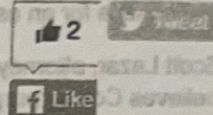


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# It's Coking Vs. Trump: Widow Wants Him To Pay He Damaged Her A.c. Home, She Says In Suit.



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By Amy S. Rosenberg, INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

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**ATLANTIC CITY** — Donald Trump flew in by private 727 from the funeral for Ambassador Pamela Harriman in Washington to face the stubborn widow who has refused for a decade to sell her house to any casino mogul.

Vera Coking had only a few blocks to travel to the courthouse yesterday from the crumbling three-story former boardinghouse in the shadow of Trump Plaza, where she and her daughter still manage to live.

And there they sat in court, Donald and Vera, one nearly as legendary as the other, on opposite sides, taking little swipes at each other whenever possible, like a divorcing couple who are obviously never going to agree on anything.

"She's trying to get more than her property's worth by far," Trump said during a break in the Atlantic County civil trial, in which Coking is suing him and a demolition contractor for allegedly ruining her house. He appeared yesterday under subpoena by Coking's attorneys. "It's a tremendous blight to Atlantic City."

Trump, for one, is not shedding tears for the 70ish Coking. "She's a professional," he said. "She's a professional businessperson in my opinion. But she's really played her cards too long."

An emotional Coking, however, said she would gladly sell the home where she has lived for 35 years if Trump would only offer a fair price.

"If they give me a good price, I'll sell now," said Coking. "But they want it for nothing. It's location, location, location. They want to give me \$250,000. You couldn't even get a condominium for that."

Coking's house on South Columbia Place has been a city landmark since the 1980s, when Penthouse tycoon Bob Guccione, exasperated at her refusal to sell, famously erected a massive steel superstructure right around the house.

Coking says Trump damaged her house when he tore down Guccione's efforts.

"He did it," she said of Trump. "Nobody else is doing it but him. How could it be a blight? How could it? How could it do all that damage? I did it? I went upstairs and broke everything down? He did it, but he doesn't want to admit it."

The trial yesterday only hinted at the real battle going on between Trump and Coking: the so-far unsuccessful attempt by the state to seize her property and two others by power of eminent domain and give them to Trump to use as part of his casino expansion.

In the New Jersey Supreme Court, Coking is now challenging the use of eminent domain to benefit a private developer, a that has drawn national attention and the assistance of a Washington public-interest law firm, the Institute for Justice.

The issue is perhaps the most volatile in the city, where people who hoped to improve their lives by inviting in casinos 20 y ago have instead lost their homes or businesses to casinos and casino-related projects.

Next week, the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority is expected to adopt new regulations regarding condemnation

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