

Light

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girlfriend made her way to the top.

"She didn't know what he was going to do. He stooped down on his knee, put his hand in his pocket and couldn't get the ring out because he was stooping," she said. "When he finally got the ring out, he opened the box and asked her to marry him. She started to cry and when she held her finger out, he went to put the ring on her finger and dropped it."

Benjes said the ring fell through the platform and plummeted the entire 150 feet to the ground. Benjes said it was obvious the proposal did not go as smoothly as the young man had planned, but at least the girl agreed to marry him.

"Everybody was looking for it. It was near closing time when we finally found the ring," she said. "I always remember that story because I wasn't even supposed to be working - I always work the morning shift and came in for the night shift as a favor."

While many have bright and humorous stories about the lighthouse, its darkest days came in 1941, when it was



Cain Chamberlin/Cape May Star and Wave
Lighthouse tour guide Gerry Benjes at the top of the lighthouse. Right, a view of the lighthouse from the ground.

made inoperable for four long years. Steve Murray, a historian at the Hereford Inlet Lighthouse in North Wildwood, said the Atlantic Coast was darkened during World War II because of enemy submarines determined to sink merchant ships and U.S. military vessels.

Following the war, a DCB-36 rotating light, similar to an airport beacon was installed while the first order Fresnel

lens was transferred to the Cape May County Museum.

In 1990, the 1893 oil house located right next door to the lighthouse was restored and converted into an orientation center and gift shop. Krysiak said a grant from the Bicentennial Lighthouse Fund and the New Jersey Historic Trust provided grants for the restoration of the oil house and the windows and doors of the lighthouse between 1989



and 1990. She said the same organizations have provided grants to continue restoring the lighthouse and the grounds surrounding it. She said the latest project took place earlier this

year, when a Delaware construction firm, Eastern Coatings, washed the tower and repainted portions of it while performing work on the classic windows.

Krysiak said the Friends of the Cape May Lighthouse, a MAC affinity group, will be hosting Lighthouse Full Moon Climbs on July 22, Aug. 20, Sept. 20 and Oct. 18, from 8 to 10 p.m. Tower admission is free for Friends members and admission for non-members

is \$7 for adults and \$3 for children (ages 3-12).

Day. Congress designated the holiday on Aug. 7, 1989, making the 200th anniversary of the signing of the Lighthouse Act and the commission of the first federal lighthouses in the country. It was initiated to honor the important role lighthouses play in American history. Krysiak said there will be vendors, lighthouse storytelling, crafts and kids' activities, including an appearance of Pete the Pirate, mascot for the Cape May-Lewes Ferry.

On the weekend of Oct. 19 and 20, the Lighthouse Challenge of New Jersey will provide a two-day opportunity to visit 11 land-based lighthouses, two museums and two life-saving stations along the Jersey Shore. Participants purchase a souvenir passport for \$1 and have it stamped at each stop along the way from Sandy Hook to Cape May. Krysiak said the Cape May Lighthouse is the perfect starting or finishing point because of its location at the southern most point of the state.

Blast

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lation was 2,737. By 1980 Cape May had 4,853 residents, and the township had grown to 11,373. In 2010, Cape May dropped to the 1950 level, while the township more than doubled its population (22,863).

Sheftz said people have left Cape May to live in the township, adding, "I don't know of one person from this working town who can afford to buy a place in Cape May."

Beck said, now, because the

economy is poor, Cape May City Council is trying to jettison the township. He said he views this as shortsighted, saying some on Cape May City Council don't understand the concept of "regional."

"We understand regional," Beck said. "We understand that the triathlon we recently hosted brought a lot of people to Cape May for shopping."

Beck said he believes what Cape May City Council thinks is good for Cape May will ultimately hurt the school, the township, and even Cape May. He said in Cape May, 48 percent of the municipal budget was paid for with revenue raised from sources such as parking meters and the accommodations tax, which each raise over \$1 million. Beck said it was recently reported that Cape May's beach tag sales now top \$2 million per year, however beach maintenance and

wages take most of that revenue. Beck said it is visitors, not the residents of Cape May who are funding that 48 percent of the budget. He said 80 percent of Lower Township's municipal budget is funded by property taxes.

Sheftz said Lower Township residents pay an average of \$1,600 per \$100,000 of assessed value in school taxes. He said Cape May pays a fraction of that amount.

Beck said a year ago Cape May supported an initiative to eliminate unemployment compensation for seasonal workers. He said he was told Cape May was paying \$16,000 per year for unemployment insurance. He said by saving on unemployment insurance costs, the city was hurting township residents who work seasonally in Cape May.

"This is a township where over 60 percent of our students are on a free or reduced school lunch," Beck said. "And they are doing this to the people who clean their rooms, and make their beds, police their town, and even shop there."

Beck said he was reluctant

to criticize Cape May, but he has become angry over this situation and said all township residents should be angry about it as well. He said over the last year and a half Cape May has been working in opposition to the interests of the township. Beck said the township for years had been working on water concerns in the Town Bank section of the township, where the well water contains volatile organic compounds. He said the township sought to increase its water allocation to be able to provide residents with potable water, and in December, Cape May representatives opposed the increase at a public hearing in the county Administration Building.

"And their wells are in our town," Beck said. "Now you want to put your fingers on our people, on our school?" Beck said taking \$6 million to \$8 million out of the regional school district would irrevocably damage the school and township.

"And as we go down, who do you think is going down with us?" Beck said.

The other members of Lower Township Council said they supported what Beck said in his statements. Deputy Mayor Norris Clark then spoke about the obligation of New Jersey residents to educate its students.

"This country was founded on the principles of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. You can't have any of them without education," he said.

Clark called it a privilege and an obligation to educate New Jersey's children, and he said that obligation doesn't stop at the border of Cape May, or when your kids are grown, or if you have no children.

Without naming him, Clark also criticized the attorney working on dissolving the regional school district. Cape May City Council hired attorney Vito Gagliardi, who has been successful in representing other municipalities wishing to get out of a regional district. Clark said residents' obligation to educate the children in New Jersey doesn't end because "an attorney comes into town, whispering in your ear that he can get you a better deal."

"This is like the west coast being attacked, and we on the east coast doing nothing, saying we should not use our tax dollars to help them," Clark said. "We are all better off

because of our educational system."

Clark added that when there is divisiveness the kids are worse off.

"I would ask Cape May City Council to remember those founding principles," Clark said.

Township resident Fred Long said the state has been grappling with the issue of funding public education since 1875. He said for over 50 years the Lower Cape May Regional School District has been providing education to children from Cape May, West Cape May and Lower Township - and for over 30 years the amount of school taxes paid was determined by assessed property values.

"When property values increased families were forced to leave (Cape May)," Long said. "Then residents began to whine, saying they see no reason to support education. They see no need because their numbers (of students) are approaching zero. But we are talking about children - all the children of a regional community."

"I am opposed to the efforts of Cape May (city council) and request a resolution (by Lower Township Council) voicing opposition to the change," Long said.

"That's a Cracker Jack idea," Beck said, recommending that a resolution be pre

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JULY 2013
Eastern Standard Time

	High	Low		
	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.
3	5:09	5:43	10:56	11:57
4	6:02	6:29	11:44	
5	6:50	7:11	12:45	12:28
6	7:34	7:51	1:29	1:11
7	8:16	8:29	2:10	1:51
8	8:56	9:06	2:48	2:30
9	9:35	9:42	3:25	3:09
10	10:13	10:17	4:00	3:47

Moon Phases
New Moon, July 8
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Perigee, July 21

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