

SECOND DIVISION

[A.M. NO. P-05-2086, October 20, 2005]

RE: FALSIFICATION OF DAILY TIME RECORDS OF OF MARIA FE P. BROOKS, COURT INTERPRETER, REGIONAL TRIAL COURT, QUEZON CITY, BRANCH 69, AND ANDRIA FORTEZA-CRISOSTOMO, CLERK III, REGIONAL TRIAL COURT, MANILA, BRANCH 39.

D E C I S I O N

CALLEJO, SR., J.:

The instant administrative matter has its roots in the 1st Indorsement dated April 6, 2005 of Assistant Court Administrator Antonio M. Dujua, referring to Atty. Perseveranda L. Ricon, Clerk of Court V, Regional Trial Court (RTC), Manila, Branch 39, for comment the photocopies of the October 2003 Daily Time Records of Maria Fe P. Brooks and Andria Forteza-Crisostomo which appeared to have been tampered.

In her Comment (by way of a 2nd Indorsement dated April 26, 2005), Atty. Ricon stated, thus:

It is Standard Operating Procedure in our office that at the end of each month, staffs will submit to the undersigned their respective DTRs. Undersigned would check if what was stated in the DTR tallied with the Log Book where the staffs log their arrivals and departures. If it does, then the undersigned affixes her signature to each DTR. The same was done in this particular month of October 2003, and after which the undersigned instructed her Utility Worker, Mr. Eduardo Flores, to submit the same to the Leave Section. When undersigned affixed her signature in the DTR of Ms. Brooks and Ms. Crisostomo, there were no erasures or tampering so to speak except that of Ms. Brooks where I put my initial below the first line of arrival since it did not tally with the Log Book and so with the succeeding entries (please refer to the Log Book for the month of October 2003 hereto attached, where the erasures or alleged tampering on Ms. Brooks's 1/2 DTR tallied with the entries therein, meaning there was no tampering or change of entries in the Log Book and the DTR). The DTRs were clean and I was surprised to see the attached xerox copies of the DTR of Ms. Crisostomo where there are legible erasures and tampering done. I presumed that the erasures/tampering were done after I had signed said DTRs.

The respective explanations of Andria Forteza-Crisostomo and Maria Fe Brooks were, likewise, attached to the said Comment.

Andria Forteza-Crisostomo admitted having made some alterations on her October 2003 Daily Time Record. She explained that at that time, she was in her first trimester of pregnancy, which made her body weak due to the heavy workload she

was handling. Her travel to and from Bulacan gave her great stress, and she was afraid that she might get suspended from the office if she would thrice be marked tardy in one month. She was apprehensive about losing her job since her family was dependent on her. She sincerely apologized for what she did and manifested that she would accept whatever punishment would be meted against her. She also vowed never to do such act or other similar acts again.

For her part, Maria Fe P. Brooks acknowledged the changes of entries made in her daily time record, particularly on October 1, 3, and 8, 2003. She explained that she was scheduled to transfer to her new workstation at the RTC of Quezon City, Branch 69 on October 14, 2003. Thus, the day before, she was very busy winding up her workload which could not be left undone. When she presented her daily time record to the Branch Clerk of Court for signature, she was made to double check if the entries tallied with the attendance logbook of the office. After doing so, she found out that some of the entries made were erroneous and proceeded to correct the same by using correction fluid. She stressed that these corrections were made known to the Branch Clerk of Court before she affixed her signature on the bottom portion of her daily time record. She further averred that the erasures were made in good faith, without any slightest interest of dishonesty, and only to reflect the true and correct entries.

In its Report dated September 7, 2005, the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA) made the following evaluation and recommendation:

EVALUATION: Andria Forteza-Crisostomo admitted having falsified her Daily Time Record for the month of October 2003. Under the Civil Service Rules, falsification of an official document such as the Daily Time Record is considered a grave offense and penalized with dismissal from the service for the first offense. Moreover, under item II of Administrative Circular No. 2-99 issued on 15 January 1999, Re: *Strict Observance of Working Hours and Disciplinary Action for Absenteeism and Tardiness*

Absenteeism and tardiness, even if such do not qualify as "habitual" or "frequent" under Civil Service Commission Memorandum Circular No. 04, Series of 1991, shall be dealt with severely, and any falsification of daily time records to cover up for such absenteeism and/or tardiness shall constitute gross dishonesty or serious misconduct.

As the Court explained in *Mirano vs. Saavedra*, A.M. No. P-89-383, August 4, 1993:

Public service requires utmost integrity and strictest discipline. A public servant must exhibit at all times the highest sense of honesty and integrity. The administration of justice is a sacred task. By the very nature of their duties and responsibilities, all those involved in it must faithfully adhere to hold inviolate, and invigorate the principle [of solemnity] enshrined in the 1987 Constitution that a public office is a public trust; and all public officers and employees must at all times be accountable to the people, serve them with utmost responsibility, integrity, loyalty and efficiency. The conduct and behavior of everyone connected with an office charged with the dispensation of