

THIRD DIVISION

[G.R. NO. 147939, July 06, 2007]

THE HEIRS OF CRISTETA DE LA ROSA, PETITIONERS, VS. HON. ADELINA CALDERON- BARGAS, HEIRS OF SESINANDO MILLARE, ROSALINA M. COSEP, CARMELITA M. DAMASO, ` MERCEDES M. ESPIRITU, AND FELICITA M. SAN FELIPE, RESPONDENTS.

DECISION

NACHURA, J.:

This is a Petition for Review on *Certiorari*^[1] assailing the Decision^[2] dated August 9, 2000, and the Resolution^[3] dated April 30, 2001, of the Court of Appeals (CA) in CA-G.R. SP No. 54750.

The Facts

The present petition stems from a forcible entry with preliminary mandatory injunction^[4] case decided by the Municipal Trial Court (MTC) of Tanay, Rizal. Petitioners^[5] were declared to have illegally entered the parcel of land denominated as Lot 3223, located at Malalim, San Guillermo, Morong, Rizal. On August 26, 1998, the court rendered a Decision,^[6] the dispositive portion of which reads:

In the light of the foregoing, the Court finds and so holds that preponderance of evidence is on the side of the plaintiffs. WHEREFORE, judgment is hereby rendered:

1. Ordering the defendants and all persons claiming under them to vacate the subject premises and surrender possession thereof to the plaintiff.
2. Ordering the defendants to pay plaintiffs:
 - a. P 30,000.00 as attorney's fee plus P 500.00 per Court appearance.
 - b. Costs of suit.

SO ORDERED.^[7]

On October 5, 1998, petitioners filed a Notice of Appeal^[8] from the aforesaid Decision. On November 20, 1998, the MTC rendered an Order^[9] directing the Clerk of Court to immediately transmit the records of the case to the Regional Trial Court (RTC) within the required period.

On January 4, 1999, the RTC of Morong, Rizal furnished the parties with a Notice of Appealed Case,^[10] the pertinent portion of which reads:

You are hereby notified that this court has received the original record of this case on appeal from the Municipal Trial Court of Morong, Rizal consisting of Two Hundred Sixty-seven (267) pages and has docketed the same.^[11]

On March 31, 1999, private respondents^[12] filed a Motion for Dismissal of Appeal^[13] alleging that petitioners had not filed the required memorandum despite the fact that they had only until January 29, 1999 within which to do so.

On April 19, 1999, petitioners filed an Opposition to the Motion for Dismissal of Appeal.^[14] Petitioners averred that they had not received the Notice of Appealed Case dated January 4, 1999. They claimed that they were sincere in their intention to prosecute their appeal and prayed that the Motion for Dismissal of the Appeal be denied and that they be given until April 27, 1999 within which to submit their memorandum.^[15]

On April 14, 1999, prior to the filing by the petitioners of the Opposition to the Motion for Dismissal of Appeal, the RTC issued an Order^[16] dismissing the case for failure of the petitioners to file the required memorandum. The pertinent portion of the Order reads:

WHEREFORE, this present case is ordered DISMISSED for failure to comply with Section 7 (b), Rule 40 of the 1997 Rules of Civil Procedure.

SO ORDERED.^[17]

On April 23, 1999, petitioners filed a Motion for Reconsideration^[18] of the Order of the RTC. On June 25, 1999, the RTC issued an Order^[19] denying the Motion for Reconsideration and the Motion to Admit Memorandum of the petitioners. The pertinent portions of the Order read:

An examination of the return card of the notice of appealed case shows that it was received by one of the staff of Atty. Metila on January 14, 1999. The Court says "*one of the staff*" because the same signature appears/resembles the recipient of the Motion for Dismissal of Appeal (Annex "B" of the Opposition) and the Pre-Trial Brief for the Plaintiffs (Annex "E" of the Opposition). The similarity of the signatures is very apparent that it is hard to believe that he did not receive the notice of appealed case; while the aforementioned pleadings of the counsel for plaintiffs/appellees were received by counsel for defendants/appellants.

As correctly observed by counsel for plaintiffs/appellees, a Postman would not leave a registered letter from the Court, unless it was properly signed by the addressee or his representative. The Postman, as public official, is presumed to have regularly performed his duty, unless there is evidence to the contrary.

Likewise, it is the duty of counsel for defendants/appellants to prepare the memorandum since he is the one who filed the present appeal. Hence, his failure to file the same is an inexcusable negligence.

WHEREFORE, premises considered, the Motion for Reconsideration is DENIED for lack of merit. Consequently, the Motion to Admit Memorandum is likewise DENIED.

Meanwhile, the second paragraph of the Order dated April 14, 1999 is amended to read as follows:

"WHEREFORE, this present appeal is ordered DISMISSED for failure to comply with Section 7(B), Rule 40 of the 1997 Rules of Civil Procedure.

"SO ORDERED."

SO ORDERED..^[20]

On September 7, 1999, petitioners filed a petition for *certiorari*^[21] before the CA. The petitioners questioned the jurisdiction of the respondent Judge to try and hear the case. They alleged that the RTC of Morong, Rizal had not acquired jurisdiction over the person of the petitioners and over the subject matter of the action due to the failure of the clerk of court to furnish them with the Notice of Appealed Case.^[22] Petitioners proffer that they only became aware that their case was already with the RTC of Morong when they received private respondents' Motion for Dismissal of the Appeal.^[23]

On August 9, 2000, the CA issued a Decision^[24] denying the petition and affirming *in toto* the decision of the trial court. The court decreed that failure to comply with Section 6, Rule 40 of the Rules of Court, is not jurisdictional. The letter of transmittal that was required to be sent to the parties was just for purposes of certification to ensure the completeness of the records transmitted.^[25] An appeal by a party by notice of appeal is deemed perfected as to him upon the filing of a notice of appeal in due time as mandated by Section 9, Rule 41 of the Revised Rules of Court.^[26]

Petitioners filed a Motion for Reconsideration. However, the same was denied in a Resolution^[27] dated April 30, 2001.

On May 21, 2001, petitioners filed a Petition for Review on *Certiorari* with this Court assailing the Decision and Resolution of the CA. Petitioners contend that compliance with the directives of Sections 6 and 7, Rule 40^[28] of the Revised Rules of Court is mandatory and is important in order for the appellate court to acquire jurisdiction over the person of the petitioners and over the subject matter of the case. Petitioners claim that their receipt of the motion for dismissal of the appeal was their first formal notification that the case was already within the jurisdiction of the RTC of Morong, Rizal. They aver that the clerk of court of the MTC failed to furnish them a copy of the letter of transmittal, while the clerk of court of the RTC failed to notify them of the receipt by the said court of the complete record of Civil Case No. 1135. They insist that they have not received the notice of appealed case dated January 4, 1999. Petitioners stress that the failure of the clerks of court of both the MTC and the RTC to furnish them copies of the letter of transmittal and notice of appealed case constituted a violation of their right to due process and that such failure on the part of the clerk of court resulted in their failure to file the required memorandum