Salve Regina Oral History Project

Date of Interview: June 21, 2018

Interviewee: Dr. James Farrington, Professor/Department Chair of Criminal Justice and Administration of Justice (1980-1998)

Interviewer: Kathleen Christ

Kathleen Christ: Okay, so this is Kathleen Christ. Today is June 21, 2018. As a part of the Salve Regina University Oral History Project, I will be interviewing Dr. James Farrington, [who] retired [as an Inspector-Deputy Assistant Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. He came to] Salve Regina [in 1980 and retired as a Professor of the] Administration of Justice Department [in June 1998.] Is that correct?

Kathleen Christ: Oh! My birth year! [*laughs*] … So, when you were younger, what did you want to be when you grew up?

Dr. James Farrington: Actually an airline pilot.

Kathleen Christ: Really?

Dr. James Farrington: That’s why I volunteered for World War II in the [Army] Air Corps, hoping to be a pilot, but it wasn’t to be.

Kathleen Christ: [*laughs*] Did you ever think you’d be a college professor?

Dr. James Farrington: No! [*Laughing*] That was the furthest thing [in my mind], because I had planned to study law.

Kathleen Christ: Oh, so can you give me a brief overview of your experiences in law enforcement before you came to Salve?

Dr. James Farrington: Sure. [I entered the Federal Bureau of Investigation in April of 1957. My first office of assignment, of course, was Washington D.C., and then a group of about 30 of us were transferred to Quantico, Virginia, for our 14-week training. Following the training, I was assigned to the Newark, New Jersey Office… in… June of 1957. I stayed at the Newark office for about 3 years doing a number of things. Since it was the first office of assignment, they [would] give the Agents a little taste of everything, so we did criminal work, we did security work, and they had different squads. They had the kidnapping squad… the [interstate shipment of stolen property] squad… the fugitive squad, and they had what they called the background investigative squad… You’d be assigned to each of those for a certain length of time… I was then sent… to [the] Washington D.C. … field office, (not headquarters, but the field office). There I did surveillance work for about 2 years, hoping like anything I’d be able to get out of [that assignment], as soon as I could… [*laughter]*… You did 8-hour shifts but you were in the car. So in the summertime you’d be sweltering and in the wintertime you’d be freezing… An opportunity came up for an opening in headquarters, and I applied for it and was accepted.

Kathleen Christ: Go you!

Dr. James Farrington: [Yes], and at headquarters I was at the Crime Records Division [where] we did a lot of publicity work for J. Edgar Hoover,[[1]](#footnote-1) who was Director of the FBI at the time. I went on vacation [in] New Hampshire… one summer, and when I got back, my boss said to me, “I’ve got some good news and some bad news for you; what do you want to hear first?” I said, “Give me the bad news.” At that time, they’d just amended the Freedom of Information Act. Up to this point… the files of the FBI were confidential, so we [were not required to reveal] that information [in our files to the general public]. But after this… we were told that now when people requested certain files, we had to respond. So some [information in the files of the FBI was now given out to the general public]… The good part was that I got a significant promotion, so that tempered it a little. [*laughter*] I started off with a crew of 3 other law-trained Special Agents, one secretary, and two clerical people. A year later, I had over [twenty] law-trained Special Agents, and about 45 clerical help because the demand for information from our files had increased significantly. I did that for about 2 years. When there [was] an opening in the Legal Counsel Division, I was appointed… [to] Inspector/Deputy Assistant Director… I retired in February of 1980…

Kathleen Christ: Thank you! So, how exactly do you believe you ended up here at Salve Regina University? …

Dr. James Farrington: Well, [my wife and I] were thinking about coming back to New England… My wife was from… Exeter, New Hampshire, and we were going to go back to that general area… I decided I’d like to do a little teaching and we almost stayed in Maryland because [St. Mary’s] University had an opening, and I was interested in that. I was also interested in Fairfield University in Connecticut. However… two of my friends in the FBI, who had retired about 7 years before I did, ended up here at Salve, so… they encouraged me to come here because there was an opening in the Criminal Justice Department…So that’s how I ended up here at Salve. [I] never regretted it. I enjoyed all 18 years of it here.

Kathleen Christ: [*Laughs*] So, these friends of yours, were they also teaching here at the time?

Dr. James Farrington: They were. … They were both retired [FBI Special Agents]. Charlie Cooke[[2]](#footnote-2) … retired about 7 years before I did, and he applied… at Salve because he learned that they were starting… a Criminal Justice Department, and he was hired. He ended up as chair. My other friend was Richard Marquise.[[3]](#footnote-3) He would spend summers in Vermont after he retired from the FBI, and he heard about an opening here, …applied, and was hired. Both of them were in the Criminal Justice Department, and it was… their interest that got me interested. So when an opening [be]came available I came up here. …

Kathleen Christ: So you got to work here with your two friends…

Dr. James Farrington: [My family and I were in] to New Hampshire for a visit with my mother and mother-in-law… and I thought, “Gee! I’ll give Charlie a call,” because it had been a while and I had lost contact with him… I looked up Charlie and… made arrangements to come [to Newport to] see him…

Kathleen Christ: Oh no!

Dr. James Farrington: Charlie then wanted me to come [to Salve] that fall, but I had one daughter, the … last of five daughters going through… Catholic high school… [in Maryland], … so I couldn’t­… [Salve] very graciously held open that position for me until the following year. [Richard] Marquise was Chairman of the department when I came here, and I eventually succeeded him when [he] became the director of the Criminal Justice Master’s Program.

Kathleen Christ: Ah, I see.

Dr. James Farrington: I’m really talking on, aren’t I? [*Both laugh*]

Kathleen Christ: So how do you feel about your experiences as a professor and later as a department chair?

Dr. James Farrington: I enjoyed teaching tremendously. I had some little [trepidation] at first because I had taught at the FBI National Academy and they were all adult[s], and now I was going up in front of young students and I didn’t know how I would react, but it turned out I enjoyed every day…

Kathleen Christ: Wow!

Dr. James Farrington: Now, when I was appointed as chairman… that involved a lot of administrative things, which took time away from teaching, which I didn’t particular care [for], but I knew it was something that had to be done and I was glad to do it. The Administration was always very good to me and supported me in my efforts to advance the department, so I enjoyed both phases of it actually…

Kathleen Christ: Oh… so what were some of your responsibilities, first as a professor and also as a department chair?

Dr. James Farrington: My first responsibility as a professor [was] to my students, [*laughter*] making sure that they were learning the subject matter, and also getting used to teaching younger people and adapting my technique to them, because it was a little different teaching younger people, (as compared to mature adults), [who] were at least 28-29 years old. As I say, I still enjoyed it. …My responsibilities as an administrator… focused on improving the curriculum, doing things to improve the status of the department and making sure the students [were] getting the current teachings of the law and the criminal justice system. We’re very proud of our department and we’ve had a number of students go on to very good professional [careers]. Some of them ended up as judges, some in the FBI by the way, some of them in Secret Service, some in DEA[[4]](#footnote-4) and a lot of them in the local police departments…[One of my former students, Karen Carroll, ended up as a judge on the Supreme Court for the State of Vermont].

Kathleen Christ: Oh wow! So, what kind of classes did you teach? …

Dr. James Farrington: Well... some of the basics were Criminal Law, Criminal Procedures… The more experienced I got… I ended up with [primarily] seniors. I wanted to [have] courses that were really challenging to them knowing that they were going out into the field very shortly. So that was a challenge, to make sure that they had a basic working [knowledge] of the criminal laws, the criminal justice system, and the fact that they hopefully would make very good, outstanding law enforcement officers. And as a general rule, I think our department accomplished that because we [have] many good people out there in the criminal justice system.

Kathleen Christ: Okay, I see. So, what exact type of students did you teach? …You mentioned that there was also the Master’s Program. So were you more involved in the Undergraduate–

Dr. James Farrington: Mine were all undergraduate, and near my last probably 5 or 6 years they were primarily all juniors and seniors…

Kathleen Christ: Were there a lot of men or women, because–

Dr. James Farrington: Actually, at first we had a lot of men because of the police officers and state police officers. In fact, that reminds me that when we first started out, we had a campus… in Warwick, St. Rose of Lima.[[5]](#footnote-5) …I can remember the chair assigning me to the 7 o’clock in the morning class at St. Rose of Lima with a group of [state and] local police officers who were coming off their shift and [were] very tired–

Kathleen Christ: Oh my goodness.

Dr. James Farrington: And it was a challenge to keep them interested and awake. [*Laughs*]

Kathleen Christ: Oh my goodness.

Dr. James Farrington: And one of the techniques that I used­–I don’t know if you’ve ever heard of this, but… the [R.I.] Policeman’s Bill of Rights… had… recently passed when I came [to R.I.]. It had given the policemen a lot more rights than they’d had previously to protect them from overzealous chiefs and things of that nature… I would start one of the classes out [and] if I saw that one of the fellas would start to nod off, I would make some derogatory remark about the Policeman’s Bill of Rights and of course that perked them right up, they were ready to go, and for an hour and a half we’d have a good exchange. [*Laughter*]

Kathleen Christ: So you had full-grown police officers that were…

Dr. James Farrington: They were completely different from the students in my other classes who were… sophomores and freshmen. It wasn’t until later that I got the older students, aside from the law enforcement and… the state police. But the state police and local police were very good… They had a lot of practical experience and they blended right in with what I was teaching.

Kathleen Christ: Well that’s good.

Dr. James Farrington: Yes.

Kathleen Christ: So, I understand you worked on creating the actual Administration of Justice Department, right?

Dr. James Farrington: [Not really]. I was there at the time it was changed from Criminal Justice to Administration of Justice.[[6]](#footnote-6) I was the chair I believe at that time, but I had a lot of good input from my fellow instructors. I’m not sure, I think Dr. Hoffman[[7]](#footnote-7) was there at the time. …When I hired her full-time I found a gem. She was very conscientious, always had her work prepared. And then I had another faculty member… who is still teaching here [today], Vinnie Petrarca.[[8]](#footnote-8) And we had another… teacher, Lois Wims,[[9]](#footnote-9) who has gone onto another university and is now I’m quite sure a dean at another university. She went the administrative route, but [was] another outstanding teacher; the students loved her.

Kathleen Christ: Okay. Can you tell me a little bit more about that shift from Criminal Justice to Administration of Justice?

Dr. James Farrington: A little more about what?

Kathleen Christ: That shift, because it became…different. Was there anything that changed in the curriculum?

Dr. James Farrington: …Criminal Justice [covered] a lot of criminal-type work, [where] the Administration of Justice [was broader and involved civil law as well].

Kathleen Christ: So it gave more opportunities…

Dr. James Farrington: For the students to branch out into other fields. ...It didn’t mean they needed to end up as police officers, or special agents, or things of that nature, and some of them did, a lot of them went into different fields.

Kathleen Christ: I see. So were you involved with other departments, or not as much? Were you–

Dr. James Farrington: Well we were involved with other departments… At the time we [had] probably [some[ of the largest… classes, and some of the other departments would have liked to have our students in [theirs], so we had to put our heads together and determine, well, what is going to enhance our students’ education and their possibility of employment if they went into this discipline or that discipline, or classes, I should say…We had to advise [some of the chairs of other Departments that our] students were not interested in that [subject] and we… [wanted] to keep them in this particular [discipline]. Some we experimented [with] and then got the feedback from the students and how they felt about it as something that they could use later on. And if it came back negative, we’d weigh it, discuss it, and then probably see the chair of the other department to address some of the [students’] concerns…

Kathleen Christ: I see. So… what departments would that have been?

Dr. James Farrington: Well, social work, sociology, psychology. This [would be after our students had completed their basic] requirements in these fields, because I think they were required to take three credits of sociology, three credits of psychology…

Kathleen Christ: So those core classes would also work for the major in Administration of Justice?

Dr. James Farrington: …Yes.

Kathleen Christ: I see. So, what was it like to work with Sister [Lucille] McKillop[[10]](#footnote-10) as president?

Dr. James Farrington: I found her to be very supportive. She and the Vice President, Sheila Megley, – Sister Sheila Megley[[11]](#footnote-11) ­– and particularly… Dr. Christopher Kiernan.[[12]](#footnote-12) When I felt that I could improve the curriculum or department by adding… or deleting another course, I would go to Dr. Kiernan, talk it out with him after I had talked it over with my own staff, and he was always very supportive. I have to say I… always [had] the utmost cooperation from the university administration. Dr. Bill Burrell[[13]](#footnote-13) was another one; Dr. Burrell was the Dean of Faculty at the time. Again, he was very supportive.

Kathleen Christ: And later, was it the same way with Sister Therese Antone?[[14]](#footnote-14)

Dr. James Farrington: Yes. At that time I didn’t have as much to do with Sister Therese, [*coughs*] because I was sort of winding down. Here again though­– she was very cooperative, very helpful, with anything we requested that was reasonable and that we could justify.

Kathleen Christ: I see. So how involved were you with the Salve community, as far as students, faculty, alumni…?

Dr. James Farrington: Actually, I was quite involved because I ended up [as] the chairman of the [Grievance Committee]. It was… where some student or faculty member felt they were treated unjustly, either by their professor or by the administration. …In any case, I had a lot to do with the faculty because a number of complaints were [about] the faculty. And here again we tried to be very fair and objective. There was even one time when there was a challenge to Sister [McKillop]’s position as president [by a faculty member]. We had a long hearing on that… We’d gather all the evidence we could and gave everyone an opportunity to testify before us, and then based on that we made a decision, and handed out our decision.

Kathleen Christ: Do you remember who the [faculty member] was who was making allegations against Sister [McKillop]? It’s okay if you don’t.

Dr. James Farrington: …What she was doing was challenging her position as President…she’s no longer here; in fact she left shortly afterwards.

Kathleen Christ: Was it a failed hearing then?

Dr. James Farrington: Yes, the Grievance Committee found–I believe it was unanimous too– that there wasn’t any justification for the allegations.

Kathleen Christ: I see. Were you at all involved in the Newport community as well?

Dr. James Farrington: Only… if one of the students was in trouble, the police department would get in touch with me because I knew [a great number of] police… on the island... And once in a while they would come and let us know what was going on, and if we could help them we would. We’d probably call the student in and talk to the student. [That was one way we were] involved [in] the community.

Kathleen Christ: Were you involved with them at all in helping students get placements after they graduated?

Dr. James Farrington: [Yes we were.] We helped them not only afterwards, but before. Vinnie Petrarca was very good about getting internships for a lot of our students… in the criminal justice system. …One of them was at the FBI, and several of them were at the [state] prison [and the Naval Investigative Service].

Kathleen Christ: Interesting. So overall how do you feel that your time here at Salve has impacted your life?

Dr. James Farrington: Oh, I think it’s impacted my life considerably. For one thing, my morale was very high. I enjoyed not only the company of younger students and the faculty, [but] particularly the teaching aspect. It had a tremendous impact because I was finished with my career with the FBI. …In fact, I had the occasion while I was still here at Salve to [see] Judge Webster,[[15]](#footnote-15) who [was] the [Director] of the FBI. …He was over here at the Naval War College,[[16]](#footnote-16) and I had the opportunity to see him and talk to him briefly. When I told him what I was doing, he made the observation that he actually considered [the field of] education at one time.

Kathleen Christ: Wow.

Dr. James Farrington: …He’s still alive [and very active]. [He was an] outstanding director of the FBI.

Kathleen Christ: I bet. So were you at all in the Naval War College then, or not really?

Dr. James Farrington: No… we were not. We didn’t have anything [to do with the Naval War College]. …We [had] an intern with the [Naval Investigative Service. One of our students] ended up making it a career…

Kathleen Christ: Are there any lessons you learned while working here at the university?

Dr. James Farrington: Any lessons I learned? Yes, one, definitely a lesson: You have to be patient, not only with the students, but with [your] fellow faculty member[s]. I was leaving a career where we [were required, after considering the problem, to come to a] decision …in a relatively short time, maybe a few hours, depending on the complexity of the matter. Then I came [to academia] and we, including myself as a faculty member, would talk the decision to *death* [*laughter*] before a decision would be made. That was one of the things that really tested me here. [*laughter*]

Kathleen Christ: What kind of decisions would they be about? Curriculum kind of stuff?

Dr. James Farrington: [Yes, primarily] I guess it could be curriculum. I can’t remember any of them specifically, but it involved the faculty and our teaching in some way.

Kathleen Christ: So did you know J. Edgar Hoover very well?

Dr. James Farrington: I was at one time one of 8 [Special Agents] that would take visitors to see Mr. Hoover [in his office at FBI Headquartetrs.]

Kathleen Christ: Do you have anything [else] you’d like to share? Like a particular memory?

Dr. James Farrington: One of the nicest memories I had was when my youngest daughter graduated [from] Salve.

Kathleen Christ: She went here? When did she come here?

Dr. James Farrington: In the fall of [1980].

Kathleen Christ: Oh, so just like you did?

Dr. James Farrington: …Once she finished high school… [in Maryland], we came up here.

Kathleen Christ: So you got to see her graduate from the school that you also taught at.

Dr. James Farrington: Yes.

Kathleen Christ: Oh, wow! Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

Dr. James Farrington: Actually, I really can’t, because I wanted to keep my distance. I didn’t want any impression that I was using my influence, or what little influence I might have had, so she was on her own here. [*Both laugh*] I do remember one incident, she’d kill me for telling you this, but she was [living] in …Wakehurst![[17]](#footnote-17)

Kathleen Christ: Oh! She lived in Wakehurst?

Dr. James Farrington: Yes, she lived in Wakehurst at the time. She was going to cook something, and she left the pan [on the stove and]… they had to call the Fire Department! [*Both laughing*]

Kathleen Christ: Oh my gosh!

Dr. James Farrington: [*laughs*] I only found out about that later on. And the housekeeper was very good, she calmed her down, I guess she was very upset about it, but I didn’t know until later on, [*laughter*] not that I would have done anything.

Kathleen Christ: What do you believe your greatest accomplishment was while you worked here?

Dr. James Farrington: I would hope that it was to prepare the students… for a career in criminal justice where they’ll make a good living and have a good reputation as far as what Salve taught them. I think that would be my biggest accomplishment.

Kathleen Christ: I’m sure they have.

Dr. James Farrington: Well, you always hope they have.

Kathleen Christ: Yes. Is there anything that we didn’t talk about that you would like to add?

Dr. James Farrington: This is an interesting thing for what it’s worth, and you can delete it if it’s not. I was still in Maryland when I had applied here and filled out all the papers, and one of the requirements at the time was that I had attended and graduated law school. Well I had attended Boston College Law School, and graduated. I happened to be in… my office [in Maryland]… and the phone rang, and it was Dr. Burrell, who was Dean of Faculty, and he said, “Jim, we were just checking on your credentials, and we just checked with Boston College Law School, and they have no record of you attending there!”

Kathleen Christ: Oh my gosh!

Dr. James Farrington: Now, I’m in my office and I’m looking at my big diploma from Boston College, and I said, “Dr. Burrell, there must be something wrong there because I’m looking right here at my diploma.” So, he said, “Would you mind calling them and finding out?” I said, “Sure!” So as soon as he hung up I called Boston College, and I got this very helpful person, and I gave her all the details and she said, “Mr. Farrington, I’m sorry, but we don’t have any record of you being here!” [*laughter*] I said, “Look, I’m sitting here, I’ve got this big diploma right in front of me!” [*More laughing*] So, she said, “Oh! I’m sorry!” And then she said, “Oh, wait a minute! When did you graduate?” And I told her, and she said, “Oh, you know what? …We did pack some boxes in another building. Let me check, and I’ll call you back.” So, I hung up and about a week later she called me back and said, “We found it… in these boxes of all the students who had gone to [the] law school [when it was located] on Tremont Street [in Boston], and they had put those boxes in a different location. So, I asked her to please send a copy of my diploma [etc.] to Salve Regina and then I called Dr. Burrell and I told him that he should expect to get the diploma, and he did eventually.

Kathleen Christ: So they found out you really did go to law school?

Dr. James Farrington: Right. [*Both laugh*] That’s something that sort of stood out in my mind, but I can’t think of anything [else.] But if I do, when I come in to read this I’ll add that to it.

Kathleen Christ: Definitely. Well thank you so much for coming!

Dr. James Farrington: You’re welcome and thank you for helping me reflect on some of those things, it’s been a long time, and good luck to you on your project, Kathleen.

Kathleen Christ: Aw, well thank you. I’m so happy you got to be here!

1. J. Edgar Hoover was the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation from 1935-1972. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Mr. Charles Cooke was the chairman of the Law Enforcement program and professor of Criminal Justice at Salve during the 1970s. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Mr. Richard Marquise was a Criminal Justice and Administration of Justice professor from the 1970s-1996. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Drug Enforcement Administration, a federal agency. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. St Rose of Lima is a Catholic school for grades Pre-K through 8. Salve Regina used it as a satellite location for some of its classes. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The change from the Criminal Justice to Administration of Justice Department occurred in 1984. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Dr. Robin Hoffman is a current Administration of Justice tenured professor and has been at Salve since the 1980s. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Mr. Vincent Petrarca is a current Administration of Justice professor and had been at Salve since the 1980s. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Dr. Lois Wims was a tenured professor and later chair of Administration of Justice between 1998-2000. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Sister Lucille McKillop was President of Salve Regina University from 1973-1994. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Sister Sheila Megley was a renowned Dean of Students and Provost from the 1970s-1992. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Dr. Christopher Kiernan, (1943-2009), served in various administrative positions, such as Assistant to the President for Development of Enrollment, Dean of Admissions, Vice President for Academic Affairs etc., and as a basketball coach, as well as a professor at Salve Regina beginning in 1980 until his death in 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Dr. William Burrell served on the faculty of Salve Regina from 1965-1995 as a professor and Dean of Faculty and Graduate Studies. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Sister Therese Antone, current Chancellor of Salve Regina University, graduated from here in 1962 and worked as a tenured professor, Director of Development, Vice President for Corporate Affairs and Advancement, Secretary of the Board of Trustees, and served as President from 1994-2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Judge William H. Webster was the Director of the FBI 1978-1987 and the Director of the CIA from 1987-1991. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. The Naval War College is a naval institution located in Newport, RI. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Wakehurst, while it’s currently Salve’s Center for Student Activities, has been an academic building, dorm and residence, and office building, since the school’s assumption of the property in 1972. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)