

Paperboy

"Paperboy" describes any kid that delivers (or delivered) a newspaper. For Howard, being a paperboy occurred from the 4th grade to about the 9th grade; delivering the Birmingham Evening News.

The inspiration behind this writing is the man himself (or should I say, the boy that was). His determination and duration of delivering papers speaks highly of his early independence - as well as his effort to help the family.

To put this in time, the "4th grade" would have been around 1946 - or shortly after WWII. Times were still difficult and - by some standards of today - would have been more difficult. Though he was only ten, he took on a route (or job) considered too much for someone only that young.

When I ask him about some recollections or remembrances, he told that delivering papers really educated on people. Some people (he said) were good customers: they paid on time and - even on occasion - would offer him a tip; others were the other extreme - as some would even move leaving an outstanding balance on their account or subscription. Some people were honest and others were not; some people treated him with respect, and other did not care. As he learned firsthand, people are not the same.

Growing his business was a continuing effort. From the 80 to 100 subscribers, he could sell additional papers or start new subscriptions with incentives in the form of gifts or prizes from the newspaper. Although the types of gifts of *his day* might seem rather basic by today's standards, it was considered well worth the effort. A flashlight was always welcomed by a scout and, since he was a scout, could always use (or trade) a flashlight for something.

As a scout - and while still a paperboy too - he won the bicycle pictured below. A reward for being a good scout, this "paperboy special" was a nice replacement worthy of the kind of transportation needed for someone in his line of work. Never once did he get carried in the car; but every day (rain or shine) he rode his bicycle.



Delivering papers was not without the usual learning curve. As he recalled breaking a few bottles of milk; yes, milk that was delivered to the doorsteps of homes by the local dairy.

And then there was the large, picture glass window; "ouch", that cost some money to replace. Yet even the occasional problem or accident came many rewards.

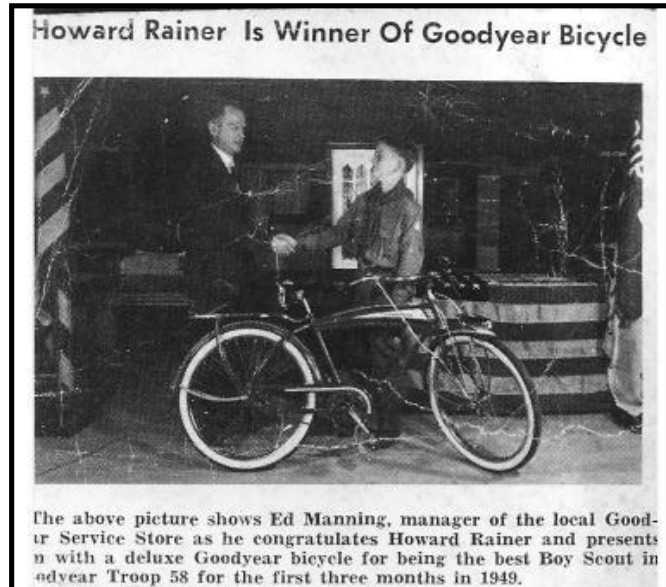
Delivering papers produced around \$5 per week in profits; yes, that's right, five dollars! But a dollar in 1945 is probably worth about \$0.20 today - which means that \$5 back then would be \$25 or more today. But

let's not stop there (in terms of inflation); for a soda-pop or candy bar cost a whopping \$0.05 or five cents and a movie was only a dime! Imagine paying a nickel for a candy bar and a dime for a movie. No, I guess you can't...

Most of his earnings were passed on to his parents - for which they saved for him most of the time. Part of that money was used to buy school lunches and clothes. He also saved some to go to summer camp - which cost \$7 for five or six days of camping, etc.

With the responsibility of a paper route and his scouting activities, he still found time to play a little baseball. Sometimes he would stop in the middle of his route to get in some baseball - which put a hit on more than the baseball. Off to finish the route and back home to eat...and prepare for another day.

Delivering papers is an age-old tradition for boys; a way to earn some money and cut-their-teeth on the responsibility of managing a business; delivery, collections and marketing. I'm not sure if boys still deliver papers but I am sure that my dad did, my brother did, and I did on occasion. What about you?



H. Kirk Rainer

League - Paperboy

@BCL@1807B201

HKIRKRAINER.ORG