



**Lillian and Lou Anzalone on the porch of their Long Branch home that has been targeted for eminent domain**

## **“Heaven on Earth”**

The bugs are bad in Florida. The heat is even worse.

Those are two reasons Lou Anzalone wants to stay in Jersey. But the most important one is this: New Jersey is his home.

The 90-year-old World War II veteran always figured he’d spend his final years relaxing on the porch of his Long Branch home, with the ocean breeze and his family and friends for company.

The City of Long Branch has other plans.

City officials want Mr. Anzalone to give up his house so they can sell it to private developers to raze and build high-rise, glitzy condos along the coveted Atlantic Ocean.

The Anzalones, along with many of their neighbors, are fighting the condemnation in court. But, fearful of losing, Mr. Anzalone, his wife and son, Thomas, spent time this winter looking at places in Florida – just in case.

“I was panic-stricken when they told me they were taking my house,” Anzalone remembers. “I looked around. I couldn’t find anything in New Jersey. I don’t want to

move from New Jersey, period. But I gotta have a roof over my head for the few years I have left.”

“I’m looking in Florida where it’s supposed to be cheaper,” he adds. “I hate it. I can’t take the heat. I can’t take the bugs. We’re down here trying to see our future. My future isn’t in Florida.”

Like many others of their neighbors, Anzalone says the City of Long Branch gave no notice that it wanted to condemn their homes. Instead, officials used fuzzy language, like “area in need of redevelopment.” They say it wasn’t until the process was far along that they heard words like “blight” and “condemnation” and finally understood what was happening.

By that time, they were forced to hire a lawyer. They have spent thousands of dollars defending their right to keep the home they have lived in for 46 years.

This disturbs the World War II veteran, who supports himself and his wife with a small pension and Social Security.

“Sometimes you wake up at night and you think – eminent domain – this is taking people’s home to put other people in their place. This is stealing from the poor people and giving it to the rich,” Anzalone says.

“I don’t want their money. I want my house. From my back porch, I have a panorama of the whole ocean. It’s heaven on earth.”