



Paperboy: Confessions of a Future Engineer

Henry Petroski

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Anyone wondering what sort of experience prepares one for a future as an engineer may be surprised to learn that it includes delivering newspapers. But as Henry Petroski recounts his youth in 1950s Queens, New York—a borough of handball games and inexplicably numbered streets—he winningly shows how his after-school job amounted to a prep course in practical engineering.

Petroski's paper was *The Long Island Press*, whose headlines ran to COP SAVES OLD WOMAN FROM THUG and DiMAG SAYS BUMS CAN'T WIN SERIES. Folding it into a tube suitable for throwing was an exercise in post-Euclidean geometry. Maintaining a Schwinn revealed volumes about mechanics. Reading **Paperboy**, we also learn about the hazing rituals of its namesakes, the aesthetics of kitchen appliances, and the delicate art of penny-pitching. With gratifying reflections on these and other lessons of a bygone era—lessons about diligence, labor, and community-mindedness—**Paperboy** is a piece of Americana to cherish and reread.

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