

Widow trumps Donald

Wins court fight to keep N.J. land

By **BILL EGBERT**
and **DAVE GOLDINER**

Daily News Staff Writers

A stubborn Atlantic City widow celebrated a million-dollar win over Donald Trump yesterday.

Vera Coking, a seventysomething homeowner, beat The Donald in court when a judge tossed out the city's plan to seize her house for a mammoth plan to expand the Trump Plaza Hotel and Casino.

Trump now will have to talk turkey with Coking if he wants her dilapidated shorefront bungalow — and she's asking for \$1.2 million.

"Location, location, location," Coking crowed yesterday. "I got there before he did."

Coking's attorney Glen Zeitz also had a succinct message for the multi-millionaire builder: "I told him there would be three women in his life whose names he'd never forget — Ivana, Marla and Vera."

In a landmark ruling, Superior Court Judge Richard Williams said the seizure amounted to a bald-faced land grab by the megadeveloper.

The owners of a jewelry store and a mom-and-pop Italian restaurant also shared in the David and Goliath victory.

The judge noted that public agencies can seize private land for some public uses, such as bridges, tunnels or schools.

Helping Marla's ex make big dough on a new casino just doesn't cut it, Williams said.

"What has occurred here is analogous to giving Trump a blank check," the judge wrote.

Trump could not be reached. A spokeswoman said the decision "probably will be appealed."

"It's not a major setback," she said.

Still, the win was sweet for

jewelry store owner Josef Banin and Clare and Vincent Sabatini, who've run their Italian restaurant at the corner of Pacific Ave. and Columbia Place for 33 years.

"They had no business taking our little restaurant away," said Vincent Sabatini. "It just wasn't right."

The four seemed in way over their heads in 1994 when the state Casino Reinvestment Development Authority decided to condemn the properties.

Trump wanted the land to expand his Trump Plaza Hotel and Casino. He said the land would be used for a park, a parking lot and a limousine waiting area that would add green space, provide jobs and relieve traffic congestion on the city's casino strip.

The city backed the plan. But the property owners said there was nothing in the deal to prevent Trump from converting the green park space to yards of green felt blackjack tables.

The four enlisted the help of the Institute of Justice, a non-profit Washington-based law firm that goes to bat for individuals fighting property battles.

The case also caught the eye of "Doonesbury" cartoonist Garry Trudeau, who last year ran a week-long series of strips ridiculing Trump.

After their big win yesterday, the Sabatinis said they hold no grudge against Trump, who once ordered soup from their restaurant when he was feeling under the weather a few years ago.

With the threat of condemnation lifted, they believe they could reach a deal with Trump over a bottle of Orvieto and a plate of their veal Francese.

"He's more than welcome to come in," Clare Sabatini said. "We'd love to have him."



DAVID BEATS GOLIATH: Vera Coking displays the victory sign yesterday after court rules Donald Trump can't use eminent domain to take her Atlantic City land.

Belated medals for five black heroes

By **CHRISENA COLEMAN**

Daily News Staff Writer

Five African-American soldiers who volunteered to fight with white soldiers in the front lines during World War II will at last be recognized for their bravery and sacrifice.

The five — who were rewarded for their heroism by being immediately returned to segregated units — will receive Bronze Stars Thursday in Washington during a ceremony to mark the 50th anniversary of President Harry Truman's order to desegregate the military.

The five include Vincent Malveaux of the Bronx, who

remembers his days as a member of the Army with a mix of bitterness and pride.

"It will not add to my pleasure or displeasure," Malveaux said yesterday.

"I am just glad the public is being made aware of this."

He said he hopes the recognition will bring the contribution of the black troops to America's attention.

"We were put in and out of those units so quickly that nobody knew we were there or involved in the battle," he said.

The five veterans are the first to be cited.

They represent the 2,221 African-Americans who

stepped up when their country called and took a dangerous combat assignment in December 1944: Filling in for white troops killed in the Battle of the Bulge.

The black soldiers were recruited from their segregated units on orders of Gen. Dwight Eisenhower, who needed to fill the depleted ranks of all-white units to continue the Army's push through Hitler's Europe.

When the war in Europe ended in May 1945, the African-American soldiers who accepted the combat posts were immediately sent home to the U.S. and back to their all-black units. Many did not

have their combat service noted in their military record.

"During the war we were told that we would serve in integrated units . . . but that wasn't the case," said J.C. Wade of Irving, Tex., one of the five being honored.

Wade, 73, said many were hurt to see how quickly the Army discarded them.

"Many of the soldiers said they would rather be shot than go back to their units," Wade recalled.

"There were all kinds of protests about it, but at that time, there wasn't much we could do."

Wade, who founded an as-

sociation for black veterans, said this week's recognition comes after years of false promises from Army officials.

"I have been disappointed by the Army in the past," he said.

"I am glad the Army has finally agreed to let the world know we exist."

Wade said he wants to make sure textbooks reflect the contributions of the black soldiers.

"I feel good that future generations will know about us, but we have to make sure the other 2,216 soldiers are processed and receive their medals, too," Wade said.