HUTCHINSON: How long have you been working with Jackson Public Schools before---since the time of integration?

HATTEN: Well, I came to Jackson in 1966 and we had what you might call token integration then because the children could come on freedom of choice, and I had one black child that year and he was in the eighth grade social studies class. Then, of course, it was 1970 - February of 1970 - when we had the forced integration - when we had to really integrate the schools and the schools and that sort of thing.

HUTCHINSON: Well how did you feel about it? Did you like the method that they used of all of a sudden---

HATTEN: Well I felt like we weren't really prepared for it. I felt like the public was not prepared. I felt like the school system was not prepared. I felt like we should have seen this coming and made better preparation for it because to interrupt the schools for two weeks to do all these things and back and forth, it was a traumatic thing for children, it was a traumatic thing for teachers, it was a traumatic thing for parents. The whole town was----I think we came through it better than we ever thought we would but I did not feel like we were adequately prepared.

HUTCHINSON: Right after it happened do you think it affected the quality of the teaching that had been going on?
HATTEN: The quality of the teaching?

HUTCHINSON: Right. Like on test scores and stuff.

HATTEN: Are you talking about standard test scores or are you talking about teacher-made tests?

HUTCHINSON: Both.

HATTEN: Well you have to realize the kind of unique situation that we were in before integration. We were here at a northeast Jackson school with upper middle class people, mostly professional people whose children were attending this school - about 1,200 or better children in this building and the average I.Q. was 118 and the most frequent score - this is from records - the most frequent score was about 112, so you can see the kind of students that we were working with, and anybody can teach those kids, they're going to learn in spite of you. You just have to get up early and stay up late to stay ahead of them, and this is the kind of situation that we had and when we had the big switch over we lost a lot of these children and we picked up a lot of children whose backgrounds were not like this. We picked up children who had difficulty reading. We picked up children who could just barely get by and it made a very traumatic difference. It really did. It made a tremendous difference because many of us had to learn how to deal with this kind of child. Our backgrounds personally---we did not---many of the words that they used we did not understand. The first child that told me that somebody was 'on his case,' I did not know what he was talking
about, you know, and the first child that told me - let me think - there were several terms like that though that we didn't understand because we had never heard them before. And though I was reared in a town where there were four blacks to every white person and I thought I was real familiar with any kind of lingo they had to use, I found that I had a lot to learn and I had to adjust my teaching methods. Where I had been going in and been able to just throw out a challenge to a class and see them rise to it, I had to go in and motivate and show cause and reason for simpler for children who were not as privileged and this was very, very difficult.

HUTCHINSON: How was the attitude of the faculty - were they real positive or were they---

HATTEN: Well everybody was kind of in a state of shock that first few months, you know, like, "Well, here we are, what we're going to do is try," and I left here and went over to Powell in September - in August, really. I was transferred over there where the ninth graders were and we had the ninth graders who had been at Bailey and at Callaway and at Chastain and at Powell and we had about seven hundred and something ninth graders in the building and that was a lot of ninth grade students and it was a big change for me. I felt like they felt like I was coming into their territory and that wasn't quite fair but the teachers over there had tremendous attitudes. We all felt like we had to make it
together and I felt like the relationship with the teachers at Powell was much better than I have seen at sometimes over here since I came back to Chastain, because we never went to a faculty meeting and all the blacks sat on one side and all the whites on one side, and they had some black men over there that loved to tease and we got to where we would carry on a lot of teasing with each other, and I see them now and they still tease me, like they say, "Uh, huh, you got on that black dress with that white trimming on the top. You just got to get the white on top, haven't you?" and so we got by real good helping each other.

HUTCHINSON:

HATTEN: Yes, we had that feeling, you know, let's make it together, you know, because I'm in it, you're in it so let's just do the best we can and that was the attitude that, I think, got us through. That, and, of course, I stayed at Powell two years and then they changed things again, you see, and I came back to Chastain and I think a few little things happened when people's feelings were a little too close to the surface, and it caused strains between the races that maybe never have been settled.

HUTCHINSON: Well what about the students here in the ninth grade - like I know I was in the third grade and I didn't know what was going on but the ninth graders knew everything that was going on. How was their attitude? Were they mumbling about and wondering - I know a lot of the whites
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went to private schools.

HATTEN: Yes, yes. Well we had a little—there were going to be some unhappy people - a lot of unhappy people. The biggest thing that we had was, you know, here was Callaway and they'd always been against Chastain and Bailey and all those junior high schools had been bitter rivals sportswise and all of a sudden here they were together and had never been together before as a unit and they had to kind of solidify and make a football team and a basketball team that could compete with Rowan and Peeples and some of those other schools that they had to play but they came through, they did pretty good. Now one of the biggest problems we had were the two factions in the black race. It wasn't black and white but it was black against black. The Virden Addition against the ________ Grove group which I understand has been going on for years and still does go on. There's a rivalry between the two groups and almost a gang warfare against the two groups. They just don't like each other a bit and this is the big thing that amazed me. It wasn't black and white against it but it was two blacks against each other and I found that the black and white kids got along pretty good. Of course, we had problems, but I had always had problems with children getting along with each other.

HUTCHINSON: In the classes did you find discrimination like with the teachers against students - like black teachers would discriminate against white and white against black?
HATTEN: I never have seen that really just down right - you know, "He's a black kid and he ain't going to have a chance in my class." I never have seen that really where a teacher discriminated against a child because of his race. I can't say that I have seen that, not noticeably. I think that there has been some that would shake their head and say, "Well, I just don't understand," and maybe they weren't trying to understand as much as they should have but then maybe they turned around and said, "Well, maybe I'll try something else," because they didn't want to give up, but the teachers that stayed - now see there were a lot of teachers that went to private schools too - but the teachers that stayed, I think felt like we had a job to do. I know I was offered a job in private schools myself but there was something in me that said that's not for me that somehow we've got to come through this and I had always felt that I was about as responsible to the good Lord for what I did in my school and the job that I have at school, some ministers the job that they have at church. And I really felt that this was the place for me to stay and a lot of folks might have differed with me, but that's the way I felt about it and I don't think I've been wrong.

HUTCHINSON: What about violence in school. It seems like most of the people that moved to private schools were always hearing rumors about there being gang fights and stuff like that. Can you tell us about anything like that?
HATTEN: Well, we had some tough times over at Powell. I had been warned that the last day of school was usually pretty bad, and I didn't know what they were talking about but I spent the last day of school over there the first year I was there, patching up heads and everything else because some of the kids came to school with their sticks and so forth, and that day when they couldn't be suspended any more or expelled any more they were going to have a fight with whoever was bothering them, and it was pretty rough that first day but - I mean that last day - but other than that there was---I had not been used to the kinds of fighting that I had seen. I always have seen people get tied up with each other but I never had seen girls just fall out in the floor and I never had seen kids bring ice picks to school or a knife to school or anybody bring a gun to a ballgame. I saw that. It was controlled, it was taken care of quickly and handled well and nobody was seriously hurt from it but it was frightening to me when I realized that I was a lot more naive than I thought but it really was kind of scary but it was taken care of quickly.

HUTCHINSON: Were there any attacks on teachers? Were you ever scared that somebody might confront you?

HATTEN: Never, never was really. I had a few---I was a lot bigger than I am now and I guess they might have been scared to attack a 300-pound woman but anyhow I had a few that didn't particularly care about me, I'm sure, and I
never had any real fear that I was going to be hurt.

HUTCHINSON: When it first happened it was real rough and everything, but can you tell, like now since years have gone by that things are better?

HATTEN: Oh, I can tell a lot of difference. I can tell a difference in the children. See the children that we have in the seventh grade this year have had integration all their school life.

HUTCHINSON: They have?

HATTEN: Yes, they started out in the first grade in 1970 in the first grade they were integrated, fully integrated, and I can tell the difference in their attitude and it's not as much black and white.

HUTCHINSON: Are they as well educated as whites?

HATTEN: Well, they seem to be better able to handle subject matter and so forth, I think, and for instance, this year in the seventh grade we have had forty something on the honor roll which is very good, I think. We still have children who have a lot of problems. We still have children that I wish had been identified by the third grade either as learning disability children or with slow learning and we need a program for these kids. They're probably—they're not retarded as such but they have been—they're educably retarded—no that's not the word for it either. They're educably deprived children probably because they've never had books in their homes before they started to school. They
haven't had the experiences a lot of other kids have had. They haven't been to the zoo, you know, and things like this and they haven't been exposed to learning as much as they should have by the time that they got ready to go to school, so they were a little behind and by the time they get to seventh grade, if there was a difference back here, you know, the difference gets wider as they get older. Even though they make progress. For instance they may have a scaled score on their permanent record that was maybe 372 and then by the time they're in the sixth grade it's gone up to 400, but their percentile score hasn't increased and it maybe has gone down and the way to explain that is that they have learned, you see, but they haven't learned as much and as fast as they should have learned by the time they were in the seventh grade, therefore they are behind and they're getting further behind every year because they're not learning at the rate that they ought to learn, and this is what is bothering a lot of people in Mississippi and all over the country. Not just in Mississippi, it's happening in California, it's happening in New York, in Florida and everywhere else where children have not had the opportunity that they ought to have and have not been able to learn at the rate that they should learn.

HUTCHINSON: It seems like now that there are so many people graduating from high school that can't read---

HATTEN: Right. And this is not fair to them because the day is going to come when a man is going to want to
hire them for a job and when they can't produce they're not going to be hired, or if they are hired and manage to get hired, they're not going to stay on the job because they can't produce and they're going to have to take the menial jobs, you know, floor sweepers and janitors and that kind of thing because they just have not been able to come up to quality standards and this is sad. It really is sad and I don't know what we're going to do about it, but we've got to do something.

HUTCHINSON: Do you think it's getting better as---

HATTEN: Well, I think that, yes, I think it's some better, some better off but we've still got a big problem. We've got a big problem, we've got a problem of what to do with the child who is about an 80 I.Q. He's not retarded but he's not really strong enough to take things very fast and that's where the school system has a big dilemma right now. They can't go into the vocational center because the vocational center demands people that can read a manual and can understand electronics and knows algebra and things like this, you know, to do these things over there.

HUTCHINSON: So the main thing is when they start back in the first grade----

HATTEN: Right, they've got to learn to read. If they don't learn to read by the time they're in the third grade, they're lost, I think. Maybe I'm wrong but I've seen these remedial programs that have not worked too well.
HUTCHINSON: That's why I think a lot of people in my grade - I was in the third grade when integration hit and it was just all mixed up and they just didn't have a chance and now they're in high school and they're still lost.

HATTEN: They're just a lot further behind. Yes. They really are. Kind of like that old sign, "The hurrier I go the behinder I get" and it really is sad because the world moves on and leaves them further and further behind and I don't know---they tried to simplify---I know I don't demand as much of children today as I used to. I know that.

HUTCHINSON: You don't think that's hurting people like---

HATTEN: Yes, I think that---now the better---I try to make a difference---I try to account for individual differences and try to give the more advanced children more, and yet I don't find them as willing to take it as the children were before. I don't find them as willing to go out on their own and really dig for knowledge as they were at one time.

HUTCHINSON: May I ask you one more thing? What did you think about Powell as a fifth and sixth grade center? How did you like that?

HATTEN: Oh, it was terrible. I thought it was terrible. I think that if I had been allowed to progress at my own speed I would probably be out playing baseball with the boys, you know, sitting there looking out the window wondering what was happening, because I had to have somebody
to motivate me sometimes by saying, "You will do this and you will do it by such and such a time," and I knew if I didn't do it I was going to be in trouble.

HUTCHINSON: That helps out.

HATTEN: Right, and my mother always said if you get in trouble at school there's going to be trouble at home and I surely knew what that meant, so I had some motivating forces behind me. It was not a thing of letting me go at my own rate because I might have wanted the rate of the turtle, you know, I don't know what would have happened to me. I think it would have been mighty sad. I've seen children who have been mighty frustrated as a result of it. But thank goodness that's over, I hope.

HUTCHINSON: I think that's it.

HATTEN: You think you found out what you wanted to know?

HUTCHINSON: Thank you very much.