

another pSecret pSociety pshort pstory



The Paper Route by Mike Bozart (Agent 33) | JULY 2016

Back in 1978, at the ripe old age of 14, I had a paper route. It was bequeathed to me by a two-grades-older, same-street best friend named Scott, just before his family moved to Philadelphia (PA, USA). The newspaper was the now-defunct *Charlotte News*, the city's six-days-a-week (no Sunday edition) afternoon newspaper. I delivered it to about 80 customers in the Idlewild Farms neighborhood in east Charlotte (NC, USA).

This paper route was my first job, and I took it seriously. I even made a pegboard map of my neighborhood route and hung it in my closet. Each active address had a golf tee next to it. I wonder where it is now. Probably under 30 feet (9.14 meters) of earth in Renaissance Park (formerly a landfill site). Why, maybe it's under the 14th green.

The best way to 'route the route' was always on my mind. I was constantly trying to figure out the best – least mileage – Pacman-esque path. It was like a game-theory problem. Not sure if I ever solved it correctly. But, I certainly learned the safest way to weave my bike along those curvilinear streets.

As soon as I got home from my parochial school, typically around 3:30, I would get on my saddle-basket-outfitted chestnut-brown Schwinn Continental 10-speed bicycle and head for the drop site on Hitching Post Lane (unless it was raining; in which case my ever-helpful mom would drive the route with me). It was only about a kilometer (.62 miles) from our house, which was in the middle section of Powder Horn Road.

Another paperboy lived where the newspaper bundles were dropped. They were left off at his house, as he had seniority.

Tony had been doing his route, which was primarily in Easthaven (the adjacent neighborhood), for over two years, and he was older than me. When he sometimes saw me, he would say hello, but we never really became friends. I wonder what became of him. Maybe an auto dealership owner? Not sure why I thought that.

The paper route usually took about 50 minutes to complete. That is if there were no adverts to insert. In such case, it could tack on another 15 minutes, even more if there were multiple inserts. There was no additional pay for doing the inserting. Needless to say, I really despised inserts.

Doing the route had its scary moments. I remember a German shepherd chasing me in the bend of Fox Hunt Road. Even though I was able to increase my speed in the slight decline, he caught up to me. I kicked at his head with my right foot to fend him off. However, doing that made the dog more aggressive: He suddenly bit the heel of my boot! I jerked my right foot back and forth a few times before the large, growling, black and tan canine released the boot's heel from his mouth.

That episode sure got the heart pumping. I was very cautious in that street curve from that day on.

Then there was the time that some preteen boy threw a bottle at me on Idlebrook Drive (near Helmdale Avenue). The juice bottle crashed into my left-side metal basket. It was like a bomb hitting my bicycle. Glass shattered everywhere, but I didn't get cut. I stopped and yelled at the giggling urchins: "Who did it?!" But, all the nefarious rascals ran away, hopping over the back yard chain-link fence.

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