

HCC in the Early 1970's

The documentation on HCC is sparse for the next few years. However, that all begins to change with the advent of the longest running and most descriptive newsletter in Hinman College history, the *Hinman Halitosis*. In April of 1971, the *Hinman Halitosis* wrote a critique of HCC for the year. HCC had promised dances in the dining hall. They had never materialized. However, they had much to be proud of. They had consistently sponsored free movies, speakers, and had subsidized various charitable organizations like the handicapped Cub Scout troop and the Binghamton Welfare kids, and any Hinman student using the Lawyer Reference Service. They also sponsored the Hinman-created Urban Studies course (a popular course based in Hinman), the *Hinman Halitosis* and *Soliloquy* (a Hinman publication filled with student poems and short stories), and an upcoming Roberta Flack concert. The article ended by stating:

It wasn't a great year; a lot of people still don't know, or care, who the rep in their dorm is. If you were unaware that [sic] Hinman had been doing all of this this [sic] year, then I guess we failed there too. But this isn't an article dedicated to our failures and shortcomings. There were probably a lot of things you wanted us to do, a lot we should have done—and we hope for a better year to come. The Council will need dedicated people if it is to succeed. We need your help.¹

At this stage in its development, HCC was an organization still striving to do its best for the community. HCC would have to try harder if it was to fulfill its obligation to the student body of Hinman.

Once again, exact information on what occurred in those early days is sparse. However, what is known is that HCC began to slowly rise in prestige as the years went by. The 1972-1973 academic year started off with big promises being made by HCC President Jeff Tanenbaum. Tanenbaum promised to turn HCC and Hinman around with the events and activities that they were planning that year. They would invite more faculty to participate in faculty-student

discussions, show movie shorts in the dining hall during dinner hours, and had big plans for Halloween weekend. They also planned to utilize the soon to be finished Hinman Building (the Hinman Library and Hinman Commons) for a variety of activities. Tanenbaum ended his article by saying:

We urge that as many people as possible become active in the affairs of Hinman College. During the past week, I've met a great number of interested and concerned students and I can assure you that Hinman Council will work hard to make life at Hinman as enjoyable and satisfying as possible for everyone. But—we can't do it alone. We need people to run movies, set up parties, referee our co-rec games, and to be willing to spend time on various committees. We're always open to opinions and comments, and we hope that you will not hesitate to give them. Good luck to everyone.²

With these strong words of encouragement by Hinman's leader it looked like the future for Hinman College and HCC was bright and promising.

During the course of the year many of the promises of HCC were fulfilled, though not all of them. Still, programming-wise it was a good year. Student involvement in HCC was also high and Hinman quickly began earning the reputation of having an active student government. However, an unexpected twist occurred late February 1973 when President Tanenbaum suddenly resigned from his position. His letter of resignation was printed in the *Hinman Halitosis* and read in part:

I've learned a lot in my 6 months as President of Hinman College but the most important thing I've learned is that we all here are working not with students as physical entities but with students' feelings. We are not working with a solid, unchanging physical being but with a delicate, changing person whose feelings are constantly being adjusted. I've found, much to my despair, that a great majority of Harpur students are unhappy, depressed and need some sort of love or understanding, from whomever they can get it. I came into this job as an enthusiastic student who felt the answers to the problems of college life was government and committee. We could run the college's socially [sic]: movies, dances, parties. We could accomplish much academically: get professors to talk to students, lecture them, educate them, but none of these things had really accomplished what I hoped. They did not muster student interest nor did they increase student happiness. They are not the answer.

The fault lies with us as well as our educational system. We are not taking the individual person seriously. We are not addressing the students' feelings. We are treating him or her as a physical being whose job is to accomplish a certain task in a certain period of time. We are treating the students as a whole, disregarding individuality, which is a grave fault. The individual's feelings are rarely considered when he or she takes a course, just his or her ability to learn. It is enough that the pressures of our educational system with its competitive spirit depresses students but we are fools to think that USG¹, FSA [Faculty Student Association] or anyone of this nature can solve this problem the way we are working.

Students seek a peace of mind that neither social or academic programs, the way they are being run, can accomplish. They need a system where they can make friends more readily, interact with people more on a personal level, faculty and administration included. The acquisition of the faculty into the collegiate structure is not going to accomplish anything if the formal separation of the two groups remains. By this I mean the fear of faculty among students and the refusal of faculty to remove themselves from their pedestal and cater to the students. The same separation exists among students and administrators as well. What students speaks to an administrator? What student knows who their administrators are? What can an administrator do for a student on a personal level? These are the types of questions and problems we must work with. We must work with feelings, with interaction. We must see ourselves as equals, respect each others' desires and pitfalls. We cannot accomplish anything by mocking each other. We are not Newing vs. OCC vs. Hinman vs. C-I-W. We are not Administration vs. Faculty vs. Student. We are not Student vs. USG vs. FSA. We cannot be this way if we are to make headway toward our goals. This is just power politics and tricky maneuvering and I have seen too much of this in my meetings as well as on the Hinman Council.

I am a counselor [precursor to resident assistant] now and see a new side of the student: his or her personal problems. These have become more important to me and helping them solve their problems has become more rewarding to me than the seven months I have spent as President of Hinman College.

In the early stages right now is a new plan to incorporate the role of the counselor into student government. I have worked on this plan with three other people, two counselors and Bob Giomi. I feel this new plan has the potential to bring about the changes I would like to see and therefore, besides my personal reasons and those stated before in this talk, I would like to spend and devote my time to this new plan and working with students more on a personal level. Therefore, I am announcing my resignation as Hinman College President.

Before I conclude I'd like to give special thanks to Dr. Gruber and Bob Giomi for their help. We are lucky to have two dedicated people working for us like them. I would like to thank all the members of the council for the work they've done and the time they've given to themselves to help make Hinman a more enjoyable place to live.³

¹ The United Student Government (USG) was the precursor to the Student Association (SA).

By all accounts, Tanenbaum had been an effective leader. His resignation from HCC was a blow to the organization and to Hinman College. Everything that Tanenbaum said was on mark. SUNY Binghamton was not meeting the needs of the student body effectively. Furthermore, the power politics being played at the level of the administration all the way down to HCC was also detrimental to the student body. Tanenbaum, like so many other past and future HCC presidents, had simply had enough and with his appointment to the position of counselor he was ready to try new avenues to improve the life of students in Hinman.

Almost immediately, Tanenbaum was criticized for his resignation and for taking the counselor position. Some claimed that he had simply taken the job not because he wanted to help students but because he would be receiving free room and board for his work as a counselor. As HCC president he received no compensation. The editorial staff of the *Hinman Halitosis* rushed to his defense with an editorial which read:

The news of Jeff Tanenbaum's resignation did not come as a surprise to us. When one attempts to serve the Hinman Community as enthusiastically and as faithfully as Jeff did and receives the aid of only a few, in a University governmental system that does not seem to accomplish anything, then it's only a matter of time before a president "burns out" and resigns. Only a change in the attitude of those in student government as well as an increase in the student body's interest in collegiate and university affairs will save the rapidly decaying university structure at Binghamton. Until that time we should like to thank Jeff Tanenbaum for doing a great job and hope he will continue to serve Hinman in the same energetic manner as a counselor and a member of the Hinman community.⁴

Tannenbaum's resignation created a firestorm of controversy in the still fledgling HCC. Not only was the reasoning behind his resignation called into question, but a new president had to be selected to fill in for the remainder of the year. Three candidates arose to take the spot vacated by Tanenbaum: Maxine Smooke, John Sutton, and Gary L. Birnbaum. All three candidates were qualified for the position, each having served on hall government in some capacity. The campaigning for the position was heated and tough, each one of them publishing their platform

in the *Hinman Halitosis*. The campaigning grew so heated that it was even asked that residents of Hinman refrain from ripping down their campaign posters until after the election. Along with near dirty campaigning, anger began to rise in the Hinman community over an anonymous letter to the editor published in the same special election issue of *Halitosis* as the candidates' platforms. One letter read:

The campaign for President is a full 3 days old now and I have witnessed some very disturbing and childlike goings on by various residents. IN my dorm, candidates' signs are being defaced, torn down and used as a forum for people's opinions (none appear to be favorable). Seeing as this is the case, I would like to offer the following comments:

Concerning the candidates: Hinman College Council is not the U.S. Senate; it is not even the state legislature!! To run a political campaign for such a non-political office as President of Hinman College is absurd and demeaning to the office itself. Hinman Council is a service organization, with the singular objective of making Hinman College a better place to live. It does this both socially and academically. NOT POLITICALLY. If any of the candidates is out for political ambitions, he should run for USG. Any candidate who is running for the benefit himself (or herself) and not for the benefit of the college, should not run.

Secondly, there are strict laws about running a slanderous campaign at the university and these laws are also in the by-laws of the Hinman Constitution. If you want to go door to door tonight, feel free to do so. But promote yourself by stating why you want to be president, not why the others shouldn't be. If any candidate is running solely because another candidate is, and because he or she wants to serve the people of Hinman College, kindly withdraw. You will do the college more harm than good by staying on the ballot.

Thirdly, let this letter serve as a warning against electioneering at the polls tonight. While I know that all of it can't be stopped, the following precautions should be taken to insure a fair and honest election:

1. All signs within 50 feet of the polling area should be torn down.
2. Candidates should not be allowed near the polling place except when they are voting.
3. Poll watchers: try to keep the ballot secret. I don't want to see anyone running through my dorm telling me that I better go down and vote because someone they don't like is winning—(this happened in September in Cleveland Hall).

At times during the night, a resident will come up to you and say they don't know who to vote for and will ask your opinion. Tell them to fold the ballot in half and put it in the box unmarked. I wouldn't like to think that this election was won because one candidate had more friends as poll watchers than the other candidates.

Concerning Hinman residents: defacing, ripping down campaign signs is an extremely contemptuous act. If you've got a gripe about a candidate, write to the *Halitosis* or put up signs of your own. I strongly believe that one of the causes of apathy in our college is the fact that people see other people's efforts being maligned, and therefore they don't even bother trying.

Finally, the best way to insure a good election is for the residents to get out and vote. That is the only way your choice will be listened to in the end...⁵

John Sutton won the election. Still the contentious issue surrounding the election left a bad taste in the mouth of many in Hinman. Politics seemed to be getting dirty and the attitudes toward students government remained much the same. What was hoped for was a new year and a new beginning for student government in Hinman.

HCC seemed to start off the new year with a roar with a highly successful program being held during the annual Fall Weekend. The Fall Weekend saw many different activities including music and dancing and of course the serving of alcoholic refreshments.² Working around the clock, Vice President for Social Affairs Steve Young (of HLT fame), Editor-in-Chief of the *Hinman Halitosis* Pete Lorenzi, and Dave Florin taped music for the dance party that was held on Saturday night. John Sutton, Retep Iznerol, Jeanne Pilot, Stan Goldberg (founder of HLT), Edmund Dittion, Stan Ruszkowski, Bill Healy and Barry Steinhart also contributed to the program by helping to serve the beer. Ed Schrenzel and the rest of movie committee chose the movies that were to be shown, Marty Finver prepared the bridge tournament, Ann Raszmann helped with the Crafts Fair and HCC President Sue Wild oversaw the entire process. A very special thanks was given to Bob Giomi for all his hard work on the program.

A special thanks must go to our own (1/2),³ Bob Giomi. Sometimes people overlook what Bob does, and if they have any problems they will dump them on him (which is not too big of a dumping place!). Point of information: No beer could have been served

² The drinking age at this time was 18 which allowed RA's, student government representatives, and professional staff members to serve alcohol at programs and events.

³ Bob Giomi's nickname was half (1/2).

unless Bob was there, meaning from 9:00 p.m. – 1:00 a.m. he had to pour beer. So next time you have a complaint, go easy on the little guy.⁶

This was a somewhat bittersweet moment for the executives in charge of HCC. At this time in HCC history terms of office did not run the academic year (August – May) like they do now. Rather they ran the length of a calendar year (January – December) with elections being held in early December to decide who would be in charge in the HCC Executive Board. The positions up for grabs that semester would be President, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Vice President for Social Affairs, Secretary, and Treasurer.⁷

There was a moderate turnout at the polls for that year's election. Hughes Hall resident Stan Ruszkowski won the presidency, ex-president John Sutton won the position of Social Vice President, Paul Karlinsky won the Academic Vice President Position, and Maxine Smooke of Roosevelt won the position of Secretary. Mark Wenger, the only incumbent, kept his seat as Treasurer. It is interesting to note, that unlike today, incumbents could run for E-Board positions. Ruszkowski won the presidency over Wild much to the surprise of everyone involved. Wild was the favored to win and Ruszkowski's victory startled them all. Steve Young's spot as Social Vice President was open because he was not seeking reelection. Instead he was doing a studying for a semester in Washington, D.C. John Sutton was the clear favorite to win the position and soundly beat his opponents. The battle for the Academic Vice President position was considered a toss up but Karlinsky, riding the wave that brought Ruszkowski to power, came into the AVP position that way. A last minute write-in campaign for Secretary by Howie Horowitz brought him 20% of the vote but not enough to beat Smooke. The members of the election committee were dismayed at the small voter turnout, but Pete Lorenzi, who had observed many elections during his time in Hinman, noted that the turnout was typical for a campaign that was fairly unemotional.⁸

¹ Howie Schwartz, "Howie Schwartz Evaluates Hinman College Council," *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. I, No. 16, April 29, 1971.

² Jeff Tanenbaum, "Hinman Council News," *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. III, No. 2, September 14, 1972.

³ Jeff Tanenbaum, "Hinman President Resigns," *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. III, No. 13, February 19, 1973.

⁴ "Who's To Blame?" *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. III, No. 19, February 22, 1973.

⁵ Name withheld by request, "letter to the editor," *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. II, No. 20, March 1, 1973.

⁶ Mark Wenger, "Giving Credit Where Credit Is Due," *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. IV, No. 10, November 15, 1973.

⁷ "Hinman Council Elections to Be Held," *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. IV, No. 10, November 15, 1973.

⁸ "Hinman Elects Not To Walk On The Wild Side, Ruskowski Wins Presidency," *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. IV, No. 12, December 6, 1973.