

On the Times Union's dawn patrol

From world tours to pocket change, newspaper carriers with local roots share what they learned on the job

By Shannon Fromma

In December 1970, Anthony Paratore embarked on a whirlwind all-expenses-paid trip around the world: He spent Christmas Eve in Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris, rode an elephant in Thailand, touched the Western Wall in Jerusalem, visited the Parthenon in Athens, and enjoyed a boat ride in Hong Kong.

He was just 13 at the time, a Times Union newspaper carrier and one of the winners of a Hearst Newspapers "Junior Diplomat" nationwide subscription-selling contest.

"It changed my life," said Paratore, who grew up in East Greenbush and now lives in Guilderland. "There's no question about it."

Paratore, who represented the Times Union for the contest, was joined by Grant Ostapeck of Clifton Park, a Knickerbocker News carrier, and 16 other winners from other Hearst newspapers on the 20-day world tour, which departed a few days before Christmas.

Paratore delivered 54 newspapers every day. He would pick them up at 5 a.m. and spend the next two hours on his bike. To win the contest, he needed to net the most new Times Union subscriptions in the area over a six-month period: Sunday-only subscriptions would receive five points apiece, a Monday-Saturday subscription earned 10, and a seven-day sale would rack up 15 points.

With his mother's help, he tracked and tallied all new customers on cardstock paper. He didn't need to deliver all new subscriptions sold, only sign up the new busi-



Times Union carrier Tony Paratore, fourth from left, about to depart from Albany in December 1970. The boy shaking hands is Grant Ostapeck, another winning Hearst "Junior Diplomat."

ness. He thinks that venturing into Troy — a territory that at the time was steadfastly loyal to the local Record — helped him accumulate reams of new Times Union readers.

He would share a flier about the contest with potential customers. Nobody could believe the grand prize was a free trip around the world, Paratore said. He ended the competition with roughly 300 new customers and 2,500 points — the highest score of all Hearst carriers in the country.

"I got a letter from (President) Richard Nixon congratulating all the junior delegates," he recalls. "Richard Nixon — can you imagine that?"

William Randolph Hearst, Jr., son of the media mogul William Randolph Hearst and publisher of Hearst Newspapers at the time, assured the boys — and their parents — that they would receive "red-carpet treatment" throughout the adventure. Hearst, who sought to showcase America's youth, covered the cost of everything for his young American ambassa-



dors, including flights provided by Trans World Airlines, rooms at Hilton Hotels, adult chaperones, meals and more.

Paratore said the company's aspiration to elevate a group of junior diplomats "was so critical because we were basically at war with everybody. And you really had to behave yourself — there was no messing around."

A reporter and photographer chronicled the entire seven-nation journey, from Paratore obtaining a passport to returning home, publishing stories in each of the Hearst papers daily. Among Paratore many highlights was touring Pearl Harbor and bumping into Buffalo Bills running back O.J. Simpson in

Hawaii.

"At that age, I knew there was something special about what I could do and accomplish, and at the same time get this kind of publicity," he said. "It's a little different than getting your photo in the paper for getting a home run. I was in the paper every single day for three weeks."

It gave him a patriotic rush: "The whole idea that you weren't just a newspaper boy but a junior delegate was like getting a promotion."

Paratore said his first job not only led to the adventure of a lifetime, but also taught him a slew of skills — effective communication, time management, prospecting and problem-solving. He went on to a successful career in pharmaceuticals and as a regional sales manager for a medical device firm.

"The fact that I ended up running my own (sales) region, there's a correlation to running your own paper territory," he said. "You were responsible for all of those customers, and I learned at the age of 13 to keep them happy. You ran your own show."

We asked other former Times Union carriers for their stories. Here are some of them:

Peter Bishop, Slingerlands

I loved being a Times Union carrier. We had a branch on Willow Street in Albany. It was and is a nondescript row of garages forgotten by time, but holds great memories. We would all meet at the branch everyday at 6:30 in the morning and talk about the previous night's baseball scores and who was better, (Mickey) Mantle or (Willie) Mays. Life then was about as long as your arm. It was a magical time everyday to go swimming, play ball and ride your bicycle to a new adventure.

No matter what the weather everyone showed up, set about packing and folding newspapers. There was something about those mornings, a peace, the beauty of the change of seasons that brought new contests. Winter in that branch was cold and unforgiving. We complained to the branch manager, a fellow named Heckman, about the cold and one day we came into the branch and what did our wondering eyes appear, a large 1900s potbellied stove. We filled the stove with rolled-up leftover newspapers and the heat filled that little garage and the glow lasted quite a while. Every once in a while we would forget our gloves on the stove and the smell of burning leather would fill the room. No gloves that day for delivering the papers.

John Michne, Clifton Park

Attached picture is of myself — first day on my first job, summer 1949. It was as the paper boy for the Knickerbocker News. The location is the short section of West Street in the West end of Albany between North Allen

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