

Driver Walter Fleming

In my junior and senior years at Lovettsville High (from 1945 to 1947) I drove an LCPS bus. I actually learned to drive by driving a school bus in the fields around my home, on a farm west of Lovettsville. In those days there were two buses for Lovettsville. One served the East side of town and one served the West side of town. My bus was a Chevy. It was in good condition, but it was not new. I'd pick my students up along the road and at a parking lot in town. I'd start my route after daybreak and be home before sunset. Approximately 55 students rode my bus, both elementary and high school students. The roads were primarily dirt and gravel and the tires required chains in snowy weather. That said, I only got 'stuck' once. It wasn't so much that I was stuck; it was that the snow had been cleared in such a way that my bus would have had to make such a sharp turn to stay on the cleared path, that it would have gotten hung up in a snow bank. I shoveled enough snow so that the bus had a cleared path and drove on my way. In those days, the gas had a bit of water in it. In cold weather that water would freeze in the fuel line. The local Lovettsville garage (Bryce-Weener) would have to come out and thaw the line so I could get the bus started. After dropping the students at the Lovettsville schools, I'd park the bus in time to start class at Lovettsville High by 9:00 AM. My school had only white students and there were no Black students on my bus. I earned \$4/day driving the bus. By my senior year, bus maintenance was pre-scheduled. When the time came to take my bus in for maintenance, I would drive it to Leesburg. There, in a garage that could hold two school buses at a time, I'd drop my bus off for servicing and pick up a spare bus. I'd drive the spare until servicing was complete on my bus, then drop off the spare bus and pick mine up in Leesburg. After I graduated from Lovettsville High, my dad took over my route (Alvin Fleming). I drove a different route from 1947-49, left school bus driving for nearly 40 years and then returned to driving an LCPS bus when I was 70 in 2000. By this time Black and white students rode the same bus, but elementary and high school students did not ride on the same bus. I would drive for nine more years before retiring in 2009¹.

¹ From June 23, 2020 interview with former LCPS Bus Driver Walter Fleming conducted by Nathan Bailey