

Case Brief

Civ Pro f2: Specific in Personam Jurisdiction

Bauer, 2/18/15

Identity of Case

World-Wide Volkswagen v. Woodson, 444 U.S. 286 (1980)

Page 183 of the casebook.

Summary of Facts/Procedural History

WWW sold a car to plaintiffs in NY, who were rear-ended in Oregon on their way back to their home in Arizona. Sued the dealer (and others who were more nationwide) for products liability, the gas tank exploded when they were rear ended and they were seriously burnt. Suit in Oregon (where the witnesses were, where they were hospitalized). WWW makes special appearance to contest personal jurisdiction, Oregon says they have jurisdiction, gets appealed all the way up to SCOTUS.

Statement of the Issue

Does Oregon have personal jurisdiction over a car dealership when a customer purchases a car from them and drives it through an unrelated state?

Holding

No personal jurisdiction.

Reasoning

The plaintiffs main argument was that it was reasonable for WWW to foresee one of their cars going into a different state. Cars are inherently mobile.

But, it is not foreseeability that your product will be used in a state, but foreseeability that you will be sued in a state.

Defendant had no intentional contacts with the state of Oregon, They were a dealership based solely in NY and an importer for vw that solely managed imports for three states in NE. Without intentional contacts, there is no basis for personal jurisdiction.

Evaluation

The plaintiffs also sued the national levels of the corporation. It will work out ok for VW because they can sue for contribution/indemnification more easily than the plaintiffs could.

Hanson v. Denckla is also related: "it is essential in each case that there be some act by which the defendant purposefully availed itself of the privilege of conducting activities within the forum state, thus invoking the benefits and protections of its laws."