

Student and Bus Driver Michael Clark

I was born in 1946. I attended LCPS from 1952 through 1964. I was a Black student at Carver (1952 - 1959), Douglass High in the 8th through 10th grade (1959 - 1962) and Loudoun Valley High School (LVHS) in the 11th and 12th grade (1962 - 1964). While at Carver, I walked to school. I lived in Purcellville, near the fire station that was on Route 7 and the distance to school was about a mile. I started riding the bus when I was in the 8th grade at Douglass High. The bus was an old Ford but fairly well maintained. It may have experienced engine trouble once all the time I rode it. Blacks usually got the older buses. From my pickup stop in Purcellville to Douglass the trip was about 12 miles of paved road, straight down route 7 and into the town of Leesburg. By the time we arrived the bus was 80% full. The bus was never stuck in mud or snow after it picked me up since that part of the route was all paved road. There were only Black students on the bus to Douglass. In the 11th grade I began to attend Loudoun Valley High in Purcellville. I was one of the first Black students to integrate LVHS in 1962. As it was, Douglass High would close in 1968. Thirteen Black students rode my bus to LVHS. While I had an idea what to expect from the white students, I was a bit surprised at the racism from the white teachers. It left me so bitter, I did not attend my graduation. I played football and basketball at both Douglass and LVHS. I rode a bus with all Black players and driver when I attended 'away' games for Douglass High. While I rode an all Black bus to LVHS in the morning, I rode an integrated bus to LVHS 'away' games. Times were changing in the county. I had my bus driver's license by the time I turned 15 and did some bus driving while I attended Douglass (sometimes substitute driving for my uncle, O. Ray Stewart). The bus was a Ford. I had to cover quite a bit of Loudon county then so I got an early start. I would leave my home in Purcellville around 6:30 AM travel through Hamilton and out Route 15 to Lucketts and back to Carver and on to Douglass. Sometimes my route was broken into two parts. I'd pick up one set of students and drop them off, then I'd pick up a different set of students on the second part of the route and drop them off. All the students had to be in class by 9:00 AM, which is why I would start so early. My bus was generally 80% full. I didn't drive a school bus after I started at LVHS.¹

¹ From October 20, 2020 interview with former LCPS Student Michael Clark conducted by Nathan Bailey