In denying Metalico's statute of limitation defense, the Court applied the discovery rule. In addition to the discovery rule, the doctrine of fraudulent concealment could also

serve to toll the running of the statute of limitations. The doctrine is based on a theory of estoppel, and provides that the defendant may not invoke the statute of limitations, if through fraud or concealment, he causes the plaintiff to relax his vigilance or deviate from his right of inquiry into the facts. Deemer v. Weaver, 187 A. at 215 (Pa. 1936). The plaintiff has the burden of proving fraudulent concealment by clear, precise, and convincing evidence. Molineux v. Reed, 532 A.2d 792, 794 (Pa. 1987).

Hranec argues that Metalico has admitted to paying cash for stolen metal coils and cites the Superior Court's opinion alleging res judicata on these issues. According to Hranec, the Superior Court held as an established fact that Defendants actions constituted "multiple violations of the Scrap Material Theft Prevention Act." Again, Hranec misinterprets the decision of the Superior Court. Specifically, the opinion recites, "A fact-finder could conclude [...]." Hranec, supra., 107 A.3d at 125 (emphasis added). The Superior Court made no conclusion, but rather deferred that determination to the fact-finder.

Hranec's motion hinges on facts controverted by Metalico thus precluding summary judgment. Whether Metalico violated the Scrap Material Theft Prevention Act is the very essence of this dispute. As previously discussed, the Court will not accept the Affidavit of Steve Hranec as dispositive on factual issues pursuant to the Nanty-Glo rule; nor will the Court accept the Affidavit of Raymond C. Stewart, a former Pennsylvania State Police Trooper. Trooper Stewart's affidavit references telephone inquiries he made of Metalico to ascertain any transactions with Hranec's employees to which Metalico allegedly responded it had no record of Hranec's employees Smouse or Keener and denied purchasing metal coils, and further alleges that Metalico delayed in providing its records. Notably, Trooper Stewart's statement is comprised of inadmissible hearsay that he attributes to Metalico, the entity, without identifying by name any employee with whom he spoke, and the affidavit also includes improper legal conclusions from a fact witness about the applicability of the Scrap Material Theft Prevention Act. As such, we will grant Metalico's Motion to Strike the Affidavit of Raymond C. Stewart.

As for the final Motion for Summary Judgment, since it is for the jury to determine whether remarks and actions that are alleged to constitute the fraud or concealment were made, we will deny Plaintiff's motion. Nesbitt v. Erie Coach Co., 204 A.2d at 476 (Pa. 1964).

WHEREFORE, we will enter the following Order.

#### ORDER

AND NOW, this 23rd day of August, 2018, upon consideration of (1) Defendants' Motion for Summary Judgment on the statute of limitations; (2) Plaintiff's Motion for Summary Judgment on the Conversion Claims; (3) Plaintiff's Motion for Summary Judgment on the Malicious Prosecution Counterclaim; and (4) Plaintiff's Motion for Summary Judgment on Fraudulent Concealment and Concerted Tort it is hereby ORDERED and DECREED the Motions are DENIED.

It is further ORDERED and DECREED that Motions to Strike Affidavits of (1) Plaintiff as to Malicious Prosecution; (2) Steve Hranec; (3) Raymond C. Stewart; and (4) Plaintiff's Supplemental Affidavits are GRANTED.

BY THE COURT, GERALD R. SOLOMON SENIOR JUDGE

ATTEST: Prothonotary

# **BENCH BAR CONFERENCE**

# Fayette County Bar Association Bench Bar Conference

Schedule: 8:30 - Meet the Sponsors/Full Breakfast Buffet 9:00 - 12:15 - Seminar CLE Presentations 12:30 - Lunch

CLE Agenda to follow

# Wednesday, October 10, 2018

The Historic Summit Inn Cost to attend - \$75 members and \$125 non-members **RSVP to Cindy** 724-437-7994 or cindy@fcbar.org

# **LUNCH & LEARN SERIES**

# FAYETTE COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION LUNCH & LEARN SERIES

The Fayette County Bar Association will be sponsoring a monthly Lunch & Learn Series on the third Wednesday of each month in the Grey Room, or in Courtroom No.1 depending on attendance, of the Fayette County Courthouse.

Often times, attorneys make costly mistakes based on a misinterpretation of the rules or because they are unaware of the specific practices or requirements of a judge. Each session will cover a different area of practice in Fayette County. After a brief presentation, attendees will have the opportunity to ask pertinent questions and discuss issues and practice tips with members of the bench and the bar in an informal setting. It is the intent of the series to promote professionalism, including ethics, civility and excellence among the members of our bar through education, example, and mentoring.

The series moderator will be the Honorable Judge Steve P. Leskinen. There will also be presenters knowledgeable in the area of practice to be covered each month.

• The first session of the series will be on Wednesday, September 19th, from 12:00 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

• The discussion topic will be Motions Court: Summary Judgment, Preliminary Objections and Judgment on the Pleadings Procedure.

We are interested in knowing what areas of practice you would like covered in upcoming meetings. Depending on attendance and how the series evolves, we may be able to arrange CLE credit for future sessions.

A light lunch will be provided. There is no charge for members of the FCBA. There is a \$10 fee for non-members to be paid at the door. Please contact Cindy McClain at the Bar office at 724-437-7994 or by email to cindy@fcbar.org no later than Friday, September 14th, if interested in attending or with ideas for future meetings.

- Professional Ethics Committee of the Fayette Bar Association





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