

Cape May Star and Wave

155th YEAR NO. 39 CAPE MAY, N.J. SERVING AMERICA'S NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK CITY THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2009 50¢



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SPORTS

Caper Tigers outmaneuvered by Holy Spirit, **B1**

LCMR field hockey begins season with three wins, **B1**

EDUCATION

New Catholic school gives parents a choice, **A5**

COMMUNITY

Ferry celebrates 13th million passenger, **A4**

SEPTEMBER 2009

TIDE TABLE

	HIGH		LOW	
	am	pm	am	pm
9/24	12:18	12:47	6:09	7:10
9/25	1:13	1:43	7:01	8:10
9/26	2:16	2:45	8:00	9:12
9/27	3:23	3:47	9:04	10:10
9/28	4:25	4:44	10:05	11:00
9/29	5:18	5:33	11:00	11:43
9/30	6:03	6:17	11:48	
Full Moon	9/4			
Last Quarter	9/11			
New Moon	9/18			
1st Quarter	9/26			
Perigee	9/16			
Apogee	9/27			

TRACEN company commander pleads guilty

Sentenced to five months and discharged for bad conduct

By CHRISTOPHER SOUTH
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY - A U.S. Coast Guard Training Center (TRACEN) company commander pled guilty to having an inappropriate sexual relationship with a female recruit and was found guilty of mistreatment of another.

Petty Officers Second Class Francesco Thompson entered guilty pleas on eight counts of a 14-count indictment with all but one of the remaining charges being dismissed as part of a pretrial agreement.

In a Coast Guard court martial held Tuesday and part of Wednesday, Thompson admitted he had sexual relations with a female recruit under his command between November and December 2008 on two occasions - once in a classroom and once in his office. Thompson, who has been in the Coast Guard since 1998, further testified he pursued a relationship with the 24-year-old female who was a member of Class U-180. The Coast Guard Personnel Manual prohibits

boot camp company commanders, who are enlisted persons, from dating a boot camp graduate for one year after graduation.

Thompson, who was represented by two U.S. Navy attorneys, admitted he pursued a relationship with the former recruit saying he had a few reasons why he assumed it was OK.

"Other company commanders at the Training Center, friends of mine, who I respect, married former recruits under one year from graduation," he said.

Thompson said it seemed to him that the command had given its blessing to such relationships.

"That being said, I saw the possibility of a relationship," Thompson said.

Thompson indicated the former recruit, now Officer Candidate School candidate, had a number of qualities that attracted him, saying she was 24, a college graduate, good-looking and athletic. He said he had heard "scuttlebutt," meaning idle talk among Coast Guard members, that such a relationship was prohibited, but he

wasn't fully aware of the rule until January when he was contacted by Coast Guard Investigative Services, which handles criminal investigations for the Coast Guard.

The investigation began after a former classmate of the female involved with Thompson was talking to other Coast Guard members at her new duty station in North Carolina. A supervisor overheard the conversation alleging a sexual relationship between the company commander and a recruit and it was reported to the chain of command. An investigation began, and according to Lieutenant Commander Casey Chmielewski, staff judge advocate at TRACEN, Thompson was immediately relieved of his duties as company commander and reassigned to the nearby LORAN radar station.

Chmielewski said the initial investigation was concluded in April, and the procedures for setting up a Special Court Martial began in May, beginning with a call to convene the court martial by Captain Cari B. Thomas,

TRACEN commander. Commander Catherine Weathers from Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, D.C., was assigned as military judge for the case, and as is often the case, two Navy attorneys were assigned to defend the Coast Guardsman.

The court martial was delayed for about four hours Tuesday as lawyers for both sides interviewed witnesses. Once the proceedings began, a pretrial agreement had been signed by all parties including the accused. As part of the judicial process, Thompson had to admit verbally to the judge the reasons for his guilt.

Thompson told the judge he had sexual intercourse twice with a recruit, who was named during testimony, and he said the same individual visited his home after graduation.

"(The female) came to my residence, then we went to Wawa and got sandwiches. We came back, watched a movie, had sex and she left," Thompson said.

Please see Guilty, Page A7



Jennifer Kopp
Cape May Star and Wave

KING NEPTUNE BACHELOR AUCTION

The first ever King Neptune Bachelor Auction held Sunday night at the Rusty Nail and sponsored by the Mermaid Guild raised over \$19,000 for the South Jersey Food Bank. 20 single men were auctioned off, including Cape May Mayor Ed Mahaney, left, with Laurie Johnson and Dawn De Mayo, each with a planned "date." Top right, auctioneer Thera Henry with "Bachelor #5" Ryan Griffin, who fetched \$600. Niko Goutzouris, of George's Place, was the high bid of the evening with \$700. As can be seen, bottom left and right, the evening was a rousing success thanks to the generous outpouring of support from businesses throughout the community. Let's do it again next year!



Hurricane Conference warns residents to do as told

By ERIC AVEDISSIAN
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY COURT HOUSE - If there's one thing you learn from the Cape May County Hurricane Preparedness Conference, it's when officials tell you to evacuate, you do so.

The Board of Chosen Freeholders hosted the conference, which featured speakers from the New Jersey State Office of Homeland Security, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency and Cape May County Office of Emergency Management.

Hurricane season lasts from August until the end of fall, bringing with it torrential rains, rough surf and the potential for a powerful hurricane. Just what Cape May County and New Jersey will do during a direct hit became the subject of the conference, where emergency officials explained how to keep the public safe during such a calamity.

Officials cited Cape May County's geographical weaknesses - it's a low-lying peninsula surrounded by water on three sides with few evacuation routes.

"We spend an inordinate amount of time making sure that all of the state emer-

gency responders have the resources and the training that they need so that they can respond anywhere," said Richard Cañas, director of the New Jersey State Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness.

Cañas said the state's strategy focuses on having adequate evacuation plans and shelters for citizens. He said developing plans for evacuating people with special needs began over a year ago, where people with special needs are asked to register to authorities that they require help evacuating.

"We do have the special needs registry. We're still not at a satisfactory number

because registration is voluntary," Cañas said. "Paramount in this is a very vigorous public awareness campaign ... Without a public awareness campaign, we are going to fail."

He added if the governor calls for an evacuation, residents would have up to 12 hours to leave, though they could voluntarily leave days earlier.

Lt. Colonel Jerome Hatfield, deputy superintendent of Homeland Security, said there are plans for reversing the southbound lanes of the Garden State Parkway to evacuate county residents in the event of a hurricane.

Hatfield said county Prosecutor Robert Taylor worked with several state departments and agencies that would allow for "an expedient evacuation of the county."

"We've been talking about a reverse lane strategy to support Cape May County for countless years. It's a labor intensive process that we have to take in the interest of the people who reside in the county," Hatfield said.

Hatfield said the first response communities are equipped to handle challenges in emergencies, but citizens should also protect their own interests.

Michael Moriarty, acting

regional administrator for FEMA's Region II, which encompasses Cape May County, said people need to make advanced plans in the event of an evacuation.

"Whether you're an individual, whether you're a family unit, whether you're a community or part of a corporation, make a plan," Moriarty said. "What do you absolutely need if you have to evacuate and you can't communicate with anybody?"

Moriarty said preparing a "disaster kit" including important documentation, medication, flashlight, and clothing is essential.

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Wooden bikes: Now that's really s unique innovation

By JOHN K. ALVAREZ
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY - Cape May offers many sights which have made more than one person say, "Did you see that?" This past summer, one such sight, if you were attending the 400th Anniversary parade, were people riding wooden bicycles down Beach Avenue. Before you make an appointment with an optometrist, you weren't seeing things.

The Woody, a wooden bicycle, was the creation of native resident Max Samuelson, who has been with Cape May Beach Patrol (CMBP) for 13 seasons, and according to him, was always building goofy stuff ever since he was really young.

"One year, a buddy of mine, Ryan Halbruner, and I took sailing classes in the summer," Samuelson said. "One

winter, when we were ten, we wanted to sail but we couldn't do it. So we busted up a bunch of bikes and grabbed some scrap lumber and made a cart with wheels. Then we got some sailboat parts and put a mast on the cart with a sail. We would sail our 'sail-cart' down Sunset Boulevard at Cape May Point when the wind was blowing in the right direction. But we would only go half a mile because there was a power line which was awfully low," Samuelson said with a laugh.

This adventurous spirit stayed with Samuelson well into his teens when he first discovered triathlons and mountain bike racing.

"I did my first triathlon when I was either 14 or 15. In college, I really got into racing mountain bikes. For two to three seasons, I did pretty well on the east coast circuit. After college, I moved to

Santa Cruz, California and trained for the Sea Otter Classic, which was a competition near Monterey. Unfortunately, my work schedule started taking over the time I needed for my training, which never got to where I had hoped it would get. So I never got to enter the race."

After he got back from California, Samuelson continued to work for the CMBP as well as starting his own construction company called MC2, which stands for Max's Carpentry and Construction.

"I do residential and commercial construction," Samuelson said. "In my spare time I make other stuff, like furniture and footboards, which are used for row boats."

"One night, this past December, I was sitting with

Please see Bikes, Page A2



John K. Alvarez/Cape May Star and Wave

Max Samuelson shows off one of his wooden bicycles while buddy Zack Baron looks on. Samuelson, a Cape May Point lifeguard, has made ten wooden bikes with plans for more which will include multi-speeds.