

DISBARMENTS

On Oct. 4, 2004, **Colin Kelly Kaufman**, 58, of Corpus Christi was disbarred. Kaufman failed to hold funds belonging in whole or in part to clients or third parties that were in his possession in connection with a representation separate from his own funds. After receiving the funds, Kaufman failed to render a full accounting regarding the funds or deliver the funds to the client or third person entitled to receive them. Kaufman charged or collected an unconscionable fee and engaged in conduct involving dishonesty, deceit, or misrepresentation in connection with a bankruptcy estate. Kaufman violated Rules 1.04(a), 1.14(a) and (b), and 8.04(a) (3).

On Dec. 30, 2004, **Travis M. Hartgraves**, 56, of Abilene was disbarred. Hartgraves was retained on a contingency basis to recover costs for property damage resulting from an automobile accident. Thereafter, without notice to the complainant, Hartgraves “farmed out” the matter. Hartgraves failed to provide the complainant any evidence that legal services had been provided in this matter. After the original communication in April 2001, Hartgraves failed to communicate with the complainant until April 10, 2003, when the complainant received a fax that Hartgraves had “farmed out” the case and would look into the status of the matter. On Oct. 17, 2003, the complainant wrote Hartgraves and requested that he respond to the letter within 14 days. Hartgraves failed to engage in any further communication with the complainant or respond to the notice of the complaint. Hartgraves violated Rules 1.01(b) (1) and (b) (2), 1.03(a) and (b), and 8.04(a) (8).

On Dec. 8, 2004, Hartgraves received a four-year, active suspension effective 1, 2005. Hartgraves was retained to handle the estate of the complainant’s deceased husband. Hartgraves was paid \$2,500 for the representation. Thereafter, Hartgraves sold real property belonging to the estate to Hartgraves’ brother-in-law. When the proceeds were received almost one year later, Hartgraves persuaded the complainant to give him \$20,000 of the proceeds to be used to pay outstanding debts of the estate, but he failed to pay off the debts. Hartgraves failed to complete work on the estate or respond to the complainant’s reasonable requests for information regarding the status of the estate. Hartgraves failed to respond to notice of the complaint. Hartgraves violated Rules 1.01(b) (1) and (b) (2), 1.03(a), and 8.04(a) (3) and (a) (8).

On Feb. 16, Edward L. Bramblett, 44, of Houston was disbarred. Bramblett was appointed guardian ad litem on behalf of two minor plaintiffs. Pursuant to a settlement agreement, Bramblett was instructed to hold the lump-sum settlement payment in trust. He misappropriated a portion of the funds for his own use and benefit. During the representation, Bramblett was repeatedly administratively suspended from the practice of law. He failed to respond to the notice of the complaint. Bramblett violated Rules 1.14(a), (b), and (c) and 8.04(a) (2), (a) (3), and (a) (8).

SUSPENSIONS

On Feb. 10, **D.J. Seidel**, 44, of Houston accepted a four-year, partially probated suspension effective Feb. 1, 2005, with the first six months actively served and the remainder probated. Seidel neglected client matters, frequently failed to carry out obligations owed clients, and failed to respond to the notice of the complaint. Seidel violated Rules 1.01(b) (1) and (b) (2), 1.03(a) and (b), and 8.04(a) (8).

On Dec. 17, 2004, **Stephen G. Smith**, 38, of Odessa accepted a one year, fully probated suspension effective Jan.1, 2005. In February 2001, Smith was hired to file suit against an insurance company for not paying spousal benefits to the complainant. Smith failed to provide any significant legal work on the case. The complainant repeatedly asked Smith for his case file so that he could hire another attorney to assist him in the case, but Smith failed to return the case file. Smith's files were taken from his law office by the property owner, who placed Smith's files in a storage unit for safekeeping. Smith failed to safeguard the complainant's file when the foreclosure occurred. The complainant attempted to communicate with Smith on numerous occasions without success. Smith moved and failed to inform complainant of his new address. He also failed to withdraw from the case. Smith violated Rules 1.01(b) (1), 1.03(a) and (b), 1.14(b) and 1.15(d).

On March 7, **Bruce A. Bus Kirk**, 54, of Houston accepted a three-month, fully probated suspension effective March 15, 2005. Buskirk was retained on March 1, 2001, to complete the adoption of the complainant's two minor children, for which Buskirk received \$1600. The adoption was completed in December 2001. On Dec. 3, 2001, the complainants paid Buskirk an additional \$200 for new birth certificates, with a subsequent payment of \$72 for the issuance fees. In May 2002, the complainants received only one of the birth certificates. The complainants made several requests of Buskirk and his office staff to obtain the second birth certificate, but they failed to comply. The complainants independently obtained the second birth certificate in April 2004.

In a second matter, Buskirk was retained to register a foreign judgment regarding child support, for which he was paid \$1000. Buskirk filed a plea in abatement in the California proceedings on August 11, 2003, filed a petition to register and enforce foreign judgment in Montgomery County Court at Law. After a hearing on Nov.4, 2003, the court in California indicated that because the child had resided continuously in Texas for at least the three previous years, it would allow the case to be transferred. However, the court refused to issue a written order memorializing its ruling. Buskirk failed to respond to the complainant's numerous requests for information regarding the status of the matter. Due to the lack of communication, the complainant terminated the attorney-client relationship. Buskirk violated Rules 1.01(b) (1) and (b) (2) and 1.03(a).

On Feb. 28, **Dain A. Dreyer**, 35, of San Antonio accepted a three-year, fully probated suspension effective March 1, 2005. Dreyer was retained by several siblings to pursue a medical malpractice claim regarding their mother's death. Dreyer prepared a petition and contends that he timely mailed the petition for filing, but it was not stamped by the district clerk's office until approximately 20 days after the statute of limitations expired. Dreyer did not ensure that citations were timely prepared and served on defendants, nor did he file a required expert report or bond. Dreyer verbally advised the clients several months

later that he was not able to continue the representation. The case was dismissed for want of prosecution.

Dreyer violated Rules 1.01(b) (1) and (b) (2), 1.03(a) and (b), and 8.04(a) (3).

On March 21, **Olanrewaju Johnson**, 43, of Houston accepted a 90-day, fully probated suspension effective March 15, 2005. Johnson was retained in a personal injury matter. He failed to carry out completely the obligations owed his client. Johnson did not abide by the client's decisions concerning objectives and general methods of representation. He failed to keep his client reasonably informed about the status of the matter. Johnson violated Rules 1.01(b) (2), 1.02(a) (1), and 1.03(a).

On Feb. 16, **Bartholomew C. Okonkwo**, 47, of Pearland received an 18-month, partially probated suspension effective March 24, 2005, with the first two months actively served and the remainder probated. Okonkwo was retained in a personal injury. He later notified his client that he was administratively suspended for failure to repay Texas guaranteed student loans, but never withdrew from the representation and did not terminate the attorney-client relationship. During the entire course of the representation, Okonkwo repeatedly engaged in the practice of law while administratively suspended. Okonkwo violated Rules 8.04(a) (10) and (a) (11).

On March 8, **Arthur G. Vega**, 52, of San Antonio received a two-year, partially probated suspension effective April 1, 2005, with the first month actively served and the remainder probated. In one matter, Vega was retained to represent the complainant in her claim against a nursing home for injuries suffered by her mother. Over the course of a two-year period, Vega neglected to pursue the claim. Vega failed to respond to the complainant's numerous requests for information and his employees refused to schedule an appointment for the complainant to consult with the respondent. Vega referred the complainant's case to another attorney without the complainant's knowledge or prior consent.

In a second matter, Vega informed insurance companies that he represented the complainant prior to being hired by the complainant. Vega failed to respond to the complainant's numerous requests for information or keep her reasonably informed about the status of the legal matter. Vega's employees refused to schedule an appointment for the complainant to meet with him.

Vega violated Rules 1.01(b) (1) and 1.03(a) and (b).

On March 24, **William R. Hester, Jr.**, 67, of Houston accepted a one-year, fully probated suspension effective October 1, 2005. Hester was hired for representation in a personal injury matter, but later determined that he could not represent the client and terminated the representation. Several months later, the former client requested that Hester forward a letter of protection on her behalf so that she could seek medical treatment. Hester sent a letter of protection to the medical provider and thereby misrepresented his association with the former client.

Hester violated Rule 8.04(a) (3).

On March 28, **Lonnie Knowles**, 51, of Houston accepted a one-year, fully probated suspension effective April 1, 2005. Knowles was retained in a personal injury matter. Knowles failed to hold funds belonging in whole or in part to his client in his possession separate from his own property. He failed to respond to notice of the complaint. Knowles violated Rules 1.14(a) and (c) and 8.01(b).

PUBLIC REPRIMANDS

On Nov. 1, 2004, **Frank C. Fleming**, 53, of Dallas received a public reprimand. Fleming violated Rule 1.15.

On Feb. 25, **John H. Wright**, 56, of Houston accepted a public reprimand. Wright received fees from clients, but failed to deposit the funds into his IOLTA account or his firm's account. He failed to hold funds belonging in whole or in part to the client separate from his own property.
Wright violated Rule 1.14(a).

On March 7, **Jay T. Wilhite**, 40, of Houston accepted a public reprimand. Wilhite was retained in a civil matter. Wilhite failed to keep his client reasonably informed about the status of the legal matter or promptly comply with her reasonable requests for information.
Wilhite violated Rule 1.03(a).

On Feb. 8, **Thomas Robert Cox III**, 40, of Dallas accepted a public reprimand. Cox failed to respond to notice of the complaint. In a second matter, Cox requested that a copy of the complaint be sent to him by facsimile on Sept. 15, 2003. The second copy was sent that day. Cox failed to respond to the complaint or assert grounds for such failure. In a third matter, he was retained in a criminal matter, for which he was paid a \$5,000 retainer. Cox failed to reply to the complainant's requests for information regarding the status of the matter. Cox failed to respond to notice of the complaint.
Cox violated Rules 1.03(a) and 8.04(a)(8).

On Feb. 18, **Joyce Marie Leita**, 56, of Victoria received a public reprimand. Leita was retained to seek modification of the monthly child support obligation after the complainant was laid off from his job. Leita failed to timely prepare and file a motion to modify or otherwise reasonably pursue a reduction in child support for the complainant. Leita failed to return unearned fees or respond to the complainant's numerous telephone messages seeking information regarding the status of the legal matter. Leita misrepresented that she was ready and willing to refund the fees paid by the complainant, but failed to respond to the complainant's subsequent correspondence demanding the fees.
Leita violated Rules 1.01(b) (1), 1.03(a) and (b), and 8.04(a) (3).

On March 8, **Glen Allen Engle**, 49, of Beaumont accepted a public reprimand. On May 21, 2004, Engle filed a plaintiff's original petition, but failed to inform his client of its filing or the nature of its filing.
Engle violated Rule 1.02(a) (1).

On March 23, **Frank Adams**, 59, of Beaumont accepted a public reprimand. Adams was retained in a personal injury case. He neglected the legal matter entrusted to him. Adams failed to keep his client reasonably informed about the status of the legal matter or explain the matter to the extent reasonably necessary to permit the client to make informed decisions regarding the representation.
Adams violated Rules 1.01(b) (1) and (c) and 1.03(a) and (b).

