

Matter of Genger

2014 NY Slip Op 31841(U)

July 15, 2014

Sur Ct, New York County

Docket Number: 2008-0017

Judge: Nora S. Anderson

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JUL 15 2014

SURROGATE'S COURT : NEW YORK COUNTY

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 In the Matter of the Application of
 Orly Genger to Remove Dalia Genger
 as Trustee of the The Orly
 Genger 1993 Trust Established on
 December 13, 1993, by

File No. 2008-0017

ARIE GENGER,

Grantor.
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A N D E R S O N, S .

Orly Genger, the primary beneficiary of an irrevocable inter vivos trust established by her father, Arie Genger, on December 13, 1993, seeks removal of her mother, Dalia Genger, as trustee. Dalia, in turn, moves to dismiss Orly's third amended petition for failure to state a ground for relief (CPLR 3211[a][7]) and for failure to join all necessary parties (CPLR 3211[a][10]).¹

The trust at issue (the "Orly Trust") provides for discretionary principal distributions to Orly for life, with remainder to her descendants, or, if none, to a trust Arie created for the benefit of Orly's brother, Sagi Genger (the "Sagi Trust"). The original and successor trustees served until January 2008, at which time Dalia was appointed pursuant to the terms of the instrument. Orly immediately challenged the validity of her mother's appointment and, in the

¹ Dalia's motion papers do not expressly invoke CPLR 3211 ("Motion to dismiss"). However, since the motion is made pre-answer and claims that the petition fails to "state a valid claim for removal" and "fails to name, join and serve all persons interested," the court will treat the motion as one seeking dismissal under CPLR 3211(a)(7) and (a)(10).

alternative, sought the appointment of a "special trustee" to investigate alleged "wrongful dealings concerning the assets and income of the trust." The court ruled that Dalia's appointment was valid and that Orly had set forth no grounds that would warrant the appointment of a "special trustee" (*Matter of Genger*, NYLJ, Jan. 9, 2009, at 34, col 2 [Sur Ct, NY County 2009]). Less than seven months later, Orly commenced the instant proceeding to remove her mother as trustee and to appoint Michael D. Grohman, Esq., as successor trustee. After Orly amended the petition for the third time, Dalia made the instant motion to dismiss.

As a threshold matter, we address movant's argument that Orly failed to join the Sagi Trust as contingent remainder beneficiary and to serve it with the third amended petition. The Sagi Trust is unquestionably a proper party to this proceeding. Where removal of a fiduciary is sought on the ground of misconduct, contingent remainder beneficiaries are considered necessary parties, since they have a cognizable interest in the proper administration of the trust (*see e.g. Matter of Bellinger*, 35 AD2d 1078 [4th Dept 1970]; *Matter of Silver*, 72 Misc 2d 963 [Sur Ct, Kings County 1973]).

This proceeding was commenced by an order to show cause dated July 1, 2009. Although the trustee of the Sagi Trust, David Parnes, was not initially served with that order to show cause, Orly subsequently amended her petition to name the Sagi

Trust as a party. A supplemental order to show cause, which provided for service of process on Mr. Parnes in his capacity as trustee of the Sagi Trust, issued thereafter. An affidavit of service filed with the court confirms that service was effected in the manner directed. On the return date, September 8, 2009, Mr. Parnes did not answer or appear, *i.e.*, the Sagi Trust defaulted. Thereafter, Orly amended her pleading for a second time. Although the changes to the pleading were substantive in nature, Orly provided only informal notice of the new pleading on Mr. Parnes as trustee.

Under these circumstances, the issue is what, if any, notice of the third amended pleading was required. Orly contends that, because Mr. Parnes initially defaulted, she had no obligation to give him any notice of the third amended pleading, but, in the event notice was required, she provided sufficient notice by mailing him a copy.

If an amended pleading does not affect the interests of a defaulting party, service of process, defined in SCPA § 103(43) as a "[c]itation, order to show cause, subpoena and any other mandate of the surrogate's court by which jurisdiction is obtained of a party," is not required. However, where an amended pleading includes "allegations or prayers [for relief that] are modified to any meaningful extent, all parties should be given notice thereof and an opportunity to be heard" (1 Warren's Heaton on Surrogate's Court Practice, § 9.04[1], at 9-

12 [7th ed]; *compare* CPLR § 3012[a], providing that "[a] subsequent pleading asserting new or additional claims for relief shall be served upon a party who has not appeared in the manner provided for service of a summons"). In other words, service of process on a party who has defaulted is required if the changes to the pleading, as they relate to the defaulting party, are substantive in nature.

Here, the third amended petition bears little resemblance to the original pleading.² Although Orly seeks some of the same relief as in that pleading, *i.e.*, removal of Dalia, she has substantially expanded the grounds for her removal. For example, she has now alleged conduct that occurred in the more than three years between the time of her initial removal petition and the third amended petition. Orly also asks the court to appoint a successor trustee different from the one proposed in the original pleading. The amended pleading thus represents a substantial modification of the prior pleading. As a result, it cannot be said with any degree of certainty that, if the initial pleading had contained the allegations in the third amended pleading, the Sagi Trust would have defaulted. Under these circumstances, Orly's argument that she

² Had Orly served process on the trustee in relation to her second amended petition, that pleading would have been the operative one for comparison. In any event, it is noted that the third amended petition bears little resemblance to its immediate predecessor as well.

had no obligation to give any notice of the third amended petition to the trustee of the Sagi Trust fails.

Similarly, Orly's contention that, in any event, she gave sufficient notice of the third amended pleading is without merit. The record shows that Orly did in fact mail a copy of the pleading to the trustee. However, Orly's provision of informal notice did not confer jurisdiction, since, as shown above, service of process was required. Further, the defect was never cured by the filing of a waiver of service or by the trustee's appearance.³

Contrary to movant's contention, however, dismissal of the pleading is not required. The court has authority under SCPA § 312 to join "any person necessary or proper to the final determination" through the issuance of supplemental process (see also *Matter of Bellinger*, 35 AD2d 1078 [failure to cite interested parties in a removal proceeding did not require dismissal of the petition, but issuance of a supplemental citation]). Accordingly, Orly is directed to obtain and serve process on the Sagi Trust in connection with the third amended

³ The trustee's "participation" in the proceeding in connection with Orly's motion for a preliminary injunction did not constitute an appearance within the meaning of SCPA § 401. For reasons that are unclear, Orly served the motion upon Mr. Parnes as trustee of the Sagi Trust. The motion was eventually withdrawn, but, before then, Mr. Parnes filed an affidavit in opposition, and his counsel came to court on the motion's return date and participated in a court conference. However, the trustee never attempted to participate formally in the proceeding. For example, his counsel never attempted to file a responsive pleading or a notice of appearance.

petition. The balance of Orly's motion, which seeks dismissal for failure to state a claim (CPLR 3211[a][7]), is held in abeyance pending completion of jurisdiction. If the trustee of the Sagi Trust appears, the motion to dismiss must be re-noticed and served upon the trustee so that he is afforded the opportunity to respond.

This decision constitutes the order of the court.

Dated: July 15, 2014

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