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The con man and the convent: A convoluted tale



At top, Richard Tagliamonte, left, with other inmates at Rikers Island. Above, Sister Catherine Grace walks on the grounds of the Melrose Convent in Brewster, N.Y., where Tagliamonte was a guest when he set up a series of elaborate scams.

Sisters never suspected they had taken in a smooth-talking swindler
Bordered by loose stone walls and rolling woodland, the Melrose Convent is a picture postcard of peace and seclusion just 60 miles from Manhattan on a hazy, winding country road.

Names of Jersey WWII vets still echo in France

When all the wallpaper was removed, the imprints of at least 46 soldiers were uncovered. The discovery sparked the memories of town residents who had lived through the war, and inspired a group of citizens to form the Historical Association of Kalhausen to research and preserve the town's history.

Neon lights are out on Broadway

Stage and strike stifles theaters in busiest season
Broadway stagelights dimmed from their bright to picket lines yesterday when their unions called a strike during the New York theater industry's busiest time of the year.

Terror drills expose Earle security flaws, secret papers reveal

The Earle Naval Weapons Station, a Morristown County military base where munitions are loaded onto warships destined for the Persian Gulf, posted a mix of high and low marks during simulated terrorist attacks this summer, according to confidential base documents and individuals familiar with the tests.

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ECHOES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

27-year-old sergeant and musician from Philadelphia's Manayunk neighborhood who joined the New Jersey National Guard band when it was stationed in Camden. Near his name, Lauzinger etched a trombone, his instrument.

"I don't remember doing it," said Lauzinger, now 90 and a resident of a Whitelands, Pa., health care center, when shown a photo of his graffiti. "I do remember them, all of them," he said when told the names of past buddies who also signed that attic wall.

There was a fellow musician, "Camden, New Jersey (Norman) 'Sadie' & the 44th Inf. band bassologist," who added a drawing of a man playing a bass.

Anthony Hamik, a military policeman from Trenton, drew a detailed sketch of the Kalhausen village center as seen from the attic window.

As the soldiers spent Christmas and New Year's in the attic, they also carved their thoughts of home. There is a least plucked bird, an arrow, backyard birds, a bridled horse head, and an organ grinder's monkey. One reads, "Cpl. Morris Passarella Hope to be in good USA very soon."

Soldiers from Boston and Brooklyn and the Bronx, from Cleveland and Youngstown, from Indiana and Michigan also left their names. But the 44th Infantry traced its origin to the New Jersey National Guard, and Jersey men peppered its ranks.

Records indicate Trout, Handel, Brunetti, Sataloff and Hamik are deceased. But today, at least 103 44th Infantry World War II veterans, all over age 80, call New Jersey home.

FRENCH CONNECTION

Kalhausen is a more than 400-year-old red-roofed town of 400 that sits amid rolling farmland in the province of Alsace Lorraine in eastern France, about 15 miles from the Rhine and the German border.

In 1940, Kalhausen had 750 residents when Adolf Hitler claimed the slaughter to Fockert's Chateau at Gettysburg in 1863. When the fighting was over, the outnumbered Americans had repaid 30 attacks.

In the five months that followed, the 44th Infantry became the first American regiment to cross the Rhine, fighting its way through Germany and Austria. At one point, the outfit was in combat for 144 days. In May, the Germans surrendered, and by late July Cpl. Passarella had his Christmas wish.

The 44th Infantry returned home. The battered Kalhausen schoolhouse was restored after the war, and the attic is now used to store supplies for the kindergarten on the floor below.

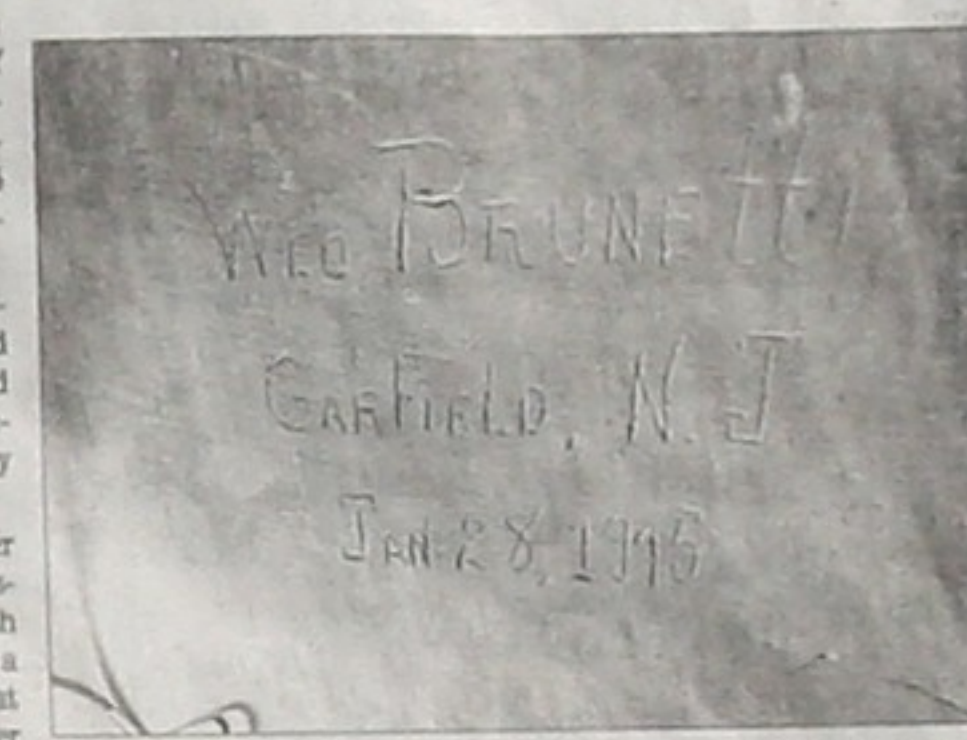
The graffiti will not be papered over again. "The school is always in function, and I hope the graffiti will be preserved," said Bernard Zins, 47, a Kalhausen historian. "We do all for this. It is unique to our area. It is history now."



Ray Lauzinger poses with actress Mariene Dietrich, who performed for the troops in France in 1945.



Lauzinger, now 90 and residing in a Whitelands, Pa., health care center, said he doesn't remember writing on the schoolhouse wall, but he vividly recalls his comrades. "I do remember them, all of them," he said.



One of the inscriptions found on the schoolhouse wall was from Leo Brunetti of Garfield.



THE STAR-LEDGER

The Kalhausen historical society is attempting to collect the memories of 44th veterans. "Sadly, it is late now and many of them passed away," Zins said. "In our village, we do a memory job with the seniors, interviews. We search for old photographs, work on genealogy and so on. For the graffiti, it is also a memory job. In French we call this 'le detroit de memoire.' Do not forget."

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Ongoing odyssey Verona author and businessman Kurt Landenberg's adventure began with his escape from Nazi Austria. An I Am New Jersey profile.

Teaming up for success Devils owner Jeff Vanderbeek and Crosswell Realty CEO Arthur Stern are honorary co-chairmen of the Greater Newark Holiday Fund. Page 35

What America Eats Whoopi's favorite indulgence, why locally grown produce is better, the truth about double-dipping, the importance of family meals and more.

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