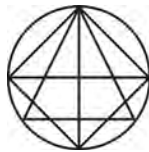


For None Can Rank Above Thee

A History of Cal-Mum Red Raiders Football

Thomas E. Pullyblank



Square Circle Press
Voorheesville, New York

**For None Can Rank Above Thee:
A History of Cal-Mum Red Raiders Football**

Published by
Square Circle Press LLC
137 Ketcham Road
Voorheesville, NY 12186
www.squarecirclepress.com

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First paperback edition 2012.

Printed and bound in the United States of America on acid-free, durable paper.

ISBN 13: 978-0-9856926-1-2

ISBN 10: 0-9856926-1-8

Library of Congress Control Number: 2012950243

Publisher's Acknowledgments

Cover ©2012 by Square Circle Press; design by Richard Vang. Epigraph: Caledonia *alma mater* by Margaret McCabe, 1926. Illustration sources: map illustration ©2012 by Barry Robinson; front cover, 1, 2, 3, 15 (all), 19, 22, 23 (all), 24, 25 (all), back cover (left) - Author and Pullyblank family collections; 4, 5 - Rochester *Democrat and Chronicle*; 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 20, 21, 26, 27, 30, 31, 35 - *Ainodelac* (Caledonia High School and Caledonia-Mumford Central School yearbooks); 6, 9,10,18 (all) - Ed Coots collection; 28, 29, 32, 33, 34, 36, back cover (right): Mike Monacelli collection (photos by Mark Riggi).

Front cover photo: The Soldier's Monument, November 14, 1980, following Cal-Mum's 26-21 Section V championship victory over LeRoy.

Back cover photos: The 1929 undefeated, untied and unscored-upon team (left) and the 2003 New York State champions (right).

*Caledonia, hear us praise thee;
all hail to thy dear name;
Oh may we ne'er disgrace thee
or cause thee any shame,
We will honor thee and love thee,
obey thy law and rule,
For none can rank above thee,
Caledonia, our dear school.*

*You have taught us to be steadfast,
to be faithful, good and true;
To be honest in our dealings
and always loyal too.
These aren't all the priceless lessons
we've learned at thy footstool,
And for all of them we thank thee,
Caledonia our dear school.*

*When we have left the classrooms,
when we are far away,
Fond memories will linger
to cheer us every day.
Though we roam in foreign countries,
our love will ne'er grow cold,
But we will still adore thee,
Caledonia, our dear school.*

Margaret McCabe (1926)

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Acknowledgments

For None Can Rank Above Thee: A History of Cal-Mum Red Raiders Football was generations in the making. My grandfather, Eugene Pullyblank, played on the legendary undefeated, untied and unscored-upon team. My father, Robert Pullyblank, and my uncle, Donald Pullyblank, played on the undefeated, untied 1950 team coached by my grandfather's teammate, Robert Freeman. My oldest brother Mike played on the undefeated, untied 1973 and 1974 teams, and again in 1975, when he was selected an All-American at quarterback. My brother Steve played along side my cousin Mark on the 1976 and 1977 teams. My brother Jim played on the 1980 and 1981 teams. Finally, my cousin Rob played on the 1983 and 1984 teams, and thereafter handed the mantle of starting left end to me, having received it from two of my brothers in turn.

The family story doesn't end there: numerous nephews have played Cal-Mum football since I graduated in 1986. They are still playing, working their way through the system from modified to junior varsity to varsity, when I and their parents and aunts and uncles and grandparents can cheer for them against the same teams with whom we competed in our youths.

This book is dedicated to them, my kin past and present, for giving me the privilege of being part of something great that extends both backwards and forwards in time. Someday, when we're all in heaven, the Pullyblank clan will have one heck of a team!

This book is also dedicated to the Pullyblank women, who, throughout the years, cheered us on and made cookies and washed our uniforms and offered hugs of celebration after victory and tears of condolence after defeat. My mother Betty Jane Pullyblank and my sisters Ann and Amy are at the top of this list.

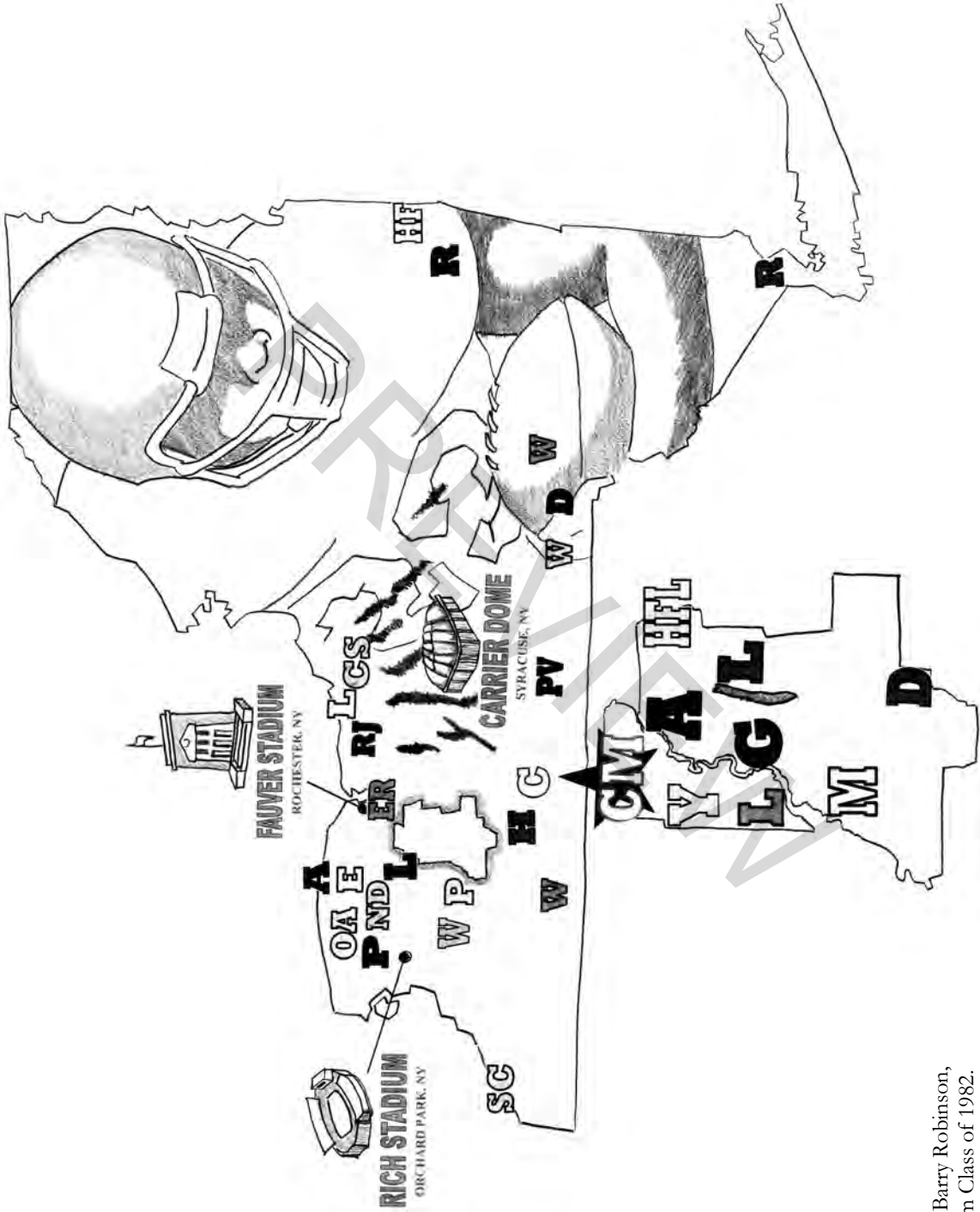
Finally, this book is dedicated to all the coaches who helped teach us Pullyblank boys how to play the game well, how to be good teammates to our fellow Raiders and good sports to our opponents, and how to conduct ourselves with dignity. My father says that it's an honor and a privilege to wear the maroon and white. In large part this was due to the lessons taught and the examples given by our coaches.

For me, those coaches were Bill McAlee, Roger House, Ed Matthews, Mike Monacelli and Gary Fredericks. I could easily sit down at the Iroquois and tell you several

fond stories about each of them, and I'm sure that many of you could reciprocate. When it came to writing this book, Ed Matthews provided some initial inspiration, Bill McAlee provided regular encouragement, and Mike Monacelli provided expertise, knowledge and more than a little coaching wisdom.

There are others who need thanking. To Shannon Martin for generously sharing her late husband Rob Martin's incredible collection of Cal-Mum Red Raider football articles. Rob's collection spans the decades from 1970 to 2003. His meticulously organized scrapbooks made research a pleasure. To Jim Pullyblank for his own scrapbook, which I inherited when Jim went off to college and which I practically memorized as I tried, with varying success, to fill his and my older brothers' shoes. To Carol Matthews for sharing her late husband Ed Matthews' football collection. While not as exhaustive as Rob Martin's, Coach Matthews' material included some precious gems from the early years of Cal-Mum football. To Pat Garrett at the Big Springs Historical Association in Caledonia. Not only did she help me tremendously with my research into the undefeated teams, she also gave me a guided tour of the Big Springs' collection that provided much of the imaginative framework for the type of lives the farm boys from Caledonia lived when they went to Rochester to play and beat the city slickers from Aquinas. To Jim Vokes for sharing his memories and knowledge. His family traveled a similar multi-generational path through Cal-Mum football history as the Pullyblanks, and I know that Jim is just as thankful as I am for all our blessings. To Barry Robinson for the map, and to Matt Robinson for getting the word out to the Rochester media. To Stephanie Pullyblank, assisted by her father and my brother Steve, whose help putting this manuscript together, especially the historically significant lists in the appendices, was invaluable. And finally to Kristin and Bradon, who patiently listened to the stories from my own Cal-Mum Red Raider glory days, asked good questions about them and, most importantly, continue to provide me with the love and support that makes for a well-lived life.

**For None
Can Rank
Above Thee**



Map by Barry Robinson,
Cal-Mum Class of 1982.

Chapter One:

Who's Number One?

MAYBE IT'S THE MOON that came full two nights before. We western New Yorkers know well what strange happenings the Hunter's Moon can bring, especially when it waxes full so close to Halloween.

Maybe it's the teams' combined histories. The first game between Caledonia and LeRoy was played in 1900. In the twenty years before 1977, there have been only three losing records between them, all Cal-Mum's. Both teams have cheerleaders who date boys from the other school. Both teams' rosters include young men whose fathers and grandfathers lined up against their opponent's fathers and grandfathers. For these schools, gridiron memories are in the blood.

Possibly it's the teams' styles of play, one the mirror image of the other. Both teams boast a hard-nosed, straight-ahead, run-up-the-gut type of game. Both teams play smash-mouth football.

Cal-Mum saw the LeRoy Oatkan Knights demolish Honeoye Falls-Lima a few weeks before. "We thought we could run on them" despite the score, said Raider running back Jeff Sweet.

A contingent of LeRoy players watched the Cal-Mum Red Raiders squeak by Livonia the previous Saturday. "Their players were laughing at us from behind the end zone," Cal-Mum's Junior Poles explained. "Laughing at us!"

LeRoy averaged 38 points per game to this point of the season. Cal-Mum averaged 30. The numbers justify both teams' confidence.

Possibly, too, it's the coaches' contrasting styles, also reflecting each other, but in this case like a fun-house-mirror. On the home sideline is LeRoy's Frank Ruane, tall, lean and dignified with a shock of remarkable white hair, his black overcoat billowing in the late October breeze. On the visitor's side is Cal-Mum's Bill McAlee, short and squat, outfitted at game time in his usual maroon and white checkered sport coat. McAlee's equally remarkable brush cut is hidden underneath a maroon fedora.

Definitely it's the articles in competing Rochester dailies profiling both teams and predicting that something special will be in the air come Friday.

"This is the best backfield I've seen at one school," boasts LeRoy "super-fan" Joe Macaluso in the Rochester *Democrat and Chronicle* when asked about the trio of running backs who had already scored twenty touchdowns that season.

Adds another fan: "If I had to defense this backfield, I don't know what I'd do." The implication, of course, is that Cal-Mum won't know what to do either.

A third Oatkan Knight supporter displays cardboard tombstones of conquered opponents on his front lawn. A special tombstone, bigger than the rest, is on the porch, awaiting the victory over Cal-Mum.

Cal-Mum's pre-game state of mind is different. "We do the same things now we did on August 24," says a calm and confident Bill McAlee in the Rochester *Times-Union*. "We'll do the same thing tomorrow that we did the last Tuesday. And the Tuesday before that."

If Cal-Mum loses? "Hey, that game is over. You can't turn back time. You can just look for a new day tomorrow."

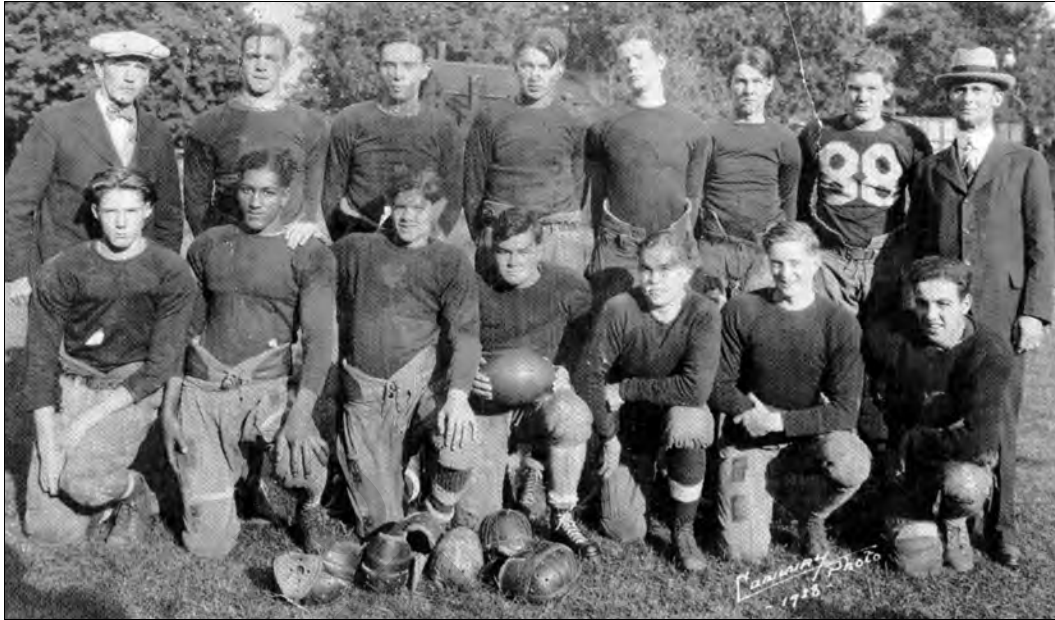
And if one of his players were to make a mistake that cost the Red Raiders the game? "Maybe we expect too much of our children because we think they are ready for something they're not ready for," McAlee muses. "A 17-year old is a 17-year old. If a kid fumbles and it costs you the game—the kid doesn't WANT to fumble. Life is too complicated for him to have to carry that fumble around with him."

LeRoy boasts. Cal-Mum plays it down. Each approach has been successful. Each approach has brought many football victories to these small upstate New York towns over the years.

Add to all this—the moon, the history, the styles, the coaches, the hype—add to all of it a simple numerological fact. LeRoy, 5-0, is the number-one-ranked small school football team in New York State, while Cal-Mum, 6-0, is ranked number seven. There's an inherent intensity in a battle of unbeaten teams, an intensity that's heightened when both teams are so good. Yet a cruel fact lurks in the not-too-distant future, awaiting one of them. Barring a tie, someone will not be unbeaten for long.

All the possibilities and the certainties line up tonight. Almost five thousand people, far more than the population of either village, are at Hartwood Park, in LeRoy, on October 28, 1977. They are here to watch Cal-Mum and LeRoy play a game that will decide the best football team in Livingston County, and likely among small schools in the state.

One simple question will be answered tonight: Who's number one?



1) The 1928 undefeated, untied team is often lost in the shadow cast by the legendary 1929 team. The 1928 Red Raiders were certainly part of something great: the 22-game winning had started with the last game of 1927 and continued all through 1928, and the 13-game shutout streak started with the last game of the 1928 season. The 1928 defense allowed only three touchdowns all year. Row one, L to R: Chet Hardman, Jimmy Jackson, Eddie Davis, Pete MacPherson, Roy MacDonald, Charles Carson, John Harvey. Row Two, L to R: Coach MacPherson, Ronnie Wilson, Everett Youngs, Carl Gibson, Bob Johnson, Gene Pullyblank, Earl Stone, Prof. Vanzile.

2) The 1929 team, undefeated, untied, and unscored-upon, set the standard of excellence for Red Raiders football for years to come. The perfection they achieved in every category of gridiron accomplishment makes them, in our collective memory, boys who were something greater than men. They alone made wearing the maroon and white a privilege for all of us boys who followed them. Row one, L to R: Ed Coots, Arlie Burkhart, Earl Stone, Jim Jackson, Ed Davis, Bob Johnson, Bill Miller, Tony Angelo. Row two, L to R: Coach Matthews, Pete MacPherson, Charles Carson, Ronnie Wilson, Gene Pullyblank, Felix Balonek, Dunc Cameron, Roy MacDonald, Preston Sinsanick, Mason Ashford, Prof. Vanzile, George Ball. Row three, L to R: Stuart Griffin, Chet Hardman, Bill Jackson, Bob Freeman, Jack Skivington, Stuart Grant.

