



St. Agnes

The St. Agnes Alumni Association's "Golden Jubilee"

The year 2006 will herald the *60th Anniversary* of our *St. Agnes Alumni Association*. I'm not aware of any plans to celebrate this remarkable occasion, and even if one is contemplated, considering the planning and notification time required, the relatively small attendance at our *50th Golden Jubilee*, and our Alumni's advancing ages and health, there may not be sufficient attendance to warrant one.

Regretfully, Joe Rosen, "Beaver" O'Rourke, John Manganaro, and other "old timers," both Nuns and Alumni, have died since we celebrated our 50th Anniversary. The Golden Jubilee was also appropriately used to dedicate three Plaques; one expressing the Alumni's "Thanks" to the Nun's, and the other two "re-dedications" of plaques recovered from the old gymnasium after St. Agnes closed. (One was in honor of Coach Faulk and the other in remembrance of St. Agnes Alumni who paid the "Supreme Sacrifice.")

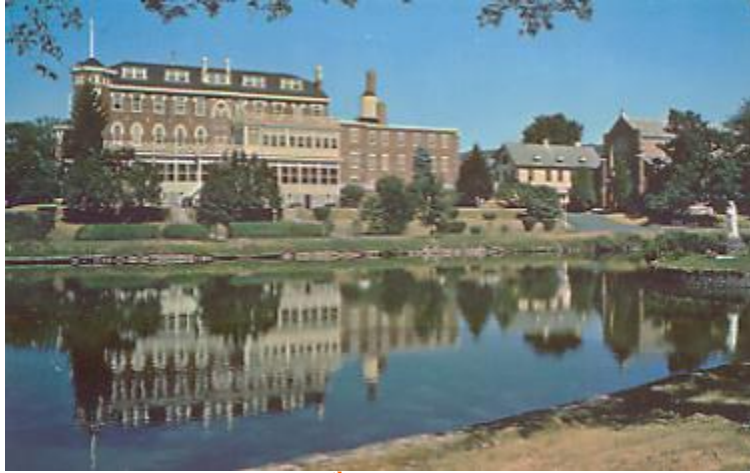
With this in mind, even should there be a *60th* celebration, for those who were unable to attend the 50th Anniversary banquet on 24 August 1996, and even for some of those who *did* attend, I thought it appropriate and timely to publish the *verbal* remarks I made at the 50th Anniversary Grand Banquet. (Many present that evening mentioned that they did not receive the full benefit of my remarks, and several requested copies that I didn't have at the time). The attached written remarks are verbatim from what I said, except for minor editing changes and omitting a couple of repetitive paragraphs. And to make the "reading" more interesting, I have taken the next step by adding pictures that were taken at both the "Plaque Dedication Ceremony" and Grand Banquet, and included other appropriate images and graphics that clarify certain of my remarks with example or explanation.

The substantive historical data about St. Agnes contained in these remarks, with considerable background information about the Kids', the Nun's, the Counselor's, Coach Faulk, and now the Alumni. is the kind of information we'd want to preserve, and I can think of *no* better place to *permanently* store it than on our very own St. Agnes Alumni web site (<http://www.stagnesalumni.org>) where alumni, family, friends, the religious community, and future researchers can all avail themselves of this contribution to the history of our School and Association. This is the very purpose for which David Feliciano, his brother Peter, Joe Stanaitis and others, worked so hard to establish such a web site.

My brother Jim *substantially* collaborated with me on the written remarks, and with my adding the pictures and graphics, the result is an interesting history of our St. Agnes Alumni Association members and caretakers, especially during and a few years following the W.W.II era.

Only the Good Lord knows where any of us will be for the "60th" or subsequent Anniversaries, or other such gatherings, but with so many of us now in our 70's and 80's, this is another good reason to retain and add this "history" of our beloved Association to our archives." With all this in mind, attached is a copy of my "Golden Jubilee" address. I hope all enjoy the "read."

St. Agnes Alumni Association Golden Jubilee



August 24, 1996, 50th Anniversary Celebration

Evening Program

Greeting and Opening Remarks: Mr. Joseph A. Rosen

Welcome: Sister Kathleen Kane, O. P., President, Sparkill Dominicans

Master of Ceremonies: Mr. Paul Fabrizio

Opening Address: Lt. Gerald F. Merna, USMC (Ret.) (1944)

Comments and Anecdotes: Art Kingsley, Alumnus (1941);
Richard Irizarry, Alumnus (1953); James P. Dunn, Alumnus (1956)

Presentations & Door Prizes: Frank Ascioffa

Closing Comments: David McMillan

HOUSE'S KIDS:

FROM THE BALLFIELDS OF ST. AGNES



St. Agnes Baseball Team, Sparkill, New York, 1940
Back: Burns; T. Kubanic; Miller; Sokol; Walsh; Brannigan; Santacroce; Inriquez, Coach Faulk
Bottom: Keegan; Shay; Paulo; P. Kubanic; Amato; Voyicky; R. Rosario
(Photo Courtesy of Bob Millspaugh)

TO THE BATTLEFIELDS OF WAR



Summer 1945: L.to R.: Frank Sutter; US Merchant Marine; Matthew McSherry, US Navy; Coach Faulk, US Marine Corps; Bob Millspaugh, US Army; Wellington, US Navy
(Photo: Courtesy of Bob Millspaugh)



January 1953: TSgt Jerry Merna, SSgt Bob Antonacci, Sgt. Jim Merna
All St. Agnes Alumni
1stBn, 5th Marines, 1stMarDiv, Korea



October 1952: Cpl Dick Feldman, TSgt Jerry Merna

REMARKS OF GERALD F. MERNA*

AT THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER REUNION OF THE **ST. AGNES ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF SPARKILL, NEW YORK AUGUST 24, 1996**

Good evening. Before I begin, I want to thank *Joe Rosen* and *Art Kingsley*, and other members of the *Alumni Executive Board*, for inviting me to speak tonight. I also want to thank Art for sending me copies

of all the World War II newsletters and other notes from that era, which provided great research material for tonight's remarks. Also, *very special* thanks to my brother Jim, a professional public affairs executive, for his *immeasurable* help in working with me in preparing tonight's address.



Joe Rosen, Alumni President, and Jim Merna, Assn. Public Affairs, discuss details of "Plaque Dedication Ceremony," as Fr. Jorn, following his blessing of the congregation, listens to Art Kingsley's remarks at St. Agnes Alumni Association's Golden Jubilee and "Plaque Dedication" ceremony, August 24, 1996, Sparkill, New York

What a *glorious* occasion this is – the 50th Anniversary of our St. Agnes Alumni Association. I'm *honored* to be tonight's speaker, though I've been asking myself since I received the invitation to speak why *I* was given this honor. I say this with utmost sincerity because as I look out at this audience and not only see who is here tonight, but recall other distinguished Alumni members who may not be with us tonight, I can think of many other former "House's Kids," as we were called, who were more active in alumni affairs and better qualified than me to be tonight's speaker. I'm very pleased I was invited, however, and I hope that in my remarks I will be able to recapture some of the many memories we all have of St. Agnes. I not only want to talk about what St. Agnes meant to each of us in our own lives growing up, but also about the warm place it continues to hold in our hearts.

I am also pleased that so many wives and family members are here with us for this grand anniversary reunion banquet. Clearly, St. Agnes is very much a part of their roots – it certainly was a major part of ours. While I am on the subject of wives and family members, I hope you will permit me a moment to introduce members of *my* family who are sharing this evening with us tonight.



Standing L.toR. Vivian (Merna) Rendes; Matt Merna; Jerry and Jim Merna. Seated: Jennifer Merna; Dot (Sedlack) Merna; Linda (Merna) Figura; Sue Merna



Matt and Jennifer Merna

I've already mentioned my brother and friend, Jim, who is here tonight with his lovely wife, Sue, a registered nurse who has put up with Jim's shenanigans for over 30 years. Jim and Sue live in suburban Maryland outside Washington, D.C. Take a *special* bow, Sue, you've earned it! With Sue and Jim is one of their *four* sons, Matt, and his wife Jennifer, both of whom lives and works in New York City. Matt is a CPA and Jennifer, who used to work with me in advertising in the Washington, DC area, is with the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency. Both are graduates of West Virginia.



Jim & Sue Merna



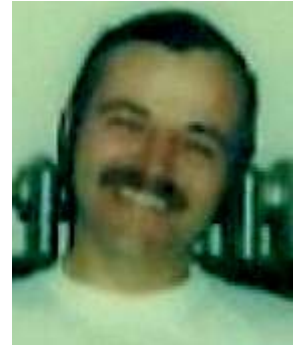
Vivian (Merna) Rendes



Bob Merna



Rich Merna



Tom Merna

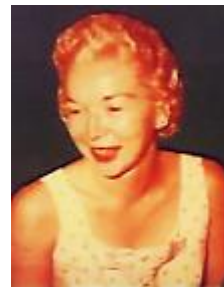
Also at our table, coming all the way from Sun City West, Arizona for this special occasion is our one and only sister, Vivian. She spent far more years at St. Dominic's than any of us did at St. Dominic's and St. Agnes combined! How *wonderful* to have her with us tonight. Our brother Bob is in California, retired from State government. Brother Richard, who was in Korea with Jim and me, is 100% disabled from the Marine Corps, living not very far from Jim and Sue in Maryland. Youngest brother Tom is living in California.



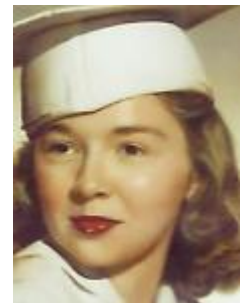
Linda (Merna) Figura with Sons Max and John



Son Gerald T. Merna and his Wife Diane



Dorothy (Sedlack) Merna, TZHS Class of '48



I'm also pleased that one of our two children was able to break away from the congressional battles now going on to join us – our oldest, the mother of our two grandsons Max and John, our daughter Linda. Our Son, Jerry (Gerald T.), is the chief photographer for the U. S. Postal Service and because he does considerable travel he was unable to join us.

Finally, saving the *very* best for last, the love of my life, my partner, my bride of over 45 years, former Tappan Zee cheerleader, prettiest girl in our class of 1948, mother and grandmother of our children and grandchildren, born and raised in Piermont, my wonderful wife, Dorothy M. (Pint) (Sedlack) Merna. Thank you for allowing these family introductions.

One point we can all readily agree upon, is that the moral values by which we live have been forged in large measure by the Dominican Sisters of Sparkill, New York. (And for many of us, also the good



Sisters of St. Dominic's (Blauvelt,) and St. Agatha's (Nanuet). Each of us may adjust to the changing times, but we continue to cling to the basic core values we were taught at all three Catholic Homes.

I want to talk briefly on the topic of values, and discuss it in the context of a current troubling development. As Jim mentioned in my introduction I served over 22 years in the Marine Corps, in two wars and during peacetime, and in many places (including recruiting duty in Nyack, NY). Values have always been the cornerstone of the Marine Corps, which is why I loved it, *and still do!*



Jerry



Jim



Rich



John

Not only were the three Merna brothers Marines, but one of Jim's four sons, John, proudly serves today as a Marine and is a veteran of Desert Storm. And not one of us House's Kids could have had a better role model than our late beloved Coach Jim Faulk, who led Marines into battle in the Pacific during World War II. I'll have more to say about Coach shortly.

But back to the topic of *values*. I was a bit dismayed last month when the new Commandant of the Marine Corps made a major announcement about the young Marine of today. It was the banner headline on the front page of The Washington Times, July 5, 1996, proclaiming, "*Marines add value training to boot camp.*" The sub-headline read, "*Commandant Krulak troubled by moral deficiencies among today's recruits.*" What General Krulak (whose father I served under in Vietnam), had to say is so important and timely involving the youth of America that I want to read a few short paragraphs from that story.

QUOTE: "*General Charles Krulak, the Marine Corps Commandant, has ordered an extra week of basic training for new Marines – not for more marching or marksmanship, but for some frank talk about values. The Corps is now drafting a plan ... to extend entry training from 11 weeks to 12. By October,*

recruit companies arriving at the Marines' two training centers, Parris Island, SC and San Diego, will find they need to learn as much about honesty and loyalty as they do about the M-16 rifle.

"A senior Marine Corps official ... said the new lesson plan will dictate that drill sergeants sit troops down for heart-to-heart talks on courage, fidelity and other values.

"We intend to expand our values-based education because we've reappraised the raw material we're getting in and the communities they are coming from have put less emphasis on ethical standards and those kinds of core values we want to see. "We're trying to address what we see as deficiencies to bring them up to speed.

"They're not teaching values in schools. They're not learning it from church members to the extent they used to. So there is a need that needs to be stressed in a values-based education." UNQUOTE



Lanham resident James E. Merna, right, and his brother Gerald, met with General Charles C. Krulak, Commandant of the Marine Corps at the National Press Club in Washington. The Merna brothers are both former Marines and veterans of the Korean War.

B14 THE PRINCE GEORGE'S JOURNAL TUESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 1997



As troubling as this development is, I think General Krulak is on the right track and I fully support him – and I feel many in this audience do also. Times have indeed changed, certainly from when I joined the Marines at age 17 almost 50 years ago, less than a year after I left St. Agnes.

All of us here tonight can recall when we were first taught the basic values of *honesty, loyalty, fidelity, love of God and country*. We learned these values, and more, as students at St. Agnes, in the classroom, at chapel, in the dormitories, and on the ball fields and playfields, by the daily example of the nuns, priests, coaches, teachers and counselors at St. Agnes. Many good nuns looked after us, and, of course risking not including all of them, to name just a few, Sr. William Vincent, Sr. Barnabus, Sr. Immaculate, Sr. Adelaide, Sr. Ignatia, Sr. Adrian, Sr. Rose Anastasia, Sr. M. Bernardine, and Sr. M. Winifred who died in 1990 at age 103!



A few of "her boys" surround Sr. Ann Catherine as she joins her Sister Nuns in cutting the 50th Anniversary cake

And don't think for a minute I *forgot* to mention Sr. Ann Catherine, who we are so pleased, is here with us tonight. Sr. Ann Catherine probably knew most of us better than anyone since she served most of her time at St. Agnes, as Principal, social worker, head of the choir and band, and with so many other duties. Sr. Ann Catherine, for those who may not know it, celebrated her Golden Jubilee in 1983, and is now remarkably, I believe, in her 63rd year as a Dominican Nun. What a record of service to God!

Through the years we are also indebted to so many others who cared for us, nurtured us, and saw worth and promise in each of us as individuals, at a time in our lives when we needed it most. Foremost among them is Coach Jim Faulk, who devoted his *life* to St. Agnes and the thousands of boys who were brought up there. Until the day he died in 1985, he inspired House's Kids *all* his life.



Coach James Faulk, Col., USMCR (Ret.) and Plaque re-dedicated to him for his dedication to and leadership of the youth of St. Agnes, and his initiative in building a new gymnasium for St. Agnes Kids, proposed by him during World War II (Plaque Photo by G.F. Merna; Faulk Photos courtesy of Bob Millspaugh)

Some of us were present with Joe Rosen and Art Kingsley when Coach Faulk was inducted into the Rockland County Sports Hall of Fame in 1978 as “Mr. Everything at St. Agnes – athletic director, guidance counselor, social worker, disciplinarian and trainer, in addition to varsity and junior varsity coach for all sports.” Who will ever forget what he said then. Quote: “I received this honor only because of the gutsy kids I coached at St. Agnes.” Unquote.



I know Coach Faulk was quite pleased when my brother Jim and his wife Sue named their first born son James *Faulk* Merna, in his honor, and even more so when his namesake graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis as an Ensign in the Class of 1987.

IN MEMORY OF
JAMES JOSEPH FAULK
 BORN
 SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 1908
 DIED
 WEDNESDAY, JUNE 19, 1985
 Age of 77 years, 4 months, 17 days
 SERVICE
 CORPUS CHRISTI CHURCH
 FRIDAY, JUNE 21, 1985 — 8:30 P.M.
 CLERGY OFFICIATING
 VERY REV.
 FATHER ANDREW P. MARINAK
 INTERMENT
 ST. DENNIS CEMETERY
 Ardmore, Pa.
 SATURDAY, JUNE 22, 1985—12:00 P.M.
 PALLBEARERS
 Members of The Knights of Columbus
 Chambersburg, Pa.

The Twenty-Third Psalm
 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
 He maketh me to lie down in green
 pastures:
 He leadeth me beside the still waters.
 He restoreth my soul: He leadeth
 me in the paths of righteousness
 for His name's sake.
 Yea, though I walk through the shadow
 of death, I will fear no evil:
 for thou art with me; thy rod and
 thy staff they comfort me.
 Thou preparest a table before me
 in the presence of mine enemies:
 thou anointest my head with oil;
 my cup runneth over.
 Surely goodness and mercy
 shall follow me all
 the days of my life:
 and I will dwell in the house
 of the Lord for ever.



In
 Remembrance

1 P.M.
 SATURDAY, AUGUST 10, 1985
 COACH JAMES JOSEPH FAULK
 Born February 2, 1908
 Died June 19, 1985

MEMORIAL MASS	CELEBRANT REV. EDUARDO FIGUEROA, O.M.I.
FOR	CONCELEBRANT
REPOSE OF THE SOUL	REV. CHARLES JOHN, O.P.
OF	HOMILIST
COACH JAMES J. FAULK	REV. EDUARDO FIGUEROA
SACRED HEART CHAPEL	REMOINS
SPARKILL, NEW YORK	JOSEPH A. ROSEN, PRESIDENT ST. AGNES ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
	TRIBUTES
	JAMES E. MERNA ST. AGNES ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
	CHARLES F. FAULK BROTHER OF COACH FAULK



June 22, 1985: Funeral Brochure, St. Dennis Cemetery
 (Courtesy of Bob Millspaugh)

August 10, 1985: Memorial Service, Sacred Heart Chapel
 (Courtesy of Jim Merna)

Along with Bob Millspaugh and my brother Jim, I was at Coach Faulk's graveside in Ardmore, PA when he was laid to rest there in 1985. We represented the thousands of St. Agnes men that he developed over many years. Seeing his wife Betty and many members of his family that day was a side of Coach most of us had never seen. I never knew he had such a large, loving and caring family. With all the love he gave to us, we never knew he had any left to share with anyone else—but he sure did!

When I got back I wrote a note to Mrs. Faulk sharing with her a 1953 letter the Coach wrote in response to one I sent him describing a particularly rough night on an Outpost in Korea. His "Marine to Marine" reply, which is in my bible at home, was also like all the letters he wrote to his St. Agnes men in service in World War II—full of encouragement and understanding, peppered with news about the St. Agnes sports teams, and the excitement that occurred when a fire broke out in the Men's House.

Coach also provided his astute views on the political scene affecting the Korean War when he wrote, "*(President) Eisenhower is making progress but even he is only the tool of the politicians and you can rest assured they will take their time in arriving at any truce solution.*" He was so right!



TSgt. Jerry Merna in Korea awaits the visit of
 Commander-in-Chief /President Eisenhower

Coach Faulk may be gone now, but he'll never be forgotten by anyone ever connected with St. Agnes. Mrs. Betty Faulk, a registered nurse, passed away three years after Coach on June 9, 1988, at age 77. She and Coach were married for *43 years!* What a marvelous couple!

So, *how* did we get to where we are today, with our Alumni Association celebrating its golden anniversary—a fraternity of brothers united in purpose, spirit and friendship?

It all began *50 years ago*, in 1946. It was then that two of our most illustrious members here with us tonight—Joe Rosen and Art Kingsley, and a handful of others, met informally following a visit to St. Agnes for Midnight Mass. After exchanging war stories and Christmas greetings, Coach Faulk met with the small group and gave a *stirring* talk on the need for an Alumni Association. Everyone readily agreed—and Joe Rosen was elected “temporary President.”

A temporary advisory committee was formed, consisting of Henry Holdner, William Pizzaia, Robert Rosario, Art Kingsley and Dan Reilly. Nominated as Secretary was John O’Sullivan. Named as honorary members and advisors were Mother M. Beatrice, Sr. M. Stella, Sr. M. Ignatia, and Sr. William Vincent. The purpose of the Alumni Association, as stated then, was twofold: (1) To honor those of our Alumni who made the Supreme Sacrifice, and (2) To do something for others.



Gloria and Art Kingsley



Joe Rosen and friends at Plaque Dedication

Words are inadequate to express the gratitude we owe to leaders like Joe and Art and his wife Gloria, for the vision they had and the service they have rendered to St. Agnes and our Alumni Association. They have led and guided our organization to preeminence for *the past 50 years*. And can you believe that Joe has been the “temporary President” for the past 50 years? Don’t we all agree it’s time for Joe to be named “Permanent President”?” And by the way, Joe, many of us wonder where you get all those wonderful jokes you include in all your newsletters. You could have been a world class Comedian! Here’s a couple for your future consideration: “*Joe and Art went into Tony’s Lobster House and asked former “House’s Kid” and Owner Richard Irizary, “Do you serve crabs here?” And Richard said, “Why yes gentlemen, we serve anybody here.”*

Another: *Is it true Joe you carry your watch in your back pocket so you will never be behind time?* And finally, Joe, *do you know why the turtle crossed the Road? To get to the Shell Station!* Some have called your jokes corny, Joe—but not me! Now you have some small appreciation for how we Alumni felt after reading *your* newsletter jokes! But keep ‘em coming!

On a more serious note, thanks Joe, for your *many* years of devoted service, and for all those great and informative newsletters, annual reunion picnics and dinner dances, and your support on our behalf of our priests and nuns missions both here in the U.S. and abroad. You have been and remain “a true and loyal son of St. Agnes!”

I want to say a few things about some of our common experiences at St. Agnes, especially those of our Alumni who made the “Supreme Sacrifice” in defense of our country. I also want to talk about the House’s Kids who served their country with great distinction in World War II.



”Our Gang,” St. Agnes Kids, Sparkill, NY

Most of us House’s Kids were shaped by two major forces: the Depression and World War II. Many of us came to St. Agnes *because* of the Depression. Many were true orphans; some of us had either a father



“The Gang, Who Are We?” (Edward Jenkins, 1953 – 1959 says “I am the black guy in the back, behind a hat blocking the bottom part of my face.”

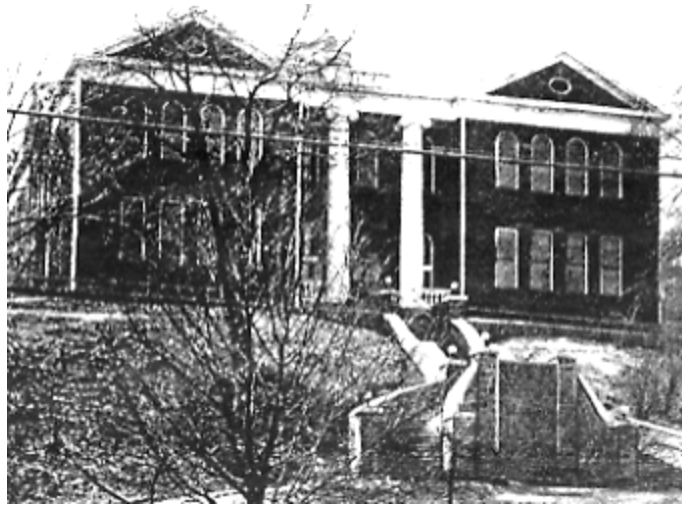


(Fr L) Jim Lawson; (Fr R) Jim Wolven, St. Agnes, 1930’s

(Photos courtesy St. Agnes Alumni Web Site)¹

or a mother – some had both – but a good number of us were sent here either because we were abandoned or because someone could not or would not take care of us. Regardless, when we came to St. Agnes, it would be “home” for most of us until we were 17 or 18 years old. Many of us chose “academics” and attended Tappan Zee High School, then located in Piermont, another town over.

¹ <http://www.StAgnesAlumni.org>



Piermont High School Building, built 1898 to 1900, named Tappan Zee High School (TZHS) in 1901. It was demolished from its Piermont location and replaced with a “mega” TZHS in Orangeburg, NY
(Photo courtesy of Rockland Review, Friday, July 11, 2003)

Others with vocational aptitudes received “shop training” at St. Agnes, with electricity taught by Mr. Stevens, carpentry by Mr. Metcalf, and auto mechanics by Mr. Fedor.

We did some fun things in those days of the 1930’s and 1940’s, and a few wild things too. Remember when we: “smoked behind the coal bin, played basketball in the ice house and ice hockey on the lake, went bean picking for 10 cents a bushel, and caddying at the Rockland Country Club up on 9W, walked to Tappan Zee High School in the days before busing in all kinds of weather, attended Midnight Mass in the main chapel on Christmas eve, saw the Nuns pets going to Saugerties (a town located between the Catskill Mountains and the Hudson River, ninety miles north of New York City and 40 miles south of Albany) for a bit of vacation every summer, got a “baldy” (haircut) after running away, (though I wasn’t “caught” when *I* ran away, I nevertheless got my “baldy” at Parris Island), and when one kid got the mumps or chicken pox every kid got it. Yeah, those were the fun days, never to be repeated!

We also had the best athletes and the best teams in those days – in football, baseball, and basketball. Coach Faulk, and in his absence during World War II, Lenny Sullivan, inspired and molded their kids to athletic greatness.



St. Agnes Football Team, Unknown Year



Quarterback David Feliciano

(Photos courtesy St. Agnes Alumni Web Site)



(Photos courtesy Greg Flotard (no. 9 in picture) and St. Agnes Alumni Web Site)

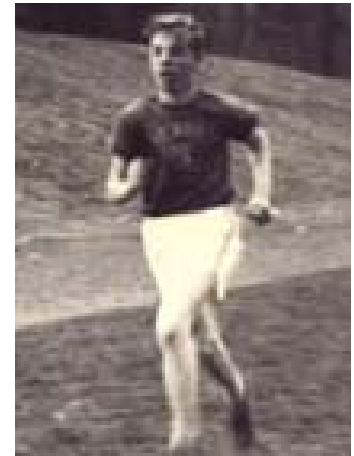
Some of the better athletes (from an earlier era) who readily come to mind, just to mention a very few since there were so many over the years, were: Jim Shea, Andy Paulo, Paul Tarantino, Eddie Loniewski, Henry Farmer, Desi Pascal, Ed Kelly, and the Feldman brothers. Our uniforms were pretty ragged until Coach Faulk made contact with the *Military Academy at West Point*. He hit it off with them and soon we were getting a lot of their used and surplus equipment. Pretty soon we were called by some



St. Agnes Band Members 1957



USMA Corps of Cadets, West Point



John Antonacci, St. Agnes Miler
1951 At West Point Military Academy

as the “Little Black Knights of the Hudson,” wearing Army’s old uniforms. I remember when Coach Faulk tried to get the *New York Military Academy (NYMA)* (Cornwall, NY) to play us in sports. But they wouldn’t hear of it. Why would a fancy prep school, a feeder for West Point, want to play with a rag-tag team from a Home for Boys? So Coach Faulk was forced to resort to a little fib. He told *NYMA* that we were St. Agnes “Academy,” or St. Agnes “Prep,” as I recall. *Bingo!* Coach Faulk had said the magic words. Soon enough, we were playing them on a regular basis, and beating the *hell* out of them as well.

Coach Faulk also got us a football game against a Catholic school, St. Cecelia’s in Englewood, New Jersey. That school’s coach, just starting his career, went on to great prominence as one of the

winningest coaches in the NFL with the Green Bay Packers and the Washington Redskins. His name – *Vince Lombardi*. I also remember when Coach Faulk got *Yogi Berra* and a few other New York Yankees to visit us at St. Agnes and hit a few balls with us. The year was 1946 – Yogi’s first year up with the Yankees, after getting out of the Navy along with his buddy *Joe Garagiola*.

When war broke out in 1941, many of our kids went directly from the playfields and ball fields of St. Agnes to the battlefields of War and other accomplishments. During World War II they would serve



on the beaches of Normandy to the sands of Iwo Jima, joining the millions of men and machines and sharing the horror and heroism that marked every stage of World War II – from blazing naval engagements, hand-to-hand combat and stupendous air battles—struggling from North Africa to Italy, across Europe to Berlin, and from Pearl Harbor to Tokyo. The House’s Kids were in all of that, as St. Agnes kids went on to distinguish themselves in all branches of the military, as well as the Merchant Marine.



Military Services Seals: Top: Dept. of Defense; Dept. of the Army; Dept. of the Navy; US Army Air Corps;²
 Bot: Dept. of Air Force; Dept. of Navy-Marine Corps;³ US Coast Guard; US Merchant Marine⁴

The good Sisters had a newsletter then that was mailed out regularly all over the globe to St. Agnes kids who were in the service. The newsletter had articles written by the ‘Sisters, by Father Nash, a few by Jim Shea, then a brother at Notre Dame, and edited by John O’Sullivan and Henry Feldman. And let’s not forget all the help supplied by Mrs. Elizabeth (Betty) Herlihy, one of our Tappan Zee High

² In July 1947, with the passage of the National Security Act, among other significant changes, the former Army Air Corps became the United States Air Force.

³ The Marine Corps, as a distinct Service, has evolved incrementally over the years., defining it as an individual service within the Department of the Navy. In 1980 the Commandant of the Marine Corps became a full member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. A pending proposal (H.R. 1741) contains other changes in relationship, responsibilities and functions in the status of the Marine Corps, including changing the title “Secretary of the Navy” to “Secretary of the Navy and Marine Corps.”

⁴ The merchant marine is civilian (except in times of war, when they are considered military personnel) governed under the Merchant Marine Act of 1936. A Merchant Mariner is a seafarer or mariner in the United States Merchant Marine.

School teachers. Did you know she went on to have *eight* children of her own? And of course, they included inspiring letters from Coach Faulk, then a Marine Corps Captain fighting in the Pacific.

Coach Faulk used to address his letters *“To the fightingest boys in the world wherever you may be.”* (Note: A copy of that original newsletter is included at the end of these remarks). In one letter he wrote, *“Now you are carrying on for your school, your country and your loved ones in order that right may triumph and peace is with us all for generations to come.”* In a minute, I am going to mention the names of a few of these boys, and highlight their heroic service. In researching some of those old World War II newsletters, I came across an early one containing a note from the Sisters that said, *“We now have the Gold Star with the number 10 on the Service Flag which hangs from the Boys Choir in the back of the Chapel. The White Star numbers 555, although we know there must be more than that number, there are many with whom we are not in contact.”*



Choir Loft, back of St. Agnes Chapel

Just think about that! As the nuns said, they had 10 Gold Stars, signifying that 10 St. Agnes kids had paid the Supreme Sacrifice. And the 555 White Stars signified that 555 St. Agnes kids were serving their country as soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines. That’s unprecedented and unheard of – 555 kid from one small Catholic school serving in the military during World War II. What *other* school or community had sent so *many* of their young men off to war? No wonder Coach Faulk described his St. Agnes kids as *“gutsy kids.”*

SOME GAVE ALL



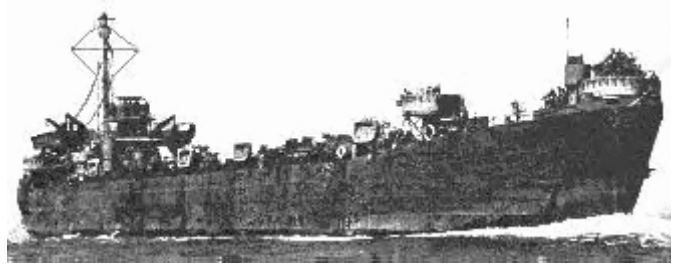
Unfortunately, those 10 Gold Stars later increased to 40. We had 40 St. Agnes kids ultimately killed in action in World War II. One of them was our oldest brother George, a Navy Signalman Second Class, killed at age 19 when his LST was sunk by a Japanese submarine in the Philippines.



At St. Agnes, September 1943



Prior to shipping out 1943



LST (Landing Ship Tank) (Low, Slow, Target)

I remember the day one of the Sisters called me away from lunch. After quietly speaking to me, I returned to my table where I suddenly broke out crying. The other kids, not knowing why, began to laugh. Then Sister told them they just learned my brother, George Merna, was “missing in action” in the South Pacific. The fellows then rallied round me, and helped me get through that day.

Who were some of these other St. Agnes kids who served with much courage and distinction in all of the major campaigns and battles? I want to mention just a few of the 555. Did you know that we had *six* Carroll brothers who entered the service just before the war was declared? They were *all* at Camp McClellan before they shipped out to the Pacific. Two of them, Dan and Thomas, were later awarded the Purple Heart Medal. Charlie Loesch lost a leg in the muddy mountains of sunny Italy. How brave and courageous he was, *never* complained and thanked God for having *only* that loss. The newsletter reported he cheerfully looked forward to being fitted with his artificial leg; SSgt William Callahan went down in flames in August 1943, and was a POW at Stalag-17 in Germany; Bob Millspaugh was missing in action, detained and later repatriated; 1stLt. A. J. Fabrizi, brother of our Master of Ceremonies Paul, was decorated for completing 50 bombing missions over enemy territory with the 15th Air Force in Italy; “Buddy” Francis Mahon had 3 operations at Walter Reed Hospital to save his eye; Bill O’Donnell – two Purple Hearts.





Japanese Flag



Guam, Marianas Islands, WWII



Army Captain



Silver Star Medal

Jim Nestor was killed in action trying to prevent a breakthrough of Japanese fanatics on a ridge in the Marianas; Dave Loeser, the first St. Agnes kid to attain the rank of Captain, was killed in Luxembourg; Fred Napoli, a paratrooper in Italy, was awarded the Silver Star and Purple Heart Medals; Charles Foyder fought the Japanese in Burma as a member of the Army’s famed Merrill’s Marauders; and William Londolfi was killed in the invasion of Normandy. One individual who brings tears to my eyes every time I think about him is Raymond Bannon. He suffered severe wounds during the fierce fighting on the island of Saipan, and was hospitalized for 24 years! Raymond died in a Veteran’s Hospital in 1992.

Heroes they were, these House’s Kids – all 555 of them and probably more, who served their nation when duty called. As did so many during Korea, Vietnam, and Desert Storm.



Korean War



Vietnam War



Gulf War (Desert Storm)

It is amazing how many *large* families passed through St. Agnes. I just mentioned the six Carroll brothers. We Merna’s also had six brothers at St. Agnes. There were also six Karris brothers, one, William (Sarge), a former counselor who died just last year (who I enlisted when I was on recruiting duty in Nyack, NY), and his brothers George, Gus, John and Paul. Donald Antonacci, who died in 1992, was one of five brothers, with John, Joseph, Ralph, and Robert. Then there were the Rhatigan’s—James, Daniel, John, Robert and William. Who can forget the five Keane brothers, William, John, Edward, Thomas, and Richard? Finally, though I’m sure I’m forgetting others, I recall the Altomare brothers, Robert (now deceased), John, Mario, Michael and Phillip. It’s amazing how many *like first names* all these brothers shared!

After the war, our St. Agnes veterans, like millions of other returning G.I.'s, returned and quietly resumed their lives, started families and pursued careers in all walks of life. Most settled in New York City, where they came from before entering St. Agnes. A small number settled in Rockland County where they soon became active citizens and leaders within their communities. Others established themselves all across the country, including overseas. Many joined the ranks of "New York's finest"—NYPD, and the fire department. Others became construction workers, tradesmen, bus drivers and salesmen.



Retired NYPD Detective Lt. John Antonacci



Fr. Jorn Dedicates Plaque

Quite a few became successful teachers, career military, business owners, government officials, lawyers, doctors, dentists, and CEO's. Several became Priests—Fr. Ray Masterson, brother of Ed and Walter; Fr. Ed Figueroa, Fr. Gregory Carroll; Fr. Bob Pelkington; Fr. Ronald Ciaravolo; Fr. Butler, and others, joining our own St. Agnes chaplain Fr. Charles Jorn. Fr. Jorn, incidentally, has been a Priest for *55 years!*

I have spent most of my time remarking on the World War II era St. Agnes kids because that period seemed to epitomize what all of us was about. We all know, however, from the many newsletters, the great accomplishments of our younger Alumni who went on to serve in Korea, Vietnam, and Desert Storm, as did the sons and grandsons of our older House's Kids. Bringing us right up to the present, a classmate of Dot and mine here tonight, Rudy Loyola, has a son Mark who has been in Bosnia for the past *ten* months! Rudy, we pray for his safe return soon.

Their accomplishments are no less important than all the others, and if more time were available, I would have loved to have gone into a lot more detail about them. They too succeeded in every endeavor their older House's Kids did. We salute you all—and are thrilled to be with you and your families and friends to share this very special occasion with you.

Whatever degree of success any of us attained in life, dear Sisters, Priests, Counselors and Coaches of St. Agnes, we House's Kids achieved because of you. Your love, your care, your support and prayers were always with us. You encouraged us always, and we will always be grateful to you, your predecessors and successors. We thank you from the depth of our hearts. Without your caring, love and help, many of us would be far less successful than we are today!

I want to conclude with one of Coach Faulk's last gripping messages in World War II, on the eve of his boarding a troop ship heading to Bougainville. In effect, he had envisioned a gathering such as ours today.

He wrote, "The day is not too far distant when we shall gather at Sparkill to honor our men of St. Agnes who have given their all in this struggle for freedom."



*In Memory and in Honor of Those
Who Have Made the Supreme Sacrifice
in Service to Mankind*



He went on, "By all means, boys, don't let this war change you. You will all get home some day, and though the rigors and strain of battle may change your physical makeup, try always to keep your spiritual health as it was the day you left Sparkill. *Never* forget that your actions will always reflect back on your school, be proud of its traditions always. You are all Ambassadors representing a religion, a school and a country. Present your credentials like true Sons of St. Agnes. And last but not least, don't forget that your Coach thinks you're the grandest guys in the world – I'm proud of you all."



In conclusion, all we can say to you dear Coach in Heaven, dear Priests and Sisters of St. Agnes of yesterday and today, your kids are proud of *you* all, we love you *very* much and we thank God that each of you was and remain a very important part of our lives.

St. Agnes allowed me to have *three* careers in my lifetime...yes and each one has helped me prepare for the next. Retired Marines don't retire, they just expand their dreams and move on to the next career. Most House's Kids have served their service and country, their community, and their God. What *better* life could we have? Today, we are living the good life thanks to the loving Sisters of St. Agnes Home and School for Boys!



Jerry Merna completes his remarks... as Sisters present show their appreciation (Sr. Ann Catherine 2nd from rt.)



Joe Rosen receives applause...



...Accolades, and...



...A TV set...

...at the conclusion of the Golden Jubilee Dinner of the St. Agnes Alumni Association, Sparkill, New York.

-END-

***Note 1: I want to express my deep appreciation to my brother James E. Merna, not only for his considerable contributions in preparing my oral remarks, but also for his thoughtful introduction, not included herein. (A copy of Jerry's biography can be found on the St. Agnes web site at: <http://www.stagnesalumni.org>)**

Note 2: I have added photos, images and graphics to my original oral presentation in the hope that it will be easier to *read* them, while preserving the additional information they provide of this special occasion for the St. Agnes Alumni Association's historic purposes. I apologize in advance for any *unintended* errors, omissions or misspellings. Where I wasn't sure of a correct name or spelling, I omitted it entirely. Any errors or questions can be brought to my attention at: gfmerna-usmc@verizon.net.

Addendum 1: Memorable Letter From Captain James J. Faulk printed in a 1944 St. Agnes Newsletter mailed to "his boys" serving in the Armed Forces around the world.

To the fightingest boys in the world,
Wherever you may be:

My Dear Boys,

This has really been a happy day for me. The News Letter reached me early this afternoon and completely broke up whatever I had planned doing. I just walked to the top of the hill where I know for certain I would be able to devour every word of the Letter without any military interruptions. You will all admit that this second News Letter is tops. The Sisters, Fr. Nash, Mr. Sullivan, Sr. Ann Catherine did a marvelous job and in passing out thanks let's not forget the Editors John O'Sullivan and Henry Feldman. I'm sure you all must feel as I do. There aren't words or phrases at our humble disposal to justify our sentiments or our appreciation. As I sat on the hillside and read the different sentiments and expressions from Sisters and you boys, I was glad I was alone, as for some reason or other I got a bit moist around the eyes. I think the Sisters expressed themselves nobly when they said your loyalty has been far beyond anything they expected. And I know all of you who were quoted meant every word you uttered. I only wish I could forward some of the letters I receive from you boys back to the Editors of the News Letter. Thanks again for the beautiful letters that keep coming my way. All of you speak from the heart and I have the deepest faith in your abilities to accomplish any task that might confront you. I know as I write this letter there are a number of you battling for your very existence against an enemy that seemingly won't give up until his last man is dead. And yet with all your tribulations and inconveniences, you take time out to drop your Coach a few lines. What a thrill it is to me when I receive letters, cards and even presents from "the finest guys" from all over the world filled with greetings and best wishes - may I with bowed head say thanks to you all. Of course you will agree and I believe you all do understand that all I can do is answer in a blanket letter which I send back to the Good Sisters, who in turn print and send back again to you in all parts of the world. I'm sure you will all vouch for the joy and comfort that is provided us by the News Letter - not only does it keep us in touch with home and our friends, but they revived the spirit that makes men great; that enables you all to do deeds beyond all human courage and power; the spirit of free men, fostered by the school where once you sat as youngsters and where you studied and played. Now you are carrying on for your school, your country and your loved ones in order that right may triumph and peace be with us all for generations to come. Let each and every one of us in receipt of the News Letter dedicate again our hearts, our minds and our bodies to the great task that still lies ahead. Since each News Letter will bring additional names of boys who are casualties, it is only fitting that we pledge anew so that they might not suffer in vain.

From somewhere in Sicily, Charlie Leesch wrote to tell me how happy he was in being able to rest and sleep between clean, white sheets at Christmas time. Having lost a leg, he still was able to smile - in fact, to quote him again, he felt quite fortunate just being in a hospital. Fellows - that is symbolic of a St. Agnes boy in CAPITAL LETTERS. Have no fear, Charlie - as long as there are St. Agnes men you will have our undying gratitude for the sacrifice you made. To the others of you who have suffered wounds, may I offer my deepest sympathy and may I in turn do just a little for you who have done so much for us as well as those back home. Remember always what the good Sisters and Priests taught you - It is not given us to know the process by which certain of us are chosen for sacrifice while others remain. We can only rest our faith in the infinite wisdom of the Supreme Being who guides our destinies. And yet strange as it may seem, as I ponder over the names on the casualty list, it seems that the most worthy among us have been selected to wear the scars of battle.

And what of the future for those of us who are still in the fight? The war is not yet won; the enemy in both theatres will fight to the last man. Certainly he is meeting more than his match, but we still have an awful lot of fighting to do before we get back to St. Agnes.

Just a few minutes ago the Chaplain stopped in to inform me that ashes would be dispensed at 6:00 tomorrow morning. So here I am on the eve of Lent writing to my boys - the same boys I woke for many an Ash Wednesday back in Sparkill. By the time this letter gets back to Sparkill and then back to the four corners of the world, the joyful season of Easter will be at hand. I can assure you very well that for our loved ones back home, our friends at Sparkill, this Lent shall be a time of penance, prayer and zeal. There will be daily masses, frequent communions, hidden sacrifices all offered for St. Agnes men overseas. Remember, boys, that such love, such faith, such hope, must of very necessity be answered, reciprocated and manifested by a great spirit of faith on our part. Let us unite our Masses, our Communions, our sacrifices with the folks back home, with the never ceasing confidence in God, that by this union of prayer and faith we shall hasten the dawn of peace.

I just have to take time out here to congratulate Joe Vigiletti and Tom Yozzo on their happy and healthy additions. You both certainly have something to fight for now. ~~You had Carl Tizini can't fly back to be Godfather.~~

It was really good news learning that Mr. Coleman joined up. You surely were more important at your airplane work, Ralph, but now that you are in, we feel more confident than ever that we just can't lose. You will be running across St. Agnes men - the Navy is chock full of them. Speaking of the Navy - what a job they are now doing in the Central Pacific. I'd like to bet that there will be sailors in Tokio before there are soldiers in Berlin.

Just one word about the Alumni Memorial Fund. If any of you have any suggestions, please forward them to me and I shall see that they are acted upon. There is no denying the truth of what this fund can accomplish. Let's all get behind it and do our individual bit. I know there are many of you who will seldom see a Plymouth - we will understand. Let your conscience always be your guide. When the lights go on again, we will all be amazed at the amount of money raised. And when that gymnasium and club house are dedicated, we will all be proud of our accomplishment. If we possess the desire and the will, we can complete any task.

I only wish I knew where I was going from here. Within a week we will board ships to be transported to an island near Bougainville - there we will board L.S.T's and partake in the next offensive of McArthur's. We are all ready and eager, and I am especially happy over the outcome of a drawing the Battery commanders had today. I will have the honor and privilege of taking the first battery of the 14th ashore - here's hoping I won't have to wade 500 yards with four 90 m.m. guns. Naturally, I will heed all the prayers that Sparkill can send heavenward. And do you know, fellows, I actually have so much faith and confidence in those prayers, I feel as though I can weather any kind of hostile fire. Anything we get ashore will have to last us thirty days, so if I'm a little late with the next News Letter, you will know the reason why. As I said before in a letter - "Have no fear for your Coach." I know full well the nature of the risk that is before me. I believe in the worth and righteousness of our course. That belief came to me very suddenly in an early evening at Munda. That righteousness has echoed itself in the mass of letters I receive from you boys. And yet beyond that lies the mission of making certain that those kids back home in Sparkill get a better start in this world than you did.

It is always indeed gratifying when I read in your letters that you manage to spend some of your time with God. With so much confusion going on, I realize that it is a strain doing the things you would really enjoy doing. When the Priest is close to Camp take advantage of his presence. I know the chapels, particularly in this area aren't like Sparkill, but they are for the purpose of worship. Remember, an extra few minutes may pay dividends.

By all means, boys, don't let this war change you. You will all get home some day, and though the rigors and strain of battle may change your physical makeup, try always to keep your spiritual health as it was the day you left Sparkill. Never forget that your actions will always reflect back on your school, be proud of its traditions always. You are all ambassadors representing a religion, a school and a country - present your credentials like true sons of St. Agnes. And last but not least don't forget that your Coach thinks you are the grandest guys in the world - I'm proud of you all.

When you hear from me again, I'll be able to give you an idea of when this war with Tojo will end. Until then, happy hunting to you all and may God and His Blessed Mother guide you safely back to Sparkill.

Jim Faulk
Captain V.V.G.C.

P.S. Flash:

I just received a letter from Joe Vigiletti who claims there is a rumor around that I was wounded and back in California. No truth at all to the rumor. As I said previously, I'm feeling quite well and very eager to get going again. Following is an excerpt from Joe's letter "Thanks for starting the ball rolling, Jim, in regards to the Memorial Fund. The boys can really look forward to something concrete after this war. And what more fitting memorial to give to our boys who made the supreme sacrifice. That's what they'd have wanted and I'm behind you 100% for the fulfillment of your plan." The more letters I receive, Joe, the more confident I become as to the eventual success of the Fund.

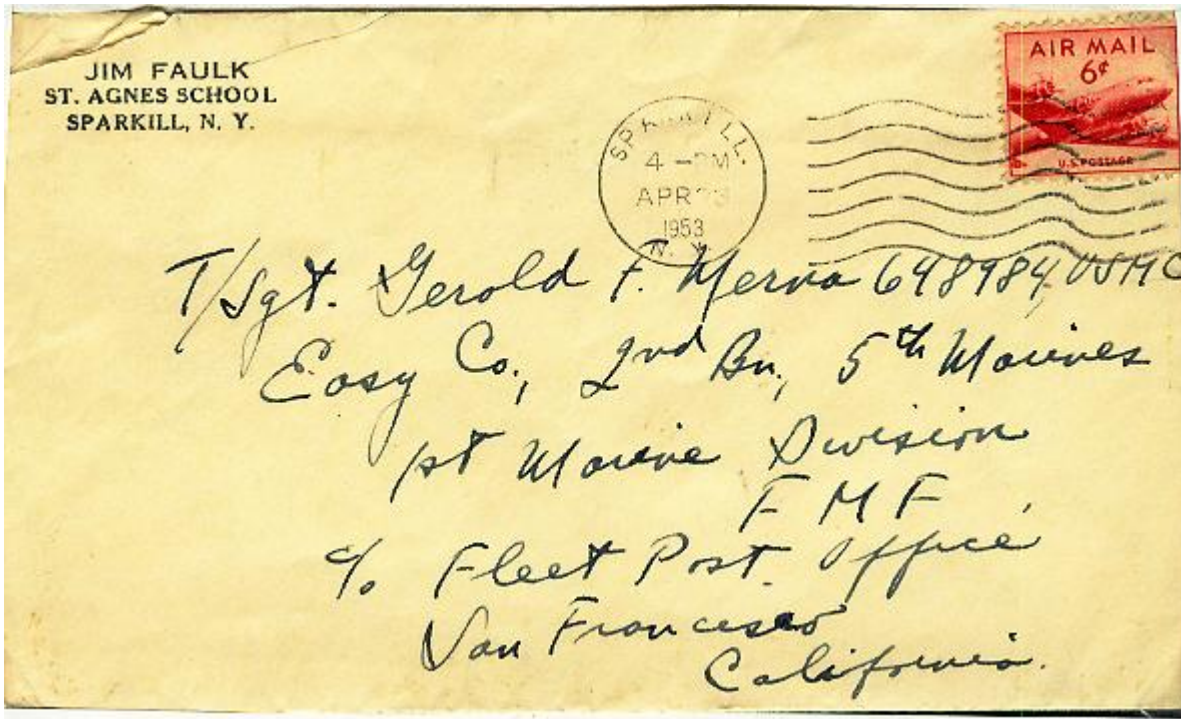
Many thanks for your kindness, Joe, and please convey my best to Charlotte and the baby. You are a true and worthy son of St. Agnes. Good luck and may God bless you.

Jim Faulk

Keep praying, this next time is going to be tough and rough. Best to you.



Addendum 2: April 1953 Letter From Coach James J. Faulk to TSgt. Jerry Merna in Korea. Note similarities of this and letters he wrote to other House's Kids away in service in World War II.



TSgt Gerald F. Merna, USMC, Korea, 1953



Sgt. Jim and TSgt. Jerry Merna, Korea, 1952

ST. AGNES SCHOOL
SPARKILL, N.Y.

April 15

JIM FAULK
ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

Dear Sergeant

Many thanks for your very interesting + informative letter. Just last Sunday I was talking with your brother Richard who informed me that you were on your way home. So you see I was quite surprised to learn that you were in the thick of the Vegas operation. You certainly were lucky to get by - and believe me that really would have been something pretty bad if any thing serious happened after you were up in. However, our Lord has a curious way of doing things and perhaps this way is always the best although at times painful. You as a platoon leader

really had your opportunity and
I'm happy & quite proud you came
through with flying colors. Action
like Vegas probably made a war
of you overnight and I'm sure no
problem in the future will seem too
insurmountable after your experience
on Vegas. Now that you are in
Reserve maybe your orders will arrive
before your outfit moves up into the
lines again. Then again maybe
the Chebs, with Russia's prodding are
really serious about their peace offer.
at least we should give them every
opportunity yet would you believe
that there are people - even local
people - who hate to see Peace
come about fearful of a cut in
pay. Any one with common sense
knows that Russia doesn't want
to fight so why not arrive at an
honorable solution so we can bring
all of you fellows back. It does
seem to me doesn't it that in
order to have prosperity we have to

2.

ST. AGNES SCHOOL
SPARKILL, N. Y.

JIM FAULK
ATHLETIC DIRECTOR

People have become
have war. People have become
accused of robbing big money
at the expense of kids like you
and killed & wounded in Vegas &
just are too selfish to settle back
to normalcy.

Eisenhower is making progress
but even he is only the tool of the
politicians and you can rest assured
they will take their time in arriving
at any true solution. Already the
Stock Market has been dipping which
is an indication of how people are
thinking. Let's hope Peace comes
early so you & all the other fellows
can safely follow you home.

Nothing new to report locally.
We have had as down much rain
that forecast is for behind
schedule. I've never seen such

weather. The big league teams
are having a hard time getting
started & those who have played
have had only few spectators.

The fellows at the Men's House
had a scare the other morning. It
seems a short in some wiring started
a fire in the bathroom that rapidly
spread right up to the roof. Harry the
Chef luckily smelled smoke and
with the help of the other men had
it under control before the Fire Co.
got there. The bid who turned in
the alarm pulled a Box in the Big
House which meant that every one
had practice getting out of Bed & reaching
the guest out doors at 3 o'clock in the
morning. Some didn't like the idea
but it did serve as an educational
"dry run."

Well, Jerry I'll sign off now.
Thanks a gain for your most interesting
letter & believe me when I say we are
all proud of you. Pass my best to
Jim & Hebe if you go their way.
Best wishes
Coch

(1944)

- (1) Seabees: Letter from Paul Valeria, currently in California. He plays softball and their station team played a team led by Vince DiMaggio and has such stars as Bobby Doer of Red Sox, Red Barrett, Ralph Kress, Dick Conger and stars from the Pacific Cost League. I am not afraid. I go to Mass twice a week and to communion weekly. The training I have received by the good sisters certainly has helped me considerably since I've been in this outfit. They really do and have done wonderful work and one doesn't realize it until something like this occurs. I'm really grateful to them for all they have done for me.
- (2) "A V-Mail letter from PFC Kuhlman. He was in the same outfit with Al, the first to land on the "Canal." It has been 20 months of foreign service for Kuhlman.
- (3) "We are being visited by Sgt. Rocco Tarantino, S1/C H. Farmer, Cos. L. Parish and S1/C E. Losefsky.
- (4) The following comments were received from St. Agnes servicemen around the world commenting on how much the News Letters meant to them: Anon: "I received the second News Letter tonight and it really was a treat...I looked around the room and felt sorry for all those fellows who never went to St. Agnes. They don't know the fellowship that goes with all the "houses kids." F. Sutter: "I wish to thank all the Sisters for the copy of the News-Letter which I received about a week ago. I liked the letter Capt. Faulk wrote to all the fellows. He certainly is an inspiration to all of us." Anon: "Gee! That was swell of him (Coach Faulk) to write that letter. The one he wrote me, took me right back to St. Agnes and happy days gone by." Anon: "You know, Sister, every time Capt. J. Faulk writes something to the boys be sure you don't forget to send it to me as I prize his letters dearly. His letters are always so interesting. The first letter he wrote I'll bet I read it at least ten or twenty times and I am saving the letter so I can read it when ever I get lonely. They do something to you. I just can't explain what I mean so I'll just say that after I finish reading his letters I feel like a new man." Anon: "Coach sure does write masterpieces." Anon: "Congratulations on the First issue of the St. Agnes service letter. It was well written and contained much news of interest. Already I have heard from some of the boys, who expressed great satisfaction also. I received my copy February 2nd and read it 3 or 4 times to make sure all the news therein was fully analyzed and appreciated. I know a paper of this sort helps morale."

Brave Charles Loesch sent the following letter to one of the Sisters of St. Agnes.:

"Dear Sister: I received your Christmas card today and you wouldn't know how glad I was to hear from you. At the rate I'm traveling around all those different hospitals, I thought my mail would never catch up with me. I'll have to watch my grammar being that you use to be my English teacher. "I was lucky to get away with the little I did. I lost my leg in the muddy mountains of sunny Italy, but when I get my artificial leg, everything will be just the same as when I had two genuine legs. I give all the credit to the good Lord who must have been at my side when the shells, bullets, etc. were whizzing through the air. In reading "The Link" there's a saying that, "There's no Atheists in the foxholes." That's one time I really prayed. The prayers that the nuns taught me when I was a kid came back to me in a foxhole. I'm still a kid 19 years old. I'll sign off giving my regards to all the nuns and boys of St. Agnes."

Excerpt from the Sixth Newsletter, Feb. 1945

(1) Fr. Nash wrote: “More than likely you have met, at times, people who expressed pity and sorrow for you because you came from “a home.” You must have sensed that pity and sympathy in their attitude and in their expressions. But if they only knew! If they only realized the friends you have made; the pals and buddies you have won while at that “home”; if they only knew your feelings for one another; your affections for that home; if they knew this, their sympathy and pity would turn to respect and almost envy. Don’t your fellow soldiers right now look longingly at you when they see you get your bulky issue of each month’s News Letter? Do they get the thoughts, the many Rosaries, the Masses, the good wishes of so many friends as you do? Do the fellows that fell and died next to Jim Nestor receive the prayers of hundreds of boys, men, and Sisters, as Jim receives? I doubt it very much. Personally, I never met Jim, yet at Mass I mention his name and ask for his eternal happiness as I do that of my own mother. That’s what this “home” does to one. If you have a chaplain go up and introduce yourself to him; tell him who you are and where you are from; he’ll be mighty proud of you, just as we are proud of you back home here at Saint Agnes.”

(2) S/Sgt J. A. ROSEN, 1201422, Sec. 10, Sq. C.B.A.D. #2, APO 635, NYC, wrote from Scotland with the following suggestion: “Have all the men who receive the Newsletter forward their home address to St. Agnes. This would provide a file of names and addresses, in the event of a social or some such gathering. All the gang could be notified—of course I mean after this mess is over.” Joe recently wrote that he has been hearing from many of the boys, both at home and overseas, and that, “after reading all about the boys, I am proud to say I am a St. Agnes Alumnus. I am praying for our heroes who made the supreme sacrifice, and I am trying to live up to the ideals they died for.”

(3) S/Sgt William Callahan, C 99805, LUFT 3, LBMS XVIIB, DEUTSCHLAND (ALTGEMAGNE) wrote: “Dear Sister, Received your letter today dated May 15th (1944), certainly was pleasantly surprised. Heard from Joe Fontana, and some Sisters. Great to hear you are all O.K. Sure appreciate your prayers. Have got my chin up. Irish stubbornness I guess. Went down in flames last Aug. ’43. Guess the Lord was riding in my ship. Two of crew killed. God certainly was welcome. Wounds healed and coming along O.K. Repatriation day is my dream. Plan to get married if my girl friend is still single. Thanks a million for getting the boys to write. Have often thought of them and what they were doing. Remember me to all the St. Agnes Boys. Some of them may remember me as the “cut up.” Am sure you are as good to them as you were to us. They’ll know what I mean a few years from now. Always one of your boys. Cal.”

“Coach, John Bannon and Joseph McGrath had a nice visit together in Guam. Coach and John are on the Island. Look them up.

“Joseph Vigaletti is with General Patton’s 3rd Army in Belgium. God protect you Joe.

“Charlie Faulk (brother of Coach) is still very sick. Please pray him through. Address: Navy Hospital #10 Ward F2 FPO San Francisco, California.

“Ray Bannon is in Mass. Recuperating from wounds received in battle.

“Buddy Mahon has received an honorable discharge. Operations on eye were unsuccessful. Francis J. Mahon, (address) Bklyn.



Addendum 4: The following was composed by one of our “thoughtful” boys while he was aboard ship returning to our own U.S.A.

“Dear Men of St. Agnes:

The drums of war grow faint in the distance and instead a message of peace heralds across the valley of echoes. This state of peace among nations and peoples is the earnest desire of every person.

As we digress over the entire course of the conflict, we realize the tremendous sacrifices endured and tho we have met them with ever increased courage, we hope and pray that the necessity to fight again shall never arise. We have experienced the bitterness and hate of the crisis and have tried to combat them with love and understanding...Still people cry out and wonder why God permits such horrible things as war. God does not permit them any more than we can stop a fire if we strike a match. It is our actions that lead to war...

While at St. Agnes, we were taught “book” knowledge and principles but since then we have learned in a beautiful way that there are no finer truths than those we learned as little children from our sisters and spiritual directors...How can man refuse to recognize Christian attributes of love and charity and still hope for peace?...We of St. Agnes have been especially blessed with a knowledge and practice of the Truth (and) should in a profound and humble manner cherish it and endeavor to lead others to it by example so that they too may find true peace instead of aimlessly seeking the Truth....

The war is over now, thank God, but meeting the resulting problems of future peace may prove to be a more difficult task than that of winning the war. ..It is not sufficient that we ourselves should want peace but the entire world must seek it.

/s/ An Alumnus of St. Agnes.”

