

The following are the antecedents of the case:

On February 25, 2003, a Mitsubishi L-300 van which Universal Robina Corporation (*URC*) owned figured in a vehicular accident with petitioner Green Star Express, Inc.'s (*Green Star*) passenger bus, resulting in the death of the van's driver. Thus, the bus driver, petitioner Fruto Sayson, Jr., was charged with the crime of reckless imprudence resulting in homicide.

Thereafter, Green Star sent a demand letter to respondent Nissin-Universal Robina Corporation (*NURC*) for the repair of its passenger bus amounting to ₱567,070.68. *NURC* denied any liability therefor and argued that the criminal case shall determine the ultimate liabilities of the parties. Thereafter, the criminal case was dismissed without prejudice, due to insufficiency of evidence.

Sayson and Green Star then filed a complaint for damages against *NURC* before the RTC of San Pedro, Laguna. Francis Tinio, one of *NURC*'s employees, was the one who received the summons. On February 6, 2004, *NURC* filed a Motion to Dismiss claiming lack of jurisdiction due to improper service.

On May 5, 2004, the RTC issued a Resolution denying *NURC*'s motion to dismiss. It ruled that there was substantial compliance because there was actual receipt of the summons by *NURC*. The dispositive portion of said Resolution thus reads:

WHEREFORE, in view of the foregoing, defendant's "Motion to Dismiss" is hereby DENIED.³

Since its Motion for Reconsideration was denied, *NURC* elevated the case to the CA via a Petition for *Certiorari*. On September 17, 2007, the CA reversed the RTC ruling, hence:

WHEREFORE, the instant Petition for *Certiorari* is **GRANTED**. The assailed Resolutions, dated May 5, 2004 and dated July 26, 2004, of the Regional Trial Court of San Pedro, Laguna, Branch 31, in Civil Case No. SPL-0969, are hereby **NULLIFIED** and a new one **rendered** granting Petitioner's Motion to Dismiss, dated February 3, 2004. Private Respondents' Amended Complaint for Damages filed against Petitioner Nissin-Universal Robina Corporation is accordingly **dismissed** for lack of jurisdiction.

SO ORDERED.⁴

³ *Rollo*, p. 23.

⁴ *Id.* at 29. (Emphasis in the original)

Aggrieved, Green Star and Sayson moved for reconsideration, but the same was denied. Hence, this petition.

The lone issue is whether or not the summons was properly served on NURC, vesting the trial court with jurisdiction.

The petition is bereft of merit.

It is a well-established rule that the rules on service of summons upon a domestic private juridical entity must be strictly complied with. Otherwise, the court cannot be said to have acquired jurisdiction over the person of the defendant.⁵

NURC maintains that the RTC did not acquire jurisdiction over it as the summons was received by its cost accountant, Francis Tinio. It argues that under Section 11, Rule 14 of the 1997 Rules of Court, which provides the rule on service of summons upon a juridical entity, in cases where the defendant is a domestic corporation like NURC, summons may be served only through its officers.⁶ Thus:

Section 11. Service upon domestic private juridical entity. — When the defendant is a corporation, partnership or association organized under the laws of the Philippines with a juridical personality, service may be made on the **president, managing partner, general manager, corporate secretary, treasurer, or in-house counsel.**⁷

This provision replaced the former Section 13, Rule 14 of the 1964 Rules of Court which read:

Section 13. Service upon private domestic corporation or partnership. — If the defendant is a corporation organized under the laws of the Philippines or a partnership duly registered, service may be made on the **president, manager, secretary, cashier, agent, or any of its directors.**⁸

⁵ *Atiko Trans, Inc. v. Prudential Guarantee and Assurance, Inc.*, 671 Phil. 388, 401 (2011).

⁶ *Cathay Metal Corporation v. Laguna West Multi-Purpose Cooperative, Inc.*, G.R. No. 172204, July 2, 2014.

⁷ Emphasis ours.

⁸ Emphasis ours.

In the past, the Court upheld service of summons upon a construction project manager, a corporation's assistant manager, ordinary clerk of a corporation, private secretary of corporate executives, retained counsel, and officials who had control over the operations of the corporation like the assistant general manager or the corporation's Chief Finance and Administrative Officer. The Court then considered said persons as "agent" within the contemplation of the old rule. Notably, under the new Rules, service of summons upon an agent of the corporation is no longer authorized.⁹ The rule now likewise states "general manager" instead of "manager"; "corporate secretary" instead of merely "secretary"; and "treasurer" instead of "cashier."¹⁰ It has now become restricted, limited, and exclusive only to the persons enumerated in the aforementioned provision, following the rule in statutory construction that the express mention of one person excludes all others, or *expressio unius est exclusio alterius*. Service must, therefore, be made only on the persons expressly listed in the rules.¹¹ If the revision committee intended to liberalize the rule on service of summons, it could have easily done so by clear and concise language.¹²

Here, Tinio, a member of NURC's accounting staff, received the summons on January 22, 2004. Green Star claims that it was received upon instruction of Junadette Avedillo, the general manager of the corporation. Such fact, however, does not appear in the Sheriff's Return.¹³ The Return did not even state whether Avedillo was present at the time the summons was received by Tinio, the supposed assistant manager. Green Star further avers that the sheriff tendered the summons, but Avedillo simply refused to sign and receive the same. She then allegedly instructed Tinio to just receive it in her behalf. However, Green Star never presented said sheriff as witness during the hearing of NURC's motion to dismiss to attest to said claim. And while the sheriff executed an affidavit which appears to support such allegation, the same was likewise not presented as evidence. It was only when the case was already before the CA that said affidavit first surfaced. Since the service of summons was made on a cost accountant, which is not one of the designated persons under Section 11 of Rule 14, the trial court did not validly acquire jurisdiction over NURC,¹⁴ although the corporation may have actually received the summons.¹⁵ To rule otherwise will be an outright circumvention of the rules, aggravating further the delay in the administration of justice.¹⁶

⁹ *E.B. Villarosa & Partner Co., Ltd. v. Imperial Development Corporation*, 370 Phil. 921, 928 (1999).

¹⁰ *Spouses Mason v. CA*, 459 Phil. 689, 697 (2003).

¹¹ *Dole Philippines, Inc. v. All Season Farm, Corp.*, 579 Phil. 700, 705 (2008).

¹² *E.B. Villarosa & Partner Co., Ltd. V. Imperial Development Corporation*, *supra* note 9, at 927.

¹³ *Rollo*, p. 44.

¹⁴ *Dole Philippines, Inc. v. All Season Farm, Corp.*, *supra* note 11, at 704.

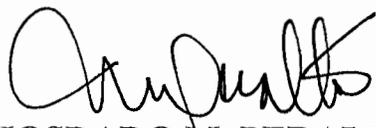
¹⁵ *Spouses Mason v. CA*, *supra* note 10, at 697; 699.

¹⁶ *E.B. Villarosa & Partner Co., Ltd. V. Imperial Development Corporation*, *supra* note 9, at 931.

At this juncture, it is worth emphasizing that notice to enable the other party to be heard and to present evidence is not a mere technicality or a trivial matter in any administrative or judicial proceedings. The service of summons is a vital and indispensable ingredient of due process. Corporations would be easily deprived of their right to present their defense in a multi-million peso suit, if the Court would disregard the mandate of the Rules on the service of summons.¹⁷

WHEREFORE, the petition is **DENIED**. The Court of Appeals Decision dated September 17, 2007 and Resolution dated January 22, 2008 in CA-G.R. SP No. 86824 are hereby **AFFIRMED**.

SO ORDERED.

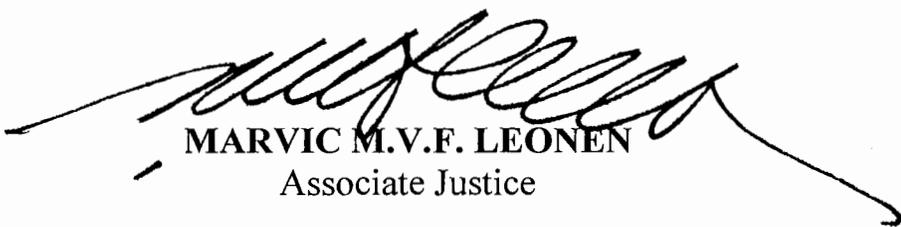

DIOSDADO M. PERALTA
Associate Justice

WE CONCUR:


TERESITA J. LEONARDO-DE CASTRO
Associate Justice


JOSE PORTUGAL PEREZ
Associate Justice


ESTELA M. PERLAS-BERNABE
Associate Justice


MARVIC M.V.F. LEONEN
Associate Justice

¹⁷ *Spouses Mason v. CA, supra* note 10, at 699.

ATTESTATION

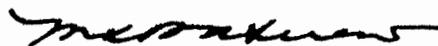
I attest that the conclusions in the above Decision had been reached in consultation before the case was assigned to the writer of the opinion of the Court's Division.



DIOSDADO M. PERALTA
Associate Justice
Acting Chairperson, Third Division

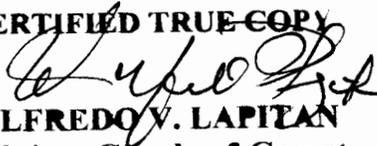
CERTIFICATION

Pursuant to Section 13, Article VIII of the Constitution and the Division Acting Chairperson's Attestation, I certify that the conclusions in the above Decision had been reached in consultation before the case was assigned to the writer of the opinion of the Court's Division.



MARIA LOURDES P. A. SERENO
Chief Justice

CERTIFIED TRUE COPY



WILFREDO V. LAPITAN
Division Clerk of Court
Third Division

JUL 28 2015