

By Glen Shulfer

Stevens Point Daily Journal

"The Paperboy"

INSIDE THIS STORY:

Background	1
The Journal Office	2
Ed Richter	3
Route 6A	4
Pick-Up	4
Delivery	6
Collecting	8
Check-In	9
Hanging Out	11
Resignation	13
Final Thoughts	13
Calling All Paperboys	13

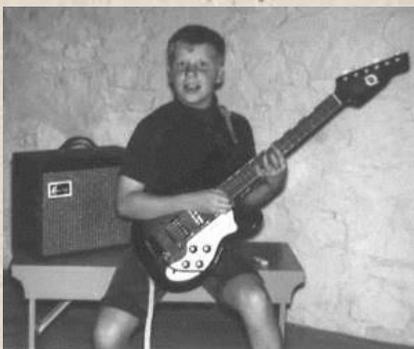
Background

School had finally let out at St. Joe's. It was the summer of 1965; the summer of the Beatles, Colonel Caboose, Where the Action Is, and the Milwaukee Braves. My friend had a paper route, and would let me ride along with him while



he was delivering. He taught me his route, how to fold papers, and even let me make deliveries. It was great fun, but more importantly, the sooner he finished his route, the sooner we could start strummin' our guitars trying to learn "She Loves You".

My big break came in July when he told me about an opening. I was thrilled at the prospect of becoming a paperboy, but there was one big problem....I was only eleven! He tried to convince the boss to hire me, but the boss was reluctant and wanted to see me first. So I jumped on my 1960 red 24" Schwinn Speedster with a basket, and rode downtown for my first job interview.



"...there was one big problem...I was only eleven!"

The Journal Office

“But most unforgettable was the intense smell of ink.”

The office was in the basement of the old Journal Building, down a narrow, rickety set of stairs with no hand rails. The basement was noisy, cold, dark, damp, and lacked proper ventilation. There were light bulbs hanging from the ceiling by extension cords, gigantic rolls of paper occupying most of the floor space, and a single unkempt restroom located in the back, down a dark hallway. But most unforgettable was the intense smell of ink.

The printing press was on one side of the basement, and the boss' office was on the other, in the back, against the left wall. The office looked like a rectangular box, constructed as an afterthought, and seemed out of place in an otherwise wide open area. There was a door on the side of the office which was generally closed. There was also a large opening in the front, similar to an open window. The inside of the office was well lit, and had the boss' desk facing the open window so he could oversee the entire operation. The outside of the office had a long table abutted to the front of it. The height of the table was approximately even with the lower frame of the open window. Interestingly, the positioning of this table allowed only one person at a time to conduct business with the boss through the open window (by design?).

After being directed to the office, I could see the boss through the open window. I became petrified and hesitated, momentarily hiding behind a big roll of paper. Eventually I mustered enough courage to walk toward the open window and meet the boss.



Typical 60s press room

Ed Richter

Ed Richter was a giant of a man, both physically and professionally, at least seemingly to me. He was large, stocky and bald. He wore wire glasses at a time when wire frames were not popular. He always seemed to wear short-sleeve white shirts in the summer and long-sleeve white shirts in the winter. He was a man of few words, soft spoken, calm and unemotional. He was strict, structured and disciplined. He commanded respect and demanded excellence. He was also fair, never praising good work, but never raising his voice or criticizing bad work. His rules were simple: Follow all rules, be responsible and do a good job. If you do, you will get paid; if not....you will be held accountable and there will be consequences. I shall never forget my first meeting with him and the conversation that occurred.

I stood silently by the open window as I watched Mr. Richter doing paper work with his head down. It seemed like an eternity waiting for him to acknowledge me. Then, he glanced up for a moment, but immediately looked down and continued writing.

I waited longer, and longer and longer. Finally.....he quietly said, "What?"

I timidly replied, "I'm Glen Shulfer, about the paper route."

There was a very long pause, again seeming like an eternity.

While still looking down and writing, he said, "You have to be thirteen years old."

I replied, but this time a little more confidently, "But I already know the route."

He glanced up and asked, "Will you do a good job?"

I replied, "Yes!"

He looked back down and continued writing. Then he suddenly stopped, searched through some papers, found the paper he wanted, handed it to me and said, "Have your parents sign this, get your bag, and start on Monday." Then he went back to doing his paper work.

I excitedly ran up to the front desk to get my bag, ran up the stairs, hopped on my bike and raced home, feeling so proud to be wearing my brand new, bright orange Stevens Point Daily Journal bag. I was a paperboy!

Route 6A

Using a big Magic Marker, I wrote my name on the side of the bag, and then my route number on the shoulder strap, 6A. Everything was all set for Monday, even having a paper punch that my older brother used on his route a few years earlier.



Each paper route was based on a geographic area of Stevens Point and given an ID number. Then it was partitioned into sub-routes, usually A and B. The person ultimately responsible for the entire route was called the “owner”. The owner would hire a “helper” who was responsible for one of the sub-routes. They worked together to reconcile the cash, deal with delinquencies and handle other customer issues. The owner earned \$5 a week and the helper earned \$4 a week.

My friend took over the owner’s Route 6B, and I was the helper on Route 6A. Luckily, I lived on 6A and it was my neighborhood. There were 63 customers on 6A and covered a big square; Michigan Ave, from the railroad tracks going south to the A&W, then all of Rice, Cleveland, Blaine and Patch.

“The owner earned \$5 a week and the helper earned \$4 a week.”

Pick-Up

Papers were usually ready by 4:00 PM during the week and approximately 1:00-2:00 PM on Saturday. It was always chaos at the Journal during pick-up time. There were kids rushing down the stairs to get their papers, while others were plowing up the stairs with full bags of papers. It was a miracle that no one ever got hurt.

Pick-Up ~ Continued

Once we were down in the basement, and amidst the loud noise, we would veer to the right where the printing press was and wait in line for our papers. To the right of the press were several shelves used for miscellaneous papers. There was an area for today's paper "singles", an area for returned old papers, and an area where stacks of papers were staged for paperboys who were late for pick-up.

Older guys operated the printing press. When our turn came, my owner would shout the number of papers needed to the press operator. As the papers came off the press, there was a single paper that projected outward, like a marker, and used for a counter. I cannot recall exactly how many papers were between the markers, but a good guess might be 25, since most routes were over 100.

The press operator would grab a stack of papers that would be a multiple of the marker, and then give the papers to my owner. For example, if your route had 98 customers, you would get 100 papers and put 2 papers back on the singles shelf. If your route had 130 customers, you would get 125 papers and take 5 papers from the singles shelf. Once our papers were counted, we quickly put them in our bags, rushed up the stairs and jumped on our bikes. Rain or shine, the bag protected the papers.



"...there was a single paper that projected outward, like a marker, and used for a counter."



Delivery

We would ride our bikes really fast down Water Street toward the underpass. Every kid who had a route on the south side would congregate at the monument in the South Side Park, near the underpass and The Dewey. We would sit along the base of the monument and fold papers.

There was an art to folding; it had to be tight without damaging the paper, otherwise it could fall apart when you toss it. I had that technique perfected. The downside was that ink got on my shirt because the paper must be held against my chest while folding. Having ink stained shirts really irked my mom! We knew exactly how many papers to fold and how many customers wanted unfolded papers.

There was no goofing around while we were folding. We had to be fast, and everyone was very serious about what they were doing. When the papers were folded, we all scattered to deliver our respective routes.

My route was big, but because I was so good at tossing papers, it only took an hour. I never tossed overhand, always sidearm; it went farther and was more stable.

A house on Cleveland Avenue across from the cemetery was always a challenge. It was set farther back from the street, and the porch had a small opening. At first I missed a lot and had to go back and pick it up. But eventually I learned how to release at the exact correct time.

My customers were all very easy except one on Blaine Street. They recently got a dog, a nasty, mean dog. As soon as I approached their driveway, the dog would chase me and bite me on the ankle and shoe. He would chase me all the way to Rice Street.

“There was an art to folding”



I can still fold!



Delivery ~ Continued

One time I had to pedal across three lawns because the dog blocked me from getting down to the street. I was forced to double back later and deliver to the houses that were missed. This really slowed me down and went on for weeks and weeks. Then I started whacking him on the head with a folded paper when he tried to bite me. It didn't hurt him, but he didn't like it! Eventually, he stopped chasing me and just stood in the driveway growling and barking. It was funny though, as soon as he saw a folded paper, he would back off. Problem solved.

We rode bikes until there was too much snow. Then in the winter, I would walk to the Journal from St. Joe's, get my papers, catch the #10 bus in front of Woolworth's, sit on the long bench seat in the back and fold papers, hop off at the corner of Michigan and Rice, and begin my route on foot.

Each bus ride cost a dime, and I needed to ride seven times a week for a total of \$0.70. The winter cut into my profit margin, but Christmas was coming and big tips were on the way! Since my family only had one car and my dad worked nights, there was no possibility of getting rides from my mom. And quite frankly, even at twelve years old, I wouldn't have wanted her to.

Some days were excruciatingly cold, and thankfully there was Morton's Store, Duralum and McKinley School which provided a few minutes of warmth. Then, I quickly discovered how to break up my route into smaller manageable logistical portions where I would deliver to an area, run home to warm up, deliver to another area, run home to warm up, deliver to another, and so on. This made it tolerable and workable, even though it would take until after 7:00 PM to finish. Another problem solved.



"We rode bikes until there was too much snow."



Collecting



“Collecting always yielded some interesting stories.”

Each paperboy was given a customer book. It measured approximately 8x4 inches, had hard front and back covers, bound by two small wing nuts on the left side, and the color blue was almost like denim. The book contained a card for each customer, with different color cards depending on how the customer paid; yearly, monthly, weekly. Along the top, bottom and side were numbered boxes which corresponded to the pay periods. The customer was given a similar card when they signed up for a subscription. When the customer paid, the paperboy would punch the appropriate box on the customer’s card, and then punch the corresponding card in his book.

Collecting occurred during Friday’s delivery and early Saturday morning for those who were not home on Friday. When the customer answered the door, I would almost sing the word “col – LECT – ing!” We had to learn how to make change, deal with customers, respond to customer concerns, and be responsible for carrying pockets full of cash. Collecting on Saturday morning in the winter was not fun, as it was freezing, and usually still dark.

Collecting always yielded some interesting stories. One older lady always answered the door in a birthday suit. One family was always drinking. One customer had so many cats that my eyes burned when entering the house. One lady would not pay, and gave a different excuse every week, eventually having to drop her.

However, 99.9% of my customers were super people, and always paid on time. One older lady on Michigan was so nice; always worked late on Friday, but faithfully left her money in a cup in her garage with a small tip. People on my route were so good and all very nice people.



Check-In

Check-In was a two phased process:

1. Reconciliation and preparation of cash.
2. Submit the cash for verification and receive pay.

We frantically tried to get to the Journal office before 10:00 AM on Saturday. It was a zoo down there; kids everywhere trying to get a spot at the table to prepare their cash. As mentioned before, there was a long table in front of Mr. Richter's office. This table was used by the paperboys to count, reconcile and arrange their money. If the table was too crowded, some paperboys sat on the floor, while others used the big rolls of paper as makeshift tables. There was never any pushing, rudeness, arguing or fighting, and no one ever dropped their money on the floor.

We huddled at the table. First, counting the cash, and then reconciling the cash with our customer books, all without a calculator. To do that, we would go through each customer card, making certain that the current week's punches would manually tally to the amount of cash collected. We had to be fast, but if the amounts didn't match, we would count again. If the amounts still didn't match, we were in trouble!

Each paperboy would organize and place his cash on a wooden board before checking-in. The boards were very old and about the size of a Belson notebook. We had to follow a strict protocol when organizing our cash.

The paper money was to be straightened, no bends or wrinkles in the bills. One time my mom ironed some of the bills for me. Most importantly, the heads of the presidents MUST be face up, and pointed to the right. Repeat: Face up and pointed to the right. The paper money should be neatly placed on the upper portion of the board; Ones first, then Fives and so on.



"...the heads of the presidents MUST be face up, and pointed to the right."

Check-In ~ Continued

Next, the coins were arranged on the board; four quarters in a stack, five stacks in a row, ten dimes in a stack, five stacks in a row, and so on. Rows should be neat and straight, and if there was less than a dollar left over, it was placed at the bottom of the board. These rules were never documented, posted or communicated by Mr. Richter. It was an understood protocol that was passed down by word-of-mouth from paperboy to paperboy.

As soon as our boards of cash were organized, we would wait in line for check-in, my owner first, and then me. Mr. Richter rarely said a word during check-in, rapidly counting the bills, and then counting the coins. Then he tallied the customer book while doing a lot of really fast punching on an old manual adding machine. If both routes reconciled, he would give my owner \$9.00, and then my owner would give me \$4.00.

One Saturday Mr. Richter was counting my bills and came across a president's head that was facing the wrong direction. He completely stopped counting and was motionless; completely motionless for what seemed like hours as I gasped for breath. Then in slow motion, he turned the bill in the proper direction and continued his rapid counting. He never said a word or glanced up at me, but I knew it was a mistake. His actions were enough for me to learn my lesson. Another time I was a dollar short, and knew it on Saturday morning before going downtown. I was sick about it and didn't know how it happened. Mr. Richter caught it immediately and called for my owner. A few minutes later my owner walked over to me and was upset, questioning me on how it happened, and said that I was docked, handing me only \$3.00 for the week. It was an expensive lesson to learn, but from then on, I guarded that money intensely.



Representation of how the cash was organized on the board prior to Check-In

Hanging-Out on Saturday

With at least a dollar in tips and my normal salary, there was a whopping 5-bucks in my pocket. By this time it was after 10:00, and we had a lot of time to kill before the afternoon papers came out. Saturday morning was our special time to be kids again, especially after the stress of collecting and check-in. It was a time to goof around, let loose, have fun and just hang out downtown. No one went home. We would eat all day, play games, thumb through the latest Beatles magazines at Woolworths, Fairway and McClellans, and basically blow the money we just made!



Beautiful downtown Stevens Point in the 60s.

First, we went to the Pal Restaurant for a hamburger and coke, best hamburgers ever! The owner of the Pal always seemed to wear black & white checked pants, and may have been married to the waitress. She was not very old, but had an old fashion hairdo, wore heavy pancake makeup, strong perfume, and red lipstick. They were always very nice to the paperboys. One Saturday, the Pal owner kept whistling "Winchester Cathedral", which drove me crazy because I hated that song. On and on and on he whistled and wouldn't stop. When we were in there the following Saturday, there was an older kid in our group, a real wise guy. In a sneaky tone, he said, "Watch this!" Then he whistled a little of Winchester Cathedral. No more than a minute later, the Pal owner started whistling it again. His wife became a little annoyed and snapped at him saying, "Why are you doing that again?" He pointed in our direction and replied, "Some kid over there started it!" And we all laughed.

Then it was on to Wanta's Bowling Alley to hang out. It was always packed on Saturday morning with paperboys. Luckily, I was terrible at pool and bowling so I normally just hung out and watched the others. There was only one pool table and it was constantly being played. It was here that many of the paperboys blew their entire salary on bowling, pool, chips, candy, pop and some even bought cigarettes.

Hanging-Out ~ Continued

By noon we were hungry again, so we went to the Unique for a barbeque sandwich. The barbeque was in a big special crock pot near the bottles of booze, and served with a bun on a paper plate. We got the sandwich and went outside to eat it. At first it was reasonable, but then they raised the price and it became too expensive. Instead, we went to the Woolworth's Lunch Counter for a hot dog, cheap, good, and we could sit there for a long time.

After that, we would hang out in Woolworth's, but I don't think Mr. Fernett liked us in there. A coke at Gwidt's or Westy's was always next on the agenda. Then, we'd often hang in the lobby of the Fox reading posters of the Coming Attractions, or browsing the WWII gear at the Surplus Store, or reading comics at the News Stand, or getting lost in dreams at the Toyland. Another favorite was looking around the Sport Shop and seeing Garth Whittaker behind the counter, every kid in Point knew him.

By that time we needed another snack, so we headed to the Main Street Café for an order of French Fries. They had the best fries in the world! Some guys had fries at the Pal in the morning AND fries at Main Street in the afternoon. The Main Street Café was somewhat of a dive. Dark and noisy with a very high ceiling, long stemmed lights hanging from the ceiling, wooden booths on the sides and the kitchen in the back. There were several big tables in the center. This was great because we could pile a bunch of guys at one table and all sit together.

And lastly, it was time for a desert. The candy bars at Wanta's didn't count! We always topped off the Saturday with a chocolate milk shake from Fischer's Dairy. It was \$0.25 and oh so good! This was the old Fischer's around the corner from the Journal, near the old Yellow Cab Company. If it was winter, we would hang around inside or stand by the doorway of the Journal and drink it. Otherwise, we would walk around the Square and drink it.

We never really knew when the papers would be ready on Saturday. Sometimes they were early, sometimes they were late. But somehow, word spread to all the paperboys hanging out in the different parts of downtown. We had camaraderie and looked out for each other. One afternoon, a bunch of us were sitting on the steps of the Masonic Temple across from Penney's, when an older paperboy riding a bike shouted that the papers were ready, almost like a Town Crier! Then we would run back to the Journal and start the delivery process all over again.

Resignation

By September of 1966, I had become a seasoned veteran paperboy, but ironically, had not yet reached the minimum age requirement to be a paperboy. My goal was to save enough money to buy a new guitar, and my interest in music was rapidly taking a priority, so the decision was made to quit the route and focus on music.



The Invaders

Final Thoughts

Looking back, it was a complex little business that each paperboy ran. We learned to deal with customers, handle money, balance books, solve problems, and be accountable for mistakes. We also learned to deliver a product within a strict time schedule, and often amidst adverse weather constraints. I am very fortunate that Ed Richter gave me that opportunity at a young age.

*“...what I had
for Ed Richter
was respect.”*

True, there were many kids who did not like him, but they were probably the same kids who blew all their money at Wanta's on Saturday morning. I did not like him nor dislike him; what I had for Ed Richter was respect. He could have declined to hire an eleven year old kid, and perhaps my life may have turned out differently. Regretfully, I never went back as an adult to thank him.

Calling All Paperboys!

Do you ever think about the great opportunity and learning experience that we had as paperboys? Maybe this story will jog your memory and you will reflect on your own paperboy experiences. Tell me what you think.

One last thought: To this day, with all of my paper money...**the heads of the presidents MUST be face up, and point to the right!**

Glen Shulfer ~ January 2, 2018