

RED ZONE



Donovan Catholic, now 5-0, rallies past Southern

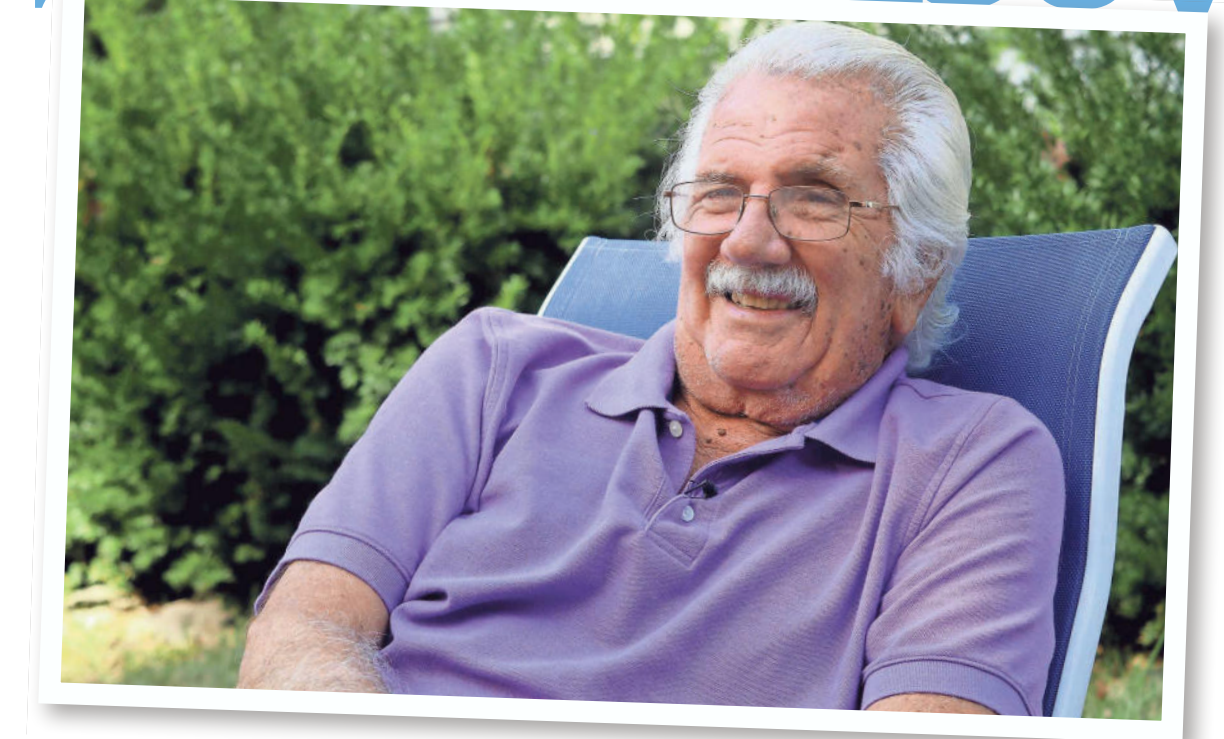
SPORTS, 1B

ASBURY PARK PRESS

sunday

11.01.20

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK



Gray in NJ

Can the state slow the exodus of young people?

Amanda Oglesby Asbury Park Press
USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

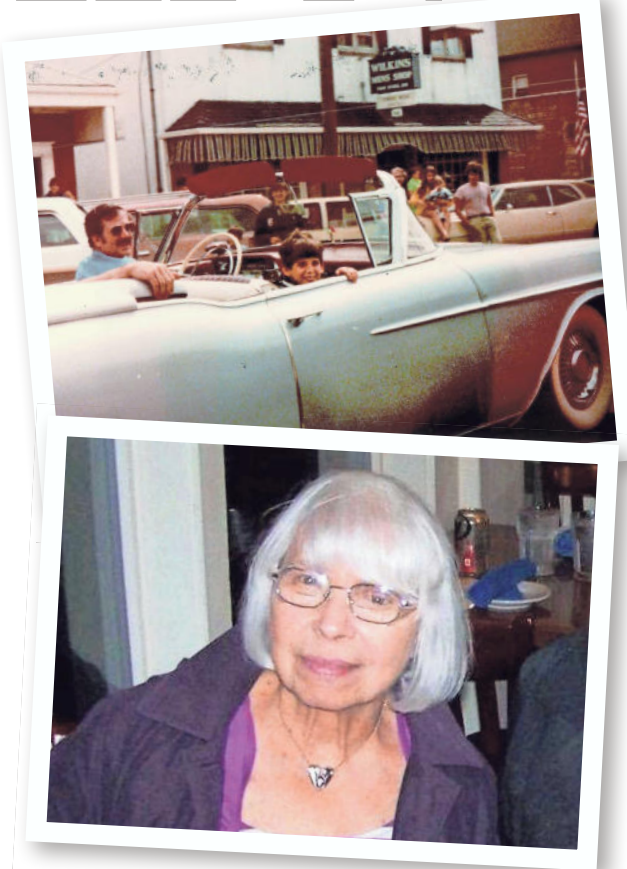
Alfred Dompieri Jr. fell in love with the Jersey Shore as a child during one of many summer vacations. As an adult, he left North Jersey to live full time in Manasquan, and later Lacey.

Thousands of New Jersey residents are just like the 81-year-old Dompieri — choosing to spend their retirement years in the Garden State. At the same time, younger Shore residents have been leaving the state in droves to work elsewhere.

The net loss in the 12 months ending in July 2019: nearly 49,000, according to government statistics.

The state’s population has grown increasingly older on average as well, according to the data, which demographers say portends problems


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Top: Longtime Shore resident Alfred “Al” Dompieri Jr. smiles during an interview at his Lacey home. His family moved from Union City to Manasquan when he was a child, and then recently moved to the Forked River section of Lacey. THOMAS P. COSTELLO/ASBURY PARK PRESS

With his son Alfred in the passenger seat, Alfred “Al” Dompieri Jr. drives a 1958 Cadillac Eldorado Biarritz convertible down Main Street during the 1976 Bicentennial parade in Manasquan. Dompieri Jr.’s wife Rosalie, shown in a 2013 photo, passed away in 2017. PHOTOS COURTESY OF DOMPIERI FAMILY

What to expect election night

 **Paul D'Ambrosio**
Executive Editor
Asbury Park Press
USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY


And the winner of the election is....

Chances are you won't see that headline on APP.com Tuesday night or even in the Asbury Park Press newspaper over the following days. As you know, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly all votes will be marked on paper, which voters will send to county

election headquarters by the U.S. mail or deposit in a ballot drop-off box.

Although more than 2 million mail-in ballots are being counted as I write this, the numbers posted on election night, Nov. 3, will show just the preliminary votes for the candidates. The six million New Jersey voters have until Election Day to mail in their ballots and election officials must wait for a week for all ballots to be delivered before they can start the process of finalizing the tallies and certifying the winners.

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 **Stop the spread**

- Avoid close contact with others
- Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others
- Wash your hands often
- Cover coughs and sneezes
- Clean and disinfect often
- Monitor your health daily

**ELECTIONS 2020**

‘Pivotal’ year, from president to marijuana

Election one of ‘four simultaneous crises’ the country faces in 2020

Mike Davis Asbury Park Press
USA TODAY NETWORK – NEW JERSEY

“It’s the most important election of our lifetimes.”

It’s a phrase that’s been used by political analysts so often that voters might easily dismiss it as hackneyed and trite.

But in the 2020 elections, New Jersey voters are faced with local races to levy property taxes amid a massive overhaul in public school funding, a statewide ballot question likely to change the state’s criminal justice system forever and candidates who could fundamentally alter the shape of the U.S. Congress.

And they’ll also vote for president.

“A few decades from now, when historians look back at the 2020 elections, they will concur with the

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Fall back

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Aging

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down the road.

This pandemic year — or years — could well upset the trend if enough young professionals pull up stakes from crowded New York and other cities and make their way to these less-congested suburbs, the experts said.

But New Jersey policymakers won't likely be able to count on that — a pandemic buying spree by younger professionals — to reverse the state's slippery hold on the younger set, the experts said.

"They (elected officials) are going to have to do everything they possibly can to keep young people... in the state," said Arthur Guarino, an associate professor of finance and economics at Rutgers Business School.

He noted that such trends come in waves and "people have short memories."

James W. Hughes, an expert in demographics, housing and regional economics at the Rutgers University's Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, said New Jersey's office parks could be enticing to wary professionals who no longer feel safe taking mass transit or braving the crowded elevators of city skyscrapers.

Commuting to a New Jersey office park by car "is a much safer environment than going up to the 35th floor in a building in New York City," Hughes said.

"If that (prediction) comes to pass, then we're going to see a further drawing of younger people into the state," said Hughes, adding it's too early to see what sticks.

Hughes said experts have not yet determined if the pandemic will lead to lasting change in terms of the state's demographics.

For Dompieri, the 81-year-old lifelong New Jersey resident, the one constant in the state is change. "Everything is changing," he said on a recent sunny afternoon in the backyard of his Lacey home. "I think it's something that's inevitable."

Long ago, marshlands throughout his former Manasquan community were filled in for homes.

The construction of the Garden State Parkway transformed his long summer commute between his home in Union City and parents' summer house in Manasquan and enabled waves of new residents to make the Shore their year-round home.

These days, young families and professionals are leaving instead.

According to U.S. Census estimates, the median age of a New Jersey resident has climbed from 36.7 in 2000 to 40 in 2018. Nearly 17% of New Jersey's nearly 8.9 million residents (nearly 1.5 million residents) are 65 and older, according to Census estimates.

The share of residents under 18 is dropping, from 23% of the state's population in 2010 to less than 22% by 2019, according to Census data.

In contrast, the proportion of the population over 65 has risen from 13% to 16.6% in the same nine-year span.

Experts say their children and grandchildren are not staying in New Jersey. The motivating factors are too familiar: better job opportunities elsewhere and New Jersey's high cost of living, including taxes.

For Tiffany Martin, a 36-year-old graduate of Manchester Township High School, following her mother to Maryland years ago made sense.

She established her career as a sign language teacher, married and fell in love with a community outside of Baltimore she says is much like the Jersey Shore.

But now that her mother has returned to New Jersey, Martin says she has no intention of following her back.

"Houses (in New Jersey) are RIDICULOUS," she wrote in a Facebook message to an Asbury Park Press reporter. "We probably couldn't even afford to live there in anything decent and we make \$150,000+."

Martin said better career opportunities coupled and a desire for a warmer climate could entice her to relocate, but not to New Jersey.

Tens of thousands of similar decisions by younger adults have left aging baby boomers as the driving force behind New Jersey's economy.

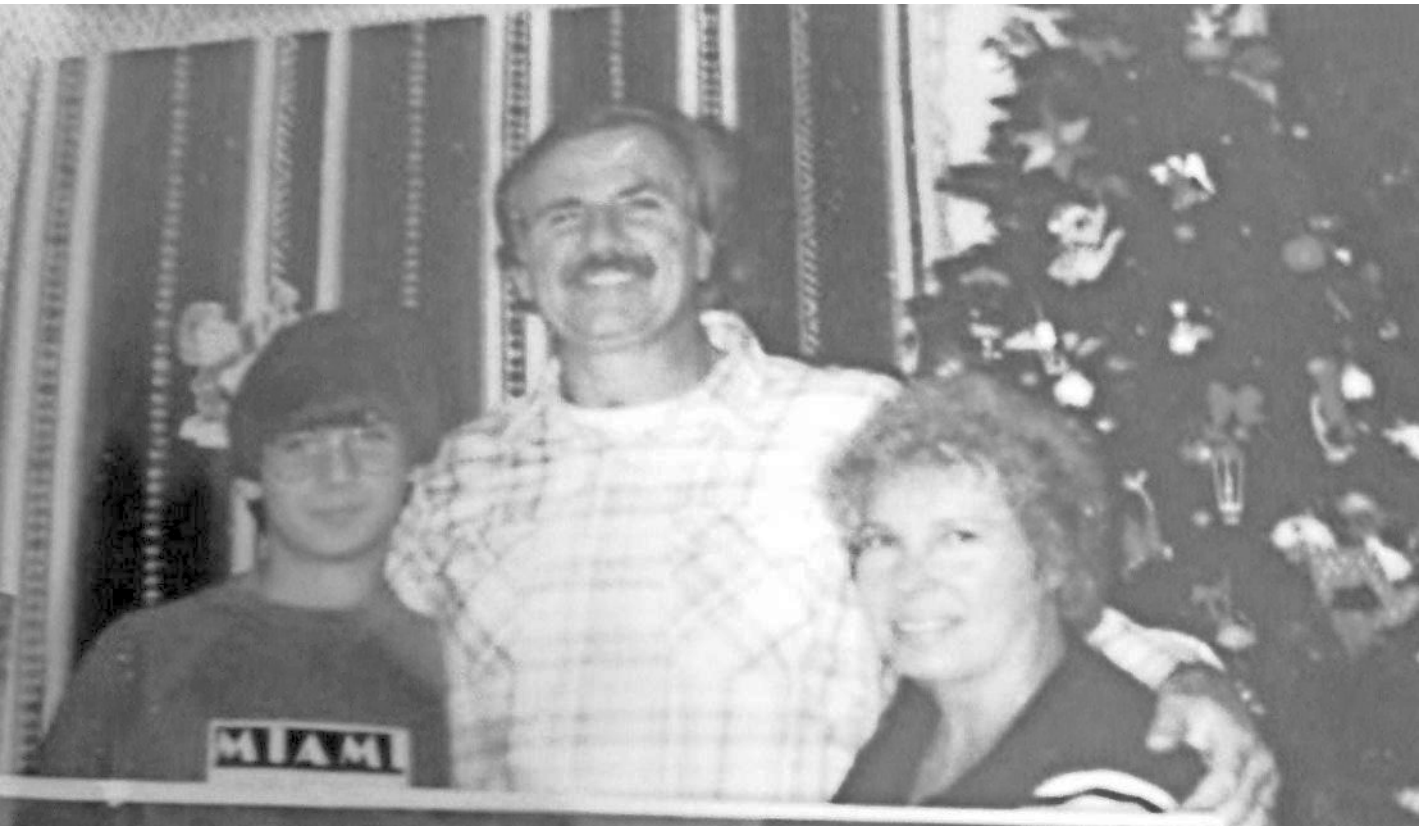
"The baby boom really ruled New Jersey throughout much of the 20th century," said Hughes, of the Bloustein School.

Baby boomers, people born between 1946 and 1964, drove school construction through the '50s and '60s, fueled the job market of the 1970s, and raised demand for suburban townhouses and single-family homes in the '80s and '90s, Hughes said.

Baby boomers remain "an economic force and their spending is very significant," Hughes said.

They spend on housing, travel, health care, dining out and recreation, while "consuming" few public services, like schools, he said.

From an economic standpoint, "they're a population you don't want to lose in terms of that pure fiscal component," Hughes said.



Alfred "Al" Dompieri Jr. is shown with his son Al and wife Rosalie in a 1985 Christmas photo. PHOTOS COURTESY OF DOMPIERI FAMILY



Dompieri's childhood home on Lincris Lane in Manasquan, taken around 1974 or 1975. The car parked out front is Al's 1938 Packard.

"I never thought of relocating (out of New Jersey). I love the ocean... I'm perfectly happy. ... I enjoy being here, being in New Jersey."

Alfred 'Al' Dompieri Jr.
81-year-old lifelong New Jersey resident

Last year, an AARP report found that 56 cents of every dollar spent in the United States was spent by someone 50 years old or older.

Seniors 65 and older accounted for 17.7% of consumer spending in the New York-Jersey City metro area, according to a 2016 analysis of credit and debit card data by JPMorgan Chase & Co.

In areas such as Ocean County, where older adults account for as many as 1 in 3 residents, that proportion is likely higher.

Here, wealthy seniors are continuing to move into the county, particularly in the southern towns of Lacey, Barnegat and Waretown, said Ocean County Freeholder Director Joseph H. Vicari. Many are retired executives who left high-priced homes in North Jersey and brought their money south, he said.

"They pay a lot of money for those houses (in southern Ocean County)," said Vicari.

"Some are young. They travel. They're very well-educated."

Many are buying high-end homes around golf courses or in resort-style age-restricted communities, he said.

Dompieri fits a profile similar to many of Ocean County's older residents. He sold title insurance after moving to Manasquan in 1970 and his wife Rosalie ran a travel company, and the two integrated into the community through joining the Manasquan Elks. They lived a comfortable life, he said.

When his wife died, Dompieri, his adult son and daughter-in-law bought a large house and combined their homes along a branch of the Forked River. Friends had discussed relocating to new places:

Delaware where the taxes were lower, or Fort Meyers, Florida, where the weather was always warm, but Dompieri said he dismissed the ideas.

"I never thought of relocating (out of New Jersey)," he said. "I love the ocean... I'm perfectly happy."

As many older New Jersey residents are staying put through their golden years, other factors are contributing to the aging of the population. Birth rates have remained low for years and immigration into the state has declined, Hughes said.

Guarino, the associate professor at Rutgers Business School, expects the pandemic won't slow the graying of New Jersey.

Home prices and high costs of living remain the greatest obstacle for young professionals and families who want to remain in New Jersey, he said.

"For those people who want to buy a home... it's just too expensive," said

Guarino. "It takes up too much of a big chunk, as far as their monthly paycheck is concerned."

Instead, young workers are going to North and South Carolina, Delaware and Florida, Guarino said.

"They're finding it's a lot, lot cheaper," he said.

The median sale price for a single family home in New Jersey as of September was \$412,000, according to New Jersey Realtors, which tracks home sales.

By comparison, the median sale price of a home in an age-restricted community in New Jersey was just \$240,000, according to the association.

Between June 2018 and July 2019, U.S. Census estimates showed New Jersey had a net loss of 48,946 residents.

If the trends continue, New Jersey could be facing a crisis, Guarino said.

"You have to have... new individuals coming into the workforce," he said.

"There has to be a certain amount of turnover as far as the workforce is concerned to replace those individuals who are retiring, who decided to stop work for whatever reason, or who can't work any longer."

The lack of young workers could drive New Jersey companies to other states, Guarino said.

As of 2018, New Jersey's Department of Labor reported employee shortages in a variety of professions, from high-paying professions like accounting, surgery and information security analysis to more modest income careers like hair dressing and preschool education.

Those workforce shortages could spur New Jersey companies to leave the state, and if they do, state and local tax coffers will suffer, Guarino said.

The Rutgers professor says he sees it happening among his own students, many of whom are accepting job offers in other parts of the country.

States have another economic incentive to retain younger adults.

Americans between the ages of 25 and 64 spend more per year, on average, than adults 65 and older, according to a 2013 survey of spending by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. In Ocean County, many of the oldest adults who moved to the county in the 1970s and 1980s have outlived their incomes, said Vicari, the freeholder.

Now, the county is left making sure their bare necessities are met.

Earlier this month, Vicari announced a new program intended to bring services to older seniors who were isolated at home by the pandemic.

"We have 200,000 seniors living in Ocean County," he said.



Dompieri and his wife Rosalie shortly after they were married in the late 1960s.

"Right now, many are living below the poverty level."

Ocean County's Office of Senior Services plans to spend \$3.3 million this year alone on programs and staff to help them, according to county budget documents.

The aging of the population isn't unique to New Jersey, but reflects a national trend across the United States, said Hughes, of the Bloustein School.

In the U.S., the median age was 38.2 in 2018, up from 37.2 in 2010, according to the U.S. Census.

Hughes said it is too soon to tell if the pandemic — which has inspired some young workers to trade pricey apartments in New York for telecommuting in the New Jersey suburbs — will significantly alter New Jersey's demographics.

"It's possible the New Jersey suburban office market is going to be a beneficiary of this," he said.

So far, the Jersey Shore appears to be profiting from New York City's exodus.

Median sale prices for single family homes in Monmouth County rose 11.7% this year over last, according to New Jersey Realtors.

In Ocean County, median sale prices for single family homes were up 9.7%.

The pandemic's affects in New York City — closures of theaters, limits on indoor dining, and risks on mass transit — appear to be driving up demand and benefiting New Jersey's housing market, Hughes said.

"New Jersey looks pretty good in those circumstances," he said.

Guarino does not believe the movement between New York and New Jersey will be enough to significantly reverse the state's aging trends.

"It goes in waves," he said of New Yorkers leaving for New Jersey.

"We saw this happen in the 1970s... but the population (of New York City) just kept rebounding."

Guarino believes that when the worst of the pandemic is over, young people are likely to continue to leave New Jersey and head to other areas of the country or cities like New York.

For now, new homebuyers in New Jersey will have to compete with longtime residents like Dompieri, who plans to spend the rest of his life at the Jersey Shore, regardless of its changing landscape. "I enjoy being here, being in New Jersey," he said.

Amanda Oglesby is an Ocean County native who covers Brick, Barnegat and Lacey townships as well as the environment. She has worked for the Press for more than a decade. Reach her at @OglesbyAPP, aoglesby@gannettnj.com or 732-557-5701.