

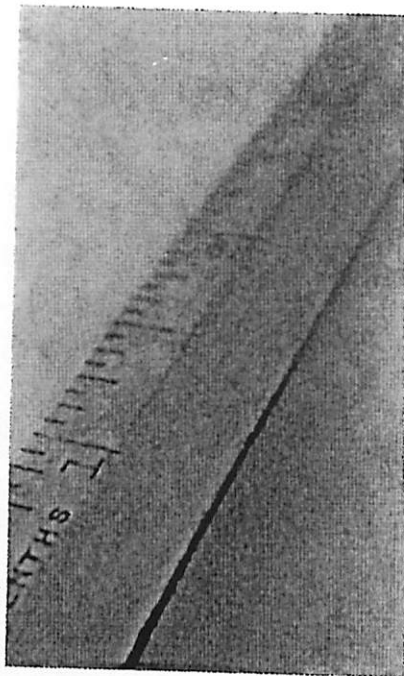
PUBLIC DISCIPLINE

April 18 through June 18, 2015

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY

The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania on June 18 ordered Donald B. Corriere suspended on consent for five years, as recommended by a three-member panel of the Disciplinary Board. According to the disciplinary report, while Corriere had practiced law “for almost 50 years with no history of discipline [and] had a long and distinguished career in Northampton County, including serving as the District Attorney during the years 1980-1992,” when his law firm “ran into financial difficulties in or around 2008-2009, after the firm’s real estate practice essentially folded,” he began commingling fiduciary funds with non-fiduciary funds in handling estate matters. In the three matters cited in the report he was found to have converted and spent at least \$50,622.73 in one; owed an estate a total of \$15,569.48 in undistributed funds and excess fees in another; and owed another a total of \$34,105.85 in undistributed funds and excess fees. According to the report, Corriere also engaged in a practice of taking “early fees” and making improper distributions, “regularly deduct[ing] legal fees from his IOLTA account prior to their receipt” and so “regularly converted other clients’ funds,” removing “fees or costs from the [firm’s IOLTA account] prior to their receipt in 107 instances” and causing his and the firm’s IOLTA accounts to be out of trust “for sustained periods of time,” with the maximum out-of-trust amount reported at about \$185,800. The report also indicated that from December 2007 to November 2009, “in order to make payroll for his law firm, [Corriere] developed a system for moving earned client fees (not entrusted funds from clients) in approximately \$5,000 increments through several ... accounts, into the [law firm]

payroll account without ever depositing those funds into the [firm’s] operating account, [and] facilitate[ing] this system [by] regularly deposit[ing] earned client fees into the [law firm] IOLTA account, thus commingling firm funds with client funds.” Noting that Corriere denied knowingly converting client funds, “instead attribute[ing] the conversion to poor record keeping,” the report concluded that “[a] fundamental part of the lawyer’s job is acting as a fiduciary and appropriately handling client funds” and that the ODC audit “revealed numerous disturbing practices, most of which cannot be excused as a result of mere ignorance,” including “paying employee medical expenses directly from the IOLTA account, moving earned funds into the IOLTA account, significantly overcharging for estate work, failing to maintain appropriate books and records (unnecessarily complicating the audit of this case) and a complete failure to perform any type of regular reconciliation that would have revealed that the IOLTA account was significantly out of trust for years.”



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