

Student John Gulick

I've lived my entire life on a farm on Tail Race road in Aldie, VA. My Great Grandfather bought that farm in 1886. My father graduated from Aldie High School in 1943, my mom in 1948. So, you could say that Aldie has seen several generations of Gulicks. I attended Loudoun County Schools from 1962 through 1975. During this period, Loudoun's education system changed from one that was racially segregated to one that was racially integrated. I was at Aldie Elementary from 1962 through 1968 (grades 1 - 6). My mother was a teacher at Ashburn Elementary. She thought I'd benefit from a teacher with an engineering background who also taught there. In 1969 (grade 7), I attended Ashburn Elementary. My high school years, 1970 through graduation in 1975, were spent at Loudoun County High in Leesburg (grades 8 – 12). Throughout my entire time in the Loudoun County Public School (LCPS) system, I rode a bus to and from school, except for my time at Ashburn, when I'd ride with my mother. My house is about 2 miles from Aldie Elementary. I'd walk or ride my bike down our half mile long driveway to Tail Race road. The bus would pick me up at the end of my driveway. That bus started picking up students on Mountain road (route 600) and traveled north on it to route 15 where it would turn left and continue north until it reached Tail Race road (route 612). Then, it would turn left onto Tail Race road and take that into the town of Aldie. The bus picked up students all along routes 600, 15 and Tail Race road. I was the last pick up before the bus delivered all the students to Aldie Elementary. Even after the buses became integrated, I was the last pick up before the trip ended at Aldie Elementary. The bus route to Aldie Elementary was about 10 miles long. The trip home was pretty much the reverse of the trip to school. This made me the first one off the bus in the afternoon. I remember the bus being half full, or having about 20 students. I remember the bus being in good condition (heat reached throughout the bus in the winter). It never broke down or got stuck in snow or mud. Tail Race road remains dirt and gravel to this day and has always been subject to some pretty large pot holes. That part of the trip was bumpy. Back then, being a gravel road, it was one of the last ones plowed, if at all when it snowed. When I attended Loudoun County High, my bus would start its run in Middleburg and travel east on route 50. It would turn left at route 612 (Tail Race road) in Aldie, pick me up and continue north on Tail Race road. When it reached route 15, the bus would turn left and continue north into Leesburg and Loudoun County High on Dry Mill road (route 699). Students were picked up at various stops along this route, but there were no stops after the bus reached route 15. My high school bus was also in good condition and never broke down or got stuck in mud or snow. It was pretty full by the time we reached the high school, (around 40 students). I remember there being two groups (cliques). Students from Aldie/Middleburg and those from Leesburg. The Leesburg kids (city kids) were "the cool kids". The route to Loudoun County High was about 20 miles. I wrestled while at Loudoun County High. We'd use the Activities Bus to travel to 'away' matches. The Activities Bus was separate from the buses taking students to and from school. It would take students to after school activities and take them home when the activities ended. All my school buses were LCPS owned (not private), but I don't remember any of their make, model or years. They were serviced in LCPS garages. The buses were generally parked at the driver's home and that's where they'd start their route in the morning. All my school bus drivers were White and one was a woman. None were student bus drivers.

As I said previously, during my school years, LCPS changed from a racially segregated system to a racially integrated one. When I started the 1st grade LCPS was racially segregated. There were no Black students at Aldie Elementary and no Black students rode on my bus. All that

changed when I was in the 4th grade (around 1966). Not only did the Black kids I had been playing with start riding the same bus as me, they started attending Aldie Elementary. As I remember it, most of the Black families making the move to Aldie Elementary lived off New Mountain road (route 631) or Deep Hollow Lane/Buchanan Gap (route 764) or Bowmantown (route 798). All my bus drivers were White even after integration. Aldie was a small rural community then. Not only did Black and White kids play together before LCPS integrated, young Black and White teens worked the farms together doing such things as making hay. Since Black and White kids had been playing together, and doing things like attending the yearly Aldie fire department carnival together, we knew one another. School integration wasn't a big deal to me.

While I was not part of the LCPS student bus driver program I did drive students to Loudoun County Day School in a new, oversized Ford van. The van held 16 passengers. I did this during my junior and senior years in high school (1973 – 1975). Loudoun Country Day School was and still is a private school. From Aldie I'd drive west on route 50 and turn right on Snickersville Turnpike (route 734). I'd take route 734 northwest and turn left on Sam Fred road (route 748). I'd take route 748 southwest and turn right on route 50 into Middleburg. All the time I'd make stops to pick up students. I'd turn around in Middleburg and head back east on route 50 toward Aldie. At Tail Race Road (route 612) I'd turn left and follow that to route 15. I'd turn left onto route 15 and take that north to Harmony Church Road (route 704). I'd turn left onto route 704, make stops along it until I turned around and headed back toward route 15. At route 15 I'd turn left and take it into Leesburg and Loudoun County Day School on Red Cedar Drive where I'd discharge the students. Then I drive over to Loudoun County High, park the van and go to class. I earned \$150.00/month.