

James Harkins

Interview with: JAMES HARKINS
Marist College
Poughkeepsie, NY
Transcribed by Lola-Dillon Cahill
For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

James Harkins

Transcript – James Harkins

Interviewee: James Harkins

Interviewer: Gus Nolan and Jan Stivers

Interview Date: 27 June 2023

Location: James A. Cannavino Library

Topic: Marist College History

Subject Headings: Marist College Alumni

Marist College Staff

Marist College (Poughkeepsie, New York)

Summary: In this interview, Gus Nolan and Jan Stivers had the opportunity to speak with James Harkins, a Marist College Alumni and member of the Office of Safety and Security. They spoke about his family and childhood, education, and work experiences both before Marist and at Marist.

James Harkins

Gus Nolan (00:00:00):

We didn't do, we've done interviews where we didn't have it on <laugh>. We had to go and get them back.

James Harkins (00:00:06):

Oh. So that must've been fun. Yeah. Very

Gus Nolan (00:00:11):

Of all things. Yeah. John Klein on the board. Oh, well good afternoon, Jim. It's nice to have you come and see us. Let me just say something about what's happening. We do oral interviews with the Marist College office of the archives. And this is like the 165th, I suppose that we've done, starting with a guy called Paul Ambrose and Adrian Perreault.

James Harkins (00:00:40):

I remember him well

Gus Nolan (00:00:40):

Well, like in, 2 0 0 1. And then, Brian Desilets, Linus Foy, Lou Zuccarello You know those names?

James Harkins (00:00:48):

Yes, I do, very well.

Gus Nolan (00:00:50):

Yeah. Well, they're all in interviews you can go see what they said. So, but for you, it's going to be something similar, like four basic parts. One has to do, early childhood, then school education, high school, after college work, first work periods, and then Marist. How did you find Marist or how long have you been here? What, questions we'll ask about security and so on. About, more than fifty percent will be in this last area. Okay. So that's the overall view. So to start, let's say a few things about your early life. Where were you born and brought up and what can you remember of those days? It's a long time ago.

James Harkins (00:01:40):

Yeah. Every day gets longer. <laugh>. I was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. I was born in Brookdale Hospital, <affirmative> I grew up in Bay Ridge, which is right near the Verrazano Bridge. Beautiful neighborhood. Lived in a private court on 101st Street, called Jackson Court, right near Fort Hamilton. I lived there until I was five, until I was 18. It was a good experience growing up in New York City. You learned a lot about cultures. Different people.

Gus Nolan (00:02:15):

Okay. Where, how about family? Your brothers and sisters. Siblings?

James Harkins (00:02:20):

I'm an only child.

James Harkins

Gus Nolan ([00:02:21](#)):

You're an only child?

James Harkins ([00:02:22](#)):

Yeah.

Gus Nolan ([00:02:22](#)):

Okay. And then, elementary education as you can. Where did you go to school?

James Harkins ([00:02:28](#)):

St. Patrick's. St. Patrick's Elementary School on 95th Street in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn,

Gus Nolan ([00:02:33](#)):

80th?

Jan Stivers ([00:02:36](#)):

Is Bay Ridge, a, Bay Ridge was an Irish community?

James Harkins ([00:02:38](#)):

Irish, Italian.

Jan Stivers ([00:02:39](#)):

Italian.

James Harkins ([00:02:40](#)):

Some German. Yes. Much different now, but that's what it was when I was a kid. Yeah.

Gus Nolan ([00:02:45](#)):

Back to St. Patrick's. Years in elementary school?

James Harkins ([00:02:50](#)):

Yes. I went to elementary school.

Gus Nolan ([00:02:52](#)):

Okay. Through elementary school, just kind of activities you were involved with. Was there much sports?

James Harkins ([00:03:00](#)):

I wouldn't, no, I wasn't much of an athlete. I wasn't into too many sports,

Gus Nolan ([00:03:04](#)):

Activities though. Were you in the choir?

James Harkins

James Harkins (00:03:07):

No. <laugh> None of that.

Gus Nolan (00:03:09):

Drama? What did you do <laugh>?

James Harkins (00:03:10):

I did a lot of, I paid attention to my studies, mainly. I liked, I was poor at math. I still am. Okay. But I was, I enjoyed English. I enjoyed history. Okay. All those types of things. That's what, that was pretty much what I did. I wasn't, I really wasn't much into sports.

Gus Nolan (00:03:30):

Very good. Let's move on to high school. How about high school? Where'd you go to high school?

James Harkins (00:03:36):

St. Peter's Boys High School in Staten Island. That's,

Gus Nolan (00:03:40):

Is it still in existence?

James Harkins (00:03:42):

It still is, actually. It's grown quite a bit. They send me a, they send me a magazine every year. And it's, they actually have a football team.

Gus Nolan (00:03:50):

An, with an envelope involved with it. <laugh>?

James Harkins (00:03:52):

Yeah, usually. <laugh> There's always an envelope.

Jan Stivers (00:03:56):

Did you have to Take the ferry to get to school?

James Harkins (00:04:00):

No, I didn't have to take the ferry. I took a bus right over the Verrazano Bridge. It would take me right there. And, it was similar. I wasn't involved in sports or anything there.

Gus Nolan (00:04:09):

The Verrazano Bridge was up?

James Harkins (00:04:11):

Oh, yeah. It was, Verrazano went up in 1964, I think. Oh, okay. I think it went up in '64, a couple of years before I was born. Oh, okay. And yeah, I took it every day, you know. And high school was good.

James Harkins

Gus Nolan ([00:04:25](#)):

Alright. Again, back to high school. Did you play basketball or anything that was on the scene yet?

James Harkins ([00:04:32](#)):

Never did. I didn't like it.

Gus Nolan ([00:04:34](#)):

Oh, okay.

James Harkins ([00:04:34](#)):

They tried to get me to play because I was always tall.

Gus Nolan ([00:04:37](#)):

How about tennis?

James Harkins ([00:04:38](#)):

Tennis? I played a little bit of tennis, but not as, you know, a, you know,

Gus Nolan ([00:04:42](#)):

Serious?

James Harkins ([00:04:42](#)):

Yeah. Not varsity or anything. I would play with friends. Okay.

Gus Nolan ([00:04:47](#)):

Okay, any other activities like hobbies, just growing? Did you ever work during school?

James Harkins ([00:04:55](#)):

I worked, I did work during school. I worked in, I worked at a local deli right near my house. I did that probably from, I would say maybe fifteen until I was about eighteen.

Gus Nolan ([00:05:05](#)):

Really?

James Harkins ([00:05:06](#)):

You know, I worked part-time and I would take extra hours. I liked the money, you know, it was the independence and all that. You know.

Gus Nolan ([00:05:13](#)):

Moving on from high school, how did, did the military ever fit into this?

James Harkins ([00:05:20](#)):

No, I never joined the military.

James Harkins

Gus Nolan ([00:05:22](#)):

Okay. You were never drafted?

James Harkins ([00:05:24](#)):

No, I was past that age. I actually had to sign the draft card, you know, where you have to fill in with this elective service, but I was, they weren't doing the draft. It was all volunteer by the time I was out of high school.

Gus Nolan ([00:05:36](#)):

Okay. So that's the first part of this whole thing. Now, after you got out of high school what's the next step?

James Harkins ([00:05:47](#)):

I moved up here with my family when I was eighteen years old. We moved from Brooklyn, New York. My mother, my father, my grandparents, we all moved up here to Rhinebeck, New York.

Gus Nolan ([00:05:57](#)):

Oh, okay.

Jan Stivers ([00:05:58](#)):

What prompted the move?

James Harkins ([00:05:59](#)):

My father had worked in the NYPD for twenty-one years. And he and my mother both wanted to get out of the city. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>.

Gus Nolan ([00:06:08](#)):

That's the New York Police Department?

James Harkins ([00:06:10](#)):

Yes.

Gus Nolan ([00:06:11](#)):

I'm familiar with it. Yeah, yeah. My brother was a, he was on the job, as they say in the trade.

James Harkins ([00:06:17](#)):

Yeah. That's what they say <laugh>.

Gus Nolan ([00:06:19](#)):

And so on. So you moved up here, and how come all the way up to upstate New York?

James Harkins ([00:06:27](#)):

James Harkins

My parents when, they used to go on vacations a lot, and they would come up to this area, and that's how, that's kind of what got the ball rolling for them. They, the city was changing by the time I was, you know, in my late teens, it was getting more crowded.

Gus Nolan ([00:06:44](#)):

About what year is this?

James Harkins ([00:06:45](#)):

This would be 1984. That's when I graduated high school. <affirmative>. And the, it was, the neighborhood was getting more crowded. People were like, they were starting to tear up their front lawns to put in parking spaces. So, I mean, the atmosphere was changing. And I think my parents essentially from coming up here, they saw, you know, you could have more space, living was easier and quieter. When you live in the city, every, you're not under stress all the time, but you're just, there's more tension living in the city.

Gus Nolan ([00:07:17](#)):

Yeah, it certainly is.

Jan Stivers ([00:07:18](#)):

And did your dad retire?

James Harkins ([00:07:20](#)):

He did. Okay. He did, he had passed the lieutenants test. Oh. But, he had had enough. So, <laugh>. Yeah.

Gus Nolan ([00:07:26](#)):

That's,

James Harkins ([00:07:26](#)):

So that was it.

Gus Nolan ([00:07:28](#)):

That's moving on up.

James Harkins ([00:07:30](#)):

Yeah. But it was his time. He knew it. And, you know, he had no regrets about it. Mm-Hmm.

Gus Nolan ([00:07:34](#)):

<affirmative>. Okay. Is college part of the scene? When you came up?

James Harkins ([00:07:38](#)):

Yes. Actually I went here.

Gus Nolan ([00:07:40](#)):

Oh so?

James Harkins

James Harkins ([00:07:41](#)):

Went to Marist College for the first, I went here from eighty-four to eighty-six. I took classes here, undergraduate.

Gus Nolan ([00:07:48](#)):

Okay. Linus Foy was president or Dennis?

James Harkins ([00:07:52](#)):

Dennis Murray was president.

Gus Nolan ([00:07:54](#)):

Already?

James Harkins ([00:07:54](#)):

Yes. He was, I think he came in in seventy-nine or something. So he was pretty new.

Gus Nolan ([00:07:58](#)):

<affirmative>. Yeah. He, well, standards here, Linus, Paul was here for ten, and Linus was here for twenty, and Dennis was here for forty. I mean, <laugh>.

James Harkins ([00:08:08](#)):

Yeah. Dennis.

Gus Nolan ([00:08:09](#)):

Longevity is part of the administration and part of this.

James Harkins ([00:08:12](#)):

Yes, absolutely.

Gus Nolan ([00:08:14](#)):

Jan, ask a few questions about college.

Jan Stivers ([00:08:16](#)):

So you were here for two years,

James Harkins ([00:08:17](#)):

Yes.

Jan Stivers ([00:08:18](#)):

Then what?

James Harkins ([00:08:20](#)):

James Harkins

I actually, I worked as a student in the security department. I worked in the security department, you know, as a part, you know, part-time, student worker or whatever. I, then I went to SUNY New Paltz and I graduated with a degree in communications over there. And it was specialized in media. And I ended up, after I got out of college, I ended up, working for small ad agency up here for about a year. And I hated it. <laugh>, I really disliked it. But the whole time, I always maintained, I worked here part-time, the whole time, you know, because they kept me as a, you know, a part-time officer. And I continued working here. And then the ad agency wasn't working out. I liked the job where I could be out and about. And, you know, it was just kind of what fit my personality more. So I ended up coming down here and I eventually took a full-time job here. Which is how I got to working here full-time.

Jan Stivers ([00:09:15](#)):

You have a longer history with Marist than we knew!

James Harkins ([00:09:18](#)):

I have. Yes. Since, you know, as a student since 1984. Yeah. So I'm coming up on forty years <laugh>.

Gus Nolan ([00:09:24](#)):

Yeah. That's, wow. That's a long period of time. The ad agency is, that's the only other job you really had.

James Harkins ([00:09:35](#)):

That was my only real job. Yes. And I took that, I worked in sales and I did some of the, I worked on the advertising camera equipment and, you know, some of that. And it just, it wasn't for me. I did not like it at all.

Gus Nolan ([00:09:48](#)):

Never liked the delicatessen.

James Harkins ([00:09:50](#)):

No, that's, I enjoyed it. I learned a lot. I learned quite a bit. But, you know, when they're slicing my meats, I know what I don't like and what I do like, but.

Gus Nolan ([00:09:58](#)):

Yeah. How about social life? Were you involved at Marist or at New Paltz? They have things like dances and they have, you know, well, they used to here. I don't know if they still do.

James Harkins ([00:10:10](#)):

I wasn't, I'm a pretty solitary person. I really wasn't.

Gus Nolan ([00:10:14](#)):

Oh, okay.

James Harkins ([00:10:15](#)):

I'm a musician.

James Harkins

Jan Stivers ([00:10:16](#)):

I also think by 84. You know, they, that stuff wasn't happening so much.

James Harkins ([00:10:21](#)):

Oh, like social, that kind of stuff?

Jan Stivers ([00:10:23](#)):

Yeah proms were, prom. But, you know, the big dances, but not the kind of mixers. That characterize the seventies, I think. Yeah.

Gus Nolan ([00:10:32](#)):

I'm older than I thought I was. Yeah. <laugh>. I didn't realize that those things were in that way. So, questions here now are so really stupid of me to ask. How'd you learn about Marist? My god, you been here about 20 years

James Harkins ([00:10:47](#)):

Yeah, that was it. That's how I learned about it.

Gus Nolan ([00:10:50](#)):

Let's get back to security. This is really the, we wanted to focus for this thing.

James Harkins ([00:10:57](#)):

Sure.

Gus Nolan ([00:10:58](#)):

How difficult is it for a person to get on security here? Are there any places open you can walk in and get a job tomorrow?

James Harkins ([00:11:11](#)):

For here?

Gus Nolan ([00:11:13](#)):

Yeah.

James Harkins ([00:11:13](#)):

We're fairly selective now. It's changed quite a bit over the years. It used to be much easier. I mean, people could, they did background and all that, but I mean, we actually have to have a license from New York State to be in the, to work for security. And that went into effect back in the early 1990s. And getting the license is not a huge deal, but you do have to be fingerprinted. You, they check your criminal record and there's annual training that you have to do, which by this point, I could probably teach the class in my sleep kind of thing. It's basic stuff. But it's essentially having the license guarantees to an employer in security that you are not, you're not a criminal. You haven't been, you don't have any convictions or there's no criminal past or issues like that. And that's essentially so, but also, with the job market the way it is now, it's more competitive. And the college to its credit stepped up over the years,

James Harkins

increased our pay, our benefits were always good, but the pay is, it's very reasonable for what we do. And I see, you know, it's made it, you know, it's competitive.

Gus Nolan ([00:12:23](#)):

How would you compare Marist with other colleges like Vassar or, New Paltz or, you know, St. Mary's? Is there any, numerically are there more members on the Marist staff than on the Vassar staff?

James Harkins ([00:12:41](#)):

I would say, now I would say it's probably the same, around COVID and a little bit past COVID. The staff was cut substantially. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, it was cut. Not, I'm talking well over

Jan Stivers ([00:12:55](#)):

Marist security officers?

James Harkins ([00:12:55](#)):

Security officers, I would say,

Jan Stivers ([00:12:58](#)):

Because there was no on-campus presence for students is that the reason?

James Harkins ([00:13:00](#)):

That was, that was part of it, yes. And, there was, I would say probably 20 positions were cut. I mean, it was a lot of personnel.

Gus Nolan ([00:13:12](#)):

How many is in the total?

James Harkins ([00:13:13](#)):

Right now, we have, I would say probably thirty-six or thirty-seven.

Gus Nolan ([00:13:19](#)):

Ballpark, okay.

James Harkins ([00:13:19](#)):

Yeah. That was what I would say. It's in that number.

Jan Stivers ([00:13:22](#)):

And that, about twenty that were cut, have they been restored? A portion of them?

James Harkins ([00:13:27](#)):

Only a couple.

Jan Stivers ([00:13:29](#)):

James Harkins

Wow.

James Harkins (00:13:29):

You know, it was a strange dynamic because at the time, the college actually hired a substantial amount of relatively new people who, you know, for the college, working at the college. So a lot of them who were let go were fairly new employees. So we never got to know them that well to begin with. So it was just kind of, it was a perfect storm kind of thing, would be the best way I could put it. How it all happened. Yeah. But I would say that staffing now for, you know, other colleges, I'd say we're probably commensurate. We may have a few more, you know, staff per student, but I wouldn't say too many more.

Gus Nolan (00:14:03):

Is there a range of development? Is Vassar more advanced than we are? And New Paltz more advanced than everybody in terms of technology, radio, you know, communications?

James Harkins (00:14:18):

I suspect I know one person at Vassar, I haven't talked to him in a while, but I believe our technology is actually superior. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. We have a very, and it's increasing and it has increased. We have a very robust surveillance camera system. We have a, we, our ID systems, we have, have equipment that we can read license plates. So I mean, we can solve things. And we have solved things because of having access to this kind of technology. You know, we've been able to save a lot of assets for the college. We've solved crimes. <laugh>, we've, and a lot of minor things. You know, sometimes something goes missing or whatever. And by using the technology, the camera systems, we can actually track property down. Sometimes it was misplaced, sometimes it was taken when it shouldn't have been. But I honestly believe we're superior in that way. I know other schools have the technology, but I think ours is better.

Gus Nolan (00:15:19):

Where is this with you? Do, the cameras that are around? Is there somebody watching it?

James Harkins (00:15:24):

Me. I'm one of the people who does it. Yes. They're not monitored continuously, if that's what you're asking. That's not done. We use it as an investigative tool.

Gus Nolan (00:15:34):

Oh I see.

James Harkins (00:15:35):

But we do in our office, the security office. Yeah There is a bank of live cameras that are visible for live purposes. You know, it covers the entrances and you saw if something's happening, we can look up right away who's ever at the desk and. Can see what's going on. <affirmative>, we do have that.

Gus Nolan (00:15:50):

Oh that's good. Back to the, well, go ahead.

James Harkins

Jan Stivers ([00:15:57](#)):

So let me ask about a typical day for you. What's the nature of your work? It sounds really interesting.

James Harkins ([00:16:03](#)):

It can be, you know, and the, I don't remember the exact quote, but it's police work, security work is hours of boredom filled by moments of terror. That's kind of a description of it. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And for me, it's not boring. It can be boring if you don't have the right mindset. A typical day for me as a supervisor, I come in and we have something called a log book or a blotter. It's electronic, it's on a computer. But I review it from the 24 hours from when I left until I go back, come in in the morning. A lot of it is routine things that took place. A door got opened, there was a leak noted somewhere, and who was notified. There's also incident reports in there, depending on, and incident reports or something above that, where somebody actually will write out a narrative. It could be for property that's been damaged. It could be a vehicle accident, it could be a larceny, which is something's been stolen. And it can go up into other levels of crime. You know,

Gus Nolan ([00:17:01](#)):

Lemme interrupt one,

James Harkins ([00:17:02](#)):

Sure.

Gus Nolan ([00:17:03](#)):

If an accident takes place on campus, one car bumps into another, when does police outside come into the scene?

James Harkins ([00:17:14](#)):

Generally, it's up to the people involved. <affirmative>. They can determine, if it's two private parties and it's a fender bender, which happens frequently. Yeah. Class change and people aren't paying attention, and it's minor damage. If we show up, we will tell them that we can do a report and you can exchange information. Sometimes people are happy with that, but we also give them the warning. Most insurance companies will not accept the campus security report as an accident report. They want an actual police report. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. So more often than not, even if it's minor, we tell people, if you think this is going to go to your insurance, or there's go be any dispute about what happened, we'll call the police. And we stand by and wait and we do a report, and the police do their report. And then they can submit that to their insurance companies, because it's happened before where they want to give the security report to their insurance company. And the insurance companies, they won't accept it. They want a police report. So that's usually how that works. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>.

Gus Nolan ([00:18:15](#)):

And your talk on the 20 year event there is some mention about, security puts their lives on the line.

James Harkins ([00:18:25](#)):

Sometimes. Yeah.

Gus Nolan ([00:18:27](#)):

James Harkins

What, give me some instances where that, what kind of typical of that, where would that happen?

James Harkins ([00:18:31](#)):

It can happen. I mean, we respond to fire alarms. We respond to medical calls. We respond to calls when we don't know what we're going into. Sometimes Yeah. Fights are not as common as they used to be. We used to get fight calls, but they're not as common. But, as, my main concern danger wise in this line of work is, number one, we're unarmed. And number two, our interaction and our interdiction with people is limited. We have to be careful. And, when we're dealing with people who are suspicious or potentially dangerous, that's usually the person in the uniform, if somebody really means to do harm, the first person they're going to look to get out of their way is the person in the uniform. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. So, when I say sometimes, you know, our lives are in danger. That's, what it is.

Gus Nolan ([00:19:21](#)):

Yeah.

James Harkins ([00:19:21](#)):

Generally, it's a very safe job. It's very rare that we encounter that. I'll give you an example though. Today of all days, <laugh>, we got a call from admissions that there were people over there asking suspicious questions about security and wanting to know about police response. This literally happened today. I wasn't sure I was going to make it here. And we went over there. We were able, through our technology and the staff, because I the staff is really good. We were able to locate the people who were asking these very suspicious questions. They're working for New York State, the Office of Homeland Security, New York State, Office of Counter-Terrorism. They were doing like a test, a drill, and they wanted to see if they would call security about the suspicious activity. So, in the meantime, but I mean, these were, these were highly suspicious questions. And it was intentional. It was, they were asking how long the police would get here. Do you search bags at events? And were there big events coming up? They were essentially giving them everything they could to say, you've got to call somebody about this. Yeah. And it, so, I mean, we called the people in from Homeland Security because they, he was on site. The guy who was running the drill I said, listen, I get what you're doing here, but, you know, this could have gone,

Jan Stivers ([00:20:34](#)):

A heads up.

James Harkins ([00:20:35](#)):

This could have gone really bad because part of our technology here. We have a system where if there's a really bad emergency that happens, we can hit an emergency button in our office and it calls, it hits, calls 9 1 1, and we'll have the SWAT team here.

Gus Nolan ([00:20:50](#)):

Oh.

James Harkins ([00:20:50](#)):

So, I mean, it can be that dangerous when something like that happens.

James Harkins

Gus Nolan ([00:20:55](#)):

You mentioned you're not armed.

James Harkins ([00:20:58](#)):

Right.

Gus Nolan ([00:20:58](#)):

But the United States Constitution says you could be, you could bear, is there anybody where, carry a gun on their own?

James Harkins ([00:21:07](#)):

No,

Gus Nolan ([00:21:07](#)):

No.

James Harkins ([00:21:08](#)):

No. We would be fired.

Gus Nolan ([00:21:09](#)):

The house rules would prevent that.

Gus Nolan ([00:21:11](#)):

It is, absolutely. There is something I believe, in New York State law that if, the president of the college was to designate that somebody could carry a firearm or persons, that that would be allowed. But you also have to have a permit to do that. You could, as a private citizen, have a firearm permit. But, unless you're authorized by your employer to carry that firearm, that, it's not going to happen. There was talk about it, but I don't see it happening. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. I really don't. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>.

Jan Stivers ([00:21:40](#)):

How do you feel about that?

James Harkins ([00:21:43](#)):

Actually, it frees me up a bit. You know, I, because having to interdict to something, everybody, you know, it's in our nature, people who do this kind of work. But there's also times where you have to understand, we are lucky. We have police close by. And, a lot of times we can step back and delay. And that's when we use, our, you know, tactics to talk to people and try to keep them calm until the police get there. But, it's a mixed bag. You know, you, would want to, heaven forbid if something really bad happened to be able to try and do something. But then again, you're talking about taking out a firearm and possibly, you know.

Jan Stivers ([00:22:23](#)):

Sure.

James Harkins

James Harkins ([00:22:23](#)):

Endangering yourself, somebody else. And there's ups and downs to it. There really isn't. There's no right answer to it.

Jan Stivers ([00:22:30](#)):

It's very complex. Yeah.

James Harkins ([00:22:30](#)):

There really isn't a right answer to it, or wrong. That's kind of, I'm good where I am though right now.

Jan Stivers ([00:22:36](#)):

Mm-Hmm. Let's talk more about the nature of your daily work. So you come in, you review the log.

James Harkins ([00:22:42](#)):

Yes.

Jan Stivers ([00:22:42](#)):

You are, you're certainly responding to things like you were responding today. That's immediate.

James Harkins ([00:22:48](#)):

That's part of, um,

Jan Stivers ([00:22:49](#)):

So today would've been a more interesting day than most, or more eventful?

James Harkins ([00:22:52](#)):

It was. It is. And it's, but that's the nature of this work. There's sometimes where, this time of year is usually very calm, but emergencies happen when things are very calm. That's the thing about emergencies. We don't know. And essentially, I, set up people's patrols where they're going to be. I give them any instructions for the day. I, alert them to anything that I've come across in the logbook or reports that they may not be aware of that they need to know out on patrol.

Gus Nolan ([00:23:21](#)):

How do you do that?

James Harkins ([00:23:21](#)):

I will convey it to them personally in a little meeting in the morning.

Gus Nolan ([00:23:26](#)):

Oh, okay.

James Harkins ([00:23:27](#)):

James Harkins

Sometimes we do that. But then again, when we talk about technology, I know we're being audio recorded, but I'm reaching for my phone. Yeah. I can take pictures of things I see on surveillance, people, vehicles, and I can send them out to everybody on my staff in a moment. And they can have that in front of them, which is an incredible advantage for what we do.

Gus Nolan ([00:23:50](#)):

What are the, well, difficult, assignments? I mean, is it parking, crowds coming? I'm thinking of major events like graduations. I mean, we've had, maybe you were here for the graduation. It snowed and rained.

James Harkins ([00:24:10](#)):

Oh, I was here. <laugh> I was here.

Gus Nolan ([00:24:11](#)):

And they tried to move everything, they might have tried to move it inside.

James Harkins ([00:24:17](#)):

It was close to a riot.

Gus Nolan ([00:24:18](#)):

Yeah. There was a riot. I mean, I paid \$4,000 a year for my daughter, I'm going in!

James Harkins ([00:24:24](#)):

<laugh>.

Gus Nolan ([00:24:24](#)):

Yeah. But you don't have a ticket.

James Harkins ([00:24:26](#)):

I remember it well.

Gus Nolan ([00:24:26](#)):

I don't care about, yeah. You, so you,

Jan Stivers ([00:24:28](#)):

Do you want to talk about that a little bit?

James Harkins ([00:24:29](#)):

<laugh> It was, I've seen bad weather. I've been to many graduations. I've seen bad weather. I've seen good weather. I've seen hot weather. I've seen cold weather. I've never seen it snow in late May. And it was actual snow. And it was actually getting on the seats and actually covering the grass.

Gus Nolan ([00:24:45](#)):

Yeah.

James Harkins

James Harkins ([00:24:45](#)):

And this was always a contingency plan, for years we talked about using McCann and there was a contingency of, in that case, students would be given two tickets to have mom and dad or whomever they chose come in. Well, what you just said is exactly what happened. Because I brought grandma, I brought my cousins, I brought everybody else. And all 15,000 of them wanted to be in a space that holds maybe 2000.

Gus Nolan ([00:25:09](#)):

Yeah.

Jan Stivers ([00:25:10](#)):

They dismissed faculty. Because there were some delays. Right?

James Harkins ([00:25:14](#)):

It was, oh, it was,

Gus Nolan ([00:25:16](#)):

Where do we go or not. You know?

James Harkins ([00:25:17](#)):

I thought people were going to break the doors down. I really did. I was inside the building. And I thought,

Jan Stivers ([00:25:21](#)):

Oh, wow. That's pretty scary.

James Harkins ([00:25:23](#)):

I really thought people were going to break the doors down. Because it was that bad. And they did let people in. And eventually, I, I've never seen McCann Center so crowded in my life. I couldn't. They were on the stairs. They were in the hallways. There was, people were wall to wall. Yeah. And, yeah. God forbid if something really bad happened there, this would, it'd be a story like the Hindenburg. They'd still be talking about it. You know, it was that kind of situation. And those

Jan Stivers ([00:25:50](#)):

So that was a really challenging time. What are some of the other big challenges that the security services face?

James Harkins ([00:25:57](#)):

Always public relations. Public relations can be, something can go from being minor to a major public relations disaster pretty quickly. Things can be miscommunicated or misconstrued. Our response to something, can go one way or another. And people can see it in many different ways. It's similar to what police departments deal with. And that's part of why I was saying, in a lot of ways, not being armed is an advantage. Because that's not something we do. We don't have to. It's, in all the years I've been here, I think I've physically intervened with people maybe five or six times, where literally I had no option. I had

James Harkins

to do something. You know? And it's always in the back of your mind. As I'm getting older, it's less in my mind, it's not something I want to be involved in. But, those things can, something like that can go bad. And it can, just, it can make the department look bad. It can make the college look bad.

Jan Stivers ([00:26:58](#)):

Do you have an example?

James Harkins ([00:27:00](#)):

Let me think. God, there's, been, oh goodness. Nothing's jumping out at me.

Jan Stivers ([00:27:10](#)):

You know, one thing, I, sometimes there's, horrible racist graffiti.

James Harkins ([00:27:16](#)):

Yes. Yes.

Jan Stivers ([00:27:17](#)):

And we had the sort of coyote on campus?

James Harkins ([00:27:20](#)):

Yes. Yeah.

Jan Stivers ([00:27:21](#)):

But those really weren't problems that, were miscommunications and PR issues. Right?

James Harkins ([00:27:30](#)):

That yes. That could, they could be, actually. We've had, we actually had an incident, years ago, a young lady claimed that she was being stalked by somebody. And this was so long ago that we didn't have cameras. And she was, we had the police involved. We had, you know, the president's office was aware of it. And she was saying this person was stalking her and leaving her notes and all these, and they actually had the police go with her to a track meet. Because the young lady was on the track team. They went to a track meet because they thought somebody was following her. It turned out the young lady had problems and she had created this whole scenario and she was doing it. But I mean, it was the kind of thing where it was getting to the point where we didn't know if she was going to go to the press and start making claims and, things of that nature.

Jan Stivers ([00:28:20](#)):

There wasn't much you could say.

James Harkins ([00:28:21](#)):

Things, no. Things of that nature can be very, yeah. You look like you're not doing anything, or you're useless. And actually what was going on was it was the person was doing the whole thing. And things like that can go bad in a hurry. What you were saying about any kind of racial thing that can go bad in a hurry. And, you know, it's, however it's handled, somebody's not going to be happy. And if, thing,

James Harkins

whatever it is, if they, have a loud enough voice and they have a legitimate complaint or a not legitimate complaint, it can just, it can go really bad for campus security. And eventually it can go bad for the whole college because the whole college can be branded as a problem for whatever the situation may be. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. You know, I mean, look at this terrible thing that happened with this poor man that was murdered down in that hotel. I mean, that's, Marist College is on, that, the guy was convicted yesterday. He got sentenced to 58 years. So, I mean, but that was, that was Marist College, Marist College. Now essentially, Marist College. Other than it was family weekend, it wasn't on our property. And it didn't happen here, but our name was in it. So things like that can be a problem for security.

Jan Stivers ([00:29:33](#)):

How about the best, sorry, Gus.

Gus Nolan ([00:29:35](#)):

I, one of the most simple things I see, or maybe problematic would be, parking and putting tickets on cars for students. And they don't like that.

James Harkins ([00:29:47](#)):

No, they don't. <laugh>

Gus Nolan ([00:29:49](#)):

No, I know <Laugh>. And so, we had, one of the former directors who was in here, he told us a story about a repeat offender. Do you have any, remembrances of guys who get a lot of tickets? They don't care at all?

James Harkins ([00:30:10](#)):

Oh absolutely.

Gus Nolan ([00:30:10](#)):

Oh, yeah?

James Harkins ([00:30:11](#)):

There was, in, where I am now in the job, I haven't written a ticket in well over 10 years, but I used to be the guy who did tickets. I was, I wrote a lot of tickets here. I put a lot of boots on cars. I had a lot of people challenge me to fights. You know, I had people drive away with the boot attached to their car. And I'm telling them, you shouldn't do that. That's not good for your car. I mean, I've seen a lot of that. Yeah. But yes, I do. I remember people who they would routinely get tickets and they didn't care. Either they were being paid by their family or they just didn't care. And I never understood it. And, but it just a mentality. And in this, in our line of work, you learn that there's just people like that, rules are not for them.

Gus Nolan ([00:30:55](#)):

Yeah.

James Harkins ([00:30:55](#)):

James Harkins

There's nothing you can do about it. Don't take it personal and, you know, you just, you have to do your job. Because I, I've talked to enough people, I don't care where the college is. There's never enough parking. There's never enough parking here. There's never enough parking anywhere. It's never where it needs to be. And, but yeah, we dealt with some students who would, you know, routine. Some of them were so blasé about it, they'd just come in and give you the money. They, well, we didn't take the money, but we'd send them to the business office. They'd go pay it, have it taken off. Sometimes we'd tow their cars. They'd go to the tow yard and, you know, go, just go pay the bill and be happy about it.

Gus Nolan ([00:31:34](#)):

One story apparently that's in the archives is a repeat offender who didn't pay it. His mother came in with four or 5 hundred dollars, maybe even a thousand dollars bill for the Times <laugh>. And, an agreement was made that, you know, well, we'll forgive 90% of these because they were struggling. But the kid didn't seem to realize that what he said, if he gets one more of these <laugh>, all of these, we

James Harkins ([00:32:06](#)):

We'll come back <laugh>.

Gus Nolan ([00:32:07](#)):

Yeah <laugh>, we'll come back to you. You know, we're putting them in the drawer. We're not ripping them up. You know, so try and press on him. You know, the, so that kind of, or always a happy turn of events and so on. We talked enough, for some more of the happy events that you experienced because of the job you've earned. Could you mention two or three of those?

James Harkins ([00:32:29](#)):

The people I work with, they're really good <laugh>.

Gus Nolan ([00:32:35](#)):

Oh, okay.

James Harkins ([00:32:35](#)):

And it wasn't that way for a long time. I worked with some people who were, they weren't the best people. You know, I've supervised people who are very difficult, but, I'm in a place now where I supervise people who are really good. I don't even have to be a boss. They just do the job <laugh>.

Jan Stivers ([00:32:53](#)):

What, makes a person really good at the job?

James Harkins ([00:32:57](#)):

If they're a self-starter, if they actually care if they're in it. Because they actually want to keep people safe. They want to prevent bad things from happening. And diligence, and I've told, you could ask any of my coworkers, I always say, it always comes down to personnel. I don't care what your training is. I've had people tell me they have all this training, and they have a resume that you just say, oh my goodness, this. And they don't pan out. But then you have other people who they just have a passion for taking care of people and looking out for people and going that extra step. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And that's usually what,

James Harkins

Jan Stivers ([00:33:36](#)):

That's a beautiful thing.

James Harkins ([00:33:36](#)):

It's diligence. It really is. That's the best way I can put it.

Jan Stivers ([00:33:39](#)):

And caring.

James Harkins ([00:33:40](#)):

It is. Yes. They go hand in hand. They absolutely do. Yeah. You know, I don't, a lot of the people here, they now, they have kids who are around college age, so they want their kids to go here. And that's a good sign. Because I mean, if they didn't think it was a good place for them to be, they, you know. But that's,

Jan Stivers ([00:33:58](#)):

So those experiences have allowed you to see parts of the college, how it operates, and students.

James Harkins ([00:34:06](#)):

Yes.

Jan Stivers ([00:34:07](#)):

That a lot of us don't see. Students at their worst, maybe.

James Harkins ([00:34:12](#)):

Sure.

Jan Stivers ([00:34:12](#)):

Sometimes at their best.

James Harkins ([00:34:14](#)):

Yeah.

Jan Stivers ([00:34:14](#)):

The college, the community of people who work here at their best. What, can you tell us about those times? Or let me, let me say that differently. Sorry. What do you think, those of us who don't have that view, what should we know?

James Harkins ([00:34:33](#)):

Security does, fills in so many holes and gaps that we get called when people don't know who to call, they're going to call security. We're the only department on this campus that answers that phone twenty-four seven.

Gus Nolan ([00:34:45](#)):

James Harkins

I see.

James Harkins (00:34:46):

And we get calls about everything. We get calls about, we got a call one time. There was a ghost in Champagnat. <laugh>. I mean, you know, we get, we really, and the person was serious. It wasn't a joke call, you know, I mean, but I mean, and a lot of times with the students, we're psychologists, you know. Sometimes we are, we're being a disciplinarian. Sometimes we're, I've seen kids going down the wrong way, and we get them on the right way. You know, and they tell you.

Jan Stivers (00:35:19):

Wow. You know? Wow.

Gus Nolan (00:35:21):

How about, problems such as, is drinking a problem on campus? Not the way it used to be, I guess. I don't know.

James Harkins (00:35:31):

It's tougher for me to answer that. Only because I work days now. But I can tell you of, it's always been a problem. It always will be. And it's, we probably would need 90% lesser security people without alcohol and other substances.

Jan Stivers (00:35:45):

Now drugs.

James Harkins (00:35:46):

Yeah. There's more now, there's more of that now. Yeah. But alcohol, yes. It causes so many problems. I mean, it's readily available. And the, these students all, they all have fake IDs and they can access it wherever they want. Mm-Hmm. And a lot of them have zero experience with it. Right. And they don't know what it's going to do to them. And they come here and a lot of times they get themselves in trouble, you know, and all manner of trouble, whether they're actually doing something bad or something bad is done to them. And it's just the nature of, it's human nature. You know, alcohol's been, as Homer Simpson says, it's the cause of, and the solution to all of life's problems, <laugh>. But it's, we witness it here, you know, and it's, you know, and that's why I say a lot of times, our people, we save lives because we're the ones calling an ambulance. When a student is so intoxicated, they don't know what's going on. And if there's not a security officer there, or a responsible person to say, no, you need help, you know, bad things do happen. So.

Gus Nolan (00:36:51):

Have you ever been at a board of trustees meeting?

James Harkins (00:36:55):

I never have. I've parked a lot of trustees cars, <laugh>.

Gus Nolan (00:36:58):

Oh, okay.

James Harkins

James Harkins ([00:36:59](#)):

I've parked many trustee's cars.

Gus Nolan ([00:37:02](#)):

Okay. The question I'm coming to though, if you had an opportunity to address the board, what would you say are the two or three most pressing needs that you would like to see the board address for security? What's, what is it you really think we need, and it would help us facilitate, or make our life at the college a better place?

James Harkins ([00:37:32](#)):

Right now? That's a, it's a good question because, respect would be the number one thing. Because right now, there's some issues going on with the security department. And, we, the officers think and feel that we're, we are being treated as second and third class citizens. And, we had some major changes enforced upon us, with our benefits, and with pay, not, our pay has not changed, but certain elements of pay have been frozen at certain rates. And it, it's only was done to us because we're not unionized. Well, the campus security department voted 33 to 1 to be unionized. So we are in the process right now of attempting to negotiate with the college. They're stonewalling us a bit. So.

Jan Stivers ([00:38:30](#)):

What union will you affiliate with?

James Harkins ([00:38:32](#)):

It's, not one of the major unions. It's called Security and Fire, professionals Union.

Jan Stivers ([00:38:38](#)):

Okay.

James Harkins ([00:38:38](#)):

And it's essentially, it's a union for security and fire professionals. And, it was a step we had to take because of what went on here. And if this was a conversation we were having two or three years ago, I wouldn't even be mentioning these things. Because I've been, generally, I've been here a long time. If I didn't like it, I would've left. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. But it's kind of where we're at right now. It's just, it's a respect thing. And I just, I would let the board know that they have better people working here than they may know. Because this department does a lot and covers a lot. And we're a valuable resource for protecting, not just physically protecting people and property in the college, but the college's assets. You know, we've recovered assets for the college. We have, probably saved the college quite a bit of money in lawsuits because of our, the proactive nature we take to prevent things from going really bad when they could be. And that's, those are things that, they're not always tangible.

Jan Stivers ([00:39:50](#)):

Right, the preventative part.

James Harkins ([00:39:50](#)):

Because until you get that lawsuit part, if you don't get the lawsuit delivered under your nose to say, wait a minute, who was watching this? Who was taking care of this? You don't know about it. Yeah. So, I

James Harkins

mean, it would be, it might not be three things. It would be one thing. It would be respect. It really would. That would be, and many, I think many of them probably do respect what we do. But they just may not be fully aware of the state we're in now, the morale situation. And I honestly don't think I'm speaking out of turn.

Jan Stivers ([00:40:19](#)):

Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>.

Gus Nolan ([00:40:19](#)):

Okay, turn the page. Another one, another, there's a big building going up here. The Dyson Center. <laugh>. Would you like space in there?

Gus Nolan ([00:40:31](#)):

Dyson Center? Sure. I'd like space anywhere.

Gus Nolan ([00:40:34](#)):

Well, exactly the point. <laugh>, you know, security. We've asked John this question before, and he would say one of the biggest things he needs, you know, a place where you can all meet, you know, there's a, you have little offices, you know.

James Harkins ([00:40:51](#)):

Yes.

Gus Nolan ([00:40:51](#)):

And so, something a little bit more expansive. And I was wondering the reality of that, or whether you saw it as a pressing need.

James Harkins ([00:41:01](#)):

Oh, it's a need. It's an absolute need. It always has been. And I do not fault any of the previous directors for that, because they've been asking and trying. It's just, it's the nature of what's available. And we're not naive to the fact that the college's main goal is an educational institution. We're aware of that. So, but, when office space does become more important, and it is more valuable. Because you do want, it's easier to keep a more professional staff when they're in a more professional environment and they have available, you know, there is room to have a meeting too. Yeah. You know, and it's sometimes we're having impromptu meetings wherever the heck we can.

Jan Stivers ([00:41:43](#)):

Yeah. I think, that's a problem that's shared with all departments on the campus that are not revenue generating.

James Harkins ([00:41:49](#)):

Yeah. I mean,

Jan Stivers ([00:41:50](#)):

James Harkins

So anything that's got the potential to increase our revenue,

James Harkins ([00:41:54](#)):

Of course.

Jan Stivers ([00:41:54](#)):

That's going to have the space.

James Harkins ([00:41:56](#)):

But it,

Gus Nolan ([00:41:57](#)):

Well related to that is, I think you solved that already. I was going to say, when I first went to IBM on an internship back in the seventies, they had bulletin boards where they were putting up the notices coming out of headquarters, and they would send some of the interns around the city to put. I was wondering what news could be made available. But you kind of answered that with your new technology. You can put on your phone though, all the offices have a phone?

James Harkins ([00:42:28](#)):

Yes.

Gus Nolan ([00:42:29](#)):

That they would beep beep beep. There's something coming from the director about some, maybe the weather, maybe something to do with, you know, an event happening, movements, of pride and whatever they're coming on campus and they're going to, you know, threaten the security or the beauty of some aspect of the place. But all of that you have means now already to go right to the source, to the help to your support systems to prevent or to handle that. I can see that's part of it already.

James Harkins ([00:43:07](#)):

Yes.

Gus Nolan ([00:43:07](#)):

So that was my, plea to the board I thought was going to be space and then for more, immediate communications, but that's already in place.

Jan Stivers ([00:43:23](#)):

Well, I want to ask, you said you've really been here forty years.

James Harkins ([00:43:28](#)):

Coming up on it. Yes. Absolutely.

Jan Stivers ([00:43:30](#)):

Tell us about the changes that you notice, in students, in the work environment, in the campus, over your time here.

James Harkins

James Harkins (00:43:41):

The students. I, it's such a broader base of people now. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. They're, I actually, some people I've, you know, the older generation always complains about the younger generation, but I actually find this generation to be more polite. They're almost like, it's really polite sometimes, you know? And it's,

Gus Nolan (00:44:04):

Still hold the door. They still on the door for us. Yeah.

James Harkins (00:44:07):

Yes. I mean, it's pleasant. But I mean, like, sometimes I, I'll have students, you know, they pass you and they say sorry about something, and I, what are you sorry about? You know, that's that level of politeness. It's, that's like a strong thing that I've noticed. They're obviously more distracted now, students because of the devices. I mean, we all grew up without these things. And I thank God every day I didn't grow up with one of these because they're so, it distracts them. It's like I used to see all the young people coming out of the buildings in class changes, and a lot of the young ladies would be lighting up cigarettes. I don't see anybody lighting up cigarettes anymore.

Jan Stivers (00:44:45):

Right? Right?

Gus Nolan (00:44:45):

But I see everybody grabbing their phones. Yeah. And it's,

Gus Nolan (00:44:51):

They're not talking to each other either.

James Harkins (00:44:52):

No. There's a lot less social interaction in that level. And a lot of the students we deal with, I mean, we're seeing more of the, you know, people with the autism spectrum and ADHD. And it's something we have to be aware of because their let, the way they communicate, it's just different. And sometimes you may perceive it as being rude or dismissive, and it's not. They're just, it's just their way of communicating. You have to understand it. Those are, those are some of the things I've really noticed. I mean, they've been good things, like I said, more polite, you know. Again, I was a lot younger back then too, but I mean, you know, we, I would have people challenging me to fight over silly things a lot of times, you know? And it was, we, that's, it's so rare now for anything like that to happen on any level. I think that those would be the changes though. I mean, distracted.

Jan Stivers (00:45:48):

Do you see any changes that you chalk up to the pandemic?

James Harkins (00:45:54):

That's a tough one. I can't say as I do. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, I can't say as I do. It was a crazy time for everybody. But I rarely see students now masked. That was a, that was just common for, you know, even well past the point when it was still going on. People were still doing it. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>.

James Harkins

But I don't see it at all anymore. And I don't, I haven't, there's nothing blasting that I've seen from that. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, it, perhaps it made them more, capable of using online, you know, teaching or whatever, learning. But nothing I've seen that it directly related to the, you know, a reaction to the pandemic.

Jan Stivers ([00:46:39](#)):

John Ritschdorff said to us one time that, not recently, said we are educating a group of freshmen who didn't have a senior year.

James Harkins ([00:46:50](#)):

Yeah.

Jan Stivers ([00:46:51](#)):

And I thought, oh, you guys must be having trouble. Or at least residence staff, residence hall staff.

James Harkins ([00:46:58](#)):

Yeah. I honestly don't, there's nothing I can think of that has changed as far as how they interact with us or how I observe them. Yeah. I, it seems like,

Gus Nolan ([00:47:09](#)):

How about diversity in students, who are coming from different countries. Do they react more negatively or positively with security here?

James Harkins ([00:47:21](#)):

That they, that depends. There are some countries, I've dealt with students who they look intimidated or scared when they see anybody in a uniform. And you have to understand where they come from. Anybody in a uniform may be, if you get in their way, it may be a very bad day for you. So, I mean, there is that aspect of it. Sometimes not, sometimes international students are as American as American students. The best way I could put it is that, you know, they're the same or, but, you do have to be aware of that. You know, if you're dealing with an international student, sometimes they, where they come from, it may be, you know, if you see somebody in their uniform, it's, you know, it could be a problem for you. You know, so I mean.

Jan Stivers ([00:48:09](#)):

Yeah, it's a really, that's a really important consideration.

James Harkins ([00:48:10](#)):

It is. And we, we have to be aware of it. I tend to have to be aware of it personally because I'm kind of intimidating because I'm tall. And sometimes when you talk down to people, even though I don't, I'm not intimidating, you know, by intent. But sometimes when you're talking down to somebody. So a lot of times if I'm talking to somebody, I'll do what I'm doing right now. I'll sit down, and just be on level with them. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. So, I mean, and that isn't necessarily international students. That can be anybody. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. But, that's part of the job too. We try not to be that way, you know? Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, it's, that's not really what we're here for. We only try to ratchet up our response when we have to. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. So, uh,

James Harkins

Jan Stivers ([00:48:53](#)):

Jim, when you get together with friends and family, do you have favorite stories you tell? Oh, you can't believe what happened at school today?

James Harkins ([00:49:02](#)):

Some of them, I've had some, anybody who's done this kind of work, you always say you could write a book. You know what I mean? And over the years, I do remember quite a few.

Jan Stivers ([00:49:10](#)):

Give us a few, if you can recall them offhand.

James Harkins ([00:49:13](#)):

I remember one time a man came here and said that his car was stolen from his car lot and that it was on our campus. And he drove me down and showed me the car. And he says, that's my car. So it was a long involved story, but the car was operated by a student on campus here. And it was, the police came and looked and they said, it's not your car, sir. It's this person's car. But it, he refused to give up, this guy. And he said, look, I, that's my car. I know they stole it off of my lot. And so, it turns out we called the police back again and he convinced them. They called the student down to the parking lot. And she started talking. And instantly we knew something was up because of the way she was reacting.

James Harkins ([00:49:57](#)):

What had happened was her boyfriend had stolen the car from the lot, and it was a Volkswagen. And he took the dashboard from another Volkswagen that he had registered legally and put that dashboard in the car. And so when they looked at the vehicle identification number, it came back to a legitimately registered Volkswagen. They impounded the car, they brought it down to the police station, they lifted it up. And cars have numbers stamped all over them. They checked the engine number with the vent, and the engine number was for the stolen car. So the guy was Right. His car was stolen.

Jan Stivers ([00:50:32](#)):

Oh my gosh.

James Harkins ([00:50:33](#)):

But I always remember the man refused to give up. And it was, it was just, he literally, you know.

Jan Stivers ([00:50:39](#)):

That relates to the investigative part of the job that you were talking about earlier.

James Harkins ([00:50:44](#)):

Yeah, you know, you have to,

Jan Stivers ([00:50:44](#)):

That's a lot of the work.

James Harkins ([00:50:45](#)):

James Harkins

Yeah. A lot of what I do now. Because we do a lot of, with the, surveillance technology with the ID system. And, it enables us to solve things that we never would've had a chance to solve. You know, we had a man, he stole one of the golf carts from the Marist post office that they use to deliver mail. And we caught it on camera, and we caught the car on camera and all. And he had, he was stealing golf carts all over Dutchess County, and he was bringing them to his house, and he was retrofitting them and then selling them to people. So we actually got the cart back <laugh>. But this was, without the technology, we never would've caught him because if there was no camera, he showed up with his own trailer and backed up, hooked it up at six o'clock in the morning and drove away with it.

Jan Stivers ([00:51:39](#)):

Isn't it amazing? I remember John Gildard sending something around. Oh, a video clip of somebody stealing like the M, the Marist M From the front gate.

James Harkins ([00:51:50](#)):

Oh yeah.

Jan Stivers ([00:51:50](#)):

And John saying, come see me before I come see you.

James Harkins ([00:51:54](#)):

And that's usually what it is, because it's, we're a small community and if we need to send a picture out, usually within an hour, somebody says they know who it is. And it's rare that we don't solve things like that. It does have, sometimes we don't, sometimes it's an outsider who comes in and does something and it's hard to track.

Jan Stivers ([00:52:14](#)):

A one shot deal. Yeah.

James Harkins ([00:52:15](#)):

But it's getting harder and harder now because it's just the pic, the cameras are so good. The pictures are so good that nobody can deny it's not them.

Gus Nolan ([00:52:24](#)):

We're getting to the end of the hour. And before that, there's always this last question that, we have to ask. You stayed here for, what was the glue that kept you here?

James Harkins ([00:52:37](#)):

It was, I liked the work and I liked the atmosphere of the place. It was, it just, it fit the way I like to work. I'm not an office person. I don't, I like to, I like different things.

Gus Nolan ([00:52:53](#)):

Do you like going to work?

James Harkins ([00:52:55](#)):

James Harkins

I still like coming here. Yes. It's be <laugh> as you get older, it gets a little tougher. I still like coming here, even with all of the things I had mentioned before about what's been going on, I work with really good people. The college still has that core of people who care, not just in security. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. And there's still enough people here who care, who, you know, they're here because they want to do, they want to do something. They want to help the students. <affirmative>. And it makes it rewarding for that. It really does. It's still, it's going away. Unfortunately. I don't, it used to be, if you talk to anybody who's been a long-term employee here, they all say it felt like a family almost. But that's, it's kind of, it's dying away maybe.

Gus Nolan ([00:53:40](#)):

The growth of the place of course has had to do with that.

James Harkins ([00:53:43](#)):

The growth is, yeah.

Gus Nolan ([00:53:44](#)):

Yeah. The faculty in different houses. We used to be in Donnelley, you know.

James Harkins ([00:53:49](#)):

Yeah. I remember when there was offices in Donnelley. Right across where financial aid is.

Gus Nolan ([00:53:53](#)):

Yeah.

Jan Stivers ([00:53:53](#)):

And the diminished presence of the Marist Brothers on campus.

James Harkins ([00:53:56](#)):

That's a huge thing. And I, you know, I remember brother Belanger living in Champagnat. I remember, brother Fontaine, I remember him living in the gatehouse, you know.

Jan Stivers ([00:54:07](#)):

Kelly.

James Harkins ([00:54:08](#)):

Don Kelly, you know, I remembered.

Jan Stivers ([00:54:10](#)):

Richard Rancourt.

Gus Nolan ([00:54:11](#)):

He's trouble now. Don Kelly.

James Harkins ([00:54:12](#)):

James Harkins

He was a great guy, Richard Rancourt, <laugh>

Gus Nolan ([00:54:15](#)):

He was in my class actually, <laugh> and well,

James Harkins ([00:54:22](#)):

Brother Donnelley. I remember him too. He lived up in the penthouse.

Gus Nolan ([00:54:25](#)):

Oh, yeah. Yeah. Nilus Donnelley. Yeah. He built well, Donnelley building. Named after him.

James Harkins ([00:54:30](#)):

Donnelley, the chapel.

Gus Nolan ([00:54:31](#)):

Yeah.

Jan Stivers ([00:54:32](#)):

So do you think that, the loss of that family feeling that you're talking about, would you link that to, some loss of the effect of the Marist Brothers? The influence of the Marist Brothers? Or is that still on campus?

James Harkins ([00:54:46](#)):

I think so, I do think so. I do. No, I think, it's still here a little bit, but it's just not there anymore. And things change. You can't be naive either. Nothing's ever the same. I mean, the place has grown. I still think it's a fantastic educational institution. It's just some of the, some of the things that have happened over the last few years, you know, and economic pressures, they all play into it. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>. Now we're getting into a situation where there's just flat out less student body available now. I mean, the baby boom is over and, you know, attracting students has become more of a challenge.

Gus Nolan ([00:55:24](#)):

That's the crystal ball now. Where do you see us in 10 years or 20 years? Are we going to be still Marist or we'll be assumed by some other, you know, the point you just mentioned, we know the student body capable of coming here has dried up in the New England area. So at the beginning, Paul Ambrose thought there'd be enough in the Hudson Valley was going to be just Marist really a community college.

James Harkins ([00:55:56](#)):

Yeah. <laugh>.

Gus Nolan ([00:55:56](#)):

He was completely told there were enough students there to keep it. So we have high five high schools in New York City, so Linus built the dorms. So that was the beginning, you know? Yeah. The whole growth and development of it. But, you know, the students now, as you said, the student body is not out

James Harkins

there for, at least in our part of the area, they're in the world. Maybe that's part of the diversity and so on. Which, but from what you said, do you think it's pretty positive yet for the next 10 years or so?

James Harkins (00:56:27):

I think so, because I think the college, the people making the decisions are astute enough. When Allied Health went up, I saw that as a very smart move. Mm-Hmm. <affirmative>, because they are, they're targeting a very specialized profession.

Jan Stivers (00:56:44):

Growing need.

James Harkins (00:56:45):

A profession that, and that is a highly competitive program. And, it's a small cohort, but, it's a need, clearly. You can see it because they're not wanting for students. I think the fashion program also. If the college tailors and designs what they have and makes sure that it's excellent, they'll still attract. It may be smaller. It may be smaller. I don't know. I don't know what's going to happen. But if they're astute and they see if they stay ahead of the curve of what's next as far as what education, people are going to want for education, that will be helpful. But, also, they obviously recruit heavily internationally now.

Gus Nolan (00:57:27):

Yeah.

James Harkins (00:57:27):

I mean it's, these are all smart moves. And they're things that will, you know, if you don't have students, you're going to have, no college or a smaller college. I don't see that happening because I think they're making those kind of decisions. We've got to tailor what our educational experience is to what people want. Yeah.

Jan Stivers (00:57:47):

Yeah. Boy, you couldn't, have a better closing statement.

Gus Nolan (00:57:50):

Yeah. And except, something we didn't ask you, what you would like to add to this conversation, as it were, your take, on what would you like to add to the few minutes we have left on this. The hours always tough <laugh>.

James Harkins (00:58:10):

Sure. What I'd like to add is, this is a, it's a funny little thing. You can tell a long term employee from a short-term employee here. When you ask them how to pronounce the nine story building, the dormitory over there, if they say Champagnat, they've been here for some length of time, if they say Champ, they haven't.

Gus Nolan (00:58:30):

Oh, I haven't even heard of Champ.

James Harkins

Jan Stivers ([00:58:30](#)):

That's very good.

James Harkins ([00:58:33](#)):

They call it champ now. And I remember when I came here, I was specifically told, well,

Jan Stivers ([00:58:38](#)):

I thought you were suggesting that this was a mispronunciation. This is a common,

James Harkins ([00:58:43](#)):

The students and many staff members who haven't been here, if you haven't been here for 15 years or less, you will say Champ, you will not say Champagnat.

Gus Nolan ([00:58:53](#)):

They all call it Champ now. Yeah

James Harkins ([00:58:54](#)):

They all call it Champ. And it just started, I don't know whether it started with the students or whatever, but it's, I can tell the difference between somebody who's been here for 15 years.

Jan Stivers ([00:59:04](#)):

Isn't that funny?

Gus Nolan ([00:59:04](#)):

Or somebody who's been here for 10 years, but when I, if they mention that building and they say, Champ, I say, you haven't worked here that long, have you?

Gus Nolan ([00:59:10](#)):

Uh huh <affirmative>.

James Harkins ([00:59:11](#)):

The students all call it Champ, unfortunately. You know, I mean,

Gus Nolan ([00:59:14](#)):

Well it just arrived. Yeah.

James Harkins ([00:59:16](#)):

<laugh>. Oh

Jan Stivers ([00:59:17](#)):

Wow. That's interesting.

James Harkins ([00:59:18](#)):

James Harkins

I remember specifically though, when I started here being told, it's called Champagnat. There's no, it's not champagne. It's not, they would tell you how to pronounce it.

Jan Stivers ([00:59:26](#)):

Yeah well,

James Harkins ([00:59:27](#)):

And the guy who founded the whole order. So, I would think you'd want to at least pronounce his name properly.

Gus Nolan ([00:59:33](#)):

Oh good. You got that right now too. You're a Marist historian, you know, the beginning of the Marist brothers. And Champagnat,

James Harkins ([00:59:41](#)):

I think that's important. You know, it's important. And it's the college, obviously it's not, it's secular now, but I mean, not knowing where it started and where it came from, that's kind of, you know, that's important.

Gus Nolan ([00:59:54](#)):

What the president, Kevin out there, in his graduation speech the first year here, the thing he mentioned was the Marist spirit of doing things quietly, unknown, hidden. You know, not to take, the spirit of the brothers to live quietly, simply unknown, but doing good quietly not asking for any attention. And that kind of, that Kevin taking over. And I admit it, even though I assigned myself to give this talk, humbly, <laugh>, you know, I, yeah. So, I feel we're in safe hands with the new captain on the ship, you know, for the next hopefully 20 years, 10 years, whatever.

James Harkins ([01:00:37](#)):

Yeah. We're never going to have another Dennis. We're not going to have a forty-year president. But, you know, hopefully if the, I mean, you just have to be astute and you have to, it's a different world.

Jan Stivers ([01:00:49](#)):

And you have to work hard.

James Harkins ([01:00:50](#)):

Yeah. And you're going to have to see where the educational trends are going. Because if you're still teaching something that people aren't interested in or that, you know, because, with the cost of education, now people want to know what results am I going to get from this? And if you don't really have a good answer, I think you're going to see less and less.

Gus Nolan ([01:01:08](#)):

You'd figure you're the one who used to teach English. English literature <laugh>. Dostoevsky, they were not going to read Dostoevsky anymore. We were going to talk about problems in the world. So communications, public relations and public, the public opinion part, all of that.

James Harkins

James Harkins ([01:01:25](#)):

Yeah. I mean,

Gus Nolan ([01:01:26](#)):

That's where we are, you know.

James Harkins ([01:01:27](#)):

There's a value to all that stuff too. I mean, you know, knowing history, knowing a lot of the old literature, there's a great value to it. It's just a matter of now, there's also a value to people understanding that this degree that I'm spending a lot of money or taking out a lot of loans on, is going to, you know, I'm going to have a productive career out of this and it's going to be worth it for me. That's a big part of it. Yeah.

Jan Stivers ([01:01:50](#)):

And some of it is telling our story, telling how that degree in history has taught you how to think.

James Harkins ([01:01:55](#)):

That's right. Absolutely. Because it, there's a value to that. There's a value to people being able to actually use logic, and not just,

Jan Stivers ([01:02:04](#)):

And work with others, and express themselves.

James Harkins ([01:02:06](#)):

Yeah. That, there's an importance to that too. Just got to know how to make people understand that.

Jan Stivers ([01:02:12](#)):

But just like you talking to us about the importance of personality traits, you can have all kinds of training in terms of security.

James Harkins ([01:02:20](#)):

Yeah.

Jan Stivers ([01:02:20](#)):

But a lot of it comes down to,

Gus Nolan ([01:02:23](#)):

Well, it comes down to the person

Jan Stivers ([01:02:24](#)):

How you learn to respond.

James Harkins ([01:02:26](#)):

James Harkins

Who you care. Yeah. Do you care? Yeah. That's the truth.

Gus Nolan ([01:02:29](#)):

Well, thank you very much.

James Harkins ([01:02:31](#)):

Well, thank you very much.

Jan Stivers ([01:02:32](#)):

It's been a pleasure, a fascinating pleasure.

Gus Nolan ([01:02:32](#)):

We could fill another hour.

James Harkins ([01:02:32](#)):

Thank you for the invite.

Gus Nolan ([01:02:36](#)):

Getting more of your stories. Oh I, one that I heard one time about a car that,

Jan Stivers ([01:02:46](#)):

Should I turn this off Gus?

Gus Nolan ([01:02:47](#)):

Yeah, turn it off.