Interview with Heath Knott
For HUM 2504: Introduction to American Studies, Prof. Emily Satterwhite, Fall 2010

Occupation: Door Staff, Top of the Stairs, Downtown Blacksburg
Time and Place: October 18, 2010, 7p.m.-8p.m., Harrell Street, Blacksburg, Virginia
Interviewers: Lauren Whaley, Senior- Human Nutrition, Foods & Exercise major from Richmond, Virginia & Mallory Smith, Junior – Electronic and Print Journalism major from Manassas, Virginia

LW= Lauren Whaley
MS=Mallory Smith
HK= Heath Knott

LW: Please tell us your name and if you don’t mind your age?
HK: My name is Heath Knott and I’ll be 24 in March and I’m 23 right now.
LW: Oh, man. That’s exciting.
LW: Will you also please tell us your job title, the name of the organization you work for and how long you’ve been working there?
HK: I’m a member for the door staff at Top of the Stairs and I’ve been there for about 14 months.
LW: 14 months, that seems like a long time.
HK: It is.
LW: that’s cool
LW: So, uh, would you mind describing your family background a little bit, where you grew up and what it was like?
HK: I was adopted. My older sister was adopted. And after we both were adopted my parents got pregnant with my younger brother. So we grew up on a chicken farm. It was my Granddad’s chicken farm. But we grew up on it. And uh, nothing really special about growing up.
LW: Where were you adopted from?
HK: South Korea.
MS: Where did you grow up?
HK: Harrisonburg.
MS: Oh, okay. Cool.
LW: Harrisonburg. So by JMU?
HK: Yeah, right outside of JMU. So we went there all during high school. So, that’s why I came here.
MS: [laughter]
LW: I would of done that too.
HK: That’s what everyone says. Why didn’t you go to JMU? Well I partied there in high school, that’s old news for me. I want to do something else now.
MS: Ha, there ya go.
LW: I was told I couldn’t go to VCU because it’s too close to Richmond.
HK: Mhmm.
LW: But yeah, so that’s cool. So what did your parents do for a living? Did they work on the chicken farm?
HK: My mother was a banker and then a teacher and then she worked on the farm for a little bit and then she well, now she is an accountant. So she’s been doing a little bit of everything.
LW: Jeez, yeah.
HK: Um, My dad has been banking for probably 45 years. Came out right outta high school and went straight into banking. Went to UVA for like an associates degree for banking and just kept on going ever since.
LW: Oh, that’s cool.
HK: There for a while he worked at every single bank in Harrisonburg.
MS: Oh really?
HK: Yeah, for a while.
MS: [Laughter] How many banks are there?
HK: He worked at a lot of them
LW: Oh, I would hate to deal with the college kids.
HK: He was more of a loan officer. He dealt with older people trying to get loans for their houses and get loans to buy cars and start businesses and stuff.
LW: Um, So tell us about your job. How did you come to work there?
HK: Ugh, I use to work at Personal Touch Catering over besides Owens and Hokie Grill and one of the managers there she is a bartender there. And one of my friends that I’ve known since my freshmen year at Tech was a door guy there and talked about how much money he was makin’ during football season and during the week he would make 35 to 50 dollars a night, every night you work.
LW: Extra?
HK: Yeah, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. And uhhh, I figured that sounded pretty good for me.
LW: How much do you make regularly?
HK: Minimum.
LW: What’s minimum?
HK: $7.25
LW: $7.25. Uhm, well that’s cool. What’s a typical day like?
HK: Uhm, typical day. Uuh, Friday night I clock in at 9:00 (PM). Get the trash cans out. Get the unders that are in there, get them out, and then wait for the rush.
LW: When is the rush?
HK: Uh, usually comes between 10:30 (PM) and midnight. That’s when everyone comes from Big Al’s and Sharkey’s and Hokie House and their house parties and their socials.
LW: So you see a lot of people after happy hour? [Laughter]
HK: Yes. [Laughter] We are the last stop on the train.
LW: Oh. [Laughter] About how many hours do you work each week?
HK: Uhmm. [Silence] A normal week I work 24-30 hours.
LW: Gotcha.
HK: Game day weekend, if there is a home game we are really busy. Uh, two weeks ago for Central Michigan I worked for 47 hours and this past week I worked for 48. So, Friday night I had to be there at 6:00 in the evening and I worked there till’ about 5:00 in the morning.
MS: Oh, gosh.
HK: Well I went to sleep around 5 (AM).
LW: Yeah, I was gonna say when do you sleep?
HK: And then I had to be there at 10:30 Saturday morning and worked there all day and all night and didn’t get out of there till’ about 5 (AM). On a good Saturday night or Sunday morning...
LW: Oh, jeez. So, they give you a lot of coffee. [Laughter]
HK: [Smiles] Lots of Red Bull.
MS: [Laughter]
HK: Yes, lots of Red Bull. [Laughter]
LW: Uh, that sounds nice.
HK: Yep, lots of Red Bull.
LW: What did you do before working at TOTS?
HK: Uhh, I worked at the catering company on campus and then over the summers I worked for a commercial contractor over in Harrisonburg.
LW: Gotcha. What are the summers like? Working.
HK: This summer was kinda of an anomaly. The owner said as far as sales and business went this has been the busiest summer in 8 years.
LW: Wow.
HK: So…
LW: Did it seem busy?
HK: [Laughter] Well, ya know it really didn’t fall off that much from spring semester. It fell off a little bit but, Friday and Saturday nights were still really busy. And Tuesday was still really busy.
LW: Jeez.
HK: But Wednesday and Thursday nights were really dead. On Wednesdays we would be closed by midnight.
LW: Well that’s nice.
HK: Instead of staying open till’ 2 (AM) because no one would be in the bar
LW: What made you decide to stay here after graduation?
HK: Couldn’t find a job, a real job.
LW: What was your major?
HK: Uhh, Interdisciplinary Studies and I had a minor in Real Estate and a minor in Building Construction.
LW: Gotcha.
HK: And I’ve just been putting out resumes and applications and I told them that I’m staying at TOTS until I do find a job.
LW: And so they seem pretty lenient with that?
HK: Yeah.
LW: Well, that’s pretty nice.
MS: Where do you live and what costs are involved getting to work?
HK: Uhh, I live at 201 Kent Street. It’s the white house on the corner of Kent Street and Wall Street, right across from Barringer.
MS: Okay.
HK: So, my costs to getting to work are nothing.
LW: You walk?
HK: A good pair of shoes.
MS: [Laughter]
HK: That’s it and a jacket when it gets cold. [Smiles]
MS: What skills do you have to have in order to get the job?
HK: Uh. [Pause] You have to be a real people person. You can’t be real introverted. You have to be able to talk to people whether you are in a good or bad mood. There’s a little bit of integrity involved with it. You could turn a blind eye to things that go on in there and just say you never saw it. I mean if someone is too drunk, they have to be kicked out instead of just keep on walking by em’. There’s not a whole lot of physical labor there,
throwing away white trash bags full of empty beer bottles. And Tuesday we have to get our liquor order. We have to carry all of the liquor upstairs. But other than that there’s not really any hard physical labor. It’s more just being able...

LW: You have to have thick skin?
HK: [Smiles] Yeah, really thick skin. You have to take everything with a grain of salt.
LW: Yeah, gotcha.
MS: Yeah.
HK: Or salt shaker.
LW: [Laughter]
MS: Nicely put.
MS: What surprised you about your position that you didn’t know when you began working?
HK: I didn’t realize how many fake people were in Blacksburg.
LW: Oh.
MS: Oh gosh.
HK: Yeah, ya know you work at the bar and you see them in there every night. And the only time you see them is when they’ve been drinkin’. And you only see this one side of this person and then you see them at the gym or at the Math Emp or out somewhere during the day and they act totally different during the day then they do at night.
LW: I can see that. Do you have a lot of regulars?
HK: Yes.
LW: Yes.
HK: Lots of regulars.
LW: Gotcha.
HK: Lots good regulars and lots of bad regulars.
LW: Umm, well that does not sound fun. Was there anything different then what you expected when you started?
HK: Umm.
LW: Or did you know what you were getting into?
HK: I didn’t really know what I was getting into. I had never really worked in that kind of position before. Everything else I had done there wasn’t much people around. I mean construction there are guys around but it’s the same guys everyday and you don’t have to interact with very many people. But, with this job you see people and have to talk to everybody.
LW: Well that’s cool.
MS: Uhm, how can you tell when you’ve had a successful day? And how do you measure success?
HK: Uhm, games days. Game day weekends are the big days at TOTS. Those are when everybody is watching. Uh, successful night on a Friday or Saturday night during a game day weekend... Just make sure everybody had a good time. If anybody had too good of a time then they gotta leave. [Laughter] Uh, I can’t really measure a successful day. I know when I had a bad night. So I guess that’s how I would calculate a good night if I didn’t have a bad night.
MS: [Laughs] Alright, fair enough. Uhm, what advice do you wish someone gave you when you first started?
LW: Or did your friend that you said, did he give you any?
HK: Yeah, I mean when I first started working there all the door guys there were really cool and they wouldn’t ask you how to do something if I didn’t know how to do it.
LW: Well that’s nice.
HK: But then with a month working there I learned pretty much everything I needed to know about that place. Cause all the older door guys would show me around and point things out.
LW: Well, that’s a lot nicer than a lot.
HK: Yeah, it was a lot better than I thought it was going to be. I figured it was gonna be one of the new guys comin’ in, nobody talks to him. He gets all the grunt jobs and all this other stuff. So it was good comin’ into that job.
LW: Good.
MS: What advice would you give someone who was considering your line of work?
HK: [Pause] Uh m, just have fun with it. I mean don’t take your work home with ya.
MS: Yeah.
HK: Because if you take your work home with ya you are gonna hate that job and you’re gonna hate people within six months. It’s just a job ya know. One of the door guys gets really really angry at people... Ha, he’s asked me a few times, when can we start hittin’ people? [Laughter] I was like if they hit you first. That’s the only time. But I say it’s just a job.
MS: Yeah.
HK: And at the end of the night, clock out, go home and drink a beer, go to sleep. Ya know, as long as you don’t take it personal then its not gonna be a big deal.
LW: That’s nice.
MS: What’s the best day you’ve had at work?
HK: Saturday night, last year during the Nebraska game.
LW: [Laughter] Oh wow, he thought of that one quick.
HK: Yes, I still... We did so much business that night and that day. And believe it or not the Nebraska fans are the best traveling fans we’ve had, that I’ve seen. They all took really well. They are all super nice and they are all... really none of them got too out of control. There was a guy there from Nebraska and he broke up a fight between two Hokie fans by buying each one of them a beer. And these guys who came from Nebraska were awesome.
LW: Yeah, I remember that game because they said we were the nicest fans that they had ever encountered.
HK: Yeah, it’s cool with us.
LW: Yeah, I mean you seem to be nice back.
HK: But, I remember this one couple they were older. I guess they had to be loaded. I mean if a fan from here went up to Nebraska they couldn’t do it by making minimum wage. But they were out there Thursday night, Friday night and Saturday night. I started talking to them Thursday night and I bought each one of them a shirt and the rest of the weekend every time they saw me they were nothin’ but smiles. [Smiles]
LW: Oh, you made their weekend.
HK: But it was a good weekend. That still sticks out in my mind, that Saturday night we played Nebraska.
LW: Just really nice people being there?
HK: Yeah, just really nice people.
LW: Are their any really bad fans?
HK: Miami. Marshall was really bad.
LW: Really?
HK: Yeah, Marshall was really bad.
LW: I wouldn’t of thought that.
HK: JMU, they weren’t pleasant.
MS: Yeah.
HK: I think that’s because they were just so excited they won. They are still fixin’ turkey in Harrisonburg before the JMU games.

LW: Well there ya go.
MS: What do you enjoy most at work?
HK: What do I enjoy the most at work? [Pause] I guess working the door. Cause I get to see everyone that comes in.

LW: You see a lot of friends?
HK: A lot of friends. A lot of people I like to make fun. I work at the door the best probably.

LW: You catch a lot of unders?
HK: Oh yeah, that’s another fun thing. Catching girls with really bad fakes and guys with really bad fakes too. Cause you ask them for three, four, five forms of IDs and they are like, “oh yeah sure.” And they pull all four forms out and you look at all four forms and you put them all back together and tell them they cant come in. That’s the best.

LW: Does that happen a lot on Tuesdays?
HK: Uhm, yeah Tuesday. Last Wednesday, I caught a guy with a fake. And two guys came in first, they were older guys, they came in and were standing by the bar waiting to order a drink and this guy comes up and hands me an ID... it was actually one of the better fakes I’ve seen, but I knew it wasn’t him. I asked him for a second form and I looked at him and said, “sorry buddy” and wouldn’t let him in.
And these two guys came over just laughing their asses and they said, “this guy went to Walmart to buy beer with this fake ID and the cashier at Wal-Mart told him you really changed since you’ve had your picture taken.” Your face doesn’t change.

LW: [Laughter] It’s a fake ID.
HK: Your face looks different because it’s not you. But they thought it was hilarious. They said, “you must be really good at your job to spot that fake.”

LW: Are there IDs that have been passed down?
HK: Yeah, I’ve only seen one legitimate fake ID where someone made it. Ninety-nine percent of them are someone else’s drivers license that they’ve passed down. Girls loose their purses at TOTS all the time. Ya know, one girl has an underage friend that looks like another girl who goes to the bar all the time. So she gets up to go to the bathroom and she still her purse, takes her ID and purse and passes them on. One of my friends had that happen to her.

LW: Really?
HK: Yeah, she had her purse stolen while she was in the bathroom. And a couple of weeks later this girl comes up to the bar and hands me this ID. I said ha, “you got a second form?” She says, “yeah sure,” hands me a Hokie Passport. I said, “You got a third form,” she hands me a debit card. I said, “You got another one?” She hands me a credit card and I have all four of them. I said this isn’t you. I know this girl; she’s one of my friends. I said, she had her purse stolen last week. Have a good night. And she just bummin’ down the street without all the fake IDs I took back from her.

LW: Wow, I never thought you would catch one of your friends...
HK: No, well
LW: Well, got her IDs back.
HK: Yeah, I got them back for her.
LW: She probably loves that you work the door.
And you don’t wanna get TOTS in trouble.
Yeah. But that’s how I’ve met some of my friends in there. I kick them out one time and then they remembered it, so now they come in well behaved and [Pause] they become one of my good regulars instead of one of my bad regulars.

They learned.

[Laughter] So what would you say you like least about working?

Uhh, what do I like least about working? Cleaning up trash at the end of the night. Ya know, when everyone else is down town at 2:00 (AM) they go home and go to sleep. At 2:00 (AM) I start cleaning up.

Uhhmm.

That’s, that’s probably the least favorite part of my job. That and really really busy nights when I can’t do any cleaning and I have to wait till’ the end of the night.

Yeah, I bet.

Ya know, the football games you get so busy you can’t focus on trash, you have to focus on kicking people out constantly and makin’ sure that no one is fighting, so you don’t get any trash picked up. And at the end of the night, Saturday night all the trash cans are filled to the top. These are 55-gallon trash bags or trash cans completely full. Plus every table, everything, every little ledge, every surface that you can set something on is full of cups and cigarette packs and trash, beer bottles. It took forever to get that place cleaned up Saturday night.

How many people work there on a (busy night)?

A busy night it’ll be uh 4 bartenders at the front bar, 2 bartenders at the deck bar, 2 bartenders at the uh VT bar, and then it’ll be 5 door guys and 2 bar backs. The bar backs just keep stocking the beers for the bartenders at the front bar and the deck bar.

That’s a lot of people.

Yeah.

Um, what’s the craziest thing that’s ever happened to you while you were at work?

The craziest thing that’s ever happened at work, uh... there’s a few things that were pretty crazy. I remember, I remember last year during one of, one of, another football story, one of the football games, um, I was standing down there between the two bathrooms at the VT bar making sure ‘cause the fire alarm, um, door, people can just go in and out that if they wanted to, so I’ve got to stand back there and make sure they don’t try to sneak their friends in, and I’m standing there and all of a sudden I see, I thought somebody had knocked a drink over and the drink was just spilling down on the people down below and these people turn around, they start cussing and throwing beer bottles and cups and whatever else they had to pick up to throw. If they had had rocks they’d done it. I came up to them, said “What’s the matter?” The guy motioned for me to stop before I walked into it and he said I was on my way around and that dude up there is pissing. He was peeing off the upstairs extension onto the people below, so I go running up there to kick him out and on my way up there I see this great big ole black guy that was just out of his mind drunk stumbling through the crowd and I tell one of the door guys to get this guy out, I gotta go find the person who [background chuckles] peed on all these people.

And I go up there said, “Alright, where is he?” They said, “Where’s who?” I said, “They guy who’s pissing all over everybody”. They said, “Oh, it was a big black guy with white shorts on.” It was the guy that I had just told the other door guy to kick out. [background laughter] I was so mad because I wanted o parade him through the bar and embarrass him [background laughter] and make him feel about like this tall [shows measurement with hands with laughter] because peeing on people...
LK: That’s not right.
HK: No. That was pretty crazy. Uh [pause], last football season, we had two guys in there at the end of the night, it was like 1:55 (AM), so we had to get everyone out, so I went to take their drinks and he said, “I paid 17 dollars for this drink” and it was a little short cup. That thing could have been full of pure top shelf whiskey and it wouldn’t have been 17 dollars worth. And so we kicked, tried to kick them out and it took five door guys and three or four cops to get those two guys out the door... ’cause they did not want to leave.

LW: I would just tell them to chug it.
HK: They got mad. Well we did, we tried to. And he’s just, well when they get drunk, they just sit there with their straw and they’re so drunk that they can’t even drink out of their straw at the end of the night [background laughter] and we, we that, that’s first we tell them to finish their drinks, chug ‘em, pour ‘em out, I don’t care, just get rid of it [background laughter] and do something with it and you have to leave. But uh that was, that was the first option and then he didn’t do that, so I tried taking it from him and that didn’t work either and then we had to go... it, it got really bad. One of—our general had the one guy, uh, he had to choke him out and ‘cause he was gettin’ pretty wild. Uh, the big fights, people trying to, people trying to climb up in the trees and then get on the back extension and uh, it’s...

LW: Is that why the police sit outside?
HK: Yeah.
[Laughter]
HK: It’s, it’s great because people when people do that and if you see them climbing up there—you go and you get a pitcher, you fill up a pitcher full of water and you wait and you wait until—if, if you see him doing it—and you wait ‘til you see them get all the way, almost all the way to the top and then you pour the pitcher of water and you make them climb back down.
[Laughter]
HK: Um.
LW: That’s embarrassing.
HK: That, those, those are fun nights when you catch the people trying to sneak in. The Miami game, we got a guy trying to sneak in three times. The third time—you know the fence along the back, where it has all those fraternity signs on it?—this guy was standing on top that fence just on, on the boards. Standing on top of the boards.
LW: How?
HK: Trying to get back—I don’t know. He, he was texting. [background laughter] Like he was on his phone texting before he jumped down back into the bar.
LW: Those are skinny aren’t they?
HK: Yeah, they’re like, just, they’re fence boards. That’s all they are. But, I mean we had to carry, we the third—the second time we pushed him out the back door and the third time we carried him out the back door. And like, I, the other door guy had him by the, by the arms and the head and I had him by the ankles and we carried him up to the cops, sat him down and said—

LW: Have him.
HK: “Do something with him.” Yeah.
LK: Haha—Take him.
HK: Yeah, take him. We’ve already kicked him out three times, he’s hammered—um—he keeps trying to sneak back, sneak back in. I don’t care if you y’all call him a ride home or
arrest him—do something with him. [background laughter] And uh, and he, I think the next time I saw him, he was, he had handcuffs on his arms and on his ankles. [background laughter] That’s how bad he got.

LW: Wow.
HK: So.
LW: Yeah.
HK: We get, we get some wild nights in there.
LW: Man, in only 14 months.
HK: Hmm.
LW: [sigh] What are some common misconceptions about your job?
HK: Uh, common misconceptions, uh. [pause] That we make more money than we actually do. You know we’re taking cover to—at the door—we’ve got this, the fanny pack full of money and uh the door guy, the guy taking cover, gotta stack full of money that big [shows with hand]. That, the door guys don’t get any of that. Um.
LW: Does it go, where does it go towards?
HK: It goes to the owner and then I guess he, it’s his discretion from there which I mean if I was, you know, I’d do the same thing. Um, another misconception is uh, that yah have to be a really, that you have to be a hard-ass to be a door guy. Just, you don’t have to be a really tough guy. You just have to know how to handle situations. Most the time if, if I could have a, if I could be nice to everybody I would. But I try to be; sometimes you can’t be nice to people.
LW: They push the niceness.
HK: They push, they push the niceness.
LW: Gotcha.
HK: I have to, I have to be mean to people but I try to be nice to everybody.
LW: Um, if you could change something about your work like wages, benefits—I don’t know if you guys get benefits—schedule, location or the kind of people you work with, would you change any of that or anything else?
HK: Uh, [pause], I would change a few things. I mean, I mean I love all the people I work with; I think we have the best staff in town. Um, the layout of the bar sometimes, sucks. Uh, especially for like the bar backs ‘cause they have to take, they have to take beer from the downstairs cooler at the VT bar on a busy night and carry it through the crowd—all the way through the crowd to the front bar and when you’re carrying three cases of beer it’s kinda tough to get through the crowd. So I’d have like, I’d have just a designated way for them to go, just for them. It would be nice, they could take the beer and run...

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HK: ...The guys that have been there 5,6,7 years tell me this is the way we do it because it works that way. I said cool. If it doesn’t work that way I tell them I don’t think it works like that. So most, most of the stuff that we do there is for a purpose, and we do it because it works, so it, I, I like the place and what goes on there but... If I get paid more, but what person doesn’t want to get paid more?
MS: Yeah.
LW: Do you like being that close to Tech, like Virginia Tech Campus?
HK: Yep. It’s nice because uh—I mean you get—on my nights off like you said, non-football weekends I’ll have Friday nights off and in su-, in the fall when it’s nice outside we’ll sit
out on the front porch and drink before we go downtown or go to a party. It’s, and you can see this wave of kids that come through, uh, from Barringer and Johnson and Lee and all those dorms that are right there close—they’re all coming and heading towards, uh, I guess Roanoke Street. Is that where all the apartments are?

LW: Yeah.

HK: The Roanoke Street Apartments, The Chase [background noise] and yeah, The Chase, the Roanoke Street Apartments and all the frat houses. And you see this wave of kids come over. I’ya, every Friday night that I’m off and out there drinking, this wave of freshman kids comes walking through heading over towards the parties.

LW: You don’t heckle them do you?

HK: No. [laugh]

LW: [laugh] That’s nice of you.

HK: Sometimes.

LW: [laugh] Call them freshman.

HK: Sometimes they heckle back.

LW: Um, do you think the amount you’re paid compensates for the work you put in?

HK: Absolutely.

LW: Good

HK: I wouldn’t do it any other way, I, I wouldn’t do it otherwise.

LW: Why do you think it does?

HK: Uh, [pause] I feel like—well ‘cause uh, if we, I mean all we had to do is just come in there and walk around and make sure people got kicked out when they were supposed to and then just at 2 o’clock we gotta kick, we’d clocked out and went home and somebody else came in to, uh, clean up the bar um, I wouldn’t expect a tip out, but at the end of the night that’s, that’s why we get the extra money at the end of the night. It’s ‘cause we clean up all the trash and the bathrooms and sweep. I mean we don’t have to mop ‘cause we have a guy come in and mops all the floors, all the hard wood floors, but the, ‘cause, I mean if you break it down when there’s, on a regular night—on a Tuesday night I’ll be there for six hours and [pause] maybe two hours of it is doing actual work, I’m sweeping up or taking trash out or cardboard, breaking down cardboard. The rest of the time I’m just walking around talking to people. I get paid really good to walk around talking to people [background laughter].

LW: Um, if you weren’t working this job, what would you ideally be doing?

HK: Ideally, I’d be back in Harrisonburg working for a commercial contractor building buildings wherever in Harrisonburg or around Harrisonburg. Um, hopefully I’d have a place of my own by now—either renting or owning—um, but this, I mean this goes, isn’t terrible, I still like what I’m doing so far. Uh, my rent’s dirt cheap over at that house; I’m paying 180 dollars rent. [background chatter] And I don’t have to drive anywhere—like I drive to get groceries and to the Weight Club and Christiansburg if I have to but other than that I don’t drive that much, so um, I guess the cost of living was more expensive I probably would have moved, already moved by now, but. [Pause] I’m doing good right now—so far.

LW: That’s good. I can’t believe your rent is 180.

MS: Um, tell me about your coworkers like we, I know we, you like them but what else?

HK: Uh, there’s good things and there’s bad things. But um, um, we—we had a guy work there last year. He came in right at the end of football seas-, I think he worked one football game. He worked NC State game and then he was there for the fall and spring semester—for a little bit of the spring—but uh, I was actual-, I was actually the one who
said something about him getting hired. I told Jason, I said listen, this guy, I’m trying to be a good friend—he said if we needed to hire more guys, to put his name in the mix. I’m not telling you to hire him, but I’m just telling you to talk to him, so that he knows he was in the mix. And he comes in and—I mean you don’t have to be a big guy to work at TOTS as a bouncer but it helps— and he was about 5’5” maybe 135 pounds—tiny little kid—and he came in for his interview and came out with two shirts over his back, two Top of the Stairs shirts and said see you guys Thursday or whatever. But uh, I mean he was good at throwing away trash, like picking up beer bottles and throwing them away and cleaning the bathrooms and whatever else, but I mean, he—we tried to kick—he could not kick out a girl on her 21st birthday. It was this little tiny little girl, she was really, really drunk and we were like alright—we called him, he had a self-proclaimed nickname “Skinny”. That’s what all his friends called him, that’s what we called him. Uh so, I said, Skinny, kick that girl out, it’s her 21st birthday. I said you can handle this one [background laughter]. And he couldn’t even do that [background laughter]. Um so when the trash, he couldn’t even, he couldn’t take out the big full trashcans that are full of beer bottles and cups and whatever else, um, somebody else had to do that. I mean he was a, he was a really great guy, but not the best—not really cut out for the job. And uh, it’s kinda a required skill to kick someone out and have them come back the next night and still like yah. You have to be able to be nice to ‘em but still get the message across that they need to leave, and he didn’t, he couldn’t get, quite grasp that concept. He would just come it, scream at ‘em, make ‘em leave and they were always so pissed off at the end of the night that they just, they wouldn’t come back. And uh, I had to convince, I, I had to tell, I had to tell Skinny out of, I had to break this—you gotta be nice to these people and still I mean there, it gets to a certain point where you can’t be nice to ‘em anymore but I mean he, there was no give for him; as soon as you had to kick them out, he just turned into an asshole. [Background laughter].

LW: Do you think people respect you more because you’re built? Or they listen to you more?

HK: Believe it or not more people—though I had a friend at Sharkey’s as a door guy, Eric Davis, I don’t know if you guys know who I’m talking, he’s a great big ‘ole guy, he’s like 6 foot 5, use to play football for Tech.

LW: Does he have a...

HK: No that’s John, I know who you’re talking about. But uh, Eric um.

LW: Did he have lots of muscles?

HK: Lots of muscles. He played, he use—he’s a biker. I mean he’d ride his bike and always had the leather on.

LW: Does he work the back bar?

HK: He doesn’t work there anymore. But uh, he said more people tried to start fights with him than the rest of the door guys. I guess you know when you’re kicking somebody out, they try to, they gotta have something to prove.

LW: Ha right.

HK: But uh, sometimes it’s nice but uh half the time people look at you and go ‘aww you know I better leave’. Most the time people get worked up and they have something to prove and try to fight yah.

LW: Yeah, they’ve got that liquid courage.

HK: Yeah, they’ve got their liquid courage in them and they think they’re 10 feet tall, they’re bullet proof, and then nobody can bring them down [background laughter].

LW: Except for you.

HK: Yeah.
MS: How does Virginia Tech affect the work you do?
HK: Exponentially.
LW: Haha yeah.
HK: Actually it’s funny because when Tech is not in session, we are not open. We’re closed Thanksgiving break, we’re closed Christmas break, we’re closed Spring break, we’re closed the week between um, the end of Spring semester and first Summer session like we’re not open at all. So, yeah, Tech really helps us out.
LW: Good to know.
HK: When Tech’s open, we’re open. Um.
LW: Wow.
HK: But we work, uh [pause] last fall right there at the end of the semester we got that huge snow storm that came in uh, we were open just because Tech had their fall commencement that Saturday. Uh, I think we, that night had 13 inches of snow on the ground that night and it was still continuing to snow, um, we were serving drinks. I think we had one family come in with their two kids that just—their one kid who just graduated from Tech. But other than that it was pretty dead. At 11:30 we were closed. We’d cleaned everything up—had everything cleaned up, all lights turned off, everybody was out of the bar, the bar was locked at like 11:30-midnight [background laughter].
LW: Wow.
HK: That’s how slow it was. So.
MS: Um, where do you see yourself in 5-10 years from now?
HK: Somewhere other than Blacksburg. Uh, I mean if I could get a good job in Blacksburg, a real grown-up person job in Blacksburg and find a real place to live, I’d stay, but uh, some-, somewhere between here and Harrisonburg. Um, Staunton or in Harrisonburg but uh, I’d like to stay close to home.
LW: Me too.
MS: Um, in our class we’re talking about, uh, the American Dream, what do you think about the American Dream?
HK: I think it’s still alive. I think people are still going after that American Dream. Uh, I think it’s changed a little bit. Instead of getting out of high school and going straight to work, people are going to college and trying to do a little better than doing hard manual labor the rest of their lives, but I think the American Dream is still there. It’s just some people have a little bit different definition than others.
LW: What would be your definition of it?
HK: [Pause] Uh—
LW: Or do you have one?
HK: It’s going good so far, but I’d like to find a good paying job and build a house and try to live the rest of my life successfully.
LW: So that would be your American Dream?
HK: Yeah.
LW: Live successfully.
HK: Mhmm.
LW: Mine too.
MS: Ok, is there anything else you think we missed or you would like to add?
HK: About my job?
MS: Mhmm.
HK: Uh, [pause] one of the good things about working at the bar is you especially for homecoming weekend and football games, you get a lot of people coming back int
town—back into town visiting, um, and the, I met the creator of I think it was VTalumni.com or VirginiaTechalums but it’s like a social network for just Tech alums and you go in there and say I’m a living in Virginia and wanna get a job in I guess Harrisonburg or wherever and put that post up there with your resume and goes through and people who are Tech alums that have businesses or in a position to hire somebody go on that website and see well I got a Tech alum that just graduated and needs a job in Harrisonburg and that’s, that and other, I have other buddies that were seniors when I was a freshman that I met, and they come back in town for football games and they ask me if I still need a job and I get a business card. They say if you really need a job, uh, I’m working in DC, give me a call, I’ll see what I can do for you. So, it’s really good social networking—if you know how to talk to people.

LW: Since you see so many people come in and stuff?

HK: Yeah, you see a lot of people come in, a lot of people recognize [pause].

LW: Who you are?

HK: Me. And then they, I got, I have so many different business cards from different people [background laughter] about getting jobs. Uh, but they’re jobs in DC; I don’t want to work in DC. Uh, one guys told me—I had a guy tell me one night, he said you’d be an amazing club promoter in Vegas. I don’t know where that came from, but [background laughter]. Literally you walk around, you know, with a backpack full of promotional stuff/business cards and promote new clubs.

LW: That’s it?

HK: That’s it. Up and down the strip talking to people, go out there, just a lot of face time. Handing out business cards, telling them to come by, check out your club. He said, “you get paid to talk to people.” I said, “that’s what I do here.” “You get paid a lot better.” [Background laughter]. So, it’s, it, it’s a good social tool to meet people and get your name out there, um, but it’s also—it can be bad. Uh, one of the old door guys who use to work there was out on a night off and was walking into Sharkey’s, three girls came walking out of Sharkey’s, and all, every single, all three girls walked by and told him that they hated him. And he said he had never seen these girls in my life before. And then he figured out that they were regulars that get kicked out of TOTS all the time by him and that’s why they hated him. So—

LW: That’s a little bit rude.

HK: Yeah, it is a little bit rude, but there’s, that’s different people in Blacksburg.

LW: Yeah.

MS: Haha, yeah fake people [chatter].

HK: Anymore questions? Or was that the last one?

LW: No that was the last one if you have anything else you want to add.

HK: I just told you a lot of it.

LW: Cool, good.