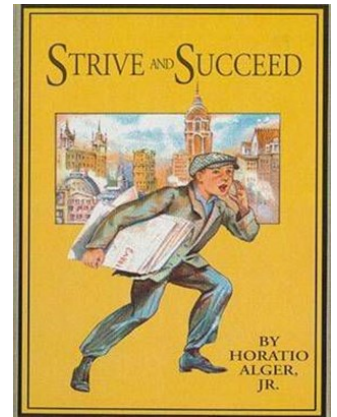




THE HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY
OFFICIAL PUBLICATION

NEWSBOY

A magazine devoted to the study of Horatio Alger, Jr.,
his life, works, and influence on the culture of America

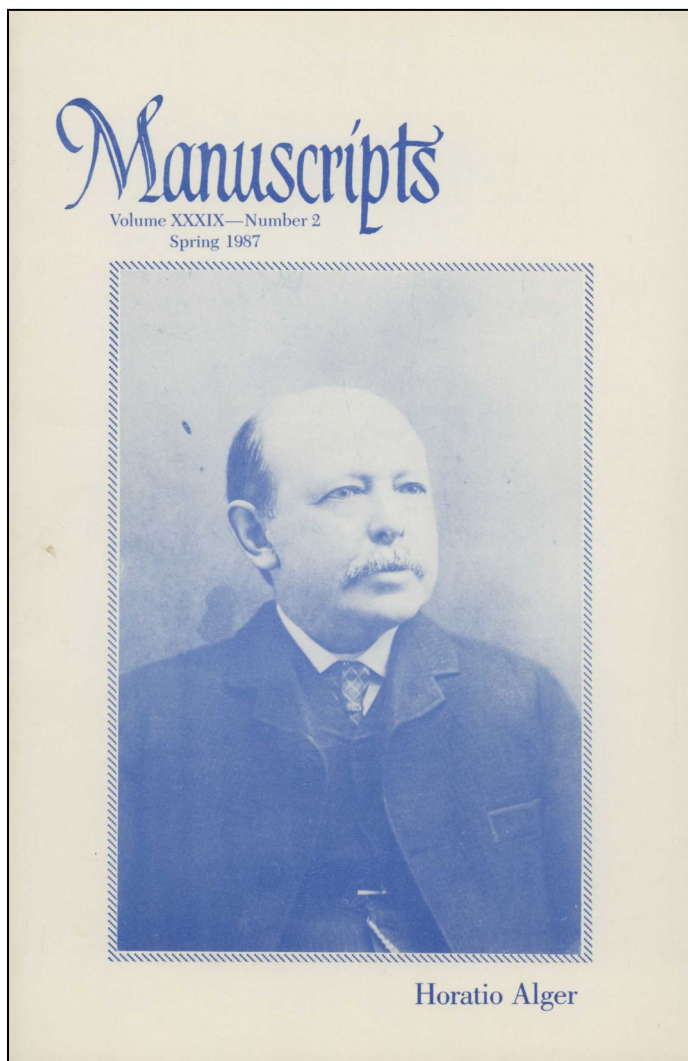


Volume LXII

September-October 2024

Number 5

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President's Column

First, news. With all HAS Board members voting, the Board has unanimously approved with regret Bill Gowen's request to step down as *Newsboy* Editor, and thank him for over thirty years of service to the Society as editor. The Board also unanimously approved the appointment of Jack Bales as the new *Newsboy* Editor. Jack's request that, if his appointment as *Newsboy* Editor were approved, his resignation as vice president be accepted, was also unanimously approved by the Board.

We are searching for a member willing to serve as vice president for the present year. Might that be you? Even if you do not wish to consider serving as president, for which the vice presidency usually serves as a stepping stone, we would value your help this year, and the work should be light. If you have any interest or would like to hear more about the position, please contact me at cracken1@swarthmore.edu.

As someone whose earlier scholarship focused on economic mobility in the United States in relation to beliefs about mobility, I have been following with great interest the July 2024 release of a new, big data study from Harvard using anonymized census and tax data for fifty-seven million American children born between 1978 (with 1978 constituting the Gen X group) and 1992 (with 1992 constituting the Millennial group). The study compared economic outcomes of Gen Xers and Millennials by race and class. The authors, including lead author Professor Raj Chetty, William A. Ackman Professor of Public Economics at Harvard, have been studying how to give young people from disadvantaged backgrounds better opportunities to succeed, and what kind of policies might be effective. While experiences in a handful of metropolitan areas differ from the overall generalizations (including Miami and Washington, DC), the study found that Black Millennial children born into poor families made significant wage gains by age 27, whereas white Millennial children born into poor families saw a shift in the opposite direction: they lost ground economically

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HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY

To further the philosophy of Horatio Alger, Jr. (1832-1899) and to encourage the spirit of Strive and Succeed that for half a century guided Alger's undaunted heroes. Our members conduct research and provide scholarship on the life of Alger, his works, and his influence on the culture of America. The Horatio Alger Society embraces collectors and enthusiasts of all juvenile literature, including boys' and girls' series books, pulps, and dime novels.

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Changes of address and other correspondence should be sent to the Horatio Alger Society, 1004 School St., Shelbyville, IN 46176.

Newsboy is indexed in the Modern Language Association's International Bibliography. For additional information on the Horatio Alger Society, including a biography of Alger and details on his works, see the Society's website at <https://horatioalgersociety.net>.

Newsboy ad rates: Full page, \$32.00; one-half page, \$17.00; one-quarter page, \$9.00; per column inch (1 inch deep by approximately 3-1/2 inches wide), \$2.00. Send ads, with check payable to "Horatio Alger Society," to *Newsboy* Editor Jack Bales at 422 Greenbrier Ct., Fredericksburg, VA 22401-5517. His email address is jbales@umw.edu.

The above rates apply to all want ads, along with ads offering non-Alger books for sale. However, it is the policy of the Horatio Alger Society to promote the exchange of Alger books and related Alger materials by providing space free of charge to members for the sale only of such material. Send free "Alger for sale" ads to the editor at the above address.

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“The Dean of Alger Scholars”:

Morton S. Enslin

By Jack Bales (PF-258)

“The Rev. Dr. Morton S. Enslin, of Canton, N.Y.—the dean of Alger scholars—whose knowledge, generosity and advice have benefitted many.”

—Ralph D. Gardner, in the acknowledgments of Horatio Alger; or, The American Hero Era (1964)

◆ ◆ ◆

Before the Horatio Alger Society was even a glint in the eyes of co-founders Kenneth B. Butler and Forrest Campbell, Alger biographers and bibliographers were collecting, researching, writing, and sharing their work with other collectors. One of the best known of these bibliophiles was Morton Scott Enslin (1897–1980), whose generous assistance prompted Ralph D. Gardner to write the above words of thanks in the acknowledgments section of his Alger biography-bibliography.

Enslin was indeed renowned in Alger circles, particularly after the publication of *Antiquarian Bookman’s* “Special Horatio Alger Issue” (July 6–13, 1959), in which appears Enslin’s “A Checklist of Horatio Alger, Jr.” (The cover, featuring the frontispiece of the first edition of the classic *Ragged Dick*, is reprinted on page 4 of this *Newsboy*.)

The six-page checklist “seeks to include all the published Alger books, with all the known variant titles which actually appeared.” In an introductory note, Enslin writes that “the real collector, sooner or later, wants real firsts, and procuring them today is no easy task, even when his purse is long. Judicious ads bring plenty of responses from people who have a few tucked away and who have gained the impression that any Alger book is a collector’s item, worth very large money. . . . And many collectors, at the start, don’t know the difference either. . . . Hence the need of a reliable and usable bibliography.”

Enslin not only studied the editions, but he also read the books. He told a newspaper writer in 1957 that “Alger novels have a real quality and are wholesome and entertaining reading. They are far superior to space ship books and the like, which seem to appeal to the present generation of teen-agers.”

The newspaper article notes that Enslin “has one of the two best collections in the nation of Alger writings,” and that he lacked only *Timothy Crump’s Ward* to have them all. Enslin said that he knew of only two copies—one owned by collector Frank Gruber and the other by the New York Public Library. (Enslin did



Morton S. Enslin of Canton, New York, looks over a Horatio Alger book in his collection. (Photograph was published in the *Syracuse (NY) Herald-American*, October 6, 1957, and the clipping is from the collection of Keith Thompson, PF-035.)

own, however, two of the six exceedingly rare Leather-Clad titles: *Dean Dunham* and *Mark Stanton*.)¹

Enslin had the advantage of using what he called the “peach” of a bibliography by Frank Gruber, published in the November 13, 1948, *Antiquarian Bookman*. “It was a godsend to collectors as well as dealers,” he enthusiastically affirmed, though “in the interim we have learned a bit more about a few titles, and now a few alterations can be made.” Although he owned the *The Argosy* serial version of *Silas Snobden’s Office Boy*, the story “did appear in separate book form, I am convinced, although as yet I have not been able to turn up a copy.” He added that his checklist is probably “not perfect, but it is the best that I can provide after fifty years of devotion to an author who added much to the joys of childhood. Sure I read the books as well as collect them. I know most of them by heart, but they never seem to lose their charm.”

Enslin had been an enthusiastic Alger fan ever since his father read the books to him while the boy was growing up in Somerville, Massachusetts. In a brief memoir published years later, he recalled that although his father’s “reading was far from limited to juveniles, he knew and loved the books of Horatio Alger and of Oliver Optic. And his love for them was reproduced in me.” The boy reader did not become a collector, however, until the mid-1940s.²

Besides Alger, The Reverend Doctor Morton S. Enslin was also well known for his knowledge of theology. In the introduction of *Understanding the Sacred Text: Essays in Honor of Morton S. Enslin on the Hebrew Bible and Christian Beginnings* (1972), editor John Reumann observes that “this volume is public token of our praise for one who could move from learned but lively essays on the church fathers or the Synoptic problem to analyses and reminiscences about Horatio Alger, Jr. (Dr. Enslin has one of the best collections of this bit of Americana), . . . to popular journals for the preacher, with pithy advice about current foibles in church life and the proper use of the Bible.”

Morton Scott Enslin was born in 1897 in Somerville, Massachusetts, the son of Theodore Vernon (a merchant) and Ada Eudora (Scott) Enslin. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Harvard University in 1919 and a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Newton Theological Institution in 1922. He was ordained a Baptist minister in 1922 and earned his Doctorate of Theology degree from Harvard in 1924. He served in the U.S. Naval Reserve Force from 1918-1922.

Enslin married Ruth May Tuttle in 1922, and they were the parents of two children, Theodore Vernon II (born in 1925) and Priscilla Stella (born in 1929).

Among his various teaching positions, Enslin was a professor of New Testament at the Crozer Theological Seminary in Chester, Pennsylvania, from 1924 to 1954 and a professor of biblical languages and literature at St. Lawrence University's Theological School in Canton, New York, from 1955 to 1965. From 1968 to 1980 he lectured on history and early Christian thought at Dropsie University in Philadelphia. He edited the *Crozer Quarterly* from 1941 to 1952 and the *Journal of Biblical Literature* from 1960 to 1969. The best known among his numerous books is *The Prophet from Nazareth* (1961).³

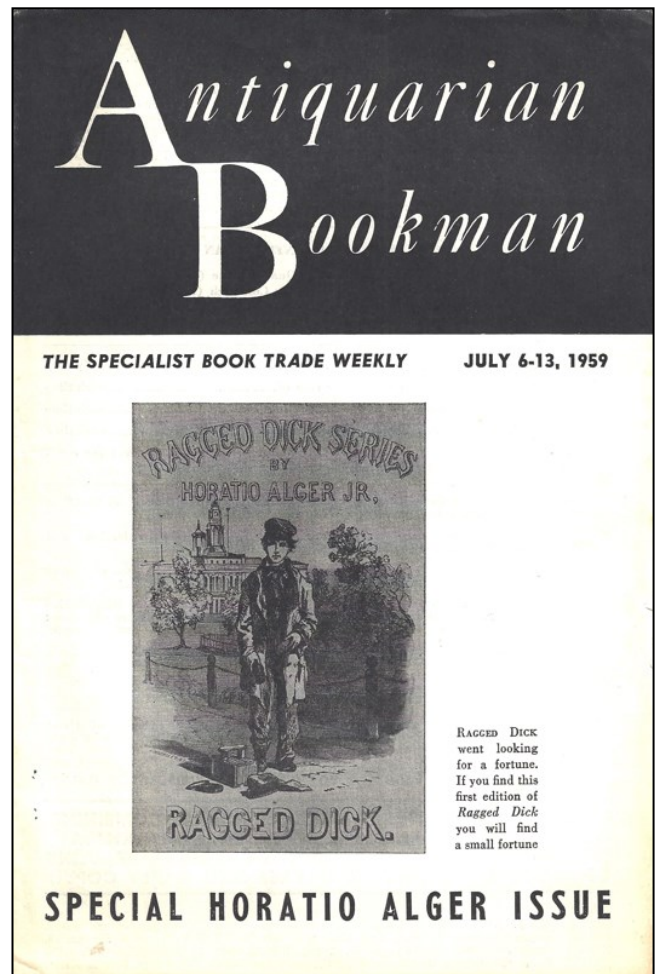
Enslin was a longtime member of the Board of Deacons of the First Baptist Church in Philadelphia. He was a member of Phi Beta Kappa and was the recipient of several honorary doctorate degrees.

These accomplishments (and accolades) notwithstanding, his career was not without controversy, as he did not hesitate to chastise fellow theologians. He created quite a stir, for example, when in a 1952 speech before the American Association of Theological Schools, he told members that biblical criticism had gone too far. He said that it had become “too analytical and literary” and that the critics had “lost sight of the proper search for the will of God . . . and its relevance.”⁴

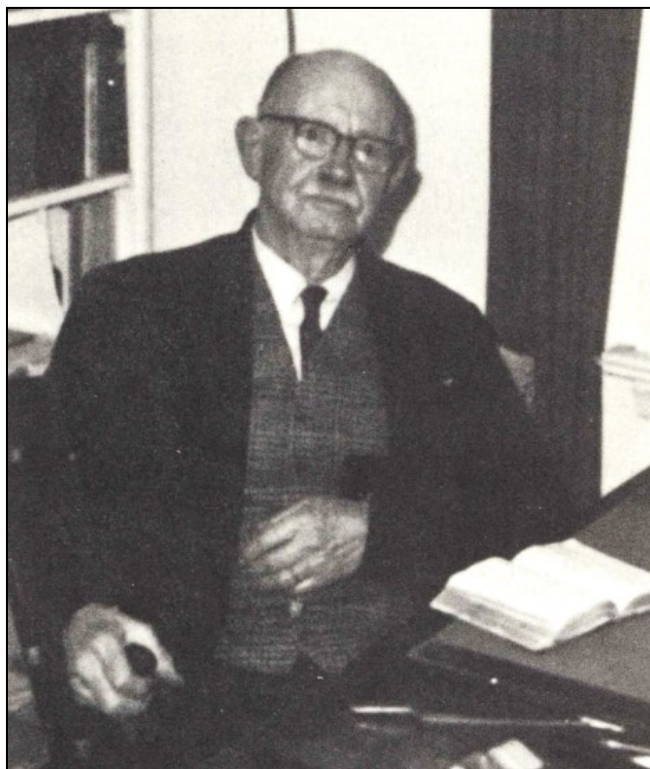
What with his busy—and apparently at times con-

tentious—professional life, it was no wonder that he needed a relaxing hobby like reading the books of Horatio Alger, Jr. (He also liked the Rover Boys, the Putnam Hall Series, the Motor Boat Boys, “and the dozen or more by Frank V. Webster, which latter were so strangely reminiscent of my beloved Algers—but not quite so good.”)

Enslin at first kept his Alger books in a large trunk, but after he started teaching, he placed them on shelves in his study, “alongside my more sedate professional tools.” With the Algers readily available for a quick read, “I suppose it was inevitable that I should decide to try to fill in the cracks.” When classes were over, he pored over reference books and



Morton Enslin's "A Checklist of Horatio Alger, Jr." appears on pages 5-10 of this "Special Horatio Alger Issue" of *Antiquarian Bookman*, dated July 6-13, 1959. The cover reads: "Ragged Dick went looking for a fortune. If you find this first edition of *Ragged Dick* you will find a small fortune." (Photograph courtesy of Robert E. Kasper, PF-327)



Photograph of Morton S. Enslin from *Understanding the Sacred Text: Essays in Honor of Morton S. Enslin on the Hebrew Bible and Christian Beginnings*, edited by John Reumann. Copyright © 1972 by Judson Press. Used by permission of the Judson Press.

other sources in the Crozer Theological Seminary library to find new Alger titles to add to his growing list. His collecting plan was simple: "Get hold of a copy of every title which I did not have, regardless of its edition or even condition—even if it is the same book under a reissue title—and better them subsequently when and if possible. But fill in the gaps."

Enslin's methodology paid off, for as he observed in 1970, "better than 100" of the books in his collection were first editions. He advertised widely for the volumes he needed, and a contemporary newspaper article indicated that "some of his acquisitions were the result of many nights of correspondence." And as he reminisced many later, "That has turned out to be one of the most pleasant and rewarding features of the hobby—the acquaintances, some now warm friends, in all walks of life."⁵

H.A.S. member Keith Thompson (PF-035) was one of them, and he sent me a copy of Enslin's full-page ad in the April 1959 issue of *Dime Novel Round*

-Up, titled "Want List of Horatio Alger Jr. and/or Arthur Lee Putnam." Keith told me that "it is annotated in Mort's hand, so I think he mailed it to me." Enslin was interested in additional titles as well as the ones specified, and the want list noted that "as any of these (or other interesting Alger items, as first ed[itions]) become available, please advise me as to condition and price. In the case of other titles, please include statement as to publisher, date (if indicated) and brief description of cover. In the case of any title listed, you are sure of an offer."

Keith related many fascinating collecting stories while at the recent Fredericksburg conventions, including this one about a rare Alger book that got away from him—all because of Morton Enslin:

"One day I stopped in at the Clinton Book Exchange in Clinton, Massachusetts. The proprietor always had a nice shelf of Algers, and I usually left happily with a package of several books. It looked like this day would be no exception, for I saw a copy of *Robert Coverdale's Struggle*, New Medal Library No. 555, the rare paperback edition, priced at five dollars. Except (and this is a true story) the proprietor had a copy of *Antiquarian Bookman* opened to the pages of Morton Enslin's checklist of Horatio Alger. As I went to check out, he casually told me that the *Robert Coverdale* was not for sale, as he was going to offer it to Ralph Gardner because Enslin said it was fabulously rare. He said he was going to ask two hundred dollars. In those days I didn't compete in such stratospheres. Ralph later told me he paid one hundred."

Morton Scott Enslin, age 83, died in 1980 at his home in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania, and was buried in Everett, Massachusetts. He was survived by his two children and five grandchildren.⁶

¹ Morton S. Enslin, "A Checklist of Horatio Alger, Jr." *Antiquarian Bookman*, July 6–13, 1959, 3, 4, 10; Sydney P. Magill, "A Real Alger Fan," *Syracuse (NY) Post-Standard*, November 17, 1957; Morton S. Enslin, "Horatio Alger, Jr., After Seventy Years," *Dime Novel Round-Up*, April 15, 1970, 43. See also "A List of Alger Titles" by Morton S. Enslin in the August 15, 1971 and September 15, 1971, issues of *Dime Novel Round-Up*.

² Enslin, "A Checklist of Horatio Alger, Jr.," 4; Enslin, "Horatio Alger, Jr.," 40; Sydney Magill, "Canton Man Lacks Only 1 of 117 Books Written by Horatio Alger," *Syracuse (NY) Herald-American*, October 6, 1957.

³ "Morton S(cott) Enslin," *Gale Literature: Contemporary Authors*, <http://galenet.galegroup.com>; "Morton Scott Enslin," *Ancestry Library Edition*, <https://www.ancestrylibrary.com>.

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In Search of Horatio Alger!

By Ralph D. Gardner
(First of Two Parts)

Editor's note: On page 10 of Robert E. Kasper's excellent article, "Letters from Horatio—Part 5," in the March-April Newsboy, he mentions New York Times Telegraph Editor Wilson Lincoln Fairbanks, noting: "Our own Ralph D. Gardner knew him in 1942 when Ralph was a copyboy at the paper and just starting his career in journalism. More can be read about Ralph's portrayal of Wilson Fairbanks in the Spring 1987 issue of Manuscripts, published by the Manuscript Society." Ralph Gardner was an early member of the Horatio Alger Society and the author of Horatio Alger; or, The American Hero Era (1964). He died in 2005. I am pleased that The Manuscript Society has granted me permission to reprint his "In Search of Horatio Alger!," originally published in Manuscripts, Volume XXXIX, #2, Spring 1987.



It is surprising that—although his name has become an American colloquialism and in 1982 a postage stamp was issued to commemorate the sesquicentennial of his birth¹—relatively few, in these waning days of the Twentieth Century, know *exactly* who Horatio Alger was. Indeed, there are many who, themselves using his name to describe someone's swift rise from humble beginnings to success, are not sure that he even existed!

When lecturing on Alger—generally to university classes in American literature or American studies—I often start by asking: Who was Horatio Alger?

Three frequent, incorrect, replies are: A poor boy who through hard work, bravery and honesty, grew up to become a rich man; the hero of a long series of adventure tales; a pen-name used by Charles Dickens.

Let me assure you that Horatio Alger Jr.—he used the Junior throughout his long career—was the real name of a real person.² Although he ranks among our nation's bestselling authors, it is only in recent years that his uncomplicated thrillers have received serious examination and understanding. As a pivotal phenomenon separating heavily moralized, didactic works from the series featuring spectacular inventions of an industrialized new era, Alger's writing is now appreciated as a bona fide development in literature for young readers.

As supersalesman for the Great American Dream, from Civil War days until the Turn-of-the-Century, his prolific pen turned out more than one hundred melodramatic rags-to-riches tales with stereotyped heroes and such alliterative titles as *Frank and Fearless*, *Rough and Ready* and *Luck and Pluck*. Although their greatest popularity had crested by the years of World War I, generations of boys—and many girls—bought, borrowed and swapped them. Public libraries filled shelves with them. They were awarded as school prizes, ministers recommended them from pulpits and, unlike blood-and-thunder dime novels with lurid scenes of frontier violence, Alger's stories could be read in the parlor.³

Alger had been a sickly child, his health affected by asthma throughout his life. Still, he was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Harvard, where, as a student of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Alger became his professor's disciple and he actually started out to be a poet.⁴ He worked as a teacher, a newspaperman and later traveled through Europe as a correspondent for the *Boston Transcript* and the *New York Sun*. Rejected by the Union Army for Civil War service,⁵ he became a minister on Cape Cod.⁶

Although seven of his books had been issued since 1857, it was when—in 1866—he observed the plight of New York's homeless newsboys and boot-blacks, that he wrote *Ragged Dick*. It created a sensation, setting the pattern for every other book he wrote. Following its extraordinary success, a series of novels quickly followed and Alger's publisher, Aaron K. Loring, called him "the dominating figure of our new era. In his books he has captured the spirit of reborn America. The turmoil of the streets is in them. You can hear the rattle of pails on the farm. Above all, you can hear the cry of triumph of the oppressed over the oppressor. What Alger has done is to portray the soul—the ambitious soul—of the country."

The Horatio Alger hero—about fifteen years old as stories began—was the son of a widowed mother or an orphan of mysterious background. Whether a city waif or a country boy, after a couple of chapters he found himself adrift on the cobbled streets of lower Broadway with only a few cents in his pocket. But he was ambitious and eagerly accepted menial work. From the beginning he had enemies: street-corner ruffians, a drunken guardian, swaggering snobs plus a host of other evil-doers.

He soon performed a courageous deed, pulling a

child from the path of a runaway horse, rescuing an elderly gentleman from being sandbagged and robbed, diving into the East River to save a life or flagging down a speeding train. He returned lots of lost wallets and jewelry.

In appreciation, he was rewarded with a better job, often as a clerk in his new benefactor's office. At this point he was introduced to his employer's daughter—described by Alger as “winsome” and “flirtatious”—who found him fascinating.

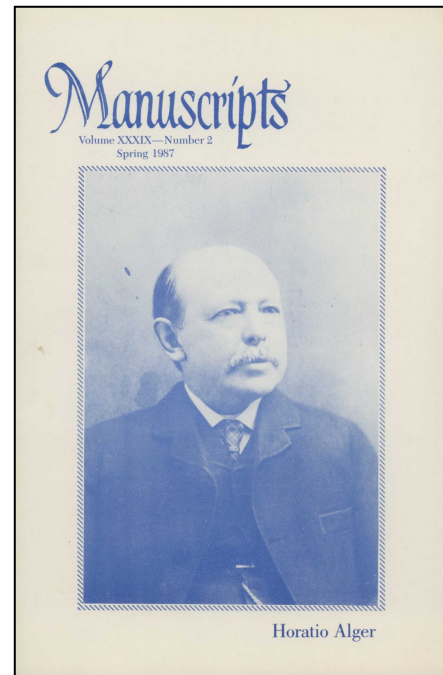
Recognizing his initiative and shrewdness, he was sent upon a hazardous journey that tested his grit and detective skills. He faced a variety of perils, during the course of which he met someone who helped solve the puzzle of his past. The mission was always a triumph, and he achieved solid middle-class respectability by the time he reached eighteen. There was the inevitable joyous ending, often with the mortgaged homestead snatched from the clutches of a scheming village squire and enemies scattered in disarray.

To one-time youths who are now well along in years, Alger's name stirs recollections of good old days long past. They recall rattling good, uncomplicated tales that left them feeling warm and happy in Alger's fixed world of order, security and eventual prosperity.

But critics carped that Horatio Alger was an over-rated fraud. That he misled youngsters, probably causing many who stood up to the neighborhood bully to wind up with a bloody nose. Some believe Alger so frightened readers with tales of mortgage foreclosures that millions grew up fearful of mortgages, although they didn't really know why they were afraid, or what they were afraid of.

Others complain that his heroes succeeded more by luck than by ability. And they were money-mad, claimed Paul Gallico, pointing out that these gallant lads never saved a poor man's daughter. Saul Bellow suggested that “Alger had a potent message; that worldly asceticism leads to capitalistic success.”

Concerning his admittedly meager talent, Russel Crouse called these stories “literary murder.” Nevertheless, a *New York Times* editorial, praising their “irresistible attraction,” called Alger the “prose laureate” for young people. Westbrook Pegler denounced Alger's stalwarts as “sanctimonious little heels,” but Heywood Broun recommended these “simple tales of honesty triumphant.” William L.



Shirer, in his memoirs, recalled finding “Alger's books a constant delight. We youngsters read them avidly. They became our gospel.”

The historian, Stewart Holbrook, described them as “the most influential tripe ever published in this country.” My own favorite comment comes from S.N. Behrman. Rediscovering an Alger novel he had cherished years before, he simply declared, “I don't know any comparable experience. It is like taking a shower in sheer innocence.”

Nevertheless, some criticism is justified. Alger was a sloppy writer, primarily because he usually wrote two or three stories at the same time. He made many errors, misplacing characters, sometimes having them disappear from one narrative to unexplainedly reappear in another. But Alger was clumsiest when it came to romance, a subject about which he knew nothing, and which he generally avoided. When inadvertently brushing up against intimacy, he became entangled in double-entendre that, even in his day, must have raised eyebrows.

For instance, when the hero of *Tom Temple's Career* was the guest of Miss Imogene Davenport, she declared: “I want to show you some engravings!” A few sentences later Alger confided that “Imogene laid herself out to entertain him, and at all events, succeeded in monopolizing his attention.” And as Miss Pendleton, an aged spinster in

Sink or Swim, was about to start a vacation, the author revealed that she looked forward to the kind of “intercourse which her mode of life for many years had rendered impracticable.”

One wonders what became of the manuscripts of Alger’s relics of the gaslit era, because virtually none have survived to the present day. One explanation is that, as most of them were first serialized in weekly story papers, and he customarily delivered installments precariously close to press time, pages were divided among a number of typesetters who, upon finishing each sheet, let it fall to the floor to be swept away.

The only existing Alger manuscript of a complete novel is an attempt at adult fiction that was either put aside by the author or rejected by publishers. Titled *Mabel Parker*, it came to light in 1961, when I was doing research on my biography-bibliography, *Horatio Alger; or, The American Hero Era*. I found it in a cavernous, dimly lit New York loft where the archives of Street & Smith—which had been absorbed into the Condé Nast organization—stretched in endless lanes of steel stacks and file cabinets.

I was searching for evidence to link Alger’s posthumous works to the phenomenal Edward Stratemeyer who—describing himself as Alger’s literary executor—between 1900 and 1908 created from Alger’s notes and outlines eleven titles that carried Horatio Alger’s byline, followed by the notation, “Completed by Arthur M. Winfield.”⁸ Let me try to share with you my thrill of this discovery. From a dusty folder I pulled the *Mabel Parker* manuscript: 203 handwritten sheets divided into seven packets. Around each, Alger affixed a band of paper inscribed with the chapter number and his name. Most of these contained about thirty sheets, all of them filled with twenty-eight lines of small, fine script.

The curator—a Street & Smith staff member called from retirement to oversee these files—told me there had been other manuscripts, but she was instructed to discard them, along with other records that had been judged worthless.

“But I held on to this one,” she said. “I was sure some day it might mean something to someone.”

The *Mabel Parker* manuscript is now in Syracuse University’s George Arents Research Library, the repository of the Street & Smith collection.

NOTES

Ralph D. Gardner—a staff member of *The New York Times* from 1942 until 1955, and recently retired as president of the New York advertising agency that bears his name, is a frequent writer and lecturer on Nineteenth Century juvenile literature. He is now completing a new book, based upon author interviews he conducted over the past ten years on his syndicated radio broadcast, *Ralph Gardner’s Bookshelf*.

¹ On April 30, 1982, Postmaster General William F. Bolger conducted the ceremony at Willow Grove, Pa., where the 20¢ stamp was unveiled at the annual convention of the Horatio Alger Society. When issuance was finally approved after having been twice rejected, media hailed it as “a typical Horatio Alger success story,” noting that members of the Society’s Commemorative Stamp Committee personally lobbied the Citizens’ Stamp Advisory Panel and every member of Congress.

² Alger was born at Chelsea, Mass., January 13, 1832. He died at nearby South Natick, July 18, 1899.

³ Horatio Alger Jr., *Struggling Upward* (New York: Dover Publications, 1984), Foreword by Ralph D. Gardner, “The Return of Horatio Alger,” p. vi.

⁴ Grace Williamson Edes, *Annals of the Harvard Class of 1852* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1922), pp. 54, 121, 193 et passim.

⁵ Ralph D. Gardner, *Horatio Alger; or, The American Hero Era* (Mendota, Ill.: Wayside Press, 1964), p. 151. Rejection from military service was due to asthma and possibly also because of Alger’s height. He was barely five feet tall.

⁶ Horatio Alger Jr., *A Fancy of Hers/The Disagreeable Woman* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1981), Foreword by Ralph D. Gardner, pp. 7–15. Alger was minister of the First Parish Unitarian Church, Brewster, Mass., November, 1864–March, 1866. He resigned after being accused by a church-appointed committee of involvement in a homosexual incident.

⁷ Foreword to *Struggling Upward*, op. cit., pp. vi, vii.

⁸ The prolific Edward Stratemeyer invented the Winfield pen name as author of his *Rover Boys* series. He also created Victor Appleton as author of the *Tom Swift* series; Laura Lee Hope as author of the *Bobbsey Twins* series; Carolyn Keene as author of the *Nancy Drew* series and other successful pseudonyms. Stratemeyer rewrote *Mabel Parker* for juvenile readers and published it as *Jerry the Backwoods Boy* (Rahway, N.J.: New York: The Mershon Company, 1904).

Editor’s note: The conclusion of Ralph D. Gardner’s “In Search of Horatio Alger!” will be published in the November-December Newsboy.



**Captain Hannah; or,
The Tyrant of the Schoolroom
By Caroline F. Preston**

Editor's note: Horatio Alger published the short story "Captain Hannah; or, The Tyrant of the Schoolroom" under his "Caroline F. Preston" pseudonym in the May 12, 1860, issue of Gleason's Literary Companion. According to Bob Bennett's A Collector's Guide to the Published Works of Horatio Alger, Jr. (1999), it was also published in Gleason's Pictorial Dollar Weekly (August 12, 1865) and once more in the May 1879 issue of Gleason's Monthly Companion, from which this transcription was taken. To my knowledge, "Captain Hannah" has not been reprinted since 1879. It is vintage Alger, an excellent story—it reminds me of Alger's book Hector's Inheritance, which also takes place at a school and features a "tyrant of the schoolroom"—and I hope Newsboy readers enjoy it.

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CAPTAIN HANNAH!

At that familiar name arise thoughts of my school days, and of a one-story brick school-house, broad on the ground, but of small altitude. For several years the same teacher had been employed. She it is whom I am about to introduce to the reader.

Hannah Hawkins stood six feet in her slippers. She was tall, rawboned and thin-featured, long-

nosed, with basilisk eyes and lean scrawny arms, which however had a good deal of strength in them, which more than one of her scholars could have testified. In age she was somewhere between thirty and fifty. I could not undertake to specify her age, for she always looked the same, and never appeared to have been young. It could hardly be said, in the words of Byron that "Time wrote no wrinkles on her azure brow," for he had written a good many.

Hannah had a stride like that of a man, and her tall, erect form, and martial bearing suggested the title which was bestowed upon her—that of Captain Hannah.

I remember my first introduction to her. I had heard a good deal of her prowess, though having lived in a different district, I had never been to school to her. I was now eight years of age. I had not the courage to go up to her and announce my presence, but she soon detected it through her horn-bowed spectacles. No sooner had she done this than she strode to the seat which I occupied, and in a sonorous voice inquired my name.

I told it in trembling tones.

"Well, have you come here to behave yourself, little girl?" inquired Captain Hannah, transfixing me with her basilisk gaze."

"Yes."

"Yes!" she repeated, indignantly. "Where's your manners? Left 'em to home, I guess. Don't

you say yes to me. Always say yes, ma'am."

"Yes, ma'am!" said I, in mortal terror.

"So you mean to behave well, do you? You'd better. Do you know what I do to little girls that don't behave well?"

"No ma'am!"

"Hold out your hand then."

Unsuspectingly I extended my hand and instantly a ferule descended upon it, producing a tingling which thrilled my whole frame. I was as terrified as if I had been struck by lightning.

"You needn't be scared, child," said Captain Hannah, "and you'd better not snifle, for if you do, I'll give you a harder one. That was only to let you know what you'll get if you don't behave yourself."

I couldn't help thinking that it would have been quite as well to tell me in word, but perhaps I should not have remembered so well.

I am not going to say much about Captain Hannah's arrangements. The scholars didn't learn much, but they were certainly kept in good order. She was a thorough tyrant, and on one pretext or other used to find it necessary to use her ferule several times a day. She overawed us all, so much by her manner, and imposing bodily presence, that no one of the scholars dared to rebel. Even the school committee seemed rather in awe of her, especially the chairman, who was a small, mild-spoken man, who would have fared badly in a contest with our military schoolmistress.

But one day it was announced that a new scholar had come to join the school. He was a lively boy of fourteen or fifteen, named George Keith. He proved to be a great favorite with the scholars generally, and perhaps it was for this reason that he incurred the hatred of Captain Hannah. At any rate hardly a day passed that he did not receive castigation at her hands on the most frivolous pretenses.

At last, for under some circumstances forbearance ceases to be a virtue, George determined that the fun should not be all on one side. He was resolved that he would pay off Captain Hannah in her own coin, and it was not long before a plan

suggested itself to him which he broached to two of the other scholars. It was received with uproarious laughter, and elicited their warm approval, and promise of co-operation. Indeed it was made known on promise of secrecy to all the scholars, and the consequence was that we were all on the tiptoe of expectation for it to be carried out.

It is time for me to explain now what it was.

Let me explain first, that between the school-house and the boarding place of Captain Hannah, there was a field of some eight acres, nearly square. Her nearest way was to cross the field diagonally, since this saved her coming round on two sides of it. This course she invariably took, and as she was regular as clock work in her habits, we always knew that it was precisely seven minutes of nine when she had got half way across the field.

It was now February. About a week previous, a very heavy snow had fallen, making it in many places five feet in depth. In a certain part of the field just alluded to, it had attained this depth.

Shortly after the snow there was a fall of rain, which had been succeeded by excessive cold. As the result of this, a hard, stiff crust had formed on the upper surface of the snow, which was quite thick enough to sustain the weight, even of a heavy person.

Over this crust Captain Hannah was accustomed to come, her height being even more imposing from the altitude of the snow.

I now come to George Keith's plan, which, as I have said, elicited such decisive approbation.

He proposed to excavate the snow from under the crust, at some portion of the path which Captain Hannah was likely to choose, but in such a manner as to leave merely the thin crust. Of course this would be insufficient to bear the weight even of a boy, much less that of a tall woman like our despotic tyrant.

Two of the older boys volunteered to assist George in his labors which would be considerable, for in order to guard against failure it was thought best to clear away the snow from quite a large place.

In order to ensure perfect secrecy it was furthermore decided that the work should be done in the evening. It was thought that an hour and a half's work of three boys would be sufficient.

The evening was fixed for going to work. The boys commenced at seven o'clock. It was rather a light evening, but fortunately for their purpose the schoolhouse was at a distance from any other houses, so there was little danger of their being interrupted. They worked hard, and at length had managed to excavate the snow for a space about eight feet square. This, it was thought, would prove sufficiently large.

I well remember how much excitement there was among the scholars the next morning—how we all gathered at the schoolhouse at least half an hour before the commencement of the school.

"I tell you, boys, there'll be fun," said George Keith, his eyes sparkling with anticipated delight. "Captain Hannah is sure to fall in, and the snow's full five feet deep at that place. Ain't it prime, though?"

"But won't she lick us when she gets out?" asked a timid boy, whose courage was hardly up to the emergency.

"She'd lick us anyway," retorted George. "But who cares for that. It'll be worth two or three good lickings to see her fall in."

"But she hurts so confoundedly," answered the other.

"Never mind. Grin and bear it, as the poet says."

The forty scholars, over whom Captain Hannah held sway, were gathered in front of the schoolhouse door. All were engaged in looking one way—in the direction by which Captain Hannah was accustomed to come.

At length she made her appearance in the distance. She entered the field which was destined to prove so disastrous to her, and advanced with long strides towards the schoolhouse.

"Suppose she should take a different path?" suggested Tom Norris. "Then all our trouble would amount to nothing."

"Don't you count your troubles before they are hatched," said George Keith. "Follow the example of Captain Hannah. She won't look out for trouble till she's plump down into it."

At this there was a laugh, and eighty eyes watched eagerly the progress of the schoolmistress. She could by this time espy us, and evidently was a little surprised at the interest which seemed to be manifested in her. She had not yet got to the pitfall, which was not in the centre of the field, but only a few rods from the wall, which was quite near the schoolhouse.

While looking at us in some wonder, Captain Hannah reached the fatal spot.

There was nothing in the appearance of the spot to testify that it was untrustworthy. It all looked alike—clean, sparkling, hard and firm. But alas for Captain Hannah, she was fated to prove the truth of the maxim that it is not safe to trust to appearances.

A step farther, and down she went—down full five feet, so that of her late altitude there was nothing now visible but her bonnet, and her angry face within, peering above the snow.

Forgetting prudence, George Keith swung his cap, and gave vent to a loud huzza, in which some of the bolder ones joined.

As for Captain Hannah, she tugged furiously to get out, but only succeeded in breaking the crust about her. Her face was inflamed with passion, and as soon as she could get her hands free she shook her fist at us and shrieked, "I'll ferule you all till you can't stand!"

The result was a general dispersion of a few who watched the frantic exertions of Captain Hannah, who was more than ten minutes in getting out. Then they too ran off, leaving the schoolhouse empty. The story got abroad, and the committee, who had long been aware of Captain Hannah's unpopularity, at length advised her to give up the school. The last glimpse I had of her was sitting on top of the stage coach, stern, rigid and bony, and shaking her fist at George Keith, who was watching her departure from the branches of an apple tree.

Co-Founder of H.A.S. Meets Son of Leo Edwards

Editor's note: I recently came across a June 1968 newspaper clipping (exact date unknown) concerning H.A.S. co-founder Forrest Campbell and his wife's visit to the son of Leo Edwards, Gene Lee. As many members know, Leo Edwards was the pen name of Edward Edson Lee, the author of several series of children's books in the 1920s and 1930s, including the popular Jerry Todd series and the Poppy Ott series.

The visit took place at Hi-Lee Cottage on Lake Ripley in Cambridge, Wisconsin. This house was the summer home of Leo Edwards, where he often read to neighborhood children from his books. The clipping is from the Cambridge News and consists of a brief article, an untitled letter from Forrest Campbell to Gene Lee, and a letter to the editor from Gene Lee.

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"President of Society Visits at the Lees"

In the days before bearded youth, violence, smut and the so-called youth revolt, there was a series of books which many people feel had an uplifting influence on the thinking and action of youth 60 years ago.

It was the Horatio Alger books and there were dozens of them. The poor boy living a chaste and upright life suffered temptations and always married the boss's daughter and won in the struggle against evil. Kids loved them.

So important is their influence that today more than a half century later there is a national organization called the Horatio Alger Society, with the official publication the "Horatio Alger Newsboy." The president of this organization and it is well established and has a fine following all over the United States is a close friend of the Gene Lees. (*Editor's note: The man referred to, Forrest Campbell, was the editor of the Society's publication, not the president.*)

Inasmuch as Gene's father was in this same field of books, and these publications also helped raise the morals of youth, it is interesting to know that this well-known head of this national organization was in Cambridge recently.

The Lees were kind enough to give us the correspondence and this man's picture. We appreciate this interest in the *News*.

Letter from Forrest Campbell to Gene Lee

June 13, 1968

Dear Friend Gene:

Regarding our discussion on your invitation for my wife and I to visit you and wife at Lake Ripley this summer, I am now prepared to suggest a possible date.

My wife and I are expected at the home of friends in Brookfield (western suburb of Milwaukee) in the early evening of Sunday, July 14th.

If acceptable to you, we might arrive at Hi-Lee Cottage around 2 p.m. and leave around 4 p.m. Just enough time to say hello, and meet your family.

Just received another interesting issue of *The Tutter Bugle*.

Your Partic'lar Friend,

Forrest Campbell

"Letter to Editor"

Cambridge News:

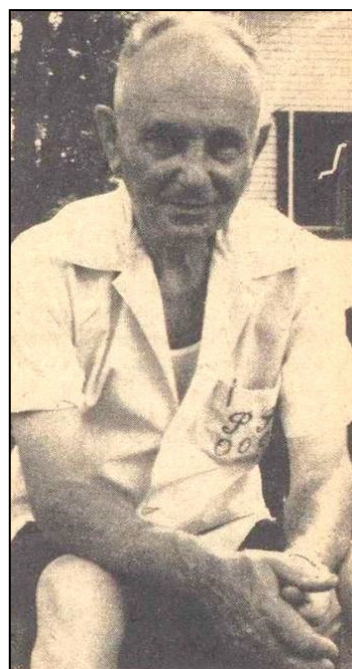
This past Sunday, we at Hi-Lee Cottage were pleased to play host to Mr. and Mrs. Campbell of Kalamazoo, Michigan. Mr. Campbell, whose picture I am enclosing, is very well known in the literature field. He is co-founder and editor of the Horatio Alger *Newsboy*, which is the official publication of the Horatio Alger Society.

The Horatio Alger *Newsboy* is a magazine devoted to the people that are readers and collectors of the juvenile books written by Horatio Alger, Jr.

We had a 2-hour chat with Mr. and Mrs. Campbell and found them very nice and quite interesting people.

Gene Lee

Editor's note: Below is the photograph of Forrest Campbell as published in the newspaper. On his shirt pocket is embroidered "PF-000," the PF number he designated for himself as H.A.S. co-founder.



Editor's Notebook

This *Newsboy* has a variety of Alger-related historical and research material that I enjoyed putting together. Also, one of my favorite aspects of editorship is hearing from H.A.S. members and passing on their news—thereby having an issue with both serious scholarship and light and breezy comments.

I've corresponded with Brad Chase (PF-412) since the mid-1970s, and he emailed that he doesn't collect much Alger anymore. "Scott knows what I need and buys them and brings them to me for my format shelf. I may have mentioned that the only thing Alger I'm collecting are different formats of most all of the older publishers. I'm using the five books I wrote on Alger publishers as the basis. This keeps me in the hunt and is something Alger-related I can do with Scott."

Liane Houghtalin (PF-699) writes that "after retiring this past May as Professor of Classics at the University of Mary Washington, I spent some time visiting family, first in Colorado, then in Michigan, with a trip to California planned for this fall. Every H.A.S. bibliophile will recognize my plight as a new retiree: I am currently trying to sort out and give away books so that I can fit those from my campus office into my home library. I am also working on some publication projects ranging from the use of Ovid in the Middle Ages to Roman coins excavated in Tunisia."

Bob Petitto (PF-1086) could not make the convention in Fredericksburg this past May due to back problems. He said that "my surgery went well, and I can return to work and hobbies (think fishing) without the pain I was enduring." He added that "when my customers found out I was back at work, they flooded me with orders. I have to be careful not to overdo it. I leave for a two-week vacation in Northern Ontario in three weeks, so my days will be full getting ready and getting orders out."

Jeff (PF-903) and Judy Looney report that they "are back from a July vacation in the British Isles. They spent a lovely week on the Isle of Man, his first visit to his ancestral homeland (from which Robert Looney emigrated in the 1720s), followed by a week piloting a narrowboat on the canals of Wales and Shropshire, and winding up in London, where they saw a play at the reconstructed Globe Theatre. The canal adventure turned out to be a bit more work than they had bargained on (especially when they came down with Covid!) and will be left to younger folks in the future, but overall it was a great trip."

I stay in contact with our 2024 Strive & Succeed Award winner, Quinn Enriques, and in early July she emailed me: "I hope you are having a good summer so far! I have been having an amazing one. I just returned home from a trip to Hawaii with my best friend and sister. While I was there I got to learn a lot more about the area I will soon be living in. Yesterday, I signed up for college classes. It feels surreal to be out of high school, but I am glad to be done. Other than preparing for college, I have been relaxing and reading a lot. I have taken much too long to do so, but I just started reading the beautiful Horatio Alger book that the Society gifted me. It is very interesting. I will definitely make sure to send photographs and updates throughout my college career. It's the least that I can do for the Society after all they have done for me!!"

Debby Jones (PF-1092) writes, "I have been busy with managing the Bellefonte Foodbank and now preparing to move our parent company, FaithCentre Thrift Store and Boutique, to the Centre Hall Grange Fair for its two-week run. This is the oldest grange fair in the country. We set our store up in one-half of the exhibition buildings. It is quite a successful undertaking for our organization. Luna [Debby's dog] and I are working on her therapy certification so that she can go to the hospital to visit patients."

Michael Dirda, a special guest at the May H.A.S. convention, relates that "it's been a hectic time this past month, what with a trip to Necronomicon in Providence for its biannual celebration of the weird and Lovecraftian. In September Marian and I will be traveling to Norway—she for a conference of the International Paper Historians—and I will be making a side-journey to England, mainly to see friends but also to take in the York Book Fair. I hope all goes well with you. I continue to have the fondest memories of the Alger Society meeting in Fredericksburg."

Peter Walther (PF-548), tells me that "I am doing well, as hale and hearty as I can be. Always doing research. Now I am updating and expanding my bibliography of *Student and Schoolmate*. It will probably never get published, but at least it will be done and I will add it to completed chapters. Let's all of us keep Bill Gowen in our prayers. He served our Society faithfully for many years." (*Editor's note*: You're right, Peter. He has and we will.)

Keith Thompson (PF-035) of Bellport, New York, writes that he lives on one-and-a-half acres of land, and "this year I let it grow and go to seed, but at the same time have mown paths and the perimeter lest I be accused of abandonment. I also have an official

(Continued on page 16)

(Morton Enslin, continued from page 5)

⁴ “The Rev. Morton Scott Enslin, Wynnewood Theologian, Editor,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 18, 1980, 15-C.

⁵ Enslin, “Horatio Alger, Jr.,” 40-41, 44. Magill, “Canton Man Lacks Only 1 of 117 Books.”

⁶ “The Rev. Morton Scott Enslin, Wynnewood Theologian.”

Author’s note: I wish to thank Lisa Blair of the Judson Press for graciously allowing me to reprint the photo of Morton Enslin on page 5. I am also grateful for the assistance of H.A.S. members Robert E. Kasper (PF-327) and Keith Thompson (PF-035) who scanned items from their wide-ranging files. In addition, I appreciate the interlibrary loan expertise of Andrea Meckley at the University of Mary Washington’s Simpson Library. Photograph at right is from the website “New Testament Festival Calendar,” <https://www.umass.edu/wsp/current/nt/calendar.html>.

In the November-December issue of Newsboy: A profile of Frank Gruber, a Horatio Alger biographer and bibliographer, as well as an author of numerous westerns and mysteries.



Moments of the Past . . .



One of the highlights of the 1977 Horatio Alger Society convention, hosted by Dick Seddon, was the signing of a proclamation by Massachusetts Governor Michael S. Dukakis that proclaimed the week of May 15-21, 1977, as “Horatio Alger Week.” Surrounding the seated governor are, from left to right: Bob Bennett, Ralph D. Gardner, Gilbert K. Westgard I (behind Ralph), Brad Chase, Carl Hartmann, David Barton (Dick Seddon’s son-in-law), Gilbert K. Westgard II, Jerry Friedland, Pauline Westgard, governor’s aide, Max Goldberg, Irene Gurman, and Dick Seddon.

(*President's Column*, continued from page 2)

by age 27. Chances for mobility can change rapidly over time, and for some, the news is better than for others.

Over the fifteen years of the study, there was no evidence that the racial gains and losses were zero-sum. That is, in metropolitan areas where Black mobility had improved most, white mobility deteriorated the least. For Black youth from disadvantaged backgrounds, the Horatio Alger story looks very much alive; hard work can make a better life possible. In addition, the opportunity gap between white Americans born rich and white Americans born poor increased by about 30%. Chetty, the lead author of the study, thinks this may mean that in America, class is becoming more important, with race becoming somewhat less so. Another suggestion of the study is that the community in which one grows up makes a significant difference—social networks, good schools, low crime rates, nice parks, and availability of work for parents also matter. People are affected by the fortunes of those around them in their community, and gains in social capital matter. I'm greatly oversimplifying the study, but for those who want to read the non-technical report, it can be found at: https://opportunityinsights.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/ChangingOpportunity_Nontech.pdf.

As Jack prepares to mail this issue of *Newsboy*, my husband and I should be concluding a safari organized by Odysseys Unlimited. Our 16-day visit to Africa begins in Johannesburg, South Africa (after 15 and a half hours of nonstop flying from Atlanta), includes a walking tour of Soweto, continues on to Victoria Falls (where I will not be trying the bungee jumping!), then to Zaire, Zimbabwe, Botswana, and perhaps a brief foray into Namibia before an add-on visit to Cape Town, where we will stay along the waterfront, do some sight-seeing, visit a celebrated winery, and join a friend at a fancy waterfront restaurant on our penultimate evening there. We had to buy some new gear for this trip, including better binoculars, clothing that is not attractive in color to Tsetse flies, and a bunch of drab attire that won't alert animals to our presence. We even had to buy new collapsable wheeled duffels (regular luggage not allowed). Just as we were trying to start downsizing!
—Carol Nackenoff (PF-921)



The *Newsboy* editor should have a newsboy statue, right? Jack Bales (PF-258) holds the 13-1/2" tall newsboy statue that Bill Gowen (PF-706) gave him after Jack succeeded Bill as editor. The brass plate at the bottom of the heavy figure reads "NEWSBOY." It now sits on top of a large bookcase in Jack's living room, and he is grateful to Bill for his thoughtfulness. (Photograph by Janet Hedrick)

MEMBERSHIP

Address changes

Bill Gowen (PF-706)
Silver Glen Retirement Living
Room 2098, Assisted Living
1901 Silver Glen Road
South Elgin, IL 60177

New members

Janet Hedrick (PF-1164)
7321 Awkwright Drive
Fredericksburg, VA 22407
Email: jhedrick815@gmail.com

(Editor's Notebook, continued from page 13)

'1000 Yards' sign clearly indicating my motives." See photo at right. (*Editor's note:* The 1,000 Yards campaign is an initiative of Bellport's Environmental Committee to have 1,000 homeowners create nature habitats for animals and pollinators.) Keith added that the benefits to him "have been enormous. My property has become a wildlife refuge for turkeys, deer and rabbits. By that I mean where they go home and shelter at night. I also have two hen turkeys and their young poults."

Bellport Village, however, has adhered to an old code that stipulates the grass must not exceed a certain length. Keith has been involved in a dispute with the Village about the grass, though the "update is that the Village has agreed to allow it and at the same time revise the old code."

— Jack Bales (PF-258), jbales@umw.edu



Robert E. Kasper (PF-327) hosted a get-together of H.A.S. members on September 7 in Richmond, Virginia. After meeting up in Rob's office (photo), they enjoyed a fine lunch, followed by a visit to his home where they admired his extensive book collection. Clockwise from left are Rob, new member Janet Hedrick (PF-1164), Jeff Looney (PF-903), Judy Looney, and Liane Houghtalin (PF-699). Also present was Jack Bales (PF-258).

Senator Everett McKinley Dirksen An Honorary H.A.S. Member in 1966

In the spring of 1966, the Horatio Alger Society awarded honorary membership to U.S. Senator

from Illinois, Everett McKinley Dirksen (1896-1969). On May 20, Senator Dirksen wrote Society co-founder Kenneth B. Butler of Mendota, Illinois:

I appreciate this opportunity to salute you and the members of the Horatio Alger Society. Truly I was a diligent reader of the entire Horatio Alger series when I was a boy and frankly they were fruitful. One of the most important things about these individual books is that they were written around some particular slogan or truism that remained with the reader. One in particular that I have never forgotten had for its general theme, "Stick to your bush." In life I have seen it happen thousands of times that people failed only because they failed to stick to the bush until all the fruit had been obtained. I know of no better admonition to the youth of the country—find an interest and stick to it.

I am honored indeed to become an honorary member of your society and was delighted to learn that you are having a convention in Milwaukee this year.

With every good wish,

Everett McKinley Dirksen