

It was a ritual. Every afternoon the paperboys perched on the curb outside the office. They told lies while folding the newspapers stacked at their feet. The secret to an accurate backhand was the Journal-Messenger tuck. Like a Frisbee, it could be made to sail left or right.

Speed and accuracy were everything. After all, none of them liked to lose time by dismounting to retrieve a paper from a hedge. It was always a race to claim the right stack, a race to fill the canvas bag, a race to mount up, and a race to hit the last porch before sundown.

“Boys, you are the face of the Journal-Messenger,” Mr. Baxter often told them. “It’s up to you. If you don’t deliver, we might as well shut the doors. All our efforts fail, and you get docked for a miss. You are in the newspaper business now, so be polite and pay attention. Hit those porches and ride like the wind!”

Only a handful of boys lasted. For Raymond and his pals, who knew every yard and alley in town, it was easy money.