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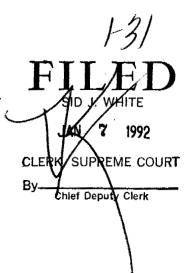
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IN THE SUPREME COURT OF FLORIDA

CASE NO. 76,800



DIVERSIFIED SERVICES, INC., a foreign corporation, d/b/a BUDGET RENT-A-CAR OF MIAMI, INC., a Florida corporation, and PALM BEACH DODGE, INC. a Florida corporation,

Petitioners,

vs.

ALIDA AVILA, as Personal Representataive of the Estate of EULOGIO AVILA, Deceased,

Respondent.

PETITIONERS' BRIEF ON THE MERITS

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- II. ASSUMING ARGUENDO THE UNINSURED MOTORIST STATUTE IS APPLICABLE TO BUDGET, WHETHER BUDGET HAS TO OFFER UNINSURED MOTORIST COVERAGE TO A RENTER WHERE BUDGET AS A SELF-INSURER HAD REJECTED UNINSURED MOTORIST COVERAGE WITH THE BUREAU OF FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAY SAFETY AND MOTOR VEHICLES, HAD REJECTED UNINSURED MOTORIST COVERAGE IN ITS EXCESS LIABILITY POLICY, AND HAD EXPRESSLY ADVISED THE RENTER IN THE RENTAL AGREEMENT THAT BUDGET DID NOT PROVIDE UNINSURED MOTORIST COVERAGE.
- 111. THE THIRD DISTRICT COMMITTED REVERSIBLE ERROR BY FINDING THE RENTAL AGREEMENT WAS AMBIGUOUS ON THE ISSUE OF WHETHER OR NOT UNINSURED MOTORIST COVERAGE **WAS** BEING OFFERED TO THE RENTER.

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Petitioners,

vs.

ALIDA AVILA, as Personal Representative of the Estate of EULOGIO AVILA, Deceased,

Respondent.

PETITIONERS' BRIEF ON THE MERITS

### INTRODUCTION

The parties will be referred to in the position they occupy in this Court and in their proper name. Petitioners, Diversified Services, Inc., a foreign corporation d/b/a Budget Rent-A-Car of Miami, Inc., a Florida corporation, and Palm Beach Dodge, Inc., a Florida corporation ("Budget"), were the appellees in the Third District and the defendants in the trial court; respondent, Alida Avila, as personal representative of the Estate of Eulogio Avila, Deceased, was the appellant in the Third District and the plaintiff in the trial court. Reference to the record-on-appeal filed in this Court will be by the use of the symbol "R" followed by the appropriate page number. Reference to Budget's appendix will be by the use of the symbol "BA" followed by the appropriate page number.

## STATEMENT OF THE CASE AND FACTS

Eulogio Avila entered into an automobile rental agreement with Budget on May 25, 1984. (R. **31-32; BA. 5-6**). While driving the rental car, Avila **was** fatally injured when his rental vehicle collided with an underinsured automobile. (R. 173-74; BA. 1-2).

Alida Avila, wife of the deceased and personal representative of his estate, brought an action against Budget. (R. 174; BA. 2). In her second amended complaint, Ms. Avila alleged that Budget, in leasing the vehicle to the decedent sold him an insurance policy for liability insurance and personal injury protection without offering underinsured motorist benefits equal to the liability insurance limits or obtaining a written rejection of said underinsured motorist benefits contrary to Section 627.727(1), Fla.Stat, (1983). (R. 108).

It was alleged also that Edward Childress negligently operated a motor vehicle *so* that it collided with the leased motor vehicle being operated by Eulogio Avila. (R. 107). Next, it was alleged that the motor vehicle operated by Childress was owned by Lillie Collier, and that the damages sustained by the wrongful death of Eulogio Avila far exceeded the policy limits of the defendants, Childress and Collier. (R. 107-08).

In answer to plaintiff's second amended complaint, Budget filed **a** general denial. (R. 121). Budget stated also that there is no requirement under the financial responsibility law to provide any other coverage except proof of ability to respond in damages for liability on account of an accident arising out of the use of  $\mathbf{a}$  motor vehicle in certain minimum amounts. <u>Id</u>.

For further answer Budget stated that the rental agreement did not provide uninsured/underinsured motorist coverage to the decedent. <u>Id</u>, Further, Budget alleged that as "a named insured" in a comprehensive general liability policy for bodily injury liability and for property damage, it had rejected uninsured/underinsured motorist coverage. (R. 121-22). 1

Paragraphs numbered 7 and 7(a) of the Budget rental agreement provided in part:

The insurance coverage referred to in this paragraph 7 does not apply:

(a) To damages caused to any person, including Renter and driver by an uninsured motorist or uninsured motor vehicle . .

\* \* \* \* \*

This paragraph 7 constitutes the entire agreement between BUDGET and the Renter and driver regarding the terms and conditions of the insurance provided by BUDGET to the

<sup>1.</sup> St, Paul Fire & Marine Casualty Ins. Co. ("St. Paul"), issued an excess automobile liability insurance policy which covered Budget for each occurrence in the amount of \$900,000, above the underlying limits of \$100,000. (R. 129, 135-36, 139-47, 156). Prior to Avila's appeal to review the summary final judgment, St. Paul was dismissed from this case by the trial court based upon the exclusion in the St. Paul policy stating that no insurance is afforded for uninsured/underinsured motorist coverage. (R. 51A). An appeal was taken by the respondent to the District Court of Appeal of Florida, Third District, and the said final judgment of dismissal of St. Paul was affirmed without opinion. Avila v. St. Paul Fire & Marine Ins\_Co', 522 So.2d 397 (F1a, 3d DCA 1988).

Renter and driver and no alteration thereof shall be valid unless agreed to by BUDGET in writing

(R. 32, 136, 157; BA. 7). 2

Also under paragraph numbered 7 of the rental agreement Budget provided personal injury protection benefits with the maximum deductible allowed by law (should personal injury protection benefits be required under the laws of the state wherein the vehicle was rented), and the renter agreed *to* accept said coverage. (R. 32, 128; BA. 7). In addition, under paragraph numbered 7, Budget agreed to provide to the renter and driver liability insurance coverage with limits of liability equal to the minimum limits required by the financial responsibility laws of the state in which the vehicle is rented. (R. 32, 128; BA. 7).

Another provision under paragraph numbered 7 stated that the liability coverage described "may be afforded, subject to the same terms, conditions, restrictions, and limitations herein described under **a** bond or self-insurance arrangement in

<sup>2.</sup> The Budget rental agreement at pages 31-32 of the record and the Budget rental agreement in the appendix are the same as the Budget rental agreement that was attached to the motion for summary judgment in the trial court and considered by the appellate court. The rental agreement that was attached to the motion for summary judgment was inadvertently misplaced. The Budget rental agreement referred to above was also utilized by the respondent in her appendix to her initial brief in the Third District. In an abundance of caution, petitioner will file a motion for the court to allow the Budget rental agreement set forth at pages 31-32 of the record and in Budget's appendix to be used as the Budget rental agreement referred to in the motion for summary judgment.

lieu of, or in combination with, an automobile liability insurance policy. (R. 32, 128; BA. 7).

Budget had received  $\mathbf{a}$  self-insurer certificate effective October 11, 1983, from the State of Florida. (R. 137).

Budget was a self-insurer up to \$100,000. (R. 129, 135, 137, 156). As a self-insurer, Budget had rejected uninsured motorist coverage by advising the Chief of the Bureau of Financial Responsibility, Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles that Budget was rejecting uninsured motorist coverage. (R. 129, 138, 157).

**Also**, Budget as an insured under an excess policy, had rejected uninsured/underinsured motorist coverage as appears in the uninsured/underinsured motorist exclusion endorsement in the St. Paul policy. (R. 129-30, 136, 145).

Subsequently, Budget filed its motion for summary judgment with an accompanying affidavit and exhibits. (R. 127-147). After argument on the motion for summary judgment, the trial court granted the motion and entered a summary final judgment. (R. 171-72). Ms. Avila sought review of the summary final judgment in the Third District.

In the opinion, the Third District stated that the issues raised by the appellant are whether the lessor, a selfinsurer who sold insurance coverage to the deceased, was required to offer uninsured motorist coverage up to the limits of liability coverage pursuant to Section 627.727(1), Florida

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Statutes, and whether the contract drafted by the lessor for the rental and insurance coverage was ambiguous on the coverage issue, thus precluding a summary judgment without consideration of parole evidence. (R. 174; BA. 2).

Concerning the alleged ambiguity in the rental agreement, the Third District stated that the face of the rental agreement reflected that the deceased paid a premium for "Damage Waiver" insurance and for "Personal Accident Insurance" in the amount of \$150,000 as described in a separate certificate of insurance which is "available on request." <u>Id</u>. Then, the Court added:

> Although a provision on the reverse side of the agreement declares that the insurance described on the front does not include uninsured motorist coverage, and that it is the entire agreement between the parties, that language is qualified by another provision which nullifies its conclusive effect where an alteration is agreed to by Budget in writing, or the paragraph or portions of the paragraph are unlawful or in conflict with public policy.

(R. 174-75; BA. 2-3).

The Court went on to state that there was a material issue of fact whether the lessee purchased, or had good reason to believe that he was purchasing a policy that would provide benefits in the event of **a** collision with an uninsured vehicle. (R. 175; BA. **3**).

Budget adverts now to Avila's issue as to whether Budget, **as a** self-insurer, was held to all the obligations of

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an insurer including a statutory duty to offer uninsured
motorist coverage as part of the sale of liability insurance.
(R. 174-75; BA. 2-3).

Regarding the question of whether a self-insurer has the duty to offer uninsured motorist coverage, the Third District found that a legal issue, not specifically addressed by the trial court, was whether the lessor, as a self-insurer up to the first \$100,000, was insulated from a duty to provide uninsured motorist coverage through its lessee by virtue of a rejection of such coverage with its excess carrier. (R. 175-76; BA. 3-4). Thus, the Third District held there is a statutory duty on the part of Budget, a self-insurer to provide uninsured motorist coverage unless insulated from such duty by a rejection of uninsured motorist coverage with its excess carrier. (R. 175-76; BA. 3-4).

Additionally, the Third District considered the rental agreement to be an insurance policy by referring to the agreement as a "policy" several times. (R. 174-75; BA. 2-3).

Following the Third District's reversal, a notice to invoke the discretionary jurisdiction of this Court was filed by petitioner, and the Court accepted jurisdiction.

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#### SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT

Ι

Although the Florida District Courts of **Appeal** have repeatedly held that a car rental agency that is a self-insurer may reject uninsured motorist coverage without notification to the renter of the automobile, those cases, however, do not **expressly** consider the issue of whether the uninsured motorist statute is applicable to a self-insurer.

The uninsured motorist statute provides in pertinent part that no motor vehicle liability insurance policy shall be delivered or issued for delivery in this State unless uninsured motor vehicle coverage is provided.

Several jurisdictions that have considered the issue of whether or not their uninsured motorist statutes (with similar language to the Florida statute) are applicable to a selfinsurer have held that self-insurers are issued certificates of self-insurance and, therefore, are not subject to the uninsured motorist statute in that **a** certificate of insurance is not **a** policy of insurance.

In Florida an automobile rental agency that is selfinsured and rents motor vehicles on a daily basis does not fall within the purview of Section 627.727(1), Fla.Stat. (1983), requiring a motor vehicle liability insurance policy to provide uninsured motor vehicle coverage, since a certificate of selfinsurance does not constitute a policy of insurance.

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In the event that the uninsured motorist statute applies, Budget, as a self-insurer rejected uninsured motorist coverage with the State Bureau of Financial Responsibility, Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles.

In addition, Budget rejected uninsured motorist coverage with its third party excess liability policy.

Significantly, Budget's rental agreement executed by the decedent expressly provided **the** insurance coverage **does** not **apply** to damages caused *to* any person, including renter and driver by an uninsured motorist or uninsured motor vehicle.

In addition to **all of** the foregoing, the Budget insurance director executed an affidavit with exhibits that Budget is a self-insurer, has rejected uninsured motorist coverage as a self-insurer and has rejected uninsured/underinsured motorist coverage with its excess third party liability carrier.

Further, there are several cases where an automobile rental company, which is a self-insurer, unbeknownst to the renter qualified **as** a self-insurer and filed a notice of rejection of uninsured motorist coverage with the State. The appellate courts have unanimously held **that** the rental agency is not required to give notice to the lessee that the company was *a* self-insurer and did not provide uninsured motorist coverage.

Here, Budget's position is stronger since it gave express notice to the decedent that there was no uninsured motorist coverage.

II

If Budget has to provide uninsured motorist coverage, the rejection provision of the statute would be repealed by judicial fiat.

## III

As to the rental agreement being ambiguous on the issue of whether or not uninsured motorist coverage was being offered *to* the renter, the Third District pointed out that **a** premium was paid by the deceased in the rental agreement for "damage waiver" insurance and for "personal accident insurance" with **a** \$150,000 benefit which insurance provisions appeared on the face of the rental agreement.

The Third District admitted that a provision in the rental agreement on the reverse side declared that the insurance described on the front of the agreement does not include uninsured motorist coverage, Notwithstanding, the Third District found the provisions, which unambiguously excluded uninsured motorist coverage, were in turn qualified by language in another provision which nullified the conclusive effect of the provisions excluding uninsured motorist coverage, by providing Budget could alter the agreement in writing, or the paragraph or portions of the paragraph proscribing uninsured motorist coverage might be unlawful or in conflict with public policy.

As to the provision dealing with the alteration of the rental agreement, no alteration or modification was alleged and

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proved either orally or in writing. Respondent offered no affidavits or other evidence in proof of modification.

Based on the reasons stated herein, and upon the reasons and authorities to be stated under the points, <u>infra</u>, the decision of the Third District should be quashed.

#### Argument

#### POINT I

## WHETHER BUDGET, A SELF-INSURER, IS SUBJECT TO THE UNINSURED MOTORIST STATUTE AND REQUIRED TO OFFER UNINSURED MOTORIST COVERAGE TO ITS RENTERS.

In several Florida *cases*, the appellate courts have held that a self-insurer, such **as** a car rental agency that unilaterally rejects uninsured motorist coverage effectively waived such coverage against the renter who suffered injuries in an accident with an uninsured motorist while occupying a vehicle rented from the self-insurer. <u>Guardado v. Greyhound Rent-A-Car</u>, **Inr. 340** So,2d 510 (Fla. 3d DCA 1976); <u>Morpurgo v. Greyhound</u> <u>Rent-A-Car, Inc.</u>, **339** So,2d 718 (Fla. 1st **DCA** 1976).

It appears in <u>Morpurgo</u> and <u>Guardado</u> that the courts, as well as the parties, proceeded on the assumption that the uninsured motorist statute was applicable to a self-insurer.

Even the Third District in the instant case, as noted in the statement of the case and facts, made a reference to **a** self-insurer's "duty to provide uninsured motorist coverage to its lessee" and made several references to the rental agreement **as** "the policy." (R. 174-76; **BA**. 2-4). Thus, the Third District, in effect, assumed that a self-insurer has the duty to provide uninsured motorist to its lessee without expressly considering the applicability of the uninsured motorist statute to a self-insurer.

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Mr. Avila, the decedent, signed Budget's rental agreement on May 25, 1984, for a one-day rental. (R. 31-32; BA. 5-6).

Section 627.727(1), Fla. Stat. (1983), provided in pertinent part:

> No motor vehicle liability insurance policy shall be delivered or issued for delivery in this state with respect to any motor vehicle registered or principally garaged in this state unless uninsured motor vehicle coverage is provided therein or supplemental thereto for the protection of persons insured thereunder who are legally entitled to recover damages from owners or operators of uninsured motor vehicles because of bodily injury, or disease, death, sickness, including resulting therefrom. However, the coverage required under this section shall not be applicable when, or to the extent that, any insured named in the policy shall reject the coverage in writing. When a motor vehicle is leased for a period of 1 year or longer and the lessor of such vehicle, by the terms of the lease contract, provides liability coverage on the leased vehicle in a policy wherein the lessee is a named insured or on a certificate of a master policy issued to the lessor, the lessee of such vehicle shall have the sole privilege to reject uninsured motorist coverage.

The clear, unequivocal language of the uninsured motorist statute reads that no motor liability insurance <u>policy</u> shall be delivered or issued in this state unless uninsured motor vehicle coverage is provided. It is interesting *to* note that Ch. 82-243, 6544, Laws of Florida, containing the initial words "[n]o motor vehicle liability insurance" was amended in the same year by the Legislature in Ch. 82-386, §66, Laws of Florida, to read "[n]o motor vehicle liability insurance policy."

Several sister jurisdictions in construing the applicability of their respective uninsured motorist statutes to a self-insurer focused primarily on the fact that the uninsured motorist statute spoke in terms of "policy of insurance" while no "policy" existed in the case of a self-insurer. Since the self-insurers were issued certificates of self-insurance by the state, the self-insurer was not subject to the uninsured motorist statute, since the certificate was not a policy of Robinson v. Hertz Corp., 489 N.B.2d 332, 333 (I11, insurance. 1986); Mountain States Tel. **&** Tel, Co. ν. Aetna 3d Dist. Casualty & Surety Co., 116 Ariz. 225, 568 P.2d 1123 (App. 1977); O'Sullivan v. Salvation Army, 85 Cal.App.3d 58, 147 Cal.Rptr. 729 (2nd Dist. 1978); Shelton v. American Re-Insurance Company, 210 Va. 655, 173 S.E.2d 820, 822-23 (1970).

Turning to the statutory language permitting the lessee of a vehicle leased for a period of one year or longer to have the privilege of rejecting uninsured motorist coverage when there is a policy or a certificate of a master policy, the Legislature in Ch. 84-41, \$1, Laws of Florida, deleted the following language concerning insurance policies relating to the leasing of motor vehicles for a period of one year or longer:

> In a policy wherein the lessee is a named insured or on **a** certificate of **a** master policy issued to the lessor."

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In 1986, the Legislature in Ch. 86-182, §7, Laws of Florida (1986), broadened and clarified the right of a lessee of a leased vehicle for a period of one year or longer to enjoy the sole privilege to reject uninsured motorist coverage by adding the following language: "[R]egardless of whether the lessor is qualified as a self-insurer pursuant to Section 627.727(1), Fla. Stat. (Fla.Supp. 1986).

At no time has the Legislature amended that part of Section 627.727(1), Fla. Stat. (1983), wherein the mandatory requirement that every motor vehicle liability insurance policy shall be issued or delivered providing uninsuredmotorist coverage.

Thus, the Legislative scheme reveals  $\mathbf{a}$  dichotomy within the uninsured motorist statute that makes the offering of uninsured motorist coverage mandatory where the motor vehicle is leased for  $\mathbf{a}$  period of one year or longer whether or not the lessor is  $\mathbf{a}$  self-insurer.

On the contrary, the requirements of Section 627.727, Fla. Stat. (1983), are inapplicable to **a** self-insurer that rents motor vehicles for a term of less than one year.

Thus, the decision of the Fourth District in <u>Lipof v</u>. <u>Florida Power & Light Co.</u>, 558 So.2d 1067 (Fla. 4th DCA 1990), is eminently correct as to the following language:

> An individual self-insurer is not for most purposes an "insurer" under the Florida Insurance Code. (Citations omitted). Selfinsurance is not considered a "policy" of insurance, therefore, the requirements in section 627.727, Florida Statutes (1983), are inapplicable to self-insurers.

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Finally, a review of the self-insurer certificate reveals that Budget has qualified under Section 324.171, Florida Statutes (1983), and by such qualifying has complied with the requirements of the Florida Financial Responsibility Law, Section 324.021(7), Florida Statutes (1983) and with personal injury protection coverage under Section 627.733(3)(b), Florida Statutes (1983). (R. 137).

There **is** simply no statutory requirement for a selfinsurer, in the automobile rental business **to** offer a renter uninsured motorist coverage, unless the lease is for a term of one year or more.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that this Court determine whether Budget, an automobile rental company, which is a self-insurer and rents vehicles on *a* daily basis, falls within the purview of the uninsured motorist statute. It is respectfully submitted further that this Court determine that the uninsured motorist statute is not applicable *to* Budget under the facts and circumstances of this case and quash the decision of the Third District. ASSUMING ARGUENDO THEUNINSURED MOTORIST IS APPLICABLE STATUTE TO BUDGET, WHETHER HAS BUDGET ΤO UNINSURED MOTORIST OFFER COVERAGE TO A RENTER WHERE BUDGET AS Α SELF-INSURER HAD REJECTED UNINSURED MOTORIST COVERAGE WITH THEBUREAU OF FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAY SAFETY AND MOTOR VEHICLES, HAD REJECTED UNINSURED MOTORIST COVERAGE IN ITS EXCESS LIABILITY POLICY, AND HAD EXPRESSLY ADVISED THE RENTER IN THE RENTAL AGREEMENT THAT BUDGET DID NOT PROVIDE UNINSURED MOTORIST COVERAGE.

The Third District stated in its opinion that an issue for the trial court *to* determine is "whether the lessor, as a self-insurer up to the first \$100,000 is insulated from a duty to provide uninsured motorist coverage to its lessee by virtue of a rejection of such coverage with its excess carrier." (R. 176; BA. 4). It is apparent that the Third District has implied that Budget only rejected uninsured motorist coverage in the excess policy, but failed to reject uninsured motorist coverage under its certificate of self-insurance by not notifying the State of **a** rejection.

On the contrary, the record reflects that on September 29, 1983, Budget notified the Chief of the Bureau of Financial Responsibility, Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, that Budget was formally rejecting uninsured motorist coverage. (R. 138; BA. 7).

In addition, Budget stated in its rental agreement concerning coverage, in paragraph numbered 7:

• 13 •

The insurance coverage referred to in this paragraph / does not apply:

(a) <u>To damages caused to any person,</u> including <u>Renter and driver by an uninsured</u> <u>motorist or uninsured motor vehicle</u> (emphasis added).

(R. 32, 128, 131, 136, 157; BA. 6).

Budget rejected uninsured motorist coverage in **a** third manner, St. Paul issued an excess automobile liability insurance policy covering Budget above the underlying limits of \$100,000 **up** to \$900,000 for each occurrence. (R. 135-47). The **excess** insurance policy contained an uninsured/underinsured motorist exclusion endorsement, which endorsement was signed by an officer of Budget. (R. **136**, 145). This endorsement reads:

#### UNINSURED MOTORIST EXCLUSION

It is hereby understood and agreed that no insurance is afforded hereunder for Uninsured/Underinsured Motorist.

(R. **130**, 145, 156).

An affidavit was filed by Martin Hernandez, the Director of Corporate Insurance for Budget in support of the motion for a summary judgment, (R. 135-36). Mr. Hernandez stated, <u>inter mim</u>, that 1) Budget is a self-insurer; 2) Budget rejected uninsured motorist coverage as a self-insurer; [pursuant to a letter dated September 29, 1983 to the Bureau of Financial Responsibility, Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles]; and 3) that St. Paul's excess third-party liability policy contained an uninsured/underinsured motorist exclusion. (R. 135-38),

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Turning to the <u>Morpurgo</u> case, the issue was whether a rental car company was required to give notice to the renter that it was a self-insurer and did not intend to provide uninsured motorist coverage.

The rental company's standard form contract contained a provision under which the rental company was to obtain and maintain insurance on the rented vehicle in the amount of \$100,000/ \$300,000 for bodily injury/property damage without any specific agreement to provide any other insurance. Unbeknownst *to* the renter at the time the contract was signed, the rental company had qualified as a self-insurer under the Florida Financial Responsibility Law, and had executed and filed with the Florida Insurance Commissioner a notice of rejection of uninsured motorist coverage. The renter's passenger, Morpurgo, was injured in an accident involving an uninsured motorist.

The First District in <u>Morpurgo</u> held that the rental agency **was** not required to give notice to the lessee that the company was a self-insurer and did not provide uninsured motorist coverage.

The Third District in <u>Guardado v. Greyhound Rent-A-</u> <u>Car, Inc.</u>, <u>supra</u>, held that a self-insured automobile lessor could effectively waive uninsured motorist coverage and that waiver was effective against the lessee, even though it was not communicated to the lessee.

In both <u>Guardado</u> and <u>Morpurgo</u> the appellate courts pointed out that the problem of uncommunicated waivers of

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uninsured motorist coverage is one for legislative action and not judicial fiat. <u>Guardado</u> at 512; <u>Morpurgo</u> at 719; <u>Kohly v. Royal</u> <u>Indemnity Company</u>, **190** So.2d 819, 822 (Fla. **3d** DCA **1966)**, cert. den. **200** So.2d 813 (Fla. **1967)**.

Here, the position of Budget is much stronger in that Budget gave express notice to the decedent that the insurance coverage it was providing pursuant to paragraph numbered 7 did not apply to damages caused to any person, including the renter and driver by an uninsured motorist or uninsured vehicle. <u>Cf.</u> <u>MacKenzie v. Avis Rent-A-Car System, Inc</u>., 369 So.2d 647 (F1a. 3d DCA 1979).

Quite simply, the Third District overlooked the letter rejecting uninsured motorist coverage under Budget's Certificate of Self-Insurance. (R. 138; BA. 7). Budget, as a self-insurer, and owner of the motor vehicles in question, had rejected uninsured motorist coverage.

Based on the foregoing reasons and authorities, the petitioner respectfully requests the Court to quash the decision of the Third District. THE THIRD DISTRICT COMMITTED REVERSIBLE ERROR BY FINDING THE RENTAL AGREEMENT WAS AMBIGUOUS ON THE ISSUE OF WHETHER OR NOT UNINSURED MOTORIST COVERAGE WAS BEING OFFERED TO THE RENTER.

The face of the rental agreement reflects that the deceased paid a premium for "damage waiver" insurance and for "personal insurance" with a \$150,000 accident benefit as a separate certificate of described in insurance which is "available on request." (R. 31; BA. 5). The Third District stated there is another provision on the reverse side of the agreement declaring that the insurance described on the front does not include uninsured motorist coverage. (R. 32, 174; BA. 6).

Notwithstanding that the rental contract was unambiguous and that Budget had rejected uninsured motorist coverage, the Third District in order to vitiate the agreement, stated the following:

> Although a provision on the reverse side of the agreement declares that the insurance described on the front **does** not include uninsured motorist coverage, and that it is the entire agreement between the parties, that language is qualified by another provision which nullifies its conclusive effect where an alteration is agreed to by Budget in writing, or the paragraph or portions of the paragraph are unlawful or in conflict with public policy.

(R. 174-75; BA. 2-3).

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Turning first to the statement by the Third District that the conclusive effect of the provision that there is no uninsured motorist coverage being qualified by another provision where an alteration is agreed to by Budget in writing, is simply not supportable under the facts and circumstances of this case.

The provision on the reverse side of the rental agreement provides:

This paragraph 7 constitutes the entire agreement between BUDGET and the Renter and driver regarding the terms and conditions of the insurance provided by BUDGET to the Renter and driver and no alteration thereof shall be valid unless agreed *to* by BUDGET in writing.

(R, 174-75; BA. 6)

Thus, the unambiguous language of the rental agreement that insurance coverage is not provided for injuries caused by an uninsured motorist or motor vehicle may be altered, but only if agreed to in writing by Budget. (R. 174-75; **BA 6**).

There is not a scintilla of evidence oral or written of any agreement by Budget to alter the exclusion of uninsured motorist coverage.

Although a written contract may be modified by a subsequent oral agreement, the party alleging modification, has the burden to prove the modification. <u>Bella Vista, Inc. v. Interior</u> <u>& Exterior Specialties Co., Inc</u>., 436 So.2d 1107, 1108 (Fla. 4th DCA 1983); <u>Newkirk Const. v. Gulf County</u>, 366 So.2d 813, 815 (Fla. 1st DCA 1979). Again, there is no allegation of a modification of the rental contract concerning uninsured motorist coverage, and there is not a scintilla of evidence to prove any modification of the Budget rental agreement, either orally or in writing.

The Third District attempts again to state that the conclusive language that there is no uninsured motorist coverage is nullified by the language in the contract stating:

If any provisions of this paragraph **[on** insurance] shall be found to be unlawful, unenforceable, or contrary to public policy, then that portion of this paragraph which is unlawful, unenforceable or contrary to public policy shall be modified to provide the minimum amount of insurance coverage necessary to comply with the law or public policy

(**R. 32**, 174, 175; BA. 6).

There is nothing in this record and no holding by the Third District that the exclusion of uninsured motorist coverage in the rental agreement was unlawful, unenforceable, or contrary to public policy.

Therefore, the Third District's holding that there is a material issue of fact whether the lessee purchased, or had good reason to believe that he was purchasing a policy which would provide benefits in the event of a collision with an uninsured vehicle is void of merit.

It should be noted also that personal accident insurance in the amount of \$150,000 does not constitute automobile liability insurance. Therefore, it is not necessary *to* produce the personal accident insurance policy in support of the summary

- 19 -

judgment simply because respondent contends that personal accident insurance "could include uninsured motorist coverage." (R. 175; BA. 3).

Quite plainly, if Budget, owner of the motor vehicles, can be held responsible for the payment of uninsured motorist coverage, where Budget rejected said coverage with the State; where Budget rejected said coverage in its excess liability policy; and where Budget expressly provided in its rental agreement that the insurance coverage does not apply to damages caused by an uninsured motorist or an uninsured motor vehicle, the provision for rejection of uninsured motorist coverage set forth in the statute has been repealed by judicial fiat.

Accordingly, the decision of the Third District should be quashed.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing reasons and authorities, the decision of the Third District should be quashed.

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Respectfully submitted,

DUBE' and WRIGHT, P.A. Suite 2608, New World Tower 100 N. Biscayne Boulevard Miami, Florida 33132 (305) 374-7472 Attorneys for Petitioner By

RICHARD M. GALE, Of Counsel

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## IN THE SUPREME COURT OF FLORIDA

CASE NO. 76,800

DIVERSIFIED SERVICES, INC., a foreign corporation, d/b/a BUDGET RENT-A-CAR OF MIAMI, INC., a Florida corporation, and PALM BEACH DODGE, INC. a Florida corporation,

Petitioners,

\_\_\_\_\_

vs.

ALIDA AVILA, as Personal Representataive of the Estate of EULOGIO AVILA, Deceased,

Respondent.

**PETITIONERS' APPENDIX** 

DUBE' and WRIGHT, P.A. Suite 2608, New World Tower 100 N. Biscayne Boulevard Miami, Florida 33132 (305) 374-7472

RICHARD M. GALE, OF COUNSEL

Florida Bar No. 027382

Attorneys for Petitioners

NOT FINAL UNTIL TIME EXPIRES TO FILE REHEARING MOTION AND, IF FILED, DISPOSED OF.

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF APPEAL

OF FLORIDA

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THIRD DISTRICT

JULY TERM, A.D. 1990

## ALIDA AVILA as personal representative of the Estate of EUGLOGIO AVILA, deceased, Appellant,

vs.

CASE NO. 89-1971

DIVERSIFIED SERVICES, INC., a \*\* foreign corporation d/b/a., a \*\* BUDGET RENT-A-CAR OF MIAMI, INC.,\*\* a Florida corporation; PALM BEACH\*\* DODGE, INC., a Florida corporation; UNIVERSAL CASUALTY

INSURANCE COMPANY IN A INSURANCE \*\* GUARANTY ASSOCIATION; LILLIE M. COLLIER; EDWARD EARL CHILDRESS; \*\* and ST. PAUL FIRE AND MARINE INSURANCE COMPANY, a foreign corporation, \*\*

Appellants.

Opinion filed July 17, 1990.

An Appeal from the Circuit Court for Dade County, Mario P. Goderich, Judge.

Wilson & Rodriguez and Carlos A. Rodriguez (Fort Lauderdale), for Appellant.

Dube and Wright and Richard M. Gale, for Appellants.

Before HUBBART, FERGUSON and LEVY, JJ.

PER CURIAM.

Eulogio Avila entered into an Automobile Rental Agreement with Budget Rent-A-Car of Miami, Inc. He was fatally

BA-1

injured when his rented vehicle collided with an uninsured automobile. Alida Avila, wife of the deceased and personal representative of his estate, brought this action against the lessor alleging entitlement to uninsured motorist benefits or, alternatively, that the lessor sold liability insurance to the without offering uninsured motorist deceased coverage in violation of section 627.727(1), Florida Statutes (1989). Construing the policy, in the absence of supporting affidavits or other evidence, the trial court entered a summary judgment for the defendants. We reverse.

Two issues are raised by the appellant: (1) Whether the lessor, a self-insurer who sold insurance coverage to the deceased, was required to offer uninsured motorist coverage up to the limits of liability coverage pursuant to section 627.727(1), Florida Statutes and (2) whether the contract drafted by the lessor for the rental and insurance coverage was ambiguous on the coverage issue, thus precluding a summary judgment without a consideration of parol evidence.

The face of the Rental Agreement reflects that the deceased paid a premium for "Damage Waiver" insurance and for "Personal Accident Insurance" as described in a separate certificate of insurance which is "available on request." Although a provision on the reverse side of the agreement declares that the insurance described on the front does not include uninsured motorist coverage, and that it is the entire agreement between the parties, that language is qualified by another provision which nullifies *its* conclusive effect where an alteration *is* agreed *to* 

-2-

BA - 2

by Budget in writing, or the paragraph or portions of the paragraph are unlawful or in conflict with public policy.

Avila contends first that the Rental Agreement is ambiguous because Personal Accident Insurance in the amount of \$150,000-for which a premium is charged--is provided on the front of the agreement, and the coverage could include uninsured motorist coverage. The certificate of insurance was not produced by the lessor in support of its summary judgment motion. A second contention is that the lessor, as an admitted self-insurer, is held to all the obligations of an insurer including a statutory duty to offer uninsured motor vehicle coverage as part of the sale of liability insurance.

The lessor responds that (1) paragraph seven of the agreement expresses in clear terms that there is no coverage for damages caused by an uninsured motorist or an uninsured\_motor vehicle, (2) it did not sell liability coverage, (3) the lessor's rejection of uninsured motorist coverage in its excess policy with St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company was effective to deny any uninsured motorist coverage to the deceased-lessee, and (4) the \$150,000 Personal Accident Insurance purchased by the deceased was a health insurance policy.

As already noted, the first response relies on qualified language in the policy. There is a material issue of fact whether the lessee purchased, or had good reason to believe that he was purchasing, a policy that would provide benefits in the event of a collision with an uninsured vehicle. There is also a legal issue, not specifically addressed by the trial court,

-3-

BA-3

whether the lessor, as a self-insurer up to the first \$100,000, is insulated from a duty to provide uninsured motorist coverage to its lessee by virtue of a rejection of such coverage with its excess carrier. This court's opinion in <u>Guardado v. Greyhound</u> <u>Rent-A-Car, Inc.</u>, 340 So.2d 510 (Fla. 3d DCA 1976), relied on by the lessor, does not answer the question.

In MacKenzie v. Avis Rent-A-Car Sys., Inc., 369 So.2d 647 (Fla. 3d DCA 1979), we held that where there is a reference in the rental agreement to another policy providing coverage without a sufficient identity of the policy, a defendant is not entitled to a summary judgment on the basis of what may or may not be a covered loss by the terms of the referenced policy. <u>See also</u> <u>Riccio v. Allstate Ins. Co.</u>, 357 So.2d 420 (Fla. 3d DCA 1978)(in light of evidence that the plaintiff sought to be "fully covered" in purchase of insurance, a fact question remained for the jury on whether the defendant had complied with statute requiring that uninsured motorist coverage be provided).

Reversed and remanded for further consistent proceedings.

BA-4

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	3. The following restrictions are enimulative and each shall apply to every use, operation or driving of vehicle. Under no circumstances shall vehicle be used, operated or driven by any person;		
	(a) For the transportation of persons or property for hire; or (b) Who has given BUDGET a failse name, age or address; or (c) in any race, speed test or contest or to any illegal pirtpose; or	*	
	(d) To propel, push or tow any vehicle or trailer; or (e) While under the influence bi intoxicants or narcotics; or (f) Where the adameter of vehicle has been tampered with or disconnected; or	. * *	
	(g) By any person other than (1) the Renter who signed this agreement, or (2) any additional Benter who signed this agreement. 3. Renter will pay BUDGET on demand all charges including, but not limited to, for time, mileage (as determined by factory installed odometer)	A	
	3. Henter will pay (SUDGE 1 on demand all characs including, bit not inited to, for inite, multiple (as determined by factory instance domineer) minimums, service, Damage Waiver, applicable taxes or other charges entered on the reverse side hereof. Renter is responsible, and will reimburse BUDGET upon demand, for all toss or danage whicksoever land regardless bit weightprice) to vehicle, it's equipment and tools. If Renter has directed that signification of a company, and upon being billed they shall fail to make payment. Benter will upon demand by BUDGET, promotly pay said charges.	· · · · ·	I
	4. Benter or the driver of vehicle shall in no event be deemed the agent or employee of BUDGET in any manner or for any purpose whatsoever.		
	5. BUDGET shall not be liable for loss of, or damage to, any property left, stored or transported by Renter or any other person in or upon any premises of BUDGET, any service vehicle, or any rental vehicle, either before or after the return thereof to BUDGET, whicher or not said loss or damage was caused by, or related to, negligence of BUDGET, its agents or employees. Renter additiones all risk of such loss or damage and waives all claims against. SUDGET by reason thereof, and Renter agrees to hold BUDGET harmless from, are to defend and indemnity HUDGE Fagainst, all claims based upon or or arising out of such loss or damage.	-	
~	6 Renter appress to lock the ignition and doors to said vehicle, secure all windows, and remove the keys from the vehicle when it is unattended.		
	7. EUDGET will provide personal injury protection benefits with the maximul educatible allowed by law (should personal injury protection benefits be required inder the taws of the state wherein the vehicle was rented) and thenter does berefy agree to accept said coverage. BUDGET also agrees to provide, to Renter and driver, hability insurance coverage with limits of hability equal to the minimum limits required by the financial responsibility taw of the state in which the vehicle is rotited. As a condition of this coverage. Renter and driver agree to comply with, and be bound by, all terms, conditions, including is noticed to said coverage. BUDGET every process, plearing or piper of any kind related to said coverage. BuDGET every process, plearing or piper of any kind relating to any claim such or proceeding received by Renter or driver in connection with any accident or occurrence. Said coverage further requires that Renter and driver vial not aid or abot the assertion of any claim, and shall concurate with SUDGET and insurer in the investigation and delense of any claim or said.		
ŀ	In states where permitted by law or regulation (and to the extent so permitted) the liability coverage described above may be afforded, subject to the superforms, conditions, restrictions and limitations berein-described, under a bond or self-insurance arrangement in fieu of, or in combination with an utging bite liability insurance velicy.	يەن ا بە	
	<ul> <li>The insurance coverage referred to in this paragraph 7 does not apply:</li> <li>The damages coverage referred to an this paragraph 7 does not apply.</li> <li>The damages coverage referred to any nerson, including Benter and driver, by an uninsured nuclorist or uninsured motor vehicle, or for medical expenses incurrined by presons sectanting injuries while rading in or on, entering or leaving. The relief vehicle, or , ,</li> <li>(b) The any obligation for which Benter or the driver of vehicle, or , any insurance currier as his insuran, may be hold hable under any worker's compensation, unemployment compensation, or disability benefits law, or any similar law; or</li> <li>(c) To any isobility assumed by Benter or by any driver of vehicle under any contract of whatsoever nature, or</li> <li>(d) To damage or destruction of property owned by, repited to, in charge of, or transported by. Benter or the driver; or</li> <li>(e) While said vehicle is used, driven or operated in violation of the provisions of paragraph 2 (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (d), (erg.), (e), hereof</li> <li>(f) Sparagraph 7 constitutes the online any contract of two for any driver or (d) the provisions of paragraph 2 (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (d), hereof</li> </ul>		
	paragraph shall be found to be unlawful, unenforceable, or contrary to public policy, then that person of this paragraph which is unlawful, unenforceable, or contrary to public policy shall be notified to privide the noninnum amount of insurance coverage necessary to comply with the law or public noticy, and the remainder of this paragraph shall remain in full force and effect.		
	8: Penter aarees to pay all costs, excensely and attorney's fees incurred by PUDGE1 in collecting sums due or in regaining possession of vehicle or in enforcing or recovering any damages, losses or claims, analitist Benter.	*	
	9. If vehicle has been rented by any bettern who has given to BUDGET a false or a fictitious name, adjitess, or business affiliation, or if renter fails or refuses to return vehicle to BUDGET within 48 hours following demand uppintentor by BUDGET (which demand shall be deemed delivorei to Renter, by the denosit of a registore or to critited lefter in any U.S. mail box addressed its entitier reduces or business address of Renter, as shown on the reverse side hereoft, Benter shall be conclusively presumed to be in unlawful passession of said vehicle and under such circumstances. Renter are reversed and under such circumstances. Renter are non-order vehicles and discharges IUDGET (review) and and all claims, suits or demands of every kind or nature whatsoever arising out of, or relating to, any all-resides areast, false imprisonment, false dotention, defamation of character, as shown on pertaining vehicle, or arising out of, or relating to any other areast of Renter, or any every non-out of, or relating to, the issuance of a warrant for the arrest of Renter, or any every non-order to effect the return of vehicle, or the collection of character is assault, many false during to, any all-resided to the intervence of a warrant for the arrest of Renter, or any every non-order to effect the return of vehicle, or the collection of accurate site during to any other accurate site with the return of vehicle, or the collection of accurates and by DUDGET pursuant to the terms of this Bental Agreement.	ی ای ایک ایک	
	10. Conter shall be responsible for, and shall pay all fines, populties and forfeitures imposed for parking or traffic violations, including reasonable attorney's fees, which are incurred while the vehicle is rented to the Renter.	<b>ال</b> ي ۲ . ۲	
	11 No rights of BUDGET under this Bental Agreement may be waived unless in writing and signed or initialed by BUDGET.	•	
	<ol> <li>VEHICLE SHALL NOT BE DRIVEN OUTSIDE THE STATE OF FLORIDA, OR OTHERWISE REMOVED.</li> <li>(a) It vehicle is given out of the State of Florida, a charge of \$50 (lifty central period armine for all miles driven during the entire rental period will be due PUBGET. The other exhibits he in addition to the rates agreed upon by Renter at time of rental.</li> </ol>		
	13 This Asceniest shall be construed in accordance with and shall be governed by, the laws of the State wherein the vehicle was rented. Any expression hereof found to be invalid, unenforceable in vitigal shall be severable and shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions hereof.	1	
	FOR SERVICE OR IN CASE OF ACCIDENT CALL 305-871-3053 AUTHORIZATION MUST BE OBTAINED PRIOR TO REPAIRS IT IS IMPORTANT FOR YOUR PROTECTION THAT YOU DO NOT SURRENDER THIS COPY. This is your only record of this transaction. If payment is made in cash, this is your receipt. This copy serves as vehicle registration while you are in possession of the vehicle. YOU MUST PRESENT THIS COPY OF RENTAL AGREEMENT AT TIME OF CHECK-IN	•	

BA-6

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PREDDY, KUTNER & HARDY ATTORNEYS AT LAW

L NORTON BULODY ANNO KUTHEN G. JACK HAHDY LOWARG G. HUBINGER TIMOTHY G, ANAGNOST STEPHEN T, BROWN JOHN A. THUMPSON, JA. GLENN P. FALK MICHAEL J. PARENTI, IIT JOEL A. HAPLAN CHARLES W, HICE HOWAHU N. CHERNA PAUL FREEDMAN G WILLIAM DISSETT MANN D. TUCKEN HOBIN 5, TAYLON

TWELFTH FLOOR CONCORD UILDING 66 WEST FLAGLER STREET MIAMI, FLORIDA 33130 MIAMI (305) 358-8200 BROWARD (305) 452-6377

September 29, 1983

## CERTIFIED MAIL #P 273 422 574 RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

Mr. Ralph Cobb, Jr. Bureau Chief, Financial Responsibility Department of Highway Safety & Motor Vehicles Neil Kirkman Building Tallahassee, Florida 32301

> Re: Diversified Services, Inc. d/b/a Budget Rent-A-Car of Miami Diversified Services, Inc. d/b/a Budget Rent-A-Car of West Palm Beach Self-Insurance Certificate #304 Our File: 14967 ER

Dear Mr. Cobb:

Pursuant to Florida Statute 627.727, please accept this letter as formal rejection by Diversified Services, Inc. d/b/a Budget Rent-A-Car of Miami and Diversified Services, Inc. d/b/a Budget Rent-A-Car of West Palm Beach of uninsured motorist coverage (Self-Insurance Certificate #304).

We would appreciate you issuing a new certificate which reflects the abovereferenced rejection of uninsured motorist coverage and forwarding it directly to:

> Mr. Ronald E. Lazarus **General Manager**, Florida Operations Diversified Services, Inc. d/b/a Budget Rent-A-Car P. O. Box 592263 Miami, Florida 33159

If there nrc any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Thank you for your cooperation and attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,

FOWARD G. RURINOFF

Edward G. Rubinoff

EGR/lac

ee.

Ronald E. Lazarus & THIS COPY FOR

BA-1