

The Pet Policy

Riding high on the successes of self-regulation and apartment-style living, Hinman College decided to try another experiment in housing. In May of 1971 it was decided that Smith Hall would pilot a program in which pets including dogs and cats could be allowed to live inside the halls with their owners. Until that time no animals were allowed inside the buildings, and the owner of any of these pets was subjected to a \$2 a day fine for every day that the animal stayed in the building. Smith Hall opened up its doors to four-legged friends as well as the human animals that occupied its suites. Certain restrictions were made of course. The animal had to be vaccinated against rabies, distemper and other diseases, and the floor had to sign an agreement allowing a pet to be inside the building. Residents also had to promise to take care of the pet and keep it well fed, groomed, and healthy. Also, if the animal's behavior began to affect anyone (such as incessant barking disturbing people's sleep or study patterns or if the animal was prone to biting) then the student would have to remove it from the building. Only after having all of these conditions met would a pet be allowed inside the building.¹

The experiment in Smith Hall was a success and shortly thereafter all of Hinman was opened up to pets in 1972. The idea became popular and although a relative few people actually owned pets, those that did had a wide variety of species occupying the five halls of Hinman. When the policy was created by the Hinman staff, they believed that mostly dogs and cats would be the pets of choice. While this was the case, other students brought in a wide variety of animals including an alligator and even a person.

One of the most famous dogs ever to live in Hinman was owned by Bob Giomi. The name of the shepherd/huskie mix was Half. To understand the origin of the dog's name one must understand a little about Bob Giomi and one of his good friends and fellow Hinman staffer

Gabe Yankowitz, who was Head Resident of Cleveland Hall for much of the 1970's. Bob was five feet two inches tall and Gabe was even shorter than Bob. Whenever Bob and Gabe would walk anywhere together, Hinman residents began to say "There goes half and half," jesting at the height of both men. The dog received the name Half in honor of these two beloved Hinman staffers.²

John and Heidi Kowalchuk were a husband and wife who were co-Head Residents of Roosevelt Hall from 1978 until 1981. They owned a dog named Timber who quickly became the Roosevelt Hall mascot. John and Heidi, whose many claims to fame include the creation of Dorm Wars, had a specially designed t-shirt for Timber that said "Go Roosevelt!" on it. Timber truly became a Roosevelt mainstay, almost more so than his human counterparts. Timber was loved by virtually everyone in the hall and Timber loved them in return. Timber had the habit of lying in front of the door just outside the Head Resident apartment. He was a large dog and he sprawled out on the floor making it difficult for residents to walk around him. Showing the true sign of intelligence, Timber would do this because every time he blocked the way, residents were forced to bend over and pet him, much to his delight. Timber also became a close companion of the RA's in the building. Timber was known to regularly sit on duty with the RA's and even sit on the couch like a human being. Timber acted so much like a person that he began to be treated as one. He truly became just as much a part of the Roosevelt staff as any of the RA's. One of the biggest complaints that residents had about pets was the mess that they would leave on the lawns and roadways of Hinman. John and Heidi alleviated this problem by training Timber to go in the long grass and not on the mowed area, ensuring that no one would accidentally step in Timber's mess as they walked to class or relaxed out on the lawn.³

Allan Eller^{*}, who was a Head Resident of Roosevelt Hall from 1972 to 1978 and then became Coordinator of Hinman from 1978 until January of 1980, also had a pet story. When he was a Head Resident, a student named Rodger Drum had a puppy named Jenny. Drum was in an accelerated program with ambitions of entering medical school and becoming a doctor. When Drum did not get into medical school, he could not afford to keep his dog, so Allan adopted her. Like Half and Timber, Jenny soon became part of the Hinman family, making appearances at many Roosevelt Hall and Hinman programs. In an effort to keep Jenny from harassing residents of the building, Allan trained her to stay inside the apartment when he placed a broom across the threshold of the Head Resident's apartment's doorway. Jenny was obedient and stayed within this boundary when it was necessary.⁴

Maria Carra, who was the Resident Director of Lehman Hall and an Assistant Coordinator of Hinman in the early 1980's had a pet story of her own. A student in Hughes Hall had a cat that had given birth to a litter of kittens. As soon as the kittens were old enough to leave its mother, Maria adopted one for herself. She named the cat Groucho Marx because the coloration on the cat's face coupled with its whiskers made it look similar to the famous actor/comedian. She soon found out that this cat was a natural "attack cat" because it had the tendency to latch onto chairs that people were sitting in and playfully swat at their clothes, limbs and just about anything that would dangle.⁵

While dogs and cats were certainly the pets of choice in Hinman, Gabe Yankowitz remembers an exotic pet from his days as an undergraduate living in Roosevelt Hall from 1968 until 1971. Gabe had a suitemate who owned a baby alligator which he would let wander around the study lounge of Roosevelt. One day when he and Gabe were playing with the alligator in the

^{*} Allan Eller suffered a severe horseback riding accident in 2005 which left him paralyzed from the neck down. He died on November 1, 2006 at the age of 64.

lounge, a young woman entered in an effort to find a quiet place to study. The suitemate decided that it would be funny to scare the young lady with his pet. When he approached the girl with the alligator in his arms, she was not frightened. Instead she was disgusted and asked how anyone could have a pet like that. She declared that they were not cuddly and you could not hold them and be affectionate to them like a cat or a dog. The suitemate said that he disagreed and in an effort to prove her wrong he began to rub noses with the alligator. While he was doing this the alligator opened its jaws (some of the most powerful in the animal kingdom) and clamped onto his nose. The terrified suitemate frantically clutched at the creature and tried to loosen the reptile's grip on his nose. Finally he was able to break the alligator's hold and removed him from his nose. At first it appeared that no damage had been done, but then slowly blood began to seep out of the spots on his nose where the alligator's teeth penetrated the skin. The following day the suitemate had a large bandage over his nose. When asked what happened, he would reply, in an effort to avoid embarrassment, that he had "cut himself shaving."⁶

Perhaps the most bizarre "pet" ever to live in Hinman was not an animal but a human being. At some point in the late 1970's, a patient at a nearby state mental hospital wandered off the hospital's grounds and somehow found his way into Cleveland Hall's main lounge. Many of the residents of Cleveland took pity on this obviously handicapped old man and brought him food from the dining hall and blankets so that he would be warm. This went on for nearly an entire month until someone passing through asked the Hinman Office what the deal was with the guy sleeping in the Cleveland lounge. Upon learning of an unauthorized resident in the hall, the proper authorities were called and the man was returned to the hospital.⁷

Sadly, though the pet policy was it was popular, it could not last. Residential Life banned pets from living in the residence halls in the Fall of 1984.⁸ The pet policy was rescinded and no

more animals were allowed inside the buildings with the exception of a fish in a non-aerated bowl. While most of the residents cared for their pets, the few bad apples that did not spoiled it for the rest. In addition, awareness about pet allergies increased and a rise in the number of people with such allergies forced the university to discontinue the policy. While it lasted, though, the pet policy brought much comfort and welcome companionship to many Hinmanites of both the two-legged and four-legged varieties.

¹ “Dogs and Cats,” *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. I, No. 18, May 13, 1971 and “Pets,” *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. III, No. 2, September 14, 1972.

² Gabe Yanokwitz, “Hinman in the 1970’s,” Group discussion recorded on April 23, 2003, Hinman Archives.

³ John and Heidi Kowalcyk, “Hinman in the 1970’s,” April 23, 2003.

⁴ Allan Eller, “Hinman in the 1970’s,” April 23, 2003.

⁵ Maria Carra, interview with author, January 26, 2007.

⁶ Gabe Yanokwitz, “Hinman in the 1970’s,” April 23, 2003.

⁷ Allan Eller, “Hinman in the 1970’s,” April 23, 2003.

⁸ “Council News,” *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. XV, No. 24, April 4, 1984.