

Interview with Kristen Jones

for HUM 2504: Introduction to American Studies, Prof. Emily Satterwhite, Fall 2010

Occupation: Housekeeping Supervisor, Virginia Tech

Time and Place: October 13, 2010, 11 a.m., Femoyer Hall, Blacksburg, Virginia

Interviewers: Lauren Kennedy, senior Communication major from Richmond, VA and
Katie Herber, senior Interior Design major from Jefferson, MD

LK= Lauren Kennedy

KH= Katie Herber

KJ= Kristen Jones

LK: Will you please tell me your name and, if you don't mind, your age?

KJ: Kristen Jones and I'm 36.

LK: And your job title and the name of the organization you work for, and how long you have been working there.

KJ: I'm a housekeeping supervisor for Virginia Tech and I've been here for 5 and a half years.

LK: Describe your family background- where you grew up and what it was like.

KJ: Umm, my mother and father were separated. My mother is disabled with epilepsy and my father was a machine shop plant manager. I have two younger brothers that are aggravating as most of them are. [Laughter] So I had fun picking on them because I'm the oldest.

LK: Are you married?

KJ: Yes.

LK: What does your husband do for a living?

KJ: Umm, he worked at the stone quarry here for Virginia Tech. We've been together 10 years and I have three children of my own and five step children.

LK: And how old are your children?

KJ: Mine are 18, 12 and 10.

LK: And what do they do?

KJ: All of them is still currently in school.

LK: Umm, what did you want to be when you grew up?

KJ: I wanted to be a vet to start off with and uhh, then I found out that I really liked to drive trucks and run equipment and do things like that so I kind of went on to get my CBL and work for VDOT.

LK: Tell me about your job.

KJ: Um, right now I have 7 buildings, 9 employees. I'm responsible for umm public areas, restrooms, offices, classrooms and then we take care of umm any needs that the university would have such as the commencements and different open houses and ceremonies that go out through out the year.

LK: How did you come to have this job?

KJ: I was... actually umm just... going around putting in applications looking for something different from what I was doing and just happened to see it online and had applied.

LK: What is a typical day like?

KJ: We start at 5 am. Umm first priority are our classrooms and restrooms and then we move on to our public areas, hallways, steps and then we go on to do, umm, take care of trash and cleaning offices and conference rooms and such.

LK: What is the best thing about your job?

KJ: The different people that I get to meet. It's such a diverse crowd, all the different departments, the different backgrounds that each individual has is really interesting.

LK: Do you have a favorite day or memory?

KJ: Umm, actually I would say that was the convocation that we had here umm after everything had happened and the governor and the president and his wife were on campus and we were over the convocation taking care of all the needs of everybody and I actually got to meet the governor and the president and I just thought that was wonderful.

LK: What is the hardest thing about your job?

KJ: That would be, umm, dealing with employee shortages, the budget cuts and so forth.

LK: If you could change one thing what would it be?

KJ: Umm I would just be, I would fix it so that we would be able to hire the employees we need to take care of everything.

LK: Umm, Can you tell me more about that?

KJ: We started off several years ago having like 168, 169 employees. Umm budgets cut, they came, they froze our hiring. We're now down to like a hundred and three people. Uhh, this side of campus has the largest classroom facilities and it's just really hard to, umm, take the number of people we do and cover everything that we need to accomplish.

LK: So are you doing the same amount of work with 100 as you were with 170?

KJ: Up until recently, yes.

LK: Ok

KJ: We were doing the same we have now went to, umm, what we call frequency. Its divided based on each building, the number of employees that we have in the building now. So our services where once we would go through an entire building, pull every trash can in every office and everything. We now have it set to where we do that on certain days and we have community areas that are done daily now, so that the people in the offices and things like that can bring things from their office and put them in that are to be removed.

LK: Do you do anything with the dorms?

KJ: No, thank goodness. [laughter] That's a completely different department.

KH: Are you glad you're not in that department?

LK: Whats the craziest thing that has ever happened to you on the job?

KJ: [Sigh] [laughter] I believe that would have been last year when I went to McBryde and one of my custodians had asked me to come over there was a fellow that was acting a little weird and when I actually got up to the floor he was standing in the hallway urinating in the trashcan.

LK: Oh my god. [laughter] Was it early in the morning?

KJ: It was about 15 minutes after 5.

LK: Oh, ok.

[Laughter]

KJ: He was just a tad bit inebriated. [laughter]

LK: Was it like a college student?

KJ: Yes.

LK: Oh ok.

KJ: He was a student. [laughter] He wasn't quite in the dorm he thought he was.
[laughter]

LK: Can you please talk about how your work affects your family life?

KJ: Umm It's... it's kind of pretty positive. I mean have a very early shift. Its 5 in the morning to 1:30. So I'm home in the evenings, I'm able to go to the sporting events and stuff with my kids. Umm we have leave set aside for us that if they have programs or field trips or things like that you know I can take leave and go and still participate at the school functions with my kids and then not interfere with my job here.

KH: So your leave and benefits and that kind of stuff is pretty good for this position?

KJ: Yes.

LK: How do you think your family life affects your work, if at all?

KJ: Umm, the same as anybody you can get stressed out, leave the place and you try not to carry it with you. Sometimes its hard when you have a tussle with your kids to get them ready to go in the morning and then you come here and your employees are having a bad day and they're all reluctant to do something so it just like dealing with your youngins all over again. [laughter]

LK: If you could switch places with president Steger for a day what would you change about Virginia Tech?

KJ: Mmmmm... nothing really I think we have a beautiful campus and I think its well perceived. We have a great bunch of people that work here so I think, I think he's doing a really good job.

LK: What if anything would cause you to leave Virginia Tech?

KJ: Ummm, It would definitely have to be just like a better position with more money and better benefits, which would kind of really be hard to find.

LK: How do you feel about your interactions and relationships with the students?

KJ: They are mostly pretty positive, I mean...

KH: You don't have to say anything just because we're here.

[laughter]

KJ: No, mostly I mean everybody that I've encountered has been like really cool, they're very talkative, they're open, friendly. Very polite, surprisingly. [laughter] You know you especially I have I deal a lot with the Cadets around here and they're just so polite and actually I've had just people come by and just help me do thing that they see me doing just without, you know just offering to help. So I've had really pretty positive experiences.

LK: Do you feel like you are part of the university community?

KJ: For the most part.

KH: Why do you say for the most part?

[laughter]

KJ: Umm, just generalized opinions, umm the word housekeeper, custodian. It kinda... it just has that affect when someone hears it. But ummm other than you know once everybody gets to know how we are and they interact with us and stuff like that then I think we are pretty much accepted.

LK: As a supervisor what's your biggest concern for your employees?

KJ: Their safety.

LK: How does that affect how you do your job?

KJ: Umm, I kinda... mother em... some. I mean I'm constantly checking up on them, pitching in and helping them out. Doing things like that I don't... I don't like sometimes... especially I have a lot of females and that early in the morning, in a building that's open 24/7 like McBryde is, umm, occasionally there are days and stuff that things are going on and you know I worry about the girls being by their self so I try to either I'm with them or pair em up with somebody to do, to do jobs and stuff.

LK: Have you ever had any safety problems with any of your employees?

KJ: Actually no. It's been its been a really good 5 and a half years so far.

[laughter]

LK: Where do you see yourself in 5-10 years, personally?

KJ: Umm, I really like my job so I see me still being here, umm, hopefully one day you know I can move on up to maybe a area manger position or so forth but I really enjoy my work.

LK: In our class we have been talking about the American dream a lot. What do you think about the American Dream?

KJ: It has so changed. [laughter] It has so changed, umm. I think its really hard now for your generation. I mean it was tough for me growing up but I'm really not that much older than you... [laughter] But now I look and I think about how its going the economy and everything and then I look at my children and, you know, without an education and even with an education it's still very tough to get a job and I think that umm, the whole picture of the job, the house, the white picket fence, now in a way that is part of the past and the new, new wave is coming through and technology is definitely, umm, advancing so that that's where I believe that the future is gonna lie.

LK: Are you trying to achieve the American dream?

KJ: I'm done. [laughter] Umm I have my family and my job and I'm, I'm content as to where I am.

LK: Umm is there anything you think we've missed. Can you think of anything else? Anything else you would like us to know?

KH: Any other interesting stories?

[laughter]

KJ: Probably some I probably couldn't repeat but... [laughter]

LK: Alright I think we're good.

KH: Thank you so much

LK: Thank you.

KJ: You are more than welcome. I hope that helps.

LK: That was really good. Perfect.

KH: Do you have...