

Mum Day remains Hoban's oldest student spirit tradition

By T.J. Wolski '01 (Published in the Visor Dec. 14, 1999)

Throughout Hoban's vast history of traditions, one stands out from all the rest. Mum Day is an annual event with great meaning to all students, faculty and alumni. Yet many people don't fully understand what Mum Day is about.

In 1962, the student council conceived the idea for Mum Day when Hoban was playing St. Vincent (now St. Vincent-St. Mary) in football. Don Zwisler, a junior at the time, was quarterback for the Knights.

"The year before," Zwisler said, "they peeled us really bad [Hoban lost 55-18]. Then in my junior year, the student council came up with the idea that in order to save energy for the end-of-the-day pep rally, no one would talk that day."

The idea was accepted throughout the school, and everyone was silent the entire day. Zwisler remembers his first Mum Day experience.

"The brothers were very supportive of the idea," he said, "and for the most part there wasn't any noise at all. No one needed to be told not to talk, to the point where you could hear a pin drop in the cafeteria."

The local newspaper picked Hoban to lose by a wide margin. But the spirit generated by Mum Day seemed to motivate the Knights football team to a new level.

"We were having a .500 season," Zwisler said, "and St. V. had only lost one game. St. V. came out and scored on the first play, but then we scored the next 24 points and went on to upset them. After that, we went on to beat Cuyahoga Falls, then my senior year we won our first eight games. Mum Day really seemed to boost our spirits, and we won 10 straight."

From that day forth, Mum Day became a celebrated tradition unique to Hoban.

As the years went on, the rivalry between STVM became so intense that after the game on Nov. 11, 1977, the series was canceled.

In 1994, former STVM coach John Cistone told the Beacon Journal his version of why the series was terminated.

"We stopped the series," Cistone claimed. "It was a personality thing, something they had done that I didn't think was kosher."

Longtime Hoban coach and teacher Don Schubert, who was athletic director at the time, had a different version of the story.

“There were a lot of half-truths to why the series was stopped,” Schubert said, “but the major reason had to do with the playoffs. We weren’t that good at the time; enrollment was dropping, and Hoban was about to close. St. Vincent wanted to get into the postseason, and in order to do that they needed computer points. They wanted to play someone that would get them into the playoffs, and a game against Hoban wasn’t going to help them out in that regard.”

Although the series with the Irish was interrupted, the Mum Day tradition continued, but the Mum Day game became the meeting with Hoban’s other parochial rival, Walsh Jesuit. Although the opponent was different, some say the Walsh rivalry grew to be as big as the STVM contest. Schubert commented on the switch. “When Mum Day was switched to the Walsh game,” Schubert said, “everything was basically the same, but it took a year or so before it gained the stature that the STVM game had. Eventually the rivalry became just as big as the STVM game, and the school spirit was always there.”

T. Kirk Griffith, a 1989 graduate, has fond memories of the Mum Day game against Walsh.

“For me,” Griffith said, “Mum Day will always be the Walsh game. I grew up in Stow, so the Walsh-Hoban rivalry was always real big. Coach [Clem] Caraboolad, who coached here for six years, would always get everyone real fired up at the pep rallies.”

Then in 1996, the STVM rivalry was reborn, and Mum Day was moved back to that game. The Knights beat STVM in that game 24-0. There were a few changes in the way Mum Day was approached, and sophomore counselor Katie Surface remembers those changes.

“My first year on the faculty, we were still playing Walsh, and I was really disappointed with the school spirit,” Haubert said. “But a lot of things changed the next year. The student council came up with some really good ideas like the senior lockin and the use of the milk jugs [as noisemakers], which really helped with the school spirit.” Whether Hoban was playing STVM or Walsh, the bottom line is still the same. Ever since its inception in 1963, Mum Day has been the most celebrated tradition in Hoban history. On this day, a special feeling envelops the entire school, and school spirit is raised to new heights.