

Bye to Michael and Molly the paperdog

Most big-city newspapers are delivered by grown-ups now.

Here's the grown-ups' method for delivering newspapers. They drive by the house at a rapid rate of speed, with the car window open. As they approach your house, they grasp a paper and fling it out the window, in the general direction of the house. If luck is with everybody that day, it lands on the driveway; if not, on the wet grass or in the snow, depending. This method almost demands that the paper be in an environmentally incorrect plastic bag which you must then dispose of in an environmentally correct way.

I know all this because we get four newspapers delivered every morning. (So, I admit it, we're news junkies. There are worse things.) Three are big-city newspapers tossed in the general direction of the house by grown-ups in cars. The fourth is the *Enterprise Sun*, that used to be delivered by a bright and friendly young neighbor of ours named Michael Kennard.

Here's Michael's method for delivering newspapers. He comes on foot or on bike, always early. He walks all the way up to the front steps and places the paper inside the door. If I've neglected to unlock the door, he carefully rolls the paper and tucks it into the door handle. If the day is absolutely wet, the paper will be in a plastic bag; otherwise, not.

Accompanying Michael — but sauntering contentedly while Michael hustles — is his sidekick and paper-carrier assistant, Molly the golden retriever paperdog. Molly very well understands that her job is to deliver papers. She doesn't quite so well understand that the job is to deliver specific papers to specific houses. If she and Michael arrive at our house and the Boston Globe, say, is splattered on the driveway, Molly might good naturedly pick it up and deliver it two doors down.

Then you hear Michael, trying to speak both loudly to impress Molly and softly so as not to

disturb his customers, shout-whisper, "No, Molly! Drop it! Molly! No!" Sometimes Michael has to retrace his steps to undo the work done by his willing but not quite so able assistant.

When we're planning to be away, we ask Michael to hold the papers for us and deliver them when we get back. His answer is always a smile and a "No problem." Sometimes we've asked him to pick up the other papers for us and put them inside the door — also, a smile and no problem.

Michael and Molly have been delivering our *Enterprise Sun* for four years.

But it seems that those lovely days are over. Michael is going to high school.

One day last week, a note was stapled to the newspaper.

In the note, Michael writes (that is, I assume Michael wrote it, not Molly) that "after long thought

and many hours of deliberation" he and Molly have decided to resign from their post as *Enterprise Sun* carriers. Michael is starting high school and would have to get up too early in the morning to do his route. He thanks customers for standing by them "when we were late, when the papers were a little wet or when I accidentally mis-billed you. And to those of you whose Boston Globes or Wall Street Journals were chewed, Molly says sorry."

And then he was gone.

The *Enterprise Sun* is, I think temporarily, being delivered by a grown-up.

I don't know what Michael's plans are for after high school and beyond. I sort of hope he goes into business. He already understands what constitutes excellent customer service, and how much it means to customers.

And, Mr. or Ms. Businessperson, if Michael ever comes to you looking for a job, snap him right up. I'm sure he can do whatever you ask him to do. Even if Molly isn't with him.

Janice Lindsay of Marlborough is a free-lance writer.

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