

Former dancer, circus performer marks 103rd birthday

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

NORTH CAPE MAY — It's extraordinary to see your 103rd birthday, but for Doreen Quinn, it's just one more milestone in a remarkable life.

"It went rather quickly, didn't it?" Quinn commented recently in a crisp British accent.

Victoria Manor threw a birthday party for Quinn on May 12 that featured a live band and a visit from Lower Township Mayor Michael Beck.

Show business has always been in her blood. She was a dancer, stood on horses while they galloped around the ring of circuses, walked a tightrope and flew through the air on the flying trapeze.

Quinn was born in Pretoria, South Africa, in 1911. After her father died when she was 10, her mother moved the family of five children to England, according to Quinn's daughter Paula Perrotti.

When Quinn was 15, she worked in a factory by day to help support her family and went to dance classes at night. She met Johnny Quinn, known



Jack Fichter/SURE GUIDE
Lower Township Mayor Michael Beck greets Doreen Quinn, right, and her daughter Paula Perrotti during the 103rd birthday celebration May 12 at Victoria Manor.

in Ireland as the "Singing Clown." She married his son and they began a life of performing in the circus.

The couple went to South Africa and joined Boswell's Circus. In order to be able to entertain British troops during World War II, they had to join the Army. They became mem-

bers of a group of entertainers called the "Crazy Gang." A member of the gang was Bud Flanagan of the act "Flanagan and Allen." Quinn and her husband would later open a theatrical agency in England with Flanagan until the call of performing sent him back on the road.

As a member of the "Crazy Gang," Quinn crossed paths with a young Frank Sinatra, Perrotti said.

By 1947, the Quinns returned to England. They left the life as traveling entertainers and ran a theatrical agency.

"They booked acts all over the world," Perrotti said.


Perrotti credits her mother's longevity to "staying away from doctors." She also has eaten small portions of food throughout her life.

Beck presented Quinn with a certificate of recognition on behalf of Lower Township. The mayor said it was the fourth birthday party for Quinn he has attended.

He said Quinn has lived during the most eventful century of the world's history, noting William Taft was president of the United States the year she was born.



Quinn during her days performing.



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Panel approves Van Drew bills to help soldiers, disabled vets

TRENTON — Two bills sponsored by state Sen. Jeff Van Drew to financially assist active-duty soldiers and disabled military veterans were approved by the Senate Community and Urban Affairs Committee.

The first bill would exempt disabled veterans, or their caretakers, from having to pay fees for the construction or improvement of ramps solely designed to promote accessibility to their homes.

Municipalities currently have the option of exempting disabled veterans from payment of the fees by ordinance; the bill would make it a requirement.

"Soldiers returning from

war with lost limbs, brain injuries and other conditions that limit their mobility have already paid an enormous price for our country. Asking them to pay a fee for the construction of something as basic as a ramp so they can gain access to their home is outright offensive," said Van Drew (D-Cape May, Cumberland, Atlantic). "This kind of project should be tax and fee exempt — no questions asked."

The second bill proposes a constitutional amendment to extend the current \$250 property tax deduction, which applies to veterans of the U.S. armed forces who are honorably discharged or released under honorable circumstanc-

es from active service, in times of war or other emergencies, to also include members of the armed forces while they are on active service during times of war or other emergencies.

"We know that military service can put an emotional strain on families, but it also can take a financial toll," Van Drew said. "Extending this tax benefit to deployed soldiers is a recognition of the importance of providing assistance to our servicemen both when they are serving in the field and after they return home."

The bills cleared the committee by a vote of 5-0. They head next to the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee for consideration.

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paying a fair and equitable share, he said.

Beck said it is not the fault of Lower Township that Cape May had a number of families move out because property values have increased there. He said Cape May benefits from much of its work force coming from Lower Township.

"I'm quite happy with the funding formula as it now exists and as it was legislated," he said.

Beck said the township recognizes that the school board does not wish to hold a referendum, but in the interest of trying to save taxpayers money, he said Lower Township would not oppose it.

"But we certainly oppose the object of the referendum. We certainly do not support either an adjustment of the current levy or the withdrawal of Cape May City," Beck said.

"Our goal as council and mine as mayor is to make sure that we maintain the quality education that currently exists in the regional district, and we will fight any initiative they come up with that attempts to damage that quality education," he continued.

Beck responded to a request from Cape May to state Sen. Jeff Van Drew and Assemblymen Bob Andrejczak and Samuel L. Focchi to amend legislation allowing Cape May an additional seat on the LCMR Board of Education.

"The representation was never based upon how much money you contribute," Beck said. "That gives people who have wealth a larger say."

Beck said if more power is given to the wealthier sections, "who already don't want to pay the governing body," there could be a move to limit programs in the school district. He said homeowners in Cape May have been blessed with property of significantly higher value than Lower Township's.

Van Drew told the Star and Wave last week that he had hopes of bringing representatives from both municipal governments and school boards together for discussions. However, that seems unlikely given Beck's stance on the matter.

"It's not a negotiable item. There's no room to compromise since you'd be taking the fair and legislated way off the table if you were to tinker with it in any way, shape or form," Beck said.

"I made our point plain to (Van Drew) that I don't feel that there is any need for us to sit down and discuss this," Beck continued.

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