

1986

Michael M. Sweat vs. Raymond J. Eves: Brief of Appellant

Utah Supreme Court

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IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF UTAH

860155

MICHAEL M. SWEAT, :
Plaintiff/Respondent, :
vs. : Case No. 860155
RAYMOND J. EVES, : #14
Defendant/Appellant. :

BRIEF OF APPELLANT

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IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF UTAH

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Defendant/Appellant. :

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IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF UTAH

MICHAEL M. SWEAT,	:	
Plaintiff/Respondent,	:	
vs.	:	Case No. 860155
RAYMOND J. EVES,	:	
Defendant/Appellant.	:	

BRIEF OF APPELLANT

I. STATEMENT OF ISSUES PRESENTED ON APPEAL

Where the Plaintiff seller under a real estate contract is unable to recover for the buyer's breach because of the Plaintiff's own breach, may the Plaintiff seller use a claim of unjust enrichment to recover the down payment from another who unjustly withheld it from the **buyer**?

II. STATEMENT OF FACTS

For purposes of this Appeal, the Defendant relies on the facts as found by the trial court and as set forth in the Memorandum Decision as follows:

In February, 1980, Plaintiff (as buyer) and Raymond J. Eves Company, Inc. (as seller), entered into a uniform real estate contract. The evidence is unclear as to what degree each of the parties performed under the contract and this Court is unable to determine that either party fully performed its obligations under the contract.

Plaintiff transferred a mobile home with a value of \$2,800.00 to defendant which

should have been transferred to Raymond J. Eves Company, Inc. as a down payment on the property in question. The defendant, Raymond J. Eves, individually, kept possession of the mobile home and did not transfer it to the corporation. Defendant did not pay the corporation \$2,800.00 in exchange for his right to keep the mobile home.

Memorandum Decision page 1,
Appendix, Exhibit 1. See also
Findings of Fact, paragraphs 1, 2
and 3, Appendix Exhibit 2.

III. SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

Unjust enrichment occurs whenever a person has and retains money or benefits which in justice and equity belong to another.

The trial court found that the defendant RAYMOND EVES unjustly receive a mobile home which should have been the lawful property of RAYMOND J. EVES CO., INC. By the court's own findings, RAYMOND J. EVES CO., INC. is the victim of unjust enrichment, not the plaintiff. The trial court has misinterpreted the law of unjust enrichment and has ordered restitution to the wrong victim.

IV. ARGUMENT

**POINT ONE: THE CONCEPT OF "UNJUST ENRICHMENT" IS AN
EQUITABLE DEVICE FOR RESTORING PROPERTY
TO ITS RIGHTFUL OWNER.**

"Unjust enrichment occurs whenever a person has and retains money or benefits which in justice and equity belong to another" L & A Drywall, Inc. v. Whitmore Construction Co., Inc., 608 P.2d 626 (Utah 1980) at 630. See also: Baldwin v. Vantage Corp., 676 P.2d 413 (Utah 1984); Barrett v. Stevens, 690 P.2d 553

(Utah 1984); General Leasing Co. v. Manivest Corp., 667 P.2d 596 (Utah 1983); Dalton v. Jerico Const. Co., 642 P.2d 748 (Utah 1982); Baugh v. Darley, 112 Utah 1, 184 P.2d 335 (1947).

An order or judgment (formerly writ) of restitution directs the return of property to its rightful owner.

POINT TWO: THE RIGHTFUL OWNER OF THE \$2,800.00 MOBILE HOME RECEIVED BY THE DEFENDANT WAS RAYMOND J. EVES CO., INC., NOT THE PLAINTIFF, BY THE TRIAL COURT'S OWN FINDINGS.

In the court's own words:

Plaintiff transferred a **mobile home** with a value of \$2,800.00 to defendant which **should have been transferred to Raymond J. Eves Company, Inc.** as a down payment on the property in question. The defendant, Raymond J. Eves, individually, kept possession of the mobile home and **did not transfer it to the corporation.** Defendant **did not pay the corporation** \$2,800.00 in exchange for his right to keep the mobile home.

Memorandum Decision. See also identical findings in Findings of Fact paragraphs 1, 2 and 3.

The seller corporation was the rightful owner of the down payment, and was the victim of any unjust enrichment by the defendant. Any restitution should have been ordered to the corporation, not to the plaintiff.

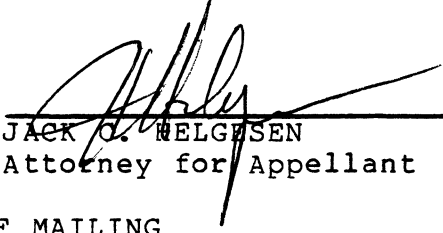
V. CONCLUSION

The trial court's judgment of restitution to the plaintiff is a misapplication of the law of unjust enrichment and

should be reversed.

RESPECTIVELY submitted this 3rd day of September,
1986.

HELGESEN & WATERFALL, P.C.



JACK O. HELGESEN
Attorney for Appellant

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that I mailed four true and correct
copies of the foregoing BRIEF OF APPELLANT to Dale F. Gardiner,
Attorney for Respondent, 1325 South Main Street, Suite 201, Salt
Lake City, Utah 84115, postage prepaid, this 3rd day of
September, 1986.



JACK O. HELGESEN

ADDENDUM

Exhibit 1:
Memorandum Decision

Exhibit 2:
Findings of Fact

Exhibit 3:
Uniform Real Estate Contract

RECEIVED JAN 6 1986

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF WEBER COUNTY, STATE OF UTAH

MICHAEL M. SWEAT,)	
)	
Plaintiff,)	MEMORANDUM DECISION
)	
vs.)	
)	
RAYMOND J. EVES,)	
)	Case No. 90299
Defendant.)	

The Court having heard the evidence at trial and having considered the memoranda of the parties finds and rules as follows:

In February, 1980, Plaintiff and Raymond J. Eves Company, Inc., entered into a uniform real estate contract. The evidence is unclear as to what degree each of the parties performed under the contract and this Court is unable to determine that either party fully performed its obligations under the contract.

Plaintiff transferred a mobile home with a value of \$2,800.00 to defendant which should have been transferred to Raymond J. Eves Company, Inc. as a down payment on the property in question. The defendant, Raymond J. Eves, individually, kept possession of the mobile home and did not transfer it to the corporation. Defendant did not pay the corporation \$2,800.00 in exchange for his right to keep the mobile home.

Memorandum Decision

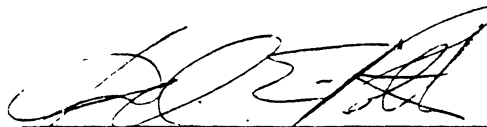
Page 2

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As a result of the above transactions, I find that the defendant was unjustly enriched in the amount of \$2,800.00 and award judgment to the plaintiff in that amount plus costs and interest as allowed by law.

Plaintiff is to prepare Findings of Fact, Conclusion of Law, and Judgment, consistant with this decision.

Dated this 3 day of January, 1986



DAVID E. ROTH, Judge

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that I mailed a copy of the Memorandum Decision to plaintiff's counsel, Dale F. Gardiner, 1325 South Main Street, Suite 201, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84115, and Jack Helgesen, 2650 Washington Blvd., Suite 102, Ogden, Utah 84401, in regard to the above-captioned matter.

Dated this the 3rd day of January, 1986.



District Court Clerk

RECEIVED FEB 18 1986

DALE F. GARDINER
Attorney for Plaintiff
1325 South Main Street
Suite 201
Salt Lake City, Utah 84115
Telephone: (801) 486-4607

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF WEBER COUNTY, STATE OF UTAH

MICHAEL M. SWEAT,)	
)	
Plaintiff,)	FINDINGS OF FACT AND
)	CONCLUSIONS OF LAW
vs.)	
)	
RAYMOND J. EVES,)	Case No. 90299
)	
Defendant.)	

The above-entitled matter having been tried before the Court, and the Court having entered its memorandum decision and being fully advised in the premises, now makes and enters the following:

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. In February of 1980, plaintiff as buyer and Raymond J. Eves Company, Inc., as seller, entered into a Uniform Real Estate Contract for the sale of a building lot. As part of the transaction, a mobile home with a value of \$2,800.00 was to be transferred to Raymond J. Eves Company, Inc. as the down payment on the property in question.

2. The defendant Raymond J. Eves individually took possession of the mobile home and did not transfer it to the corporation, nor did defendant pay the corporation for the right to keep the mobile home.

3. Thereafter, Raymond J. Eves Company, Inc. failed to convey to plaintiff the purchased lot.

4. Raymond J. Eves Company, Inc. received performance by the plaintiff until Raymond J. Eves Inc. breached the agreement.

5. As part of the afore-described agreement, plaintiff received a partial credit toward the purchase of a house.

6. As a result of the contract having been breached by Raymond J. Eves, Inc., plaintiff incurred a net loss of \$2,800.00, representing the difference between the value of plaintiff's performance and the credit on the house.

7. As part of the real estate transaction, the uniform real estate contract, although purporting to be a contract between plaintiff and Raymond J. Eves, Inc., was signed by Raymond J. Eves personally, as was the earnest money agreement. From the foregoing Findings of Fact, the Court makes the following:

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. Defendant was unjustly enriched in the amount of \$2,800.00.

2. Plaintiff should be awarded the sum of \$2,800.00 plus costs and interest as allowed by law.

DATED this ____ day of _____, 1986.

BY THE COURT:

DISTRICT COURT JUDGE

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I hereby certify that I mailed a true and correct
copy, postage prepaid, of the foregoing FINDINGS OF FACT AND
CONCLUSIONS OF LAW _____ L

Jack Helgesen

Attorney at law

2650 Washington Boulevard, #102

Ogden, Utah 84401

on this 5th day of February 1980.

Carolyn - Peet

UNIFORM REAL ESTATE CONTRACT

"This is a legally binding form, if not understood, seek competent advice."

1. THIS AGREEMENT, made in duplicate this 1st day of February, A.D. 1980,
by and between Raymond J. Eves Co., Inc.
hereinafter designated as the Seller, and Michael M. & Theresa A. Sweat, husband and wife,
hereinafter designated as the Buyer, of 1 Vacant Lot

2. WITNESSETH: That the Seller, for the consideration herein mentioned agrees to sell and convey to the buyer,
and the buyer for the consideration herein mentioned agrees to purchase the following described real property, situate in
the county of Weber, State of Utah, to-wit: 2150 N. 650 W. Harrisville, Utah
More particularly described as follows: ADDRESS

All of Lot # 84 Misty Meadows Subdivision; Harrisville, Utah

3. Said Buyer hereby agrees to enter into possession and pay for said described premises the sum of Fourteen Thousand and no/100 Dollars (\$14,000.00)
payable at the office of Seller, his assigns or order 2029 N. Main St.; Sunset, Utah 84015
strictly within the following times, to-wit: Four Thousand Three Hundred and no/100 (\$4,300.00)
cash, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, and the balance of \$9,700.00 shall be paid as follows:
And Trade in the amount of 2800.00 from Mobile Home

The balance of \$9,700.00 shall be paid in trade to Raymond J. Eves Co., Inc.
by the sheetrocking of at least two houses per month until the total balance
and interest is paid. The amount to be applied to the payment of this
contract will be 40% of the bid price on each sheetrocking job.

Lot will be improved by 1 February 1981.

Possession of said premises shall be delivered to buyer on the 1st day of February, 1980.

4. Said monthly payments are to be applied first to the payment of interest and second to the reduction of the
principal. Interest shall be charged from closing date of home on all unpaid portions of the
purchase price at the rate of twelve per cent (12 %) per annum. The Buyer, at his option at anytime,
may pay amounts in excess of the monthly payments upon the unpaid balance subject to the limitations of any mortgage
or contract by the Buyer herein assumed, such excess to be applied either to unpaid principal or in prepayment of future
installments at the election of the buyer, which election must be made at the time the excess payment is made.

5. It is understood and agreed that if the Seller accepts payment from the Buyer on this contract less than according
to the terms herein mentioned, then by so doing, it will in no way alter the terms of the contract as to the forfeiture
hereinafter stipulated, or as to any other remedies of the seller.

6. It is understood that there presently exists an obligation against said property in favor of none
with an unpaid balance of
\$ none, as of none.

7. Seller represents that there are no unpaid special improvement district taxes covering improvements to said prem-
ises now in the process of being installed, or which have been completed and not paid for, outstanding against said prop-
erty, except the following:

8. The Seller is given the option to secure, execute and maintain loans secured by said property of not to exceed the
then unpaid contract balance hereunder, bearing interest at the rate of not to exceed percent
(percent) per annum and payable in regular monthly installments; provided that the aggregate monthly installment
payments required to be made by Seller on said loans shall not be greater than each installment payment required to be
made by the Buyer under this contract. When the principal due hereunder has been reduced to the amount of any such
loans and mortgages the Seller agrees to convey and the Buyer agrees to accept title to the above described property
subject to said loans and mortgages.

9. If the Buyer desires to exercise his right through accelerated payments under this agreement to pay off any obli-
gations outstanding at date of this agreement against said property, it shall be the Buyer's obligation to assume and
pay any penalty which may be required on prepayment of said prior obligations. Prepayment penalties in respect
to obligations against said property incurred by seller, after date of this agreement, shall be paid by seller unless
said obligations are assumed or approved by buyer.

10. The Buyer agrees upon written request of the Seller to make application to a reliable lender for a loan of such
amount as can be secured under the regulations of said lender and hereby agrees to apply any amount so received upon
the purchase price above mentioned, and to execute the papers required and pay one-half the expenses necessary in ob-
taining said loan, the Seller agreeing to pay the other one-half, provided however, that the monthly payments and
interest rate required, shall not exceed the monthly payments and interest rate as outlined above.

11. The Buyer agrees to pay all taxes and assessments of every kind and nature which are or which may be assessed
and which may become due on these premises during the life of this agreement. The Seller hereby covenants and agrees
that there are no assessments against said premises except the following:

none

12. The Buyer agrees to pay the general taxes after After Lot Is Paid In Full or as otherwise
negotiated.

14. In the event the Buyer shall default in the payment of any special or general taxes, assessments or insurance premiums as herein provided, the Seller may, at his option, pay said taxes, assessments and insurance premiums or either of them, and if Seller elects so to do, then the Buyer agrees to repay the Seller upon demand, all such sums so advanced and paid by him, together with interest thereon from date of payment of said sums at the rate of $\frac{3}{4}$ of one percent per month until paid.

16. In the event of a failure to comply with the terms hereof by the Buyer, or upon failure of the Buyer to make any payment or payments when the same shall become due, or within 5 days thereafter, the Seller, at his option shall have the following alternative remedies:

B. The Seller may bring suit and recover judgement for all delinquent installments, including costs and attorneys fees. (The use of this remedy on one or more occasions shall not prevent the Seller, at his option, from resorting to one of the other remedies hereunder in the event of a subsequent default): or

17. It is agreed that time is the essence of this agreement.

19. The Seller on receiving the payments herein reserved to be paid at the time and in the manner above mentioned agrees to execute and deliver to the Buyer or assigns, a good and sufficient warranty deed conveying the title to the above described premises free and clear of all encumbrances except as herein mentioned and except as may have accrued by or through the acts or neglect of the Buyer, and to furnish at his expense, a policy of title insurance in the amount of the purchase price or at the option of the Seller, an abstract brought to date at time of sale or at any time during the term of this agreement, or at time of delivery of deed, at the option of Buyer.

20. It is hereby expressly understood and agreed by the parties hereto that the Buyer accepts the said property in its present condition and that there are no representations, covenants, or agreements between the parties hereto with reference to said property except as herein specifically set forth or attached hereto _____

22. It is understood that the stipulations aforesaid are to apply to and bind the heirs, executors, administrators, successors, and assigns of the respective parties hereto.

Signed in the presence of

_____ Seller _____ Buyer

Uniform Real Estate Contract

No

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