

Epilogue

The way you get meaning into your life is to devote yourself to loving others, devote yourself to your community around you, and devote yourself to creating something that gives you purpose and meaning.

-Mitch Albom

April 30, 2007 was a Monday, and Monday night means trivia night. Everyone who knows me will tell you that I'm a trivia fanatic. My lifelong ambition for as long as I can remember (we're talking about since age 5, maybe even younger) has been to appear as a contestant on *Jeopardy!* Every Monday night, I and a small group of friends go to Cyber Café West, a local watering hole on Main Street in Binghamton to play team trivia. For the better part of two years, this small group of friends, which includes my roommate from my freshman and sophomore years, Hu Huang, and a former suitemate, Eric Brown, compete against other teams in one of the most challenging weekly trivia competitions that I have ever known. Both Eric and Hu were two-year residents of Hinman. We all lived in suite 126 of Roosevelt Hall and that's how we all met. This night in particular most of the regulars who come to play trivia with us couldn't make it. That night only myself, Eric and our mutual friend Molly Ariotti were the ones playing trivia. Molly is a denizen of College-in-the-Woods. Early on in the year I had mentioned to Molly that I had been writing the history of Hinman College. Over the course of the year she would ask about my progress and I would keep her informed. This night she happened to ask me what page I was up to. At this point in time I had lost track of how many pages I had written, but the rough estimate was close to 700 double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins on Microsoft Word. Molly was flabbergasted when I told her my estimate for the page count and was even more astonished when I told her that I wasn't quite done yet, that I still had a few more chapters to finalize before the project would be complete. Molly then proceeded to flash me one of her trademark smiles and went on to say, "Come on,

Brent. There honestly can't be that much to say about Hinman. And besides, why would you want to write all that?" I replied with the answer that after spending hours in the library and the archives researching the history, and after communicating by phone and email with alumni that I felt that I owed it to them to make sure the story was told right. An indescribable twinkle sparkled in her eyes, and once again Molly smiled then scoffed, "Ok, but seriously, I've lived in CIW my entire time here and I don't feel that way about it. I like living in CIW, but I'd never want to commit the amount of time that you have to writing the history of it." We didn't win trivia that night, though we did alright, coming back from a large deficit and getting the final answer right. In my mind, the night was a victory for our team, "The Vegan Drapes." The origins of our team trivia name would take a chapter in and of itself to explain, though anyone who has ever played competitive team trivia can tell you that the team trivia names rival Co-Rec team names for raunchiness and sexual innuendo.

For a long while after that I began thinking a lot about what Molly said to me that night. Had what I'd been doing for my entire senior year been worthwhile? Was Hinman really that important to write over 700 pages about? In the process of writing this history, had I missed out on my college experience? These questions haunted me for a great deal of time afterwards. I began to ponder my situation. While I had been writing Hinman history, others that I had known were off creating their own. While I had been dutifully jotting down the exploits of others, I had been accumulating few if any of my own. I came to the conclusion that Hinman College is a cruel mistress. Like the Old Testament interpretations of the divine spirit, Hinman giveth and Hinman can taketh away. Had it all been worth it, I asked myself late at night, wracked with insomnia? Had what I been doing for the past nine months been meaningful in the least?

The more I thought about it the more I began to despise my situation and the more I began to resent Hinman College for what it had done to me. How dare these five buildings of brick and mortar take up so much of my life. How did it all happen? One day I came in like any other college student, carefree and full of freedom, and seemingly overnight I had more responsibility than I could handle thrust upon me and my liberty greatly restricted. I saw my friends go out on Friday and Saturday nights when I was stuck in the building with weekend RA duties. I saw them playing catch out in the sun while I was stuck in the archives. I saw people growing up, living, loving, while I was hacking away at my keyboard until the wee small hours of the morning. Yes, Roosevelt Hall may have won Hinman Hysteria for an unprecedented three years in a row, but the only tangible reward I had gotten out of it was a nasty sinus infection (most likely from the late nights working on the banner, the early mornings preparing for the song and skit, the numerous afternoons spent out in the elements playing the various sports, and all the stress and heartache of trying to get everyone out and involved). The more I examined the situation I began to think that Hinman had done very little for me. Here I was a graduating senior with no job, no girlfriend, no future prospects, a scrap of paper with Binghamton University insignia on it designating that I was getting my BA in History, and a gigantic stack of papers telling stories that I began to wonder if anyone would want to read, documenting the history of a place that few if any would care about. It was at this point in time that anger and resentment overtook me. I came to the conclusion that I hated Hinman College.

I hated this college with a passion. For four years it had denied me everything that I had wanted. If I were a regular college student I would have moved off campus at some point in time or another and I wouldn't have had to deal with all the hassles and stress of living in a residence hall. I wouldn't have had to sit through grossly inefficient and interminably long HCC meetings.

I wouldn't have had to play a foolish sport where only girls are allowed to throw the football. I wouldn't have had to waste precious time reviewing HPC plays because I knew that no one else would do it. I wouldn't have had to spend innumerable hours in the Hinman Library/Discovery Center filling up that godforsaken printer with paper every time it ran out (even after I ceased being a Discovery Assistant I still have to perform this function from time to time). I wouldn't have had to stay up late at night helping my residents prepare for HCC sweeps, or help them figure out their classes for the next semester, or help them with roommate conflicts, girlfriend/boyfriend problems, family squabbles, drug and alcohol problems, and a host of other issues, the only reward of which was my own room, which I would have gotten anyway if I had moved off campus. I began to hate every single alum with whom I had spoken, for telling me that this was the best four years of their lives, that by the simple fact of living within what I now viewed as nothing more than forty-year old tenements their lives had been better off. What did those old fogies know anyway? For a while I felt this way. For a while I had lost my faith and began to wonder if these past four years had been just a cruel joke, if they had been nothing more than a terrible miscalculation on my part, and if I had squandered what should have been the best years of my life.

Then I began to stop and reflect, and only what I can describe as a religious epiphany and a reaffirmation of my beliefs took place took place within me. For a brief moment the past four years of my life flashed before my eyes. I remembered the day when I first came to Hinman, when I first checked into Roosevelt Hall and met Hu, my roommate and the person who I consider to be one of the best friends that I have ever had. I remembered meeting my suitemate Kevin Clark, the man who gave me my nickname "Gooch." To this day if you walk about Hinman and ask people if they know who Brent Gotsch is, most will shrug their shoulders and

not know who you're talking about. If you ask them if they know Gooch, then everyone, from fifth year seniors all the way down to freshmen know precisely who you're referring to.

I remembered the late night conversations I would have with Eric Mazurkewitz, Brian Forster, and Steve Ni, my suite and floormates in Roosevelt and the times that we belted out Clay Aiken's "Invisible" just for the fun of it. I remembered Valerie Potopsingh, my RA my freshman year, introducing me (as Gooch) to Al Vos at lunch one day, a meeting that would change my life forever. I remembered Amy Forgacs, another RA from freshman year, who had lived in Roosevelt for five consecutive years, more than anyone else in Hinman history, taking me under her wing and helping me through more difficult times in my life than I can count.

I remembered when I applied to be the Discovery Assistant in Roosevelt Hall my sophomore year and having Lauren Losapio (my RA at the time and future staff member) say to me after I asked her for a recommendation, "Gooch, I want you on my staff." She didn't say "go ahead, give it a shot," or even "sure, I think you'd make a good candidate." She said, "*I want you on my staff.*" To this day that statement and simple action on her part has meant so much to me not only because it got me where I am today but also because of the genuineness of the way she said it. I owe her more than I could ever possibly repay.

I remembered meeting Eric Kurs-Lasky for the first time, complete with broken hand but far more of an athlete than I ever would dream of being and the person who would inspire me to reach goals I never thought possible. I remembered when he let me borrow his shoes for the date auction. I remembered all the times we would hang out in his suite playing Taboo with residents in the building. I remembered when with another broken hand he led the Co-Rec team to a championship victory, continuing the legacy that Bob Giomi started in 1971. I remembered all the conversations we'd have about the future and our places in it, the end result being that I

always felt better about myself. This past year especially, when I started working on this project and opened up a Pandora's Box, Eric gave me hope, something that has sustained me when I was wracked with confusion and self-doubt.

I remembered Michelle Grossman practicing tap dancing in the hallways of Roosevelt and sitting with her friend Jody at the high tables in the Hinman Dining Hall for hours on end, but always stopping you to say hello as you passed by. I remembered her bringing her tours into my room each and every weekend and each of us each finding a new way to mess with the prospective students. I remembered her dressing me up to perform in the 2006 Miss Roosevelt Competition and teaching me all the moves to the song and dance routine from "Saved by the Bell." She gave me the gift of laughter, something which warms my heart to this very day.

I remembered soft-spoken Yachao Zhang dropping everything including studying for her MCAT exam so we could go collect cans for the canned food drive (we came in first place in that event). I remembered staying up all night with her to help finish the banners for Dorm Wars and Hysteria. I remembered helping her set up for the "Lunar New Year" program, by far the best program that we've ever had in Roosevelt and one of the best I've ever seen in all of Hinman. Her simplicity, courage and strength has been a model that I will always try to emulate.

I remembered jumping out of the "Books for Africa" box when all of us were bored one night and scaring the living daylights out unsuspecting residents. I remembered the long nights in the RA office with my staff members shooting the breeze, talking about every conceivable topic under the sun and never, ever getting sick of one another's company. I remembered when two of my freshman E-Board members got elected as officers in HCC, when one was selected as a DA, and when three of my residents became Hinman RA's (one of which is following in my footsteps as Roosevelt Hall RA) and made me the proudest senior Hinman RA in the world.

I remembered the Co-Rec games, every Dorm Wars and Hysteria, every HCC meeting, every trip to the dining hall, every late night run to Wal-Mart, every excursion to the Nite Owl, every moment of bonding and camaraderie. I remembered all of it. I remembered the good times and the bad, and there were bad times, a fair number of them in fact. But I then began to realize that the good far outweighed the bad.

I began to realize that though the story of my time here in Hinman may not be as exciting or even as important as some of the others that have passed before me, it is a story nonetheless. I also realized that the story of Hinman does not end with the writing that I have jotted down upon these pages, that it truly is a never-ending story, always changing, always evolving, always entering a new chapter, but always interconnected. Everyone who has ever lived in Hinman has been a part of this story of Hinman College and we all have a role to play in it, a responsibility to it to make sure that the past is honored and that the future of this place is secure. And that's what it had all been about. My story had been the act of writing down these words, to tell the stories so that they may be preserved for future generations. That was my task, and that was the destiny that had been laid out for me.

Destiny has a funny way of working things out. Never in a million years would I have thought that I would become this involved and this invested in a residential college. But it seemed as though from day one here fate had tipped its hand and had maneuvered me into this position. I had taken a class with Allan Eller (long before I knew his involvement in Hinman) and decided to take another class with him because I liked his teaching style. Tragically, that was right before his horseback riding accident. However, his replacement was Dr. Francis Newman, one of the men chiefly responsible for the Colville Report and bringing collegiate structure to SUNY Binghamton. If I had never taken that class with Allan Eller I never would

have taken a class with Francis Newman and that part of the history to this day may never have been known. This was not the only example of destiny playing a part in my life. Chris Cullinane, a former RD of Hughes Hall, current Associate Director of Residential Life, and a Hinman Fellow, told me to speak with his fellow Residential Life staffer, Rene Coderre, who led me to Adam Brown who led me to Jarrod Bagatell, the man who would lead me to the family of Al Haber. If it wasn't for those connections I may never have been able to write that section on Al Haber in the chapter on Faculty Masters. The loads of paper in the archives, all the meticulously filed back issues of the *Hinman Halitosis* and *Dynamo* were laid out there for me, as though someone, in some past time, knew that they were important and that it was only a matter of time before they saw the light of day. These are but a few examples of destiny showing its hand, a new faith that I now totally and whole heartedly believe in.

Throughout this whole document I have been trying to understand what the meaning of Hinman is all about, to understand its unique spirit and why it has meant so much to so many people over the course of its forty year history. It took 700 pages and countless hours of research and writing and I still am unable to figure out what the Spirit of Hinman is all about. I don't think that I will ever be able to define the Hinman Spirit but I can answer the question of what Hinman means to me. In a nutshell, what Hinman means to me is everything.

Without Hinman I never would have gotten involved, I never would have become a presence in the community, and I never would have grown as an individual. If I never had become involved in Hinman, I would have been just another face in the crowd of Binghamton University. They say that it's the premier public university of the northeast, and that may be true, but in my mind the real premier institution is Hinman College. Hinman has meant so very much to me. It has meant my growth and development and it has meant me finding the people

whom I consider to be my best friends that I have ever had and whom I love with all my heart. Maybe that's what it's all about. It's about the relationships, the passions, everything associated with humanity at its absolute best is what the meaning of Hinman is all about.

So, you may ask the question of me now, "Was it all worth it?" I'll try to answer it this way. The reason that Molly isn't writing a history of CIW isn't because she has no passion. She's a sophomore with enough credits to be considered a senior, she's double-majoring in Geography and Political Science with a minor in French, she writes for *Pipe Dream*, is a member of the Ultimate Frisbee team, possesses a natural grace and intelligence that I have rarely seen in any one individual, and plays the violin in the orchestra on top of all that. No, I'd say Molly Ariotti has passion, especially when it comes to her music and performing in the orchestra. On a side note, Dr. Timothy Perry, the head of the Music Department and orchestra and his wife, Ute, are both Hinman Fellows. Just had to throw that in there. The reason Molly's not writing a history of CIW is because her connection to that community is not as strong as mine is to Hinman. It's not to say that CIW is not a fine residential college. It almost certainly is. What I've discovered though is that there is a reason why no one has written a history of CIW or Dickinson or Newing or Mountainview (which is really too young to have a history). The reason is that when you ask the people who live there, they say they like it but they don't have that same passion. When you talk to people who live in Hinman they have something that the others don't have: they have passion. Whether or not that is the reason why this community is considered so special and so unique by generations of students is unclear, but I think it is a big reason behind it. Hinmanites are special people. They keep coming back even years later. You don't see that with people from other residential colleges. The reason Hinmanites keep coming back is passion.

My time in Hinman has ended. I'll come back, no doubt, like many others before me, and walk along the quad. I'll stop in the dining hall and sample some of its cuisine. I'll meander into the Hinman Commons to catch the latest HPC play, to the Hinman Library to say hello to the office staff. I'll stroll up to Sterling Field to take in a Co-Rec game, and of course I'll return to Roosevelt Hall and commune with the spirits who still inhabit it. If those walls could only talk, what stories they'd tell. But the time that I've had here will never come again, not like it did when I was a student. The past is in the past. The awesome responsibility of Time will be left to someone else to take up, someone who comes after me to document the next forty years.

And perhaps, upon my return journey to Hinman, I'll even run into some old faces who can say that they too now understand what the meaning of Hinman is all about—that they've discovered what I've discovered, that Hinman means different things to different people, but in the end it's something unique and special. Maybe I'll even see Molly, and though she may never be able to completely comprehend the Spirit of Hinman, I'll know that I do, and in the end, that's all that really matters.

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