

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN FLORIDA

SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION,) -6500 CIV-MOORE
Plaintiff,) Case No. Preparate Jude) DUBÉ
V.) DIAINTIES SECTIDITIES
PHEBE W. ERDMAN, HANS L.) PLAINTIFF SECURITIES) AND EXCHANGE
ERDMAN and DAVID M. LEMON,	COMMISSION'S COMPLAINT
Defendants, and)
REBECCA W. ERDMAN and LESLIE CHEKIN,)))
Relief-defendants.)))

Plaintiff Securities and Exchange Commission ("Commission") alleges:

I. NATURE OF THE ACTION

1. This case involves the fraudulent sale of unregistered stock in International Trade & Commerce Corp. ("ITC"), a worthless shell corporation. From February through August, 1993, Defendants Phebe Erdman ("P. Erdman") and Hans Erdman ("H. Erdman")



and Relief Defendants Rebecca Erdman ("R. Erdman") and Leslie Chekin ("Chekin") sold approximately 370,000 shares of ITC stock to 40 investors and realized proceeds of approximately \$240,000.

- 2. P. Erdman, H. Erdman and Defendant David M. Lemon ("Lemon") solicited investors by misrepresenting that ITC would acquire other businesses and realize substantial revenues in the coming year. They falsely claimed that ITC would finance these acquisitions through a public offering and misrepresented the status of that offering. They failed to disclose the crucial facts that ITC had no assets or operations and no ability to acquire other businesses, conduct a public offering or earn any income. Finally, they concealed their relationship to ITC and each other through a variety of misrepresentations and omissions.
- 3. P. Erdman, H. Erdman and Lemon violated and, unless enjoined, will continue to violate, the antifraud provisions of the federal securities laws, and P. Erdman and H. Erdman violated and, unless enjoined, will continue to violate, the registration provisions of the federal securities laws. Although they are not alleged to have violated the federal securities laws, R. Erdman and Chekin were unjustly enriched by the proceeds of the fraudulent, unregistered sales of ITC stock and hold such proceeds in constructive trust. The Commission seeks permanent injunctions, disgorgement of the Defendants' and Relief Defendants' ill-gotten gains (plus prejudgment interest), and civil monetary penalties.

II. <u>JURISDICTION</u>

- 4. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to Section 22(a) of the Securities Act of 1933 ("Securities Act") [15 U.S.C. 77v(a)] and Sections 21(e) and 27 of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 ("Exchange Act") [15 U.S.C. 78u(d) and 78aa] and 28 U.S.C. 1367.
- 5. Many of the acts and practices described herein occurred in this district. P. Erdman, H. Erdman, R. Erdman and Chekin all sold stock in this district to residents of this district. The majority of investors purchased through a broker employed at a firm in this district. Stanley Cohen ("Cohen"), whose role is described herein, lives and works in this district. Lemon visited this district in furtherance of the fraudulent scheme described herein and made fraudulent communications to individuals in this district.

III. PARTIES AND SIGNIFICANT NONPARTIES

ELLIS ELWOOD ERDMAN

6. Ellis Elwood Erdman ("E. Erdman") is the now-deceased former husband of P. Erdman. He also was the father of H. Erdman, R. Erdman and Chekin. In 1982, E. Erdman consented to the entry of an injunction in a Commission enforcement action alleging violations of the antifraud provisions of the federal securities laws.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE & COMMERCE CORP.

7. ITC was incorporated in 1987 as Expedite, Inc. and changed its name to ITC in 1988. It has never filed a registration statement with the Commission. At all relevant times, ITC was a shell company with no assets, revenues or operations.

THE DEFENDANTS

- 8. P. Erdman, age 70, is a resident of Greensboro, North Carolina. P. Erdman is the mother of H. Erdman, R. Erdman and Chekin.
 - 9. H. Erdman, age 43, is a resident of Blaine, Minnesota.
- 10. Lemon, age 52, is a resident of Marietta, Georgia. During 1993, Lemon acted as the executive vice-president and treasurer of ITC. In 1993, Lemon had been a friend and associate of E. Erdman for over ten years.

THE RELIEF DEFENDANTS

- 11. R. Erdman, age 38, is a resident of Greensboro, North Carolina.
- 12. Chekin, age 39, is a resident of Springfield, Virgina.

STANLEY COHEN

13. Cohen, age 66, is a resident of Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. At all relevant times, he owned three insurance agencies doing business as Academy Insurance.

IV. FACTS COMMON TO ALL COUNTS

E. ERDMAN ACQUIRES ITC

14. In 1988, E. Erdman acquired ITC by purchasing all 500,000 shares of its outstanding stock.

MISREPRESENTATIONS TO COHEN

15. In December 1992, E. Erdman entered into negotiations with Cohen. E. Erdman misrepresented to Cohen that ITC would purchase his insurance business and that E. Erdman could arrange financing, by conducting a public offering of ITC stock, to

purchase 100 additional insurance agencies. E. Erdman failed to inform Cohen that ITC did not have the ability to make the acquisitions or conduct a public offering.

16. After E. Erdman's initial contact, Lemon falsely represented to Cohen that various well-known broker-dealer firms had agreed to underwrite the purported ITC public offering and that "seed money" was available from a private investor and a related corporation.

THE DEFENDANTS OPEN BROKERAGE ACCOUNTS

- 17. Between December 1992 and February 1993, inclusive, P. Erdman opened brokerage accounts for herself and for H. Erdman and Chekin at the Ithaca, NY office of Advest, Inc. ("Advest"), a broker-dealer firm. She deposited 450,000 shares of ITC stock into these accounts.
- 18. At the time her mother opened the accounts described above, R. Erdman already had 37,500 shares of ITC stock on deposit in an account at Advest's Ithaca office (she had deposited 50,000 shares in 1988 and sold some of those shares).
- 19. According to a published report, the 500,000 shares the Erdmans deposited represented all of ITC's outstanding stock.
- 20. P. Erdman falsely informed the branch manager of the Ithaca office that the Erdman family had no connection to ITC other than E. Erdman's role as a consultant. She also misrepresented the Erdman's degree of stock ownership and failed to disclose that the Erdmans controlled ITC.

- 21. P. Erdman informed the branch manager of the Ithaca office that investors would contact Advest. She directed him to keep the Erdmans' names as the owners of the ITC stock "confidential."
- 22. In January 1993, H. Erdman opened an account at R.J. Steichen & Co. ("Steichen"), a Minnesota broker-dealer firm. H. Erdman deposited 125,000 shares of ITC stock into this account. The stock deposited by H. Erdman at Steichen bore legends restricting its sale.

E. ERDMAN AND THE DEFENDANTS DISTRIBUTE FALSE RELEASES

- In January and February 1993, E. Erdman prepared fraudulent promotional materials entitled "Public Information Immediate Release" (the "releases"), which described ITC as "previously engaged exclusively in export trade for USA products and services." They stated that ITC was acquiring 80 to 100 insurance agencies, which would be a "material addition to the operations of its business". They further claimed that there were "considerable numbers of individuals with work assignments required for the closing." The releases projected over \$100 million in sales and over \$17 million in earnings for 1993-1994. The releases also stated that ITC shortly would conduct a public offering of its stock and that appropriate SEC filings were being prepared. The releases provided Lemon's telephone number and address.
- 24. The releases were false and misleading and omitted that ITC had no assets, revenues or ability to acquire other businesses, conduct a public offering or earn any income.

- During February 1993, E. Erdman directed Cohen to distribute the releases, and he complied.
- 26. Between February 1993 and at least August 1993, inclusive, P. Erdman distributed the releases to Advest.
- 27. Between February 1993 and at least August 1993, inclusive, H. Erdman distributed the releases to Steichen.
- 28. Between February 1993 and at least August 1993, inclusive, Lemon distributed the releases to several broker-dealer firms and to potential investors.

INVESTORS BEGIN TO PURCHASE SHARES

- 29. Beginning in February 1993, potential investors learned about ITC's purported plans to acquire insurance agencies and conduct a public offering of its stock from the releases, E. Erdman, Lemon, Cohen (who was acting at E. Erdman's direction), or other investors.
- 30. E. Erdman, Lemon, and Cohen informed investors that stock was available at Advest. The investors contacted Advest's Lauderhill, Florida office and inquired about purchasing ITC stock.

DEFENDANTS MAKE FURTHER MISREPRESENTATIONS

- During 1993, Lemon falsely confirmed to persons who contacted him after receiving the releases that the ITC public offering was proceeding.
- 32. During 1993, P. Erdman falsely represented to the branch manager of Advest's Ithaca office that another well-known broker-dealer firm had agreed to underwrite the offering and that the price of ITC stock would rise following the offering.

She failed to disclose to the firm that demand for the stock was being generated by E. Erdman's misleading solicitation activities.

- During 1993, H. Erdman falsely represented to Cohen that Steichen was interested in underwriting the ITC offering. He falsely informed Steichen that various firms had agreed to underwrite the offering and that ITC would realize substantial revenues and earnings after it merged with other corporations.
- 34. In May 1993, H. Erdman falsely represented to Steichen that he permissibly could sell his ITC stock under Rule 144, which provides a safe harbor from the registration requirements of the federal securities laws.
- 35. In May 1993, H. Erdman falsely represented to Steichen that he had not arranged for the solicitation of any purchasers for his stock and that he was not acting in concert with any other shareholders.

THE DEFENDANTS SELL THEIR SHARES

- 36. Between February and August 1993, inclusive, P. Erdman sold approximately 220,000 shares, H. Erdman sold 50,000 shares, R. Erdman sold 37,500 shares and Chekin sold 50,000 shares of ITC stock through Advest. P. Erdman arbitrarily set the price of most of this stock at \$.60.
- Advest executed the majority of the ITC sales by matching buyers, who had opened accounts through Advest's Lauderhill office, with the Erdmans, who sold through the Ithaca office, in transactions known as cross transactions.
- 38. P. Erdman arranged the prices of some of the sales to make it appear as if the price of ITC was increasing.

- 39. P. Erdman received approximately \$139,010, H. Erdman received \$27,860, R. Erdman received \$21,084, and Chekin received \$27,110 in proceeds from their sales of ITC stock through Advest.
- 40. P. Erdman and R. Erdman shared the proceeds from their sales with E. Erdman.
- 41. In July and August 1993, through his account at Steichen, H. Erdman sold 12,500 shares of ITC stock to two investors.
- 42. H. Erdman realized total proceeds of approximately \$27,380 from these sales.
- 43. After the sales through Steichen, on August 20, 1993, H. Erdman filed a false Form 144 with the Commission. The Form 144 failed to disclose H. Erdman's sales of ITC stock through Advest, or the sales by his family members, even though the Form 144 required that information to be disclosed.
- 44. Many of the investors who purchased ITC stock were unsophisticated and inexperienced. The purchasers did not receive any current, accurate information regarding ITC.
- 45. The acquisitions described in the releases never occurred and ITC never conducted a public offering or earned any income. All of the shares purchased by investors are worthless.

FIRST CLAIM

Violations of Section 10(b) of the Exchange Act [15 U.S.C. 78j(b)] and Rule 10b-5 thereunder [17 C.F.R. 240.10b-5]

- 46. The Commission realleges and incorporates by reference Paragraphs 1 through 45.
- 47. The misrepresentations and omissions described herein were made by the use of a means or instrumentality of interstate commerce or of the mails. The misrepresentations described herein were material. The omissions described herein were of material facts necessary to make the statements made, in light of the circumstances under which they were made, not misleading. When making these misrepresentations and omissions, the defendants acted knowingly or recklessly. The defendants' conduct constituted a device, scheme or artifice to defraud and operated as a fraud or deceit. The defendants' scheme was ongoing through at least August, 1993.
- 48. By reason of the foregoing, Defendants P. Erdman, H. Erdman and Lemon violated Section 10(b) of the Exchange Act [15 U.S.C. 78j(b)] and Rule 10b-5 thereunder [17 C.F.R. 240.10b-5].

SECOND CLAIM

Violations of Section 17(a) of the Securities Act [15 U.S.C. 77q(a)]

49. The Commission realleges and incorporates by reference Paragraphs 1 through 48.

- 50. The misrepresentations and omissions described herein were made by the use of a means or instrument of transportation or communication in interstate commerce or by the use of the mails.
- 51. By reason of the foregoing, Defendants P. Erdman, H. Erdman and Lemon violated Section 17(a) of the Securities Act [15 U.S.C. 77q(a)].

THIRD CLAIM

Violations of Sections 5(a) and 5(c) of the Securities Act [15 U.S.C. 77e(a) and 77e(c)]

- 52. The Commission realleges and incorporates by reference Paragraphs 1 through 51.
- 53. No registration statement was in effect for the Erdmans' 1993 sales of ITC stock and the sales were not exempt from the registration requirements of the federal securities laws. The Erdmans' sales constituted a public offering and a distribution of ITC stock.
- 54. At all relevant times, E. Erdman controlled ITC by virtue of his and his nominees' ownership of the company's stock and his ability to direct the affairs of the company. P. Erdman, H. Erdman, R. Erdman and Chekin participated in controlling ITC because of their familial relationship with E. Erdman. Accordingly, sales by the Erdmans involved statutory underwriters.
- 55. Defendants P. Erdman and H. Erdman, by reason of the foregoing, violated Sections 5(a) and 5(c) of the Securities Act [15 U.S.C. 77e(a) and 77e(c)].

FOURTH CLAIM

Unjust Enrichment of the Relief Defendants

- 56. The Commission realleges and incorporates by reference Paragraphs 1 through 55.
- 57. R. Erdman and Chekin have been unjustly enriched. They received the proceeds described above under circumstances dictating that, in equity and in good conscience, they should not be allowed to retain them.

FIFTH CLAIM

Constructive Trust

- 58. The Commission realleges and incorporates by reference Paragraphs 1 through 57.
- 59. Investors who purchased R. Erdman's and Chekin's ITC stock were defrauded by P. Erdman, H. Erdman and Lemon. The sales were part of the unregistered offering and were therefore illegal.
- 60. The relief defendants did not give value to investors for their funds and have no legitimate claim to such funds. Accordingly, the relief defendants hold such funds in constructive trust for the benefit of investors.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff Securities and Exchange Commission respectfully requests that this Court grant the following relief:

I.

Find that Defendants P. Erdman, H. Erdman and Lemon violated Section 17(a) of the Securities Act [15 U.S.C. 77q(a)], Section 10(b) of the Exchange Act [15 U.S.C. 78j(b)] and Rule 10b-5 thereunder [17 C.F.R. 240.10b-5], and that Defendants P. Erdman and H. Erdman violated Sections 5(a) and 5(c) of the Securities Act [15 U.S.C. 77e(a) and 77e(c)].

II.

Permanently restrain and enjoin Defendants P. Erdman, H. Erdman and Lemon, their officers, agents, servants, employees, attorneys-in-fact, successors and assigns, and each of them, and all persons in active concert or participation with them from violating Section 17(a) of the Securities Act [15 U.S.C. 77q(a)], Section 10(b) of the Exchange Act [15 U.S.C. 78j(b)], and Rule 10b-5 promulgated thereunder [17 C.F.R. 240.10b-5].

III.

Permanently restrain and enjoin Defendants P. Erdman and H. Erdman, their officers, agents, servants, employees, attorneys-in-fact, successors and assigns, and each of them, and all persons in active concert or participation with them from violating Sections 5(a) and 5(c) of the Securities Act [15 U.S.C. 77e(a) and 77e(c)].

IV.

Require P. Erdman and H. Erdman to disgorge any ill-gotten gains they received as a result of their fraudulent conduct, plus prejudgment interest thereon, with such

monies and interest to be disbursed in accordance with a plan of distribution to be ordered by the Court.

V.

Impose a constructive trust on the funds, including prejudgment interest thereon, that R. Erdman and Chekin received as proceeds from their sales of ITC stock and require them to disgorge an amount equal to the proceeds they received, plus prejudgment interest thereon, with such monies and interest to be disbursed in accordance with a plan of distribution to be ordered by the Court.

VI.

Impose civil monetary penalties against each of the Defendants pursuant to Section 20(d) of the Securities Act [15 U.S.C. 77t(d)] and Section 21(d)(3) of the Exchange Act [15 U.S.C. 78u(d)(3)], in amounts to be determined by the Court.

VII.

Grant such other and further relief as this Court deems necessary and appropriate under the circumstances.

Dated: May 15, 1998

Respectfully submitted,

Juan Marcel Marcelino District Administrator

David E. Marder Senior Trial Counsel

Grant David Ward Asst. District Administrator

John M. D'Amico Branch Chief

Madeleine McGrath Blake Branch Chief

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(617) 424-5940 (Fax)

_____ AMOUNT__

_____ APPLYING IFP____

JS 44 (Rev. 12/96) See 0:98-cv-06500-WPD Document 1 Entered on FLSD Docket 05 18/1998 CIVIL COVER SHEET

Bage 16 of 10

The JS-44 civil cover sheet and the information contained herein neither replace nor supplement the filing and service of pleadings of by law, except as provided by local rules of court. This form approved by the Judicial Conference of the United States in \$ 35t in the rule of the Clerk of Court for the purpose of initiating the civil doctret sheet. (SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE REVERSE OF THE CLARK COURT OF THE C

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I. BASIS OF JURISDI		y) III. CI	TIZENSHIP OF PRI or Diversity Cases Only)	NCIPAL PARTIES	PLACE AN "X" IN ONE BOX FOR PLAINTIFF
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2 U.S. Government Defendant	☐ 4 Diversity (Indicate Citizenship of Parties in Item III)	Cit	tizen of Another State □		and Principal Place □ 5 □ 5 s In Another State
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110 Insurance 120 Marine 130 Miller Act 140 Negotiable Instrument 150 Recovery of Overpayment & Enforcement of Judgment 151 Medicare Act 152 Recovery of Defaulted Student Loans (Exc) Veterans;	Liability 365 Personal Product L Slander 368 Aspestos	Injury Expression Expression	610 Agriculture 620 Other Food & Drug	□ 422 Appeal 28 USC 158 □ 423 Withdrawal 28 USC 157 A PROPERTY RIGHTS □ 820 Copyrights □ 830 Patent □ 840 Trademark	□ 400 State Reapportlonment □ 410 Antitrust □ 430 Banks and Banking B□ 450 Commerce/ICC Rates/etc □ 460 Deportation □ 470 Racketeer influenced and Corrupt Organizations □ 810 Selective Service ▼ 850 Securities/Commodities/Exchance
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210 Land Condemnation 220 Foreclosure	A CIVIL RIGHTS PRISONER P 441 voting B 510 Motions t Sentence HABEAS COP	o Vacate	☐ 730 Labor Mgmt. Reporting & Disclosure Act ☐ 740 Railway Labor Act	B64 SSID Title XVI	895 Freedom of Information Act 900 Appeal of Fee Determination Under Equal Access to Justice
230 Rent Lease & Ejectment 240 Torts to Land 245 Tort Product Liability 290 All Otner Real Property	443 Housing Accommodations B 530 General A 535 Death Pe B 540 Mandam B 550 Civil Rights B 555 Prison Ci	nalty us & Other its A	☐ 790 Other Labor Litigation ☐ 791 Empl. Ret. Inc. Security Act	A 870 Taxes (U.S. Plaintiff or Defendant) A 871 IRS Third Party 26 USC 7609	☐ 950 Constitutionality of State Statutes ☐ 890 Other Statutory Actions A OR B
VI. CAUSE OF ACTION 15 U.S.C. 77c ENGTH 任野風udulent so a ldays estimated (for both sides to	DO NOT CITE SURISDICTIONAL STATUTES L (a); 15 U.S.C. 78j(b); sale of unregistered sto	UNLESS DIVERSI	TY)		(a) and 77e(c);
/II. REQUESTED IN COMPLAINT:	CHECK IF THIS IS A CLASS AG UNDER FR C P 23	CTION	DEMAND \$240,000 civil penal) + CHECKYES o Ities JURY DEMA	only if demanded in complaint: ND: □ YES Ď NO
/III.RELATED CASE(S IF ANY	(See instructions): JUDGE			DOCKET NUMBER	
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FOR OFFICE USE ONLY					

_ JUDGE_

____ MAG. JUDGE ___