

MISSISSIPPI RULES OF CIVIL PROCEDURE

Adopted Effective January 1, 1982

RULE 60. RELIEF FROM JUDGMENT OR ORDER

(a) Clerical Mistakes. Clerical mistakes in judgments, orders, or other parts of the record and errors therein arising from oversight or omission may be corrected by the court at any time on its own initiative or on the motion of any party and after such notice, if any, as the court orders up until the time the record is transmitted by the clerk of the trial court to the appellate court and the action remains pending therein. Thereafter, such mistakes may be so corrected only with leave of the appellate court.

(b) Mistakes; Inadvertence; Newly Discovered Evidence; Fraud, etc. On motion and upon such terms as are just, the court may relieve a party or his legal representative from a final judgment, order, or proceeding for the following reasons:

- (1) fraud, misrepresentation, or other misconduct of an adverse party;
- (2) accident or mistake;
- (3) newly discovered evidence which by due diligence could not have been discovered in time to move for a new trial under Rule 59(b);
- (4) the judgment is void;
- (5) the judgment has been satisfied, released, or discharged, or a prior judgment upon which it is based has been reversed or otherwise vacated, or it is no longer equitable that the judgment should have prospective application;
- (6) any other reason justifying relief from the judgment.

The motion shall be made within a reasonable time, and for reasons (1), (2) and (3) not more than six months after the judgment, order, or proceeding was entered or taken. A motion under this subdivision does not affect the finality

of a judgment or suspend its operation. Leave to make the motion need not be obtained from the appellate court unless the record has been transmitted to the appellate court and the action remains pending therein. This rule does not limit the power of a court to entertain an independent action to relieve a party from a judgment, order, or proceeding, or to set aside a judgment for fraud upon the court. Writs of coram nobis, coram vobis, audita querela, and bills of review and bills in the nature of a bill of review, are abolished. The procedure for obtaining any relief from a judgment shall be by motion as prescribed in these rules or by an independent action and not otherwise.

Comment

Rule 60 (a) prescribes an efficient method for correcting clerical errors appearing in judgments, orders, or other parts of a trial record; errors of a more substantial nature must be corrected in accordance with MRCP 59(e) or 60(b). Thus, the Rule 60(a) procedure can be utilized only to make the judgment or other document speak the truth; it cannot be used to make it say something other than was originally pronounced. See, e. g., *West Va. Oil & Gas Co. v. Breece Lumber Co.*, 213 F.2d 704 (5th Cir. 1964). This procedure accords with prior Mississippi practice. See Miss. Code Ann. § 11-1-19 (1972); *Ralph v. Prester*, 28 Miss. 744 (1855) (this statute applies solely to the correction of judgments and decrees and cannot be extended so as to supply a judgment never rendered); *Rawson v. Blanton*, 204 Miss. 851, 35 So.2d 65 (1948) (judgment which is erroneous as to plaintiff's name involves merely a clerical error which may be corrected in the supreme court without reversal); *Healy v. Just*,

53 Miss. 547 (1876) (there is no time limit within which a correction to a judgment may be made); *Wilson v. Town of Handsboro*, 99 Miss. 252, 54 So. 845 (1911) (all courts have inherent power to correct clerical errors at any time and to make the judgment entered correspond to that rendered).

Under Rule 60 (a), evidence dehors the record may be considered in making the correction; this also accords with prior Mississippi practice. See *Wilson v. Town of Handsboro*, supra (In making a determination as to whether the correction should be permitted, any evidence of parol or other kind is competent which throws material light on the truth of the matter. "The object of every litigation is to obtain . . . a final determination of the rights of the

parties. That determination is invariably what the judges direct, and not invariably what the clerks record. The power of the court to make the record express the judgment of the court with the utmost accuracy ought not to be restricted." See also 6A Moore's Federal Practice ¶¶ 60.01-.08 (1971); 11 Wright & Miller, Federal Practice and Procedure, Civil §§ 2851-2856 (1973).

Rule 60(b) specifies certain limited grounds upon which final judgments may be attacked, even after the normal procedures of motion for new trial and appeal are no longer available. The rule simplifies and amalgamates the procedural devices available in prior practice. Prior to MRCP 60(b), Mississippi recognized the following procedural devices for relief from judgments, other than by appeal:

Statute for Correction of Misrecitals, Miss. Code Ann. § 11-1-19 (1972). This statute, referred to in the preceding discussion of MRCP 60(a), *supra*, applied solely to corrections of judgments and decrees and could not be extended to supply a decree or judgment never rendered. See *Ralph v. Prester*, *supra*; *Rawson v. Blanton*, *supra*; *V. Griffith*, Mississippi Chancery Practice, § 634 (2d ed. 1950).

Writ of Error Coram Nobis. Generally, this device was for review of errors of fact, not of law, which substantially affected the validity of the judgment but which were not discovered until after rendition of the judgment. See *Petition of Broom*, 251 Miss. 25, 168 So.2d 44 (1964). It was instituted as an independent action.

Bill of Review for Error Apparent. This device was an original bill, and was filed and docketed as such. It cured a material error of law apparent on the face of the decree and the pleadings and proceedings on which it is based, exclusive of the evidence. However, Miss. Code Ann. § 11-5-121 (1972) placed a two-year limitation upon the period of time after the judgment was entered for filing the bill. See *Brown v. Wesson*, 114 Miss. 216, 74 So. 831 (1917); *V. Griffith*, *supra* § 635.

Bill of Review Based on Newly Discovered Evidence. Leave of court was required for the filing of a bill of review based on newly discovered evidence, but after leave was obtained the bill was considered as part of the action it sought to

challenge. See *V. Griffith*, supra §§ 636, 441. The two-year limitations of Miss. Code Ann. § 11-5-121 (1972) applied.

Bill in the Nature of a Bill of Review. This bill was available as an original action for vacating judgments tainted by fraud, surprise, accident, or mistake as to facts, not to law. See *Corinth State Bank v. Nixon*, 144 Miss. 674 110 So. 430 (1926); *City of Starkville v. Thompson*, 243 So.2d 54 (Miss. 1971); *V. Griffith*, supra § 642. This device did not require leave of court for filing, nor was it limited to two years' availability. Cf. Bill of Review for Error Apparent and Bill of Review Based on Newly Discovered Evidence, supra.

Motions for relief under MRCP 60(b) are filed in the original action, rather than as independent actions themselves. Further, motions seeking relief from judgments tainted by fraud, misrepresentation, or other misconduct of an adverse party, MRCP 60(b)(1), accident or mistake, 60(b)(2), or newly discovered evidence, 60(b)(3), must be made within six months after the judgment or order was entered. Aside from these two features, Rule 60(b) does not depart significantly from traditional Mississippi practice with respect to relief from judgments, but it dispenses with the arcane writs and technical requirements of prior practice. Importantly, a Rule 60(b) motion does not operate as a stay or supersedeas; further, in the courts governed by these rules, Rule 60 supersedes the devices discussed above for relief from judgments and orders.