

WHIMPS NEED NOT APPLY

By Donna R. Jensen

HELP WANTED: Newspaper Carrier

Special abilities desired: Able to hold an umbrella and a flashlight while pushing a newspaper through a mail slot (a third hand would be helpful); ability to handle angry dogs; able to find a new customer when it is dark, and there is no visible name or number; sure footed as a mountain goat for icy driveways, hill-sides, and painted porches.

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We have long been aware that despite rain, sleet, or snow, the mail goes through. Let me assure you that what is true of the mail, is equally true of the newspaper, but the job is usually done by a child.

My daughter Allyson began her career as a paper carrier at the age of twelve. After carefully folding each newspaper, she put them in a bag that she hoisted onto her shoulder (a weight that I wouldn't have wanted to carry) and headed out the door into the dark at 4:30 A.M. She did this six days a week for a year and a half until we moved to another neighborhood.

It was our understanding from the first that it was her job, not mine. Though she tried her best not to awaken me, I watched from my window each morning as she left and my prayers went with her.

Only twice did I have to come to her rescue. Drifting back to sleep, I was awakened by heavy rain pelting my window. Sitting bolt upright, I remembered that Allyson had left in summer attire with no umbrella. Searching the streets of her route, I found her drenched and in tears on a customer's porch.

Then there was the time she substituted for a friend on vacation, as well as doing her own route. Once again, rain was the culprit. Jake's newspaper bags were fastened to his bike. She couldn't remove them, nor could she handle the bike with 115 papers! She had to run back to our house and get her bag. While she was gone, it started to rain. She had left the bike by the rain gutter and many papers were wet.

In tears, she awakened me to tell me her problem. The only thing I could think of to do was to dry them in the oven. We quickly spread them out across the kitchen floor. As a few were dried, she ran out to deliver them while I dried more. Only one was slightly singed!

After six months, a paper route became available in our new neighborhood. Since the new route took Allyson into some very out of the way places, and I could use the exercise, I decided to go along with her.

The first day of our job, winter settled into Pennsylvania. As a bonus, we developed car trouble. This added an extra thirty minutes each way to our walk. Many days, Allyson couldn't do the route and catch the van to her Christian School. On those days, her younger brother and sister helped me with the route.

One icy morning ten-year-old April helped out. We had never seen the area in the daylight. Starting up a fifty-foot driveway to a house, I cautioned her to stay on the grass.

I delivered two papers across the street and waited for her at the back of the lot. No April. Finally, huffing and puffing, she appeared. Calling to her, I asked if she had fallen down.

"No," she replied, "but Mom, they don't have a yard! It drops off by the driveway! I had to crawl up it on my hands and knees! Every time I put my hands down, my mittens stuck to the ice!"

We hugged each other and laughed as I told her how proud I was of all the effort she put into getting the job done.

Perhaps you can see why I'm convinced that newspaper carriers deserve a special place in Heaven!