

NASHUA

and The Region

DeMoulas Supermarkets, Nashuan settle age bias lawsuit

By ANDREW WOLFE
Telegraph Staff

NASHUA — DeMoulas Supermarkets has settled a lawsuit brought by a Nashua woman who claimed she was fired from her job stocking produce because of her age after working for the company for 15 years.

Irene Rootovich, 66, of 32 Farmwood Drive, Nashua, sued for age discrimination in October 1992 in Hillsborough County Superior Court, 16 months after she was dismissed from her job.

Rootovich claimed managers at the Nashua and Hudson stores where she worked gave preferential treatment to younger employees. She had sought compensation for lost pay, emotional distress and attorney fees.

The company argued Rootovich was fired for poor

■ Woman, 66, a 15-year employee, sued for discrimination in 1992 after being dismissed from her job, allegedly for poor performance.

performance and attitude. Under New Hampshire laws, businesses can hire and fire employees at will, without any particular reason, so long as they don't violate contracts or anti-discrimination laws.

The case was settled June 29, after a mediation session June 17, according to court records. At the time, Rootovich had rejected two previous settlement offers, according to court records. Officially, the case was closed without any judgment being entered for either side.

Neither side can comment further on the case under the terms of the settlement, Rootovich's lawyer,

Nancy Richards-Stower of Merrimack, said Friday. DeMoulas' lawyer, Andrea Johnstone of Concord, could not be reached Friday.

"Both parties are precluded from commenting on the terms," Richards-Stower said. "I'm not at liberty to discuss any aspect of the agreement."

Rootovich had worked at the Turnpike Plaza store in Nashua before being transferred to the Hudson store about a month before she was dismissed in April 1991. Rootovich claimed she pleaded for her job back, but company President Telemachus DeMoulas told her she shouldn't have expenses at her age and sug-

gested she collect Social Security.

Rootovich could not be reached for comment Friday, and Richards-Stower said her client did not want to comment publicly.

In an interview with The Telegraph last winter, Rootovich defended her performance at work.

"They just don't like old people," Rootovich said. "I did my job. They can't say I didn't."

According to court records, company officials said Rootovich was fired for poor performance culling and packaging produce, refusing to wear her smock, taking extra breaks without telling her supervisor and failing to clean up her work area at the end of her shifts.

Rootovich denied that her work was below standards and added that she never received any formal warnings to that effect. She argued younger employees went unpunished for similar infractions.