A.1 Preliminary Instructions

WHAT A PATENT IS AND HOW ONE IS OBTAINED

This case involves a dispute relating to a United States patent. Before summarizing the positions of the parties and the issues involved in the dispute, let me take a moment to explain what a patent is and how one is obtained.

Patents are granted by the United States Patent and Trademark Office (sometimes called "the PTO"). A valid United States patent gives the patent holder the right [for up to 20 years from the date the patent application was filed] [for 17 years from the date the patent issued] to prevent others from making, using, offering to sell, or selling the patented invention within the United States, or from importing it into the United States, without the patent holder's permission. A violation of the patent holder's rights is called infringement. The patent holder may try to enforce a patent against persons believed to be infringers by a lawsuit filed in federal court.

The process of obtaining a patent is called patent prosecution. To obtain a patent, one must first file an application with the PTO. The PTO is an agency of the Federal Government and employs trained Examiners who review applications for patents. The application includes what is called a "specification," which contains a written description of the claimed invention telling what the invention is, how it works, how to make it, and how to use it. The specification concludes with one or more numbered sentences. These are the patent "claims." If a patent is eventually granted by the PTO, the claims define the boundaries of its protection and give notice to the public of those boundaries.

After the applicant files the application, an Examiner reviews the application to determine whether or not the claims are patentable (appropriate for patent protection) and whether or not the specification adequately describes the invention claimed. In examining a patent application, the Examiner reviews certain information about the state of the technology at the time the application was filed. The PTO searches for and reviews information that is publicly available or that is submitted by the applicant. This information is called "prior art." The Examiner reviews this prior art to determine whether or not the invention is truly an advance over the state of the art at the time. Prior art is defined by law, and I will give you, at a later time during these instructions, specific instructions as to what constitutes prior art. However, in general, prior art includes information that demonstrates the state of technology that existed before the claimed invention was made or before the application was filed. A patent lists the prior art that the Examiner considered; this list is called the "cited references."

After the prior art search and examination of the application, the Examiner informs the applicant in writing of what the Examiner has found and whether the Examiner considers any claim to be patentable and, thus, would be "allowed." This writing from the Examiner is called an "Office Action." If the Examiner rejects the claims, the applicant has an opportunity to respond to the Examiner to try to persuade the Examiner to allow the claims, and to change the claims or to submit new claims. This process may go back and forth for some time until the Examiner is satisfied that the application meets the requirements for a patent and the application issues as a patent, or that the application should be rejected and no patent should issue. Sometimes, patents

are issued after appeals within the PTO or to a court. The papers generated during these communications between the Examiner and the applicant are called the "prosecution history."

The fact that the PTO grants a patent does not necessarily mean that any invention claimed in the patent, in fact, deserves the protection of a patent. For example, the PTO may not have had available to it all other prior art that will be presented to you. In addition, there is the possibility that mistakes were made or that information was overlooked. Examiners have a lot of work to do and no process is perfect. Also, unlike a court proceeding, patent prosecution takes place without input from those who are later alleged to infringe the patent. A person accused of infringement has the right to argue here in federal court that a claimed invention in the patent is invalid because it does not meet the requirements for a patent. It is your job to consider the evidence presented by the parties and determine independently whether or not [alleged infringer] has proven that the patent is invalid.