

# Dayton Daily News

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SUNDAY EXTRAS: COUPONS

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COLOR COMICS

PARADE MAGAZINE

## Inspirational woman, 91, ready for a cruise

BY DALE HUFFMAN, STAFF WRITER

### DAYTON, OHIO

It was mid-morning on one of those recent frigid February days and Sarah Deets had spent more than an hour scraping away at the ice that coated the windshield of her automobile.

"I had to get the car ready and get out to do my shopping," she explained. "I just had things to do to prepare for my cruise."

The 91-year-old Deets was on her way to a women's store where, among other things, she purchased two swimming suits for her month-long adventure that includes a 15-day ocean cruise around the tip of South America.

"Won't it be just marvelous to have 80-degree temperatures?" she asked. "I am very excited about this. There will be so many places to see and interesting things to do."

Deets, a retired second-grade school teacher for Beavercreek schools, now lives at 10 Wilmington Place, and, according to her neighbors and friends, is an inspiration.

"Sarah has an amazing zest for life," said Sally Collins, a 10 Wilmington Place staffer. "She has incredible energy and is a kind woman, very sweet, and makes us feel good every day."

Deets explained that she was having a conversation in December with her daughter Donna Jean Moran, a retired government worker, when the matter of a "dream ocean cruise just came up."

"My daughter's gentleman friend of many years got on a computer and in a matter of time announced, 'We are booked on a cruise that will circle the horn and bring us to Buenos Aires in Argentina.'"

She told him, "Let's get packing."

Deets is looking forward to the newest adventure in her colorful life.

Her philosophy sums it up: "Life is exciting. It is our obligation to make marvelous memories. The way I see it, we get up and do interesting things. Then when we get tired we sit down and rest."



Sarah Deets, 91, of Dayton is packing for a 15-day cruise around South America. Her philosophy: 'Life is an exciting adventure, and it is our obligation to make marvelous memories.'

Staff photo by Jan Underwood

Deets lost her beloved husband of 63 years, Milton Deets, on May 8, 2008. "Milton was an educator, a mechanical engineer, a builder of steam engines and an incredible partner in life," she said. "I just know he would want me to take a vacation with our daughter. We were always one hundred percent behind each other. I miss him, but you know, he would understand that we all have to go on in life."

Together, the couple was well known in civic circles, community and philanthropic activities.

She earned her master's degree in education as a member of the first

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## Inspirational woman, 91, ready for a cruise (continued)

graduating class of Wright State University in 1967 and retired from teaching in 1983.

“Personally over the years I took part in the League of Women Voters, the College Women’s Club, the Historical Society. I just enjoyed taking part in important activities,” Deets said. “I still stay busy.”

In addition to Donna Jean, she has a daughter Marilyn Kay Cheek, who is a retired registered nurse who now lives in Florida and a son, Douglas, a captain in the U.S. Air Force based in Virginia, who calls her several times a week.

She drove to the post office in Oakwood last month to update her passport, and then got a patch to prevent sea sickness from her doctor.

“I am in remarkable good health,” she said. “Oh, I color my hair a bit. It’s a girl thing. But I am in good shape. We have a lovely promenade outside our main building and it is a quarter of a mile to circle it. I get out almost every day and walk a mile. And I have an exercise regimen I do faithfully every morning. Fifty leg lifts on both legs, and other things. Health wise I am very fortunate at age 91.”

Deets has lived at 10 Wilmington Place for two years, and has redecorated her apartment.

“Oh I like it here, and I keep involved,” she said. “I went to a Super Bowl party, and then just recently we had a party for those who are 90 years old or over. We had entertainment and went around the room and each person spoke about interesting things in their life. I talked about being born in Nebraska, getting married just at the end of World War II to a pilot in the Army Air Corps and how I remembered when Route 35 was just a two-lane road between Dayton and the air base when Milton and I first moved here... so many years ago.”

Her trip takes her first to Santiago, Chile, where she will spend four days and then 15 days on the Infinity, in the Celebrity Cruise fleet.

“We will go down to the bottom of South America and stop at little ports and inland villages and will end up in Buenos Aires,” she said. “It should be a wonderful trip. I went to the auto club and picked up maps and information about it.”

She added, “They promise that the cruise will be charming, and just

packed with interesting things. I have a feeling that it will be just like life — I will never be able to crowd in everything I would like.”

Dale Huffman wants your suggestions and story ideas. He’d like to share a story about you, your family, or a friend. This column is for you. Send e-mail to [dhuffman@DaytonDailyNews.com](mailto:dhuffman@DaytonDailyNews.com) or write to Dale at 1611 S. Main St. Dayton, OH 45409. Fax: (937) 225-2489. Phone: (937) 225-2272.

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## Atlas Rehab to provide services at 10 Wilmington Place

STAFF REPORT

### DAYTON, OHIO

Atlas Rehab & Wellness has joined 10 Wilmington Place and will provide independent and assisted-living residents with physical, occupational and speech therapy on-site.

Such services are more common in nursing homes instead of independent living communities, according to Ann Broderick, 10 Wilmington's executive director, in announcing the arrangement this week.

Atlas Rehab, which began working at 10 Wilmington Place in November, has two full-time employees at the center, including a physical therapist, Andy Valdez, and a certified occupational therapy assistant.

According to Valdez, Youngstown-based Atlas also has three staff members on call: two occupational therapists and a speech language pathologist.

10 Wilmington Place, located at 10 Wilmington Ave., is a retirement community with 221 independent-living and assisted-living units.

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## Hurricane Charley Sends Woman Back to Dayton Area

BY DALE HUFFMAN

DAYTON, Ohio —

"I'm back home in Dayton," she said. "And I know that God had this in his plan for me."

Jenna, who celebrated her 91st birthday on Sept. 25, lost everything she owns but the clothes she was wearing when Hurricane Charley hit the high-rise building where she lived as part of a retirement center in Port Charlotte, Fla. on Sept. 13.

Speaking from her new home at 10 Wilmington Place, a Dayton retirement center, Jenna, who is a widow, said, "We had never been hit with anything more than high winds in the 24 years since we retired to Florida. But this time, wow, did we get a direct hit."

She was in her third-floor apartment when the rumbling started. Her large picture window blew out and furniture was tossed around in her living quarters.

She took refuge in an interior bathroom. "It went on forever, and we were in the building for two days without electricity or water. We were unable to get out."

Eventually, rescue workers found Jenna and others and took them for medical examinations and then placed them in a hotel in Sarasota.

When the hurricane winds began ripping at her home, and havoc

reigned, Jenna said something unusual happened to her.

"I must tell you this. I had not a fear in the world," she said. "I can't explain it well, but it was like a curtain came down over my brain. I was able to function and deal with it as if nothing was happening. I guess the Lord was at work and he allowed me to han-

When Jenna, who lived 40 years in the Belmont area before moving to Florida, saw the apartment at 10 Wilmington she said she knew she had found a home.

"It is beautiful and I have a big window with a nice view and the folks are great," Jenna said. "I live near my daughter in Vandalia and my two sons,

*Little did Jenna Underwood know that a severe hurricane season in Florida in 2004 would send her back home where she now plans to live out her life.*

dle it without trauma. It seems I was prepared for these things in measure. I just did not become unglued, and was prepared for my fate, whatever that would be."

Jenna said the owners of the retirement complex informed her and others that the building was so badly damaged it must be razed. She added, "They did say that if they are able to find any of my personal pictures or items they will try to save them for me."

She said she called her daughter in Vandalia to let her know she had survived the storm, was living in a hotel — but all her possessions were gone.

"Well, she encouraged me to come home to Dayton," Jenna continued. "To come home and be with family."

Her daughter, Jackie Orme, began looking for living accommodations and sent Jenna money for airfare.

one in Dayton and one in Indiana. And my grandchildren. It is a blessing."

The Dayton Red Cross helped provide her with emergency food and clothing once she arrived here, and her son's church in Indiana held a "kitchen shower" and brought her kitchen equipment.

"The kind folks here at 10 Wilmington were kind enough to lend me furniture until I am able to get my own," she said. "I am also getting my electric scooter replaced."

She admits she will miss all her Florida friends, and does not look forward to the challenges of a Dayton winter after all these years.

"However, things are really falling into place. God brought me home to Dayton after the hurricanes sent me packing," she said. "And now, I must say, I am thankful for every day of my life. Regardless of the weather."

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## Senior Prom Event Takes on New Twist

*Students, senior center residents attend dance*

BY JOHN BRUNING

DAYTON, Ohio

Myrle Hall cried a little when she was crowned queen of the Under the Sea prom 2003.

"It's wonderful," she said.

King Ken Kinnison accepted his crown and robe with quiet dignity.

Applause erupted as the couple took their inaugural dance in the Patterson Room of 10 Wilmington Place, the retirement community at 10 Wilmington Ave., Dayton.

The crowning, from a random drawing, was the highlight of a beach-themed dance Friday night.

The event was organized by Oakwood High School students who are members and volunteers of Oakwood Caring, a student community service club.

Dozens of student volunteers, dressed in island attire, arrived ahead of most of the elderly residents and set up a table with brownies, cookies, punch and other treats. They were ready to greet and put a colorful paper lei around the neck of each resident.

Many of the students also danced with the residents.

Junior Danny Surico, 17, was the disc jockey, playing mainly the big band sounds of the Glenn Miller Orchestra, in the spacious room which the students had decorated.

Weston Perkins, 17, also a junior, was another volunteer.



*Music, Dancing, Refreshments... the annual Senior Prom is a popular event!*

"I get along very well with elderly people," he said. "My grandparents live in an elderly community, and I'm around them all the time."

"It's fun and it's a good experience," junior Mike Whalen, 17, said. "You get to meet a lot of nice people, and the people here will probably enjoy it."

Oakwood Principal Joe Boyle was one of the school officials who attended the event.

"I think it's one of the best things I've seen in my five years as principal," he said. "I think it's great that so many students are giving up their Friday night to be here."

A grandparent-grandchild chemistry was evident throughout the event. Students and residents enjoyed the event.

Resident Fay Morgan appreciated all the students' work.

"I think it's darling, the decorations they did. They did all of this," she said.

"It's very nice of them to do this for us, the elderly folks," resident Verene Peters said.

April Dapore, activities director at 10 Wilmington Place, and Mary Berger, an Oakwood teacher and moderator of Oakwood Giving, made arrangements for the event.

"I was very impressed with the students and the residents," Berger said.

Senior Amanda Cole, 18, coordinates the volunteer projects. She said the student organization has about 50 members and another 30 who help with the activities about twice a month.

"We do things like food collections for the needy but it's the first time we've done something like this," she said.

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## Retiree's Chef is Cooking

BY DALE HUFFMAN

### DAYTON, Ohio —

When folks ask Martha Baker if she is comfortable living in the retirement center known as 10 Wilmington Place, she always answers, "Why shouldn't I love it? I have my own chauffeur, my own maid and, of course, my personal chef."

It was her chef that inspired Martha, who is 89, to call me.

"Get this," she said. "He's been selected the top chef in the Miami Valley. I mean, he won out over those guys who work at the fancy restaurants. Our Keith is absolutely the best."

According to the Greater Dayton Chapter of the American Culinary Association, which represents more than 50 chefs in the Miami Valley, Keith Davis of 10 Wilmington Place has been named 2003 Chef of the Year.

Martha said she moved into the center nine years ago after her husband, Richard Baker, who taught at the University of Dayton for 40 years, passed away.

She said her chef is not only a great cook. "He has a wonderful sense of humor and is very kind. Four of us women eat at the same table each evening, and Keith comes in and greets us with something like, 'Well, I see the wayward women are here again.' He is definitely one neat guy. And he wears the cutest chef's hat."

Kerry Onyett, spokesman for 10 Wilmington Place located at the corner



*Chef Keith Davis, Executive Chef of 10 Wilmington Place*

of Wayne and Wilmington avenues, confirmed the honor for the facility's executive chef, and added, "Chef Davis is the best. Well, he doesn't have his own television show on the Food Network - not yet anyway - but look out, they may be coming after him."

Davis has been working at the retirement facility for four years Onyett said, "He was honored by his peers for his leadership, commitment and dedication to the culinary profession."

According to Ann Broderick, executive director at 10 Wilmington Place, this is not the first award for Davis. In 2002, he received a presidential medallion from the national office of the American Culinary Association.

"This is quite an accomplishment, since only 25 presidential medallions are awarded each year," Broderick said. "The awards keep piling up for

Chef Davis since he also was voted into the Miami Valley Career Technical Center's Hall of Fame."

After completing studies at the Miami Valley Career Technical Center, Davis went on to get a degree from the Johnson and Wales University Culinary College in Rhode Island.

Next month Davis, who lives in Belmont, will turn 35. He said he has known since he was about 12 years old that he wanted to be a chef. "It always fascinated me. I am one of those folks who decided early what he wanted to do and I worked hard at my dream."

He said he enjoys his work and tries to make every day special for those around him.

"I appreciate the owners here who support me, and of course our wonderful residents," he said. "It's nice to win awards, but it is even nicer to be appreciated by those you serve."

While we were talking, I found out that I met Keith Davis years ago on an important day in his life.

"Mr. Huffman, I wanted to let you know that when I graduated in 1987 from Northmont High School, you were our commencement speaker, and I remember how impressed I was that you stood there and shook every graduate's hand."

I asked the award-winning chef if anything I told the class that day may have inspired him to the greatness he has accomplished.

"Hmm," he said. "Well, I am sure you said something inspiring."

Good answer.

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## Birthdays Mark 100, 103 Years

BY DALE HUFFMAN

### DAYTON, Ohio

— She taught many young men how to cook years ago when she was a teacher at Roosevelt High School and developed what was at the time a revolutionary program teaching home economics to boys in Dayton Public Schools.

Margaret was living there when she was a child in 1913 and experienced the great flood that inundated much of the city that March. Her father's business, Haas Plumbing, was at Third Street and Wayne Avenue.

"The water was so high everywhere and I remember how frightened I was walking my father's

Lewis' daughter, Mildred Lewis Johnson, said Lewis was born in Milan, Tenn., and his grandmother, Lou Smith Lewis, was a slave in the 1800s in Paris, Tenn.

"My father was ordained in 1924 and had churches in Michigan before coming to Dayton," Johnson said. "He has always been active in fighting for the rights of all citizens in the city, especially the blacks, and he marched and worked side by side with noted civil rights leaders through the years."

She said Lewis worked at the Inland division of General Motors in the 1940s and later worked for the city of Dayton, where he retired in 1948 after being injured in an automobile accident.

Lewis, with his his wife, Drucilla Warren Lewis, were guests of honor at the Saturday party.

"My father has defended the poor, the helpless, the destitute for so many years. He made such a difference for so many," Johnson said. "He picketed, protested, spoke out on issues of every nature concerning injustice. We wanted to make his birthday was as special as it could be.

"Not many people live to be 103. And not many people have had such a meaningful and important career. His legacy is tremendous."

We join the family and friends in wishing Grady Lewis Sr. a happy birthday celebration.

*Today, someone else was in the kitchen baking a cake for Margaret Haas Plattenburg, who is celebrating her 100th birthday at Wilmington Place.*

Today, someone else was in the kitchen baking a cake for Margaret Haas Plattenburg, who is celebrating her 100th birthday at Wilmington Place, 10 Wilmington Ave., where she has lived for 13 years.

"My grandmother's two sons, Walter and Clifton, took the home economics course," said Paula Waizmann, 40, with a laugh. "But the only thing my father, Walter, can cook today is a pretty good tuna noodle casserole."

Waizmann said when she was a child, her grandmother lived in the Victorian mansion at 1632 Wayne Ave. that is now used by Schlientz and Moore as a funeral home.

"Grandma was married to Clifton Plattenburg in the grape arbor near the tennis court behind the mansion and she has many memories of the old homestead."

lunch to his shop," she recalled.

Waizmann said her grandmother still has a good sense of humor. "We were on a ride not long ago and we went by Woodland Cemetery where she will be buried," Waizmann said. "I asked her if she wanted to see her grave site, and she quipped, 'I'll be there soon enough.'"

The party is scheduled for today at 10 a.m. at Wilmington Place and we join in wishing Margaret Plattenburg a happy birthday celebration.

### **Civil rights leader has birthday 103**

Grady Earl Lewis Sr., a distinguished minister and civil rights leader in Dayton, celebrated his 103rd birthday with family and friends at a party Saturday at Hoover Place, a retirement community at 5407 Hoover Ave.