

Case Title: In the Matter of the Intestate Estate of Jose Uy: Wilson Uy vs. Atty. Pacifico M. Maghari III

Facts:

Lilia Hofileña petitioned the Bacolod City Regional Trial Court (RTC) on February 18, 1997, to be named administratrix of her deceased common-law partner Jose Uy's estate. Initially designated administratrix, Hofileña's position was contested by Wilson Uy, Jose Uy's son, resulting in the RTC appointing Wilson Uy as administrator. During subsequent proceedings, Hofileña was represented by Atty. Mariano L. Natu-El, while Magdalena Uy, represented by Atty. Pacifico M. Maghari III, filed motions affecting the estate's claims.

Wilson Uy's counsel noticed inconsistencies in Maghari's pleadings, where Maghari appeared to have copied and later altered professional details from Atty. Natu-El's documents in various filings from 2010 onwards. This misuse included copying IBP, PTR, Roll Number, and MCLE details and was brought to the court's attention through a Motion to declare Magdalena Uy in indirect contempt and address Maghari's actions. Despite the RTC's refusal to cite Magdalena Uy for contempt, Wilson Uy filed a Complaint for disbarment against Maghari with the Supreme Court. Maghari admitted to the discrepancies but labeled them as "mere overlooked errors," attributing no ill motive to his actions.

Issues:

1. Did Atty. Pacifico M. Maghari III engage in unethical conduct through the use of false or appropriated professional details in legal pleadings?
2. What is the proper penalty for Atty. Maghari's unethical conduct if proven?

Court's Decision:

The Supreme Court found Atty. Maghari guilty of unethical conduct, violating his Lawyer's Oath and the Code of Professional Responsibility. The Court focused on Maghari's repeated appropriation of another lawyer's professional details and his fraudulent submissions across various pleadings, establishing deceit. Respondent's actions were considered a mockery of legal procedures and professional standards, warranting a sanction. The Court suspended Atty. Maghari from the practice of law for two (2) years.

Doctrine:

This case reiterated doctrines concerning the Lawyer's Oath, emphasizing fidelity to law, truthfulness in court, and the obligation not to engage in deceitful conduct. It underscored

the significance of the informational requirements on pleadings to maintain the integrity and credibility of the legal profession.

Class Notes:

- Integral Elements: The case exemplifies the importance of professionalism, honesty, and adherence to the procedural and ethical standards set by the Philippines' legal system.
- Procedural Requirements: Lawyers must indicate their Roll of Attorneys number, IBP O.R. number, PTR number, and MCLE compliance in all pleadings, as these are safeguards ensuring only qualified individuals practice law and maintain professional integrity.
- Violations and Sanctions: The willful misrepresentation or appropriation of professional details in legal documents constitutes grave misconduct, warranting suspension or disbarment.

Historical Background:

The case is indicative of the legal profession's enduring emphasis on ethics and professionalism. Misconduct, particularly through deceit and misrepresentation, has consistently been met with strict penalties, reflecting the profession's self-regulating nature and its role in upholding justice.