

# CONVERSATION mike faires

Thieves, non-do gooders, and pernicious people of any nature, beware--Fat Faires has arrived. Faires, more properly known as Michael D., is Mars Hill College's new director of safety and security. He's not fat, the nickname came about because of Faires' affinity with comedian Bill Cosby's character Fat Albert. It should be noted that Faires is an ex-Airborne Ranger, Green Beret sergeant.

A jovial six-footer, Faires majored in Special Education at West Georgia College, which is located in his hometown of Carrollton. It was at West Georgia that Faires became interested in police work, and he minored in Criminology. Returning from the service in 1970, he worked for his alma mater in the public safety division. Beginning as a patrolman, he had been promoted to assistant chief of that department before he left this summer to come to Mars Hill.

Faires is well acquainted with education and colleges, since his father is an Elementary Education professor. According to Dean Don Gehring, Faires was hired to begin a comprehensive program of police and general security, fire safety, property protection, accident prevention, campus first aid training, lighting survey programs, and civil defense and disaster programs.

Right now, according to Faires, the most important aspect of the overall program is security. "There are more people reporting crimes now than have reported previously. Most of the crimes have been thefts, which isn't unusual. Money, phonograph records, we even had one incident of a student having his clothes stolen. Although they were returned, I don't think it would have been too difficult to track the thief as the victim was 6'5".

It is an unusual fact that much of the stolen material has been returned, something that hasn't happened before. "Even money," notes Faires, "A student had \$60 stolen last Thursday, and Tuesday it was returned, all of it, anonymously." Faires notes that if stolen items are returned in the same condition as when they were taken and the victim doesn't push for an arrest, the safety and security division won't push for an arrest either.

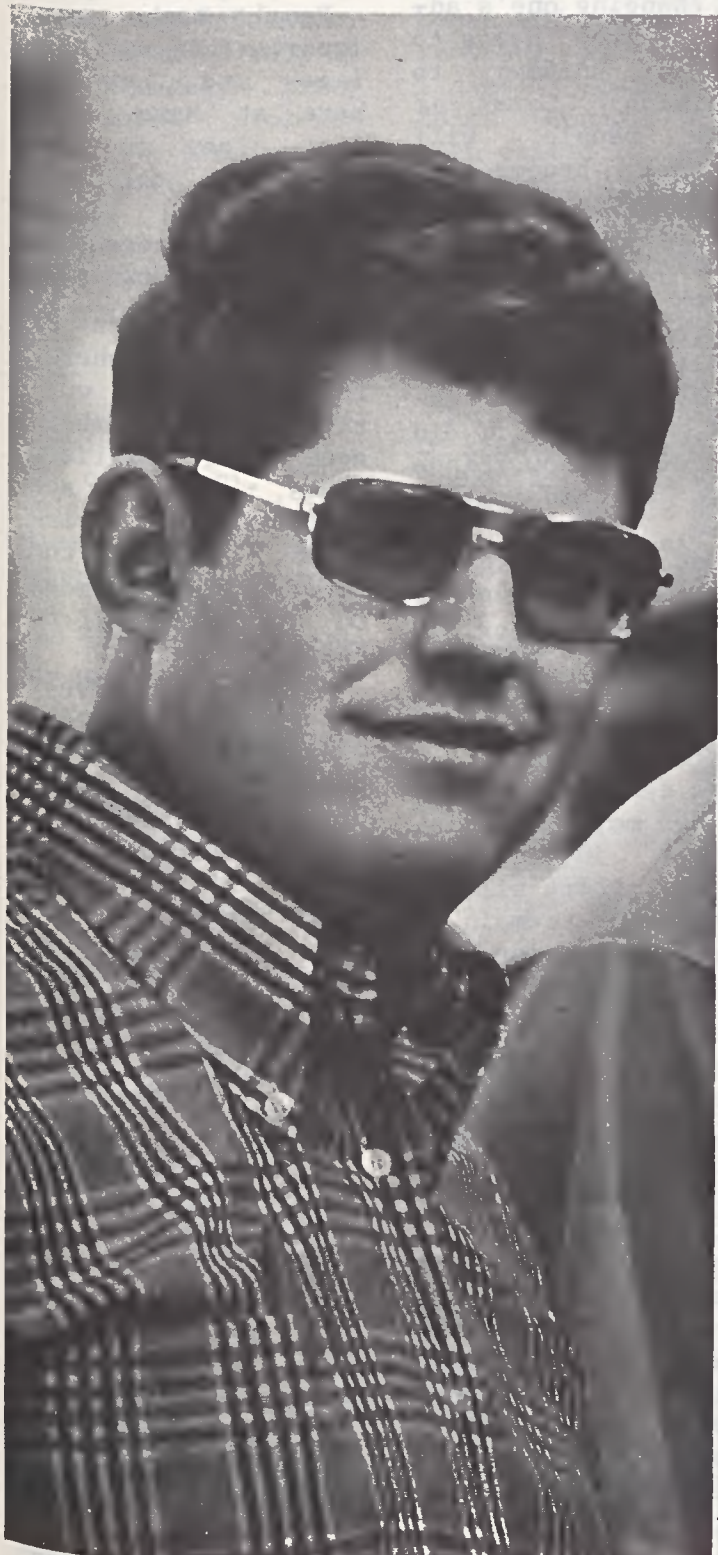
"Many people just succumb to temptation," Faires explains, "There is a mighty temptation present when a person sees \$60 or even \$100 in some cases just lying on a dresser with no one around. Later, they think better of it and return it. We feel that something like this is a learning process, and if the goods or money are returned, then the person that took it has learned that stealing is not right."

Some of the thefts have had a humorous nature about them, but not necessarily to the victim. Such as the student with a record collection numbering nearly 100, who had four stolen, "It's obvious that the guy just took the four that he liked extremely well," commented Faires. Or the student that left four \$1.00 bills on his dresser, went out of the room and had \$3.00 stolen.

But these events point out one thing to Faires, "There are no professional thieves at Mars Hill." If there were, for example, a pro would have taken all of the student's nearly 100 records or all of the \$4.00, "and anything else that he could resell elsewhere."

On general campus security, co-ed's mothers can rest easy. There has been only one attempted break-in in a women's residence hall and Faires concluded that the person was after a stereo sitting in a ground floor window rather than trying to get in the room. However, Faires reports, the girls were a little anxious after the incident, so to provide protection and an alarm system, the safety and security division bought each girl a whistle. "It's one of the most effective deterrents I know," he commented. "A loud noise at night is bound to attract a lot of attention which is what a burglar doesn't want."

Since he's been here, Faires has observed that "The Mars Hill students really take care of each other. It's something you don't see at other schools." He also commented on the character of the student body, saying that Mars Hill students "are generally better than those at any other school I've been acquainted with." He pointed to things such as the low crime rate, general lack of drugs on campus, and the usually good relationship that exists between people on campus as evidence to back up his statement.



It should be pointed out that while Faires is a deputized member of the Madison County Sheriff's Department as well as a deputy of the Mars Hill city police, "I am a member and officer of Mars Hill College first and these other things second." Faires has been pleased with the response he has received from the students, and flatly states "We are here to serve the students." He encourages students to come to him or one of his staff with any problem, "if it's out of my field, then I can find someone who can help."

Faires' office location is currently a little ambiguous, but he will soon be located in what used to be the dressing room behind the amphitheatre. "There's a lot of props and scenery in there now," he noted, "but it is well situated with a parking lot nearby and easy access to all parts of the campus. It's surprisingly well equipped as for space, water supply, toilets, and things like that." Although it doesn't have a formal name yet, Faires and his staff refer to it as "the Bunker," because "that's what it looks like."

If a student should have to get in touch with Faires or any of the security staff, particularly at night, he can call the infirmary, "there is a nurse on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week and there is a radio located there so we always have communication with the nurse on duty."

Faires complimented his staff, saying that they are some of the finest men he has ever worked with. "I know that some of the students have tended to look down on some of them, but they have integrity and character and they truly care about the students here. One of the staff members has a son in college and he told me that he treats the students here the same way he wants his son treated."

Faires noted some things students could do to prevent losing their belongings through theft. "Becoming security conscious is the most important thing. Use a magic marker to put names on phonograph dust covers and again on the label. Stereos have serial numbers, so make sure that a record is kept of all items that have serial numbers. We have an electric marking device that students can use to put their name or social security number on metal or plastic item. Don't carry large sums of money, keep just enough cash around to meet your needs until the bank opens. If you do need to carry a large amount of money, copy the serial numbers off the bills. Within a short time, we will have a room inventory program available, where we can inventory a student's room, at his request, and then if it's ever burgled, we can tell exactly what's missing."

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