

Jury vindicates Turner; wins \$7.8 million

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Former Ravenna banker Ed Turner can finally put the nine worst years of his life behind him, but that he won his dignity and a \$7.8 million lawsuit against Bank One on Friday in Summit County Common Pleas Court.

Company ordered to pay ex-Ravenna banker

to Ravenna residents for his community spirit and for his work on the Ravenna Balloon A-Fair, was vice president of Bank One in Ravenna before becoming head of the installment loan department in Akron.

The \$7.8 million award is believed to be the largest civil award in the history of Summit County. His 30-year banking career was destroyed in 1983, when Bank

One fired him because his department made dozens of bad loans to customers of two Wajken car dealerships in Stark County. Although Turner fired the man who actually handled the loans, Turner

was held responsible as head of the department. Turner's misery began when Bank One told its bonding company the bank suspected Turner was dishonest in his loan dealings.

While bonding companies do not cover bad loans resulting from poor judgment, they do reimburse banks if employees are found guilty of fraud.

For two years, the case with the bonding company was not resolved and Bank One never submitted proof of dishonesty. The matter was dropped when the case (See Ex-banker, page A6)

Ex-banker is awarded \$7.8 million

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partnership paid for the bad loans. Bank One later charged Turner, formerly of Randolph, with fraud racketeering for three bad loans he made in 1982 and 1983 totaling \$120,000 to Carolyn Strouse of Arwater. Strouse filed for bankruptcy before paying off the loans. Turner and Bank One were not only victims of Strouse. In 1985, she and her boyfriend, Bill Abbe, defrauded 11 other banks of more than \$1 million and were sent to prison in 1989, 16 days before Turner was to be tried on racketeering charges in federal court. Bank One dropped its case. Although Turner was never charged on the accusations, his name

was never cleared. After his firing, he could not get another banking job, because of his ties to the dishonesty charges. He ended up selling men's suits at an area shopping mall. After filing bankruptcy in 1984, losing his Randolph home, suffering a heart attack and plunging into the depths of despair, Turner decided to fight back. He sued Bank One for \$10 million for abusing the legal process and causing him emotional distress. Attorneys Tim Scanlon and James Rudgers represented him. Friday afternoon, a Summit County jury awarded him \$7.8 million — \$3.6 million for abusing the legal process and \$4.2 million for emotional distress. "I am so happy this is over," Turner said Friday. "It feels like

the weight of the world has been lifted off my shoulders." All Turner wanted was the chance to tell his story and be vindicated, he said. "I've always believed if I had the chance to tell what really happened, anyone would believe it," he said. "The bank never asked me what happened. They just sued me. I was just mortified when it happened, because everyone in Ravenna knows everyone's business. I've had a rough road to go, but now that it's over, I feel like a new man." Turner said he appreciates the support he received from about a dozen Ravennans who testified for him. "You can't replace that kind of friendship," he said. As for future plans, Turner said he has no idea what is next for

him. "I've been taking every day as it comes," he said. "I have no plans for the future. I just want to get on with my life." Bank One's attorney, Lawrence Bach, said the bank will decide whether to appeal within the next two weeks. "I think this jury was swayed by emotional testimony and did not consider the testimony of the bank," Bach said. "While a federal court found there was reasonable basis for a suit (against Turner), this jury was not convinced." Bach also said large corporations always have problems with juries in lawsuits against well-respected individuals, such as Turner, who present themselves well.

Throughout the case, Bank One contended it had proper motives to file charges against Turner. Evidence presented by the bank portrayed Turner as being careless. They introduced evidence to show Turner lent too much money to Strouse for a 1968 Corvette, even by standards for classic cars. The business she needed a loan for was not registered with the state. The house he appraised and used as collateral for a \$70,000 loan was valued on the tax books at \$2,500. Turner's attorneys maintained the bank went too far and that the only reason he was charged with dishonesty was so the bank could get reimbursed by the bonding company.