

Interviewee: June Hampe

Interviewer: David P. Cline

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START OF DISC 1, TRACK 1

DC: This is David Cline in Louisville, Kentucky. It's August the second. If you could just introduce yourself officially for the microphone, I promise this will go away within minutes and it will just magically disappear.

JH: My name is June Hampe. My title in Jefferson County Public Schools is Specialist One, Student Assignment Health and Safety. From a practical point of view, I coordinate the parent assistance effort in student assignment, which is the provision of information to parents and assistance in placing their children in schools.

DC: Okay. I'll start with just some background information on you and then we'll build into this conversation. If you could just tell me a little about your own personal background, so where you were born and where you were educated.

JH: Well like a lot of Louisvillians, I'm a transplant and have stayed here by choice. I am originally from a suburb of Baltimore, Maryland. That's where I met my husband when he went to graduate school at Florida State. I went along as student wife and worked and had our first child while he was in graduate school. We came here for a year for him to intern in psychology and sprouted roots and stayed, raised three children here. I became extremely active in the school system, first as a parent volunteer and then just like

a full-time volunteer when 1975 came about. My children were quite young and I had just started to become active in the local PTA.

DC: So what grades were they in and what schools around that period?

JH: At the time of 1975, I had an entering seventh grader, fourth grader, and second grader. At that time, the mandatory busing was based upon an alphabet plan in which one was bused by the letters of one's last name. As circumstances would have it, two of our three children were bused that first year. My husband and I decided that we believed in the general goals, if not the mechanism of what was going on, and we would try to support it. Our phrase was we will go wherever our children go. Well since he was working full-time with the university and getting a private practice started in psychology as well, "we" was me, with his approval and support. So our children were in three different schools that year, one in the home school and two bused, one in middle school and one in elementary. So I divided my time among the three schools and the household and assisting my husband's practice with his secretarial work. So it was a phenomenally busy time.

DC: Right. Had you originally chosen your neighborhood based on the schools in the neighborhood?

JH: Not really, because when we were house hunting, we had a toddler and a baby on the way and we weren't going to stay more than a year or two. So we really were not thinking about that sort of thing. As it turned out, we have been pleased right down the line with the schools in the neighborhoods and then under the busing plan, we felt very fortunate with the schools that we also were bused to, so much so that we took additional years of busing for our younger two children. See at that time, you were bused, if your name was H-Hampe, you were bused in grades two and seven. So for a youngster that meant fifth grade finishing your elementary, sixth grade in a middle school, seventh grade

a busing year, eighth year back to that middle school, and ninth grade on to high school. So for five straight years, you were in a different school every year because of the way it fell out. We decided that that was just not what we wanted to do. So having had a good experience with our oldest at Meyzeek Middle School in his year of busing, we said let's take additional years for the younger two and give them continuity coming through. So our daughter was at Meyzeek for seventh and eighth and our youngest was there for six, seven, and eight. We felt very comfortable there. I was very active in the PTA and knew a lot of the staff, thought the principal was a fine fellow. In fact, I still stay in touch with him by Christmas card and this has been thirty years. We found, and lots of families did things that they found worked for them, that took the plan and massaged it or adjusted it a little bit and made it work. But we were very pleased with it.

DC: Right. What was the neighborhood where your house is?

JH: We live in the Plantation Subdivision. At that time it was in Wilder Elementary's area. We say that our neighborhood is on the San Andreas Fault because every time the earth shakes a little, we're in a different area. We just happen to be equidistant from three elementary schools. As population enrollment totals has shifted, our subdivision has been changed. So right now it's not, but at that time it was Wilder Elementary.

DC: Right. Just because I'm an outsider, of course, to this area, if you could just sort of tell me, Meyzeek was where your kids were being bused to, and where is that, in what kind of neighborhood is that.

JH: Okay, the way the busing plan worked at that time, there was a school called the head of a cluster and several middle schools exchanged students with that school. The head of the cluster would be in a neighborhood that was primarily black residential. The

other members of the cluster would be in neighborhoods that were primarily white. So in a given year, depending on the letter of your last name, you went to Meyzeek. Meyzeek youngsters came out into the suburban schools. Meyzeek is at 828 South Jackson Street, which is in a historically black neighborhood here in Louisville on the east side of downtown off Broadway, known by the inglorious name of Smoke Town, having to do with early industry in that area or early products in that area. But Meyzeek—

DC: Oh I just assumed that that was a racial epithet.

JH: Oh no.

DC: Because I've heard Shadow Town in other areas. So it's not—

JH: Louisville is funny about things like that. Louisville is made up of a crazy quilt of small neighborhoods and very, very intensely proud of these mini-communities. They have some extremely colorful names and the names go back in history to who first settled there, what might have been produced there, someone who was a leader who lived there, things like that. For example the suburb of St. Matthews was named after a church that was there. We have an elementary, St. Matthews. It sounds like a parochial school but it's not because that's the neighborhood. So Smoke Town is not a racial derogatory term. It's just the name of that part of the community, probably had more to do with smoked meats.

DC: Oh okay.

JH: But I'm not sure, I'm really not sure. There's German Town. There's just all kinds of areas. So I got off the track. That's where Meyzeek is, at a considerable distance from our home, although not a very great distance at all from where their father was working at the university at the med center. But what was good about Meyzeek was the people who came, came with such a positive attitude that immediately kids started taking extra years to stay, an extremely strong advanced program—that's our academically gifted

program—and then because of the extremely strong teaching there, particularly in math and science, some years later that's where the district put its first math-science magnet at the middle school level. But that was based on a faculty strength that was there and kind of grew itself.

DC: What about facilities there? Were they up to snuff when you first reviewed it?

JH: Well when we first looked at it, which was one of the best things, immediately prior, right at '75 when all this happened, the city and county systems merged and one of the things that the now merged administration did was invited parents to visit the new schools and they arranged buses to do that, which went a long, long way to keeping people stable and comfortable and able to figure this out. Because I walked the halls with many, many other parents and said oh, you know this is fine. It's not as shiny new as the suburban school because it's an older building. Meyzeek's a funny building. It's an amalgam of two or three other buildings. It goes out in several directions and is laid out about as strangely as any building I've ever seen. But it was clean and over the years, it's been repainted and this and that and renovations and things have been done to it, that this school district is very good about keeping its physical facilities in good shape. We don't have any such thing as a dilapidated inner-city school. One of the reasons that we don't is because of this busing plan, because everybody is in seeing everything. There aren't any schools that are hidden away in a ghetto or hidden away in a suburban enclave and nobody else sees them. Everybody engages in exchange. That way everybody sees everything. So no school better be in any kind of great difficulty, and no school had better have all sorts of things that other schools don't have because there will be political you-know-what to pay.

DC: Right.

JH: But yes Meyzeek, the neighborhood as I have told many, many people and continue to tell people is certainly not in the garden spot of the world, but nobody's asking you to walk the neighborhood. They're asking you to have their child there and the program is definitely worth the trip. And that's been the philosophy behind the magnets in this district. If you look at where they are, they're nearly all within the Waterson, which is the inner ring around the city. The whole notion is to draw people and so the deseg plan does the deseg piece, but it also is a great benefit in that it keeps the inner-city schools revitalized or vitalized and people coming in. In fact, this school district through the 90s opened a new building, one or more new buildings, every year and they were all replacements. So we have not let out inner-city schools go to ruin. We have either renovated extensively or in the case of quite a number of them, replaced them on a nearby site.

DC: So nothing has closed? The district has not—

JH: Now we did close, in '75 a number of inner-city schools were closed as part of the merger and the deseg plan and then this organizing of the cluster notion. Yes, a number were closed but since then, we've closed very few. You close schools with no great relish because people pop up who wouldn't even know how to find the building otherwise to tell you not to close them. (laughter)

DC: Right. Yeah I imagine people have a lot of stake in—

JH: Or they think they do. But we have replaced a great number of them with new buildings and then we sell off the old building as best we're able. A few of them we have used for administrative purposes but most of them we've sold to interests that then either converted them to apartments or office condos or razed the building and built on it, or whatever. But back to your question, Meyzeek was by our standards lacking in some

instructional materials and things like that we were used to in the county schools, and library materials and things like that. But you know, we worked it all out. People got what they needed.

DC: How did you do that? Were you able as parents to bring—

JH: Well as parents we met with the principal. He was wonderful. He didn't try to sugarcoat: "Oh I have everything, just look there." He knew he didn't have some of the materials that the advanced program for example was used to, or that we were used to. He knew he just flat-out didn't have enough desks yet. More kids had shown up than the desks had been moved in. So I recall going to the school board to speak to a school board meeting, which is a process that's part of our general process, and knees knocking because I had never done anything like this before. I stood up there at the mike under the klieg lights and told them who I was and that I was there with the knowledge and support of the principal and that our parents were asking them please couldn't we get desks and other things that he needed and we knew that they knew he needed, but couldn't it be speeded up in some way. They were most kind and assured us of course that that would happen. Well it did. It just took awhile but it did happen. But so yeah, this district is good about such stuff. You'll hear people saying, oh well you know, some schools they have splinters in the furniture and no chalk and that is just hooey. (laughter) It is just not true. Yeah I think we did a nice job. The parents were extremely supportive of the PTA. We did well with volunteers and donations and things like that. Now it was a core.

DC: Now had there been a very active PTA at Meyzeek before busing?

JH: Not that I'm aware of, uh uh. Now that isn't to say that neighborhood parents hadn't come over and helped out or something, but PTA as a structure had not been.

DC: So was it mostly white parents then or was it interracial?

JH: It was both, but it was largely white-dominated. That brought up another interesting feature about Meyzeek. Meyzeek was not the only school like this but it was one of very, very few, in that there was an inner-city white population in that Smoke Town area as well. So we had inner-city white, suburban white, and inner-city black.

DC: And the inner-city white was working class?

JH: It varied.

DC: Or lower?

JH: For the most part, blue-collar if working at all and not very well-educated, but very proud, and very resentful of the fact that here came these hoity-toity whites and who did they think they were. We were all there because the fates had put us there. We weren't there because we decided this was a wonderful thing to come do. So there was an elaborate dance that occurred among the political factions in trying to get this worked out. Their position in part was well how come the blacks get to go out to heaven in suburbia and we can't? We have to stay here and not only do we have to stay here but we have to tolerate all of you coming into our school, which was interesting. I think we did a nice job on the whole, everybody involved, particularly the administration of the school, in helping people to work it out. We all certainly did not become bosom buddies but there was not like fighting in the halls or any of that kind of stuff. It worked out.

DC: Did the kids sort of separate themselves into cliques?

JH: Yeah they did, mostly from the business of just being totally strange and new, but one of the really neat things and the thing that my kids liked, particularly my oldest because he was there the first year, was nobody knew anybody. If you were coming from, I don't remember now but it was a great number of suburban schools that fed into Meyzeek, well if you would have been at this middle school and that guy was from another middle

school and there you were sitting side by side at Meyzeek, which neither one of you knew how to find the cafeteria, then somehow you made friends and alliances on the bus, in the school. There were no set anythings. You weren't breaking any social groups. That was great and most of the suburban kids liked that. As one mother said, I like this except that for slumber parties now I'm all over the county, because people made friends all over. But yes, kids did distance themselves from kids who were unfamiliar in every way to them. But I remember the lament of my oldest was mom, I went into this hoping that I would meet some black boys and become friends with them and it's really not happening.

DC: And why was that?

JH: Well he was in the advanced program and there were very few black students in the advanced program, which is something that we have worked on lo these thirty years and have made some definite progress in getting that worked out. It's not that there aren't bright black children. It's just that parents often say, I don't want my child to be a token black in that white program. Well from an administrative point of view, how do you break that down if somebody won't do it? We can only achieve critical mass if we'll get somebodies to help us do it. So we work very hard on that and if you want to find out about that, you interview Bernadette Hamilton. She can tell you how we're working on that with some degree of success.

DC: It interesting because a number of the former students that I've interviewed were in these advanced programs and so I'm getting this very particular view.

JH: Right. Now my other two were in and out of the program because they were probably not good candidates to the program as the oldest one was. But yeah I think they liked the business of meeting new people and just kind of being in a different spot and working that out. And for some people that's just so terrifying they can't face it.

DC: So did your two younger have more chances to meet African-Americans?

JH: Somewhat more. Of course on the bus in the morning, which was a lengthy bus ride, they were with other white suburban kids. But no, not that many with African-American kids. Now then what happened later was back in the suburban schools, they had more opportunity for mixing because there were black youngsters from the city who were out in quote, my school and there was more mixing there. I think they, particularly in high school, knew other kids because in high school you take all kinds of courses and everything isn't—my youngest was not in advanced and he had almost anybody in a history class or a PE class or whatever. My daughter was in the band so there were all kinds of kids in the band. So yeah they met kids from all over and they're extremely proud to this day of the fact that they were in a diverse environment and are very scornful of people who want to separate themselves, whether they're black people, white people, Jewish people, whoever they are. Their whole attitude is who cares?

DC: So they see some direct benefits from this experience?

JH: Oh absolutely, absolutely. Now I would like to hope we have raised them that way, but our neighborhood is racially integrated and that's another benefit of the desegregation plan because black families said now wait a minute, wait a minute. Why is my child being bused ten, eleven years out of twelve to the suburbs? If I move to the suburbs, he can go to the local school and they did. So we had some families that moved into our neighborhood with kids about the same ages as my younger two, with whom my kids became friends and in fact are still friends now that they're adults.

DC: Was that a widespread phenomenon?

JH: It was what I would call a sprinkled phenomenon. It happened enough to talk about but not to the extent that anyone interested in social change would have been out

cheering in the streets about, but it did happen. Our neighborhood was affordable enough that it happened, where some other neighborhoods it didn't happen. I have never seen anybody do anything overtly ugly to anyone who's in the neighborhood. Some of those families are still there. As I often say to newcomers to this community because I deal a lot with them, I'd love to tell you this community is now racially integrated in terms of housing; it isn't but it's a whole lot better than it was. We have numerous neighborhoods now that integrated and then we have our sprinkles. But we still have, the west end is still entirely black or just about entirely black and east-east is almost entirely white, but in between there's a lot of mix, which I see as good for everybody. It's the real world, thank you. I think one of the reasons that our oldest was able to move to New York City and thrive there, he went there to go to college and he has just stayed, you can't find a bigger mix than you'll find there.

DC: Yeah I was just there for a week.

JH: His whole attitude was gee, isn't this fun.

DC: This experience, it's really incredible.

JH: So I'm sure I got off the track there.

DC: Just going back to that time, you're a parent getting very involved in several different schools and so tell me where that leads.

JH: Well as I often say to parents who say, oh and I want to be active in my child's PTA, I say that's wonderful, we need you, and I'll talk about that and I'll say, now watch that you don't get too active or you'll end up in this chair, because that's how it happened. I was a full-time really volunteer, whether it was at this school or that school. Well when you start doing things like that and your head is a little bit above the horizon, then people begin to take notice of you. So I was extremely fortunate to then get invited to do some

taskforce kinds of things with the administration of the system, first with the PTA's district-wide organization a little bit and then onto some district kinds of committees, parent committees, taskforces, and things of that nature. It was a lot of work; it was grinding work, but I feel very, very fortunate to be on the citizen committee that redesigned the deseg plan in 1984 that resulted in the revision, what's commonly referred to as 4-4-84, the April 4, 1984 revision of the deseg plan and I was on that citizen committee that shaped that plan. You ever want to smell a political process, that was--.

(whistles)

DC: So tell me more about that. It was made up of parents and administrators—

JH: What it was made up of, our school board is composed of seven elected board members. It's typical in Kentucky to have five. Because this is the most populous county, we have some changes in our parameters for lots of things but in that case, we have a seven-member board. Each board member named two people from the portion of the county that they served and these were parents or people like that, and that's how I was put on. Then there were some people representing organizations like the NAACP and the Urban League and League of Women Voters and things like that, who had representation on there, some religious groups. Then there was a lot of staff support. They weren't actually the taskforce but they were all background and all that. So I served on that and they told us we would meet two or three times; we might have a weekend retreat but that would be all that would be asked of us. Well horse feathers! We wound up meeting night after night after night, and this went on for weeks and months. It was chaired by the now deceased Ray Nicestrand, who at that time, I guess he was head of the College of Education, which was the School of Education then in the U. of L. He chaired it. So there

were a lot of well-known, recognized people in the community, black and white, and then there were some folk that were just kind of interested parents on it as well.

What we did was examine the deseg plan as it had been approved by Judge Gordon in '75, look at our shifting needs and try to say there has to be a better way to do this, how will we do it? One of the things that we were most interested in looking at was the situation that I described where you had discontinuity from the bus years. Wouldn't there be a way to smooth that out? Wouldn't there be a way to do that for black and white students? What could you do about all that? So we wound up then keeping the basic concept but rearranging the mechanism. That was a major step toward stanching the white flight we were still having and some black flight too, either out of county, out of state, because we're right across the river from out of state, or into private deseg academies or something like that. That began to turn the tide. That really began to help a whole lot and created a lot more stability. So what you think of the mechanisms in place, who knows, but they certainly were effective.

I have to say that I think one of the, in my position now, I look at why has our deseg plan worked and no place else that we can point to in the country, who had a sizeable district, has it worked. We went to court to keep it. So many other places, it's the district going to court to get rid of it: we don't have to do this anymore. Well we went to say we have to continue to do this. Why does it work here and it hasn't worked other places? I think there are several factors but one factor is commitment on the part of administration to make it work. Are all of our administrators gods? For heaven's sake no. Have they been for thirty years? For Pete's sake no. But the school board and the upper administration has remained true to the notion that the Judge said we have to. That's what's carried it through, tremendous respect for the court ruling. What we have done

every time we've adjusted the plan, '84, '91, 2001, well '84, '91, '96, 2001, it's always been to what we hope is to make it easier for everybody to live with, keep the same goals, and smooth off the rough stuff, and try to keep it easier. Now is it hard to administer? You'd better believe it.

DC: These are all the slips?

JH: These are people who want to talk to me about where their child needs to be or can't be or something like that. But by and large, it works very well most of the time for most people. I think that's it's been a tremendous commitment on the part of the school district. The religious community has been really fairly supportive. The business community as a whole has been supportive. I think the university's been supportive. We don't have major anybody out in the community jumping up and down and saying get rid of this stupid thing. The community has really been supportive. Does that mean everybody loves the plan? Absolutely not, but on the whole—

DC: How about for example just the religious community, can you tell me maybe some ways in which they've actively supported or—

JH: Well in '75, the Episcopal bishop, the right Rev. David B. Reed, at the urging of a school board member, came out with a public statement, basically support this and keep your kids in school and go with the plan and be supportive and work it from the inside. If there are things you don't like, try to see what you can do to fix them. But a very stabilizing kind of thing. Are Episcopalians our biggest group? No, but they are a group and he was a respected person. The Catholic archdiocese here made some very, what would you call it, stabilizing kinds of comments. Now what happened of course there was their schools, which were many of them doing the decline bit and in fact were thinking of closing, suddenly filled up. Suddenly we had a lot of Catholics who weren't Catholic. But

they on the one hand said they weren't going to feed on this and on the other hand, filled up their schools with it. But to their credit, they didn't go opening up additional Catholic schools and they didn't go putting up portables and all this kind of stuff and saying y'all come, y'all come. They took people who approached them but when they filled up, they didn't try to like make forty-five kids in a class or something, take everybody they could. They tried to be stabilizing.

At that time, the Christian school movement really hadn't started here. There were some other church-affiliated things but not like the number of Christian schools that are around now, not only here but all over the place. So that was a blessing because most of the schools that popped up simply for the purpose of dodging deseg, many of them didn't last very long. Some of them are still around today but many of them didn't last very long because academically, they really didn't have anything to offer.

DC: So there were a number of them that sprung up but then—

JH: Oh gosh yeah. And then some of them have stayed and some of them have disappeared. The black religious—

DC: I'm sorry, these are private academies?

JH: Yeah. We derisively refer to them as deseg academies.

DC: And how many would you estimate appeared?

JH: Oh gee, I don't know. It wasn't a huge number but there were quite a few that popped up and then they kind of popped down too.

DC: And where did they, would they recruit their teachers from within the county district?

JH: Anywhere they could get them and that was one of their problems, because we pay better. Now there were upset people because teachers got reassigned during deseg too.

There was a lot of consternation about that: I've been a teacher in this city or this county for so many years. Why am I being sent from school A to school B across town, and things like that, because the staffs, administrative and faculty, custodial, secretarial, everything, they were all integrated, which again was a stroke of genius. I don't know how brilliant it was, it was pretty self-evident, but it was a gusty maneuver. That helped a whole heck of a lot.

One of the ways in which it helped not only to model to the children, "Hey I'm a black principal and here's my white assistant principal and we're getting along great, you do the same," there was not only that but it cut down on the notion of "this is my school and you're an interloper." Because when you went into a front office it was a mix. One of the ladies had been there forever and one of the ladies just got there when you did. It helped. It broke up the cliquishness or the in-group/out-group stuff, which was quite a blessing, I think. It was hard, it was hard as heck on staff. They were not all happy. There were some of them who welcomed the challenge, thought this was great, and there were others that, we joked about it but people knew to the day, some of them to the hour, their hire date so they were all busy trying to pull seniority so that they could get off of where they had been sent and get back to wherever. And some of them were able to do that but most of them, no. You were reassigned, you're reassigned.

DC: Did that stabilize after awhile?

JH: It did after a couple of years, that stabilized. One of the hardest things about—on the religious thing before I forget it. The black religious leaders were extremely helpful in keeping people, what would say, calm and moving in the right direction and trying to say no, you don't want your youngster across town any more than that white mother does

but this is for the betterment and all those kinds of things. So they were very helpful, very helpful indeed.

DC: Now the chair of the school board at that time in '75 was a minister, right Rev. Randolph?

JH: He was and that changes like yearly or whatever. So yeah he was one of the chairs and not too thrilled with this whole process but pulling it together, pulling it together. I'm seeing his face and forgetting his name, a pastor out in Okalona, who was also on that taskforce, who was helpful in trying to keep things, he didn't believe in the busing but he was trying to keep his parishioners doing what was legal and participating and doing what was best for their kids. So yeah we did some good support in that direction.

DC: Were there organizations of black parents that formed?

JH: Yeah there were, black parents and white parents, all sorts of clever acronyms, people that were going to "save our schools," SOS was a white group, and there were all kinds of groups. None of them got to the size or the political clout that they wanted to get to. I think an awful lot of people kind of, it happened so fast. People knew this issue was bubbling but they didn't expect to get slam-bang implementation. What happened was the court order came down, I think July 25, and we were due to open school in a few weeks. Well the first thing that the combined administration did was put off the opening of school a couple of weeks and worked like crazy to develop this cluster plan and figure out what to do with administrators and how to reassign teachers and what to do about school buses and all these things that had to be done, and then the Judge's sign-off on the plan. They must have worked twenty-five hours a day, eight days a week, for four to six weeks to get that done, but the blessing which didn't look like a blessing at the time but was, was Mr. and Mrs. John Q. Public suddenly were hit upside the head with this massive change and there

was no time to go anywhere or do anything. So I couldn't sell my house and move out. You weren't going to buy it and it wasn't going to happen fast enough and what was I going to do. So I got on the bus and I went and I looked at schools. I mean that's the way most parents went.

Now in our particular case, we were supportive but if you were feeling very anti, you still got on the bus and you went and you looked. By George, it was fine and you wound up sending your child. As one mother told me, her contribution to the whole thing was every morning when her child left, she got down on her knees and prayed real hard. I said well that's a good thing but I wish you'd come help the PTA. (laughter) But that was what she did. The quickness of it, if people had had six, eight, twelve months to know it was coming, there probably would have been a lot, lot of white flight, but this way there wasn't as much. Now people did things like send their child to live with grandma in Alabama or something like that.

DC: I've talked to some of those people.

JH: They did some of that. Some of them moved to Oldham County and Bullitt County, and some of them moved to southern Indiana. A lot of them have not figured out that we don't do what we used to do. I still, because I meet newcomers all the time and talk to them over the phone, that's part of my job, "Somebody told me not to live in Jefferson County. You bus kids all over the place." No we don't. "Oh they said so." I said, "You know what? They don't know what they're talking about. Their news is twenty-five to thirty years old. Let me tell you how it really works."

DC: So could you tell me how a typical case now, how it's changed with all these revisions, where is it now?

JH: Well now where it is—

DC: In terms of achieving a level of integration.

JH: Okay the guidelines have shifted. The guidelines used to be based on so many points plus and minus from the actual enrollment at the elementary, middle, or high. Based on that, we've decided to make it uniform and go from the fact that our school district, and this is another reason why it has worked, our school district's roughly a third black, which is a significant number of students and helps you to make sure that you're integrated. But it's not overwhelming and to sound very white about it, white people don't feel threatened in a situation like that. If it were the reverse they would, but they don't feel uncomfortable. So we use 15-50 at all levels. We use every mechanism imaginable to achieve that.

Originally we used the cluster system that I described briefly, but beginning in 1984 and that was one of the major achievements of the 1984 plan, we began to use magnets in a purposeful way as part of the plan. We had a few magnets prior to that but they just sort of bumped along within the structure. We began to purposefully use them in '84, strategically place them, and say to folk: if you want into the magnet, then the parameters are here's how you get in and yes, race will taken into consideration. To this day, we have people who fight us on that one, that's what the latest court case was about, and the courts have upheld us. Nobody told you you had to apply. Nobody told you you had to be there. If you want to play the game, you have to play by the rules. You can't get in here and say you want to play football and then try to play with a baseball. You've got to play by the rules.

The magnets, first at Dupont, Manual, and Central, we already had youth performing arts, which we wedded to Manual and we already had the beginnings of the traditional schools, which we expanded somewhat. Brown had been around since 1972, part of the old city system, and so then there has been a proliferation of magnet programs.

Students can go anywhere for programs within the parameters of racial balance and actual building capacity. Most of the programs, do you meet the specs for the program? You don't want to be in a math-science program if you're a dolt at math or in the youth performing arts if you can't sing, dance, act. But can you be in traditional program on a random draw? Sure because anybody should be able to succeed in that program.

DC: And the schools, do they have a mix? Is a magnet just all magnet programs or is there a traditional program as well?

JH: In this district, every question you ask probably has at least two answers and oftentimes has a main answer with an asterix and a footnote. The answer to that question is we do it both ways. We have a smallish number of what I call pure magnets. Everybody in the building is there by application. The traditionals use a random draw. The others use a matching process. Sometimes there's random draw that kind of calls the shot if it comes down to two equally qualified math-science kids for example. Usually that doesn't come into play. The point is that if it's a magnet school such as Dupont, Manual, or the Brown or Male High School, everybody's there by application. There is no right to be there because of residence.

DC: So Central is that way too?

JH: Central is a countywide magnet. Every child who's there is there by application, with the exception of there may be some special ed kids that may be placed there for a service that's housed in that building. There are also some English-as-a-second-language students that are placed there because the program's housed there. Then as they acquire English, they may stay and matriculate into the magnet if they want to. But much more often in our district it's the other situation which I call a hybrid, in which you have a magnet, sometimes more than one, in a neighborhood school. So Pleasure Ridge Park is a

good example of that. They have an area out off Dixie Highway that they serve, but they have about five maybe optional, magnet, or technical programs that draw on a magnet basis into that building. So you want our future teachers, there's one for people interested in health fields, there's one in industrial plastics, and several others. So if you want that, you apply and you come from anywhere in the county, courtesy of our transportation system to that location.

DC: How well, like in PRP's case, how well does that serve to diversify the student body?

JH: PRP, it helps. The real thing at middle and high is the non-contiguous attendance zones, better known as satellites. So at middle and high the way it works is you draw an attendance area around a school. Everybody in the attendance zone goes to that school, regardless of race, unless they have opted to apply to a magnet elsewhere and been accepted. Another mechanism is boundary lines. We try to be clever about how we draw boundary lines and sometimes it look's like we've been on a drunk, but what we're doing is we're picking up a black neighborhood, we're picking up a white neighborhood, to pull them into the building. Alright so you begin with address and you have a zone. Now at middle and high School, most of the middle and high Schools also have a zone in the downtown area and the west end, which is almost entirely black residential. So these children in that area are as much students as the ones that live next door to the building. They're there all three years of middle school or all four years of high school unless they have opted to go elsewhere and they do.

DC: They just have a longer ride to school.

JH: Bingo, and that's a sore point. But they're built into, and many of them have strong loyalties: "Oh yeah, my cousin or my brother or somebody went to Fairdale or went

to Seneca or wherever it was," and they're part of the student body with the same magnet application rights as anybody else. In fact, the percentage of "do you keep your kids from your satellite" is quite good for most of the high schools, which says that when they get there, they feel comfortable and well-treated and they don't feel ostracized. It's good for athletics, I'll tell you that, because--.

END OF DISC 1, TRACK 1

START OF DISC 1, TRACK 2

DC: What percentage do you think that is that's not happy?

JH: Well, it's an interesting number and this number spooks people moving in from out of town, but it is a stable number. Before busing started and now, about twenty-five percent of the school-aged children in Jefferson County are in non-public school and people want to point to that number and shriek and holler and say isn't that terrible, you're not doing a good job, to which I say horse feathers. This community is heavily Catholic, always has been. There is a sizeable parochial school system here. Some of their schools are closing. They're facing the same things we are; people move and stuff like that. Rather than closing inner-city schools, we've done magnets, we've done clusters, we've done what we've done. They're closing some of theirs and building some out on the edges. They're facing a lot of problems that we don't face, such as the nuns are dying off and that was cheap labor and those kind of things. But at any rate, the point is that this community had a very, very significant number of its kids in parochial schools. I just recently served on a jury in June and totally random as to who was on that jury. Several of them knew each other because they had been in parochial school together or their kid had been taught by this one or whatever. Half the jury, at least, was Catholic, but that's just a fact of life; that's life in this community. So to have twenty-five percent of school-aged children in a non-public school, I don't think is un-understandable. It did go up during the white flight time. It settled down.

I just saw some stuff released yesterday. We did a media conference yesterday, the superintendent did, and I think we're up to seventy-eight percent market share, so we creep up and get up close to eighty and then times get good and people find tuition money and things like that happen. But are all those people unhappy with us? No. A lot of them I have

said to many people over the years, look I can sit here and tell you all day the benefits of our school district and all the things that we offer but I cannot deal with the hereafter. So if you're worried about where your child is going after life on this planet and you feel you need to be in a religious school, I can't touch that and you know it. So that's a competition that we don't even, you can't fool with. And this community has a sizeable Jewish population. They operate a small Jewish day school. By and large, and that's another group I need to give a lot of credit to, our Jewish families have been extremely supportive of the public school system and during 1975, their kids were right in there with everybody else's kids doing the busing bit. They have been very, very supportive but there is a small school and in their case, I think that's more those of a more conservative religious feeling, rather than something against the public schools. They want that religious training, teaching, just like a Catholic might. And we have a Lutheran school; we have some of those. I think that a lot of times that is a religious thing, although sometimes it's also a hideout. But yeah, twenty-five percent has been the case before '75 and it has been the case right now. Right now, it's less than twenty-five, if our figures hold up for actual enrollment, but we're projecting that we'll have about seventy-eight percent.

DC: So if we could talk, I don't want to take up your whole day but—

JH: As you can see, I like to talk.

DC: No, this is really wonderful. I want to talk briefly both of the lawsuits, having just come from Central yesterday and been there a couple times.

JH: That was interesting; that was fascinating.

DC: Yeah, so you were working here, I assume, at the point that—

JH: I was privileged, although some days it didn't feel like much of a privilege, but it was a tremendous privilege as my boss says, to be right where history is in the making,

to be on the prep team for both of those lawsuits. What happened was way back with that taskforce stuff I told you about, I demonstrated this phenomenal mystical ability to be able to take shorthand.

DC: Aha.

JH: Aha. And so when I took minutes of any meetings, which they'll sometimes say oh will you take some minutes; they don't care if you take shorthand, they don't care. You say, oh gee yeah, I'm the lowest on this totem pole. Of course I'll, you know. Then your minutes come back like no minutes they've ever seen and they say oh my God. Well then you're kind of tagged. If you demonstrate some ability to back one word up to another and actually make sense and know where to put the periods, then you're tagged. So I parlayed that background into being the one who wound up putting the words on the paper, which I quickly realized, not being a very brilliant observation, that she who puts the words on the paper shapes the direction of the project. Somebody is going to have to change the words. Do they? Sure they do, but not all the time. If you can turn a phrase that then becomes the catch word, you can shape the thinking. That's been my route and my contribution, I hope. That's how I, in part, got this job and how I have been on so many committees and taskforces and have been one whose helped to shape how things were phrased.

So that got me into the prep team and it was a phenomenal, phenomenal amount of work, unbelievable amount of work. But I'm proud of the outcome. The first one, which we loosely called the Central lawsuit, was over whether or not we could apply racial guidelines to magnets basically. I don't think the—a lot of the community doesn't see it that way. They see it as "those black people got their school back. Why can't we have a school?" It's really not what was going on. What was going on was to say if a program is

unique in this system, which Central is, may you or may you not apply racial guidelines to it. We of course had been applying racial guidelines to it because heck, that's what the courts told us to do, all your schools. Central had been a neighborhood—I mean they had a cluster with a magnet at it and we made it entirely magnet. The idea was that you would recruit well enough and run a strong enough program that you'd have to fight the people off, regardless of what color they were, because they'd want to get in.

DC: Of course, right.

JH: Well I'm not going to sling mud but it didn't go that way. Anyway, we also had people who said you're keeping me out simply because I'm black. You can't do that. I can't get this program anywhere else. So it was a test case. The courts wound up saying your deseg effort countywide may stay in place. You're doing a good job for the right reasons, but any school that is totally unique in your system, while you may certainly and we hope you will strive for diversity, you can't use the racial guidelines. Go look and see if there are any other schools in addition to Central that you ought to pull the guidelines off of, so we did all that and we wound up with four: Central, Manual, which includes YPAS [Youth Performing Arts School], Brown, and Brandeis Elementary, which is a math-science elementary school. All four of those are pure magnets and all four of those are unique in the system. Can you learn math and science if you're an elementary kid someplace else? Absolutely, but do you get the mix that's there? No. And Brown is a unique setup and Central and Manual/YPAS are a unique setup. So we were told to pull the racial guidelines off of those but everything could stay in place, which we saw as a major victory.

Few people on the other side of the lawsuit felt they had won, because Central was no longer under the guidelines and in fact, one of the protagonists shouted across the

courtroom at us what fools we were and here we were acting like we'd won when we had lost. Were we so stupid we didn't know we had lost? We're sitting here saying fellow, take a look. Except for this many kids, nothing's changed. Indeed, three of the four have continued to stay racially integrated through recruitment practices and selection practices and whatever.

DC: At the same level that they were or has that changed?

JH: Pretty close. Manual's become a little whiter. Brandeis stayed about the same. Brown stayed about the same. They're roughly a third black and this has been strong recruitment practices. Central has gone eighty-five percent African-American. I don't think that that's strengthened their program and I don't mean to say that in a racist way at all. Many of our black families do not wish to have their child in a predominately black setting. They don't think that that's the real world and they don't want to do that.

DC: So is that a combination of more black families applying and fewer white families applying?

JH: Yeah, because it's a tip thing. What the courts told us to do that first year was go back and admit, because they had space, those black students that they would have taken had there been no guidelines. In other words, they qualified when there were no guidelines. So we had to go back that summer and go through records and contact people and people you couldn't find and certified letters and the whole nine yards.

DC: Oh boy. That's a lot to put on you.

JH: But we took some in, we took them in and we tracked them and a lot of them left. But anyway, we did and so that all of a sudden gave a jump, and the publicity, and whatever. But we were still getting white applicants, but the more it does this, the more it's going to do this.

DC: The more it changes in one direction.

JH: Yeah and I would think that if the balance had been the other way, it probably wouldn't have, if it had been a white-black, it would have gone the other way too. But people tend to want to be where there are enough people like themselves that they feel comfortable.

DC: But that, and this is a question I posed yesterday at Central, clearly is not to the benefit of a kid, say a particular white kid who wants to do veterinary medicine who will then say not apply to Central because they don't want to be in a quote, unquote black school?

JH: That's exactly right, so we get pressured to open another program somewhere else. So far, we have not opened any more veterinary programs. Now we are opening another medical program at Wagner High School, which is literally across the street from the medical complex and includes Baptist East Hospital, Suburban Hospital and Jewish has a medical center and there are just a slew of doctor office buildings, radiation centers, and all that kind of stuff there. So it only makes sense. There's also a psychiatric facility there. It makes really, really good sense from a medical point of view to have a program there; practicums are on your doorsteps and I'm sure all of that will be built into the program. But yeah, it's says oh, I would really like to do this. Oh, do I want to do it in this surrounding and then some kids will say sure, I don't care and some kids will say, no I don't think so or Mom or Dad is saying that. Yeah, that's not good; it's not a good balance. My quarrel would be much more with what are you doing with the academics. I don't care what color the kids are, what's the quality of your academics? That's where I would get upset.

DC: Have you seen upsides for Central in this as well?

JH: In terms of increasing enrollment, yeah. I would like to give Dan Withers, the current principal, time to jack up things like advanced placement courses and those kinds of things. He really has not been in that chair but a couple years and he needs time to try to see what he can do about that. But my chief concern, either before the court ruling or after the court ruling, was what are you really doing in terms of academics. From my perspective, having seen that program for twenty years, I am really distressed that it doesn't have the academic strength that it did.

DC: So you think it's not—

JH: Yeah, I don't think the academic strength is there that was there say in the second half of the 80s, when it first started; it started in '84.

DC: And why is that, do you think, has declined?

JH: (whispered) Leadership.

DC: Leadership.

JH: Yeah, I think that people got muddled as to what their purpose was, and that can happen at any school. There's no reason why that couldn't be a strong school and why it can't be a strong school again, but they really, really, really need to work hard on recruitment. I'm not trying to say you've got to have white kids to have smart kids to have a good school, but I think that you need diversity at any school, but mostly you need to convince people that you're turning out really good products. These are capable kids and they're going to all kind of good places and gee, I want to be part of that. It's a real hard ball to get rolling and it's a easy one to have come back down on you, and it came back down on Central. Once you start to slip, it's easy to slip; it's awfully, awfully, awfully hard to climb back up.

DC: And you think that contributes to what we consider or look at as new white flight?

JH: They just don't choose to apply. They're not going anywhere; they're staying in the county. They're just going to a different school in the county. Have other schools profited by that? You bet. Have some schools lost black kids to Central? Yes. Huge numbers? No, but some. But as I say, some black families don't want a situation that's predominately black or they see the academics there as not strong, as strong as they ought to be. So it's a complex kind of situation.

DC: So the second lawsuit, what was the rationale?

JH: Well the second lawsuit, see Teddy Gordon is the attorney in the first one and his whole point was he won and where were the white folk and didn't they want to come get him, the great crusader, to do a suit for them so they could win their school? It took three years to recruit somebody but what he got was a disgruntled parent whose child didn't get in to traditional school, which uses a random draw. Now do you sue the lottery when you don't win? No, but his notion was that we were setting aside seats for black children and this was wrong and it kept his child out, which was not the case but that was this father's complaint. And he cooked up a couple, they recruited a couple of people that they knew and they had several plaintiffs, there were about five of them, that had all not gotten into traditional school. Well the goofy thing was that the following year, before this thing actually got to trial, both children of this original person, Mr. McFarlane, got in on the random draw the next year.

DC: Of course.

JH: And believe me, we didn't contrive that one. If we could have kept him at the bottom of the heap forever, he'd have stayed but of course, we couldn't do that. We were

playing it squeaky clean and his kids got in. Well did he have the great good sense to drop his lawsuit? No, of course not. "It's the principle of the thing." So the others in the case either got in or I think what they mostly did was they went private and one of them wanted to get us to pay the tuition. Somebody got into an advanced program; he asked for a transfer and got into an advanced program in a school, a choice of his. And we said, you have no standing. You know, this is stupid. But the judge knew that the issue was of such importance that he didn't want to get into the business of disqualifying people and all this good stuff. So we went on forward.

The tag at the end was the one that went to appeal and that was a different issue. This was a woman whose child was an elementary child. We use a cluster system at the elementary still, so that if you live in the attendance area of this school, your address doesn't give you this school, your address gives you access into a cluster of schools. Alright, she didn't want to be in the school that she was in, but that's where her child was. She claimed that she wanted a different school in the cluster. She moved in in the summer and the school in whose area she lived is one of the few that we have that's on a year-round schedule, Breckinridge Franklin. They had already started. As they have now, they start about the third week of July. It was a divorce deal and her child had been living with the dad in the summer and he came back to town and by the time he got back to town, it was already August and time for school to start, but the school in their neighborhood had started. So she said she didn't want to do that; she would put him in another school in the cluster and indeed, he was assigned to the head of the cluster, Young Elementary. Well she didn't want him there; that was in a black neighborhood, blah, blah, blah, too far from home, whatever. Applied for a transfer out of cluster to another school. That was denied; it was full.

DC: Now do people actually say I don't want my kids in a black neighborhood?

JH: They will say that. They will say all sorts of things. Sometimes they'll say it's too far from home. Usually, they're a little more PC, a little more politically correct, but sometimes they'll say it's in a bad neighborhood. You know, there are drug deals on the corner or things like that. That's usually the kind of thing they'll say. It's in a bad neighborhood or it's too far away, it's not convenient to my child-care arrangements, it's not convenient to my place of employment. You know, in other words, they say the politically-correct things. She applied for a transfer out of cluster and that was denied. She did not appeal the denial. Her child attended Young. In February, when she had an opportunity to reapply for another placement in cluster, which we do—going into K, you can do that. K to one, you can do that—she didn't apply. We felt like she didn't take the avenues that she had available. The following year, I'm trying to remember if she applied for a transfer or not, but popping up in a lawsuit when you haven't exhausted your avenues, we found offensive. And she was tacked on as the last plaintiff. Well her case was entirely different from the random draw issue. So we went through this humungous preparation process and I have to give tons of credit to our in-house attorneys, as well as to the external firm that we used, Wyatt, Tarrant, and Combs. They were fantastic. Frank Mellon and Byron Lee, they were just fantastic. Well anyway, we presented literally tons of evidence on everything there was to present on. The judge ruled that we could probably do the traditional schools with one list, rather than black boy, black girl, white girl, white boy; random lists and then you just take from the tops of those until you fill your classes. That ensured you'd get black kids into your classes and that you'd keep a gender balance. Well I think we did such a good job convincing the judge how we recruit and how we handle things that he decided, doing a little math, that we could probably make it work

using one list. Now we don't agree with him. We are concerned that just as soon as black parents realize that their chances are now diminished, they are into the total pool, rather than in a pool which gets drawn from—then they're going to stop applying is our fear, because they will not see that they have as good a chance to get in and they're right. So he said do it with one list. This is the first year we're getting ready to start now having done it with one list.

DC: And are you keeping track of the numbers?

JH: Oh absolutely. We'll see what happens, we'll see what happens. But if you do a randomized list of all applicants and there are black kids kind of all in and around, you're cool. If they tend to be bunched toward the bottom just because that's the way it came out, you're going to have a problem and you're going to have a continuing problem because—

DC: Oh, because it's just drawing from the top.

JH: Yeah. So all applicants for the kindergarten at traditional school A, the school gets a randomized list of all applicants for each grade level in their building. They start at the top and work down. Well before, they would start at the top of four lists and work down and then take some more and they would wind up with half boys and half girls, about thirty percent black and it was cool. Well the complainant was trying to act like these were set-asides. Well they weren't. But anyway, the judge says look, just get yourself out of that whole issue, that whole question, and do one list. Well as long as the list is going to fall out pretty evenly distributed, boys-girls, black-white, the theory's fine. If it comes out skewed, then you got a problem. Well then the theory is you make it up the next year. Well you don't, because those kindergarteners become first graders. Alright, who comes off the first grade applicant list is people plugging holes. So the whole first grade is not up for grabs. Those kindergartners stay; they've got the seats. Will some of them leave? Of

course. You got to your applicant list to fill those. Well what they were doing before was if a black girl left, they put a black girl in her seat. If the white boy left, you put a white boy in the seat. Now they can't do that. So they're at the mercy of the list. If the list is pretty evenly distributed, you'll probably be okay. If it's not, if you have several black children who leave and you plug them with white kids, then as those kids become second graders, the problem has the potential to just continue to compound. That's what we're concerned about. Then if the parents begin to perceive that's oh, this is a lost cause, why should I apply, then the pool gets smaller. So of course, the onus is on us to recruit. Right.

DC: When did that decision come down?

JH: That decision came down, what, '02. So Teddy Gordon, the attorney on the other side, appealed and he appealed in '02, '03, whatever—I'm losing my timing. I've got it here in the drawer, but anyway, he appealed. I guess it was '04 because he appealed and the only piece he appealed was the one lady who had the cluster placement. He didn't appeal the traditional. He felt he had won that because we're using one list, still with the racial guidelines in place. Now he acts like they're not, but they're still there. The whole rest of the plan is all still in place. So he appealed and this is '05. Last fall, going into the early winter, we went through the whole deal with getting the brief ready and everything for the sixth circuit. That all had to be in like it was January or February. Oral arguments were June ninth and we got the ruling just what, ten days ago or whenever it was.

DC: And that was, just for the record—

JH: The ruling was one little paragraph that essentially said we're not going to write an opinion because the district court's opinion was so well-written and the defendant's brief was so well-written that it's all in the record. But they upheld us completely, seeing governmental interest on the part of the school district to maintain a

diverse situation and that the methods we use are not so restrictive as to be injurious to anybody or contravening their civil rights or whatever else. We felt like it was a total, total victory. Now whether or not Mr. Gordon will see fit to appeal that to the Supreme Court, who knows? And if he does, I'd be very surprised if they hear it, not because it's not an important case, because the Lynne, Massachusetts case is supposed to go to the Supreme Court or they're talking about going to the Supreme Court. They may decide to hear it because of the importance of it, but when the lower court dismisses it without even writing an opinion, how would you as a Supreme Court judge?

DC: So in your opinion, is this more one attorney trying to make a name for himself than reflective of the community's feeling?

JH: I think he is reflective of a piece of people, but what we've found interesting was people did not flock to his cause. He had trouble, in fact in the Central lawsuit, the first set of plaintiffs that he brought forth, we did the research on who are they, where did they go, who are these kids. The judge disqualified all of them, but let him go out and get another batch, which we're sitting there going "oh please." But again, he thought the issue was of such importance that it should have it's day in court, so to speak. So he had to go out and get another set of plaintiffs. People were not beating down his door to be the plaintiffs and he got very weak cases. We would have people come in here between the two cases and when they got frustrated and couldn't have what they wanted, the school was full, I'm sorry the school is full: "Well Mr. Gordon told me that if I didn't get what I wanted, I should come to him and I've got his phone number. I'm going to leave here and call Mr. Gordon." Do what you have to do and of course, they didn't and they didn't have a case. But we got a lot of that, not like tons of it but we got maybe half a dozen of those during that time. He was out there hunting up clients and it took him awhile. When he got

them, those were weak, they were weak plaintiffs. I wouldn't have wanted to go to court with any of those. I mean the kid got in the next year. Why are you sitting in my courtroom? The process was evil last year. You got into it again and now it's glorious because you got what you wanted? Get with it. But will he carry it forward? He might, he might. But I have nothing but praise for Judge Heyburn. He was phenomenal, he was phenomenal.

DC: I'll wrap this up now. I really appreciate your time. This has been terrific and I've learned a lot.

JH: We didn't talk at all, I don't think, about what those early years were like and it's probably not a good idea to do so. Now having a National Guardswoman with a loaded rifle on your child's school bus is not a happy feeling.

DC: And that was the case with your kids?

JH: Yeah. The Guard was called in. They weren't here long and we had a U.S. Marshal and we had all that good stuff. The Guard wasn't here long but they were here and that was a good idea, that was a good idea.

DC: And that was for which school?

JH: He was at Coleridge Taylor. That wasn't the only one, but some of them.

DC: What grade?

JH: Second.

DC: Second grade with the National Guard on the bus.

JH: They weren't here long but they did need to be here. We had marching in the street. We had some real ugly stuff, not all over the community at all, but in the south end we had some. In fact, one of the people who was a ringleader there used that to get herself

elected to the school board and she's on the board to this day. I think she's been off it and back on it. And now none of that's an issue at all; she's fine.

DC: Who's that?

JH: That's Dottie Pretty.

DC: Oh, of course. She's in our files.

JH: Yes, gun-toting Dottie.

DC: Gun-toting, really?

JH: Oh yeah. She's a piece of work.

DC: Gun-toting in the sense of actually standing at a demonstration?

JH: Oh she's been known to pack a pistol, but I have to give that woman tons of credit. She has stayed on the school board for many, many years. Some people have tried to dislodge her. Her constituents love her and she has really basically represented them and the school district quite well. She's in precarious health; that's become an issue because of having to miss meetings and things like that, but typically she gets wheeled in in her wheelchair. She knows what's going on when they do board briefings and things like that, bringing board members up to snuff behind the scenes so that they can know what's going on. Dottie gets her briefings and sometimes it's by phone and sometimes they're taking stuff to the house and things like that. But she comes to the meetings, especially when there's a crucial vote; Dottie's going to get wheeled in, she's going to be there. Her people see her, her constituents see her as a champion of the common working person and she is. She's been in labor. Her husband, who's now deceased, was in labor organization politics, things like that. She's quite a character.

[conversation breaks off as phone rings]

JH: My colleague down the hall. That's another thing. The integrated staff in JCPS has been such a blessing. She's black. She's in the magnet office down the hall. We call ourselves the salt and pepper team, but we work so well together and in fact, we will all say it to each other. If we go out to a social event and look around and it's all or nearly all white, we're uncomfortable. I'm comfortable if I go to a performance, the opera, the orchestra, whatever, someone's home—you know, if it's a small group in a home, it's just some friends—but any kind of sizeable gathering, if it's JCPS, it's going to be mixed. JCPS is wonderful about illnesses, deaths, whatever, weddings, everything and everybody goes to stuff. I couldn't tell you how many times I've been to Porter's, which is the major black funeral home. There's just no color barrier there and we're all proud of it and we live with that kind of a mix on a daily basis. This whole department is totally mixed. But out in the real world, or the other parts of the real world, it's not necessarily that way. But we value—

DC: But that's become something that you want.

JH: We value it, we really do. We value it and it feels comfortable to us. Being in a situation that is not mixed is not comfortable. So put us down as goofy, but that's the way that is.

DC: That's actually one of my wrap-up questions: Were you changed?

JH: Oh absolutely.

DC: And you'd say that you were changed by this process?

JH: Totally, totally. I came from being this mother who was just figuring out how to volunteer in her children's school and schools and figure out how to be part of that, to someone who was probably so gung ho that she offended everything and everybody by becoming totally committed to let's get this job done. Do I like everything about it? No,

but I believe in what it's trying to do. I'm going to set that example for my kids and I'm going to go in there and try to make it work. Things that need to be changed, we're going to change from the inside, not from the street. One of the greatest compliments I ever had paid to me was paid by a parent who said, I have a full-time job and I can't be at, I think it was Meyzeek, but I am sending my child with comfort because I know you'll be there. Now was I there all day, everyday? No. Was I in that child's classroom? No, but I was in and out of the building all the time and other parents were too. There weren't hoards of us, but we were there; we were a presence. I think the administration and the faculty felt very supported by that. In fact, today they remember—of course a lot of them have gone now—but people, you just know people all over the system.

Of course, a lot of us old gray heads are retiring out and that's part of my concern is the oral history. Dr. Tinsley just retired. I'm going to retire as soon as I get enough good sense and people are leaving. I don't want to see people reinvent the wheel, make some stupid mistakes that we've already made that they don't have to make, but that's life, that's people, that's how it works. Yeah, I think we were as people changed a great deal, very much so.

DC: Would you do it all again if you had to?

JH: Sure. Are there things I'd do differently? Yes, a lot more balance to it. But then that's one of the advantages of old age; you get to look, you have perspective which you don't have when you're young and that's probably a good thing because it gets you up and out in the morning and chug, chug, chug. Somebody's got to get out there and be on the battlement and do the stuff or behind the scenes doing the stuff and you can't do that if you don't believe in what you're doing. I don't know if you have talked to her or if anyone

has said anything to you about Sherry Jelsma. She was board chair, she was a board member for a long time.

DC: What's the last name?

JH: J-E-L-S-M-A.

DC: Okay.

JH: She and I began as friends shelving books in the library in her child's elementary school and we became very good friends and she ran for school board and served on the school board. In fact, she's the one that put me on the taskforce. She has a whole big piece of this as well. She was right there working in her kids' schools just like I was. She went on to serve not only on the school board, but to chair it for a number of years, and then Governor Burton Jones named her to be his education and something in humanities cabinet secretary at the state level. She did that through the Jones administration. Right now, she's retired but she keeps a finger in all sorts of things. She's been a dollar a year head of the Kentucky Center of the Arts, the Speed Museum, and a couple of other things.

DC: So this is an interesting sort of working women's story too—

JH: Absolutely.

DC: Because of transforming from mothers through that educational role to these very distinguished positions.

JH: Well yeah. She had been a teacher. She had the education background, the degrees and all of that. But yeah, the moms were the ones that held it together, black moms. Georgia Eugene, if you have not heard of her and talked to her, Georgia also retired about a year and a half ago. She was up out of the black community, out of the projects, and some people still see her as rough. I worked for her and with her for so long that I

don't see her that way, but I see what they're talking about. She was a rabble rouser and an advocate and a whatever, but at the time I met her, she was working for the city school system in 1975. She and June Key, June Key is white, Georgia is black, were a salt and pepper team and they worked together and they kept the lid on and off a lot of protests and things like that, defused and defanged and whatever else. They were where they heard the rumors and they knew what was going on.

DC: This reminds me of I talked to a woman who was a member of one of the black parent organizations at the time of desegregation and asked her sort of what had happened to those members. It actually got her involved in politics, but she talked about how she sort of saw what she called cherry-picking, that she said there were some jobs that were given to some people—

JH: In the Superintendent's [office], yeah.

DC: Yeah, to kind of encourage and alleviate some of—

JH: There was. Georgia was hired that way. June had come up through the PTA and she was hired into the district, but Georgia was hired as a way to make her one of us and not one of them. But the city system was smart enough to put her talents to use, because there are few people who can bring people together like Georgia. If that's what she wants to do, she's damn good at it. She can work a crowd, I mean the woman is fantastic, just self-taught, instinctual stuff. She wound up doing a phenomenal service for this district in that she created what's called Devalle Education Center. It's in the west end and that's an adult education program getting people back into school, things like that. They run after-school programs for school-aged kids, there's preschool there. But it was part of the school system and she created it from nothing and I was privileged to be a lieutenant of hers. So I went into the west end on almost a daily basis and worked with her there, black

projects. But she got that program started. But as I say when I first knew her, she was part of what had been the city school administration that joined with the county then to keep the lid on and just keep diffusing situations.

DC: And she's kept that job up until—

JH: She continued to do that kind of as a side thing and then she became head of the community relations department and then she got what she had always wanted and that was the opportunity to create the Devalle Education Center, which she did a wonderful job of and then just recently retired. The administration has been smart about plucking people and I'll call myself a plucked person because I think that I was not abrasive. My whole attitude is if you see something that doesn't look right, go in with a solution; don't just go in and bitch and don't rabble-rouse. That's in part how I got hired by the district, was because my head was above the horizon. They could see that my intentions were good and that I had some skills and I was trying to do some good things. I was fortunate enough to get a start and show that I could do it and good at something else and show that I could do it. They hired some other folk that I'm sure they wished they hadn't, but--. (laughter) That was a tactic, if you want to call it that and I think anybody would do that. I'm sure corporations do that with people that are flies in the ointment. They find ways to treat the flies. But Georgia was an excellent hire for the district and I think I've been one and there have been others that have then turned out to be strong supporters. Still seeing the warts, but trying to work on the warts while trying to support. Well I hope this has been helpful.

DC: Very helpful, thank you very much. Just last question would be is there anything that I didn't ask that you think I should have asked?

JH: Well I sort of volunteered a bunch of stuff. We talked about why it has worked here. I think I've kind of ground to a halt.

DC: Well you've been more than generous. I really appreciate it.

JH: That's because I'm a Yankee.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Emily Baran. December, 2005.