

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF PITTSBURG COUNTY
STATE OF OKLAHOMA

RECEIVED AND FILED
IN DISTRICT COURT
PITTSBURG COUNTY, OKLA
MAR 02 2018
BY CINDY LEDFORD
DEPUTY

DIANNA WALDRIDGE, surviving
spouse of PARKER WALDRIDGE,
deceased,

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Plaintiff,

v.

CASE NO. CG 2018-42

RED MOUNTAIN OPERATING, LLC,
RED MOUNTAIN ENERGY, LLC,
PATTERSON-UTI DRILLING
COMPANY, LLC, AND PATTERSON-
UTI ENERGY, INC.,

Defendants.

PETITION

Plaintiff Dianna Waldridge, surviving spouse of Parker Waldridge, deceased, respectfully states for these causes of action against these Defendants as follows:

INTRODUCTION

1. On January 22, 2018, Mr. Parker Waldridge lost his life when an uncontrolled release of gas during rotary drilling operations ignited, resulting in a catastrophic Fire and Explosion (the "Explosion") which erupted into flames on the Patterson-UTI Rig #219 (the "Patterson Rig," "Rig," or "Rig #219") in Pittsburg County, Oklahoma. Sadly, four other people also died. At the time of the Explosion, Defendants Patterson-UTI Drilling Company, LLC and Patterson-UTI Energy, Inc. (collectively, "Patterson") directed and controlled these rotary drilling operations which were being performed using this Patterson Rig at the Pryor Trust 0718, Well No. 1H-9 (the "Well"). At all times material, Defendants Red Mountain Operating, LLC and Red Mountain Energy, LLC (collectively, "Red Mountain") was the leaseholder and the operator of the Well.

2. The Explosion which tragically killed Parker Waldrige marked the deadliest oilfield disaster since the Transocean Deepwater Horizon oil and gas well blowout and Explosion which occurred in the Gulf of Mexico on April 20, 2010. Not unlike that disaster, this tragedy was preventable had safety been properly managed and controlled during these rotary drilling operations. According to federal workplace safety data, Patterson is no stranger to workplace fatalities—having the second worst worker fatality rate among its peers in the industry. Patterson has been cited more than 110 times for serious safety violations in the past ten years and, on at least one occasion, has been told by federal regulators that its lack of concern for safety created a seriously dangerous environment for its workers. It would appear this tradition was permitted to continue in Quinton, Oklahoma on Rig #219, and five souls were lost as a result.

THE PARTIES

3. Plaintiff Dianna Waldrige is the surviving spouse of Parker Waldrige, deceased. Mrs. Waldrige is a resident of Crescent, Oklahoma and a citizen of the State of Oklahoma. Prior to his death, Parker Waldrige was a resident of Crescent, Oklahoma and a citizen of the State of Oklahoma.

4. Upon information and belief, at the time of filing, Defendant Red Mountain Operating, LLC, is a limited liability company with one or members that reside in Oklahoma. Its Registered Agent is Koray Baker, 5637 N. Classen Blvd., Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73118.

5. Upon information and belief, at the time of filing, Defendant Red Mountain Energy, LLC, is a limited liability company in the State of Oklahoma, with one or more members that reside in Oklahoma. Its Registered Agent is Len Cason, 201 Robert S. Kerr Avenue, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73102.

6. Upon information and belief, at the time of filing, Defendant Patterson-UTI Drilling

Company, LLC, is a limited liability company in Texas, with headquarters and principal place of business located at 10713 West Sam Houston Parkway North, Suite 800, Houston, Texas 77064. Its Registered Agent is CT Corporation System, 1999 Bryan Street, Suite 900, Dallas, Texas 75201.

7. Upon information and belief, at the time of filing, Defendant Patterson-UTI Energy, Inc. is a Delaware corporation, with its headquarters and principal place of business located at 10713 West Sam Houston Parkway North, Suite 800, Houston, Texas 77064. Its Registered Agent is CT Corporation System, 1999 Bryan Street, Suite 900, Dallas, Texas 75201.

VENUE AND JURISDICTION

8. This is a wrongful death action resulting from the death of Parker Waldrige brought by his surviving spouse pursuant to 12 O.S. §§ 1053-54. The Explosion that took Mr. Waldrige's life occurred in Pittsburg County, Oklahoma, which falls within the jurisdiction of the District Court of Pittsburg County for the State of Oklahoma. As such, venue is proper in this county pursuant to 12 O.S. § 134.

9. The amount in controversy exceeds the sum of \$75,000.00, exclusive of interest and costs.

10. Patterson conducts rotary drilling operations throughout Oklahoma, as well as the United States and Canada. By voluntarily engaging in rotary drilling operations in Oklahoma, Patterson purposefully availed itself of the privilege of doing business in Oklahoma. The tort claims that form the basis of this lawsuit are a direct result of the activities Patterson purposefully directed to Oklahoma. As such, Patterson is subject to this Court's jurisdiction.

11. Because complete diversity of parties is lacking, as at least one Defendant is a forum-state defendant by virtue of its status as a Oklahoma business entity, jurisdiction is

appropriate with this Court.

BACKGROUND FACTS

12. On January 22, 2018, at the time of the Explosion, Patterson was in the process of drilling the Well, which was operated by Red Mountain. Upon information and belief, Red Mountain was responsible for this Well's design and the Well's Drilling Program (the "Plan"). Red Mountain formulated the Plan which required Patterson to drill to a total depth of approximately 17,500 feet. Patterson, as the Drilling Contractor, provided its Patterson Rig #219 and supplied its Rig Crews to properly and competently operate the Rig during all phases of these rotary drilling operations. As the Drilling Contractor, Patterson had direct control over all rotary drilling operations and all of the necessary and required emergency responses for subsurface conditions with the regard to controlling uncontrolled flows from the Well ("Well Control").

13. Shortly before the Explosion occurred, Patterson had drilled to a depth of approximately 13,500 feet when it was decided to remove or pull ("Trip-Out or "Tripping-Out") the entire assembly of pipe, its bottom-hole assembly ("BHA") and the Rock Bit ("Bit"), i.e. (the "Drill String") out of the Well.

14. Patterson had removed the entire drill String from the Well and removed the Bit at around 8:25 AM on the morning of January 22, 2018.

15. Around that same time, Mr. Waldrige had just started his shift ("Tour") and had made his way up to the "Doghouse"; a building located atop the Rig Floor. It is believed that the Patterson crew was already engaged in using the Rig's Hoisting System to Trip-Out of the Well prior to Mr. Waldrige starting his shift.

16. As a Wellsite Consultant who reported the progress of the Well to Red Mountain, it was not Mr. Waldrige's practice to regularly be in the Doghouse, rather, Mr. Waldrige would

spend a substantial amount of his time in the Wellsite Consultant's Trailer which was on the Well's Site (the "Location").

17. Upon information and belief, while Mr. Walldridge was present in the Doghouse, and as Patterson's Rig Crew operated their Rig to conduct these Tripping-Out operations, an uncontrolled release of gas occurred from the Well under substantial pressure.

18. Ordinarily, when a Well begins to flow on its own in an "uncontrolled" manner, there are warnings that the Rig Crew operating the Rig must recognize. Stacked atop of the Well's equipment used to construct and complete it (the "Wellhead Assembly"); another assembly of high pressure valves (the "Blowout Preventers" or "BOPs") can be used close ("Shut-in") the Well and prevent it from flowing to the surface. It is believed that Rig #219 had three individual BOPs; an Annular Preventer (the "Annular"), a double Ram-Type Preventer (the "Double Ram") and single Ram-Type Preventer (the "Single Ram"). All these BOPs were atop the Wellhead Assembly. The Rig's BOPs can be operated to OPEN or CLOSE from the Rig Floor and/or down on the Ground. When this Well began to flow in an "uncontrolled" manner, Patterson's Rig Crew was obligated to undertake all of the required steps to mitigate it and Shut-In the Well. It is unclear why the Rig's BOPs remained OPEN when indications of uncontrolled flow began to occur.

19. Because of this uncontrolled flow, natural gas was released from the Well and mixed with oxygen in the atmosphere. Ultimately, a flammable mixture of gas and oxygen found an ignition source which was the genesis of this Explosion and Fire. This Explosion rocked the Rig, sending flames fifty feet into the air and consuming the Rig in an inferno. The Fire raged out of control for several hours before the Well could be Shut-In and the flames extinguished. Several failed attempts were made to Shut-In the Well in using the BOPs with no success. Again, it is unclear why the BOPs had not been used or were not used to properly Shut-In the Well before gas

reached the surface and the Explosion subsequently occurred.

20. While the Fire raged, Mr. Waldrige was trapped in the Doghouse along with four other men: Patterson's Tool Pusher, Driller, a Floorhand, and a Directional Driller. Tragically, all five men were burned to death. The resulting Fire was so intense that authorities had to rely on dental records in order to confirm the identities of Mr. Waldrige and these four other men.

21. According to those who knew him best, Mr. Waldrige was a loving father, devoted husband, and dedicated worker. Mr. Waldrige predeceased his wife, Dianna Waldrige, their four daughters, and six grandchildren.

CAUSES OF ACTION

Count One: Negligence – Red Mountain

22. Each of the foregoing paragraphs is incorporated herein for all purposes.

23. At the time of the Explosion, Red Mountain was the Operator of the Well and had entered into Agreements with various Contractors and Subcontractors to perform work on the Well. Red Mountain owed a duty of ordinary care to persons working at the Well, including Mr. Waldrige, to ensure that the working conditions at the Well were safe under all circumstances. Red Mountain failed to use that degree of care, which should be used by an Operator of ordinary prudence under the same or similar circumstances and, as a result, the Explosion and Fire occurred. Red Mountain was also negligent for failing to properly instruct and supervise its employees and/or agents, including Patterson, as described above and further below. This negligence includes, but is not limited to:

- a. Allowing hazardous conditions to exist at the time of the Explosion;
- b. Negligently approving work to be performed by the Contractors, such as Patterson, it provided at the Well; and

c. Failing to hire a Drilling Contractor who was competent to safely perform all rotary drilling operations at the Well.

24. Red Mountain's negligence was a proximate cause of Plaintiff's injuries.

Count Two: Negligence – Patterson

25. Each of the foregoing paragraphs is incorporated herein for all purposes.

26. Patterson was the Drilling Contractor on the Well, supplying the infrastructure and equipment, including the Patterson Rig, trained and competent personnel and other rotary drilling operational resources to operate and control the Rig during rotary drilling operations. Patterson had the most direct control over the drilling operations and emergency response to changing conditions and failed to use ordinary care with respect to its conduct. Patterson failed to use that degree of care, which should be used by a Drilling Contractor of ordinary prudence under the same or similar circumstances. Patterson was also negligent for failing to properly train, instruct, and supervise its employees and/or agents, as described above and further below. This negligence includes, but is not limited to:

- a. Allowing hazardous conditions to evolve, exist, persist and worsen on the Patterson Rig before and at the time of the gas release, Fire and Explosion;
- b. Failing to properly train its employees, and other contractors, working on the Patterson Rig to perform rotary drilling operations safely and appropriately;
- c. Failing to properly supervise the rotary drilling operations being performed on the Patterson Rig at the time of the Fire and Explosion; and
- d. Directing Patterson employees and contractors to perform rotary drilling operations on the Patterson Rig in an unsafe and dangerous manner.

27. Patterson's negligence was a proximate cause of Plaintiff's injuries.

Count Three: Reckless Conduct of All Defendants

28. Each of the foregoing paragraphs is incorporated herein for all purposes.

29. The wrongful conduct specifically alleged hereinabove (as well as other acts and omissions, which will be revealed during the discovery process), also constitutes reckless disregard for the rights of others. By reason of such conduct, Plaintiff is entitled and therefore assert a claim for punitive or exemplary damages in an amount sufficient to punish and deter all Defendants and others like them from such conduct in the future.

Count Four: Wrongful Death – All Defendants

30. Each of the foregoing paragraphs is incorporated herein for all purposes.

31. As a direct and proximate cause of Defendants' negligence described above, Mr. Waldrige died and his surviving spouse has suffered damages.

32. Plaintiff seeks all damages pursuant to 12 O.S. § 1053, including her loss of consortium and the grief, the mental pain and anguish Mr. Waldrige suffered, the pecuniary loss suffered by Mr. Waldrige's survivors, and the grief and loss suffered by Mr. Waldrige's survivors.

DAMAGES

33. Dianna Waldrige, individually and on behalf of the survivors, has suffered and will continue to suffer enormous damages, including:

- a. Extraordinary grief and mental anguish over the loss of her husband, Parker Waldrige;
- b. The loss of future financial support of contributions of money from her husband, Parker Waldrige;

- c. The loss of parental care, training, guidance, or education that would have been forthcoming from Parker Waldridge, to his children;
- d. The loss of consortium and companionship of Parker Waldridge;
- e. The pain and suffering of Parker Waldridge;
- f. The grief and loss suffered by Parker Waldridge's survivors; and
- g. The burial expenses.

34. The wrongful acts and omissions of Defendants were intentional, willful, wanton, malicious, and evidence gross negligence and a reckless disregard of the rights of others, without just cause or excuse, entitling Plaintiff to an award of punitive damages so as to punish Defendants and deter others from engaging in such wrongful conduct. Defendants were either aware or did not care that, under the circumstances, there was a substantial and unnecessary risk that their conduct would cause serious injury to or the death of others, and there was a high probability that their conduct would cause serious harm to or death of another person, such that a jury should give punitive damages with no cap in place for the sake of example and by way of punishing said Defendants and deterring others from engaging in such wrongful conduct.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff Dianna Waldridge, surviving spouse of Parker Waldridge, prays judgment against the Defendants jointly and severally for wrongful death damages, and against the Defendants for exemplary or punitive damages, in an amount in excess of \$75,000.00, together with interest, costs thereon and all other relief as the Court deems just and equitable.

Respectfully submitted,



Reggie N. Whitten, OBA #9576

Michael Burrage, OBA #1350

J. Revell Parrish, OBA #30205

WHITTEN BURRAGE

512 North Broadway Ave., Suite 300

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73102

Telephone: (405) 516-7800

Facsimile: (405) 516-7859

rwhitten@whittenburrage.com

mburrage@whittenburrage.com

rparrish@whittenburrage.com

AND

Michael P. Lyons (*pro hac vice* pending)

Texas State Bar No. 24013074

Christopher J. Simmons (*pro hac vice* pending)

Texas State Bar No. 24058796

Stephen Higdon (*pro hac vice* pending)

Texas State Bar No. 24087719

DEANS & LYONS, LLP

325 N. Saint Paul St., Suite 1500

Dallas, Texas 75201

Telephone: (214) 965-8500

Facsimile: (214) 965-8505

mlyons@deanslyons.com

csimmons@deanslyons.com

shigdon@deanslyons.com

**ATTORNEY'S LIEN CLAIMED
JURY TRIAL DEMANDED**