

25806

NORTH CAROLINA  
WAKE COUNTY

BEFORE THE  
GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE  
OF THE  
NORTH CAROLINA STATE BAR  
05G0975

IN THE MATTER OF )

George T. Hagood, )  
Attorney At Law )

REPRIMAND

On July 20, 2006 the Grievance Committee of the North Carolina State Bar met and considered the grievances filed against you by Samuel C. Cornwell, Jr.

Pursuant to Section .0113(a) of the Discipline and Disability Rules of the North Carolina State Bar, the Grievance Committee conducted a preliminary hearing. After considering the information available to it, including your response to the letter of notice, the Grievance Committee found probable cause. Probable cause is defined in the rules as "reasonable cause to believe that a member of the North Carolina State Bar is guilty of misconduct justifying disciplinary action."

The rules provide that after a finding of probable cause, the Grievance Committee may determine that the filing of a complaint and a hearing before the Disciplinary Hearing Commission are not required, and the Grievance Committee may issue various levels of discipline depending upon the misconduct, the actual or potential injury caused, and any aggravating or mitigating factors. The Grievance Committee may issue an admonition, a reprimand, or a censure to the respondent attorney.

A reprimand is a written form of discipline more serious than an admonition issued in cases in which an attorney has violated one or more provisions of the Rules of Professional Conduct and has caused harm or potential harm to a client, the administration of justice, the profession, or a member of the public, but the misconduct does not require a censure.

The Grievance Committee was of the opinion that a censure is not required in this case and issues this reprimand to you. As chairman of the Grievance Committee of the North Carolina State Bar, it is now my duty to issue this reprimand.

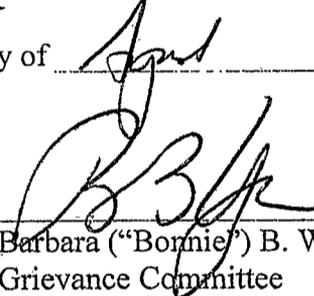
Since early 2003 you contracted with Nations Title Insurance Company to perform certain functions in connection with real estate closings in North Carolina. For each closing, Nations Title prepared all closing documents, contracted with a title abstractor for a title search, provided you with the abstract of title for you to certify title to the property, and provided a notary public to appear at closings at various places around the state to supervise the signing of the closing

documents. In offering these services to the public, Nations Title Insurance Company (or its various entities) engaged in the unauthorized practice of law. The Grievance Committee recognized in performing services for Nations Title you made efforts to comply with the Revised Rules of Professional Conduct. For instance, you complied with the opinions issued by the State Bar Ethics Committee relating to providing title certificates and, to the extent possible, you interacted with the title abstractors contracted by Nations Title. Nevertheless, your relationship with Nations Title allowed Nations to provide, and hold itself out as able to provide, a package of closing services that constitutes the practice of law, in violation of Rule 5.5 of the Revised Rules of Professional Conduct.

You are hereby reprimanded by the North Carolina State Bar for your professional misconduct. The Grievance Committee trusts that you will heed this reprimand, that it will be remembered by you, that it will be beneficial to you, and that you will never again allow yourself to depart from adherence to the high ethical standards of the legal profession.

In accordance with the policy adopted October 15, 1981 by the Council of the North Carolina State Bar regarding the taxing of the administrative and investigative costs to any attorney issued a reprimand by the Grievance Committee, the costs of this action in the amount of \$50.00 are hereby taxed to you.

Done and ordered, this the 28<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2006

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Barbara ("Bonnie") B. Weyher, Chair  
Grievance Committee

BBW/lr