

Mobile home park residents prevail

Five who sued owner, alleging dangerous living conditions, are awarded a total of \$350,000 in back rent.

DAN WEIKEL

A judge has ruled in favor of five mobile home park residents near Canoga Park who alleged that the park owner failed to make repairs and allowed dangerous conditions to persist for years, including a faulty electrical system that had been cited more than 100 times by state inspectors.

Based on an eight-day trial held in April, Judge Gregory C. O'Brien sided last week with Gary and Deborah Gibson and three other tenants of Mountain View Mobile Estates, which contains 156 homes tucked into a hillside with a panoramic view of the west San Fernando Valley.

They sued Mountain View's owner, G.J. Park Associates,



LAWRENCE K. HO/Los Angeles Times

CRUMBLING: A wall shows signs of disrepair in April at Mountain View Mobile Estates near Canoga Park. A retired judge who handled the case sided with residents.

and its management firm, M.A. Cirillo & Associates, which does business as Star Mobile Home Park Management.

G.J. Park and Cirillo said the park was well-run and that they had spent millions of dollars to make repairs in a reasonable amount of time. But O'Brien disagreed, spelling out his decision in a scathing 31-page opinion scheduled to be filed today in Los Angeles County Superior Court.

The landlord collected the tenants' rent, O'Brien wrote, "for which the tenants received in return endless insults to their sensibilities: Years of noise, mud, dangerous conditions, a studied neglect of simple services, a clubhouse with no furniture, a badly maintained pool and spa, and inexcusably rude, petty and bullying behavior."

O'Brien is a retired Superior Court judge who works for ADR Services Inc., a private arbitration and mediation service in Los Angeles that both sides hired to hear the case.

He awarded the group \$350,000 in back rent for four years, or about \$90,000 per household, and decided that G.J. Park and Cirillo should pay punitive damages as well as the plaintiffs' attorney fees and court costs.

"Maybe this will give residents of other mobile home parks with landlords like ours a glimmer of hope for some kind

of fair play, especially the elderly," said Gary Gibson, 62, a 10-year resident of Mountain View who spearheaded the lawsuit.

Attorney Dale B. Goldfarb, who represents the park owner and management company, could not be reached for comment Friday.

The lawsuit, filed in March 2007, contended that G.J. Park and Cirillo poorly maintained Mountain View for years and failed to make repairs related to more than 250 notices of code violations issued by state regulators since 1999. Those included the inadequate electrical system — a key safety issue because of the potential for fire and electric shocks.

Steven H. Haney, the tenants' lawyer, alleged that park operators were negligent, engaged in unfair business practices, failed to keep the park in good working order and deliberately committed continuous violations of the state Mobile-home Residency Law, which requires park owners and residents to maintain a clean and safe environment.

Residents testified that since May 2004 they had to endure scores of park-wide electrical outages, at least 20 park-wide water shut-offs, unstable soil, sewer backups and flooded streets during rainstorms. The electrical system was so poor, they said, that the park was plagued with power surges, dim lights, damaged

appliances and so little electrical current that heaters could not be used in winter and air conditioners could not be used to relieve summer heat.

The evidence indicated that park operators took more than six years to make improvements to the electrical system.

Though state inspectors eventually signed off on the work, the plaintiffs' expert testified that the repairs — some completed by an unlicensed contractor — were haphazard and that the electrical system still doesn't meet national standards.

Residents further testified that their complaints were often met with derision by park staff, who called them "trouble-makers" and failed to respond. Gibson's wife testified that she received several anonymous death threats, and Gibson told the judge he was repeatedly harassed, including being denied use of the pool for failing to sign a waiver of liability — the only resident of whom the demand was made.

"The expectations described by the witnesses were hardly extravagant: End the noise, stop the mud, fix my driveway, restore my view..." O'Brien wrote. "For the most part, the resident office managers seem to have a standard reply: 'I'm working on it.' Evidently, they were not."

dan.weikel@latimes.com

Lottery results

or Saturday, July 25, 2009

Super Lotto Plus
Mega number is Bold

12 20-36-47 — **Mega 13**

Jackpot: \$9 million

Winners per category:

	No. of winners	Amount of prize(s)
+ Mega	0	—
	3	\$21,528
+ Mega	24	\$1,364
	552	\$98
+ Mega	958	\$51
	23,251	\$10
+ Mega	13,118	\$9
+ Mega	65,934	\$1
Prize only	101,786	\$1

Like Me a Millionaire

Stan Stanton, Camarillo, \$35,000.

Sunday, July 26, 2009

Easy Five: 1-4-8-12-28

Easy Four: 4-5-8-1

Easy Three (midday): 0-2-4

Easy Three (evening): 4-1-2

My Derby:

Gold Rush

Fireka

Sorgeous George

Time: 1:43.88

Links on the Internet:

latimes.com/lottery

for more information:

Call 568-8379

Prizes not available at this number