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Cape May Star and Wave

159TH YEAR NO. 7 CAPE MAY, N.J. SERVING AMERICA'S NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK CITY WEDNESDAY, February 13, 2013 50¢

Coast Guard awards diving team for help with Lady Mary

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY - Nearly four years ago, the fishing vessel Lady Mary sank in 211 feet of water between 5:10 and 5:40 a.m. The vessel went down in the Atlantic Ocean about 65 miles southeast of Cape May, claiming the lives of six crewmembers and leaving one survivor.

On Jan. 25, the US Coast Guard honored a team of volunteers who dove the wreck for evidence in an attempt to identify why the scallop boat went down, and in the process recovered the body of Bernie "Tarzan" Smith, brother of partner Royal "Fuzzy" Smith.

Award recipients included Rustin "Rusty" Cassway, Harold Moyers, captain of the Big Mac diving vessel, Joe Mazraani, Jon Hulbert, Paul Whittaker, Anthony Tedeschi, Mark Nix, Bart Malone, Andrew Donn, Bradley Sheard and Tom Packer.

"Steve Gatto was sort of the leader of the whole thing," Cassway said.

Gatto, who according to Cassway, organized the expedition, said he was given an award at an earlier time. Gatto described himself as having become a liaison between the US Coast Guard and the team of volunteer divers.

According to Cassway, the divers knew they could do something to help both the Coast Guard and the families, if only to bring some closure to their lives. The Coast Guard had rescued crew-member Jose Arias, but the other six were missing.

"We saw the boat had sunk and we kept petitioning the Coast Guard to let us help,"

Cassway said. According to Moyers, he had already been approached by Fuzzy Smith to make a dive.

"Fuzzy stopped by the boat and talked to me, he met with all of us, and he said 'What do you want to go out there?'" Moyers said. "I told him just pay for my fuel."

Moyers said by all accounts, Smith had just lost two sons, his brother, his crew, his boat and his livelihood. He said they reviewed a layout of the boat and its operations to determine where to look.

"Fuzzy told us all about the boat and what might have happened," Cassway said.

According to Cassway, the Coast Guard really only operates on the surface of the water, and is not prepared to dive, particularly to the depth of 211 feet, which requires special considerations and experience.

"They could only send the ROV (remotely operated vehicle)," he said.

Cassway said Gatto kept asking the Coast Guard for permission to dive the wreck and they finally said okay.

The group called together a team of individuals they knew had experience diving at over 200 feet.

"It's not the average scuba diver who goes over 200 feet in April. Especially when the safe sport diving limit is 130 feet," Cassway said.

Cassway said diving past the safe sport diving limit can lead to decompression sickness, known as "the bends," or nitrogen narcosis, in which the nitrogen in the air becomes narcotic at certain depths. He said divers have to breathe a mixture of helium,



Bradley Sheard © 2009

Photo by Bradley Sheard used by permission

Above is a shot of the Lady Mary resting on the ocean floor, which was taken by diving team member Bradley Sheard. The entire team was recognized, Jan. 25, by the Coast Guard for their assistance in gathering evidence and recovering a deceased crew member from the scallop boat, which sits about 65 miles southeast of Cape May in 65 feet of water.

nitrogen and oxygen. He said the helium is inert and offsets effects of nitrogen narcosis.

"The long story short, we got permission to do it," Cassway said.

They went out on Moyers' boat, the Big Mac, which is

docked at Cape May. Moyers said choosing his boat had little to do with the boat itself, but with the team they formed.

"We are suited to this kind of diving, we go out all the time. We do a lot of clam

dredge jobs. If a clammer loses a dredge we dive to get the dredge back. They know we get the job done," Moyers said.

The accident happened early on a Tuesday, and Cassway remembers going

out the same day. Gatto said they picked up the ROV from the Coast Guard and ran it around the Lady Mary and then reviewed the video

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Township hires an in-house engineer

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
Cape May Star and Wave

LOWER TOWNSHIP - As of Feb. 5, Lower Township has hired its own engineer.

George A. Curvan, a resident of Dennis Township, was hired to oversee township projects, such as the rehabilitation of the Millman Center, and to advise the Planning and Zoning boards.

Curvan grew up in Middle Township and is a 2005 graduate of Rutgers University, where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree from its College of Engineering. Curvan became a licensed engineer in 2010, while working with the firm Remington, Vernick and Walberg.

Curvan said when an engineer graduates college he or she is eligible to sit for an exam to qualify as an engineer in training. After passing the exam, the engineer in training must spend four years working under the supervision of a licensed engineer, after which he or she can sit for the professional engineer's exam.

Curvan said he saw the

position advertised and found it attractive.

"I've always liked working in the public sector, the variety of projects and working in the community," he said.

Curvan has taken over as the project manager for the Millman Center, and will be handling the inspection and contract administration from this point, instead of the architect. Curvan, who was hired at a starting salary of \$70,000, said having him on staff should save the township money.

Mayor Mike Beck said Lower Township has spent \$1.2 million in engineering fees over the last four years; however, \$200,000 was escrow, which the township will get back.

"It's hard to know exactly what we will save, but we're already using him," Beck said.

Beck said by having Curvan work with Lower Township Municipal Utilities Authority (LTMUA) executive director Matt Ecker on any given situation, the township has

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Construction hours, firefighter OT discussed

By PAUL GRISER
For the Star and Wave

CAPE MAY - Weekend construction hours and firefighter overtime dominated the discussion at the Cape May City Council meeting, Feb. 5.

At the beginning of the meeting, Mayor Ed Mahaney brought up the year's construction activities, discussing the request by local contractors to work weekends and holidays as needed. Under the current ordinance, the city of Cape May does not permit construction workers to work on weekends or holi-

days.

Mahaney said he had a closed meeting which included representatives from the city of Cape May and the construction trades to discuss the possibility of allowing construction on weekends. The consensus of the meeting was to permit construction on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. between Memorial Day and Labor Day, and then on Saturdays from Labor Day to Memorial Day at regularly scheduled weekday hours.

Construction will not be permitted on the holidays New Years Day, Memorial

Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Mahaney said construction will not be permitted on Sundays except in the case of an emergency. However, the city must be informed of any such emergency before construction begins.

"Look at the seven other shore cities in Cape May County - they all allow construction on Sundays," Mahaney said. "They wanted seven days a week, but we said absolutely not."

Council agreed in concept to permit the Saturday construction hours.

The meeting then switched gears to 2013 budget talks, with the main topic centering on the amount of overtime firefighters for the city of Cape May have been receiving.

Councilmember Terri Swain said that while other areas of the budget have been cut, including overtime for city police officers, firefighters continue to receive ample amounts of overtime.

One problem in reducing the amount of overtime fire-

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Sheriff says he has made changes for the better

By ERIC AVEDISSIAN
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COUNTY - According to Cape May County Sheriff Gary Schaffer, since he became sheriff four years ago, the Sheriff's Office has implemented changes which increased efficiency, officer safety and reduced costs.

Schaffer presented his office's annual report to the Cape May County Board of Chosen Freeholders on Feb. 12.

Schaffer said the Sheriff's Office budget is \$10 million, not including health care



Sheriff Gary Schaffer

costs.

There are currently 163 full time and 19 part time employees in the Sheriff's Office, a reduction from 188 employees four years ago.

The Sheriff's Office is comprised of four departments: Legal and Civil Division, the Correctional Center, County Security and the Animal Shelter.

Schaffer noted after restructuring the Sheriff's Office, overtime costs were reduced without reducing services.

Overtime costs in 2012 are \$176,478, a decrease from \$196,730 in overtime costs in 2011.

For 2012, the Sheriff's Office came \$342,741 under budget. It was the fourth straight year the Sheriff's Office is under budget, which he attributed to good management with the office's staff.

"I didn't think the overtime budget was going to go down this year. When salaries go up year after year it becomes tougher to keep the overtime down, because when salaries go up, overtime should go up. Somehow, we came under and I'm happy. It's four years in a row that's happened," Schaffer said.

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