

# Sticking it to Mullen, old-school style

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By John Moore,  
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As a student at Regis Jesuit High School, you learned early on that confession is good for the soul ... and punishment is hell on your social

life. So, for the most part, you kept your mouth shut.

But assuming the statute of limitations has passed after nearly three decades, I'd like to get something off my chest.

To Ray Rosenbaugh, esteemed and feared dean of students: Yep, I did it.

I did, along with four unnamed conspirators, spread multiple 10-gallon jars of honey over every inch of the bleachers on the visitor's side of our football field the night before Regis was to entertain archrival Mullen.

Yes, your future valedictorian. I'm ashamed. And, yes, I'm still giggling about the whole thing.

What were we thinking, you ask? Simple: If our malfeasance went undetected long enough on game day,

the sticky situation we had created would force an already overflow crowd to all cram together onto our side of the field. And the proximity between enemies would make it that much easier for fights to break out.

I know ... brilliant, right?

It might have worked, too, had our football coach (and gym teacher) Dick Giarratano not taken his freshmen up to the football field for classes on the morning of game day.

A freshman later told me that when they walked onto the field, the reflection was blinding. So the Regis frosh spent the entire day sponging the bleachers clean. And the game went on, unimpeded by our plot.

We were thwarted ... but never busted!

Perhaps it wasn't the best idea that we left behind all the empty honey jars under the stands, where they were discovered and turned over to the aforementioned dean, who then engaged the student body in a taut and drawn-out game of nerves that would have made Hitchcock proud.

For the next two weeks, the daily morning announcement calling for our confessions grew progressively more ominous. Eventually, we were warned that if the culprits did not come forward within 24 hours, the jars would be turned over to the Colorado Department of Motor Vehicles for fingerprint matching!

Absurd as this threat seemed to us even then, some of our gang came perilously close to cracking. But peer pressure can be a powerful thing. ... thank God.

The rise of Regis and Mullen to today's Class 5A football title game has unleashed memories citywide from one of the most heated rivalries in state prep lore. All this week, Regis alums (and no doubt some Mullenites, too) have been trading war stories on Facebook

about the once all-boys Jesuits going up against the once all-boys Christian Brothers.

In our defense, my class inherited a pugnacious legacy. And my older brothers were responsible for some of the most combative chapters. Dan landed a punch on a Mullen jaw that he was still paying for, literally, 18 months later. Pat got punched in the face by a Mullen kid's father the year before.

Brother Mike made the papers in '77, when he was challenged in the stands during a basketball game at Regis. It was not the most eloquent of tête à têtes:

Mullen kid says, "Move."

Mike says, "Move me."

Next thing you know, a game-stopping melee had broken out. "It felt like the rumble from 'The Outsiders,' " classmate Todd Reilly said.

Mark McVicar's lasting image: "Watching Jimmy Ziemba fly from the top row of the bleachers into the pile that spilled all the way onto the floor," the Regis grad said.

That was the last time student sections were allowed to form on the same side of the gym for any Regis-Mullen game — ending a tradition that, years later, we just felt ought to be revived.

Fighting at an all-boys school was part of the terrain. A black eye from a Mullen kid was considered a badge of honor. Alum Kelan Brady only remembers one thing from his freshman orientation tour: An upperclassman telling him, "Hate Mullen."

"And I obliged," he said.

Both schools aligned with nearby girls' schools: Marycrest with Regis; St. Mary's with Mullen. "And while Regis guys always tried to infiltrate the St. Mary's dances," said McVicar, "if a Mullen guy was ever seen at a Marycrest dance, it was considered a fighting offense."

The rivalry even extended to the speech team, of all things. "We used to change the rooms and times on the meet assignment sheets to get the Mullen guys to report to the wrong room — and thus lose their matches," McVicar said.

It all seems so juvenile now, but that's what we were.

While today's title game will stoke the embers of that long-simmering feud, it'll never be the same. Because the Regis we fought for, and fought to get through, doesn't exist anymore. Not really. Mullen, too. Both schools have gone co-ed, no doubt causing a very different type of blood pressure to rise.

We used to endlessly chant, "We are (beat, beat) Ree-gis!" But the truth is, many of us are now more Mullen than Regis.

Regis abandoned its North Denver roots 20 years ago for more academy-style campus environs in Aurora. And while forgiveness is a Christian virtue, that will be a long time coming from many hardcore, old-school Regis families who now send their kids to Mullen or Holy Family, rather than the new Regis 25 miles to the southeast. That once would have been unheard of.

Even the kids are different today. For example, we never invested in a pot-dispensary Ponzi scheme. We ran the ... oh wait, maybe the statute of limitations hasn't quite run out on that one yet.

To understand just how radically this rivalry has changed, all one has to do is look to the sidelines at today's game, where Dick Giarratano will be prowling ... Mullen's! Yes, our old football coach, whose intense disdain for Mullen used to dribble off his mustache, is now the Mustangs' quarterbacks coach; his son-in-law is the defensive coordinator.

My classmate Vince Porreco, who comes from one of the oldest of old-school North Denver Regis families, is Mullen's head baseball coach.

It seems we've all given up the fight ... and the honey.

OK, I feel better now. So, Mr. Rosenbaugh ... what's my jug?

(That's the Jesuit term for detention — "Justice Under God.")