

# Newspaper carriers of a bygone era

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READ ALL ABOUT IT! — Newsboys a few years back were as busy as today's Saratogian personal salesmen. Pictured with their manager, Jack Estle, third

from the right, are, first row from left, Edward Harrington, Arthur G. Wood, Stephen Jurcsak, Joseph Jurcsak, Lucien Pastore, Joseph Bargovic,

Harold Arff Jr. and John Hickey; rear, from left, John McLennan, Stewart Stanton, Lacey King, Earle Arff, the late James Albertin, Thomas Kelley, the late

Harry Rooke, Pat Weaver, Bob Woodruff, Estle, the late Mrs. Estle and the late William A. Sutfin.

The feature that follows was written by Ann Hauprich in March 2009. An updated and expanded version with additional photos will be published in *Mornings with Morley* in 2016.

*There was a time in Ballston Spa's history when bicycle-peddling lads with heavy Saratogian newspaper sacks slung across their chests were a common sight in village neighborhoods. Established in 1855, the periodical soon began employing adolescent males to make deliveries on two-wheelers and on foot to homes and businesses in the village to its south.*

*By the time the Roaring Twenties came along, the daily had a bustling office on Front Street that was managed by John (Jack) Estle, assisted by William A. Sutfin. Their duties included supervising some 15 to 20 youths whose job it was to deliver the newspaper to subscribers on a daily basis and collect money from them in keeping with a weekly or monthly payment schedule.*

*Among the early newspaper carriers was Lucien Pastore, who would become a highly respected physician in his hometown after serving as an Army doctor during World War Two. According to his 88-year-old sister, Rose Pastore Miranda, the future MD "had a gift for caring and compassion" which she had opportunities to observe many times over the decades.*

A retired teacher, Mrs. Miranda vividly recalled the long ago winter when her brother slipped on the ice while making a delivery and had to spend the next six weeks confined to his bed. "It became part of my daily routine to play checkers with him after school every day – a game at which he excelled," said Mrs. Miranda.

She wasn't certain whether or not Lucien returned to his paper route after his leg had healed, but does remember that many of his best friends throughout high school were fellow newspaper carriers. Some, including future Village Postmaster Arthur G. Wood, became friends for life while others lost touch for a variety of reasons.

After graduating from Ballston Spa High School, Lucien was accepted by Cornell University where he completed his pre-med studies before pursuing a degree in medicine at Albany Medical Center. The young doctor had just completed his internship in Allentown, Pennsylvania, when he was drafted into the US Army.

"I'll never forget the night his wife, Mary, called to ask me to come and take care of their two little boys (John and Ralph) because she wanted to be with him before he shipped out. From then on, we'd hear that he was treating the wounded soldiers who were sent over to England for care. I'm sure he saw some terrible things . . . he had the use of an Army motorcycle while he was in England and that he bought one soon after he returned home and established a private practice in Ballston Spa. Sometimes patients would go to his practice, but mostly he made house calls. His favorites were in the evenings. He'd take his bag and head for the mountains on his motorcycle. He loved the mountains so much – I think that was also this way to unwind after hours."

It was with some regret, Mrs. Miranda said, that her brother gave up his motorcycle after an elder she described as "a proud Italian immigrant" admonished him for his freewheeling mode of transportation. "In those days, it wasn't considered respectable for a doctor to make house calls using anything other than an automobile so Lucien sold his motorcycle. But he never stopped loving the mountains. Many years later, after he suffered a stroke, I would drive him to the mountains on the weekends so he could enjoy the scenery and the fresh air."

In the course of his long and distinguished career as a village doctor, the former *Saratogian* carrier earned a special place in the heart of many patients on the outskirts of the village who couldn't afford to pay for his medical services.

“Some of them would pay Lucien with eggs, chickens, fruits, vegetables – whatever was in season. One time, someone left a bushel of corn for him at his office,” recalled his sister. “He never once complained about not getting money. He loved taking care of people and was grateful for each and every offering they made.”

A former patient who is reasonably sure her parents were “cash customers” is Carolyn Wakefield Eddy, who recently took an early retirement from a classroom position elsewhere in Saratoga County. “I’ll never forget Dr. Pastore wrapping his arms around me and telling my mother in a very comforting tone: ‘She’s very sick, Thelma. We’ll put her in Benedict Memorial Hospital. They’ll take good care of her.’ He was just so gentle and reassuring.”

As a side note, a younger brother of the late Dr. Pastore is Paul Pastore of Hyde Boulevard, who for many years ran a thriving pharmacy on Milton Avenue in the village. Dr. Lucien Pastore and his wife ultimately had two daughters, Kathleen and Mary Ann and a third son, Jim. Sadly, both Jim and Ralph have since passed away, but their brother John continues to work as an attorney.

Another early newspaper delivery boy was Lacy King, grandson of King House Hotel founders Orilla and Lacy T. King. Situated at 50 West North Street in the village’s north end, the family-owned inn offered regal accommodations to guests during the late 1800s and early 1900s. News clips show that at the time of its opening in 1884, the three-story lodging boasted such amenities as a stable for horses, a fine dining room, a well-stocked bar and live music that was performed at a dance pavilion where locals were invited to join in the merriment with guests from far and wide.

The King name continued to show up in the press during the village’s 1907 Centennial celebrations as both Orilla and Lacy T. King were leaders who, by all accounts, did an outstanding job of promoting 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary festivities that year.

All four of their children (Joseph, Frederick, Louisa and Loretta) were also involved in the festivities at which Village President Irving Wiswall presided. A souvenir program published in conjunction with the 1907 event described Ballston Spa as “one of the most charming and prosperous villages in the great Empire State.”

It was after the 1927 deaths of Lacy T. King and his son Joseph (the father of Lacy Joseph – the lad in the vintage photo of *Saratogian* delivery boys) that surviving family members came to the heartbreaking decision that they would not be able to continue operating the inn.

The funeral for young Lacy’s father (who was also related to Baseball Hall of Famer Ira Felix Thomas) reportedly brought the whole community together with an Honor Guard of 100 firefighters on hand to help celebrate his life.

The Prohibition years had hit the hospitality industry hard, however, and by the time the Great Depression struck, all of the other King children had married and moved out of the hotel. Indeed records show that The King House and all other holdings acquired by Lacy T. King – including a grocery store and a barbershop on the hotel grounds — were eventually sold.

It is thus not surprising that the grandson of the once thriving hotel’s founder would seek to earn extra money as a paperboy during the years when the nation as a whole was in economic decline. He was also considered a model altar boy at St. Mary’s Roman Catholic Church who loved to play baseball on the King Ball Diamond behind the old King House Hotel when not at school, in church or delivering newspapers.

Lacy Joseph King’s son Gerry inherited a faded copy of the photo of the *Saratogian* newsboys in which his father is included and was delighted to be shown a copy that was in better condition. Although he doesn’t recall his father (who passed away in 1974) reminiscing a great deal about his experiences as a news carrier, he has heard that Lacy’s brother (Gerry’s Uncle Fred) was once honored by the *Saratogian* for selling the most Liberty Bond Stamps to customers on his newspaper route.

“My father served in the US Navy during World War Two where his duties included being in charge of the storage supplies aboard his ship. After the war, he worked for a time at the Ackshand Mill in Ballston Spa and a mill in Gloversville. He later secured a position he liked better at General Electric in Schenectady where he worked until his retirement,” said Gerry King.

A Ballston Spa High School Class of 1970 alum, Mr. King went on to earn a Bachelors in Sociology from Siena College, followed by a Masters in Social Work and a Masters in Public Administration from SUNY/Albany.

Now a Glenmont resident, Mr. King works in the NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services. He and wife Patricia have a son, Colin.

“Although my father didn’t talk a lot his childhood, I always considered myself fortunate that he and my mother, Mildred, would take me and my brother Joseph (now the Head Football Coach at RPI) to visit our Grandmother King who lived in the house next door to what had been The King House. It was certainly a name we were familiar with long after others had forgotten it ever existed. I’m sorry to say that I didn’t see as much of my relatives in that part of the village after Grandma passed away, but the memories I have of that neighborhood and of my own youth on Hop City Road – which was then mostly dairy farms and apple orchards – are good ones.”

Community directories owned by Village History Consultant Maurice “Christopher” Morley, meanwhile, help chart the route taken to the Village Postmaster’s Office by Arthur G. Wood.

The fact that Morley’s own father, Edward J. Morley, was Village Postmaster prior to Wood’s appointment made assisting with this search especially interesting for his soon to be 87-year-old son who was present at the very first Air Mail delivery to Ballston Spa in 1938.

A directory published two years after that landmark event listed Wood as an employee of the County Welfare Office. By 1952, his name appeared both as an insurance agent and as the Supervisor of the Town of Milton. Wood had risen to the rank of Postmaster when the 1970 directory rolled off of the presses.

Information about the other lads in the photos was not as easy to come by. In a few instances, the names of the carriers vanished completely from the Ballston Spa pages leaving one to wonder whether their lives had been sacrificed during World War Two or if marriage or careers had caused them to pull up roots and settle elsewhere.

Included in the latter category were James Albertin, John Hickey, Joseph Jurcsak, Joseph Mulholland, Stuart Stanton and Pat Weaver. While additional hours of detective work would, no doubt, answer many questions, this feature’s deadline did not permit such an exhaustive search of public records.

Thanks to Morley, it can be reported that Joseph Bargovic went on to work at General Electric in Schenectady as did Harold Arff, Jr. – although it appears Harold worked at the Socony Service Station for a time before taking his position at GE.

Although Arff’s twin brother Earl and Stephen Jurcsak were also listed as commuting to work in The Electric City, the vintage directories did not stipulate the names of their employers. By 1940, Harry Rooke was employed as a millwright at the Ballston Stillwater Knitting Mill while Edward Harrington and Thomas Kelley were working at the Ackshand Knitting Mill. That same directory listed John McLennan as an attendant at the Thomas Oil Company.

As for the adults in the vintage *Saratogian* photograph, Morley remembers William A. Sutfin as “a likeable fellow” who was also a Boy Scout leader. It is believed that his son Robert became a village Justice of the Peace. Less is known about what became of the Estles who were last listed as living above the Post Office when it was at a different location in the village. “The *Saratogian* office was where the Sunset Café is now on Front Street and the Post Office was on the same street in what we called the Balmuth Block. Where the Post Office now stands at the corner of Front Street and Milton Avenue was the Eagle Hotel. I was just a boy when it burned down.”

Grilled as to why he never delivered *The Saratogian*, a mischievous grin spreads across Morley’s face. “I knew a lot of the carriers, but I got an opportunity to work delivering telegrams for the D & H and I heard the tips were often better than when you delivered newspapers.”

A case in point: The time when Mr. Morley – then around 11 or 12 – was promised “a guaranteed five dollar tip” upon delivery of a telegram from Ballston Spa to an address along a part of Saratoga Lake known as Chinatown.

“It was the dead of winter so I wore snowshoes and carried a kerosene lantern,” recalls Mr. Morley. The fact that he’s a proud descendent of Revolutionary War Scout Alexander Bryan and was also a Boy Scout at the time meant that Morley knew more than his share of survival tricks. His favorite was stopping frequently to visit with friends and relations along the way – most of whom offered him hot cocoa by their fireplaces or wood stoves.

He still remembers being overjoyed at the sight of the \$5 tip because it made him feel like a grown man. “In those days, a good skilled worker made 32 and a half cents an hour and a cup of coffee cost a nickel. That five dollars went a long, long way.”