

Title: Atty. Bonifacio T. Barandon, Jr. vs. Atty. Edwin Z. Ferrer, Sr.

Facts:

The case began with a complaint-affidavit filed by Atty. Bonifacio T. Barandon, Jr. against Atty. Edwin Z. Ferrer, Sr. with the Integrated Bar of the Philippines Commission on Bar Discipline (IBP-CBD) on January 11, 2001. The complaint alleged several instances of misconduct by Atty. Ferrer:

1. **Abusive Language and Insinuation of Falsification**: Atty. Ferrer accused Atty. Barandon of presenting a falsified document in Civil Case 7040 through abusive language in a legal filing dated November 22, 2000.
2. **Fabrication of Charges**: Atty. Ferrer falsely charged Atty. Barandon with falsification of a public document, a document notarized before Barandon had become a lawyer or had any professional connection to Camarines Norte.
3. **Threats and Intoxication**: On December 19, 2000, Atty. Ferrer, allegedly intoxicated, threatened Atty. Barandon with violence in the Daet Municipal Trial Court.
4. **Gross Ignorance of the Law**: Atty. Ferrer accused Atty. Barandon of falsifying a document without verifying its authenticity or considering its notarized status, which presumes genuineness.

Atty. Ferrer defended himself by claiming the charges stemmed from his clients' allegations against Barandon and attacked the credibility of the accusations against him, including the improbability of his threatening behavior going unchecked in court and accusing Barandon of forum shopping.

Following the submission to the IBP-CBD, the case underwent evaluation, culminating in a recommendation by Investigating Commissioner Milagros V. San Juan to suspend Atty. Ferrer for two years, which the IBP Board of Governors modified to a one-year suspension. Atty. Ferrer's subsequent motion for reconsideration was eventually denied after referral back from the Supreme Court.

Issues:

1. Whether the IBP Board of Governors and the IBP Investigating Commissioner erred in finding Atty. Ferrer guilty.

2. If the findings were correct, whether the penalty of suspension for a year was justified.

Court's Decision:

The Supreme Court affirmed the IBP's findings and penalty, holding that Atty. Ferrer's actions violated Canons 8.01 and 7.03 of the Code of Professional Responsibility. It found the evidence sufficient to prove that Atty. Ferrer had imputed falsification to Atty. Barandon without basis and used abusive language. His conduct, including the making of threatening remarks while possibly intoxicated, was unbecoming of a lawyer and detrimental to the legal profession's dignity and integrity.

Doctrine:

- Lawyers must maintain a respectful and dignified demeanor in professional dealings, avoiding abusive, offensive, or otherwise improper language (Rule 8.01).
- Lawyers are enjoined to uphold the dignity and integrity of the legal profession at all times, avoiding conduct that adversely reflects on their fitness to practice (Rule 7.03).

Class Notes:

- ****Canons of Professional Responsibility****: Focus on Canons 8.01 and 7.03. Understand that lawyers must conduct themselves with courtesy and dignity, especially in their professional communications and conduct, respecting the integrity of the legal profession.
- ****Due Process in Administrative Discipline****: Recognize the importance of providing accused lawyers with a reasonable opportunity to be heard and defend themselves.

Historical Background:

This case illustrates the continuing efforts by the Philippine legal system to uphold the professionalism and integrity of its barristers. It serves as a reminder of the ethical standards expected of lawyers and the consequences of failing to meet them. Through such disciplinary actions, the legal profession reinforces its commitment to moral and professional excellence.