



FR. RAY MASTERSON

REMEMBRANCE

By Gerald F. Merna

March 01, 2012

FROM “N.Y. HOUSE’S KID” TO A “PRIEST IN THE HOUSE OF GOD” IN SAN PAOLO, BRAZIL¹

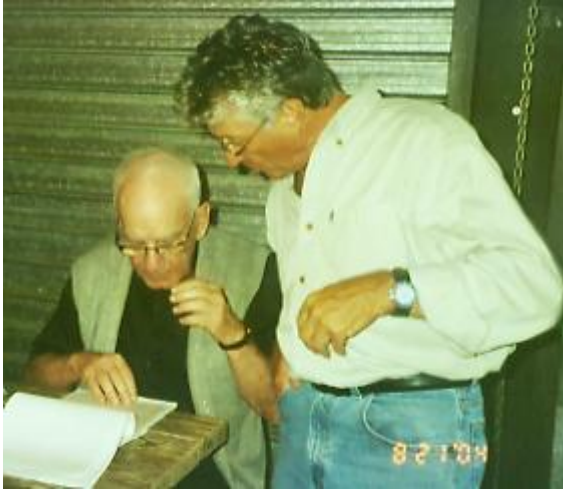
**REV. RAY MASTERSON ATTENDS ST. AGNES ALUMNI ASSOCIATION REUNIONS IN SPARKILL,
NEW YORK RECALLING MEMORIES WITH FELLOW ALUMNI**

by Gerald F. Merna- March 01, 2012

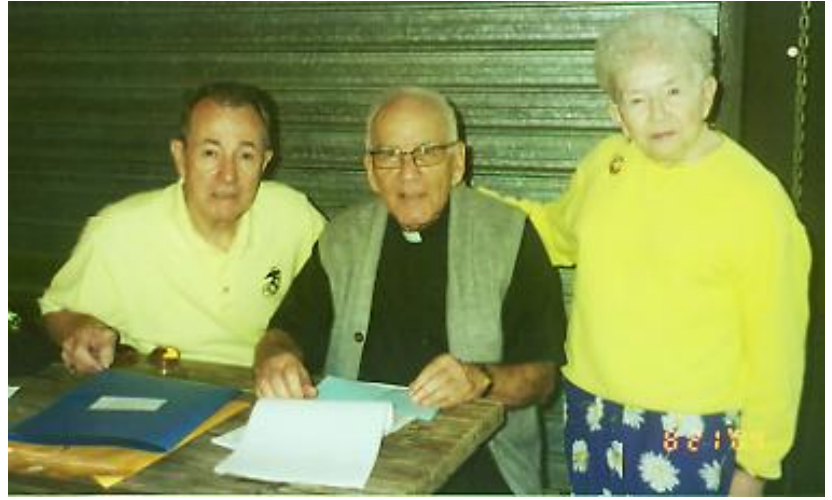


**ST. AGNES HOME AND SCHOOL FOR BOYS,
SPARKILL, (ROCKLAND COUNTY) NEW YORK**

¹ “House’s Kid” is a long-standing term of pride denoting an abandoned or orphaned youngster who was admitted to and lived for a number of years at St. Agnes Home and School for Boys, a Catholic Convent in Sparkill, NY. Some were sent direct to St. Agnes from New York Cities and Towns, but most came from other Rockland County Catholic Homes or Orphanages such as St. Dominic’s Convent in Blauvelt, NY or St. Agatha’s Home in Nanuet, NY when they graduated from the eighth grade to attend Tappan Zee High School in the nearby town of Piermont. (Those not attending TZHS were given technical (“shop”) training at St. Agnes. The term “House” relates to the building they lived and slept in, thus becoming a “House’s Kid.” Annual reunions of the St. Agnes Alumni Association are held on the Piermont Pier, moving from the American Legion building in Sparkill several years ago.



St. Agnes Alumni Reunion: 21 August 2004:
Fr. Ray Masterson shares pictures with
unidentified St. Agnes Alumni, Sparkill, NY.....



Jerry and Dot Merna with Fr. Ray Masterson. (Ray's Brother
Edward is married to Jerry's Aunt, making Fr. Ray Jerry's
"Uncle by Marriage")



Though the Dominican Convent was closed in 1977, the St. Agnes Chapel still
stands as a tribute to its former residents



Fr. Masterson gives remarks after giving the Blessing to reunion attendees. In the center are Dot and Jerry Merna and St. Agnes Alumni President Art Kingsley and his wife Gloria ²



St. Agnes Alumni Association's 60th Anniversary: August 19, 2006

² Fr. Masterson had two brothers at St. Agnes; Walt and Edward. Walt, now deceased, was a classmate of Jim Merna. Edward, a year older than Jerry at St. Agnes, married Jerry's Aunt Patricia over 60 years ago, making Fr. Ray Masterson an "Uncle by marriage" to Jerry and Jim, and their Sister Vivian.



FR. MASTERSON GIVES INVOCATION AT BLESSING OF THE PLAQUES. George Lynch, far left, Commander of the Piermont Veterans of Foreign Wars, is recently deceased.



Members of Piermont's Veterans of Foreign Wars stand behind Fr. Masterson during his opening prayer.



Left, St. Agnes Alumni Paul Fabrizzi sings the Star Spangled Banner



VFW Commander George Lynch (behind Fr. Masterson) leads the Pledge of Allegiance



Fr. Masterson and others listen to remarks from VFW Official



**St. Agnes Alumni pose behind three Plaques (shown in detail below) dedicated at the 60th Reunion.
(Fr. Masterson is second from left of the wreath and Jerry Merna fourth from the left)**



St. Agnes Alumni David Feliciano, (second row far right), is the creator and webmaster of the St. Agnes Alumni web site: www.stagnesalumni.org)



St. Agnes Nuns (all in civilian clothing) join St. Agnes Alumni behind the dedicated Plaques



Fr. Masterson blesses all attendees and the three Plaques dedicated at the 60th Anniversary of the St. Agnes Alumni Association



Signalman Second Class George Charles Merna, U.S. Navy (center), brother of Gerald, Robert, James, Richard, Vivian and Thomas, was killed in action in 1945 in WWII while serving on the LST-577 (Landing Ship Tank) returning from the Leyte Invasion

Tell me,
what
were their
names...?

Gerald F. Merna and David Kee look for familiar names on the memorial plaque at the Dominican Sisters convent in Sparkill. The plaque commemorates the 39 alumni of St. Agnes Home for Boys, run by the Sparkill Dominicans who died in World War II.

The two were among a number of alumni who attended ceremonies Saturday celebrating the 60th anniversary of the alumni association.

Merna read out the name of his brother, George, one of seven siblings at St. Agnes.

George Merna, a Navy signalman, died on an LST at the battle of Leyte Gulf.

Boys from St. Agnes attended Tappan Zee High School; many left to serve in the armed forces at the outbreak of World War II. Gerald Merna was 18 when he was killed.

St. Agnes alumni were also part of the larger community of Piermont and Sparkill. Gerald Merna married Dorothy Sedlack of Piermont. He had not seen his classmate, David Kee, in 56 years.

story and photo
by Arthur R. Aldrich

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Fellow Marines and St. Agnes Alumni Jerry Merna and Dave Kee review the 39 names of St. Agnes Alumni Killed in Action engraved on the Plaque



Dot and Jerry (center) listen to Fr. Masterson's remarks. To right of Dot are Gloria and Art Kingsley. Art was the President of the St Agnes Alumni Association until he passed away in 2009. Gloria continues to publish the St. Agnes Newsletter.

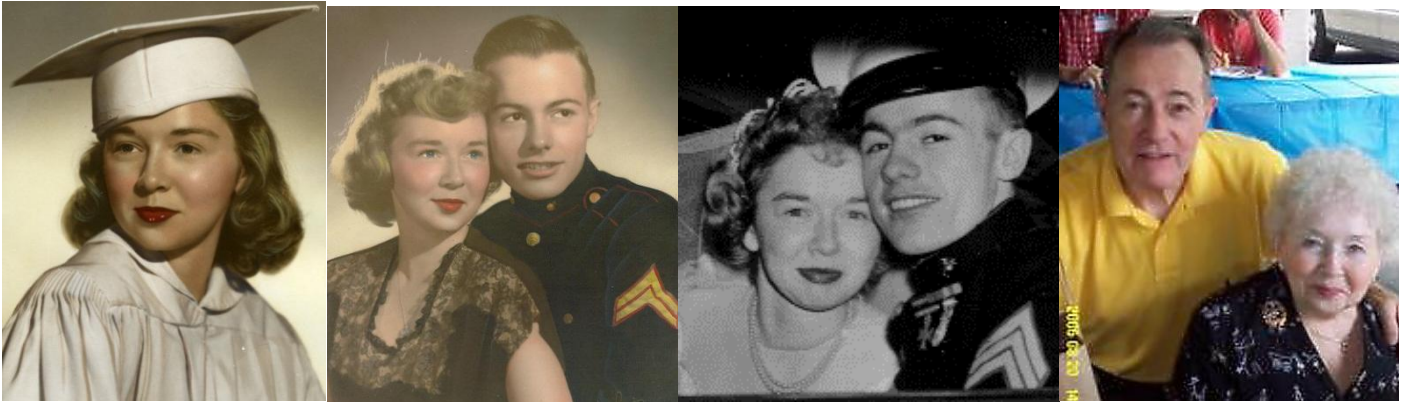


L to R: Elizabeth Lavigne, sister of deceased Alumni William C. Doherty, Dot Merna, Fr. Masterson; Louis Kee (USMC Retired); Joe Stanaitis (an original member of the St. Agnes Alumni website), Aida Antonacci, Ditty Naglieri (from Piermont), and John Antonacci (retired NYPD Detective).



L: Fr. Lundberg was in same 8th grade class with Jerry Merna at St. Dominic's Convent (Blauvelt, NY). When Fr. wrote a note to Jerry he was invited by Jerry to the St. Agnes 60th Alumni Anniversary where he met Fr. Masterson.



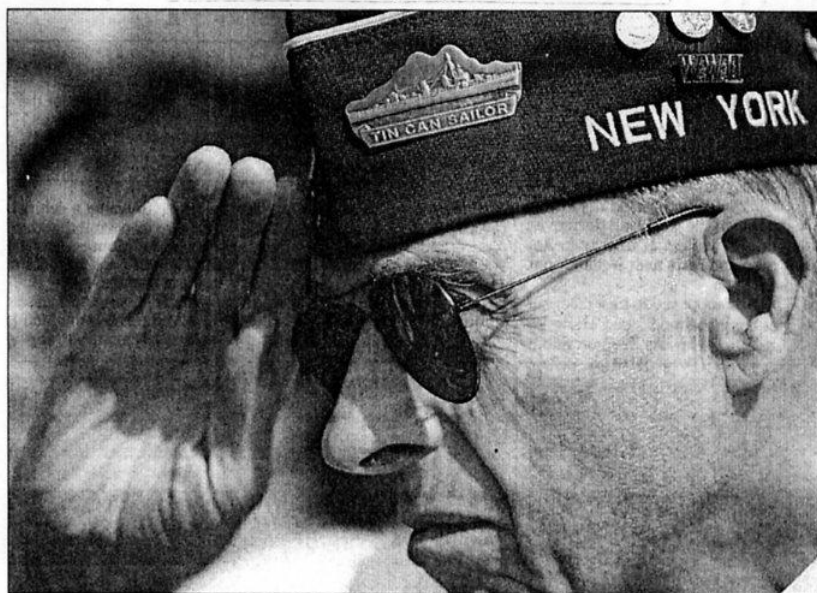


Dot and Jerry Merna, Class of 1948³ at Tappan Zee High School, were engaged in 1949, and married in 1951, (60 years). Dorothy passed away on September 16, 2010. (R: Dot and Jerry at St. Agnes 60th Reunion).



Arlington National Cemetery

³ Jerry ran away from St. Agnes in 1946 after his sophomore year and joined the Marines on his 17th birthday in April 1947. In coordination with TZHS Principal Mr. Anthony Barone, Jerry completed all required courses and received his TZHS diploma while in the Marines. He later earned BS and MS degrees from The George Washington University at ages 43 and 47 respectively.



Photos by Vincent DiSalvio/The Journal News
Frank Bradicich of Staten Island attends the St. Agnes Boys Remembrance Ceremony yesterday at the Dominican Convent in Sparkill. Bradicich attended St. Agnes Boys Home from 1930 until 1941 when he enlisted in the U.S. Navy at the start of WWII. Bradicich said he knew many of the boys whose names appear on the Sparkill memorial.

Alumni honor war dead

Ex-St. Agnes residents pay tribute at event prior to 60th annual picnic

Irene Plagianos
Special to The Journal News

SPARKILL — Frank Bradicich gazed at a plaque engraved with the names of 39 fellow alumni from the St. Agnes Home for Boys as he stood on the grounds of the Dominican Convent yesterday morning.

"These were my friends, my brothers," Bradicich, 82, said of the men killed in action during World War II and the Korean War. "To me, every name is a real person — they're guys I grew up with."

The Staten Island man spent more than 10 years at the orphanage, from 1930 to 1941.

Accompanied by his daughter and granddaughter, Bradicich, a World War II veteran, joined other members of the St. Agnes Alumni Association as Piermont Memorial Post 7462, Veterans of Foreign Wars, held a ceremony to honor the fallen service members.

"Barely out of their teens, they went from the ball fields of St. Agnes to the battlefields, giving their lives for our freedom," said Paul Fabrizio after singing the national anthem. The St. Agnes alumnus asked those gathered to "never forget what these men did for us."

Before the rifle squad fired a salute, the name of each serviceman was read aloud. Gerald Merna gently bowed his head as he said, "my brother, George Merna."

At the age of 17, George Merna joined the Navy; two years later, he was killed when a Japanese submarine's torpedo struck his ship.

"This whole event has really touched me deeply," said Merna, a retired Marine who served in the Korean and Vietnam wars.

Merna and his six siblings were raised by the Dominican nuns, he said.

"To see men I knew as boys here 50 years ago and to recognize the loved ones we've lost together, as a family, it's very special."

"In spite of all the things they never had, no families awaiting their return, they have given so much," said Jerry Donnellan, director of the Rockland Veterans Service Agency in New City. "I am proud to say thank you."

Bradicich said many of his fellow St. Agnes comrades were inspired to join the military because of their sports coach and mentor, Jim Faulk.

Faulk joined the Marine Corps during World War II and after his service, returned to St. Agnes to work with the boys.

A plaque dedicated to Faulk, who died in 1971, lies next to the plaque honoring the 39 soldiers.

"He was the only father many of us ever knew," said



Joseph DeVito, left, and Ralph DeLorenzo, both of Piermont Memorial Post 7462, look at the memorial and remember those lost.

Bradicich as he choked back tears. "He was a great man and a great influence — we all wanted to be like him."

The Sparkill Dominicans opened the St. Agnes Home for Boys when they located to Rockland in 1884. Over the years, thousands of children passed through the orphanage, which served as a home for boys up to the age of 18. St. Agnes closed in 1977, and two years later, its buildings were torn down.

After the ceremony, the St. Agnes Alumni Association held its 60th annual picnic at the pavilion on the Piermont Pier.

But before leaving the convent grounds, 15 alumni gathered around the commemorative plaques, at the base of a flagpole, for a picture.

"We were all family," said Joe Carroll as they began to position themselves. "We're still a family."

COMMITTEE

nk Ascioia
Alfano
in Bohanan
nk Bradicich
omas Fitzgerald
e Maltese
car Molerio
arles Montano
Rosen
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St. Agnes Alumni Association

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Edited by:
John Bohanan
& Joe Rosen

ST. AGNES TO BE TORN DOWN

It is our sad duty to inform you that St. Agnes School and Convent will be demolished in the early fall of this year. Present plans call for the razing of all buildings, except the chapel and gymnasium, around September 15th, to be replaced by senior citizen housing units.

The main building, nearly 100 years old, which housed the dormitories and nuns' quarters, has been vacant since the last boys departed over two years ago. Deterioration, plus the high cost of heating and maintenance were major factors in the decision to demolish it, together with the ancillary buildings, including the school. It has been reported that construction of the first housing units will begin shortly on the south field, below the lake.

We are informed that many objects from the old buildings are to be auctioned off, probably some time in August. If you are interested in attending the auction, please contact the Alumni for details.

REUNION PICNIC

The annual reunion picnic, possibly the last one we will be able to hold on the grounds of St. Agnes, is scheduled for Saturday, August 11th, beginning at 1 p.m. This will be a different type of picnic from those of previous years—it's **FREE!**

Due to the high cost of food, especially meat, we would have had to increase the cost of tickets substantially this year. This would have created a burden on many of our members, especially those with large families. Therefore, the committee suggests that all those attending bring their own food. This way everyone can afford to attend. The Alumni will provide free beer and soda.

Although some tables and chairs will be available, we suggest that you bring your own lounge chairs, tables and blankets. The location of the picnic will be at the gymnasium area. For those of you who haven't been back since the gym was built, it's on the site of the old "Fellow's" field, next to the school.

We strongly urge all members who can possibly make it to attend this year's picnic, since it will be the last chance to see St. Agnes as you remembered it. Be sure to bring your camera. Also, we would like anyone with a musical instrument to bring that along, too, for an evening sing-along.

We are aware that many of our members, especially those living in New York City do not have cars, so we have com-

plied several bus schedules for your convenience in attending the picnic. These schedules are for Saturday:

From the Port Authority Bus Terminal at 41st Street & 8th Avenue, you can get buses at the Manhattan Transit (Mohawk) Lines which leave at 10:15, 11:15 and 12 Noon for Sparkill. These buses return to New York from Sparkill at 3:07, 4:47, 5:47, 6:47 and 8:07.

Buses of the Red and Tan Lines (Rockland Coaches) leave the 175th Street Terminal in upper Manhattan at 10:40, 11:40 and 12:25 p.m.

There also are buses that come down from Poughkeepsie and Peekskill. Please call the bus lines in that area for schedules.

JUBILEE CELEBRATION

Big day at St. Agnes on Saturday, June 16th. Five nuns celebrated 60 years, and 11 celebrated 50 years service to God and His children. Among them were Sr. Antoinette and Sr. Victoire. Many of the Alumni attended a Concelebrated Mass held in the Convent Chapel, where the seeds of faith were implanted in our hearts by many of these Jubilarians.

ALUMNI NOTES

Don Dillon (Pearl River) recovering nicely after a recent operation. Congratulations to Joe Rosen, recently honored with a life membership for his service and dedication to the American Legion. Brother Frank Butler, S.J. (Xavier H.S., N.Y.C.), while visiting Washington, D.C. over the Easter holidays, was struck by a car which threw him about ten feet. Miraculously, no broken bones. However, he did suffer some bruises and torn ligaments.

Henry Farmer recovering at home in Gardena, Calif., after being mugged in Sacramento. Ronny Schneider (Rockland County) and Bernie Neville (New York City), employed by Western Union. Welcome back to Pat Rooney of Ridgefield Park, N.J., who spotted a member's Alumni jacket while shopping in Little Ferry, N.J., and returned to the fold.

Also, new members Manny and William Cardona of The Bronx. Greg Spero, now a bank executive in New York City,

discovered by Oscar Molerio's sister, is now on our mailing list. Attilio Comito has a floor repair business in Rockland County. Cornelius O'Neill moved from Jersey City to Inglewood, Calif. Congratulations to John Bohanan who became a grandfather for the first time in February.

Richie Irizarry now the proud owner of Tony's Lobster House in Sparkill. Tom Kelly, tending bar at Sullivan's in Tappan. Otto & Eppy Kopf still running the Mountain House in Sparkill send their regards to all members. All of the above establishments look forward to seeing returning alumni members and urge that you stop by any time you're in the area. You're sure to find another "House's Kid" or two, there also.

MEMBERSHIP

The Alumni is still accepting dues (\$3.00 per year). This is to help offset the cost of mailing the newsletter (\$80 per mailing) and other Alumni expenses, including donations, Mass offerings, floral tributes to departed nuns and members, etc.

In an effort to reduce our mailing expenses we request that those members whom we haven't heard from over the last five years please notify us if you still wish to receive the newsletter, otherwise we will remove them from the mailing list. This is **ONLY** for members who have not corresponded with us in one way or another, or have not attended any of our functions, over the last five years.

Alumni jackets are still available. They are blue with gold lettering in sizes S, M, L & XL. Price is \$19 (which includes postage). Be sure to indicate what name you desire on the jacket.

The Committee needs new members to help plan activities for the Alumni. If you can spare some time (we only meet 3 or 4 times a year), please contact us by mail or at the picnic. We will notify you of all committee meetings.

Reminder: This is **YOUR** Alumni! We have stayed together all these years. Let's continue to do so. And let's have a big turnout this year for our reunion picnic.