



by Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker

Chairman of the Board, Eastern Air Lines



As National Newspaperboy Day approaches, a business leader and national hero reflects on what his old route taught him

BIRTHDAYS, especially when you've had 69 of them as I have, are a good time to look back and take stock of what you've accomplished. My birthday was last Thursday, Oct. 8, and I noticed that National Newspaperboy Day is next Saturday. The proximity of the two dates reminds me how much being a newspaperboy has had to do with any success I've enjoyed in life.

My formal schooling ended after the sixth grade, but now I'm the chairman of the board of Eastern Air Lines, one of the giants of American enterprise. I don't say this to toot my own horn, but to emphasize that here in America we all have an opportunity to make good in spite of certain handicaps.

One of my first jobs was the most important one, no matter how inconsequential it seems. It was as a newspaperboy in Columbus, Ohio. It was my initiation into a man's world, and it taught me many things. First, it taught me duty. Without a sense of duty, we have nothing.

Back in the days when pilots were flying the mail in open-cockpit planes through all kinds of weather, there was a saying: "The mail must go through." To all of us, these words were more than just a motto, they represented a sacred duty.

What better training could I have had for that situation than my newspaper delivery route? It was my first crack at responsibility, but it left a lasting impression. I delivered my papers rain or shine. Once, when I was only 12, I completed my route

while a blizzard was raging. So did the other boys, many of them younger than I was. It was this lesson in devotion to duty that stood so many of us in good stead years later.

It was our jobs as newspaperboys, too, that gave many of us our first lessons in dollars and cents—although in those days it was mostly cents. I didn't know it then, of course, but this financial lesson was to be particularly important because my father passed away and, suddenly, I discovered I had to make my own way.

We worked hard for the money we made and consequently we valued it. A quarter we earned always seemed to be shinier—and easier to spend wisely—than the one given to us.

ONE MORE LESSON that delivering papers taught me was perseverance. There were many times when I wanted to play ball, but I had to deliver papers. I didn't like it, but I did it. Seventeen years ago this month, on Oct. 21, 1942, to be exact, I had reason to be thankful for that training. The Flying Fortress I was traveling in under secret orders plummeted into the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

It was 24 days before the seven of us who survived on a raft were rescued.

I remember thinking during that long ordeal how endless my newspaper route had seemed when I had something else to do. But it had somehow always ended, and this thought gave me renewed

hope that the days on the raft would terminate, too.

Our country has grown and become mightier since I delivered newspapers in Columbus many years ago. But as National Newspaperboy Day approaches, I think that it hasn't changed so much after all.

For the average American boy, today as then, opportunity is not only knocking at the door, it's practically kicking that door down. And if he is prepared to take advantage of opportunity when it knocks, he is certain to succeed.

A newspaperboy has more than a job; he has a wonderful chance to learn the fundamentals of business because he actually is in business for himself.

He learns how to handle money, how to deal with people and, most important, how to meet head-on and solve the practical problems he will be facing in everyday life.

These lessons can't fail to bring rich rewards, justly earned, as a boy passes into manhood.

I think that any youngster who learns these two important rules will win the success and the respect of his fellow man:

First: always put the very best you have into your work.

Second: always be willing to help the other fellow. It's just putting the old "golden rule" into operation, but it's the tenet upon which to build a lifetime.

A newspaper route is as good a teacher of lessons as any institution we have in America. I, for one, would feel assured of our future if more of our present teen-agers had newspaper delivery routes of their own.

So on the special day set aside for them, I wish to add my tribute to the newspaperboys of America. My congratulations on a job well done!

COVER:

Arthur Sarnoff's cover painting and the above article by Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker pay tribute to a hard-working young businessman—the newspaperboy. National Newspaperboy Day will be officially celebrated next Saturday.

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