The Tennessee Jury Verdict Reporter

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Truck Negligence - A sales person for an alcohol distributing company was driving drunk after a day of work (making calls, stocking supply and having a drink or two along the way) she crashed into the plaintiff leaving him with a mild TBI, a C6-7 compression fracture, broken wrist, thumb injury (ligament) and a SLAP tear of his shoulder – the jury awarded the plaintiff $1.25 million ($995,000 in non-economic damages) but rejected the imposition of punitive damages

Cook v. DET Distributing et al, 20-476
Plaintiff: Chaucey Fuller and Annie Berry, *Bart Durham Injury Law*, Nashville
Defense: Brian F. Walhart, Nashville, Thomas P. Mannion, Cleveland, both of *Lewis Brisbois*, Amie A. Vague, *Lightfoot Franklin & White*, Birmingham and E. Reynolds Davies, Jr., *Spicer Rudstrom*, Nashville
Verdict: $1,250,000 for plaintiff less 10% comparative fault
Court: **Davidson**
Judge: C. David Briley
Date: 8-21-26

Melissa Wilson had a busy day at work on 4-23-19. She worked in sales for the Nashville based, DET Distributing. The company distributes spirits and beer in Tennessee. It does a lot too. The company website indicates they push 9.8 million cases of booze every year.

Wilson's job was to call on commercial consumers of alcohol. On this date she visited a variety of Nashville area bars including, Pour House, Music City Bar & Grill and Rebar at the Dam, among others. She'd make deliveries, restock supplies and otherwise communicate with the customers. Wilson would also have a drink or two (it's the alcohol business after all) at some (but not all) of her stops.

The workday for Wilson was mostly done. She had driven the commercial van provided by DET Distributing to the home of her sister's boyfriend. Wilson had a few glasses of wine there. Wilson left that residence and was heading home. She traveled on Stewart's Ferry Pike and was preparing to make a left turn to reach an I-40 exit ramp.

At the same time, Nakia Cook, age 42 and a project manager at a manufacturing firm, was proceeding from the opposite direction on Stewart's Ferry. He was driving a 1999 Jeep Grand Cherokee. As Cook proceeded straight, Wilson turned left in front of him. She didn't hit the brakes or otherwise try to evade. Cook hit the brakes but there was still a hard collision. Cook was taken from the scene of the crash by ambulance. Wilson for her part was charged with drunk driving for which she was later convicted. Her blood alcohol level

A Notable Mississippi Verdict

Defamation - A lawyer (the plaintiff) for a Memphis personal injury law firm alleged that after quitting his job, the firm's principal defamed him in an email to a defense lawyer involved in a case, that email indicated the plaintiff lacked integrity, practiced with "sheer incompetence" and the principal lawyer was "embarrassed to have ever been affiliated" with the plaintiff – the plaintiff also alleged breach of contract in failing to pay earned bonuses – the verdict was mixed, the plaintiff prevailing on the defamation count but he lost on the contract claim

Myatt v. Reaves Law Firm, 3:25-65
Plaintiff: William B. Ryan and Janelle C. Osowski, *Donati Law*, Memphis, TN
Defense: Wesley T. Evans, *Reaves Law Firm*, Memphis, TN
Verdict: $245,000 for plaintiff
Federal: **Oxford, Mississippi**
Judge: Robert P. Chamberlin
Date: 9-10-26

Jody Myatt graduated from law school at Texas Tech in 2003 and was licensed in Texas. Thereafter he spent time as a JAG lawyer. He became licensed in Mississippi in 2016. Myatt took a job with the Memphis-based The Reaves Law Firm in February of 2023. The law firm's principal is Henry Reaves.

Myatt had a melded compensation package. He was paid a base $95,000 per annum salary to work plaintiff's personal injury cases. There was also a convoluted bonus structure that provided additional compensation on cases that settled in which Reaves was involved. Myatt spent his first three months in the Memphis office before working remotely from his home in Oxford.

In December of 2024, Reaves removed Myatt from a significant case that was nearing settlement. Myatt believed he'd been so removed in an effort by the law firm to avoid paying him a bonus. Myatt made a decision to resign.

Myatt gave the law firm two weeks notice of his separation on 1-13-25. Reaves immediately terminated him. Reaves also sent an email to attorney Dawn Davis Carson (she was defending the big case upon which Myatt was removed) and he had observations about Myatt.

Reaves wrote to Carson and said about Myatt, that,

(1) he was fired because of a lack of integrity,
(2) Reaves removed Myatt from the case because of "sheer incompetence,"
(3) He originally hired Myatt because he likes to help veterans, but he was now "embarrassed to have ever been affiliated with a man of such low character." It's not clear how Myatt learned of the email but ultimately he did.

Myatt filed suit against The Reaves Law Firm two months later and advanced two claims. The first was breach of contract. He alleged that the law firm failed to pay him earned bonuses on the contract ($55,000) plus $7,500 in salary.

Dawn,

This matter is resolved. There are no fee disputes.

Jody was fired from RLF due in part to his lack of integrity and failure to meet RLF standards as an attorney. He was an attorney on payroll and had no contractual right to any fees from any case I had him work as an employee.

His current actions, reaffirm that we made the right decision firing him.

I took this case from Jody because of his sheer incompetence, prior to mediation.

Jody is currently misrepresenting himself and attempting to mislead others.

He in no way reflects the Reaves Law Firm. ***I try to give fellow veterans an opportunity when no one else will, sometimes it doesn't work out. I'm embarrassed to have ever been affiliated with a man of such low character.***

If Jody Myatt continues with these tactics, there will be ramifications.

Best,

Henry E. Reaves III, Esq.

The email from Henry Reaves to Dawn Carson

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