

SIASEFI USHERED IN NEW ERA IN 1952

You might ask how a band of Korean War veterans changed the Stevens Point campus in the mid-1950s. Few who lived through those years would deny that their impact was profound. But it is at this very starting point that the controversy begins and it has never really subsided. Who were they? What motivated them? Were they, as some implied, the very personification of disorder, or were they, as Dean Warren Jenkins observed, "men with a world view descended upon campus to stir things up"?

Here at last is the true story of the legendary Siasefi (or as true as any history is likely to be).

G.I.s Meet Greeks- The Beginning

To understand what this campus was like fifty years ago, rent an old Andy Hardy movie. The campus culture in 1953 had evolved little from what it had been in 1933. We were a very small school where students were essentially "children" provided for by a benevolently parental institution. They called it in loco parentis. Imagine if you can, a growing number of G.I.s descending upon this oasis of order and control. These men (there were few women veterans on campus then) had been trained to obey, but were not inclined to suffer fools gladly. They required reasons, or they were prone toward noncompliance. This was the setting in 1953 when Siasefi came into being. Not every Siasefi was a veteran, but many were. Some were married. They were inclined toward self-assurance, self-reliance and individualism. They were also very amused by the antics of campus Greeks. They considered the rituals of the Greeks so silly that when Siasefi came into being, parodies of Greek ceremonies were lampooned in many of their activities. For example, during festive periods, recruits to the Siasefi might call out as follows:

Oh, Siasefi, Thou paragon of propriety
Thou beacon in the fog of fallacious fellowship.
Let me bask in the beam of thy benevolence
though I am but camel's dung under thy feet.
I beseech thee to test me, to ignore my insufferable vileness,
to forgive my multitudinous sins and to allow me to grovel at thy feet.

A pledge proclaimed not in the secrecy of a fraternity house basement. but in the glaring light of public scrutiny for all to witness. When things made little or no sense, the Siasefi said so. Rowdy? Hard drinkers? An embarrassment? Beauty it is said lies in the eye of the beholder. These men would certainly plead guilty to iconoclastic tendencies. As for the charge of being fond of the occasional tankard, they would point out that even Sigmund Romberg's Student Prince enjoyed the occasional evening in the beer garden. What was generally not known, nor acknowledged, was the fact that Siasefi maintained for many years the highest grade point average of any campus social organization.

Siasefi Literary Renaissance

A few years after their origin, Siasefi gave birth to an opposition campus newspaper "The Disappointer". An obvious imperative when the established campus newspaper refused to print letters to the editor in any way critical of administration policies. Although organization, funding and publishing of the Disappointer are obscured in the mists of time, it is clear from the name that the Disappointer was a counter to the Pointer. Professor Clifford Morrison, first faculty advisor and those stout fellows who followed him as advisors proved strong in their encouragement of these enterprises. They were also among the first subscribers.

What's In a Name?

Folks ask about the name: Siasefi. What it means is something of a mystery. It is said that the name originated from a type of unseemly street performance of 17th Century Paris. An apocryphal story? Perhaps. It is also said that the meaning of Siasefi is revealed to each new member upon initiation but that a curse befalls any who reveal it to the uninitiated.

The Legacy

The name may remain mysterious, but the men who maintained Siasefi traditions over the decades are not. Of those who were present at the creation in the 1950s, most are retired. They, and those who followed, became CEOs, bank presidents, government officials, teachers and countless other endeavors spread across the broad social spectrum of this nation. They probably do not stand out in a crowd today. Few would look like revolutionaries. But fifty years ago, thirty men began a campus tradition at Central State College, now UWSP, that hastened the demise of an old campus culture and inaugurated a new era of campus life that would reach full bloom in the 1960s and 70s.

We hope to perpetuate the spirit of Siasefi on the campus of UW-SP by helping those students who we deem to best embody the attitudes and values of the founders and members.