

Student and Bus Driver Paul D. Jackson

I was born January 1, 1928. We lived in Round Hill then, and I began attending Loudoun County Public Schools (LCPS) at the Round Hill Colored school in 1934. I started attending the 1st grade at Round Hill Colored school and my teacher's name was Mrs. Cole. It would be three more years before the first public school bus for Black students appeared in Loudoun, so I walked the nearly 3 miles from our home to the school. My family owned an 11 acre farm where we raised chickens, cows and pigs. We also had some horses. Our farm was accessed via dirt roads. Those roads weren't plowed in the winter and when the snow was deep enough, we would be allowed to ride one of the horses (Bill) to the paved road. There, we would dismount and follow the plowed, paved road to school. Round Hill Colored school was located on route 719. Bill would return to the farm on his own. After school we'd walk the plowed, paved road back to where it intersected the dirt road leading to our farm. We'd follow Bill's tracks home through the snow. Walking to your local school was a common practice for both Black and White students back then. Later, we moved from Round Hill to Short Hill. I continued to walk to Round Hill Colored school. A White farmer living near us had cows that would graze in pastures near our home. By agreement, we let him know when any of his stock got out of the pasture. Sometimes he'd give us a ride home from school if he saw us on the road. All the time I attended Round Hill Colored school I walked to school. I graduated from Round Hill Colored school under Mrs. Hannah Daniel. I started attending Douglass High after graduating from Round Hill Colored. This would have been after Round Hill Colored school burned down Oct 31, 1943.

When I started riding the bus to Douglass High, Ervin Ferrell was the bus driver (1943/1944) and the bus only carried Black students. The school system was segregated and wouldn't be integrated until the 1960's. Black drivers drove only Black students. White drivers only drove White students. By then I was living in Purcellville. I'd ride the bus from Purcellville through Hamilton, Paeonian Springs, Waterford and on to Douglass High in Leesburg. This was part of the same route I'd follow when I was a student school bus driver. I was a student school bus driver for two years while attending Douglass (1944/1945 & 1945/1946), and two years after I dropped out. My bus was kept at Sam Steel Service Station on 21st street in Purcellville. Sam Steel also sold cars and my bus was kept on the lot with the cars. My route was number 30. I'd begin at 7:00 AM, picking up students in Hillsboro then I'd drive on to Short Hill. There were no shelters and the students would come out to the road to board the bus. After picking up students in Short Hill, I'd drive to Woodgrove and pick up students. From Woodgrove I'd drive to Bluemont. There I'd pick up a couple of students that lived in a church. Some of the roads between Short Hill and Bluemont were dirt and in really bad weather I'd have to take a different route because the road was impassable. This would happen in heavy snows. The dirt roads in the county were the last ones plowed if at all. Even though I'd have put chains on my tires, I still wouldn't be able to make it through deep snow. If the snow was really bad, they'd cancel school. From Bluemont I'd drive to Round Hill and pick up more students. Then I'd drive to Purcellville and drop off students at the Purcellville Colored school. There I'd pick up high school students and a teacher, Miss Flossie Feur. I'd drop Miss Feur off in Hamilton at Ivandale and Route 7. She taught at the Brownsville Colored school in Hamilton and would walk a block or so to the school. From Hamilton I drove to Paeonian Springs and picked up students. Then I'd drive on to Waterford Colored school. I'd pick up a few students in Waterford and then take the old Waterford Road to Route 7 via Clark's Gap. I'd take Route 7 into Leesburg and drive to Douglass High where I'd discharge the remaining students, park the bus and go to class.

Classes started at 9:00 AM. In the afternoon, I would reverse the route for dropping students at their homes. I had as many as 53 students on my bus, which meant some had to stand in the aisle. That would never be permitted today. My first bus was an old, 1930's Chevy school bus. It actually belonged to Mr. George Brown, not LCPS. Mr. Brown was an electrician, but he rented his bus to LCPS, which paid my salary. I remember student school bus drivers were paid half the salary of adult school bus drivers. I drove that old 1930's bus for a year. It was not very dependable and would have mechanical problems. When it broke down, the bus from Middleburg driven by Mr. John Tolbert would pick up my students. My bus would be serviced by Bishop's garage. After a year of driving Mr. Brown's, 1930's Chevy bus, LCPS gave me a brand new Ford school bus. This would have been around 1945/1946. I was one of the first Black school bus drivers to get a new bus. Most Black school bus drivers drove older buses. I continued to drive for two more years, after I dropped out of Douglass High in 1946. After dropping out of Douglass I also worked at a dry cleaners in Purcellville. I drove the same route, until Carver opened in 1948. When Carver opened, students moved from Purcellville Colored to Carver, which is located just up the hill. Instead of making a stop at Purcellville Colored school, I'd stop at Carver. The building that was Purcellville Colored school is now Lyles Funeral Home. I never had a bus get stuck in mud or snow. I indicated earlier that the school system was segregated. On rare occasions, after I started driving the Ford, if that bus had a mechanical failure, a White driver would pick up my students. By this time I had dropped out of Douglass and I would stay with the bus until it was repaired. Then I would pick up Black students in the afternoon for the trip to their homes. I never heard of a Black driver picking up White students if a bus of White students broke down.

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Round Hill Colored school was one room and was heated by a single pot belly stove that burned coal or wood. I attended it from 1934 until I graduated around 1942/1943. It was clapboard construction, white on the outside with three windows down each side of the building. There were two outhouses to the rear of the school, boys on the left and girls on the right. A small building directly behind the school held coal or wood for the stove. The school building's orientation ran west to east with front door facing west and route 719. The front door opened onto a short hallway. To the left on that hallway were the coat racks. To the right down that hallway you entered the single classroom where all grades (1 - 7) were taught. The single classroom had a blackboard mounted on the far wall, opposite the front door. There was a small stage in front of the blackboard. The teacher's desk sat in the right corner off to one side of the blackboard. From there, the teacher could keep a watchful eye on the entire classroom. The pot belly stove sat in the middle of the room and provided ample heat in the winter. The interior walls were a kind of off-yellow and were unadorned with anything like pictures or examples of numbers or letters. I don't know if the interior walls of the White schools were as bare as ours. I never saw the interior of a White school. Though we'd get the classroom supplies such as crayons, chalk, erasers and text books from the Round Hill White school, we were responsible for our personal school supplies. My family would sometimes trade eggs from our chickens at the local store for things like paper and pencils. The desks were similar to a type first designed by John Loughlin in the 1880's known as the '*Fashion Desk*'. It was a bench that seated two students. A desk was mounted behind the bench and by placing them one in front of the other, a column of benches and their desks was constructed. Round Hill Colored school

had 30 - 36 students when I attended it. The younger students sat up front. Each grade had separate text books. The teacher would work with each grade separately. When the teacher wasn't working with your grade, you did your 'desk work'. Since there was no running water in the school, it had to be brought in. We had permission to use the pump on the back porch of the Mars' home in Round Hill. It was about 4 blocks from our school. Twice a day (once in the morning and once in the afternoon) older students would bring a pail of water from the back porch of the Mars home to Round Hill Colored school. I carried my lunch to school in an empty syrup bucket. My lunch was usually two biscuits, one with ham the other with jam and a piece of pound cake. I washed it all down with water from the Mars' back porch. In the winter LCPS would sometimes provide soup and dry beans for lunch. The beans were soaked in water the night before and added to the soup which was heated on the pot belly stove. In the winter, we'd bank the fire in the stove in the evenings so there would be hot coals to start the next day's fire. To the rear of the school, beyond the outhouses and coal storage building was a baseball diamond. Every day, weather permitting, starting at 10 AM we'd play baseball for about an hour. I guess you might call it a type of gym class. When it was too cold, or raining, or snow covered the ball diamond we wouldn't play. I remember the School Superintendent (Mr. O. L. Emerick) would visit our school once or twice a year. He'd park his car on the grounds next to the school. He'd come in and speak with the teacher a little, but never addressed the students. He'd observe the classroom proceedings for a bit and then leave. At lunch time, weather permitting we'd eat and play outside. Sometimes we'd prank the teacher. While most of us played under the watchful eyes of the teacher, one of the boys would sneak back into the school and move the clock's hands ahead 5 or 10 minutes. Thus, shortening our school day 5 or 10 minutes. Another prank would typically happen on Halloween night. Gates would be removed from fences letting farmer's stock wander onto the road. Speaking of pranks, Round Hill Colored school suffered two fires. Both occurred on Halloween nights. These may have been pranks and not racially motivated. The first fire was extinguished. The second one happened a year or two later (Oct 31, 1943) and burned the school to the ground. I remember there being about a year after that when there were no classes because there was no local school building. The following year students started getting bussed to Purcellville Colored school. The building that was Purcellville Colored school is now Lyles funeral home and sits just down the hill from Carver. When Carver opened in 1948, the Purcellville Colored school closed and students began attending Carver. Carver's opening was part of the plan that included consolidating smaller one and two room Black schools like Purcellville and Hillsboro Colored schools into larger schools. With that consolidation came bussing for students living farther away. I never attended Purcellville Colored school, by then I had graduated from Round Hill Colored school and I started attending Douglass High. My mother may have attended Round Hill Colored school and my father may have attended Purcellville Colored school. Schools were also a place for social events. Occasionally, we would have dances at Round Hill Colored school in the evening. There would be live music. At Douglas we would sometimes have movies of Friday afternoons. Young men would ask young ladies to accompany them to a school dance or movie. I don't remember any PTA meetings being held at Round Hill Colored school, however Lolly's Harris' father may have been a PTA president for a while. The last day of school at Round Hill Colored school was celebrated as a type of May Day Festival at the Emancipation Grounds in Purcellville. Douglass was a nice high school. It offered organized sports such as baseball, basketball and football. The teachers were dedicated to their trade and took a true interest in helping their students become successful. At Douglass I remember taking Home Economics one grading period. Typically the boys would take shop and the girls would take

Home Economics. I was the only boy in the Home Economics class while the rest of the boys were taking shop. In shop you could learn a trade that you could use after you left high school. Mr. Knox, the shop teacher, instructed us in bricklaying (how to make mortar, how to make a corner). With that training, Bryson Simms and Louis Feur started their bricklaying business after high school. I bought an old 1930's Model A Ford with Ralph and James Clark. Ralph wrecked it, but Mr. Knox helped us repair the damage in shop class. After retiring from teaching, Mr. Knox went into business as a brick contractor. Though I had several girlfriends in my youth, I married my 1st serious, high school girlfriend, Miss Lolly Harris.¹

¹ From November 02, 2021 interview with former LCPS Student and Student Bus Driver Paul Jackson conducted by Nathan Bailey



Mr. Paul D. Jackson - From the Library of Joyce Knox – Photo Taken 2021