

## St. Agnes Home News

John J. Antonacci

"Dear Sister Marie,

**I**t took me fifty years to find you! I want to thank you for all the loving care you gave us as children in the home at St. Agnes Convent, Sparkill, NY I always wondered what happened to you?

On Sat. 5/18/02 I went up to St. Agnes to be present at a memorial mass for Joe Rosen. . The mass was held in the main chapel. Fr. Raymond Masterson (a house kid) said the mass. There were 40 to 50 alumni present. I met people I haven't seen in 45 years. Beaver O'Rourke, Rudy Loyola, John Diaz, Raymond Adames, Robert Aponte, Arthur and Gloria Kingsley who currently put out the St. Agnes Alumni Letter. Joe Rosen started publishing it in 1946. It tells you about the House Kids what they are doing with their lives-when they get married, what they are doing- what careers they have chosen- when they have children when they have grandchildren.

They have a picnic every year so House Kids can come together to sit and talk. I had my video camera and I was taking video of the church and as I was videoing the rear of the church, I was videoing the organ-and the choir area. The choir area where every Sunday you would be play

ing the organ and Sister Ann Catherine would be conducting the choir which sang such beautiful hymns. The church would be full of nuns and all the house kids.

I made several trips back to St Agnes over the years. I asked for you but no one could tell me where you were stationed. I guess I was asking the wrong people. I knew I had to find you and to write to you. I almost gave up.

After we left mass we were invited back to the Dominican Convent for refreshments. I met with Sister James Francis, who I visit yearly and Sister Mary William - both were saints.

I stopped at the desk before going into the room for refreshments and asked the Sister my usual question. Do you know Sister Marie, she answered yes. I asked her do you know where she is stationed. She said yes in St. Louis. I then asked her can you please give me her address. She said yes I couldn't believe it. 50 years I finally found you. I told her Sister I have been looking for her for the longest time. She called you the Music Nun. I could not believe it. She told me you were stationed in St. Louis because

you were from St. Louis. But thank God I finally found you. It took me 50 years to find you and write to you.

I left St. Agnes in 1952. (I went to the same chapel I was in on Sat. 5-19-02. That was 50 years ago.) I went in to say a prayer because I was leaving St. Agnes and I was afraid to leave not knowing what kind of life God had chosen for me. Sister I know you can not remember all the children whose lives you have touched over your many years of service you have given to God. I know you don't remember the great service you have given the children at St. Agnes Home (House kids) but I can tell you as a child you inspired me and treated us kids with love and respect. All of us kids loved and respected you back then but we were afraid or didn't know how to show it. But by growing up, getting married and providing for our children was one way of doing it and today we are blessed with beautiful grandchildren. I first came to St. Agnes when I was 5 yr old around 1941. There were 5 of us. The 5 - Antonacci's

1) Joseph 2) Robert 3) John 4) Donald 5) Ralph. I started out in the babies 5 yr old. Donald 3 yrs old. Ralph 18 months. Sister Suso

had the babies. When I was in grammar school I tried out for the band. You gave us different size mouth pieces to blow into. I was only a fill in but I was in your famous band, Sister Marie band -we marched - we practiced.

I marched in your band for about 5 to 6 years. I remember being fitted for new uniforms. Those uniforms were beautiful with gold capes. I was only a fill in and you never kicked me out. We marched in St. Patrick Day Parade. Marched in Memorial Day Parades entered into competitions, won many trophies. Those were my fondest days at St. Agnes, belonging to something what an escape, being in the band. Travel to different places. 54 young future men marching down Fifth Ave. -what a beautiful sight. I know my brother Donald was in the band and choir and my brother Bob was in the band. I was in one of your famous plays, St. Francis of Assisi. I was one of the shepherds. You brought the house down. The kids in the audience would not stop clapping - we got 3 curtain calls. Sister, they were beautiful days thanks to you. Of the five boys 4 are left. Donald died about 6 yrs ago at the young age of 50. He served 3 tours in Vietnam with the US Navy. He was

an American-Advisor on the Assaults boats. He was the only American on board. His crew was Vietnamese. He was wounded in battle 3 times and received the Bronze Star - He saved many lives. He died of Agent Orange. All of us served in the military. Joseph - Marines, Robert - Marines, John - Army, Donald - Navy, Ralph - Army.

We all did very well for ourselves. Joe married had two children - retired school teacher. His son Joseph - is a sales executive - his daughter Carol is a lawyer. He retired now living in San Diego, Calif. Joe has 3 grandchildren.

Bob married has two children. Daughter Gigi a school teacher. Bob owns his own company. Flies his own planes, cruises on his own yacht, races and breeds race horses - Still active living in Pasadena, Calif. His son Brian sales executive. Bob has 3 beautiful grandchildren.

John married- two children. Son John NYC cop for 10 yrs. Son David computer wiz - Geico - Washington DC. John was a NYC cop for 24 yrs. 16 of those years as a detective. Two beautiful grandchildren.

Donald deceased - never married. Ralph married- one child. Daughter - Christene sales executive. Ralph sales executive. Wife Linda bank V.P. 3 wonderful grandchildren. Twin girls now 10 yr old and a boy Eric.

Sister it was not easy for any of us. It took a lot of hard work, many hurdles to jump over. Many pitfalls but we did it because of you and those loving, caring nuns at St. Agnes. We never quit. Sister Marie it took me fifty years to find you and to thank you for the role you played in my life. You never gave up on me and I know I never let you down. When we used to march in the parades you put powder in our shoes. Still this day every day I put powder in my shoes. I think of you every day wondering where you are. Are you safe and well? God bless you Sister. My God love you forever. Thank you for being part of our lives.

Sincerely,

John J. Antonacci

P.S. sister we all love you and always will.

*From all the kids who ever marched in Sister Marie's band. "*