

## **Chapter 16 – Jobs**

**Paper Route:** I remember little about how I receive money growing up. I do not remember ever having an allowance. Somehow, I have a little to spend on stuff and things. When I am big enough, I wash cars for the neighbors. I remember getting one or two dollars each.

After 7<sup>th</sup> grade, I am lucky to get the paper route around Walnut House. I have a sturdy 26" bike. The route has about 155 customers. I ride to Main Street to the Roswell Daily Record. I roll, fold, or bag each of my papers in the prep area behind the office and place them appropriately in the canvas pack on the back on the rear fender. I ride the two miles to Walnut and throw the papers at the houses Monday through Friday. It is a 5-mile route.

On Sunday, the papers are delivered to my Walnut driveway around 3:30 A.M. I must collate the advertising inserts and either roll or bag each paper. It takes over an hour to prepare to ride. Papers must be delivered by 8:00 A.M. or complaints are phoned in and I lose money. I do not enjoy Sunday mornings in the freezing winter temperatures and snowstorms.

Collecting is the worst part. I go house to house asking for the \$1.40 or so. Often, the customers say they do not have the money now. "Come back again". Sometimes, after several of those responses, I tell them, "Time's up". The Record office does not like that. I throw papers for a year and a half. It is about a 9-mile route daily, Monday through Friday. My legs are much stronger because I keep the seat in a low position to exercise my legs. I know well how to fix the chain and flat tire/bike problems.

The interesting part is that I never save any of the money. I faithfully pay my bill at the Record. I have no supervision or accounting system to determine what my profits are. I usually ride over to 2<sup>nd</sup> Street to the pharmacy when I have some cash. I sit at the drug store counter and drink several old-fashioned carbonated flavored sodas. One day, Father wants an accounting. I have nothing to show. He makes me stop working the paper route. It is disruptive on Sundays, he says. Father is disappointed. I have failed at accounting, really enjoyed the sodas, and I look forward to Sundays now.

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

**Safeway:** During my 1<sup>st</sup> semester in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, I land a sacker job at Safeway on Main St. and McGaffey. It is a union store. I must pay \$5/quarter to the union. I make \$0.85/hour. I work after school two/three weekdays and all day Saturday. make I can work Sundays for 1.5 times the hourly salary when slots are available. Most of the senior guys and union loyals get the Sunday time. Furr's sackers nearby only receive \$0.75/hr.

I enjoy the job. After about a year, I have a large clientele. My customers ask me to find the best watermelons, test their radio and tv tubes, and sack their groceries the way they like. "Paper or Box?" Carrying out is required. Accepting tips is not allowed. I find ways to be ready to sack at the register when a cutie pulls in.

I want to do more. I ask to check once in a while or stock the shelves, just for training. The union steward hears about it and says "No... Against rules". That does not make me happy. How else can one progress? I know the math divisions checkers must quickly calculate at the register. I remember checkers sometimes looking at me when he/she does not know how much to charge for an amount like 3 cans priced at 7 for a dollar or something similar. I tell them 43 cents or whatever it was.

I did manage to save up enough to buy a 1951 Ford 4-door with a standard stick on the column. Father might have loaned me a little on this. He does not want the bother of driving me to work and back. It is about a 2-mile trip one-way.

I never receive a raise. I sometimes volunteer to spend Saturday night locked in the store. I mop, wax, and buff the floors by daybreak. I guess the union folks do not like the hard work.

The end comes one day when the new whipper-snapper assistant store director makes a mistake. The normal procedure is: sackers stay with their customers when sacking is done and carryout is imminent. The new Asst. director is checking. He calls for a carry out. He looks at me and thinks I should drop my customer who is ready to go and run to his customer. I point to my customer. I do not go to his. I am called into the director's office. Both the new guy and the director (whom I have worked with for a long time and admire) are there. The new guy says that if I ever do that again, he will fire me on the spot. It really hurts my feelings. I look at the director for support, but none came.

## *Part 1 - Times and Places*

I tell Father. He can see how much it hurts and takes my side. He goes to the directors and tells them off. I was not in the room, but Father probably had some colorful language. That is the most Father has ever supported me. I appreciate it. I resign about a week later after I say goodbye to some of my customers.

**Mechanic:** I almost ruin my 1951 Ford by removing the front springs. I cut off 1.5 coils and replace the springs. I want to have a lowered front like other cool cars. No one ever mentions that an adjustment must be made in the toe-in. My wheels are splayed out at the bottom. Father says a few curse words. The car is dangerous to drive. Father takes my keys and somehow gets it to Alamogordo. He gives it to his brother, a mechanic. Father then gives me the old family car, a 1950 Nash Ambassador which looks like an upside-down, two-tone green bathtub. Amenities are that the front seats lay flat creating a double bed. The AM radio has a front speaker to rear speaker fade knob switch. The bathtub has a straight six-cylinder engine with a standard plus overdrive stick shift on the steering column. It can do 70 mph coming down the Big Hill on Main Street in 2<sup>nd</sup> gear, says the police officer. (Remembering tricycle ride)

I start taking the bus to high school. I use the car for Saturday night dates. I clean the basement of the 1<sup>st</sup> National Bank on Wednesday afternoons. The bank chief gives me \$5 each week. That is just enough for 4-5 gallons of gasoline, 2 chicken fried steak meals, and a dollar for the drive-in movie. I miss my midnight curfew often. That results in standing under Father's 10 – 15 minute scowl. **Life is good.**

