



Bishop Verot's Beretta to issue pardon

In March 2007, I spent a week as a student at Bishop Verot High School for a reporting assignment, experiencing first-hand the pressures of today's high school students. I "enrolled" in a full slate of upper-level classes, completed homework every night, joined the baseball team and even took a couple of exams (I bombed them, of course). I wore a school uniform and struggled to remember my locker combination under intense pressure.

I asked for the full Verot experience, and Verot laid it on me. So much so that staff conspired to give me what I later was told is a Verot tradition, an initiation rite of sorts — detention. They looked me up and down for dress code violations, but my shirt was never untucked. I was never tardy, didn't curse and blended in as well as a 30-something can do on a high school campus.

But then I committed no-no number one.

As I walked from the main building to Mike Gill's outdoor classroom, I pulled the cell phone from my pocket to check for messages or missed calls. Within a minute — no exaggeration — I was handed a detention slip, much to the delight of my classmates who'd been through this before. I thought it was a joke; it wasn't. I had to report for an hour-long detention that afternoon.

Detention at Verot is rough. You're stuck in a classroom with other rule-breakers, and there's no talking. And I mean not a peep. There's no looking out the window or doing homework. You just stare straight ahead and listen to Christian music from a boom box. Minutes seemed like hours, but I was a lucky one plucked from detention to empty trash cans throughout campus. I volunteered, anything to get me out of there.

The principal, Rev. Chris Beretta, and staff thought it was funny. As for myself, though, I was worried about my permanent record. I made it through eight years of Catholic school, then high school, with nary a detention notice. Now I had a blemish on my fourth day at Verot, one published in my blog for the whole world to see. What if I applied for a doctoral program; would the admissions office toss out my application because of it? What about future job prospects; would they see me as a troublemaker, someone who couldn't follow the simplest of rules?

Well, now that Beretta has announced his departure this June, I figured it was time for a reprieve. If outgoing presidents can issue pardons for convicted felons, surely Beretta could expunge the detention notice from my file. So I asked him.

"Absolutely," Beretta laughed.

Perhaps he still thinks I'm joking.