

Interviewer: Joel Buchanan

Interviewee: William Jackson

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B:[It is] 2:00 in the afternoon. I am Joel Buchanan doing an interview with Dr. William H. Jackson in his home in Ocala, Florida. The address is P.O. Box 1012. Bill Jackson has been an administrator, teacher, and president in the education system for forty-one years. We are in the family room of his home. Good afternoon, Dr. Jackson.

J:Good afternoon.

B:How are you today?

J:Fine.

B:Dr. Jackson, do you have a middle name?

J:Harold.

B:So your complete name is William Harold Jackson?

J:That is true.

B:Where were you born, sir?

J:De Funiak Springs, Florida.

B:In what year?

J:January 26, 1917.

B:Tell me something about your family--mother, father, brothers, sisters, and names.

J:My mother was **Allie Mae Jackson**, [and] my father was **Will Jackson**. There were twelve of us.

Nine of us lived to adult age.

B:What number were you?

J:I was the third-born.

B:The third-born. How many brothers and how many sisters?

J:Four brothers and eight sisters.

B:What did your parents do for an occupation, sir?

J:My father was a carpenter and **bricklayer**, and my mother was a housekeeper and a seamstress.

B:Were your parents born in De Funiak Springs?

J:No. My mother was born in **Boston**, Georgia and my father was born in Ponce De Leon, Florida.

B:Ponce De Leon, Florida. I have never heard of that. Where is that, sir?

J:That is in west Florida in Walton County.

B:I see. Did they ever discuss with you how they met?

J:No. They never discussed that.

B:They never discussed that. Tell me something about your childhood growing up in De Funiak Springs.

J:At an early age, I lived with my grandmother.

B:Her name, please?

J:Her name was **Jenny Joe**.

B:Why did you live with her?

J:My mother wanted me to live with my grandmother while her husband was away working.

B:What kind of work was your grandfather doing?

J:I think, and I am not too sure, he was employed in the turpentine business.

B:You lived with your grandmother for how many years?

J:I lived with my grandmother for about four years.

B:When you left there, did you go back to your home?

J:I went back to my home.

B:Did you have a typical childhood life?

J:I think so. I think since there was a large number of us, we grew up in a happy family. Most of us started working at an early age, doing something around the house. Since my father was a

carpenter, he used to carry me to work with him. I would carry the brick and the lumber, give him nails, and this kind of thing.

B:I see. When did you start school?

J:I started school at six years of age.

B:Do you remember the first school you went to?

J:I do not really remember the first school I went to, but I think most of the time I attended what was called **Tiviley Elementary** school. I think in 1937, **Gilbert Porter** was principal. Of course he made it a high school.

B:His name was Gilbert Porter?

J:Gilbert Porter. He was my principal.

B:I see. So your elementary school became your high school?

J:That is right.

B:Did you finish high school?

J:No, I did not. I did not finish there. I finished at Florida Memorial College in St. Augustine.

B:Explain that to me now.

J:Since there was not a high school the year I left, I finished tenth grade. I went to Florida Memorial College and finished high school and junior college.

B:So Florida Memorial actually was a high school and a junior college at some point?

J:And a college. So was Florida A&M. They had a high school department also at that time.

B:While you were in high school, did you partake in any activity?

J:Basketball.

B:Was this an all-black school?

J:All-black school.

B:Was it a wood school or a block school?

J:It was a frame structure--wood.

B:Did you go to school between the hours of 8:00 and 12:00, or did you go for a full day?

J:We went between 8:00 and 3:30, I think.

B:Do you remember anything unique about your schooling?

J:I think the only uniqueness about the school was that you had faculty who was concerned about the kids, who worked with the kids, and who really wanted the kids to learn. I think most of them wanted you to become professionals. At that time either a teacher, doctor, and a few lawyers.

B:Was there anybody in your schooling that left an impression on you that caused you to go into the academic field?

J:Oh yes, Gilbert Porter, who was my principal in the ninth and tenth grade. A lady named **Mrs. Minor.**

B:Minor?

J:Yes, and another lady who went to Howard University who was our presiding **elder's daughter.** She taught foreign languages and English. She made a real impression on me because she was not only motivated, but she wanted kids to learn and to become professionals.

B:Oh really? Did you think at this point, I know this is a very selfish question, that in your elementary high school period that you would ever reach the point of becoming the president of a college?

J:No, at that time I guess I thought only about being a lawyer or a doctor. I really did not think about ever being a teacher. Since I went to an institution that dealt strictly with the real programs at the institution with teachers training me, I guess yes. That was all I could afford at that time. I went there and worked my way through college and high school.

B:When you left, I guess it was De Funiak Springs and went to St. Augustine...

J:Florida Memorial College.

B:Did you have to pay?

J:I did not pay. I worked my way through college.

B:What did you do?

J:I cooked. Since I had been accustomed to working in hotels, I cooked. Of course, that is what I did then. Since I had pretty high academic standards, I was one of the tutors for the high school students.

B:Were you? Let us digress for a moment. You finished high school in what year?

J:I finished high school in 1938.

B:Did you go directly on to college?

J:I was at Florida Memorial and I finished the two years there--a two year teacher's training program.

B:You mentioned your grade point average. Did you finish in the top of your class?

J:I finished as val **[valedictorian]** of my class.

B:How many persons were in your class?

J:I think there were fifteen of us.

B:You mentioned that you were a cook while you were in school, and your two year program was a teacher's training program. Explain that to me, please.

J:Florida A&M had been my first choice. A number of young men in De Funiak Springs went to Florida Memorial to play football, and they encouraged me to come. Instead of going to Florida A&M, which had a high school also at that time, I went to Florida Memorial.

B:Was Florida Memorial private or public?

J:It was a private school.

B:It was all-black?

J:Baptist related. It is presently.

B:And it was then.

J:It is in Miami now.

B:What did it cost you to be there for a year?

J:I am not sure at that time. Since I was working my way through, they also had governmental programs that they would put you in which paid for the students who enrolled at the college, who were individuals who did not have resources.

B:So are you saying to me that your working literally paid your bills and you did not have to even worry with that part?

J:I did not have to worry because they had what was called student aid. I am not sure what it was at that time, but anyway, it was a government subsidy.

B:You mentioned about the teacher certification program--teacher training. Was this to train you to be a teacher?

J:Training you to be a teacher.

B:What was your subject of specialty?

J:When I was at Florida Memorial, it was in math and science.

B:Did you finish the two year program and start teaching, or did you go on?

J:I finished the two year program and I taught for two years, 1940-1941, and 1941-1942. In 1942, I entered the United States Army.

B:Where did you teach in 1941 and 1942?

N:I taught in De Funiak Springs, Florida, my hometown.

B:How did you feel going back to your home where you had lived and had gone away to be trained in college to go back and teach? What was that like?

J:At that time, I am not too sure that I knew the significance of it, but it was a job. It was a way of working. Since there were nine of us who were living when my father died (he died the year before I graduated), I went back home to help with the family.

B:Was this school a one-room school?

J:No. This was not a one-room school. I think we had about eight rooms and an auditorium.

B:You mentioned that your father died the year before you finished. You went back home to help with the family. Were any of your other brothers and sisters away in school at that time?

J:Yes. My brother had spent, I think, three years in what was called the **C.C. Camp**, which also at that time provided a subsidy for the family. It was called the **Silver Conservation Camp**. While he was there, he went to the University of Florida and learned to type. Of course there, he was what you called the assistant instructor. The year before I graduated in 1940, he came and enrolled at Florida Memorial College. He and I were there and we played football that year. I was on the football team prior to the time he came there. When he came he played football also.

B:What was his name?

J:**Theodus Jackson.**

B:Theodus Jackson. Was he older than you?

J:No. I was one year older than he was.

B:What position did you play when you played football?

J:I played both defensive and offensive end.

B:Were you a big boy? Were you a big person?

J:I was big in comparison to most of the young men at that time.

B:Did you all have a winning team?

J:Well, we had a winning team. I think the conference at that time consisted of Bethune-Cookman College, Edward Waters College, Florida Memorial College, and a few schools in Georgia that became four year institutions.

B:Let us talk about that. You were at an all-black college, and you played football. Was this called the Negro League at this point?

J:I am not sure what the title was at that time. It was a conference made up of black institutions, which may have included Florida A&M (I am not too sure), but they grew out of that league.

B:When you all traveled, how did you travel from one school to the other?

J:We traveled by bus.

B:Where did you all stay when you got into those cities?

J:We stayed at the colleges.

B:So most of the colleges had dormitories?

J:Most of the colleges had dormitories.

B:So when you were at Florida Memorial, you lived in the dormitory?

J:Yes.

B:Did you wear uniforms?

J:No.

B:No uniforms?

J:No uniforms.

B:You mentioned that you taught from 1940-1942 and then you went into the military. What branch of service did you go into, sir?

J:I went into the infantry, buy I was in finance. I was in the finance department. After my basic training at Fort McClellan, Alabama, [Anniston, Alabama] I was transferred to the Ninety-second Division. After taking tests, they selected two individuals from my hometown-- **Theocredus Campbell**, who became a principal of the high school in De Funiak Springs, Florida, and they selected me. We attended a finance school, and then we came back and worked in finance. We spent a year overseas. In December 1945, we returned to the United States. I think they discontinued the Ninety-second Division as such.

B:Was the Ninety-second Division an all-black division?

J:It was all-black with the exception of officers.

B:This entire time you were in the military, you worked in the finance department?

J:That is right.

B:What was your responsibility?

J:I was section chief of enlisted pay.

B:So you had a very interesting life at the beginning. [You were] a teacher, and [you were in] finance. How many years were you in the military?

J:Three and one-half years.

B:When you came back from that, what did you do then?

J:When I came back here, I met a young lady. I married the young lady. I taught that year in De Funiak Springs. I taught science and math. Then I started attending Florida A&M University, where I graduated in 1959 with a bachelor's degree in administration and supervision.

B:What an interesting life. So you left the military and eventually married. Do you mind saying who this person was you married?

J:A young lady named **Juanita Fordham**.

B:From where?

J:From Tallahassee.

B:You enrolled at Florida Agriculture and Mechanical College for Negroes. You graduated in 1959.

J:I graduated in 1959. I enrolled in 1956.

B:That was to get your last two years?

J:That was my last two years.

B:You go a degree then in what?

J:I got a degree in supervision and administration.

B:Why was the reason for changing from math and science and going into administration?

J:I wanted to become a principal because the salaries were better. Of course, I had an undergraduate degree in political science--at least that was my minor. Administration and supervision was my major.

B: Was Bill Jackson unique in his family to have all of this ability? Of nine brothers and sisters, were any of the others as academically motivated as you were?

J: There were nine of us, and six of us graduated from college.

B: What do you contribute that to?

J: I think a good family background.

B: What do you call a good family background?

J: Where mothers and fathers insisted that you excel in whatever you did and demanded excellence.

B: Did your parents do that?

J: Yes.

B: Why do you think they had that desire for you all?

J: What people said then was I want you to live a better life than I lived.

B: So that was one of the motivating factors?

J: That was one of the motivating factors.

B: You finished in 1959 from Florida A&M University [with a degree] in administration. What was your first job after then?

J: My first job after then was a junior high school. I call it a junior high school, but it was the first through eighth grade, in De Funiak Springs as principal in the outlying section.

B: Now I have heard that in the early 1940s and 1950s, many times principals taught as well. Did you teach during that time?

J: Yes, I taught math and science.

B: Did you? Was it a very large school?

J: It was not large. It was four of us and a teaching principal.

B: It is said that in the early 1940s and 1950s that black schools, or shall I say negro schools, were poorly equipped with supplies and equipment. Teachers many times did the very best,

although they were not the most qualified people. Was that true during your first term as principal of this junior high in De Funiak Springs?

J:It was pretty much true, but I think most of the people who worked then were highly motivated. In addition to being highly motivated, I think they were concerned about being the best that they could possibly be. We knew that we had to be competitive in order to even hold a job.

B:As principal of this school, did you ever have meetings with the white administrators, your white superintendent, in the 1950s?

J:I met occasionally with the superintendent in his office. We did not have meetings where both white and black principals met together.

B:You did not?

J:We did not.

B:Were you pretty much in charge of your school?

J:I was in charge of my school, yes.

B:So are you saying to me that after you were hired, you were pretty much given self-direction to do what you had to do in your school?

J:Yes. The only exception I know to that is my brother who was a principal also, in Milton, Florida. He never met in a segregated group. He met with the white principals. He was a principal also.

B:Now was he older or younger?

J:He was the younger brother.

B:And his name was what?

J:**Theodus Roosevelt Jackson.**

B:So he was the one who was on campus while you were at Florida Memorial College?

J:Yes, he came there while I was there during my sophomore year.

B:We are going to jump a few minutes from that period. Did you ever think that you would see a period in history during your lifetime where you had a mixed environment, black and white together, in an educational setting?

J:At that time, I am not too sure I gave it too much thought. I was dedicated to what I was doing, which was to see that black boys and girls got the best education possible so they could be competitive, so [that] whatever became of them, they would be qualified to perform at the highest level.

B:How long were you at this junior high?

J:I was there for four years and then I became principal of Chipley, Florida, which was more like high school in 1951. That is when I hired **Simon Johnson**.

B:Was it 1951 or 1961?

J:1951.

B:So you had gone from a junior high for four years, and then became the president of a senior high. This went from eighth grade to twelfth grade?

J:That is right.

B:Did you have a football team?

J:Yes.

B:Basketball team?

J:Yes.

B:So you had a full academic environment?

J:Full academic environment.

B:What about curriculum for your students?

J:While I was in Chipley, Florida, most of the individuals were competitive. Most of our kids from _____ high school were competitive. On the senior examinations, they scored comparable with the white kids of that county.

B:What do you attribute this to?

J:A good educational program, dedication on the part of the faculty, and leadership. I consider leadership to be most important. Leadership and of course individuals who were concerned about what takes place in the school system and in the community so far as improving the conditions of black people at that time.

B:As a principal, would say that you were an authoritarian.

J:I must say that I think that I was pretty much an authoritarian.

B:In your school.

J:In my school.

B:Did you hire your teachers?

J:I hired my teachers.

B:You had the right to do that?

J:Yes.

B:What about evaluating the teachers--did you do that as well?

J:The supervisor and I worked together in evaluating the teachers. I made all the recommendations.

B:You made all the recommendations. We are talking about a separate system for negroes and whites. Was the supervisor you were talking about a black individual?

J:It was a white individual.

B:White? How interesting. Was there a separate program outlined for negro students in the school system, [one] for whites, or was it the same?

J:I developed the program. They had guidelines from the state of what a program should be. I developed the program based on the guidelines in terms of subject matter from the state recommendations.

B:Who did the hiring of you?

J:The superintendent hired me.

B:So you had a double system, but you were hired by the white superintendent?

J:That is right.

B:Then you did all of the hiring of your faculty and administrators in your school?

J:I did.

B:Do you feel that you had a very topnotch school and program?

J:Everyone said that. That was the only reason I was promoted. People saw the quality of work that was being done by the students who attended the school.

B:When you left Chipley, where did you go?

J:I came to Ocala.

B:How long were you in Chipley before you came to Ocala?

J:Six years.

B:Why did you move from Chipley to Ocala?

J:I just thought I had done all I could possibly do, and I wanted to do something else.

B:What was that?

J:I came here and served one year as principal of **Howard High School**.

B:Were you asked to come here or did you apply to come here? How did you get here?

J:**D.E. Williams** was supervisor of what they called negro education at the time.

B:D.E. Williams?

J:D.E. Williams indicated to me that they were looking for a principal in Ocala. At that time, I had been employed previously four years prior to that as principal of Howard High School. I refused to come because they would not give me any guarantee that my wife could have a job. So I refused the job at that time, four years prior to that. Principal _____ named **Hartsfield**, and he came. I think he was here for four years and he died. After his death, I was contacted. When I was contacted, I came here and the superintendent asked me if I was interested and wanted to come. He talked to me about the kinds of recommendations he had

received about the quality of my work and my performance. So he said that he would most certainly like for me to accept the job if I would. At that time, I told him that I would accept it since I had previously refused it after having been employed at [Chipley].

B:Let us talk about D.E. Williams. You mentioned that he was the superintendent for negro education. Excuse me, supervisor.

J:He was supervisor of negro education in the state of Florida.

B:What does that mean?

J:That means that he visited the schools to determine how effective they operated, and the quality and performance of their students. He talked with me about it. I think that at that time, he made most of the recommendations when there was a vacancy in a black school in the state of Florida.

B:Did he live in Ocala?

J:No. He lived in Tallahassee.

B:So in essence, he was like the counterpart to the white person in the education system for the state?

J:That is right.

B:I see. You mentioned to me that you did not accept the job in Ocala previously because your wife was not offered a job here. What does she teach?

J:She was a business teacher.

B:Were there any children as a result of this marriage?

J:Two.

B:Their names?

J:**Cheryl Lynn Jackson** who was an honor student and graduated from Florida State University in mass communication. She worked in Tampa, I think at Channel 13. Then she was

employed by **Tony Brown**, and of course she is one of the co-producers of **Tony Brown's Journal** and she has worked, I think, about thirteen or fourteen years in that position.

B:And your son?

J:My daughter graduated from Florida State University. My son graduated from Florida A&M University with a degree in political science.

B:What is his name?

J:**William H. Jackson, Jr.**

B:And what is he doing now?

J:He is presently employed in the nuclear lab at Princeton University.

B:So Bill Jackson had a wife that was in the education system, you were a principal, and produced two quality children. Now you are in Ocala. You came here as the principal of what, Howard?

J:Howard High School.

W:Was this school larger than the school you had at Chipley?

J:Yes.

B:So I assume with each move you made, you went to a larger school. We are talking about large in the sense of size, student body, and faculty.

J:That is right.

B:What did you bring to each school?

J:I consider myself an organizer. I consider myself an implementor. I think most importantly I was a person who evaluated prior to the time I made decisions. I was most certainly concerned about the conditions of black people, whether or not they received a quality education, and whether they could perform once they go on the jobs, whatever jobs were available to them. I have been fortunate. I had a lot of help, mostly from white individuals because of my ability. Wherever I was employed, I performed at a high level. In order to be successful

wherever you are working, you must have the ability, if you are working for somebody, to make them money and to improve their businesses.

B:So that was one of the focuses.

J:That was one of the focuses. Wherever I worked as a young fellow, I was always promoted because I knew in order to be retained, you had to perform at a high level. You had to make money for other people. In the kinds of jobs I was employed in, as a bartender, a weeder, and all this kind of thing, I understood that you had make money. I understood that you have to perform and make money. I was willing to do whatever was necessary to be successful.

B:So being a principal of a school was actually generating funds for the school board?

J:Being principal for the school, not generating funds to the school. I am talking about prior to the time I became a principal. My experience as a young man working since I have been on my own, since I was seventeen-years-old. Nobody ever gave me anything since I was seventeen years old. Consequently, after my father's death, my brother and I had to rear the family.

B:So you understood the value of work.

J:We understood the value of work.

B:Do you feel that you got this training or this concept from when you helped your father as a carpenter as a boy?

J:Yes. Most certainly. I guess my father was a pretty caring person, and since I was the oldest son, he always took me everywhere with him. If he went to the shop, he took me with him. Wherever he went, I went.

B:We are talking about a period where you had an all-black environment. Segregation was very prevalent. Did you encounter any problems being a black man who was highly intelligent and an administrative principal during this period?

J:This is what was said by the supervisor who was D.E. Williams. My brother only had one job. One of the schools is named for him in Milton, Florida, T.R. Jackson High School. I guess it

has something to do with your background and your family expectations. Since that was true and we came from a religious background too, I do not consider myself a person who is radical in anything. I am a person who is pretty conservative. I am a person who had the feeling that everyone has dignity and worth, no matter who you are. I never had any difficulty, to tell you the truth, with white people wherever I worked. Any difficulty I had, I stood up for the principle. I have only once witnessed some difficulty, and I stood up for my rights. It was him that backed down, not me.

B:So being able to be successful in this period dealt with the values and principles that were established in the home and how you handled situations?

J:That is right.

B:Let us talk about one thing. Did you see a gradual improvement in the pay when you first started teaching and the pay that you have now at Howard?

J:I have seen a gradual improvement in all. I made more money than the superintendent of this county about the third year I was president. **Joe Fodice** and I at least began not making more money than the superintendent. I only served as principal of the high school one year. When they got ready to select someone for president...

B:President of what?

J:Of Hampton Junior College.

B:Here in Ocala?

J:In Ocala. I had not planned to stay here because my name was on the list of individuals who could make application for any of the junior colleges that were opening. I had not planned to stay, but when they selected the community college board, the superintendent said, I have the best man in the state here. If he will accept the job, I would like to recommend him. I did not make application for the job. He sent for me and asked me if I would consider the job because of the quality of my work, the organization, and the school system here. Prior to my

coming here, they had not had anybody who control either the teachers or the students. So after one year, I had organized the school. I had the teachers working together and working effectively. So the superintendent said well, I would like for you all to consider him. He sent for me. I told him I would consider it on the following condition: since you are going to have a dual system of education and there is not anything I can do about it presently, I will accept it on the condition that I can make this community college comparable to or better than Central Florida Community College. I am almost sure, based on what took place, that mine was operated better.

B:Really? What year was this, sir?

J:I was president from 1958-1966.

B:Let me go back for a moment. So Hampton Community College was a junior college for negro boys and girls. Central Florida Community College was in the city as well?

J:Yes. Both of them were organized the same year.

B:So you became the first president of that institution?

J:That is right.

B:Had you gone back and gotten more education?

J:Oh yes.

B:Tell me about that now.

J:I got a master's degree in administration and supervision from Florida A&M University. Then I went to Columbia University for further study. I studied there for two years. I then went to Indiana University and studied. Then I helped to integrate Peabody College for Teachers in Nashville, Tennessee. I was working on a doctorate degree in curriculum and supervision.

B:Did you ever have the desire to go to the University of Florida here in Gainesville?

J:No, I never thought about it.

B:Why?

J:I never thought about it because I did not have time to go through any hassle in order to attend an institution since better institutions were already available.

B:I see. Excellent answer. Did you get involved during the 1960s in the Civil Rights Movement?

J:Yes.

B:How did you get involved?

J:Number one, whenever the movement started, I attended all the meetings that they held in this community as a means of integrating the schools. In fact, I met the superintendent. In the beginning, I did not believe in segregating schools, but it was something over which I had no control. They knew my position. I never lied to anyone about what my position was in anything. I merely told them what my position was. I am going to be a law-abiding citizen, but it does not mean that I would not be trying to affect changes in the conditions.

B:I see. Tell me some of the things you think you had that were positive that came about in your administration as a principal. You mentioned that when you came here, you got the students and teachers in order.

J:Number one, when I came, I understood the conditions that had existed here because I had been hired as a principal for four years previous to that. They would not guarantee my wife a job, so I refused to come because I was happy where I was. Of course, they wanted me and no one wanted me to leave. I just felt like I had done all I could possibly do there, and I wanted to improve myself also. So by virtue of the fact I wanted to improve myself and largely improve myself, I decided to accept this job. There were a number of jobs prior to the time **Boston** went to--that tells you that I was not too sophisticated in the early days **[[Please clarify thought]]**. I thought that if you did a good job, everybody understood that. When a vacancy was open in our landmark, the **Jones' High School**, I went down and I made application. The superintendent called me and told me that he selected me from among the groups who had made application. Since I did not know that you had to go to D.E. Williams,

who was the black supervisor of negro education, I just thought you made application to the superintendent. So the superintendent called me and said, Jackson, your name was not on that list sent to me by D.E. Williams. We have offered the job to Boston. So I went to Tallahassee and sat down with Mr. Williams and told him. He said, well Jackson, you know everybody is happy with your employment and I did not think you wanted to leave since you were happy. I told him, you know, after the same period of time, I figured I had done all I could possibly do there in order to improve myself. You know I am not satisfied just to have a job. I would like to improve myself. From then on, my name was on every list and went out for any job.

B:So you literally had to deal with Mr. Williams as well as the superintendent in whatever county you were in to get the position?

J:That is right. They would accept recommendations from him since he was the supervisor of negro education, which is what they called it at that time.

B:Was he a highly educated man--D.E. Williams?

J:He had a master's degree, I know. I also know he used to be a principal in that little town adjacent here going north.

B:Micanopy?

J:No. On Twenty-seventh.

B:I do not know what you are talking about.

J:What is that little town in Levy County?

B:Williston?

J:Williston. He was a principal at Williston.

B:I did not know that, that is interesting. Now, you became president of the community college. Was this a star in your crown for you?

J:I guess I was always ambitious. I took it in stride because all I was doing was making application.

In terms of quality of work, I was not worried about that.

B:Prior to that year, there were no junior colleges for negroes?

J:No junior colleges.

B:So a person actually finished high school and went to Florida Memorial, Florida A&M, or Bethune-Cookman and got their two years there and/or four years?

J:That is right.

B:What brought about this requirement at this point or this need?

J:In terms of the community that I lived in?

B:Yes.

J:There was an act passed by the legislature creating the community colleges in Florida. When they created it, since they had segregated high schools and elementary schools, I guess they thought that they had to make provisions for blacks at that level also. This is the way they had dual systems, so they also created a dual system of junior colleges.

B:I see. Let me ask you another question. As principal in Chipley, Ocala, and also in De Funiak Springs, were you very much involved as a leader in the community?

J:Yes.

B:Tell me how.

J:I was involved in most of the things that took place in the community, clubs, organizations, and fraternities. I have always been involved politically because it has been my impression that the only way you can affect change is to deal with the political system. The political system, as such, controls the economics of any community. Do not let anybody fool you. Census controls the economic system. That is where you get on the totem pole, how much money you earn, or anything else. You have to protect your self-interests.

B:At either of the schools that you were in, were you able to add any buildings or do any additions to the buildings while you were there?

J:Oh yes.

B:Which of the three schools would you say that you did a lot for that campus?

J:I did a lot for the campus in Chipley, and I did a lot for the campus in Ocala.

B:Did you? Give me two or three examples of what you did while you were there.

J:They had no library when I came here. I got a library. Of course they had a poorly equipped science department, so I got that. I got rid of all the outdated books they had the first year I came here. I was not going to be accountable for books that were out of adoption, out of use, and this kind of thing. So I packed them up and I took them back to the superintendent's office, and asked him to provide me with whatever resources were available to get new books. I also got the books that were still in use but out of adoption. See, there are two groups. There are books that are the new adoption, and then there are books that are in use but out of adoption. I carried them all back.

B:Did you have a problem getting that done?

J:No.

B:You did not?

J:I made all the decisions. When I was here and when I was any place else, the decisions were made by me. People were accustomed to going to the superintendent and the board members. I had it understood that when I accept a job, I have one boss--the superintendent. The board is his boss, and I am only responsible to the superintendent, nobody else. I guess that generated some ill will in the community. I would not accept the job if I was not completely in charge.

B:So that was understood--if you had a position, you were completely in charge in all aspects of the program?

J:That is right.

B:All of your administrators had to come through you?

J:Everybody came through me.

B:I see. Did you have to have the communities support, financially, to help you do things on your different campuses?

J:I hate to tell you this.

B>Please tell me.

J:One of the supervisors told me, Jackson, you used all the money that is available to you. You know most of the principals here think you can make some good principles not to use the money that has been allocated.

B:But Jackson used all the money?

J:I used the money that they did not use.

B:Did you?

J:Here.

B:So you feel that you were very significant and very successful. Excellent.

J:People used to come on the campus when school was in session. Everybody was in class. There was not any running around on the campus. If the teachers could not control the students, they could not work with me.

B:Oh they could not? I was getting ready to ask you that question. Did you have an orderly campus?

J:Orderly? Did I tell you that people who came to the campus were always amazed. They did not see no running, no hollering, no nothing. Teachers were in class and they worked. They came to school on time, and they performed when they were there because they did not know when they may see me.

B:What about attrition or maintaining the students on campus? Did you have a good rate of graduations?

J:Yes. If the kids are in class, and you are not instructing them, or if the students did not pass the test, then the teachers are not doing their jobs. Once I evaluated the return of test scores, based on that, we knew what we needed to improve. If the teachers could not improve it, I got someone who could. When I came here, they had one person who taught badly and was not qualified. They had nothing but general math. I put in algebra, trigonometry, and everything else, and hired teachers to do it.

B:I see. Were you able to get quality teachers?

J:Yes.

B:So there was a supply here in Florida for you?

J:If they were not in Florida, I got them from everywhere else.

B:Let me ask you a question. So Florida A&M, Florida Memorial, and Bethune-Cookman were producing quality persons to teach at the high school level. When you went to the junior college, you also had the quality there? Or, did the state provide incentives for people to go back to school to get advanced training to be a teacher in the community colleges?

J:At one time, before there was integration in the schools, yes. **Lurine Shelman** has a doctorate degree.

B:Who are you talking about now?

J:**Mr. Eddie Joshel**. At Central Florida, I wrote grants that got teaching fellows to come and replace them while they got their degree.

B:So there was some incentives for persons, through you, to write proposals for them to go away to get advanced degrees.

J:That is right.

B:Let me ask you a question, when you became president of the community college...

J:Did you see **Simon Johnson**?

B:Yes, Dr. Johnson at the University of Florida?

J:I gave him his first job in Chipley.

B:Did you?

J:I brought him here. I sent him down there.

B:Did you have to have any special training to be president of the junior college?

J:Not any special training. Once you get the both the theory of administration and implementation of the theory, it is the same everywhere when it comes to administration. It does not change. The only thing that changes is the theory.

B:Now was Hampton Community College a very large college? About how many students?

J:It was the second largest in the state.

B:Really? Approximately how many students, sir?

J:Wait a minute, I have to look in this book now.

B:I can find out later.

J:All right, well you look in that book

B:The book you are talking now is titled Black Florida and this deals with Florida education?

J:It deals with the county and deals with something in Florida education. Only St. Petersburg was larger than us.

B:Let me ask you where was your campus located?

J:Adjacent to the high school.

B:Did they build a new campus?

J:They were building there, yes. They knew that they were not going to be in existence that long. It was understood that integration would take place in not too far of a distance.

B:So it was known that the community colleges or the junior colleges would only be in existence for a short period of time?

J:A short period of time.

B:So you had Hampton Community College on the campus with Hampton High?

J:On the campus with Howard High School.

B:Howard High.

J:Originally, we called it Howard Junior College, but we changed the name to Hampton Junior College.

B:I see. Now, were students able to come from all over the state or did they have to be in a certain section?

J:They could come from all over the state. In fact we recruited. At that time, they had no community college in Orlando, _____, Maitland, and also Polk County, all the surrounding counties. Gibbs Junior College [second Black public junior college, 1957, located in St. Petersburg] and I recruited them. Gibbs Junior College was in existence one year before us, but the next year we created. I think there was one other community college in Daytona Beach, and Hampton in 1958.

B:I see. From you going from principal from Howard or Hampton, which one was it? Howard or Hampton?

J:Howard High.

B:Howard High. Was there a big ceremonial? Did you have an inauguration and support?

J:No.

B:There was not?

J:No. When I left that year, I was responsible for recruiting and hiring a principal. Then the principal reported to me, not to the superintendent.

B:Now, wait. The year that you were finishing from here to be president...

J:For one year.

B:You were appointed president of the community college. So you did the hiring of the person who replaced you?

J:That is right.

B:And that person answered to you?

J:That is right.

B:Was that the only high school for negro children in Ocala?

J:No. In Marion County.

B:In Marion County?

J:No.

B:It was not?

J:No.

B:Was there more than one in Ocala?

J:There was not more than one high school in Ocala.

B:That was the only one?

J:One in Ocala, but they had three in the county.

B:I see, but this person answered to you?

J:Four in the county, but that person answered to me.

B:How long did that last?

J:It lasted until I left--until we were integrated in 1966.

B:So you actually had to hire your faculty at the community college as well?

J:I hired my faculty, but I was only responsible for getting a good principal. He was to report to me rather than the superintendent. If he had problems, he talked to me about it.

B:Let me ask you a question. Did you have a difficult time that first year getting enough students to come to the community college when it opened?

J:We had a difficult time with recruitment initially because during that time integration was taking place and the community was opposed to it.

B:You said the community was opposed to the community college being opened here?

J:Yes.

B:Why?

J:At that time, that was during the years of our turmoil.

B:The Civil Rights Movement.

J:The Civil Rights Movement. We were seeking toward integration. Even though I did not want it, if it was going to happen anyway, I thought that I was the best person for it. I may as well accept it, rather than let somebody come who may not have the interest and dedication that I would have because I did not want to be in a second-rate institution. I did not want to be an institution that somebody was just coming to because it was a position and fair. I have seen too much of that.

B:Now, were you given any direction by the powers that be or the state of Florida, [as far as] what to do with this community college?

J:I went to meet with Wattenbarger [James L. Wattenbarger, Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus, University of Florida] and his assistant. I remember Dr. Wattenbarger asked me, do you have any questions, Bill? I said, presently I do not have any. I am doing the research that is necessary, I think, that will qualify me to know what should be done. Of course, I am going to do whatever is necessary to know how to do it. I said, but presently, I do not. He said, well you must be the smartest individual I have ever dealt with.

B:That is what he told you?

J:Yes. [He said], are you maybe **above** the thing, Bill. I said, well you know, you can never tell. I said, you know I do not think you should ask questions just to be asking some questions.

What is to be known that I do not know, I will learn. What I already know, there is no use in me asking questions about.

B:Were you given pretty much all the authority to run the community college the way you chose to?

J:All.

B:All?

J:All.

B:You did not have a board to direct you?

J:I do not understand how you would expect a board made up of citizens and citizens who had no background for this kind of thing to really be advising me on anything other than public relations.

B:I see. Excellent. Did you do recruiting?

J:I did recruiting.

B:Did you travel all over the state to get students?

J:No. I traveled in the central Florida area.

B:Central Florida. What kind of students were you looking for?

J:I was looking for students who really wanted to improve themselves, to get an education, and who would go back into the communities and improve the communities.

B:Was it perceived that Bill Jackson was the white man's boy, that he was doing what they told him to do for negro education? Or you were your own man?

J:I have always been my own man.

B:I see.

J:Anybody who was in my way will tell you that. Really, this is factual. All the other people who had been there would go down to the board and talk or to the superintendent to talk. Then he is upset and he is running over here to get this or that. People have come to me and said,

Mr. Jackson, we can help you. If you can help me to keep my job, you can also help me to lose it. I do not need any help. God is my help.

B:So Bill Jackson pretty much ran his programs?

J:I have been the responsible individual in everything I have ever done. I am responsible for all of my actions. I have never gone in the community and tried to recruit anybody to be supportive of me. I want my work to be my support.

B:That first year, were you successful in getting a good faculty and good student body?

J:I got a good faculty and I recruited some good students. In fact, the Division of Community Colleges will tell you that I had the best of everything in terms of curriculum, finance, organization, everything. I had the best in the state.

B:The best?

J:The best. When I went to Central Florida, I made all the reports. I made them, and two or three times I have gotten cited for the best reports submitted to Central Florida.

B:So you were at Hampton Community College until 1966?

J:Yes. I was there from 1958 to 1966.

B:Is there any one of two things that stand out in your mind, that you are very proud of that you did at that community college?

J:Yes. I am proud of the fact that I developed academic programs and also vocational programs that improved the quality of the students lives. In addition to that, individuals who transferred from Hampton to the universities--Florida State University, Florida A&M, and the University of Florida--lost no credit. I have proof to this; the lady will tell you. When she went to the University of Florida, she lost no credit. They wanted to know who prepared this curriculum in elementary education for youth.

B:So you actually produced quality students that were able to transfer to other institutions?

J:That is right.

B:Now the entire time you were at Hampton, were you an all-black faculty and an all-black student body?

J:Let me see. I think I had one white faculty member. I had one white student.

B:So you did not have a second-rate education? You were producing quality students?

J:I did that in high school, in junior college, and at Central Florida.

B:So let me get some points established. When you were principal of your different schools and the president of the community college, you did not have problems with behavior?

J:So far as I was concerned, I did not have any problems that I could not resolve.

B:Were you a corporate punisher? Did you believe in the corporate punishment of students?

J:Oh yes.

B:And did you use a paddle?

J:Oh yes.

B:You did?

J:Yes.

B:Do you think that helped?

J:It helped some students. Listen, those who do not need it will recognize that they will get it, and they do not try anything. Listen, I think what happens now with most administrators and the reason they have problems is that they are inconsistent. You must be consistent in what you do and what you expect of people. I also think that if you are on the job just to earn money and it is a job just to earn a living, you have to have some dedication to what you are doing. A lack of dedication on the part of both administrators and teachers means that you are not going to get the desired results in terms of quality. Students must know that you care. That does not mean that you have to agree with them, or that you have to permit them to do what they want to do. My wife will tell you everywhere I go they say, you know this was a tough

man. They hug me and say, you know one thing, I would not be what I am now if it had not been for you.

B:That makes you feel good, does it not?

J:Yes.

B:So you were an authoritarian, you believed in corporate punishment, you paddled, and you fired and hired people. You fired people, did you not?

J:Yes.

B:A lot, because they did not do their job.

J:Yes.

B:A student could not sit in your school and not learn. He had to learn.

J:Had to learn.

B:What if you found one that could not learn?

J:No.

B:You could not find one that could not learn?

J:No.

B:So you are saying to me that every boy and girl that was in your program [learned]?

J:I could find some who did not want to learn. I found a lot who did not want to learn. They could stay in the classroom because the teachers understood this: if they did not get results, they did not have a job.

B:So you are saying to me that you took that boy or girl who did not want to learn, and that teacher knew that they had to produce and get that student motivated somehow to make him learn?

J:That is right. There is not anybody who cannot learn. They may not learn all the things you want them to learn, but they can most certainly can learn how to be respectful, how to listen, and how to do the things that are necessary to do in order to improve their lives.

B:Now at the junior college, I guess you did not have athletic programs, did you?

J:Yes.

B:You did?

J:Basketball.

B:Was your team very competitive?

J:Oh yes.

B:Let me ask you this question. Since you seem as if you had control of everything, I guess that person who was in charge of your athletic program knew that they had to achieve too, right?

J:Yes.

B:So you did not want a losing team?

J:I did not want a losing team. I did not want to lose anything. Everything you do, you ought to try to be the best.

B:That is it. Were you?

J:Oh yes.

B:So you were very proud at the community college of your academic program and vocational programs. What kind of vocational programs did you have?

J:I had brick masonry, carpentry, and electronics. I think that was about it. We also had mechanics.

B:So you believe that there is a need for academic excellence as well as vocational.

J:As well as vocational. All people are not going to deal with academics. They are going to deal with just learning to earn a living. Consequently, everyone, I do not care what you do, has to have command of communication [skills]. You have to be able to do mathematical reasoning and computation. You have to have command of the communication skills. If you do not have that, you cannot succeed anyway.

B:I see. Did you have many programs, I guess at the community college and in the high school, for those children who were slow-learners?

J:There are people who have not been exposed, and we may call them slow-learners. Because people have not been exposed, we identify them. I think we label people too quickly. Consequently, once you put a label on a person, he believes that it is true. I think labeling gets us into more difficulty than anything else because we tend to buy the fact. If you and I had bought the fact that the majority group thought we could not learn, we would not have learned anything. All other blacks in this country bought the fact that people said we cannot learn. I have a little nephew. My brother was in the military, and he is in Oregon. They were not satisfied with my nephew's performance, so they went to the school. They said, he is making C's, A's, and B's. My brother said, that is not satisfactory; he should be making A's. Now this young fellow became an exchange student. He taught at Colgate in foreign language--Spanish. He graduated from Colgate, and got a law degree from Harvard.

B:So this is the one that they said was making C's and B's, and the father said that he wanted him to make A's.

J:That is right.

B:So you are saying if you demand from that person, you will get more.

J:If you demand from that person, do you hear what I am saying?

B:I hear what you are saying.

J:He got a law degree in corporate law.

B:So you are saying that you do not believe in labeling students?

J:I do not believe in labeling students.

B:So in your programs at the community college, did you have different abilities together?

J:Yes. Average students and all were in the same class. You learn by association. If you are associating with smart kids, you are going to learn something. If everyone reads on the same level, what are you going to learn? You learn by associating with people who know more than you know. You cannot learn from anyone who knows less than you.

B:Was President Jackson's office open to students to come in and talk?

J:All the time. All you would have to do is follow me over the state. We went to Lakeland and Leesburg the Sunday before last. We went to a dedicatory service for **Prim and Williams**, the naming of the building. A young lady who graduated from Hampton Junior College [was there], and my wife was with me. She [the young lady who graduated from Hampton Junior College] just ran up to me and hugged me. [She said], Mr. Jackson, I am so glad to see you, you know what you told me? She had been married and had an unsuccessful marriage when she came to the school. She said, Mr. Jackson, I just wanted to be sure to let you know how much I appreciate you. She came and she wanted student assistance. I asked her if she was married, she said, no, she is separated. I said, why are you going under someone's name if you are not married to him? What you need to do is go under your maiden name, get some assistance. She went with [her] maiden name, got assistance, and graduated. She said, I just wanted to tell you how much I appreciate what you said to me that day.

B:So your office was accessible to students?

J:All the students.

B:And you were able to help them?

J:Listen, I have a young fellow who I recruited out of Orlando, Orange County. He is a professor at Florida Atlantic University with a Ph.D. He did not have a dime. I went and got him and brought him here. I got him a room and put him up. I got him assistance. I did this for all students.

B:So if you saw potential in a student, you went out, got that student, and gave him that push?

J:That is right. He is a professor at Florida Atlantic University. His name is Charles _____.

Those are only a few of the stories of successful students.

B:I bet you have many, do you not?

J:I have many. Kids learn because you think they can. They achieve because you think they can.

B:Do you think you were ever too hard on anybody?

J:No.

B:You were not?

J:My wife will tell you, even grown people. They come up to me and hug me. They tell my wife how tough I was.

B:But you still demanded.

J:And loved.

B:Well let me ask you, did you demand the very best from your children?

J:Yes. Oh yes. My son said to me recently, daddy, you know I would not have gone to college if I did not know you were going to demand it. My daughter was always brilliant, but he did not like working hard. He knew I demanded it. If he came to me crying about something, I would talk to him. He views me not as my son, but as my friend.

B:I hear you. Very good. So you were there until 1966. What happened in 1966? Did the state close the community college?

J:Yes, they closed it to integrate the community college. All of the persons who had tenure transferred to Central Florida Community College. They were better faculty than they had at Central Florida Community College. They were superior to them, in fact.

B:I see. Where did you go?

J:I went there as the assistant dean of academic affairs.

B:How long were you there, sir?

J:I was there twenty years.

B:Of the jobs you had, which one did you enjoy the most?

J:Well I always enjoy what I have control of because I can determine the destiny.

B:So your years from 1958 to 1966, at the junior college, were those years you enjoyed?

J:I enjoyed where I was because I made a contribution. I did things that nobody else could or would do.

B:Like what for instance?

J:Number one, I wrote the first real catalogue that they had at Central Florida.

B:So Central Florida was actually established in 1958, the same time as Hampton?

J:The same time as Hampton.

B:And you got the first catalogue after you went there in 1966?

J:I mean wrote the first real catalogue. I studied the California system. I got all the catalogues I could get, and talked with all the presidents I could talk with. They had the best junior college system anywhere. I merely studied, researched, and copied, I guess, after them.

B:Let me ask you a question. I got a little away for the moment. Were you ever able to meet with all the community college presidents in the state of Florida, during your tenure when you were president of Hampton, between 1958 and 1966? Or did you have a separate system?

J:We had a separate system and we met together. At another time, all of us met together. Once a year, there was an organization made up of community college presidents.

B:Did they ever visit your campus, and did you visit their campuses? Did the other presidents come to your campus to see what you were doing and you visited their campuses to see what they were doing?

J:I visited the other campuses to see what other people were doing. I visited a lot of white campuses. In fact, I have been a number of consulting teams for the white community colleges--Key West and all around.

B:Really? So [during] your years at Central Florida Community College as the dean of academic affairs, what major contributory efforts did you make there besides producing the first major catalogue?

J: Number one, I became director or dean of research and development. I was responsible for all the reports that came to the college and left. Even though somebody else may have done it, they had to come by me. I reviewed them and sent them. I was responsible for the coordination of those that I did not make, which somebody else was responsible for or whatever portion they were responsible for. I was also responsible for writing all grants. I got a tremendous amount of money. I had a program...

B: What did it do?

J: Wait just a minute. High school students would be enrolled in it. I cannot think of what it was called. Anyway, it was here for about three or four years. They were on most campuses. There were only two in the United States.

B: What did it do?

J: It took high school students, and they attended classes during the summer.

B: Upward Bound?

J: Upward Bound. We had the Upward Bound Program here. That is right.

B: Did you? Upward Bound.

J: There were only two in the country. I wrote one, and got one here. It was here for four years. Upward Bound.

B: Upward Bound, where you brought in high school students on the weekend to get academic and college programs, to get them motivated for college.

J: It was here about four years. Because of the jealousy on the part of teachers because most of the black teachers were employed in the program, **[[please finish thought]]**. You can understand that because they had a larger number of black students in the program than they had white kids. One board member was dissatisfied with it, so the government gave it to South Florida. I wrote the program.

B: You did?

J:Yes. I wrote the program which got a lot of equipment and everything else. I used to write all the programs. There is fellow named Nickens [John Marcus Nickens, Professor of Education] at the University of Florida. Do you know John Nickens? He and I used to consult all the time. We used to go everywhere.

B:So at this point, did you get all this knowledge by self-direction. By sitting down, reading, and researching?

J:I went to a lot of good institutions. I went to Indiana University, and I was a good student. I am not bragging, but I was a good student when I was young.

B:You still are. You still have a good memory.

J:[I went to] Columbia University. I helped to integrate Peabody. The professor there wanted me to stay, but I said I had family difficulties, so I had to leave.

B:Did you end up getting your Ph.D.?

J:No. I ended up getting a specialist.

B:Specialist, but so close to it. Now the new wife that you have now, her name is?

J:Peachy W.

B:Peachy W. Jackson. When did you marry her?

J:I married her in 1965.

B:Now what is her profession? Is she an educator too?

J:She is an educator. She is a musician, an accomplished musician. She plays the piano. She also had a string orchestra at the elementary level.. She was also at one time acting supervisor, without the title as such, of the music programs in Marion County.

B:Where did you meet her?

J:I met her the same year that my divorce became final. That must have been 1964.

B:Was she teaching here in Marion County?

J:No. She was teaching in Palm Beach County. I met her through my sister.

B:I see. Now you mentioned that several of your brothers and sisters graduated from college. What are their areas of specialty? Were they all in education, your brothers and sisters?

J:Yes, yes. I have a sister who is in charge of childhood education in Palm Beach County, which is the largest and the best in the state.

B:What is her name?

J:Her name is **Ida Elizabeth Wesley**.

B:Give me the other sisters. What are the other brothers and sisters doing?

J:I have a sister who is retired in Panama City. She was an elementary school teacher.

B:Her name?

J:**Evelyn Campbell**. I have another sister who was a teacher. Her name is **Denise**; she has been married again.

B:When I come back, I will let you write down all the names and give me that because I would like to all the brother's and sister's names.

J:My baby brother--my brother next to me--and I were a year apart. He was a principal in Milton, Florida. He has a school named for him. My baby brother spent twenty years in army and retired. He just retired as a teacher in Palm Beach County.

B:What was his name?

J:His name is **Jim** [interruption in tape].

B:Of all the things you have done here, why do we not have a building named in your honor?

J:Well, I think I came from a different kind of background and a different community. The community that I came from, even though it was a small community that I was born in, the attitudes of blacks in that community **[[please finish thought]]**. They were home owners and land and property owners. To a great extent, they depended not on other people; they depended on themselves to earn a living. Most of them were home owners, property owners, and this kind of thing. I think the community may have been a little more different because

it was small. Even though it was segregated, there was much more communication between the whites and the blacks. I go back to the town now, and I sit down and talk with whites and tell them that I came from this community. They tell me everything that has taken place since I have been gone, which has been almost forty years. We sit down and talk, and they know my relatives and this kind of thing. Really, I guess it is the way people grow up--if you grow up thinking you are different. I never thought I was different from anybody else.

B:Never thought.

J:Never thought. I never thought, I am inferior to white people. I always thought I was equal to anybody else. The fact that I was black was just coincidental.

B:Coincidental, excellent. During your period of being an administrator, did you ever have the privilege to work with Mrs. Bethune, Mary McLeod Bethune [President, Bethune-Cookman College]?

J:No, I have only attended meetings at the institution where she was present and spoke.

B:I see, but you never really had much dealing with her?

J:I never had much dealing with her.

B:Did you have much dealing with your politicians for the state of Florida when you were president of the college?

J:Oh yes. I have always been politically active, since before I went in the service and after I came out of the service. I understand politics, and I understand the value of politics. I understand that politics control the economic system. Since politics control the economic system, it also controls my life. Consequently, in order to get my piece of the pie, you must become involved; you must contribute too. I am not talking about just voting. You must be involved in the selection of people and voting for people who at least support the things that impact on your life too since we live in a pretty racist society. When I say racist, I am not talking about white only; we are racist too. It is the people who are in power who have the greatest

influence on what takes place. Since that is true, it usually impacts unfavorably on us, since we are the minority. Since we were in slavery, maybe, the attitudes of people are different. Had we never been in slavery, like all other minority groups, I do not think that the racist element would impact on us the same way.

B:I am sitting here at your desk with you, across from your desk in your family room. I am looking at all these awards that you have on the wall, plaques, and so forth here. I know they are all significant to you, but have you received any one that you find most impressive that you have?

J:I guess the one that I served as president of the Black Teacher Organization.

B:What was that one? Was that for the state of Florida?

J:For the state of Florida.

B:Was this during the time when you had dual system?

J:Yes, it was during the time we had dual system. I was president of the Florida **Sleigh** Teacher's Association in 1958.

B:Did black teachers meet together collectively?

J:Black teachers met together collectively.

B:What was the purpose of this organization?

J:The purpose of the organization was to protect and improve the educational system as it related to a dual system of education. Since there was a dual system of education, we met in order to improve it, talk about politics that may affect change, and how we would develop strategies in order to affect change in the system.

B:When you left Hampton Community College as president and went to Central Florida Community College as the academic dean, I assume, was this your first time being in an integrated environment?

J:No. I attended integrated schools.

B:So this was your time when you were an administrator, so you were prepared to be an administrator in a black/white environment?

J:Oh yes.

B:Do you think there was any good that came out of that?

J:Oh yes. I guess I have always been competitive, and I have always wanted to be the best. I have always tried to be competent. I am sure that I have had an impact on the institution, not only upon white kids. The white kids at Central used to come and see me when they had problems, and black kids too. White teachers too. I was always fair, but I am always demanding.

B:Fair but demanding.

J:Fair but demanding.

B:And you were competent in what you did?

J:Oh yes.

B:And did the very best.

J:I think so.

B:Sitting here in front of me is an award you received from the former president of Florida A&M, **Walter N. Smith**. He says in the book, the magnificent twelve. So there were twelve black community colleges in Florida?

J:That is right.

B:You were one of those twelve?

J:That is right.

B:Now were they all closed at the same time?

J:No. I think mine was probably one of the last ones closed. Mine was closed in 1966.

B:Did all those presidents end up going to other institutions to work?

J:I am the only president who went as an administrator and functioned at that level in the integrated system. They used the other presidents as off-campus this and off-campus that.

B:What happened to the facility for the community college when it was closed?

J:It was adjacent to the high school. It was subsequently changed to a middle school, so the middle school uses it.

B:If you had to do anything over and you had to have a chance to have another position that you did not have then, what would it be?

J:I guess I have always been a person who wanted to improve things. I never had any fear about what I was doing or with whom I was working. I never had any fear about losing the job. So if I lost one, I was looking for one when I got that one, but I have never lost any job. I have never been fired at any level.

B:You have never been fired at any level?

J:At any level. I left on my own everywhere I have ever been in every job. If it was digging a ditch, I left when I got ready.

B:Is there any position that you would like to have had that you have not had? Would you have wanted to be the president of a large college or university?

J:I have done everything I have ever strived to be.

B:So you have been fulfilled?

J:I have been fulfilled.

B:I am quite sure when you read the paper you read about the testing of black students, not equally doing well, and the attrition rate of maintaining them in college is down. What do you contribute to that?

J:It is an attitudinal thing. I guess I am going to say it point blank. The attitude comes and you do it without thinking. Since we are products of our environment, we are a part of what we learn. If you learn that this group of people are what you call (I guess they call it) incompetent,

[or] you do not have the ability. Number one, there is an assumption that black people have less ability than white people. Even the darker hue of blacks have less ability than the lighter hue of blacks.

B:That is the perception.

J:That is perception. Perceptions become a reality with some people. Since this pervades our system of race, even though we have integration and people see competent blacks, it is never accepted that all blacks could do the same thing if given the same opportunities. It is assumed by whites that we are less competent, that we have less ability. All the value systems put us at the bottom of the totem pole in terms of our contributions to this nation and everything else. Consequently, it is this kind of thing that has stifled our growth because we tend, after a while, to buy the fact that we have less ability and we are less intellectually bright and competent than the other groups.

B:I see. That is a very good point.

J:They talk about the Hispanics because maybe they put them in the same boat with us. They talk about the Asians who have excelled in terms of excellence. They have probably achieved the highest status now. Of course, the whites talk about their ability. I do not think there is any difference in people when it comes to capacity to learn, if they are given the same opportunities. What takes place is that we are a product of our environment. What you hear, you buy.

B:Do you think we hear that more of that today then they did yesterday?

J:I think you hear more of it because we have more media. I think it did not have the same kind of impact because every time you look at television or pick up a newspaper, it brings it to your attention. Then there is one basic thing that happens to us. That is in terms of crime. You have to understand that poverty is the breeder of crime. If there were no poverty, you could, to some extent eliminate crime.

B:Yes, you could.

J:The only things you would have is maybe passions of killing because people's passions sometimes direct their actions. Consequently, I think that you could eliminate it if there were some degree of economic security to people that all people live with.

B:If you visit a school system now, you will find that there is a lot of your black students that are in your low programs or your programs for slow- learners. You contribute this to the media and perception that you cannot learn, so they are not doing it?

J:I contribute it to the fact that they have been integrated, and the fact that people think that we are less capable in terms of learning than others. Then they start classes behind you. Since most of the teachers have the same attitude that I am talking about, that we are less capable intellectually than whites, they buy that thing. If something is pounded and you listen to something every day, you are going to soon start believing it. It is like repetition.

B:Right. Do you feel that integration has helped, as well as hindered, or has hindered as well as helped?

J:I think in terms of providing leadership for our people, I think it may not help. Kids had an opportunity when they were in segregated schools to become leaders.

B:Very true.

J:They do not have that same opportunity now except in a few cases, the individuals who demonstrate that they are better equipped than whites in order for you to become a leader.

B:That is very true. A very good point.

J:You are talking about exceptional people. Since there are exceptional people in all races and groups, you are going to have somebody who emerges despite the attitudes of others. Maybe it comes from family too, who keeps pounding and working with individuals to keep them from destroying the individual's concept of self.

B:Have you ever thought about writing your life history or a book?

J:I have never thought about it too much. I guess I am a person who has always been involved. I am still involved in too many community activities that it does not give me any time to do anything but try to improve the conditions of the community--going to court with young people who need somebody to help them or going to court with adults.

B:Do you do that?

J:Yes.

B:You are retired now, I assume.

J:Yes.

B:But you are still involved in the community?

J:I am involved in every aspect of community life--Boys and Girls Club, Marion ARC, also pretty much all the activities that go on in the black communities. I am talking about the racially mixed groups. Chamber of Commerce and all of these kinds.

B:Are you ever called to be involved in anything with the community college?

J:No. What you have to understand is that I am the individual who retired because I thought the institution was exploiting black people and not giving black people an opportunity to participate. As it is now with most of the leadership in the school system, black teachers are not involved too much. Even where you have black administrators, the black teachers are not involved too much because I do not know, fear on the part of the administrators. They merely succumb to pressure from other people. Consequently, even if you have a talented black, who is probably much more talented than anybody else, there is a fear on the part of the principal to use it.

B:Is that one of the reasons you retired?

J:Yes. I have talked with people who know, even one of the board members admitted to me that, you were right, Jackson, he was the no administrator. In fact, the young lady who worked with me and who was his secretary said, Jackson, he was not a leader; he was not an

administrator. In fact, the year I was there I decided I would discontinue correcting all the reports that went in. If the people did not have them right and could not get them right, I would merely tell them and tell them what they needed to do if they wanted to send them on. I would buck them. There was a report that went to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and the academic dean gave it to me. I bucked it back to him and told him that it was not accurate and did not provide the information requested. He told me, oh yes it does, Jackson. I said, nope, it did not provide the information requested. I want you to read it and go over it. So he told me, well, I have done it and I do not think it needs correcting. I took it to the president, and I told the president the same thing. Then I asked him, I said, what do you want to do about it? He said, it is correct. I said, it is not.

B: You told him that too?

J: I told the president, yes. I said it is not correct. I said, what do you want me to do with it? I was ready to quit then. So he said, send it on. I sent to the Southern Association of Colleges.

B: Knowing that it was not correct?

J: Knowing that it was not correct. They bucked it back! I was ready to quit. I was tired of it. They bucked it back. When they bucked it back, he kept it for seven days and did not know what to do with it. He did not even know what it was, after I told him. So he called me back and said, Bill, what is this?

B: This is the dean or the president?

J: The president.

B: The president.

J: I said, that is the report I gave you and told you that it did not provide the correct information. I told him the information requested. So he said, well, what can we do about it, Bill? I said, president, you can fix it.

B: You told the president to fix it?

J:Yes. He is the one who told me to send it on. Fix it. I mean you can get your dean to fix it. It is not my job. My job is to tell you whether it is right or wrong. So he said, they do not know what to do, Bill. I said, well. He said, can you help us? I said, I tell you, I will not help Bob do anything. I told him. I said, I will tell you what I will do; I will take his secretary and I will get it corrected. I corrected it and sent it to the Southern Association and it stayed there.

B:It was accepted?

J:It was accepted.

B:What did that end up with you? Did you end up proving a point?

J:Proved my point.

B:Your point was what?

J:My point is that I have been doing all this work for the institution to make the institution look good, and I wrote you a letter telling you that in a few years I plan to retire. I think based on what I have seen going on here, you have raised everybody's salary and I asked for a raise. You refused to give it to me. So if you refuse to give it to me and I am the man making this institution look good, I am quitting.

B:I see. And did you quit?

J:Quit.

B:When was that? What year was that?

J:In 1985.

B:1985.

J:Quit! [Inaudible].

B:Have you enjoyed your retirement since 1985?

J:Yes.

B:Did the president ask you to stay?

J:Everybody knows me. When I tell you, I mean it.

B:Were you ready to leave?

J:Yes.

B:Did you get to the point where you could not do anymore or they would not allow you to do anymore?

J:He would not allow me to do anymore.

B:What do you think the problem was?

J:He did not know and he did not want to do anything. He wanted to keep the institution small. Even one of the board members that I had talked to later told me, Jackson, we found out that you were telling the truth. He was no administrator. I was calling the lady to get ready for the search for president for Central Florida. I called her, and she was telling me what his wife said. I said, no, that is not true. I said, there was no plan, nothing developed, no plan. So far as I am concerned, I do not know about an academic program, but I know about the physical plan. He has done that.

B:How many presidents did you work under at the Central Florida Community College?

J:I only worked under two: Fordyce.

B:Joseph Fordyce [president, Santa Fe Community College, July 1966-January 1972] who went to Santa Fe Community College?

J:That is right.

B:And the one, what is the last fellow's name?

J:**Goodman.**

B:That is the one you quit under?

J:That is the one I quit.

B:I see.

J:I had been doing all the work anyway, making the institution look good, getting the best reports in the state. This man, I answered [inaudible] making a lot of money. We were not making a lot of money. I was deserving of it because I made the institution money.

B:Do you think you were a threat to him?

J:No. I could not be a threat--voters are always going to vote in his favor. How could I be a threat? Then I attended meetings and told him in his presence. We decided that we were going to have a change. I got together with the NAACP because he was exploiting the community, both white and black. He was not doing anything for the institution, letting it remain as small as it was, when it should have been one of the largest in the state. I talked with the state, they always told me, well Bill, why don't you all get rid of him? These were state people from the Division of Community Colleges. I said, how do you expect me to get rid of him? I am not the president. I am not a board member. He is my boss; I am not his boss. Why don't you do something? So we finally got rid of him. We called him on the carpet. We got the NAACP. We had a special conference.