

The Fischer Administration

Besides Fischer as HCC President, Rochelle Benjamin would be the Academic VP, Elizabeth Reingold would be Social VP, Treasurer would fall to Sue Schneyman. It was also noted that perpetual *Halitosis* mascot Hermann Worm (AKA Herm the Worm)¹ and John and Heidi Kowalchuk's (RD's of Roosevelt Hall) dog Timber were all write-in candidates.¹ The Fall semester ended with the leadership of HCC being left in very good hands. The 1981 Spring semester looked very bright indeed.

The Spring semester started off on a somewhat sour note. For reasons unknown, Hinman finances were in a mess. Apparently, Hinman owed a number of groups close to \$700. President Fischer assured everyone that the matter would be taken care of quickly. On a more positive note, that very same meeting of HCC saw a very special guest make an appearance. Pete Gruber, the very first Faculty Master of Hinman (who had earlier left the Mastership to accept a job as an assistant to SUNY Binghamton President Clark), came to the meeting to discuss a proposal. Gruber proposed that the Hinman Collegiate Center (the Hinman Library and Hinman Commons building) be renamed the Nelson A. Rockefeller Collegiate Center. Gruber explained that this would be in keeping with naming the buildings in Hinman after New York State governors.² What Gruber did not mention to HCC that night was that the plan to change the name was not simply to honor former Governor Rockefeller for all his work and contributions to the SUNY system. Renaming the collegiate center after Rockefeller would even the balance of the political parties represented by the buildings (Theodore Roosevelt, Charles Evans Hughes, and Nelson Rockefeller were Republicans, Grover Cleveland, Alfred Smith, and Herbert Lehman were Democrats). The hope of Gruber and President Clifford Clark was that Rockefeller would be flattered by the gesture and donate money to the university. They also hoped that Republicans in

¹ See the chapter on Hinman Publications for further details.

the New York State Assembly and Senate would earmark more funds to the SUNY system because of this gesture. In the end their efforts were futile. Rockefeller donated no funds to Binghamton and Albany sent no additional money to the university, in fact they wound up cutting the SUNY budgets even more.³ Still, HCC voted overwhelming to rename the Collegiate Center after Rockefeller.⁴

Not everyone was happy with the name change. A former HCC President and editor of the *Hinman Halitosis*, Jim Bachman wrote an opinion piece sharing his disappointment with the name change.

I am writing this in response to the go-ahead vote given by the Hinman College Council on Monday night, February 2nd, for the renaming of the commons area. I for one am appalled and angered at their approval for a variety of reasons. First of all, those elected to the Hinman College Council are supposed to represent the wishes of the Hinman residential population. But did that meeting's 15-0 vote with only two abstentions, in favor of the proposed name change reflect any input from the majority of Hinman College? How could it have when it was not first brought back to the dorms for discussion before taking any action, as normal procedure entails. Or am I to believe those council members gave their acquiescence were acting upon some prior divination of the opinions of their constituency, namely us. If this was so, and I certainly was never aware of their extra-sensory powers, possibly their talents could be put to better use elsewhere. Indeed, if it seems that those responsible for such actions are likely to repeat similar moves, perhaps it would be best overall if they found positions elsewhere.

Granted, some might say, there was a degree of irresponsibility shown at the meeting, but why get so hot under the collar about the issue itself. Simple. There is an additional reason for my annoyance. This centers on a dreadful trend which I see on campus of concentrating upon naming or renaming of something rather than concentrating upon making contributions to its qualitative growth. Examples? How about the naming our main Library, The Glenn G. Bartle Library. A nice thing to do except that it will increasingly have troubles obtaining new books in spite of its illustrious late namesake. Or how about the renaming of Campus Security "ULED",² a truly impressive acronym of the type we Americans seem to delight in. Yet, in reality merely a change of uniform for a bunch of frustrated cops who seem to thrive upon writing out ten foot tickets to roll up and stuff down the unsuspecting throat rather than actively pursuing an investigation of the theft of your room-mates [sic] stereo. And finally, of course, we have this latest development in Hinman in particular. Of course Rockefeller contributed significantly to the growth of this campus. But why be pretentious in renaming our own collegiate "A"

² Campus Security became University Law Enforcement Division (ULED) which eventually became University Police.

and “B” building complex “The Nelson A. Rockefeller Collegiate Center”? Unless of course this is some prelude to a preconceived plan of growth for our Library and the addition of new facilities for student use, something I see as extremely unlikely.

But didn't someone once say “A rose by any other name would smell as sweet”? Maybe so, but in this case the whole issue of renaming the Commons area reeks [sic] of administrative meddling, and typifies the impotency of the whole system to contribute to any appreciable growth as of late on this campus. Seriously, what is Hinman's real chance for getting monies from the Rockefellers if we rename some relatively small-time structures for one of their clan, especially when they haven't seemed too concerned as of late with SUNY-Binghamton in general? Wouldn't it be a better use of everyone's time if we concentrated upon freeing the restrictions against new construction at Binghamton, say for instance in the case of a graduate complex? Then maybe there could be a Rockefeller center on campus of which we could all be proud and which would be a fitting tribute to and a reminder of the man so responsible for our initial period of qualitative growth.⁵

The points raised by Bachman's letter were sound ones. The renaming of the collegiate center was simply a political move on the part of the university administration to try to secure more funds from Albany and from the Rockefeller family in particular. In the end simply changing the name accomplished nothing. The expansion of facilities, which was desperately needed, would not be accomplished through a name change alone. Still, the name change went ahead and to this day the Hinman Library and Hinman Commons buildings are collectively known by the university as the Nelson A. Rockefeller Collegiate Center or the Rockefeller Center for short. On a somewhat humorous note, this name change has made life incredibly difficult, especially on new students during the first week of classes. Classrooms in the Hinman Commons building are given the designation RC (for Rockefeller Center). However, most students know the building only as the Hinman Commons. Many students wander around aimlessly searching for their classrooms, sometimes ending up in the study abroad office which is located in the basement of the Hinman Library. The study abroad office is usually given the designation as being in the Rockefeller Center, so sometimes student will go there in search of their classrooms. To this day, over two decades later, students, both old and new, informed and uninformed, from Hinman

or from other residential colleges, continually seek out the Rockefeller Center only to hit dead ends by going into the wrong building. Perhaps that is the true legacy of Nelson A. Rockefeller and his collegiate center: perpetually lost and frustrated college students.

The following week, the search for the missing \$700 continued. Apparently due to an accounting error, HCC was told that they had more money than they really had, therefore HCC overspent. A concerned HCCer, known in the record as only Bob from Roosevelt, called for an ad hoc committee to be formed to investigate the matter further. The HCC Treasurer went on to state that she reallocated funds from the individual buildings to give to other groups because the halls could raise money easier than the groups could. The Finance Committee agreed to meet to discuss this decision.⁶ After doing some rather intensive forensic accounting work that would make the management of Enron, Worldcom, Tycho and the various other firms exposed for their accounting scandals drool in grim appreciation, the HCC Financial Committee discovered the missing \$700. Apparently, \$330.42 had been allocated to Hinman originally, but at the beginning of the year, the SA took the money away from Hinman (and the other residential colleges) to help cover the costs of the OCC buses. The remaining \$381.68 was used to pay outstanding bills from the previous year. Those bills included \$100 charged to Hinman by the SA for Senior week and \$253.14 for food service bills and HCC's phone bill which came to \$28.54. With the matter of the missing \$712.10 finally settled, HCC could move on to other pressing issues.⁷

One of those pressing issues was the creation of the Co-Rec Football Committee. The committee would consist of two people from each hall. Their duties would include training referees, setting policies for the payment of the referees, scheduling the actual games, and creating the charter for the game. A charter for Co-Rec was important because it would ensure

that an HCC committee would constantly be there to oversee the sport that had quickly become Hinman's favorite pastime.⁸ Also of note was the move of the Hinman Student Government Office from the basement of the Hinman Library and into the Hinman Commons.⁹ The HCC office would remain there until around 2000 when it would again move into the Hinman Library, this time to the first floor in the back behind the student manager's office and adjacent to the Hinman College office.

HCC and student government in general hit a sour patch toward the end of the semester when Smith Hall sponsored a drinking contest in its rec room. The rules of the contest had contestants drink one shot of beer every minute. If a contestant had to use the lavatory, they had one minute plus part of the next minute to do so but then they had to drink the missed shot and the following shot on time. If more than two shots were missed the contestant was disqualified. Regurgitation also resulted in immediate disqualification. The last man standing (or kneeling over the table) would be the winner and snag the coveted prize of a bottle of Jack Daniel's whiskey. The previous record for the contest was held by Hohn [sic] Seymour which was 110 shots. An average six pack of beer held 72 shots. Everyone expected the average intake of beer to be between 60-100 shots. Amazingly, many contestants passed this number by a great deal. Some went well over 200 shots. However, the large intake of alcohol was also beginning to make many of the contestants devastatingly sick. A large number of them were disqualified from the competition when they began to vomit up the excess of alcohol. One female contestant, after her 200th shot, had to be rushed to the hospital by Harpur's Ferry. The winner of the competition downed an astounding 307 shots and then proceeded to take a 308th shot just to secure his title. Later that evening he preceded to go to one of the many dorm parties going on that night and consumed even more beer.¹⁰

The aftershocks stemming from the Smith Hall shot-a-thon were serious and lasting. Many Hinmanites, both staffers and residents, believed that the drinking competition was dangerous and stupid. Many of the contestants became violently ill at the end and some would have succumbed to alcohol poisoning if they were not rushed to the hospital for treatment. One opinion printed in the *Hinman Halitosis* spoke for many that disapproved of the competition.

Last weekend's shot-a-thon, held in Smith (which has the reputation of being the worst dorm on campus), shows that Hinman is leading the way to university-wide drug abuse and insanity.

Of course, it was all in good fun: the most beer consumed by one person was only 4 gallons, and Harpur's Ferry only had to be called once. Four gallons of beer put into one person in 3 hrs, and all to prove what? Maybe it was all good fun, but did anyone stop to consider the sickness of the idea?

For starters, the Shot-a-thon is a form of drug abuse. For people to drink so much that they can't stand up and especially to drink so much as to warrant an ambulance to be called is not only unhealthy, but dangerous. Perhaps it isn't very dangerous for a 200lb, 6' tall person to drink 2 or 3 gallons of beer in 3 hours., [sic] (the larger the body mass, the more alcohol can be absorbed without danger,) but far less beer than that has proved fatal. For some people, imbibing even 2 gallons of beer in 3 hrs would cause alcohol poisoning, and with that comes the possibility of alcohol coma, and death. Perhaps too much time has passed for us to recall a college freshman at another SUNY school suffocated to death on his own vomit after fraternity hazing activities (remarkably similar to a shot-a-thon) only a few years ago. No one would consider holding an LSD-a-thon, so why are we so willing to tolerate the drink-a-thon?

Everyone defends it by saying "You can always stop". But how many actually do stop when they should? Not enough. Call it pride, Macho, or determination, but too many would rather drink more than they can handle than be considered a "Sissy." Trying to prove something definitely supercedes [sic] common sense in the majority of cases. And, because of the macho attitude, trying to stop someone from drinking more after the first gallon has been down can elicit violence, which endangers everyone present.

Besides, is it that much fun? Puking our brains up the rest of the night, or taking up valuable hospital or ambulance time, is that our idea of good recreational activity? Drinking shots is not relaxing and is not "social drinking"—it is drinking with one purpose only: drunkenness. Aren't we sick enough of seeing our dorms vandalized by injudicious drinkers? Isn't it about time we took a good look at what we're doing and stop these dangerous and unhealthy activities, or will it take a tragedy before we wake up and do something about it?¹¹

There were differences of opinion. Many Hinmanites defended the Smith Hall shot-a-thon, as this counter letter to the editor shows:

I would like to take this opportunity to offer another view of the Smith Hall Shot-a-thon. But first I never knew that Smith was the worst dorm on campus. If it is, why does the author of the opinion in the last issue continue to live there. Secondly, How [sic] does someone who was not even there have the right to criticize what they only heard about.

The most beer consumed by one person was approximately 385 ounces which is 3 gallons and 1 ounce. A little less than four gallons. At one shot a minute, it took 308 minutes to drink 308 shots (new math). This is 5 hours and 8 minutes, slightly longer than 3 hours.

I don't think out Shot-A-thon should be criticized for intoxicating people. Any campus party is equally guilty on that count. I do suppose too much time has passed for us to remember that SUNY freshman that died. But, this was not a fraternity function and definitely not a hazing type activity. No pressure was put on anyone to continue beyond their desired quitting pint [sic]. Several people were required to stop when others felt that they had had enough.

Besides, it was a lot of fun! Less people than I thought did throw up and I don't know of anyone who spent the night "puking their brains out". It is true that one individual was taken to the hospital, but that was the only dark spot that evening. No vandalism occurred anywhere because of our activity. As far as drinking shots not being relaxing that is totally ludicrous. Everyone who was there was doing exactly what they wanted to and what could be more relaxing than that. One person even said, "That was the most relaxing night I've spent since I came here. I got to talk to a few people I really haven't before and I had a good time. When I knew it was time to leave, I did." I think that perfectly sums up the way most of us feel about our Smith-Hall-Shot-A-Thon.¹²

The feelings on the Smith Hall Shot-a-thon were mixed through the community. There were supporters for both sides. However, whatever the feelings one had on the shot-a-thon, it did bring to the forefront awareness concerning issues of alcoholism and alcohol abuse by college students. Not long thereafter, the legal drinking age would rise from 18 to 21, in part to combat abusive practices of alcohol like the shot-a-thon on college campuses.

1981 was year that would see many people deeply involved in Hinman say goodbye. Graduating that year would be Hinman mainstays such as Jim Greenless, Jim Bachman, and Steven "Pudge" Meyer, all of whom had been deeply involved in HCC at some point during their

time in Hinman. The final HCC meeting of the year saw Hinman say goodbye one last time to these individuals who had done so much for their residential college. It also saw the final HCC meeting of Patti Koval, a highly influential Assistant Coordinator. Koval was accepting another position on campus as Coordinator of Conferences. Also saying goodbye during that meeting would be beloved Faculty Master Vito Sinisi. Vito, who had served eight years in Hinman as Faculty Master, was finally stepping down. Before he left, both former HCC President Jim Greenlees and Pudge Meyer toasted the man who had done so much for them as individuals and so much Hinman.¹³ Pudge Meyer in particular had had a special relationship with Vito Sinisi. Pudge, who had been active in HCC, HLT, and who had almost single-handedly saved the *Hinman Halitosis* newsletter from extinction, had grown very close to Sinisi, who had been a sort of mentor and father-like figure to him over the years. Before he left, Sinisi told Pudge that when Pudge had gone off to do study-abroad in Spain in the Spring of 1980, that had been a very tough semester for the aging Hinman Master. During Hinman graduation, when it came time to hand out the Den of Distinction and Harvey D. Hinman Awards, Vito personally presented Pudge with a Den of Distinction. Over twenty-five years later, Pudge Meyer still remembers that day. Jim Greenless was the winner of the Harvey D. Hinman Award, but Vito had presented Pudge with the final award, saving him for last.¹⁴

That graduation saw the departure of many individuals who had fought long and hard to keep HCC and Hinman College together. It also saw the final farewell of one of Hinman's most influential Faculty Masters. It had been a rough and tumble year full of many trials and tribulations. It had also been a year full of fun and laughter as far as HCC was concerned. The next year would see a new HCC E-Board take the helm of Hinman College, as would it see a new Assistant Coordinator and a brand new Faculty Master. This year truly saw HCC become

an organization that proved vital to the happiness and well-being of the inhabitants of Hinman College. The hope for all was that next year there would be much of the same.

The 1981-1982 academic year started off right with the success of the annual university-wide screaming contest. Many people from each community participated in the event and HCC President Diane Fischer stated that she was very pleased to see all of the community spirit that came from Hinmanites who participated in the event. There were some problems associated with the event. The screaming contest, moved from community to community and with any large gathering of people, rowdiness and mob-like mentalities can occur. A number of windows were broken and a few small fights among the participants broke out. Even though there was no serious damage to any property and no one was seriously injured, there still was a call for people to remember to behave properly during these events. The administration had been threatening to cancel the event because of the property damage and fights. The participants, many of whom had come from Hinman, were warned to be on their best behavior for the next event.¹⁵

Early in the semester a great source of contention arose from budgetary issues. Many in HCC believed that HPC was getting too big a share of the funds. This issue was eventually settled relatively amicably.³ However the newly formed Outdoors Club was up and running and the Hinman Social Committee was planning on bringing many fine social events to Hinman including the annual Hinman Fall Weekend and a party to be held in the Hinman Dining Hall.¹⁶

That semester also had a very competitive mural-making contest in Hinman. For close to three months, teams from the different halls competed with each other to see who would win the honor of having the best mural in all of Hinman. The award for Best Mural went to Cleveland Hall 2nd South (Cleveland Hall 2A) and Best Dorm overall went to Cleveland Hall. Roosevelt Hall Floor 2B won First Prize.¹⁷

³ For more information on this topic see the chapter on Community-Based Theater.

¹ Ibid.

² "Council Minutes," *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. XII, No. 16, February 5, 1981.

³ Rene Coderre, interview with author, October 10, 2006.

⁴ "Council Minutes," *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. XII, No. 16, February 5, 1981.

⁵ James Bachman, "Opinion-letter to the editor," *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. XII, No. 17, February 12, 1981.

⁶ "Hinman Council," *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. XII, No. 18, February 19, 1981.

⁷ "Where Our Money Went," *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. XII, No. 19, February 26, 1981.

⁸ "Hinman Council," *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. XII, No. 20, March 5, 1981.

⁹ "Hinman College Council," *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. XII, No. 22, March 26, 1981.

¹⁰ "Look, Down in the Rec Room, It's a Telethon, it's a Marathon, no...it's a Shotathon," *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. XII, No. 24, April 9, 1981.

¹¹ "An Opinion," *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. XII, No. 24, April 9, 1981.

¹² "A Different Opinion," *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. XII, No. 25, April 23, 1981.

¹³ "Changes," *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. XII, No. 28, May 7, 1981.

¹⁴ Steven "Pudge" Meyer, e-mail message to author, February 12, 2007.

¹⁵ "Editorial," *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. XIII, No. 3, September 9, 1981.

¹⁶ "Hinman Council," *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. XIII, No. 7, October 14, 1981.

¹⁷ "Hinman Council," *Hinman Halitosis* Vol. XIII, No. 13, December 2, 1981