



Wyoming Supreme Court



News Wire

Wyoming Tribune-Eagle (Cheyenne, WY)

June 22, 1999 | Dana Biebersmith

CHEYENNE -- The Wyoming Supreme Court has suspended a Cheyenne divorce attorney from practicing law for one year.

Robert Hampe, who the Wyoming State Bar put on probation in June 1998, was suspended Thursday for violating the Rules of Professional Conduct.

According to a Wyoming State Bar news release issued Monday, Hampe employed or contracted with disbarred attorney Charles Rawson from December 1995 to March 1999.

"It was unethical for Hampe to knowingly utilize disbarred attorney Rawson after April 23, 1997, when Rule of Professional Conduct 8.4(g) prohibiting such utilization became effective," according to the news release.

Randy Arp, Wyoming State Bar counsel who investigates grievances and handles cases before the State Bar's Board of Professional Responsibility, said he brought three grievance cases to the board alleging Hampe's connection to Rawson.

Correspondence and information obtained during the grievance investigations indicated that Hampe knew of Charles Rawson's disbarred status as of Jan. 23, 1998. Hampe was further advised by another attorney of Rawson's disbarred status in January 1999.

"But Hampe continued to utilize (Rawson) in relation to billing and bookkeeping for clients," the news release states.

Hampe had previously denied having any connection with Rawson, who claimed he was the head of Sharon E-H Systems, a company Hampe used as a collection agency to bill former clients who refused to pay.

Before a scheduled formal disciplinary hearing took place, Hampe admitted to violating the Rules of Professional Conduct.

Hampe entered into a written stipulation with the Wyoming State Bar's Board of Professional Responsibility for it to recommend the one-year sanction to the Wyoming Supreme Court.

Other conditions Hampe agreed to include that he reimburse the Board of Professional Responsibility \$1,169.79 for its costs in prosecuting him and that after his one-year sanction is up, he must remain on probation for another year.

Hampe was put on probation one year ago and publicly censured for not cooperating with or responding to an allegation made by the Wyoming State Bar's Fee Disputes Committee.

The committee referred a possible ethical violation to the Board of Professional Responsibility and, in turn, the board requested Hampe respond to the allegations within 30 days.

When Hampe failed to do so, he was given a 10-day extension. But he still didn't respond, according to the board.

Based upon Hampe's probation and further violation of the Rules of Professional Conduct, Arp said he believes Hampe's one-year sanction is appropriate.

"We're a progressive disciplinary system," Arp said. "We use the American Bar Association's lawyer sanctions. I think that when we bring cases and files to the board, they are dealt with in an appropriate matter."

The one-year suspension is the latest in a string of problems Hampe has faced.

Last month, Hampe agreed to pay \$231,000 to Sandra Nicklas Vickrey, a former client, as part of an out-of-court malpractice settlement. Vickrey, of Cedaredge, Colo., filed the suit on June 24, 1998, alleging that after hiring Hampe to represent her in a custody battle, Rawson represented her instead.

Hampe faces another lawsuit in Laramie County District Court. Janis G. Vandehei of Cheyenne filed the suit in February, claiming Hampe breached a legal representation agreement to provide competent and proper legal services.

Hampe was unavailable for comment Monday. Hampe's ex-wife, Sharon Eskem, said Hampe's office is currently closed and he is currently out of town.

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