

Cape May Star and Wave



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Diamond Beach fire insurance skyrockets

Climbs after change in protection rating

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA — Diamond Beach residents complained to Fire District 3 commissioners that their fire-insurance rates have doubled due to a poor rating of fire protection from the Insurance Services Office (ISO).

Diamond Beach is served by the Erma Fire Company, located on the mainland at the Cape May County Airport. Firetrucks must use the Middle Thorofare Bridge to reach Diamond Beach, but the bridge, constructed around 1940, can no longer handle the weight of a normal size firetruck. As a result, heavier Erma Fire Company firetrucks must drive through Rio Grande, Wildwood and Wildwood Crest to reach Diamond Beach, at least an 18-minute drive.

In 2007, standard-size firetrucks stopped using Middle Thorofare Bridge when it was limited to a maximum load of 15 tons. A fully loaded firetruck can weigh as much as 25 tons.

In 2013, Erma Fire Company purchased a basic 14-ton fire pumper truck that can use the Middle Thorofare Bridge, but it has limited use.

At an Aug. 26 Fire Commission

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Three snakes surrendered; boa still loose

By MARY LINEHAN
Special to the Star and Wave

VILLAS — The owner of four pet snakes, including a red-tailed boa constrictor that escaped in late July, surrendered the remainder of his menagerie to animal-control officials last week.

According to Lower Township officials, officers from Shore Animal Control made the transfer of three snakes from the private owner to the Cape May County Zoo. The reptiles were then transferred to Steve Serwatka, of New Jersey Nature, a nonprofit organization in Dennis Township that focuses on the rehabilitation of animals.

The county zoo does not typically accept and house surrendered, exotic pets.

"The transfer is, pretty much, going on right now," Lower Township Public Information Officer Lauren Suit said during a phone interview Aug. 25.

Suit said the transfer was voluntary and was undertaken with the assistance of Lower Township police in conjunction with the township's animal-control contractor.

The Villas summer snake event began at the end of July when a local

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West Cape May says tomato



Deborah McGuire/Special to the CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Kiersten Keywood, 12, of West Cape May, helped her grandfather Les Rea sell fresh produce Aug. 30 during the West Cape May Tomato Festival. Below left, Amanda Pierce and Brooke Dodds of Empanada Mama's. Below right, juggler James Rana entertains the crowd.



Cape May innkeeper wins tomato dish contest

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — Cape May resident Jan Pask was the winner in the inaugural Cape May Star and Wave tomato dish contest at the West Cape May Tomato Festival on Aug. 30. She submitted a tomato zucchini frittata, which received four of the five judges' votes.

Pask said the recipe was given to her by Marie Pirelli, former owner of the Jeremiah Hand House.

"I made some adjustments to it. I made it my own," Pask said.

She said she makes it twice a week in summer at her Cape May bed and breakfast inn, the Luther Ogden Inn. The dish features tomatoes, zucchini, cheese, fresh herbs and onions, Pask said.

She said she can prepare the dish in about 15 minutes.

"Bear in mind, I've probably made it 500 times," Pask said. Most of the ingredients are



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Jan Pask holds what's left of her winning entry in the Cape May Star and Wave's tomato dish contest during the West Cape May Tomato Festival.

grown in the inn's garden, she said, making it organic and local.

Strong contenders in the

contest were Ursula Friedrich's sweet tomato bread pudding and Karena Sherwood's tomato salad.



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Nick Cooney stands with the TBM Avenger in which he was a gunner during World War II. 'I was one of those gung-ho kids out of North Catholic High School in Philadelphia,' Cooney said.

World War II gunner finds former plane

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

ERMA — Veterans visiting museums may find an airplane similar to one they flew aboard during wartime, but when Nick Cooney visited the Naval Air Station Wildwood Aviation Museum last week, he found the exact plane on which he served as a turret gunner during World War II.

The plane is a TBM Avenger, a World War II torpedo bomber. Cooney, 89, stood beside the gleaming blue plane with folding wings, telling his story during the 18th annual AirFest at the museum.

Originally from Philadelphia, Cooney spent a number of years living in Sea Isle City. He said he enlisted in the Navy at the age of 18 and was in combat by 19.

Cooney said he did not feel he was pilot material, so the next best job was gunner.

"I was one of those gung-ho kids out of North Catholic High School in Philadelphia," Cooney said.

He trained up and down the West Coast of the U.S. in ground-to-air, air-to-air and torpedo runs. Cooney said he flew from the carrier USS Belleau Wood and saw action in Iwo Jima, Okinawa, the China Sea and the Japanese homeland from late 1944 through most of 1945. He flew with a pilot and a radioman, he said.

"I had a total of 32 strikes in the Navy, and a couple were pretty close," Cooney said.

In addition to the 32 missions, Cooney said he also flew a few anti-submarine patrols. During a torpedo run on a Japanese convoy, the TBM Avenger was hit, killing the radio operator on the plane.

He was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross for his service.

"It was an excellent flying plane," Cooney said. "It could take an awful beating from anti-aircraft fire."

"We came back one time with almost 100 holes in our plane, and another time with part of our tail

"We came back one time with almost 100 holes in our plane, and another time with part of our tail shot off."

— Nick Cooney, World War II gunner

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