

## PROBATE COURT 4

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CAUSE NO. 412,249

IN RE: ESTATE OF

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IN THE PROBATE COURT

NELVA E. BRUNSTING,

NUMBER FOUR (4) OF

DECEASED

HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS

PLAINTIFF'S SECOND AMENDED PETITION

TO THE HONORABLE PROBATE COURT:

JURY FEE PAID

COMES NOW, Plaintiff, Candace Louis Curtis, and files this Second Amended Petition and for cause of action would show as follows:

I. PARTIES

Plaintiff, Candace Louis Curtis is a citizen of the State of California.

Defendant Anita Kay Brunsting is a citizen of the State of Texas, who has made an appearance and can be served through her counsel of record.

Defendant Amy Ruth Brunsting is a citizen of the State of Texas, who has made an appearance and can be served through her counsel of record.

Defendant is Carole Ann Brunsting, is a citizen of the State of Texas who has made an appearance and can be served through her counsel of record.

Necessary Party is Carl Brunsting, individually and as Executor of the Estate of Nelva Brunsting, who is a citizen of the State of Texas who has made an appearance and can be served through her counsel of record.

II. JURISDICTION AND VENUE

This Court had jurisdiction pursuant to Sections 32.002(c) and 32.005 of the Texas Estates Code, Chapter 37 of the Texas Civil Practice and Remedies Code, and Chapter 115 of the Texas Property Code. Venue is proper pursuant to Section 33.002.

### III. BACKGROUND

Elmer and Nelva Brunsting created the Brunsting Family Trust, and placed essentially all of their assets into this Trust, of which they were the trustees. The Trust became irrevocable and not subject to amendment upon Elmer's death in 2009, at which time Nelva became the sole trustee of the two trusts into which the Family Trust was divided: the Decedent's Trust and the Survivor's Trust. She also became the sole beneficiary of the Survivor's Trust and the primary beneficiary of the Decedent's Trust.

In 2010, Defendants Anita and Amy began taking steps to control the Trust assets and garner a larger share than their siblings. To that end, they caused Nelva to execute a Qualified Beneficiary Designation and Exercise of Testamentary Power of Appointment in June of 2010 in which she exercised her power of appointment over all the property held in the Nelva E. Brunsting Survivor's Trust as well as in the Elmer H. Brunsting Decedent's Trust. The June exercise of Power of Appointment went on to ratify and confirm all the other provisions of the Trust. Two months later, they caused Nelva to execute a second Qualified Beneficiary Designation and Exercise of Testamentary Power of Appointment, in which she attempted to exercise the very same power of appointment she had exercised in June without revoking the prior exercise – instead she ratified and confirmed the June 2010 Power of Appointment. This second Qualified Beneficiary Designation purports to remove Candy and Carl as the trustees of their own trusts, while not subjecting Amy and Anita to that same fate, and contains paragraphs of self-serving no-contest provisions.

Seemingly because the future power she had obtained for herself was insufficient, Anita had Nelva resign as Trustee in December of 2010, in Anita's favor. As Trustee, Anita made numerous transfers that far exceeded the scope of her powers. She conveyed to Carole 1,325 shares of Exxon stock out of the Decedent's Trust, and gave 1,120 shares of Exxon to Amy out of the Survivor's

Trust, plus 270 shares of Chevron stock (held in the names of Amy's children). To herself she transferred 160 shares of Exxon, plus 405 shares of Chevron (270 shares she placed in the name of her children). Anita also paid herself thousands of dollars in the form of gifts, fees and reimbursements, and did the same for both Amy and Carole.

Carole not only received hundreds of thousands dollars worth of stock and cash distributions, she also had access to a bank account that Anita funded with Trust monies and used that bank account for her own purposes. She routinely charged this Trust account for her personal groceries, gasoline, and other expenses despite not being a present income beneficiary of the Trust.

#### IV. CAUSES OF ACTION

Breach of Fiduciary Duty. Defendants Anita Brunsting and Amy Brunsting are Co-Trustees of the Trust and owed to Plaintiff a fiduciary duty, which includes : (1) a duty of loyalty and utmost good faith; (2) a duty of candor; (3) a duty to refrain from self-dealing; (4) a duty to act with integrity of the strictest kind; (5) a duty of fair, honest dealing; and (6) a duty of full disclosure. Defendants have violated this duty by engaging in self-dealing, by failing to disclose the existence of assets to Plaintiff, by failing to account to Plaintiffs for Trust assets and income, by failing to place Plaintiff's interests ahead of their own, and by making distributions that deviate from the strict language of the Trust. Defendants Anita breached this duty during Nelva's life by engaging in self-dealing and taking actions not permitted by the terms of the Trust, and thus is liable to the Estate and derivatively to Plaintiff for these breaches. Plaintiff seeks actual and exemplary damages, together with pre- and post-judgment interest and costs of court.

Fraud. Defendants Anita Brunsting and Amy Brunsting made misrepresentations of material facts with the intent that Plaintiff rely upon them, and Plaintiff did rely upon such misrepresentations to her detriment. Such misrepresentations included statements regarding the Trust, Trust assets, and



her right to receive both information and Trust assets. On information and belief, Defendants made fraudulent misrepresentations to Nelva Brunsting upon which she relied to her detriment and to the ultimate detriment of her Estate. Plaintiff seeks actual and exemplary damages, together with pre- and post-judgment interest both on behalf of herself, and on behalf of the Estate of Nelva Brunsting, Deceased.

Constructive Fraud. Constructive fraud exists when a breach of a legal or equitable duty occurs that has a tendency to deceive others and violate their confidence. As a result of Defendants' fiduciary relationship with Plaintiff and with Nelva Brunsting, Defendants owed Plaintiff and Nelva Brunsting legal duties. The breaches of the fiduciary duties discussed above and incorporated herein by reference constitute constructive fraud, which caused injury to both Nelva Brunsting's Estate and Plaintiff. Plaintiff seeks actual damages, as well as, punitive damages individually and on behalf of Nelva Brunsting's Estate.

Money Had and Received. Defendants Anita, Amy and Carole have taken money that belongs in equity and good conscience to the Trust and derivatively to Plaintiff, and have done so with malice and through fraud, in part by representing that transfers to them were valid reimbursements. Plaintiff seeks her actual damages, exemplary damages, pre- and post-judgment interest and court costs.

Conversion. Defendants Anita, Amy and Carole have converted assets that belong to Plaintiff as beneficiary of the Brunsting Family Trust, assets that belong to the Brunsting Family Trust, and assets that belonged to Nelva Brunsting and that should be a part of her Estate. Defendants have wrongfully and with malice exercised dominion and control over these assets, and has damaged Plaintiff, the Brunsting Family Trust, as well as the Estate of Nelva Brunsting by so doing. Plaintiff seeks actual damages, exemplary damages, pre- and post-judgment interest and court

costs, both individually and on behalf of the Decedent's Estate.



Tortious Interference with Inheritance Rights. A cause of action for tortious interference with inheritance rights exists when a defendant by fraud, duress, or other tortious means intentionally prevents another from receiving from a third person an inheritance or gift that he would otherwise have received. Defendants Amy, Anita, and Carole, herein breached their fiduciary duties and converted funds that would have passed to Plaintiff through the Brunsting Family Trust, and in doing so tortiously interfered with Plaintiff's inheritance rights. Plaintiff seeks actual damages as well as punitive damages.

Declaratory Judgment Action. The Brunsting Family Trust was created by Nelva and Elmer Brunsting, and became irrevocable upon the death of Elmer Brunsting. After his death, Nelva executed both the June and August Qualified Beneficiary Designations and Exercises of Testamentary Power of Appointment ("Modification Documents"), which attempted to change the terms of the then-irrevocable Trust. The Modification Documents fail because they attempted to change the terms of the Trust. Assuming without admitting that the June Modification Document is a valid Power of Appointment, then the August Modification Document fails because Nelva had already effectively appointed all of the Trust property in June; she never revoked that Power of Appointment, but actually affirmed it. Upon information and belief, Nelva did not understand what she was signing when she signed the Modification Documents, and signed them as a result of undue influence and/or duress. Plaintiff seeks a declaration that the Modification Documents are not valid, and further that the *in terrorem* clause contained therein is overly broad, against public policy and not capable of enforcement. Plaintiff further seeks a declaration as to her rights under the Brunsting Family Trust. Plaintiff contends and will show that she has brought her action in good faith.

Declaratory Judgment Action. The Family Trust Agreement governed all of the rights and

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powers that Anita held as Trustee. Those rights and powers did not allow her to transfer out the shares of Exxon and Chevron stock. Her duties as a Trustee prevented her from distributing Trust Assets to some beneficiaries to the detriment and for the purpose of harming other beneficiaries. Plaintiff seeks a declaration that the distributions of Chevron Stock and Exxon Stock to Amy, Anita and Carole are void because Anita as Trustee exceeded the scope of her power in making those gifts.

Unjust Enrichment. Defendants Amy, Anita and Carole have all been unjustly enriched by their receipt of Chevron Stock, Exxon Stock, and cash from the Trust. None were entitled to the distributions of stock, and a majority of the cash transfers were for purposes not authorized under the scope of the Trust Agreement nor of the purposes they alleged to be for. Plaintiff seeks a declaration that the Defendants were unjustly enriched, and seeks the imposition of a constructive trust on the remaining Chevron Stock and Exxon Stock that remains in their possession, as well as on any cash or proceeds from the sale of said stock and on any cash distributions from the Trust.

Conspiracy. Upon information and belief, Defendants Anita, Amy and Carole all conspired to make improper withdrawals and distributions from the Trust, to decrease Plaintiff's inheritance and interest in the Trust, to enrich themselves at the expense of the Trust and other beneficiaries, and to conceal the impropriety of their actions. They should be found jointly and severally liable for the decrease in the Trust, and should be required to disgorge their ill-gotten gains.

Demand for Accounting. Plaintiff seeks a formal accounting from Defendants in compliance with the Texas Property Code.

#### V. JURY DEMAND

Plaintiff hereby makes her demand for a jury trial in this matter.



VI. PRAYER

WHEREFORE, PREMISES CONSIDERED, Plaintiff prays that upon final trial in this matter, she will take judgment for her actual and exemplary damages, actual and exemplary damages will be awarded to her and to the Estate of Nelva Brunsting, that pre- and post-judgment interest and costs of court will be assessed against the Defendants, and that she be granted such other and further relief to which she may show herself justly entitled.

Respectfully Submitted,

ostrommorris, PLLC

BY: 

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE


I hereby certify that a true and correct copy of the foregoing instrument was served in accordance with Texas Rule of Civil Procedure 21a on the following on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2015:

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