

Bus Stop and Rockefeller Room

Bus Stop was a spring event popular in Hinman beginning in the mid-1970's. Held in the Hinman Commons, it was essentially a talent show for anyone on or off campus who wanted to showcase their musical, artistic or other creative talents. In the early years of Bus Stop, the entertainers were local Binghamton area folk singers or other mellow musicians hoping to get greater exposure.¹ As time passed, however, Bus Stop began to change from a venue for off campus musicians into a solely Hinman-based talent competition. Everything from folk music to popular songs were sung. Humorous skits with elaborate choreography were performed. Musical instruments were played. Magic, juggling, pantomime, almost every conceivable talent that you can think of was exhibited at Bus Stop.

Coming after Bus Stop was what would become its sister program: Rockefeller Room. Rockefeller Room was essentially a fall version of Bus Stop. There was one major difference between these two talent competitions. Where as Bus Stop essentially had an "anything goes" attitude and allowed a multitude of talents, Rockefeller Room was a more formal, classy (some might say old-fashioned) talent competition. Contestants in Rockefeller Room would typically dress up nicely in shirts and ties or evening gowns and perform their talents, which usually involved lounge or easy-listening type music along the lines of Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett or Harry Connick, Jr. Even with these restrictions, Rockefeller Room became just as popular if not more so than Bus Stop. Rene Coderre, who was the Coordinator of Hinman during the heyday of Bus Stop and Rockefeller Room remembers having to turn people away from the programs because there just was not enough space in the Hinman Commons.²

Sadly, popular though Bus Stop and Rockefeller Room proved to be, they would last only until the late 1990's. For reasons unclear, both of these hugely popular Hinman programs faded

from the scene and disappeared completely by the start of the new millennium. There are a variety of theories as to why these incredibly popular Hinman events seemed to have disappeared from the landscape. One theory is that student apathy caused their downfall, that students were no longer willing to put in the time or the energy to organize or even compete in the event. Others theorize that popular television shows like “American Idol,” which is similar to the premise of both Bus Stop and Rockefeller Room, killed these two programs. Perhaps students were more interested in watching this national, interactive television show, which allowed the audience to vote for their favorite performer. This was a similar to the format of judging for Bus Stop and Rockefeller Room. Hinmanites, like most Americans, were caught up in the growth of pop culture that was offered through the medium of television, and lost their desire to venture away from their TV sets to the Hinman Commons to see their peers perform. Even though they may no longer exist as annual Hinman events, the legacy of both Bus Stop and Rockefeller Room continues today whenever a talent show or open-mic competition occurs within the bounds of Hinman College.

¹ Ibid.

² Rene Coderre, interview with author, October 10, 2006.