For four years, female employees of a Tampa firm didn't know a top executive had secretly videotaped them in the restroom


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Tampa Bay Times

Susan Taylor Martin, Times Senior Correspondent

TAMPA — Jeremy Lenkowski worked on computers for MaintenX International, and on a November morning in 2010 he wanted a colleague's advice on what to do about some disturbing videos he had found.

Lenkowski asked Gregory Keeler, the company's controller, to meet him in the parking lot of a McDonald's on N Armenia Avenue. Lenkowski pulled out a laptop, set it on the trunk of his car and inserted a memory stick.

Shocked, Keeler watched as the screen lit up with images of female MaintenX employees including his own assistant. They "were going to the bathroom and doing other things," he later recalled. "I couldn't watch the whole thing and told him to turn it off."

Keeler was stunned, too, when Lenkowski told him where he had found the videos — in a bag belonging to the company's chief financial officer, James Patrick Stanton Jr.

Four years later — still working for MaintenX — Stanton would be arrested on more than 100 felony counts of video voyeurism based on images that showed unsuspecting women using the toilet, changing clothes and showering naked. At the time of his arrest, a company vice president said that "no one on our executive team had any knowledge of this activity."

That was not correct.

Within days after Lenkowski found the videos, MaintenX president Patrick O'Hara learned of the allegations, he later acknowledged. He was upset enough that he confronted Stanton — who neither admitted nor denied the tapings — and told him to get counseling. He had the bathrooms checked for hidden cameras.

Other than that, little happened. O'Hara didn't call police or request a more thorough investigation. He didn't notify the employees whose privacy had been violated. He didn't
even ask if the images included his own wife and step daughter, both of whom worked for MaintenX.

Stanton, a married lawyer, was not demoted or disciplined. He continued to work around women he was accused of taping. And because too much time had elapsed between the 2010 tapings and Stanton's 2014 arrest, the charges were dropped and the records were sealed from public view.

The search warrant, the arrest affidavit, the booking information — all have disappeared as if there never had been a case against him.

Stanton, 42, declined to comment for this article and O'Hara did not return calls. But through depositions and lawsuits it is possible to piece together the story — one with allegations that a judge called "outrageous" and "very yucky."

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Headquartered in a century-old former cigar factory in West Tampa, MaintenX bills itself as "one of the largest national facility maintenance and repair companies in the U.S." With its own employees and a huge network of subcontractors, it handles electrical, plumbing and other maintenance work for Fortune 500 companies including Home Depot, CVS and Best Buy.

Around 2003, a few years out of the University of Florida law school, Stanton joined MaintenX as chief financial officer. Among the employees reporting to him was Lenkowski, who worked in information technology.

In late 2010, Lenkowski was asked to repair Stanton's Dell laptop computer. Needing to transfer a data file, he used a memory stick he found with the laptop. When he opened it to see if there was enough storage to hold the file, images of female employees showering and using the toilet suddenly appeared.

"The videos were taken from different angles, at different times and dates," Lenkowski said in a lawsuit he filed against Stanton and Maintainex in 2014. "The restrooms and shower at the MatinenX offices were being monitored and recorded digitally. The videos . . . had been culled, renamed, sorted and intentionally saved."

Stunned and not knowing what do, Lenkowski showed the videos to Keeler. After briefly viewing them, Keeler went to work and "sat in disbelief," as he later described it. He too, was unsure how to proceed so he called his mother, who advised him to let the company owners decide.

Keeler took the matter to O'Hara, MaintenX's president and founder, who said he wanted "a week or two to think about it." O'Hara then invited Keeler, Lenkowski and the company's vice president, Juan Carlos Gonzalez, to lunch at a Tampa restaurant.

Accounts of that meeting differ.

In his lawsuit, Lenkowski said he was urged not to notify police because "it would hurt the women shown in the video, their families, the company . . . and the stability of his own employment."
In a deposition, O'Hara said he told Lenkowski and Keeler that "if they (had) something that's a police matter, they should go to police."

Regardless of what was said, no one called the police. Instead, O'Hara met with Stanton about the allegations against him.

"And he didn't ever — he didn't deny it, he didn't admit it," O'Hara said in a deposition. "I just told him if any of this s--- is going on, that, you know, that's not something that can be tolerated."

O'Hara also told Stanton that if he "was doing anything like that, he needs to go get some mental help." Stanton replied that he had been counseled by his priest.

"And that was good enough for you?" O'Hara was asked in his deposition.

"Yes," he said.

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MaintenX did not discipline or demote Stanton. In his lawsuit, Lenkowski said the CFO kept working around the women in the videos, "sharing office space and restroom facilities with them, flirting with them and giving them gifts." The stress got to be too much for Lenkowski — he suffered a breakdown and in 2013 quit his job.

After Lenkowski left, employees began receiving letters from a Tampa law firm with the title: Surveillance Cameras with Audio in the Female Restroom and Shower at MaintenX International.

O'Hara called a meeting of employees.

"He gathered everyone around and said, 'You know, this isn't something that's going on right now,’” Olivia Gatliff, O'Hara's stepdaughter and the company's human relations director, testified in a court hearing. According to Gatliff, O'Hara went on to say: "We've obviously checked the bathrooms. There's nothing going on and it's most likely coming from an unhappy ex-employee.' And that anyone that received these (letters) should turn them into human resources."

O'Hara didn't mention Stanton's name nor let on that any employees had been taped, Gatliff said.

In February 2014, an attorney representing Lenkowski gave Tampa police a disk with 142 videos. She explained that her client was afraid to hand them over himself because he feared he had broken the law by not contacting authorities sooner.

Most of the videos showed female MaintenX employees completely nude, partially nude or dressed. But in two videos, a man could be seen entering a restroom, quickly removing a camera, putting it in a bag and, moments later, removing electronic wires from the same bag. The man was Stanton.

Soon after police received the disk, a detective met with a woman who appeared in 20 of the images.
"She was devastated when she watched the videos," the detective wrote in a search warrant that has since been sealed. "She cried and displayed anger for whoever was responsible for this recording without her permission."

On March 21, 2014, police and FDLE agents raided MaintenX headquarters on N Howard Avenue and arrested Stanton on 123 counts of video voyeurism. O'Hara was in Colorado so Gatliff, his step-daughter, said police made her watch the videos to try to identify the women.

"They were graphic images," she later testified.

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Although efforts to pass a federal law against video voyeurism have been unsuccessful, it is illegal in several states. Florida law defines it as a felony in which a person who, "for his own amusement, entertainment or sexual arousal," records those in the act of changing or exposing their body when they have "a reasonable expectation of privacy." The maximum punishment is five years in prison.

In 2011, two young Bulgarian women found cameras in their Tampa apartment and claimed they were being spied on. The Hillsborough County Sheriff's office declined to file charges because the cameras weren't hooked up and there was no recording equipment.

The most notorious case of video voyeurism involved then-ESPN sportscaster Erin Andrews. In 2009, she was videotaped naked in her hotel room by a man who posted the images online where they were viewed by millions. He went to prison, and in March a jury awarded Andrews $55-million in her civil case against him and the Nashville Marriott.

Less than a month after Stanton's 2014 arrest — which drew little publicity — prosecutors formally charged him with six counts of voyeurism, a first-degree misdemeanor. Later, the charges were dismissed altogether because the one-year statute of limitations on such misdemeanors had elapsed.

Lenkowski's lawyers asserted in depositions that MaintenX's failure to notify police of the videos when they were found let Stanton avoid prosecution.

In addition to Lenkowski, five women — identified only as Jane Does 1,2,3,4 and 5 — sued Stanton, O'Hara, Gonzalez, MaintenX and the company that owns the building. The women allege that they have suffered "severe mental anguish" and other problems because of Stanton's taping and the company's failure to do anything about it.

"Thank God we don't see these cases every day," Hillsborough Circuit Judge Paul L. Huey commented at one hearing last year. "It's a tough case."

Records show that confidential settlements were reached last summer in all cases except for the women's suit against the building owner.

"I was happy for it to be over, I was happy it finally brought some justice," Lenkowski, who is working as an infrastructure engineer for another company, said in a recent interview.

His former boss, Stanton, left MaintenX the day of his arrest because of what company officials called "an accumulation of things," not just the criminal charges.
A licensed attorney since 1999, Stanton is the subject of a recent Florida Bar complaint initiated by one of Lenkowski's attorneys. By recording the women without their consent, the complaint says, Stanton violated Bar rules that prohibit lawyers from engaging in conduct involving "dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation" or that "reflect adversely on the lawyer's honest, trustworthiness or fitness as a lawyer in other respects."

A referee has been appointed to hear facts in the case and recommend a punishment, if any.

In the meantime, the Bar's website shows Stanton as being in "good standing" with no disciplinary action against him. He currently practices in the Tampa Bay area and handles various types of cases including expungements, the sealing of criminal records, according to a profile on a legal website.

As part of the lawsuits against him, Stanton was deposed last year but didn't answer a single question except to give his name. Instead, he invoked his constitutional right to remain silent — 162 times.

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Timeline

2003: Lawyer James Patrick Stanton Jr. joins MaintenX International as chief financial officer.

2010: MaintenX employee Jeremy Lenkowski finds images of female co-workers that Stanton secretly taped in the company restroom.

2010: Matinex President Patrick O'Hara tells Stanton he needs "mental help" but doesn't fire or demote him or call police.

2013: Lenkowski quits his job and a Tampa law firm sends letters to MaintenX employees about cameras in the restroom. O'Hara tells employees nothing is going on, doesn't mention Stanton.

February 2014: Lenkowski's lawyer gives Tampa police a disk with videos of women in the MaintenX restroom and Stanton removing a camera.

March 21, 2014: Stanton is arrested on 123 felony counts of video voyeurism, leaves his MaintenX job because of "an accumulation of things"

March 28, 2014: Lenkowski sues Stanton and MaintenX. His suit is later consolidated with those of five "Jane Does" that Stanton taped.

April 2014: Prosecutors formally charge Stanton with six counts of voyeurism, a misdemeanor.

August 2014: The charges against Stanton are dismissed because the statute of limitations has expired; court records are sealed from public view.
Summer 2016: All lawsuits are confidentially settled except for the Jane Doe cases against the owner of MaintenX's headquarters building.

For four years, female employees of a Tampa firm didn't know a top executive had secretly videotaped them in the restroom 12/08/16 [Last modified: Thursday, December 8, 2016 4:22pm]

Tampa attorney accused of secretly videotaping women offers to give up law license


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Tampa Bay Times

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ST. PETERSBURG — Attorney James Patrick Stanton Jr., accused of secretly videotaping nude and partially dressed female employees at a Tampa company, has offered to voluntarily give up his law license in exchange for the Florida Bar dropping misconduct charges against him.

The announcement came this morning as Stanton, former corporate counsel for MaintenX International, appeared in a St. Petersburg courtroom for what would have been the start of a two-day hearing in the Bar's case against him.

Pinellas Circuit Judge Thomas M. Ramsberger, acting as referee, tentatively postponed the hearing until June 27 to give the Bar time to consider Stanton's request for a so-called disciplinary revocation. That is tantamount to a five-year disbarment with leave to apply for readmission to the Bar. Stanton, however, would have to retake the Bar exam and meet other conditions.

The final decision rests with the Florida Supreme Court. If the justices approve, the Bar case would be moot and no hearing would be held. If they don't approve, Stanton, who has been in private practice since leaving MaitenX in 2014, potentially could face permanent disbarment.

The high court appointed Ramsberger to take testimony and consider other evidence, including videos, in the Bar's case against Stanton.
PREVIOUS COVERAGE: For four years, female employees of a Tampa firm didn't know a top executive had secretly videotaped them in the restroom.

Among the witnesses that had been expected to testify was another former MaintenX employee, Jeremy Lenkowski, who was repairing Stanton's laptop in 2010 when he found videos of women showering, using the toilet and changing clothes in company restrooms and showers. In a lawsuit he later filed, Lenkowski said he told top MaintenX executives about the videotapes but said nothing was done except to remove the cameras and instruct Stanton to get counseling.

After leaving the company in 2014, Lenkowski turned the videos over to Tampa police, who arrested Stanton on 123 felony counts of video voyeurism. Prosecutors reduced the charges to misdemeanors, and a judge dismissed them altogether after Stanton's lawyers argued that the statute of limitations had expired.

PREVIOUS COVERAGE: Police say Tampa executive filmed women using toilets and showering at his company (w/video)

Although he escaped prosecution, the Bar charged Stanton with violating several Bar rules including one that says "a lawyer shall not commit a criminal act that reflects adversely on the lawyer's honesty, trustworthiness or fitness as a lawyer in other respects."

Before Monday's hearing, Ramsberger issued a confidentiality order that would ban the public, including journalists, from being in the courtroom when anything is said or shown that could identify the victims of Stanton's alleged videotaping. Attorneys for Stanton and the five "Jane Does" who have pending civil suits against him agreed to the order.

However, in a motion seeking to intervene in the Bar case, the Tampa Bay Times is challenging Ramsberger's order on the grounds it is overly broad and constitutes prior restraint on speech and publication in a matter of public interest.

"Agreement of the parties is not a cogent reasons for excluding the media and public from judicial proceedings," according to the motion filed by attorney Alison Steele, representing the Times. "Wrenching, painful, embarrassing matters come before the courts every day, yet courtroom closures do not occur."

The Times, like most other media organizations, has a policy of not identifying victims of sexual assault or other sex-related crimes.

The judge said he would consider the Times motion only if the Bar case against Stanton proceeds.

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Attorney accused of secretly videotaping women agrees to permanent disbarment


1/16/2018

Tampa Bay Times

Susan Taylor Martin, Times Senior Correspondent

ST. PETERSBURG — Attorney James Patrick Stanton, accused of secretly videotaping nude and partially clothed female employees of a Tampa company, has agreed to never practice law again in Florida.

Before a brief hearing today, Stanton signed a consent to disbarment. That means he would be permanently disbarred without admitting to any of the allegations or violations of Florida Bar rules.

The consent agreement, which also was signed by two Bar attorneys, still must approved by the Florida Supreme Court.

"I wish you the best of luck going forward," Pinellas Circuit Judge Thomas Ramsberger told Stanton. The 43-year-old attorney, who has been practicing since 1999, later declined to comment on his plans.

Ramsberger, serving as the referee in the Bar's case against Stanton, had set aside several days for a hearing into the allegations that Stanton videotaped women showering, using the toilet and changing clothes in restrooms at MaintenX International, a facility maintenance company where Stanton worked as corporate counsel.

Among those expected to testify at the hearing was former MaintenX employee Jeremy Lenkowski, who was repairing Stanton's laptop in 2010 when found the videos. In a lawsuit he later filed, Lenkowski said he told top MaintenX executives about the videotapes but said nothing was done by the company except to remove the cameras and instruct Stanton to get counseling.

After leaving the company in 2014, Lenkowski turned the videos over to Tampa police, who arrested Stanton on 123 felony counts of video voyeurism. Prosecutors reduced the charges to misdemeanors, and a judge dismissed them altogether after Stanton’s lawyers argued that the statute of limitations had expired.

Although he escaped prosecution, the Bar charged Stanton with violating several rules of professional conduct. He petitioned the Supreme Court for a disciplinary revocation, which would have resulted in disbarment but allowed him to apply for readmission to the Bar. However, the court denied the petition after the Bar said Stanton had failed to state, as required, all past and pending investigations and proceedings against him.
In 2014, five "Janes Does" sued Stanton, MaintenX and other defendants in Hillsborough County Circuit Court. A Tampa attorney representing the women, Steven Parker, said today that the claims against Stanton had been settled confidentially but that neither he nor the women could comment.

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