

Hysteria

Similar to Dorm Wars, Hinman Hysteria is a week-long event in the spring where each of the buildings compete against the other in events that challenge athletic, intellectual, and artistic prowess, centered around a predetermined theme. In many ways it is a kind of extended Dorm Wars. Dorm Wars is limited to one Saturday in the fall, whereas Hysteria is a weeklong series of events typically starting on a Sunday and ending on Saturday. During the course of that week many sporting events occur, the most popular ones being games of kickball, dodgeball, basketball, volleyball, and Co-Rec football. Usually there is also a trivia competition and/or other tests of intellectual prowess. Hysteria is also usually host to a Miss Hinman competition, a drag show featuring a male contestant from each building who has to answer a series of questions and perform a talent routine. The Faculty Master, Assistant Director and Hinman Fellows act as judges for this and the other events. One difference between Hysteria and Dorm Wars is that Hysteria is coordinated by a group of student volunteers which form HCC's Hysteria Committee. The Hysteria Committee coordinates the events and acts as judges and referees. The HCC E-Board has this responsibility during Dorm Wars.

Events Day is much like the Events Day of Dorm Wars. Banners must be hung in the Hinman Quad to be judged, and relay races, egg toss, sneaker relay, tug-of-war, and other field events take place. This typically takes most of the afternoon. When the field events are all over, a scavenger hunt occurs where each building must find as many items as possible on a list developed by the Hysteria Committee. The first building to bring all the items on the list to a central location (usually the lower Hinman Dining Hall) wins this contest. In the event that not all of the items are found, the first building to bring the most items on the list wins. The capstone of Hysteria centers around three of the most popular events of the entire competition.

The first event is usually the alma mater, which is a parody of a popular song, or a song rewritten to fit the theme. This is sometimes combined with a skit which each of the buildings performs. The skit, like the alma mater, has to fit the theme and usually features good-natured ribbing of the other buildings and the personalities who live in them. This is followed by the ever popular lip sync competition where a group of students from each building lip sync to a random group of songs. The group with the best “performance” and choreography wins the competition. The winners of Hysteria have as a reward not only the bragging rights of being Hysteria champs, but also the right to house the Hysteria Trophy in their respective building until the next year.

Hysteria was developed in 1987, nearly ten years after Dorm Wars. The reason why Hysteria was introduced as an event in Hinman is multifaceted. First, Hysteria was designed as a sort of companion event to Dorm Wars. Dorm Wars was a popular event and quickly became the biggest Hinman activity of the Fall semester. However, there had been nothing comparable in the Spring. Hysteria was developed to fill the vacuum.¹

The other reason why Hysteria was created was because of the drinking age change. Up until 1984, most states in the United States had minimum drinking ages set at age 18. However, the National Minimum Drinking Age Act of 1984 was passed by Congress on July 17, 1984. This increased the drinking age to 21. The reasons the drinking age was increased to 21 are many, though one of the big reasons was that Congress thought that increasing the drinking age would reduce the cases of alcohol abuse on college campuses and reduce the rates of drinking and driving. Although alcohol abuse had been a problem on college campuses for many years previous to this and one of the big concerns of many college administrators was that raising the drinking age would only send drinking on college campuses underground. Previously, if college students became intoxicated severely, the only concern of college officials was to help that

student get the help that he or she needed. While this was still the chief concern after the increase in age, now underage drinking was a crime. It was found that many students turned to unhealthy binge drinking when the age was changed. Colleges and universities across the country were faced with the problem of how to curtail underage drinking at this time and Binghamton was no exception. One key fact that was discovered was that many students claimed that they drank because they had nothing else to do. With this in mind, the residential life officials in Hinman College at this time decided to give the students something to do and as a result Hinman Hysteria was born. In other words one can say that Hysteria was created to keep underage students from drinking.²

Though Hysteria probably did little or nothing to curtail student drinking, like Dorm Wars it quickly became a popular event and the biggest Hinman activity in the Spring Semester. Eventually it would even eclipse Dorm Wars and become the biggest most anticipated event of the entire year. Like Dorm Wars, Hysteria is a milestone annual Hinman event which brings out members of the entire community. Hysteria is a vehicle for residents in each building to form truly lasting bonds with one another. Anyone who has stayed up all night working on a banner, coming up with a skit and song, and who has played in sporting events every night of the week, can truly attest that you bond with the people are on your team and even the people whom you compete against.

Almost everyone who has competed in Dorm Wars and Hysteria will attest that some of their fondest memories of their days in Hinman center around these two events. Moreover, like Co-Rec, almost every alum keeps their shirts. Though they may become faded over the years, and though alums may no longer fit into their shirts, they still represent priceless mementos from the days of their youth and the time that they spent in Hinman. For both Dorm Wars and

Hysteria, by far the two biggest and most important events during the academic year in Hinman, that is their lasting legacy—bringing people together for days filled with sometimes goofy but nevertheless fun and enjoyable events and creating memories that last a lifetime.

¹ Jarrod Bagatell, telephone conversation with author, January 9, 2007.

² Ibid.