

ALUMNI PROFILE

HARVEY BARSANTI (CLASS OF 1956-1961)

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In the year 2005, St. Mary's College will be celebrating its 50th anniversary. In 50 years as an educational institution, many students and teachers have walked the halls at SMC but none more so than Harvey Barsanti. For 5 years as a student and 32 years as an educator, mentor and friend at St. Mary's College, Harvey is one of our most senior and respected “Alumni”. Through his spirit and dedication to teaching the fundamental values of family and faith instilled upon him by the Basilian fathers, he has positively touched the lives of many young men and women who have worn the colors maroon and white and has proudly passed on the traditions and meaning of what it means to be a St. Mary's KNIGHT. It is for this reason; Harvey Barsanti has been chosen the Honorary Chairman of the St. Mary's College 2005 50th Reunion.



At age 13, Harvey began high school at St. Mary's College in September 1956 its 1st year in operation. Two classes started with an enrolment of seventy-two grade 9 students and two Basilian priests, Father Matthew Mulcahy (principal) and Father Pat Lalonde (teacher). During this first year, construction of the school was still in progress and Father Mulcahy spent much of his time dealing with contractors and often took volunteers from his classroom to perform various jobs around the school. The Knights of Columbus assisted the Basilians financially to field some of our athletic teams and hence the name St. Mary's “Knights” was born.

In 1957 three more Basilians were brought in to teach as the school now included grade 9 and 10 students. The same occurred each year until graduation in 1960-61, by that time only thirty-three students were left to graduate out of the original seventy-two.

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“Great rivalries were beginning to develop in athletics between the Knights, Sir James Dunn Eagles and Collegiate Wildcats” commented Harvey. “Both the Knights and the Eagles took their lumps from the Wildcats in football and basketball. Back then everybody played all sports.

I was fortunate to be declared “Outstanding Athlete” the first year the award was given (1958-59).”

After graduation (1960-61) Harvey attended St. Pat’s College in Ottawa where he played junior hockey (1961-62). They won the Ottawa Valley League, beat Cornwall and Halifax but lost to Quebec. Quebec lost to Niagara Falls who eventually beat the western representative to win the Memorial Cup that year.

Following first year, Harvey transferred to University of Windsor where he played hockey and golf. In 1963-64, he won the gold medal for Ontario Quebec Inter-College Athletic Association golf tournament.

Graduating in 1965 with a B.A. Harvey went on to teachers college in Toronto and was hired by then principal Father Brown to teach physical education, history and Latin in the fall of 1966. This was the beginning of a long career as an educator at a school he cherished as a student.

“The Basilians were always hard pressed to make end’s meet but the staff continually helped out in many ways to make money for teaching necessities – that of course brought us closer together” Harvey said. “We even gave up some salary to keep one of our staff who had a young family and was going to be let go because of hard times.”

“The Basilians always held Principal and Vice-Principal positions until 1980 when they posted a part time Vice-Principals job for lay staff which I applied for and successfully received” indicated Harvey. This made me the first lay staff Vice-Principal at SMC.

After many years of attempting to receive funding for Catholic schools grades 11 thru 13, the Conservative Government finally came through in 1985. Students would no longer have to pay tuition and the financial responsibilities of the Basilian Fathers were relieved. In 1987, the catholic board of education bought out the interest in St. Mary’s College from the Basilians and moved the school to the former Lakeway Collegiate site on Wellington Street with Father Campbell as Principal and Harvey as Vice-Principal. This was also the first year that uniforms were introduced to the students.

Prior to leaving St. Mary’s College on the hill the enrolment was approximately 525 students. When the school began its first year as a coed school, enrolment jumped to 794 students. Because of government funding, the separate school boards had a contract to accept teachers from the public school system since there enrolment had dropped - since many students were choosing SMC. This resulted in some great people joining the SMC family. The effect of government funding resulted in the offering of more programs and an increase in the quality of education. Within 5 years of becoming coed, enrolment reached 1305 students and staff increased from 33 to 80 members. “It was difficult trying to keep the spirit of family but we struggled through it and succeeded” indicated Harvey.

The Basilians gave up administration in 1988 and Harvey was introduced as the first lay staff principal at St. Mary’s College. Most of the Basilians were gone by then as only Father Gerry Lalonde remained as Chaplain. He was the brother of Father Pat Lalonde, one of our first teachers. Bob Barbeau and Ray Barsanti were first and second lay Vice-Principals.

When enrolment reached 1300 students, the Board re-opened the original St. Mary’s College building on the hill as St. Basil Secondary School. As a result Bob Barbeau left SMC along with some staff to become principal at St. Basil. Anne Cosgrave took over as second Vice-Principal. Enrolment at SMC eventually



Harvey in his younger years (1961).

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Harvey continued as principal until his well earned retirement in 1998.

In retirement Harvey says, "You are hired, you teach and then you retire, but it's not over... especially if you are a Knight because you are one forever. I can't help but look back and cherish so many memories not only of when I was a student helping to create and develop our traditions but also as a teacher helping to instill them into each new Knight. The tremendous pride that you feel in knowing you may have played some part in the development of so many great young people who have passed through our halls."

"I can't help but cherish the memories of the successes our teams enjoyed but just as important were the accomplishments of our students in our liturgies, theatre SMC, and academics. All the students that I taught and coached or the many who worked for our family at the Root are embedded in my mind and heart forever; all of whom I now claim as friends. Now that I am retired you can find me on the golf course working or enjoying a game, or on a lake or in a river trying to catch the big one. In most cases I will probably be in the company of another Knight or two."

"My wife Donna and I spend a lot of time traveling to North Bay to see our daughter, son-in-law and the three very special grandkids. We are both looking forward to seeing many of you at our 50th. Sign up on the website now... see you then."

As St. Mary's moves ahead into the new millennium and continues to face new and difficult challenges, may the present and future administrations never lose sight of the years of dedication that people like Harvey Barsanti have given toward what makes St. Mary's the special place that it remains today. It is imperative that the young men and women who walk these

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