

Dorm Wars

The very first Dorm Wars occurred in Hinman in the Fall of 1978. It was created by John and Heidi Kowalchuk, the RD's of Roosevelt Hall at the time. Their idea was simple: create a color wars competition among the five buildings of Hinman centered around a theme which would change each year. Each building was assigned a different color and they had shirts to match. Over the years, the themes have been very diverse, (centering around everything from popular movies, television, sports, music and almost every other conceivable topic under the sun). The first Dorm Wars theme was Star Wars partly because it was so similar to the name Dorm Wars but also because the year before the film *Star Wars* hit the theaters and became one of the highest-grossing most popular films of all time. Other notable themes have included "Hinman Through the Ages" (2003), Medieval Hinman (2004), Hinman Gets Dirty (2005), and the fairy tale themed "And Hinman Lived Happily Ever After" (2006). These are just a few of the many examples of Dorm Wars themes throughout the years. The Kowalchuk's goal was to create a fun weekend early in the fall to help build community and to bring residents of each building closer together.¹ Many of the events that occurred during that first Dorm Wars still continue to this day. Halls made banners and had events on the Hinman Quad. Many of the events continue to this day including things like bat spin, egg toss, sneaker relay, tug-of-war and various other relay races that are the staples of Dorm Wars. Today there is typically an alma mater (a parody song) sung by the students of each building and a lip sync which caps off the event.

One very popular event that has been discontinued involved a beer chugging contest. Participants in the beer chugging contest would run down to a station and be handed a cup of beer. They would then chug that beer as quickly as possible and then proceed to run back to

their original starting position. They would repeat this a number of times. As one might imagine after running this circuit a few times, the participants began to feel the effects of the alcohol on their system.² This wildly popular event (for both the participants and the spectators) would eventually be discontinued for a number of reasons. One reason was because all too often, the participants in the beer chugging contest would become ill from drinking too much alcohol too quickly. The other reason, the reason why it was completely killed off, was because the drinking age changed from 18 to 21. With the vast majority of the potential participants underage, any sort of alcohol-related activity would be all but impossible.

Nonetheless, Dorm Wars is a popular event which almost everyone who has lived in Hinman since 1978 has participated in. The tradition continues each fall when one Saturday is set aside for an afternoon of fun events that introduce new residents to the traditions of Hinman and give everyone, both new and old, a chance to bond and get to know one another.

¹ John and Heidi Kowalcyk, "Hinman in the 1970's," April 23, 2003.

² Tony Toluba, e-mail message to author, March 10, 2007.