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UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

In re:

THE DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDING OF JEFFREY S. HOFFMAN.

Case No. 2:12-mp-00179-BB

MEMORANDUM OF DECISION ON DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDING OF JEFFREY S. HOFFMAN

Date: Friday, November 16, 2012

Time: 2:00 p.m.

Place: Courtroom 1339

Edward R. Roybal Federal Building

and Courthouse

255 East Temple Street Los Angeles, CA 90012

The matter before the Court is a disciplinary proceeding against attorney Jeffrey S. Hoffman ("Mr. Hoffman") pursuant to the Fourth Amended General Order 96-05 of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California (the "General Order").

Statement of Procedure and Notice of Hearing

The Honorable Geraldine Mund (the "Referring Judge" or "Judge Mund") initiated this disciplinary proceeding against Mr. Hoffman, pursuant to the General Order, by filing with the Clerk of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California (the "Clerk") a statement of cause, dated August 7, 2012, setting forth the basis for the referral and a suggestion of appropriate discipline (the "Statement of Cause"). [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 1.] In accordance with the procedure set forth in the General Order, the Clerk designated a panel of

Case 2:12-mp-00179-BB Doc 19 Filed 02/15/13 Entered 02/15/13 17:11:43 Desc Main Document Page 2 of 23

three bankruptcy judges from this district to hear the matter. The members of the panel are the Honorable Sheri Bluebond, Presiding Judge, the Honorable Victoria S. Kaufman, and the Honorable Scott C. Clarkson (together, the "Panel").

On August 28, 2012, the Clerk served¹ Mr. Hoffman with the Notice of Assignment of Hearing Panel, which included the Statement of Cause and General Order. [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 6.] On September 7, 2012, the Clerk served² Mr. Hoffman with an Amended Notice of Assignment, which included the Statement of Cause and General Order. [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 7.] Pursuant to the General Order, Mr. Hoffman and the U.S. Trustee had until the expiration of a period of 10 days after service of the Notice of Assignment to move to recuse one or more of the judges assigned to the Panel. No motion to recuse was filed.

The Clerk served³ Mr. Hoffman with a Notice of Disciplinary Hearing on October 2, 2012, which set a disciplinary hearing date of November 16, 2012. [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 8.] On November 1, 2012, the U.S. Trustee filed a timely Notice of Intent to Appear [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 9] and Request for Judicial Notice [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 10]. Also on November 1, 2012, Kelly L. Morrison, attorney for the U.S. Trustee, filed a declaration [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 11], and Lewis R. Landau, attorney for creditors Holstein & Golbaz-Hagh in the chapter 7 case of *In re Old Topanga Road Trust*, Case No. 1:11-bk-23205-AA, filed a declaration in support of the U.S. Trustee's Notice of Intent to Appear [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 12]. On November 15, 2012, the day before the disciplinary hearing, Mr. Hoffman filed an untimely "supplemental response," wherein he requested additional time to "prepare and timely file an intelligent and comprehensive reply." [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 15.]

¹ The Clerk served Mr. Hoffman by U.S. mail service at 16250 Ventura Blvd., Ste. 202, Encino, CA 91436.

² The Clerk served Mr. Hoffman by electronic service at john@jshoffmanlaw.com and by U.S. mail and overnight mail service at 11400 West Olympic Blvd., Suite 200, Los Angeles, CA 90064.

³ The Clerk served Mr. Hoffman by U.S. mail and overnight mail service at the following addresses: 530 S. Glenoaks Blvd., Ste. 201, Burbank, CA 91503; and 20501 Ventura Blvd., Ste. 270, Woodland Hills, CA 91364-0842.

⁴ Mr. Hoffman had served a virtually identical un-filed response on the Presiding Judge approximately one week before he filed this "supplemental response."

Case 2:12-mp-00179-BB Doc 19 Filed 02/15/13 Entered 02/15/13 17:11:43 Desc Main Document Page 3 of 23

On November 16, 2012, the instant disciplinary proceeding came on for hearing before the Panel (the "Disciplinary Hearing"). Mr. Hoffman did not appear. Instead, Erickson Davis, Esq. ("Mr. Davis"), appeared on Mr. Hoffman's behalf. At that time, Mr. Davis offered as a witness Mr. John Edwards ("Mr. Edwards"), an individual identifying himself as a paralegal in the employ of Mr. Hoffman, to provide testimony on the matter before the Panel. Mr. Hoffman's counsel also submitted two unfiled declarations. The Panel determined that the declarants of the two unfiled declarations, Karen Nierhake and Delores Lucas, were not present at the disciplinary proceeding. Finally, on November 23, 2012, the U.S. Trustee filed a post-hearing declaration, outlining several additional bankruptcy cases filed within the Central District of California where Mr. Hoffman had been non-compliant with orders to pay sanctions. I2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 16.1

Background

The initial events giving rise to the instant disciplinary proceeding stem from Mr. Hoffman's representation of Marcella Holding Trust (the "Debtor") in two consecutive chapter 7 bankruptcies and Judge Mund's referral of Mr. Hoffman for disciplinary proceedings pursuant to the General Order. On November 22, 2011, Marcella Holding Trust filed a voluntary chapter 7 bankruptcy petition in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California (the "First Bankruptcy Case"). [1:11-bk-23548, Dk. 1.] Mr. Hoffman signed the petition as the Debtor's attorney of record and Phillip Allen Murphree⁵ ("Mr. Murphree") signed as principal of the Debtor. [1:11-bk-23548, Dk. 1.] The Debtor's address and Mr. Hoffman's address were both listed on the petition as 16250 Ventura Blvd. #202, Encino, CA 91436. [1:11-bk-23548, Dk. 1.] While Schedule A only reflected a single family residence located at 1031 Marcella Avenue, in Rialto, California, four motions for relief were filed concerning unscheduled real property located at 20748 Exhibit Place, Woodland Hills, California [1:11-bk-23548, Dk. 18];

⁵ The name of the Debtor's principal was listed as "Phillip Murphee" on the petition [1:12-bk-13350, Dk. 1], but listed as "Phillip Allen Murphree" on Mr. Murphree's signed declaration [1:12-bk-13350, Dk. 43]. For consistency, further references to this individual will reflect "Mr. Murphree."

Case 2:12-mp-00179-BB Doc 19 Filed 02/15/13 Entered 02/15/13 17:11:43 Desc Main Document Page 4 of 23

1990 N. Rory Lane #4, Simi Valley, California [1:11-bk-23548, Dk. 19]; 23301 Park Colombo, Calabasas, California [1:11-bk-23548, Dk. 26]; and 28149 Shelter Cove, Santa Clarita, California [1:11-bk-23548, Dk. 32]. The First Bankruptcy Case was dismissed on January 26, 2012, for failure of Debtor to appear at the scheduled § 341(a) hearing. [1:11-bk-23548, Dk. 23.]

On March 5, 2012, Marcella Holding Trust filed a second voluntary chapter 7 bankruptcy petition (the "Second Bankruptcy Case"), once again listing Mr. Hoffman as the Debtor's attorney of record and Mr. Murphree as principal of the Debtor. [1:12-bk-13350, Dk. 1.] The Second Bankruptcy Case was originally assigned to Judge Robert Kwan; however, on April 5, 2012, that case was reassigned to Judge Mund. [1:12-bk-13350, Dk. 23.] On April 9, 2012, the Second Bankruptcy Case was transferred from Los Angeles Division to San Fernando Valley Division and the case number was changed from 2:12-bk-17888 to 1:12-bk-13350. [1:12-bk-13350, Dk. 24.]

Judge Mund reviewed the Second Bankruptcy Case in preparation for the April 3, 2012, hearing on a motion for relief from stay filed by U.S. Bank, and she discovered what appeared to her to be "a case in which interests in various properties were 'dumped' post-petition for the purpose of obtaining an automatic stay." [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 1, pg. 2.] For example, Exhibit 7 to the motion for relief filed by U.S. Bank reflected an unrecorded quitclaim deed that had been executed post-petition, which transferred an interest in property to the Debtor. [1:12-bk-13350, Dk. 9, Exh. 7.] That quitclaim deed reflected 16250 Ventura Blvd. #202, Encino, CA 91436 as the address to which a recorded copy of the deed should be returned. [1:12-bk-13350, Dk. 9, Exh. 7.] This address is the same address listed for both Mr. Hoffman and the Debtor on the petition. [1:12-bk-13350, Dk. 1.]

On April 11, 2012, Judge Mund issued an order to show cause why the Second Bankruptcy Case should not be dismissed pursuant to 11 U.S.C. § 109(g) with a 180-day bar against re-filing and ordered Mr. Murphree and Mr. Hoffman appear at the May 1, 2012, hearing to answer the court's questions. [1:12-bk-13350, Dk. 27.] On April 30, 2012, the day

Case 2:12-mp-00179-BB Doc 19 Filed 02/15/13 Entered 02/15/13 17:11:43 Desc Main Document Page 5 of 23

before the show cause hearing, Mr. Hoffman filed a late "reply," which included declarations of Mr. Hoffman and Mr. Murphree.⁶ [1:12-bk-13350, Dk. 43.] On May 1, 2012, the show cause hearing was held, but neither Mr. Hoffman nor Mr. Murphree appeared. Instead, Martin Weingarten, Esq. ("Mr. Weingarten"), an appearance attorney, appeared on behalf of Mr. Hoffman. [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 1, pg. 2.] Judge Mund continued the show cause hearing to May 29, 2012, and ordered Mr. Hoffman to appear at the continued hearing. [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 1, pg. 2.] Once again, neither Mr. Hoffman nor Mr. Murphree appeared at the continued show cause hearing, but instead Mr. Weingarten appeared on behalf of Mr. Hoffman. [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 1, pg. 2.] As a result, on July 9, 2012, Judge Mund entered an order to show cause why Mr. Hoffman should not be referred for discipline pursuant to the General Order for the bad faith filing of multiple bankruptcy cases and bad faith transfers of property into bankruptcy cases in which he is the attorney of record. [1:12-bk-13350, Dk. 71.]

On July 17, 2012, Jeannette R. Marsala, Esq., attorney for secured creditor ING Bank, FSB, filed a declaration in support of the order to show cause (the "Marsala Declaration"), which provided evidence of several additional instances where certain debtors, represented by Mr. Hoffman, were transferred property post-petition. Specifically, the Marsala Declaration provided evidence that Mr. Hoffman was the attorney of record for the following additional post-petition debtor-transferees: Nashville Property Trust (1:12-bk-10312); Landamerica Investments, LLC (1:11-bk-21906); and Francisco Loya (2:12-bk-15300). [1:12-bk-13350, Dk. 78, pg. 3:4-9.] The Marsala Declaration points out that each of these cases was dismissed without a discharge. [1:12-bk-13350, Dk. 78, pg. 3:9.] The Marsala Declaration included evidence that the instruments conveying real property to these debtors post-petition, usually unrecorded quitclaim deeds, reflected Mr. Hoffman's address as the return address and were notarized by the same recurring group of notaries. [1:12-bk-13350, Dk. 78, pg. 3:10-16.]

⁶ This "reply" was late-filed the day before the hearing and was therefore in violation of Local Bankruptcy Rule 9013-1.

Case 2:12-mp-00179-BB Doc 19 Filed 02/15/13 Entered 02/15/13 17:11:43 Desc Main Document Page 6 of 23

On August 3, 2012, Mr. Hoffman filed a "supplemental response" to the order to show cause and request for continuance, in which Mr. Hoffman denied that he received proper notice or service, requested additional time to respond, and explained that he had been admitted to a rehabilitation facility which rendered him unable to physically appear at the show cause hearing.⁷ [1:12-bk-13350, Dk. 81.] On August 6, 2012, the day before the show cause hearing, Mr. Hoffman filed a declaration in response to the order to show cause, which reflected a general denial and a request for continuance.⁸ [1:12-bk-13350, Dk. 81.] On August 7, 2012, Judge Mund conducted a show cause hearing in which Mr. Hoffman and Mr. Murphree were not present, but Mr. Weingarten again appeared on Mr. Hoffman's behalf. That same day, Judge Mund referred Mr. Hoffman for disciplinary proceedings by issuing the Statement of Cause. [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 1.]

The Statement of Cause

The Statement of Cause reflects Judge Mund's independent inquiry into the Marcella Holding bankruptcy case as well as 11 other bankruptcy cases in which Mr. Hoffman was attorney of record for the debtor. The Statement of Cause sets forth in detail an analysis of post-petition real property transfers in each of these 12 bankruptcy cases. Specifically, the chart attached to the Statement of Cause reflects information on each of these post-petition transfers, including the property address, type of transfer instrument used, name of notary on the transfer instrument, and the return address for recorded copies. [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 1.] In analyzing this data, Judge Mund pointed out several noticeable patterns and similarities concerning these transfers. For instance, each of these cases was dismissed without a discharge; the transfers used a recurring group of notaries; Mr. Hoffman's address was often the return address on the transfer instrument; and the type of transfer instruments was similar.

⁷ This "supplemental response" was filed four days before the hearing and was therefore late-filed. Pursuant to the Order to Show Cause entered on July 9, 2012, "Any evidence that you wish the Court to consider must be submitted in the form of a written declaration at least one week before the scheduled hearing." [1:12-bk-13350, Dk. 71.]

⁸ This declaration was late-filed pursuant to the Order to Show Cause entered on July 9, 2012. See supra, note 7.

Case 2:12-mp-00179-BB Doc 19 Filed 02/15/13 Entered 02/15/13 17:11:43 Desc Main Document Page 7 of 23

[2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 1.] Judge Mund also noted that "since Mr. Hoffman became aware that these quitclaim deeds and trust deeds are being tracked back to his office address, he is having them returned to the debtors." [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 1, pg. 4.] With respect to the recurring group of notaries, Judge Mund concluded that "each [transfer instrument] used one of the notaries that appear throughout these transfers and thus it appears that Hoffman is behind these matters." [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 1, pg. 4.] Finally, Judge Mund stated that Mr. Hoffman has never adequately responded or provided adequate justification for his non-appearance during the show cause proceedings. [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 1, pgs. 3-4.] Judge Mund observed that, while Mr. Hoffman asserted that he "is now in a rehabilitation facility due to serious complications of a recent surgery and cannot physically appear," he has not provided any evidence that he cannot physically appear. [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 1, pg. 4.] In conclusion, Judge Mund recommended "that [Mr. Hoffman] be suspended from practice in the bankruptcy court of this district, be referred to the disciplinary process of the district court for disbarment by the body, and that he be referred to the State Bar of California for review and action." [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 1, pg. 4.]

The Disciplinary Hearing

The Disciplinary Hearing was held on November 16, 2012. Mr. Hoffman did not appear. Instead, counsel for Mr. Hoffman, Erickson Davis, Esq., appeared on his behalf. Both the Panel and Mr. Davis noted that Mr. Hoffman's Supplemental Response was late-filed because it was filed on November 15, 2012, the day before the Disciplinary Hearing. Pursuant to the General Order, the Panel has discretionary authority to disregard "written statements or declarations of innocence or in mitigation of the attorney's conduct unless they are filed with the court with copies delivered promptly thereafter to the chambers of each member of the Panel at least 7 days prior to the hearing." General Order at 4:15-18. The Panel announced that it would disregard the Supplemental Response because it was late-filed.

Mr. Davis also referred the Panel to the various pleadings and declarations submitted by the U.S. Trustee (timely filed on November 1, 2012), consisting of the U.S. Trustee's Notice

Case 2:12-mp-00179-BB Doc 19 Filed 02/15/13 Entered 02/15/13 17:11:43 Desc Main Document Page 8 of 23

of Intent to Appear [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 9], Request for Judicial Notice [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 10], and the Declarations of Kelly L. Morrison, attorney for the U.S. Trustee [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 11] and Lewis R. Landau, attorney for creditors Holstein & Golbaz-Hagh in the chapter 7 case of *In re Old Topanga Road Trust*, Case No. 1:11-bk-23205-AA, [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 12], and requested a continuance to respond. The Panel, reviewing the U.S. Trustee's November 1, 2012, filed pleadings, determined that the scope of the information contained therein was generally outside the scope of, or was duplicative of, the Statement of Cause, and therefore was unnecessary for the Panel to consider. Therefore, the Panel declined Mr. Hoffman's request for a continuance to permit him to respond to the U.S. Trustee's papers and stated its intention to disregard the contents and judicial review requests of court pleadings within the U.S. Trustee's November 1, 2012, pleadings.⁹

In support of Mr. Hoffman, Mr. John Edwards also appeared and gave testimony. Following this testimony, representatives of the Office of the U.S. Trustee and the Panel members cross-examined and examined Mr. Edwards.

Further, two unfiled declarations of Karen Nierhake and Delores Lucas were submitted to the Panel d uring the November 16 hearing. The Declarants for these two unfiled declarations were not physically present during the Disciplinary Hearing. The Panel has discretionary authority to disregard "[w]ritten statements presented to the Panel as evidence by or on behalf of the attorney . . . if the declarant is unavailable at the hearing for cross-examination and for examination by the Panel." General Order at 4:18-21. The Panel announced that these declarations would be disregarded because they had been late-filed and because the declarants were not present for cross-examination and for examination by the Panel.

In response to questions posed by Mr. Davis, Mr. Edwards testified that Mr. Hoffman had no connection with the dumping scheme. Mr. Edwards testified further that he believed a

⁹ Notwithstanding this, the Panel has, *sua sponte*, taken judicial notice of various pleadings, as set out in this Memorandum of Decision.

former business associate of Mr. Hoffman was actually responsible for dumping scheme. Mr. Edwards provided no admissible evidence to support this statement. The Panel asked Mr. Edwards how long he or Mr. Hoffman had known about the dumping, and Mr. Edwards replied that they both had known about these activities for approximately two and one half years. The Panel then asked Mr. Edwards what he and Mr. Hoffman did once they discovered the dumping scheme. Mr. Edwards testified that, upon discovering instances of dumping, either he or Mr. Hoffman would send a letter to the secured lender whose property was being affected, informing that secured lender of the dumping activity. The Panel requested that Mr. Edwards provide copies of these letters for inspection by the Panel within 10 days of the Disciplinary Hearing, and Mr. Edwards agreed to do so. The Panel has never received any letters from Mr. Hoffman or Mr. Edwards.

Findings of Fact

Based on the Statement of Cause, the records of the Court referred to in the Statement of Cause upon which the Panel takes judicial notice, and the Panel's own records in this disciplinary proceeding, including the underlying bankruptcy cases in which Mr. Hoffman was counsel of record, and further including the amounts of sanctions that Mr. Hoffman has been ordered to pay, but has not paid as of the date of this Memorandum of Decision, being drawn from the Court's various dockets within the Central District of California, the Panel makes the following findings of fact based on clear and convincing evidence:

- A. The procedures taken as set forth above were in accordance with the procedures required by the General Order.
- B. Judge Mund issued a statement of cause on August 7, 2012, and this Panel was appointed.
- C. Mr. Hoffman was provided with adequate notice of this disciplinary proceeding and a fair opportunity to respond to the Statement of Cause.
- D. On November 11, 2012, the U.S. Trustee filed a timely Notice of Intent to Appear [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 9] and request for Judicial Notice [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 10]. Also on

November 1, 2012, Kelly L. Morrison, attorney for the U.S. Trustee, filed a declaration [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 11], and Lewis R. Landau, attorney for creditors Holstein & Golbaz-Hagh in the chapter 7 case of *In re Old Topanga Road Trust*, Case No. 1:11-bk-23205-AA, filed a declaration in support of the U.S. Trustee's Notice of Intent to Appear [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 12]. The Panel, however, chooses to disregard the substantive aspects of these pleadings as being either outside the scope of the Statement of Cause or otherwise redundant with respect to the files and documents before the Panel.

- E. Mr. Hoffman filed an untimely response to the Statement of Cause on November 15, 2012, the day before the Disciplinary Hearing. [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 15.] Moreover, Mr. Hoffman was not present or available for cross-examination at the Disciplinary Hearing. Pursuant to the Panel's discretionary authority under the General Order, the Panel chooses to disregard Mr. Hoffman's response to the Statement of Cause dated November 15, 2012. 10
- F. The Panel conducted the Disciplinary Hearing on November 16, 2012, at which time Mr. Hoffman was not present but was represented by counsel, Erickson Davis, Esq. Mr. Edwards, an individual identifying himself as a paralegal employed by Mr. Hoffman, appeared and gave testimony before the Panel. At the Disciplinary Hearing, Mr. Davis presented two unfiled declarations in support of Mr. Hoffman. Neither of these declarations was timely-filed and neither declarant was present or available for cross-examination at the Disciplinary Hearing. Pursuant to the Panel's discretionary authority under the General Order, the Panel chooses to disregard the two unfiled declarations submitted in support of Mr. Hoffman.¹¹
- G. During the underlying bankruptcy case from which Mr. Hoffman was referred to this Panel, *In re Marcella Holding Trust*, 1:12-bk-13350, he has never appeared personally to

¹⁰ The General Order grants the Panel discretionary authority to disregard "written statements or declarations of innocence or in mitigation of the attorney's conduct unless they are filed with the court with copies delivered promptly thereafter to the chambers of each member of the Panel at least 7 days prior to the hearing" (General Order at 4:15-18) as well as "[w]ritten statements presented to the Panel as evidence by or on behalf of the attorney . . . if the declarant is unavailable at the hearing for cross-examination and for examination by the Panel" (General Order at 4:18-21).

¹¹ See supra, note 10.

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address the serious allegations that form the basis of this disciplinary hearing, despite being ordered to appear by Judge Mund. 12 Instead of appearing at the show cause hearings, Mr. Hoffman filed untimely responses, which failed to provide a sufficient evidentiary response to the allegations of wrongful conduct. 13 Moreov er, Mr. Hoffman's responses to the orders to show cause failed to adequately explain his non-appearance at the show cause hearings. 14

- H. Mr. Hoffman has not appeared in the instant disciplinary proceeding to address the matters contained in the Statement of Cause and has never filed a declaration under penalty of perjury denying his involvement in the wrongful conduct outlined in the Statement of Cause.15
- Ι. Mr. Hoffman was counsel of record in the 12 bankruptcy cases referenced in the Statement of Cause in which real property interests were transferred to the respective debtors post-petition. Within each of these 12 bankruptcy cases, the transfer instruments were notarized by a recurring group of notaries. Mr. Hoffman's own office address is listed as the return address on many of the transfer instruments. The Panel, sua sponte, takes judicial notice of the records and files in the following 12 bankruptcy cases:

1. 1:11-bk-12032 GM 2930 Mojave Court Titling Holding Trust

19403 Leon Circle Trust 2. 2:11-bk-37199 BR

1031 Marcella Title Holding Trust 3. 6:11-bk-36080 WJ

¹² Order to Show Cause, 1:12-bk-13350, Dk. 27, 3:8-13 ("The Court further orders attorney Jeffrey S. Hoffman . . . to appear . . . to answer questions of the Court why the bankruptcy schedules do not reveal the alleged real property assets and liabilities of the numerous motions for relief which have been filed in the bankruptcy cases of this debtor."); Order to Show Cause, 1:12-bk-13350, Dk. 71, 2:24-27 ("If you fail to appear and adequately explain these transfers or otherwise show cause why you should not be referred to the Disciplinary Committee, the Court will make such a referral with an appropriate recommendation for discipline."). See also Judge Mund's August 7, 2012 Tentative Ruling, 1:12-bk-13350, Dk. 82, 4 ("If Mr. Hoffman does not appear in person or on the phone and convince me otherwise, I will issue the report and referral to the disciplinary process and he can give them a full explanation of what happened ").

 ^{13 1:12-}bk-13350, Dk. 43 and 80.
 14 See, e.g., Judge Mund's August 7, 2012 Tentative Ruling, 1:12-bk-13350, Dk. 82, 3 ("Mr. Hoffman has not provided the court with any proof that he is physically unavailable to appear on 8/7. He has not given the name, address, or phone number of the rehabilitation facility nor of the supervision doctor who has authorized his stay. He also states that he is fully able to conduct his practice during his time in the facility. . . . [T]his court allows appearance by phone.").

Although Mr. Hoffman denied any involvement in the dumping scheme in his late-filed "supplemental" response, he did not attach a sworn declaration denying such involvement. See 2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 15.

1	4. 1:11-bk-21906 VK Land America Investments, LLC		
2	5. 1:11-bk-22482 AA Chantilly Circle Trust		
3	6. 1:11-bk-23548 VK Marcella Holding Trust		
4	7. 1:12-bk-10312 AA Nashville Property Trust		
5	8. 2:12-bk-15300 NB Francisco Loya		
6	9. 1:12-bk-13350 GM Marcella Holding Trust		
7	10.1:12-bk-13111 AA Marilan A. Villalobos		
8	11.2:12-bk-24174 VZ Sabino W. Hernandez		
9	12.1:12-bk-14416 MT Janet W. Tate		
10	J. Mr. Hoffman has provided no admissible evidence to support any reasonable		
11	alternative explanation to the Panel as to the property "dumping."		
12	K. Mr. Hoffman is currently on probation subject to a stayed suspension of his		
13	license to practice law. The Panel, sua sponte, takes judicial notice of the stipulation pending		
14	before the State Bar of California un der case number 10-O-09791, which details several		
15	instances of Mr. Hoffman's violating the Rules of Professional Conduct and California Civil		
16	Code § 2944.7(a)(1).		
17	L. The Panel, sua sponte, takes judicial notice of the records and files in the		
18	following bankruptcy cases in which Mr. Hoffman has been ordered to pay sanctions, but has		
19	failed to comply:		
20	1. In re Old Topanga Road Trust—On March 16, 2012, the Court ordered M		
21	Hoffman (and the principal of the debtor) to pay sanctions of \$2,500 within 1		
22	days of entry of the order. [1:11-bk-23205, Dk. 34-1.]		
23	2. In re Steve A. Joice—On August 16, 2011, the Court ordered Mr. Hoffman to page		
24	sanctions of \$900 to the Clerk of the Court within 30 days of entry of the order		
25	[1:11-bk-17831, Dk. 19.]		
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- In re Peter Barnes—On August 16, 2011, the Court ordered Mr. Hoffman to pay sanctions of \$600 to the Clerk of the Court within 30 days of entry of the order. [1:11-bk-14232, Dk. 19.]
- 4. *In re Eduardo Sevilla*—On August 25, 2011, the Court ordered Mr. Hoffman to pay sanctions of \$300 to the Clerk of the Court within 30 days of entry of the order. [2:11-bk-39537, Dk. 15.]
- 5. *In re Laura E. Flores*—On August 23, 2011, the Court ordered Mr. Hoffman to pay sanctions of \$600 to the Clerk of the Court within 30 days of entry of the order. [2:11-bk-39732, Dk. 16.]
- 6. *In re Lucia Gervay*—On August 23, 2011, the Court ordered Mr. Hoffman to pay sanctions of \$600 to the Clerk of the Court within 30 days of entry of the order. [2:11-bk-41261, Dk. 12.]
- 7. In re 3623 Old Conejo Road Title Holding Trust—On August 16, 2011, the Court ordered Mr. Hoffman to pay sanctions of \$300 to the Clerk of the Court within 30 days of entry of the order. [1:11-bk-18223, Dk. 11.]
- L. The Panel, sua sponte, takes judicial notice that Mr. Hoffman is listed as counsel of record for the debtor in the following 108 chapter 13 cases filed in the San Fernando Valley Division of the Central District of California during the period from February 1, 2009 through October 1, 2012. Almost all of these cases were "face-sheet" filings. Many of these cases involve repeat filings by the same debtor, and related debtors filed cases in multiple divisions. Several of these cases reflect spouses filing separate cases that created multiple automatic stays relating to the same real property. All of these cases were dismissed and no plan of reorganization was confirmed in any of the cases based on work performed by Mr. Hoffman. Specifically, the Panel, sua sponte, takes judicial notice of the records and files in the following cases:
 - 1. 1:09-bk-11117-VK Roger Leroy Staab Filed on 2/3/09;

Case 2:12-mp-00179-BB Doc 19 Filed 02/15/13 Entered 02/15/13 17:11:43 Desc Main Document Page 14 of 23

2. 1:09-bk-11851-MT Thomas G Dobson and Diann L Dobson Filed on 2/20/09; 1 3. 1:09-bk-16138-GM Steven J Riggs and Genoveva Riggs Filed on 5/22/09; 2 4. 1:09-bk-16234-MT John Andrew Parkenham Filed on 5/26/09; 3 5. 1:09-bk-17565-GM Santiago Cabrera Filed on 6/19/09; 4 6. 1:09-bk-17677-MT Thomas G Dobson and Diann L Dobson Filed on 6/22/09; 5 1:09-bk-17823-GM Daryl Rummens Filed on 6/25/09; 7. 6 8. 1:09-bk-23039-MT Jody D. Pool Filed 10/2/09; 7 9. 1:09-bk-23697-GM Santiago Cabrera Filed on 10/16/09; 8 10. 1:09-bk-25284-MT Carlos Juarez and Lilia Juarez Filed on 11/16/09; 9 10 11. 1:09-bk-27521-GM Crystal Lebard Filed on 12/29/09; 12. 11 1:10-bk-10390-GM Santiago Cabrera Filed on 1/13/10; 13. 1:10-bk-10522-MT Jody D. Pool Filed on 1/15/10; 12 14. 1:10-bk-11292-KT David C Abel Filed on 2/4/10; 13 15. 1:10-bk-11499-KT Robert J Falini Filed on 2/11/10; 14 16. 1:10-bk-11698-MT Morris Peryanti and Hanna Peryanti Filed on 2/16/10; 15 17. 1:10-bk-12260-GM Crystal Lebard Filed on 3/1/10; 16 18. 1:10-bk-12872-GM Kelly J Lundberg Filed on 3/15/10; 17 19. 1:10-bk-12877-GM Malka Harari Filed on 3/15/10; 18 20. 1:10-bk-13049-GM Ruben Gilberto and Anita Schmidlin Filed on 3/17/10; 19 21. 1:10-bk-14176-MT Randall Wagner Filed on 4/12/10; 20 22. 21 1:10-bk-14820-MT Jody D. Pool Filed on 4/26/10; 23. 22 1:10-bk-14827-MT Carlos Juarez and Lilia Juarez Filed on 4/26/10; 24. 1:10-bk-14839-KT Mark A Behrang Filed on 4/26/10; 23 24 25. 1:10-bk-14986-KT Alan Horvatich Filed on 4/29/10; 26. 1:10-bk-16544-GM Lindsay Peet Filed on 6/1/10; 25 27. 26 1:10-bk-16590-KT John Bates Filed on 6/2/10; 28. 1:10-bk-16955-MT Esther P Hayon Filed on 6/9/10; 27

| Case 2:12-mp-00179-BB | Doc 19 | Filed 02/15/13 | Entered 02/15/13 17:11:43 | Desc | Main Document | Page 15 of 23

1		29.	1:10-bk-17560-VK Kay L Canale Filed on 6/23/10;
2		30.	1:10-bk-18462-GM Carolina Marroquin Filed on 7/13/10;
3		31.	1:10-bk-18637-KT John Bates Filed on 7/16/10;
4		32.	1:10-bk-18643-KT Jakov Marusich Filed on 7/16/10;
5		33.	1:10-bk-18901-MT Jose A Gonzales Filed on 7/22/10;
6		34.	1:10-bk-19007-MT Esther P Hayon Filed on 7/23/10;
7	;	35.	1:10-bk-19109-MT Enrique Simon and Daniella Simon Filed on 7/26/10;
8		36.	1:10-bk-19320-MT Ginette L Mendez Filed on 7/30/10;
9		37.	1:10-bk-19665-GM Kelly J Lundberg Filed on 8/6/10;
10		38.	1:10-bk-19990-GM Malka Harari Filed on 8/13/10;
11		39.	1:10-bk-20334-KT Bertha Dickey Filed on 8/20/10;
12		40.	1:10-bk-21434-GM Lindsay Peet and Sheila Y Peet Filed on 9/13/10;
13	4	41.	1:10-bk-22601-MT Sandra Lane Filed on 10/5/10;
14	4	42.	1:10-bk-22644-GM Armando Cuevas Perez Filed on 10/6/10;
15	4	43.	1:10-bk-23260-GM Malka Harari Filed on 10/20/10;
16	4	44.	1:10-bk-24382-VK Mihaela Pucko Filed on 11/15/10;
17	4	45.	1:10-bk-24895-GM Bertha Dickey Filed on 11/29/10;
18		46.	1:10-bk-24896-MT Jose A Gonzales Filed on 11/29/10;
19		47.	1:10-bk-24978-GM Robert J Getty Filed on 11/30/10;
20		48.	1:10-bk-25092-GM Audrey Park Filed on 12/1/10;
21	4	49.	1:11-bk-10023-VK Ricardo Rangel Filed on 1/3/11;
22		50.	1:11-bk-10034-VK Maral Tarpinian Filed on 1/3/11;
23		51.	1:11-bk-10230-MT Armando Cuevas Perez Filed on 1/6/11;
24		52.	1:11-bk-10413-GM Oscar Orellana and Sandra Mendoza Filed on 1/11/11;
25		53.	1:11-bk-10670-GM David Harari Filed on 1/18/11;
26		54.	1:11-bk-10981-MT John Getty Filed on 1/25/11;
27		55.	1:11-bk-11020-MT Julie Vasquez Filed on 1/26/11;
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Case 2:12-mp-00179-BB Doc 19 Filed 02/15/13 Entered 02/15/13 17:11:43 Desc Main Document Page 16 of 23

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56.
                     1:11-bk-11421-VK Ivan Preciado Filed on 2/3/11;
 1
              57.
                     1:11-bk-11553-GM Peter Barnes Filed on 2/6/11;
 2
              58.
                     1:11-bk-12449-AA Lindsay Peet and Sheila Y Peet Filed on 2/28/11;
3
              59.
                     1:11-bk-13113-VK Maria Sueoka Filed on 3/14/11;
 4
              60.
                     1:11-bk-13352-MT Guillermo Gonzalez Filed on 3/18/11;
5
              61.
6
                     1:11-bk-13364-MT Tania Argueta Filed on 3/18/11;
              62.
                     1:11-bk-13772-VK Steve A Joice Filed on 3/28/11;
7
              63.
                     1:11-bk-13874-MT Debra Sanker Filed on 3/30/11;
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              64.
                     1:11-bk-14122-GM Ricardo Rangel Filed on 4/4/11;
9
10
              65.
                     1:11-bk-14232-AA Peter Barnes and Segal Emily Barnes Filed on 4/6/11;
              66.
11
                     1:11-bk-14318-GM Robert J Getty Filed on 4/7/11;
              67.
                     1:11-bk-14440-MT Maria Hernandez Filed on 4/9/11;
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              68.
                     1:11-bk-14461-MT Janet W Tate Filed on 4/11/11;
13
              69.
                     1:11-bk-15119-AA Antonio J Ortuste Filed on 4/26/11;
14
              70.
                     1:11-bk-15738-GM Gladis Del Carmen Filed on 5/9/11;
15
              71.
                     1:11-bk-15750-GM Maria Selina Estrada Filed on 5/9/11;
16
              72.
                     1:11-bk-17831-VK Steve A Joice Filed on 6/27/11;
17
              73.
                     1:11-bk-20874-MT Catherine Holcombe Filed on 9/13/11;
18
              74.
                     1:11-bk-22667-MT Michael J Towne Filed on 10/31/11;
19
              75.
                     1:12-bk-10713-AA Marilan A Villalobos Filed on 1/25/12;
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              76.
                     1:12-bk-10765-VK Steve A Joice Filed on 1/26/12;
              77.
22
                     1:12-bk-10778-MT Maria C Delgado Filed on 1/26/12;
              78.
                     1:12-bk-11084-MT Janet W Tate Filed on 2/3/12;
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              79.
                     1:12-bk-11760-MT Bertha Valverde Filed on 2/24/12;
              80.
                     1:12-bk-11964-AA Juana Orendain Filed on 2/29/12;
25
26
              81.
                     1:12-bk-12029-AA Sumit Ghosh Filed on 3/2/12;
              82.
                     1:12-bk-12382-AA Salvador Garcia Guzman Filed on 3/14/12;
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1	83.	1:12-bk-12659-MT Jose Luis Preciado Filed on 3/21/12;
2	84.	1:12-bk-13111-AA Marilan A Villalobos Filed on 4/3/12;
3	85.	1:12-bk-13422-AA Antonio J. Ortuste Filed on 4/12/12;
4	86.	1:12-bk-13423-VK Fred Inouye Filed on 4/12/12;
5	87.	1:12-bk-14064-AA Sumit Ghosh Filed on 5/2/12;
6	88.	1:12-bk-14165-AA Jane E McAllister Filed on 5/4/12;
7	89.	1:12-bk-14364-VK Luzmila A Drury Filed on 5/10/12;
8	90.	1:12-bk-14585-MT Marko Radlovic Filed on 5/17/12;
9	91.	1:12-bk-15049-VK Antonio J Ortuste Filed on 5/31/12;
10	92.	1:12-bk-15059-MT Andres J Espinoza Filed on 5/31/12;
11	93.	1:12-bk-15229-VK Everardo Duarte Filed on 6/5/12;
12	94.	1:12-bk-15806-VK Angel Hernandez Filed on 6/25/12;
13	95.	1:12-bk-16047-VK Hydee Meza Filed on 7/2/12;
14	96.	1:12-bk-16134-VK Maria Cruz Ochoa Filed on 7/6/12;
15	97.	1:12-vk-16136-VK Jane E McAllister Filed on 7/6/12;
16	98.	1:12-bk-16837-MT Bertha Toscano Filed on 7/30/12;
17	99.	1:12-bk-17037-MT Patricia L Towne Filed on 8/6/12;
18	100.	1:12-bk-17270-AA Lindsay Peet Filed on 8/13/12;
19	101.	1:12-bk-17353-AA Everardo Duarte Filed on 8/15/12;
20	102.	1:12-bk-17448-VK John W Alvarez Filed on 8/19/12;
21	103.	1:12-bk-17766-AA Bertha Toscano Filed on 8/29/12;
22	104.	1:12-bk-18240-VK Jose Luis Preciado Filed on 9/17/12;
23	105.	1:12-bk-18244-MT Amanda Espinoza Filed on 9/17/12;
24	106.	1:12-bk-18411-AA Andre Malek Moradian and Anita Malek Moradian Filed on
25	9/2	21/12;
26	107.	1:12-bk-18638-VK Manuel Gomez Filed on 9/28/12; and
27	108.	1:12-bk-18724-MT Michael D Hanna and Patricia L Hanna Filed on 10/1/12.

Conclusions of Law

Based on the above Findings of Fact, as determined by clear and convincing evidence, the Panel makes the following Conclusions of Law:

- A. The Bankruptcy Code implicitly and explicitly imposes on debtors a duty of good faith in filing and maintaining bankruptcy actions.¹⁶
- B. An attorney's signature on court documents acts as a representation to the court that a document is not being presented for any improper purpose, such as to harass, to cause unnecessary delay, or to needlessly increase the costs of litigation.¹⁷
- C. The Statement of Cause presented to the Panel by the Referring Judge sets out activity attributed to Mr. Hoffman including the filing of a significant number of bankruptcy cases and real property transfers into the bankruptcy estates for the specific purpose of obtaining the benefit of the automatic stay that would otherwise not be available to the owners of the transferred property. Within the bankruptcy arena, this activity is generically called "dumping." Associated with the practice of dumping is the filing of numerous chapter 13 and chapter 7 bankruptcy cases that are commonly known as "face-sheet" filings, which serve as the recipient bankruptcy cases for the transferred real property. These cases are not concluded under the typical bankruptcy procedures, but are usually dismissed because of lack of prosecution (i.e., failure to file complete schedules, disclosures, statements of financial affairs, or in chapter 13 cases, plans). The indiscriminate filing of "face-sheet" bankruptcy cases, and the subsequent transfer of real property into those bankruptcy estates, is a method of hindering, delaying, or defrauding creditors of persons who have not filed for protection under the Bankruptcy Code. Such activities are a gross distortion of the valid and honest use of the bankruptcy system. These activities result in fraud on creditors and the court system and incur significant time and expense to creditors, the courts, and on many occasions legitimate debtors who are summoned to court to respond to motions for relief from the

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¹⁶ *In re Kinney*, 51 B.R. 840 (Bankr. C.D.Cal. 1985).

¹⁷ F.R.B.P. 9011(b)(1).

automatic stay with respect to properties in which or with respect to which they possess no interest or information. Dumping activities add to the already clogged court calendars of the Central District of California.

- D. The Referring Judge, the Honorable Geraldine Mund, issued two separate Orders to Show Cause (entered on April 11, 2012, and July 9, 2012, respectively) in the case of *In re Marcella Holding Trust*, basing her Orders on assertions of dumping activities by Mr. Hoffman. Mr. Hoffman declined to appear at either hearing on these two Orders to Show Cause to explain the circumstances underlying the allegations contained in the two Orders to Show Cause. The second Order to Show Cause (as to why Mr. Hoffman should not be referred to the Disciplinary Panel) was ignored by Mr. Hoffman, with the exception that he "claim[ed] that the dumpings are not originated in his office or by him and he is trying to trace these down." [2:12-mp-00179, Dk. 1, pg. 4.]
- E. Mr. Hoffman did not provide any admissible evidence to the Referring Judge, or this Panel, refuting the evidence of his direct involvement and participation in a multitude of "face-sheet" bankruptcy case filings and real property transfers into those cases. Although he was given many opportunities to address these allegations, Mr. Hoffman simply refused to actively and substantially participate in the hearings on the Orders to Show Cause or the instant disciplinary proceeding.
- F. The Panel, by clear and convincing evidence, finds that Mr. Hoffman engaged in systematic fraud upon the Court and creditors by engaging in (1) dumping activities and (2) multiple "face-sheet" filings to facilitate his dumping activities, as previously described within this Memorandum of Decision.

Recommended Discipline

In light of the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, the Panel concludes that the following actions against Mr. Hoffman are appropriate:

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B. Mr. Hoffman's user identification and password for the CM/ECF system should be immediately deactivated by the Clerk of the Court and not reactivated unless and until Mr. Hoffman's revocation under this proceeding is ordered.

reinstated under the terms and conditions set out in Paragraph C and D, below.

C. Mr. Hoffman may apply to the Chief Judge of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California for reinstatement of his privileges after the expiration of a period of not less than four months after the entry of the Discipline Order.

the Central District of California should be revoked for a period of five years, unless otherwise

- D. As conditions to Mr. Hoffman's reinstatement, he should be required to:
 - File and serve on the Panel and the U.S. Trustee a declaration, sworn under penalty of perjury, setting forth his involvement, if any, in the "dumping" scheme that was referenced in the Statement of Cause;

Mr. Hoffman's privilege to practice before the United States Bankruptcy Court for

- File and serve on the Panel and the U.S. Trustee a declaration, sworn under penalty of perjury, addressing each and every issue raised by the U.S. Trustee in his notice of intent to appear and accompanying declarations and supplemental declarations filed in this disciplinary proceeding;
- Pay all outstanding sanctions or disgorgement awards issued by the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California and provide evidence that he has done so in his application for reinstatement; and
- 4. Personally appear, either in person or by telephone, at any hearing that may be scheduled on his application for reinstatement.
- E. Should Mr. Hoffman apply for reinstatement of his privileges to practice before this Court, the Panel recommends that the Chief Judge schedule a hearing on any such application for reinstatement and that the U.S. Trustee be permitted to respond thereto.

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	Main Document Page 22 of 23					
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3	///					
4	This Memorandum of Decision constitutes the Panel's findings of fact and conclusions					
5	of law. A separate Discipline Order setting forth the Panel's rulings will follow. A copy of this					
6	Memorandum of Decision and the entered Discipline Order shall be delivered to each sitting					
7	judge of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California, to the Clerk of					
8	the Court for the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Central District of California, and to					
9	the State Bar of California.					
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13	Dated: February 15, 2013					
14	SHERI BLUEBOND					
15	United States Bankruptcy Judge					
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18	Dated: February 15, 2013					
19 20	VICTORIA S. KAUFMAN United States Bankruptcy Judge					
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24	Dated: February 15, 2013					
25	SCOTT C. CLARKSON United States Bankruptcy Judge					
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| Case 2:12-mp-00179-BB | Doc 19 | Filed 02/15/13 | Entered 02/15/13 17:11:43 | Desc | Main Document | Page 23 of 23

NOTICE OF ENTERED ORDER AND SERVICE LIST

1								
2	Notice is given by the court that a judgment or order entitled (<i>specify</i>): MEMORANDUM OF DECISION ON DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDING OF JEFFREY S. HOFFMAN was entered on the date indicated as "Entered" on							
3	the first page of this judgment or order and will be served in the manner stated below:							
	1. SERVED BY THE COURT VIA NOTICE OF ELECTRONIC FILING (NEF) - Pursuant to controlling General							
4	Orders and LBRs, the foregoing document was served on the following persons by the court via NEF and hyperlink to the judgment or order. As of <u>1/29/13</u> , the following persons are currently on the Electronic Mail Notice							
5	List for this bankruptcy case or adversary proceeding to receive NEF transmission at the email addresses stated below.							
6	Ron Maroko ron.maroko@usdoj.gov							
7	 Kelly L Morrison kelly.l.morrison@usdoj.gov S Margaux Ross margaux.ross@usdoj.gov 							
8	United States Trustee (LA) ustpregion16.la.ecf@usdoj.gov							
	☐ Service information continued on							
9	attached page							
10	2. <u>SERVED BY THE COURT VIA UNITED STATES MAIL:</u> A copy of this notice and a true copy of this judgment or order was sent by United States mail, first class, postage prepaid, to the following persons and/or							
11	entities at the addresses indicated below:							
12	Jeffrey S. Hoffman 530 S.Glenoaks Blvd., Ste 201							
13	Burbank, CA 91502 Service information continued on							
14	attached page							
15	"Entered" stamp by United States mail, overnight mail, facsimile transmission or email and file a proof of service of the entered order on the following persons and/or entities at the addresses, facsimile transmission numbers,							
16								
17	and/or email addresses stated below:							
18	☐ Service information continued on attached page							
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