

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE  
15<sup>TH</sup> JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR  
PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA

WILLIAM E. STANSBURY,  
Plaintiff,

CASE NO: 50 2012 CA 013933 MB AA

v.

TED S. BERNSTEIN; SIMON BERNSTEIN;  
LIC HOLDINGS, INC.; and ARBITRAGE  
INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT, LLC,  
f/k/a ARBITRAGE INTERNATIONAL  
HOLDINGS, LLC.

Defendants.

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PALM BEACH COUNTY, FL  
CIRCUIT CIVIL

**RESPONSE OF PLAINTIFF WILLIAM E. STANSBURY  
TO DEFENDANTS' MOTION TO DISMISS OR, IN THE  
ALTERNATIVE, MOTION FOR MORE DEFINITE STATEMENT**

Plaintiff WILLIAM E. STANSBURY, through undersigned counsel, hereby responds to Defendants' Motion to Dismiss or, in the Alternative, Motion for More Definite Statement, and states:

1. **General Response**

When considering a Motion to Dismiss, the standard to be applied by the trial court is that every allegation must be accepted as true, and every inference must be drawn in favor of the Plaintiff; the pleader is only required to set forth "a short and plain statement of the ultimate facts showing that the pleader is entitled to relief." *See*, Rule 1.110(b), Fla. R.Civ. P.

The facts pled in the Complaint that support the various legal theories set forth in each Count are contained in paragraphs 8 through 25 of the Complaint. They establish that:

- Plaintiff was an employee and minority owner of LIC Holdings, Inc. (LIC); he was promised but not paid compensation that he was due for the years 2008 through 2011;

and he was denied promised profit distributions on his 10% ownership interest. *See*, paragraphs 13, 18, 20 21 and 22.

- That the officers of Defendants LIC and Arbitrage International Management (AIM), Simon and Ted Bernstein, made false and misleading representations to Plaintiff with respect to the compensation and distributions due him by falsely stating, among other things, that Defendants Bernstein as well as Plaintiff were not receiving full compensation when, in fact, Defendants Bernstein were being fully paid. *See*, paragraphs 21, 22 and 25.
- This concealment and other representations, and reliance thereon, induced Plaintiff to delay pursuing his rights until he did so by the filing of the Complaint in 2012. *See*, paragraph 25.

Plaintiff's Complaint clearly sets forth the ultimate facts supporting Plaintiff's claims against the Defendants. The Defendants' assertion that the Plaintiff's factual allegations as "confusing," "riddled with ambiguities," "vague," and "contradictory" (which they are not) is simply wrong.

2. **The Statute of Limitations Does Not Bar Plaintiff's Claims.** Defendants seek to dismiss the Counts alleging Accounting (Counts I and II), Breach of Oral Contract (Count III), Breach of Implied Covenant of Good Faith and Fair Dealing (Count IV), Breach of Fiduciary Duty (Count V), Fraud (Count VII), Equitable Lien (Count VIII), Contract Implied in Law (Count IX) and Constructive Trust (Count X) on the ground that these claims are barred by the four-year statute of limitations found in §95.11(3) Fla. Stat. (2012). Defendants contend the limitations period began to run prior to July 31, 2008 based solely on Plaintiff's allegation that Simon Bernstein made certain representations to him in "early 2008" (Complaint, Par. 21) and that Plaintiff represented that he had been deprived of his money due him for "approximately four and a half years" (Complaint, Par. 28). These statements, according to the Defendants,

somehow indicate that Plaintiff was aware of his claims prior to July 31, 2008, and thus they are now time barred.

Defendants' argument is fatally flawed for several reasons:

(a) These averments in the Complaint are clearly retrospective recollections made by Plaintiff as to the sequence of events that ultimately gave rise to his claims. They do not suggest that, at the time, Plaintiff realized, or should have realized, that any conduct by the Defendants was actionable.

(b) Defendants ignore the allegations of Paragraph 22 of the Complaint:

22. Through misrepresentations made from 2008 through the date of filing of this Complaint, Defendants knowingly made false statements to Plaintiff to hide their scheme to withhold from Plaintiff money to which he was entitled. For example, at times they claimed that money being received was not being paid as salary or distributions to either of Defendants BERNSTEIN but was being withheld and placed in a company account, for eventual distribution. **As Plaintiff and Defendants could afford to wait until year's end to be paid their distributions, and as Defendants BERNSTEIN assured Plaintiff that the payment arrangement would apply to all three equally, Plaintiff did not question the truthfulness of their representations (emphasis added).**

In light of these allegations, three things are readily apparent. First, Plaintiff has alleged that, due to the representations of the Bernstein Defendants, he was persuaded to wait until the end of the year 2008 to be paid. As a result, the statute of limitations would not begin to run, at the earliest, until sometime after January 1, 2009 when he was not paid as promised. Therefore, these claims are timely filed. Secondly, Plaintiff is alleging he was induced to his detriment into delaying action on the Defendants failure to pay him by the false and fraudulent misrepresentations of the Bernsteins. Fraudulent misrepresentations operate to toll the statute of limitations. *See, San Pedro v. San Pedro*, 910 So. 2d 426, 430 (Fla. 4th DCA 2005). Further, if there is some question as to when the applicable statute of limitations began to run in this case,

the commencement date is a fact question for the trier of fact to resolve. *See, J.A. Cantor Associates, Inc. v. Brenner*, 363 So. 2d 204 (Fla. 3d DCA 1978).

For the foregoing reasons, Defendant's Motion to Dismiss based on the statute of limitations should be denied.

3. **Allegations Against Ted Bernstein Personally for Accounting**

The allegations contained in paragraphs 11 through 25 of the Complaint clearly establish that the Bernstein Defendants and Ted Bernstein in particular, engaged in a campaign of misrepresentation and deceit with respect to their interaction and dealings with Plaintiff on compensation and ownership distribution issues. The Plaintiff admits, however, at least at this time, that the allegations against Ted Bernstein individually, as to an Accounting, as set forth in Count II, may be premature. As such, Plaintiff agrees to voluntarily dismiss that Count, without prejudice, at this time.

4. **Dismissal of Count I for an Accounting Against LIC and AIM is Not Warranted.**

The test in *Bankers Trust Realty, Inc. v. Kluger*, 672 So. 2d 897 (Fla. 3d DCA 1996), as set forth in Defendants' Motion, requires Plaintiff to allege that: 1) Plaintiff and Defendant shared a fiduciary relationship **OR** entered a complex transaction, and 2) a remedy at law is inadequate. Plaintiff contends that the parties entered into a complex transaction, and Plaintiff has alleged the existence of a fiduciary relationship (*see*, Count V). Plaintiff has also alleged that a remedy at law is inadequate (*see*, Count I, par. 28). As such, Plaintiff has met the pleading requirements of *Kluger* and has stated a cause of action for an accounting against the Corporate Defendants.

5. **Plaintiff's claim for Breach of Implied Covenant of Good Faith and Fair Dealing (Count IV) Will Be Dismissed at This Time without Prejudice**

6. **Breach of Fiduciary Duty (Count V), Civil Theft (Count VI) and Fraud (Count VII) Are Not Barred by the Economic Loss Rule**

Claims for Breach of Fiduciary Duty and Civil Theft are causes of action arising under statutory law. The alleged Breach of fiduciary duty claim made by Plaintiff against the Defendants is supported by Florida law, including the fiduciary obligations of corporate officers and directors, which are specifically set forth in Florida Statutes §607, *et seq.* Civil Theft is articulated in Florida Statutes §772.11 (Complaint, Par. 48). The Plaintiff's Complaint has clearly stated a claim under that statute. The Supreme Court of Florida has unequivocally stated that the economic loss rule cannot be used to eliminate statutory causes of action. *See, Comptech International, Inc. v. Milam Commerce Park, LTD*, 753 So. 2d 1219 (Fla. 1999). Moreover, the economic loss rule does not abolish the cause of action for breach of fiduciary duty, even if there is an underlying contract. *See, Invo Florida, Inc. v. Somerset Venturer, Inc.*, 751 So. 2d 1263 (Fla. 3d DCA 2000).

As to Plaintiff's fraud claim against Defendants, the economic loss rule does not bar tort actions where a legal duty independent of the contract itself has been violated. *HTP, Ltd. v. Lineas Aereas Costarricenses, S.A.*, 685 So. 2d 1238, 1239 (Fla. 1996). In addition to the contract claims alleged, Plaintiff has specifically alleged that the Defendants deceived him into surrendering his 10% ownership interest in LIC. The fraudulent misrepresentations and subsequent reliance by plaintiff constitute an independent claim that is not related to the contract. Therefore, the fraud claim is not barred by the economic loss rule.

7. **The Breach of Fiduciary Duty (Count V) and Fraud (Count VII) Claims Should Not Be Dismissed.**

For the reasons set forth in paragraphs 8 and 9 below, the Plaintiff's breach of fiduciary duty and fraud claims against the Defendants should clearly not be dismissed.

8. **The Breach of Fiduciary Duty Claim (Count V) States a Cause of Action.**

Florida law provides that corporate officers and directors owe a duty of loyalty and a duty of care to the corporation and its shareholders. *Cohen v. Hattaway*, 595 So.2d 105 (Fla. 5th DCA 1992). In particular, Fla. Stat. § 607.0830 provides:

- (1) A director shall discharge his or her duties as a director ...
  - (a) In good faith;
  - (b) With the care an ordinarily prudent person in a like position would exercise under similar circumstances; and
  - (c) In a manner he or she reasonably believes to be in the best interests of the corporation.

These fiduciary duties are generally described as the duties of care and the duty of loyalty. See, *In re Aqua Clear Technologies, Inc.*, 361 B.R. 567, 575 (Bankr. S.D. Fla. 2007). Each of these duties is of equal and independent significance. *Id.* The duty of care requires the directors of a company to act on an informed basis. *Id.* The duty of loyalty requires the officer or director to act in good faith and in the best interests of the company. Fla. Stat. § 607.0830(1)(c); *In re Aqua Clear Technologies, Inc.*, 361 B.R. 567. A corporate officer or director breaches the duty of loyalty if that person “depart[s] from his corporate responsibility and start[s] serving himself.” *In re Aqua Clear Technologies, Inc.*, 361 B.R. at 575, citing *Intercarga Internacional de Carga, S.A. v. Harper Group, Inc.*, 659 So.2d 1208, 1210 (Fla. 3d DCA 1995). An officer or director may be held “strictly accountable and liable if corporate funds or property are wasted or mismanaged due to their inattention to their duties.” *Id.*

In this case, the Complaint specifically alleges that Simon and Ted Bernstein owned and controlled the corporate Defendants (LIC and AIM), worked closely together with respect thereto, and were one another's alter egos. (Complaint, Par. 6) As such, the Bernsteins are (or were at the time the claims arose – Simon Bernstein is now deceased) clearly both "officers and directors" of the corporate Defendants and exclusively made all decisions regarding the operations of these corporate Defendants. The Complaint also alleges that both Bernsteins made false and misleading misrepresentations to Plaintiff, an employee and minority shareholder of Defendant LIC, relating to Plaintiff's compensation and distributions on his ownership interest, and the Bernsteins falsely stated that their compensation was being withheld and maintained by the corporation, the same as Plaintiff's, when in reality they had paid themselves. (Complaint, Pars. 20, 22) It has also been alleged that the Bernsteins intercepted mail addressed to the Plaintiff and converted checks intended for Plaintiff for their own personal use or the use of the corporate Defendants. (Complaint, Par. 23) All these allegations were expressly incorporated by reference into Count V. (Complaint, Par. 41) This conduct clearly establishes a claim for breach of fiduciary duty as to the Bernsteins. As officers/directors, they failed to act in good faith and in the best interests of the company or its employee/minority shareholder, the Plaintiff, and breached their duty of loyalty when they departed from their corporate responsibilities and started serving themselves. Accordingly, Defendants' Motion to Dismiss the claim for breach of fiduciary duty should be denied.

9. **The Civil Theft Claim (Count VI) States a Cause of Action.**

As stated in Paragraph 8, above, the Complaint alleges that the Bernsteins intercepted mail addressed to the Plaintiff and converted checks intended for Plaintiff for their own personal use or the use of the corporate Defendants. (Complaint, Par. 23). All these allegations were

expressly incorporated by reference into the Civil Theft claim, Count VI (Complaint, Par. 49) and were included in the all-inclusive references contained in Par. 50. Paragraph 51 makes specific reference to the Defendants' criminal intent consistent with *Palmer v. Gotta Have It Golf Collectibles, Inc.*, 106 F. Supp.2d 1289 (S.D. Fla. 2000) a case cited and relied on by Defendants at p. 15 of Defendants' Motion. While not using the specific language "sophisticated scheme of deceit and theft," that is the gist of Plaintiff's claim as alleged in Paragraph 51 and in the Fraud claim, Count VII (Par. 58). Finally, other than the general allegation relating to the failure to pay due compensation, the allegation of specific, identifiable checks made payable to Plaintiff that were converted by the Bernstein defendants is sufficient to meet the "specific money capable of identification" requirement of *Belford Trucking Company v. Zagar*, 243 So. 2d 646, 648 (Fla. 4th DCA 1970), and cited in the Defendants' Motion at p. 15. For these reasons, the Motion to Dismiss the Civil Theft count should be denied.

10. **The Fraud Claim (Count VII) States a Cause of Action**

In order to sufficiently plead a fraud claim in Florida, the pleader must allege: a) a false representation of fact, known by the party making it to be false at the time it was made; (b) that the representation was made for the purpose of inducing another to act in reliance on it; (c) actual reliance on the representation; and (d) resulting in damage to the plaintiff. *Essex Ins. Co., Inc. v. Universal Entertainment & Skating Center, Inc.*, 665 So. 2d 360 (Fla. 5th DCA 1995). *See also, Peninsular Fla. Dist. Council of Assemblies of God v. Pan American Investment and Development Corp.*, 450 So. 2d 1231 (Fla. 4th DCA 1984).

In this case, Plaintiff's Complaint has alleged sufficient, particular facts to state a cause of action for fraud. Paragraphs 11 through 25 set out in detail the misrepresentations and falsehoods stated by the Bernstein Defendants in their interaction and business discussions with Plaintiff, all of which were incorporated by reference into the Count VII by Par. 53. Of



particular interest is Paragraph 24, which alleges how Defendants deceived Plaintiff into surrendering his 10% interest in LIC, which he did. It is also alleged that the Defendants intended for Plaintiff to rely on the false statements (or omissions of fact), that these statements or omissions were material, that Plaintiff relied on these falsehoods and was damaged thereby. See, Complaint, Pars. 47, 56, 57. Plaintiff was damaged by these false representations when he was denied his due compensation and, more importantly, when he surrendered his ownership interest in the LIC. The Motion to Dismiss as to Count VII should be denied.

11. **The Equitable Lien (Count VIII), Constructive Trust (Count X), the Contract Implied in Law (Count VIII), and the Indemnification (Count XI) Claim Will Be Dismissed At This Time Without Prejudice.**

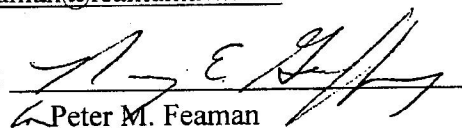
WHEREFORE, Plaintiff requests this Honorable Court to deny Defendants' Motion to Dismiss as to Counts I, III, V, VI and VII, and such other relief as this Court deems just and proper.

#### **CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

WE HEREBY CERTIFY that the above and foregoing has been forwarded via e-mail service at [swergoldj@gtlaw.com](mailto:swergoldj@gtlaw.com); [arnsdorffk@gtlaw.com](mailto:arnsdorffk@gtlaw.com); [steffesj@gtlaw.com](mailto:steffesj@gtlaw.com); and [FLService@gtlaw.com](mailto:FLService@gtlaw.com) to Jon Swergold, Esq., Greenberg Traurig, P.A., 401 East Las Olas Blvd., Suite 2000, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301; and at [kdstern@gmail.com](mailto:kdstern@gmail.com) to Kenneth D. Stern, Esq., Kenneth D. Stern, P.A., 3615 W. Boynton Beach Blvd., Boynton Beach, FL 33436 this 8<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2013.

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