



# THE HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY OFFICIAL PUBLICATION NEWSBOY



*Horatio Alger, Jr.*  
1832 — 1899

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

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NUMBER 5

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From *Paul the Peddler*, A.K. Loring, 1871

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## President's column

Your Board of Directors just concluded an exceptionally busy mid-term meeting at the Horatio Alger Society Repository at Northern Illinois University. On Oct. 30, Board members from all over the country convened for a 9½-hour meeting — no, that's not a misprint. The Board's task, to propose a revised and updated set of bylaws to the membership, was greatly facilitated by Brad Chase's codification of the present bylaw provisions as derived principally from prior issues of *Newsboy*.

The Board decided to divide the various issues into two documents, one a constitution which contains fundamental principles and directions, and the other a set of bylaws which contains more operational guidance for the Society's many activities.

The Board then went about the task of reexamining every current bylaw provision and making changes as appropriate in the light of contemporary practice and desirable future direction. The suggested text of the constitution and bylaws will appear in the March-April 2000 issue of *Newsboy*. A full discussion will be scheduled for the convention in May.

Although we sat through a very long meeting, it was not all work. The Special Collections area was open during the morning, and the Board members had the opportunity to see our latest acquisitions. We recently acquired the magnificent first-edition Horatio Alger collection of member Jerry Friedland (PF-376). The collection contains first editions of 116 of Alger's 119 books, together with many important and scarce first hardcover and variant editions. Also represented are important reprint sets, original serializations, and a very nice set of Garfield Library titles. This collection, coupled with our earlier acquisitions, vaults NIU's Alger resources to the front rank of the world's libraries.

In my last column, I indicated that I would begin to discuss modern Alger reprints. I am mindful of that statement, but I have come to believe that it would be more adequately treated in a regular article, and plan to do so sometime in the future.

May there be a book treasure in your future at a wonderfully low price!

Your Partic'lar Friend,  
Arthur P. Young (PF-941)  
912 Borden Ave.  
Sycamore, IL 60178-3200  
E-mail: ayoung@niu.edu

## HORATIO ALGER SOCIETY

To further the philosophy of Horatio Alger, Jr. and to encourage the spirit of Strive and Succeed that for half a century guided Alger's undaunted heroes — lads whose struggles epitomized the great American dream and flamed hero ideals in countless millions of young Americans.

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Membership applications, renewals, changes of address and other correspondence should be sent to **Horatio Alger Society, P.O. Box 70361, Richmond, VA 23255**.

*Newsboy* is indexed in the Modern Language Association's International Bibliography.

### BOOKS RECOMMENDED BY H.A.S.

- Horatio Alger, Jr., A Comprehensive Bibliography*, by Bob Bennett (PF-265); republished by MAD Book Co., 1999
- Horatio Alger or, The American Hero Era*, by Ralph D. Gardner (PF-053).
- The Fictional Republic: Horatio Alger and American Political Discourse*, by Carol Nackenoff (PF-921).
- Publication Formats of the 59 Stories by Horatio Alger, Jr. as Reprinted by the John C. Winston Co.*, by Bob Sawyer (PF-455) and Jim Thorp (PF-574).
- Horatio Alger Books Published by A.L. Burt*, by Bradford S. Chase (PF-412).
- Horatio Alger Books Published by M.A. Donohue & Co.*, by Bradford S. Chase (PF-412).
- Horatio Alger Books Published by Whitman Publishing Co.*, by Bradford S. Chase (PF-412).
- Horatio Alger Books Published by The New York Book Co.*, by Bradford S. Chase (PF-412).
- The Lost Life of Horatio Alger, Jr.*, by Gary Scharnhorst with Jack Bales (PF-258).

*Newsboy* ad rates: Full page, \$32.00; one-half page, \$17.00; one-quarter page, \$9.00; per column inch (1 inch deep by approx. 3 1/2 inches wide), \$2.00. Send ads, with check payable to Horatio Alger Society, P.O. Box 70361, Richmond, VA 23255.

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 our members for the **sale only** of such material. Send ads or "Letters to the Editor" to *Newsboy* editor William R. Gowen (PF-706) at 23726 N. Overhill Dr., Lake Zurich, IL 60047.



# Alger ages, but not much:

## *A Centennial reflection*

by Arthur P. Young (PF-941)

**F**riends of Horatio Alger, Jr., we are gathered again for our annual convention with its always alliterative catchphrase, "Dash to DeKalb." Our meetings are characterized by a wonderful amalgam of educational opportunities, sharing of expertise, buying and selling of Alger books and other series literature, and the many good works associated with the Horatio Alger Repository at Northern Illinois University.

This year is very special because we come together under the important symbolism of the centennial of Horatio Alger, Jr.'s death in 1899. The very fact that we are here in celebration 100 years after Alger's pen was stilled, in and of itself, is a remarkable testimony to the importance of Alger's writing and to the enduring theme of his many works. I would like to very briefly cover the milestones of Alger's career and then pause on some of his many influences in literature, drama, and above all, the continuing presence of his strive and succeed philosophy as an enduring symbol of our national culture.

Horatio Alger, Jr. was born in Chelsea, Massachusetts, on January 13, 1832, the son of Horatio Alger, Sr. and Olive Augusta Fenno Alger. He went on to get a bachelor's degree from Harvard, graduating 8th in a class of 88 with a Phi Beta Kappa key in 1852. His early years after graduation were devoted to editorial work and writing poetry and short stories for such periodicals as *Ballou's*, *Gleason's*, *Harper's*, and *Putnam's*. In 1856, his first book appeared, *Bertha's Christmas Vision*. He went on to graduate from the Harvard Divinity School in 1860, and in the middle of that decade, he assumed the pastorate of a church in Brewster, Massachusetts. He left that position after only several years, and proceeded to dedicate his life to writing juvenile literature. He went on to write more than 100 published volumes and hundreds of short stories and poems, many of them reprinted multiple times. He wrote under his own name, as well as the pen names of Carl Cantab, Arthur Lee Putnam, Caroline Preston, Julian Starr, and Arthur Hamilton.

Alger's greatest work occurred early in his career, namely, the "Ragged Dick" series, which is a group of stories about New York street boys who struggled and made good. The characterizations in this series set the

stage for many dozens of similar books which follow. Ragged Dick, or as he is also known, Richard Hunter, was a playful lad who smoked and gambled and played tricks on his friends. He was, however, generous and told the truth, and enterprising and self-reliant. With Ragged Dick, Alger began a lifelong commitment to the urban setting and the dislocations which were unfolding as a result of the rapid industrialization of the country. The young people and their trials, tribulations, striving, and eventual success are highlighted in this series and in many others. The typical Alger hero was of solid character and often advanced through enterprise and luck, and the help of a friend or two along the way. Alger's enduring accomplishment as a writer, I think, is best captured by Professor Carol Nackenoff in her recent book:

Horatio Alger, Jr. unwittingly derived a formula to deal with hopes and anxieties in a rapidly changing world. He captured a form of discourse that not only spoke to many in the era in which he wrote, but could still be spoken by later generations. The story, "fiction," by the time the ink was on the page, touched something vital. The narrative about our future and our past — and the relation between these — constitutes political identity. In it, Jeffersonian virtues meet the industrial era. The country meets the city, and both win: virtue and economic opportunity are wedded. The American Jeremiad exhorts its audience to stand true to its principles and meet the forces threatening to undo the grand experiment. And the Republic of the Creator, emerging from its rite of passage, triumphs.<sup>1</sup>

Horatio Alger's treatment by biographers has been varied and uneven, to say the very least. Alger's first biographer, Herbert Mayes, wrote about his subject in 1928.<sup>2</sup> He took a great many liberties with Alger's life, concocted a series of episodes which never occurred, and attributed books to Alger which he never wrote. The biography, of course, was a literary hoax, which took nearly 50 years for the author to disclose.

It was a wonderful hoax if you are into this genre of literature, but it regrettably had a lasting impact on subsequent writers and the many entries about Alger which appeared in various biographical and encyclopedic sources. In 1964, Ralph D. Gardner wrote *Horatio Alger, or the American Hero Era*.<sup>3</sup> Gardner's well-written biography brought together many new facts about Alger and conveyed the Alger story in a briskly written volume. It is a good read. Gardner also appended an immensely important bibliography of Alger's works. This bibliography was later printed in separate format, en-

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**Editor's note:** This article is derived from the keynote address at the centennial Horatio Alger Society convention, "Dash to DeKalb," in DeKalb, Ill., on May 14, 1999.



## Editor's notebook

At the turn of the century and in the years shortly thereafter, when a person performed a heroic, winning feat on the athletic field, it was called a "Merriwell finish."

Two generations later, after Gilbert Patten's Frank and Dick Merriwell had become distant memories, along came Chip Hilton. And in our gymnasiums, as well as on our football fields and baseball diamonds, the operative phrase to a winning basket, home run or touchdown became known as "pulling a Chip Hilton."

The **Chip Hilton Sports Series** was different than most series books we have come to love. This was a series written by a real basketball coach, Clair Bee, not a professional author writing under his own name or under a house name for the Stratemeyer Syndicate. The 23 Chip Hilton books, published by Grosset & Dunlap between 1948 and 1966, were the real deal: true-to-life adventures with hard-fought athletic competition at their core. Bee had been there, through all the highs and lows of a long coaching career (412 victories as head coach at Rider College and Long Island University). After the point-shaving scandals of the early 1950s soured him on coaching, Bee retired and continued to write his Chip Hilton stories for an eager young audience.

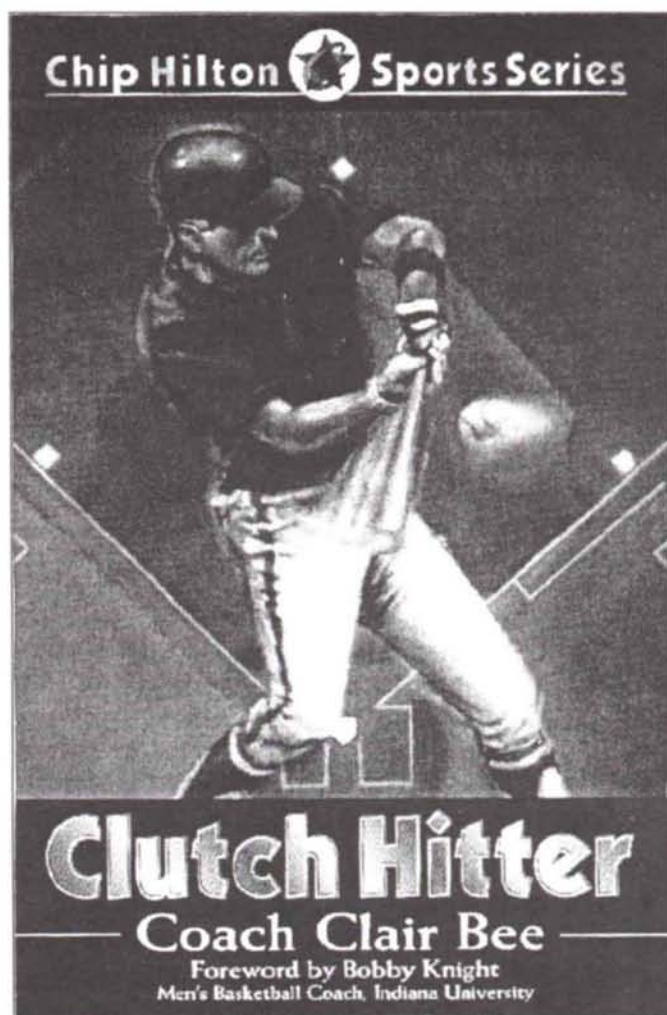
And now, the Chip Hilton series is back, in handsome paperback editions published by Broadman & Holman, a mostly religious publisher based in Nashville, Tenn. These books keep the original stories intact (although the texts have been updated considerably to make them relevant for the new millennium).

As those of us who read the Chip Hilton stories as kids have reached middle age or older as the century winds to a close, these books hold a nostalgic place in our lives. They are full of the spirit of the 1950s, a time when life in America was carefree, the baby-boom generation was in full flower, big cars and rock 'n' roll were king. The New York Yankees and Brooklyn Dodgers captured the imaginations of sports fans, with pro football about to explode onto the scene by the late 1950s. Little League baseball was new and exciting, and high school sports were important in every town in America.

Chip Hilton was "a hero for all times," as stated the headline in a 1980 feature article for **Sports Illustrated**, written by Jack McCallum.

In a recent issue of **Sports Illustrated**, McCallum pays another visit with Chip Hilton, the "new" Chip Hilton, in an article "Back to School for Chip Hilton."

Here are a few of McCallum's thoughts on this series that he, like most of us is his age, enjoyed reading so much



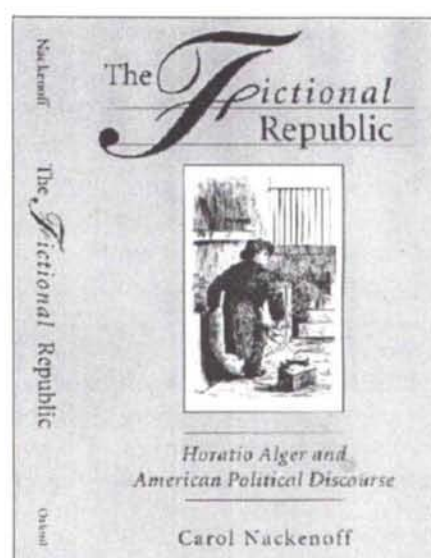
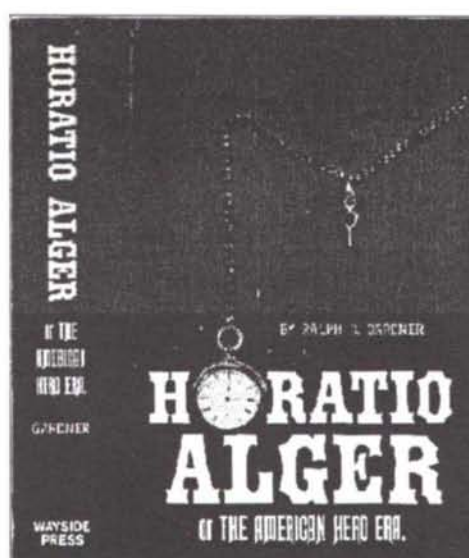
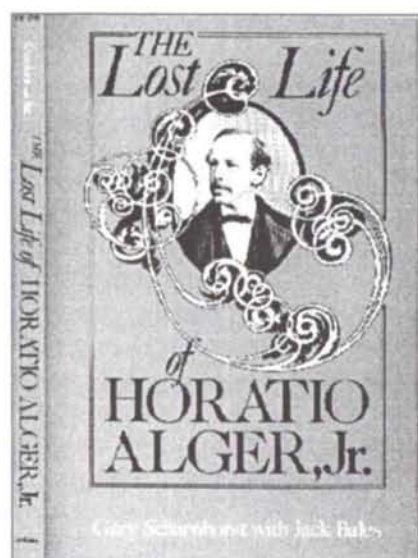
while growing up in the 1950s:

Well, Hiltonites, there's big news: the first 12 books of the series are available again (from Amazon.com or at independent bookstores) with updated characters and plots, and there are plans to rerelease all 23, plus a 24th (*Fierce Fullback*) from an unpublished manuscript that Bee completed before he died in 1983. That's not necessarily good news for those Hiltonites who wish that time would not tamper with Chip, that the mythical Valley Falls High School and State University where he spun out his three-sport heroics would remain in their pristine states. In fact, modernizing the series wasn't even the first choice of the modernizers themselves, namely Bee's daughter, Cindy Farley, and her husband, Randy, who promised Bee, before his death at age 87, that they would try to make the books available to a new generation.

"We wanted to put them out the way they were, which was always Dad's hope," says Cindy. "But no publisher would let us do the originals, because they

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## Alger ages, but not much: A Centennial reflection

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titled *The Road to Success*, and remains the most widely distributed list of Alger's works. Gardner single-handedly launched the resurrection of Alger's writings and importance to the history of American popular culture.

Gary Scharnhorst and Jack Bales published *The Lost Life of Horatio Alger, Jr.* in 1985.<sup>4</sup> This work is the best researched biography of Alger which we have, and is the result of exhaustive mining of the primary sources. Scharnhorst and Bales set the record straight on many aspects of Alger's literary career and private life. If Gardner may be criticized for being over-buoyant about some of Alger's contributions, Scharnhorst and Bales may be judged overly cynical about some of Alger's flaws and literary shortcomings.

The most recent treatment of Alger is by Carol Nackenoff, who wrote *The Fictional Republic: Horatio Alger and American Political Discourse*, in 1994. Rather than a straight biographical treatment, Professor Nackenoff looks at Alger through the lens of thematic analysis, addressing such topics as technology, capitalism, democracy, mass fiction, cultural wars, and the national character. Professor Nackenoff's work is an outstanding piece of scholarship which presents a nuanced and balanced view of Alger's writings and contributions.

I thought it might be interesting to examine Alger's impact over the decades and even the past century, mindful, of course, that we are celebrating the centennial of his death this year.

To this end, I have decided to undertake a selective inventory of Alger's continuing presence in such areas as

literature, scholarship, organizations, and, of course, the used book market. It is readily acknowledged that the Alger theme directly influenced such subsequent writers as Theodore Dreiser and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Less well known is the Alger parody in Nathanael West's *Cool Million*, written in 1934 at the depth of the Depression.<sup>5</sup>

Early in the book there is a scene with a youngster, his mother, and a lawyer who has come to announce that their house will be taken away. West continues, "Our hero, although only 17 years old, was a strong-spirited lad and would have followed after the lawyer but for his mother. On hearing her voice, he dropped the axe which he had snatched up and ran into the house to comfort her. The poor widow told her son all we have recounted, and the two of them sat plunged in gloom. No matter how they racked their brains, they could not discover a way to keep the roof over their heads." And the story ends with the following single line: "All hail, the American boy." Clearly, an Algeresque appropriation.

Another literary satire reminiscent of Holden Caulfield, entitled *The Gal'apagos Kid, or The Last All-American Boy*, was published by the Pushcart Book Press in 1971 by none other than a Luke Walton.<sup>6</sup> The book even begins with a quote from Alger's *Ben's Nugget*, namely, "So it happens that good fortune is often nearer to us than we imagined, even when our hearts are most anxious."

There is a continuing fascination with Alger in the scholarly literature, and several dozen dissertations have been written over the past several decades with Alger as either a main or important secondary theme. Forty years after his death, Alger's stories surfaced through the medium of comics, namely in *The Shadow* and *Doc Savage*. Alger has been reprinted by well over 100 publishers, and that activity continues without abatement. In the 1970s,

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## Alger ages, but not much: A Centennial reflection

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Alger's works were reprinted by Arno Press, largely distributed to libraries and therefore somewhat difficult to obtain. Publication continues apace in the '90s by appearances in books published by Easton Press in 1992, and in 1995 by a religious organization called Mantle Ministries.

In this new digital age, I have been able to locate 17 of Alger's writings, including 11 full books, which are available on the World Wide Web. The availability of these texts in this format has undoubtedly contributed to the number of course syllabi throughout the country which include Alger's works, most particularly *Ragged Dick*.

I have found Alger associated with courses given at Wayne State, Southern Illinois University, University of Wisconsin, University of Pennsylvania, and Syracuse University. There are doubtless others that bring Alger into courses on American popular literature. There are several World Wide Web sites which are good entry points to the study of Alger. One very helpful site is maintained by Bill Roach at Washburn University, a collection of sources and helpful linkages to other sites.

The Horatio Alger Society, of course, maintains a helpful site and Northern Illinois University provides information about Alger and his contributions. Perhaps the most unique indication of the continuing fascination with Alger, and mindful of our convening on the centennial of his death, is that Alger is highlighted on a worldwide web site which provides information about the burial places of hundreds of famous people.

We in the Horatio Alger Society have a steady interest in the buying and selling of Alger items, and the used book market is another indicator of continuing interest in an author. I recently checked in to the Advanced Book Exchange, or ABEBooks, and pulled up a list of books for sale relating to five or six authors. For Alger, there were 1,857 books available; for Henty, 1,698; for Edward Ellis, 680; for Oliver Optic, 587; and for Edward Stratemeyer, those written solely under his name, 283 volumes. Horatio Alger, quite obviously, has left behind a lively used book market. I will save the pricing of Alger's works and the level of bibliographic inexpertise displayed by not a few book dealers to another time and place.

No survey of Alger's continuing presence can omit the important work done by the Horatio Alger Association, a group now more than 50 years old which annually gives out five or six awards to distinguished Americans for their accomplishments. The Association also has an array of scholarships, a publication program, and a gift catalog with Alger-related items. The Horatio Alger

Association has been instrumental in keeping Alger's life and works at the forefront.

And now for a personal assessment. I think Alger and his works continue to live and to be debated because they confront the essential life experience. Alger wrote about young people in particular, sensing that they were the nation's great resource which must be shaped and nurtured. He wrote about the transformation of America from agricultural times to urban life, and he continually addressed the dilemmas of meritocracy, equality, manners, morals, advancement, economic reward, and, above all, character. In fact, the two central themes in Alger's works are character and the common weal, two vital components of our personal identity and, ultimately, our national character. Sean O'Connell, in a wonderful book written in 1995 entitled *Remarkable, Unspeakable New York, A Literary History*, allocates significant space to Alger and his career. I would like to end with some of O'Connell's words:

Alger's heroes, too, would have it both ways—by achieving their success through manners and morality, by acquiring money, and attaining grace. The solution to this dilemma for Alger was to contrive a hero who preserved his sense of decency and character at the same time that he pursued the dream of success. Alger adapted to his own purposes Ben Franklin's myth of the impoverished, idealistic young American who enters a strange city and through hard work, an exemplary character, shrewdness, and good fortune, eventually triumphs. Alger's novels, then, are triumphs of hope over experience; their vast popularity tells us much about what Americans wanted to believe about themselves and about the America they saw in New York City.<sup>7</sup>

And now I return to the title of these remarks, and can confidently assert that, more than ever, Alger ages, but not much. Your particular friends gathered here today, salute you, your writings, and your memory.

### NOTES

1. Carol Nackeroff, *The Fictional Republic: Horatio Alger and American Political Discourse*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 271.
2. Herbert R. Mayes, *Alger: A Biography Without a Hero*. New York: Macy-Masius, 1928.
3. Ralph D. Gardner, *Horatio Alger, or The American Hero Era*. Mendota, Illinois: Wayside Press, 1964.
4. Gary Scharnhorst and Jack Bales, *The Lost Life of Horatio Alger, Jr.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.
5. Nathanael West, *The Dream of Balso Snell, and A Cool Million*. New York: Noonday Press, 1996.
6. Luke Walton, *The Galapagos Kid, or The Last Great All-American Boy*. New York: Pushcart Book Press, 1971.
7. Shaun O'Connell, *Remarkable, Unspeakable New York: A Literary History*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), p. 84.



## A remembrance

**Editor's note:** The Horatio Alger Society has been informed of the death of longtime member Florence Ogilvie Schnell (PF-344) on Aug. 16, 1999 at age 93 at her residence, the Manor House, in Seaford, Del. Florence, a life member, joined the Society in January 1972. A memorial service was held Sept. 13 at Manor House. Florence's son, John Schnell, asks that any gifts in her memory be made to your favorite charities.

One of the reasons for Florence's life-long interest in the works of Horatio Alger, Jr., was the fact that her grandfather, John Stuart Ogilvie, was the publisher of the first editions of *Tony the Hero* (1880), *From Farm Boy to Senator* (1882) and *Tom the Bootblack* (1880, first thus, new title for *The Western Boy*) and a series of paperback reprints, most of them in The People's Library.

In October, 1976, Florence wrote a remembrance of her grandfather for *Newsboy*. We reprint it here for the benefit of newer members possibly unfamiliar with this important Alger publisher. The photo of J. S. Ogilvie on Page 8 was provided by Florence at the time she wrote the article.

## John Stuart Ogilvie

By Florence Ogilvie Schnell (PF-344)

My grandfather, John Stuart Ogilvie, was born in 1843 in Kirriemuir, Scotland, and came to Greenpoint, Long Island, New York, with his parents when he was a small boy. The voyage, on a sailing vessel, took six weeks.

At 10 years of age, he worked in a drug store in Greenpoint, and later he learned ship carpentry on the "Merrimac" or "Monitor." He realized that he needed more education and he went to night school at Cooper Union, New York City, and later taught there.

A Mr. Stern, who worked at the American Bible Society in New York City, helped him obtain a position there. After this job he got into the publishing business by his own initiative.

He belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church, but later became interested in the Presbyterian Church.

He met Charlotte Elizabeth Purchase at a temperance convention in Flushing, Long Island. She was the seventh daughter (considered lucky) of 13 children, and was a school teacher when they met. She had belonged to the Episcopal Church, but after they were married they joined a Presbyterian church.

Later on, Grandpa was Superintendent for 25 years of the Noble Street Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn, New York. Each Christmas he gave every child some



**Florence O. Schnell (PF-344) in a photo taken at the 1990 H.A.S. convention at Catskill, N.Y.**

candy and an orange. Some of his carpenter friends helped him build a house at 129 Oak Street, Greenpoint, Long Island, where he and Charlotte lived when they were first married. Every Friday evening, someone came to stay with the four children so that their parents could attend prayer meeting.

Twice, Grandpa saw his publishing firm burn to the ground at considerable financial loss. I believe the first location was 29 Rose Street, New York, and the later building was 57 Rose Street.

He had a verbal agreement with someone about a book plate. However, the man said that he had never made the agreement and sued Grandpa, won the case, and was awarded \$10,000. Possibly my Aunt Nellie Ogilvie Pusey Grier, who told me the story, didn't have the amount correct. \$10,000 seems like a huge settlement for sometime around 1900. In any case, the publishing firm had recently burned, and with the added expenses of two sons in college, Grandpa said that he didn't know how he was going to pay this sum of money.

Grandma said not to worry about paying the amount, because over the years she had saved that much money out of her household allowance and from money gifts which had been given her for various Christmases. At this time they had two servants, lived comfortably, and what was perhaps unique for

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# John Stuart Ogilvie

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those days, she paid all the bills.

Later on they had a summer home at Morris Cove, Long Island, facing a bay. They named the home "Airlie Hall" for the Earl of Airlie, Lord David Ogilvy (Ogilvie) of Kortachy Castle in Kirriemuir, Scotland. Ogilvie is a fairly common name in Scotland.

Sir James Barrie's home in Kirriemuir was next door to the Ogilvie home (Editor's note: James Barrie was the author of *Peter Pan*). Barrie's mother was Margaret Ogilvie, a relative. His small brownstone, two-story house on a narrow sidewalk is now a museum.

My husband and I went to see the Ogilvie birthplace and Barrie Museum in 1958. There is a picture of Barrie on the wall with a strong family resemblance to my grandfather as I remembered him.

I only have one recollection of him. He was sitting up in a high-backed dark wood bed, recovering from a stroke. However, he became worse and died on Feb. 9, 1910, and I was then about four and one-half years old. He was buried in Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn, N.Y.

I have been told that he was a devoted family man. If he gave one child a watch, he gave the others a corresponding gift. His wife must have caught this idea, for she gave each grandchild — six in all — the money for four years of boarding school or college. I chose to attend



**John Stuart Ogilvie (1843-1910), a photograph taken around 1900 in front of his Brooklyn, N.Y., home.**

Emma Willard School in Troy, N.Y., the oldest school for girls, founded in 1814.

When Grandma died in 1924, she left her estate in 10 equal shares to her four children and six grandchildren.

## **Now available: A new book on Alger formats**

### **Horatio Alger Books**

**Published by The New York Book Company**

**BY BRADFORD S. CHASE (PF-412)**

- \* This, the fourth of a series by Chase about Alger publishers and formats, is an ideal guide for the collector to use in identifying New York Book Co. Alger formats.
- \* 133 pages; paperback, published May 1999. It identifies and describes the 26 different New York Book Company Alger formats in detail, including when published, titles produced, descriptions and drawings of all cover formats. According to Chase, there are 752 different New York Book Co. Algers!
- \* A historical overview of The New York Book Co. and its related firms in the printing and publishing business.
- \* Includes a flip index to easily locate and identify each New York Book Co. Alger cover format.

**Price: \$16.00 (includes mailing)**

This new book, in paperback format, is now available along with Mr. Chase's *Horatio Alger Books Published by A.L. Burt*, (\$16), *Horatio Alger Books Published by M.A. Donohue & Co.* (\$13) and *Horatio Alger Books Published by Whitman.* (\$13). The set of four, all in similar paperback bindings, costs \$47. The books are also for sale individually. All prices include postage and handling.

**Send your order to:**

**Bradford S. Chase  
6 Sandpiper Road  
Enfield, CT 06082**



## Editor's notebook

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thought no one would buy them."

That's probably true, but Hilton traditionalists shouldn't fret too much. Though there will be plot changes (a buddy who fails an NCAA-administered drug test, a bout of cancer for Chip's beloved mother, Mary), Chip will not be walking out of the huddle with an earring or flashing a radical tattoo as he rubs down the ball on the mound. The Farleys, both teachers, are conservative, as is their publisher.

"Updating the books was a daunting task because we realize how powerful the legacy is and we want to protect it," says Randy. "How much should we change? How different would readers want the stories to be? and he had in the back of our minds, always, the thought of Clair watching over us."

McCallum goes on to note that among the changes is a major one: Speed Morris, Chip's closest friend in high school, is now African-American instead of white. The Farleys emphasize that the change was not done in the interest of political correctness, but to make the stories more believable in the late 1990s when black athletes have assumed a prominent place in American sports.

Also, Morris gets to drive a Mustang instead of a beat-up old jalopy.

"We have to admit we've not been driven by or given much conscious thought to political correctness," Farley said in an interview last spring for Long Island *Newsday*, adding that Bee's original books themselves were way ahead of their time in addressing contemporary issues. "Let's just say we have aimed for honesty."

As readers of my article, "Striking Out: The Stratemeyer Syndicate and Boys Sports Books" (*Newsboy*, January-February 1997) will remember, I spelled out some of the background for the Chip Hilton series, including the fact that Clair Bee used as his model for the title character, All-American Bob Davies, a three-sport star at Seton Hall University in the 1940s. Davies, who died in 1990, is enshrined in the Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Mass.

"I used Bobby as the hero because I think that's the best way to write — take a living person," Bee told McCallum in his 1980 *Sports Illustrated* article. "I admired Bobby very much, even though I didn't coach him," Bee said.

In a touching concluding chapter of the Clair Bee-Bob Davies story, the two met for a final time at the annual Hall of Fame ceremony in Springfield just before Bee died. Confined to a wheelchair and blind from glaucoma, Bee heard a voice saying "Hi, Coach."

It was Davies. The frail Bee instantly recognized the voice: "Chip Hilton," he said.

The new Chip Hilton books are beautifully presented, with new cover art and forewords written for these issues by prominent coaches like Bob Knight of Indiana University and Dean Smith, the retired all-time winningest NCAA coach from North Carolina.

Knight's essay is particularly moving, as he talks about the time growing up in Ohio when his mother would take him along on a shopping trip to Akron and give him \$1.25 so he could go to O'Neil's Department Store and buy the Chip Hilton book of his choice.

"It would invariably take me at least two hours to decide which of these wonderfully vivid episodes in athletic competition, struggle and accomplishment I would purchase," says Knight, a personal friend of Bee dating back to Knight's tenure in the

1960s as head coach at West Point.

"As I read my way through the entire series, I learned there was a much greater value to what Clair Bee had written than just the lifelike portrayal of athletic competition. His books had a tremendous sense of right and wrong, what was fair and what wasn't, and what the word *sportsmanship* was all about.

"No one person has ever contributed more to the game of basketball in the development of the fundamental skills, tactics and strategies of the game than Clair Bee during his 50 years as a teacher of the sport," Knight adds. "I strongly believe that the same can be said of his authorship of the Chip Hilton series."

Of course, there's another benefit of these new Chip Hilton books. Now, we can all have our own copies of *Hungry Hurler!* Not for the outrageous \$1,175 asked by a upstate New York book dealer in September, but for only \$5.99 retail (or discounted to \$4.79 by Amazon.com).

But the best thing about these books is found in the reading. They're great All-American fun.

*Note: A sincere thanks to Robert Kersch (PF-946) for providing a clipping of the feature story about the reissue of the Chip Hilton books from the May 20, 1999 issue of Long Island Newsday, used as background for this article.*





## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Bill:

For the past five weeks an hour each week, in what is called the Baylor Institute for Learning in Retirement, a program for senior adults in the community, I have been teaching a survey of Horatio Alger's life and works in relation to the American dream. I wonder how many courses of this nature are taught?

Anyway, one of the new members, a retired engineer, recited a poem he says he learned from his mother. I may be showing my ignorance when I admit that I had not heard it, but I promised Hugh McMullen to pass it long to you. He said it came from the 19th century, but it may be later, for he is a man about 70. If it's not old hat, it might do for *Newsboy*. It sounds as if it might be an echo of an Alger novel.

Incidentally, I used in a class the "Amos 'n' Andy" program with some Alger. It's a good one; surely you know it.

With some regularity I write a column for the local newspaper. An article on Alger will appear soon; it's a reflection of my doing thinking for this course.

Thanks for all the diligence for H.A.S.

Cordially yours,  
Bob Collmer (PF-866)  
2801 Wooded Acres Drive  
Waco, Texas 76710  
E-mail: RCol1017@aol.com

P.S.: I should have acknowledged John Juvinall's help in making a copy of the Amos 'n' Andy program. [Ed. note: John Juvinall (PF-537) donates cassette tapes of classic radio programs each year for the H.A.S. fund-raising auction].

Dear Mr. Gowen:

While working on an unrelated project recently, I came across four new Alger items — three stories (one of them written under the Caroline Preston pseudonym) and an essay — published in an obscure and short-lived magazine entitled *Public Spirit* in 1867-68. I enclose copies should you wish to report their existence or perhaps even reprint any of them in *Newsboy*. The essay, I think, is particularly significant.

My apologies for the quality of the copies — I worked from microfiche and the pages simply didn't copy well. One other note: You'll see that the first of these items, "Dr. Duke," is signed "Henry Alger, Jr." — but the attribution is correct on the contents page for volume II.

Best,  
Gary Scharnhorst  
Department of  
English Language and Literature  
The University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, NM 87131-1106

## THE RAGGED NEWSBOY

(Words from a ballad; author unknown, 19th century)

*One day while walking down the street, an old man lost his way,  
And asked to be directed, by some boys he saw at play.  
No help would they afford him, his request was met with jeers.  
The treatment was so hard, the old man's eyes soon filled with tears.*

*A little ragged newsboy, who happened to pass along,  
Sized up the situation, and elbowed through the throng!*

(Chorus)

*"Oh, don't tease the old man boys, because he's old and gray,  
But speak a kindly word instead, 'twill help him on life's way.  
Your Mother taught you to respect old age, the same as mine,  
And you may be like him some day, we all grow old in time."*

*"God bless you for those kind words Lad," the old man to him said,*

*"You must have a good Mother, but the newsboy hung his head.  
I have no Mother now Sir, in this world I'm all alone,  
But if you will please allow me, I'll lead you safely home."*

*They walked along in silence, 'til the old man said, "My son,  
I am immensely wealthy, but relations I have none.*

*Now, it you will come and live with me, your kindness I'll repay.*

*My heart went out to you the moment I heard those words you say."*

(Repeat chorus)

Recorded by Hugh McMullen for Robert Collmer

**Editor's note:** The Alger essay from *Public Spirit* mentioned by Mr. Scharnhorst as well as Alger's short story, "Dr. Duke: A Christmas Story" are already being prepared for publication in the next issue of *Newsboy*.

Dear Horatio Alger Society:

A little late, but the *Rochester Democrat & Chronicle* finally did a story on Horatio Alger as I suggested. They made me sound like Gomer Pyle ("gawwww-lee-Andy") but Horatio got his just due. I thought you would like a copy of the story for your files.

Sincerely,  
Ed Evans (PF-1000)  
979 Hamlin Center Road  
Hamlin, NY 14464

**Editor's note:** It's wonderful to see how perseverance can pay off, and we hope other Partic'lar Friends follow the initiative shown by Mr. Evans in spreading the word about Alger in their communities. You can do it through newspaper articles and Alger displays and talks at libraries and schools.



# Father knows best — or does he?

## *An informal, incomplete study of father figures in boys' books*

By Alan Pickrell (PF-965)

Last spring, my brother and I, as we always do when we get together, were reminiscing about our major life hero — our father. We recalled some of the good and some of the funny moments of our lives together, as well as some of those times when we tried Dad's patience as sorely as he tried ours. Yet, through it all, good and bad times alike, he was always there for us. Perfect he was not, but he was ours.

It was Dad who taught us to ride bicycles, sled, play baseball, throw a football, sink a basket, aim and shoot our Red Ryder B.B. guns, how to swim, defend ourselves, drive a car, ask a girl out on a date, how to behave ourselves on a date, how to use tools, how to give any task 100 per cent of our attention (remember boys, if it's worth doing, it's worth doing right), how to sublimate self gladly to keep the family secure and together, how to manage money, and how to finish what we started. It was Dad who taught us what a father should be.

It seems that fathers are usually heroes to their children. Certainly, this seems to be the case in the majority of popular boys' series books. However, as described by the authors of these series, are all series Dads worthy of the Robert Young Award? A quick look at some of the popular series books might reveal an answer quite different to the expected one.

In the first volume of the Hardy Boys series, *The Tower Treasure*, Frank and Joe Hardy reveal their hero-worship of their detective father (p. 5). It appears that the boys want to be just like their Dad when they grow up. Of course, Frank and Joe are engaged in riding their motorcycles on an errand for their father as they share this information at several decibels above the roar of the twin engines.

What a heart-warming moment. We are allowed to eavesdrop on the brothers and learn of their admiration for their father, the internationally famous detective. While Fenton Hardy may be a detective worthy of admiration (and admittedly, given his record in the series as a whole, that issue is in some doubt), in point of fact, his detecting

*Other authors...  
...other books*



"LOOK, THERE'S THAT ICE MACHINE — POINTING RIGHT AT DAD."  
*The Disappearing Floor* Frontispiece (Page 208)

abilities have nothing to do with his fathering skills.

The boys mention that their mother holds hopes that the boys will become a doctor and a lawyer. Fenton's admiration for his sons, however, is simply that they finish high school (p. 3). Admittedly, the books were written at a time when a high school education was an acceptable introduction into the working world, but it seems strange that he holds no more ambition for his sons. According to Joe, when the boys mention becoming detectives to their Dad, "he just laughs at us." (p. 3).

This laughter seems misplaced when we learn that Mr. Hardy solved his last big case by following up a very logical and elementary suggestion made by the boys. In fact, given the nature of the case and the obviousness of the option, it is nearly embarrassing that the world-famous detective did not think of it himself at the very

(Continued on Page 12)

**Editor's note:** This article was first presented as a paper at the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association conference in San Diego, Calif., on April 2, 1999.



## Father knows best — or does he?

(Continued from Page 11)

outset of the case.

A little later on, when the boys tell their father about their new case, the theft of their friend Chet's jalopy, Mr. Hardy takes the moment to give his sons a lecture on the powers of observation. While the subject is not a bad one for father-to-son lore, Mr. Hardy seems to shorten the scope of the usefulness of observation by limiting its application strictly to the science of detection. And, while the great detective sits in his easy chair, reading his paper and smoking his pipe, it is the boys who find the clues which help to link a professional criminal to both the Applegate robbery and the theft of Chet's auto.

Mr. Hardy uses this occasion to tell the boys what points they have missed. After this critique, Fenton leaves for New York, where he stays for two weeks, sending only one brief communication. He had originally promised to try to find some information for the boys as pertained to their case. When he does return, however, he doesn't tell anyone. The boys learn of his return from a servant (the only one the Hardys ever had ... as he or she is never mentioned again), but there is no news for the boys because their Dad is in bed sleeping — where he remains all day.

Shortly, the boys will be called upon to distract the police force (heaven forbid that a *detective* should ever have to work *with* the police) so that Fenton will be able to reach the bedside of a dying suspect before the police can. If he does, Mr. Hardy will collect a sizable reward which, otherwise, will go to the police. With the boys' help, Fenton Hardy accomplishes his mission and returns with a clue to solve the case. However, it is the boys who use the clue to find the stolen treasure "... in the old tower." Small wonder that the author describes Fenton as being "... on good terms with the boys as though he were an elder brother." (p. 33).

In the second volume of the series, *The House on the Cliff*, Mr. Hardy goes missing for an extended period of time. The boys track down the smugglers, who have kidnapped their dad and effect his release. Had they not, Mr. Hardy would have joined the ranks of Judge Crater, Amelia Earhart and Jimmy Hoffa. Fenton Hardy, the boys learn, may counsel caution, but he is incapable of practicing it, judging from the number of times he gives himself away to gangs of vicious criminals. Perhaps this is where the brothers learned their impulsive behavior. Monkey see, monkey do?

On the first page of the third volume of the series, *The Secret of the Old Mill*, the boys are found at the railroad station, waiting to meet their father, who has been away for the past two weeks. One begins to wonder if the brothers have ever contemplated solving the "case of the absentee father." Fenton returns, gives the boys a lesson

on identifying counterfeit money, mentions that counterfeiting is the case he's currently working on, and leaves town again after the boys' new motor launch arrives. We hope that someone (guess who?) has taught them how to operate a boat. Evidently so, for the boys once again solve Fenton's case for him without drowning themselves in Barmet Bay, where they run the boat for the pleasure of themselves and their friends. However, when Joe rescues a strange boy from the river beside the mill, we realize that someone taught the boys to swim.

Frequently, as in Volume 4, *The Missing Chums*, the boys are called upon to use their fists against grown men — and usually acquit themselves rather well. In part, self-defense is instinct, but usually there are a few fine points to be passed along. Mr. Hardy seems to be interested in the more esoteric points of detecting and these are the things he discusses with his sons. Police Academies spend a part of their curriculum on such items as self-defense, how to approach a suspect, disarming a suspect, etc., but Fenton evidently wants to concentrate on the powers of observation and identifying counterfeit money. In Volume 5, *Hunting for Hidden Gold*, Fenton is gone again, this time out west for a case. When he is discovered by the villains and hurt, he calls for the boys to come and take care of him.

In Volume 6, *The Shore Road Mystery*, Frank and Joe purchase an automobile to try to trap a ring of car thieves. Luckily, the boys can drive, although there is a mystery. Mrs. Hardy does not drive, we learn; Mr. Hardy is never at home long enough to teach them, and although the brothers ostensibly attend school, Drivers' Ed was not high on the list of required courses in the 20s and 30s. However, at the end of this book, Fenton does begin to act like a father when he offers two excellent pieces of advice to his sons: (1) "Don't let success go to your heads" and (2), "You took too many chances." (p. 211).

By Volume 7, *The Great Airport Mystery*, Fenton Hardy does manage to call in some favors and helps to clear his sons of some trumped-up charges that they raced a disabled mail plane attempting to make an emergency landing, causing it to crash.

By Page 7 of this volume, Mr. Hardy seems to have subscribed to Mrs. Hardy's wishes for one of the boys to follow a legal profession and the other, to follow a medical one. And, when the brothers are charged with a more serious crime, stealing U.S. mail, Mr. Hardy clears his sons ... even though the boys themselves actually apprehend the criminals.

Of course, in *What Happened at Midnight*, Fenton is once again away on a case and can not be reached when Joe is kidnapped. And, in *Footprints Under the Window*, we learn that Fenton is in the habit of leaving important papers in the pockets of his suits. This unfortunate propensity causes criminals to want to enter the Hardy home to secure these papers. Consequently, the whole family is



exposed to danger. Also, Fenton's assignment to his sons frequently places them in grave danger.

Looking closely at Fenton Hardy, let's ask exactly how he stacks up as a father figure. It seems that, more than anything, he is an absentee parent. He is frequently away from home and serves more as a mentor to two apprentices than as a father to his sons. When the boys and Fenton sit down for one of *those* family talks, the subject is nearly always the finer points of detection. Fenton takes himself and his reputation quite seriously, even though book after book proves that he is no great shakes as a detective ... international reputation, go hang. No matter how deeply undercover he goes, or how complete his disguises may be, his cover is always blown and, eight times out of ten, it is the boys who wind up raking his chestnuts out of the fire. It is then that we realize that even though Fenton's major contact with his sons is in his role as a detective, he isn't even a particularly good role model for his profession.

When we first meet the Hardy Boys, they are riding their motorcycles. They can also drive boats and automobiles. In fact, they can do all of the things that boys do. How? Who taught them? Possibly some of these things can be gained by osmosis from friends who have skills, but as a usual thing one doesn't just get on a bike and ride away — or jump into an auto and drive away the first time out. Traditionally, fathers have had something to do with imparting these skills to their sons ... for better or for worse.

My own Dad taught me to ride a bike in the fashion I used to teach my children to ride ... by running alongside them and supporting the back fender of the machine until the children learned balance and gained confidence. Perhaps it is not the easiest way, but it was child's play when compared to learning to drive in those pre-drivers' education days of long ago. That process of learning to drive an automobile produced its own particular strain on paternal/filial relationships.

In the case of my father and me, I was precipitated into the driver's seat at age 12, when a doting aunt decided I should have a vehicle and gave me a sum of money to buy one. I, in turn, gave the cash to my father, who soon towed home a Model A Ford.

After some repairs and rebuilding, we set out to teach me to drive. First, at the kitchen table ... with charts. "The gear shift is like an 'H.'" On the floor: canned goods (the accelerator, the clutch, the foot brake, the starter, the headlights). The dashboard: The steering wheel, choke spark, ignition. The warnings: "Don't ever, under any condition, use the crank; it could kick and tear your arm off your shoulder." "What are you doing? Don't look at the sauerkraut (the clutch)! Keep your eyes on the road (the kitchen clock)!"

Next came sitting in the car itself — without starting it. Just practicing gear changes, applying the brake in conjunction with the clutch, finding all of the foot pedals

without looking at them. At last the big day: "Gentleman, start your engine."

We throw on the spark, turn on the ignition, step on the starter, adjust the choke, take off the spark, put it in gear, and drive away — right? Well, em uh, no. There's a little matter of coordinating the clutch release with the accelerator depression; otherwise, the engine dies and you have to go through the entire process again.

Dad's idea was that I would learn to operate the vehicle by reversing down our driveway to the street and pulling forward again until I could do it all smoothly.

At first, he rode with me until he decided I was ready to solo. He stood beside the auto and watched, walking with the Ford as I drove slowly back and forward. On one fateful day — which has since become infamous in our family lore — I fired up the engine, put it in gear, and moved a foot or so before I killed the motor. I set about the process of getting started again when I noticed that my Dad seemed extremely agitated about something and was attempting to get my attention. I rolled down the window and leaned out to see what was exciting him so much. "It's on my foot," he said. "You've parked on my foot."

Well, technically, I hadn't ... not parked ... the car had just stopped there and his foot just happened to be under it. However, that didn't seem to be the time to split hairs on so fine a point, so I went through the process of starting the engine again when I was suddenly faced with a dilemma. Should I continue reversing down the driveway ... or pull forward a few inches?

Moments like these create a father/son bonding that lasts a lifetime. I know my Dad never forgot it, and he never let me forget it, either. And just think: as nearly as we can tell, the Hardys, *pere et fils*, have missed sacred moments of bonding like these. Instead of telling Joe and Frank about the birds and the bees, Fenton instructs them in the fine art of disguise ... which they can use if ever they're sued for child support. In his defense, however, it's just possible that Fenton has no knowledge of the ways of a man and a maid to offer the boys. He's away from home so often that Mrs. Hardy probably conceived through parthogenesis. Briefly reviewed, Fenton is a detective sergeant to his two rookie sons.

But is this unusual in boys' series books? Overall, it would seem not. The Ken Holt series reveals that the title character yearns for a family environment. Ken's mother is deceased and his father is almost totally absent from Ken's life in the father's pursuit of a journalistic career. Ken wants to be like his father and follow in his footsteps, and his yearnings for a family are eventually satisfied by being accepted into a surrogate family — the Allens. Yet, Pop Allen owns and heads up a small family-operated newspaper, and since Ken's career goal is journalism, we once again see the career supervision/intern configuration of relationships.

(Continued on Page 14)



## Father knows best — or does he?

(Continued from Page 13)

Rick Brant, in addition to his own father, Hartson Brant, has myriad father figures: all of them scientists and inventors like his father. While father figures in these series occasionally feel and show some concern for their charges, the concern is no more than any mentor would feel for a protégé. Solicitousness tends to restrict itself to "Be careful; Have you eaten? Get some rest."

Tom Swift may inherit his scientific ability from his father, Barton Swift, but readers can easily realize that father and son have reversed positions in this series. Tom looks after his ailing father much more solicitously than any of the fathers in most series look after their young sons.

In the Tom Swift, Jr. series, while Tom Senior is by no means the pathetic figure that his own father was, it is Tom Junior who is the dynamo and who operates independently of paternal supervision. He keeps his father filled in as to his progress on a particular invention, and even though they live together at home, they usually restrict their conversations to the business at hand, Tom Senior does encourage Junior, but once again, it is a business/career relationship rather than a personal one.

One series in which we find a somewhat more realistic depiction of the father/son relationship is the Jerry Todd Series. Although Jerry is somewhat younger (14) than many of the series heroes discussed here, he is not really that much younger than Frank and Joe Hardy when we first meet them in *The Tower Treasure*.

In *Jerry Todd and the Whispering Mummy*, the first volume of the Jerry Todd Series by "Leo Edwards" (Edward Edson Lee), we learn that Jerry's dad owns and operates a brick factory in their home town of Tutter, Illinois. We also learn that Mr. Todd is civic-minded and is a member of "the water power committee" (p. 13).

By Chapter 3 of this volume, we learn that Mr. Todd has quite a sense of humor, and that Jerry is definitely a chip off the old block. Jerry also depicts moments of fun and flirtation in the lives of his parents. While Jerry describes his dad as a pal, there's no doubt that Mr. Todd is a father as well — always ready to help out, reign in, encourage, and advise his young son.

Jerry describes a moment with his dad:

He stood in the shadow and I couldn't see his face; and for a few moments he didn't say anything. But I could feel him looking at me just like he was glad I belonged to him. I tell you I love my pa and ma when they're like that.

Then he said:

"Jerry, ol' pal, if you weren't such a big boy I believe I'd kiss you goodnight. But men don't do those things much, do they, son?"

"No-o sir," I said. "But I'm not so awfully big," I added. "I'm only fourteen." (p. 73).

While this quiet moment between father and son might be described as bordering on the maudlin, it is as much as part of the father/son dynamic as teaching Junior how to bait a fishing hook. Jerry's father then takes the opportunity to explain to Jerry the difference between leaders and followers and how he hopes that Jerry will be a leader and stand up for loyalty, honesty and fairness. I'm sure we all remember lecture twenty-three well enough to say the words along with Jerry's pa. After all, we've heard it as often as we've given it. Still, from the pen of Leo Edwards, it's as timely, real and affecting as it ever was.

Later, hot on the trail of the missing mummy and a \$200 reward, Jerry runs into his dad as Mr. Todd is leaving church. Mr. Todd tells Jerry that he hopes that Jerry will hurry up and win that reward, because the parsonage needs a new roof, and each member of the church is supposed to buy a bundle of shingles. According to Mr. Todd, if Jerry gets the reward, then Jerry can buy his own shingles. Jerry leaves the encounter wondering if his dad is joking. But Mr. Todd is teaching Jerry about responsibility and being a good steward, as well as setting a good example for Jerry by being a leader himself and helping out in times of trouble. Plus, he behaves like a natural man:

"There was a scurry of feet, followed by a giggle and a loud smack. I knew Dad had grabbed Mother around the waist and kissed her." (p. 180).

And, at the end of the story, it is Dad who saves Jerry, rather than vice-versa.

In *Jerry Todd and the Waltzing Hen*, Jerry needs an advance on his allowance, but his dad holds the line. He expects Jerry to act responsibly, so when Jerry proposes to paint the roof of the brickyard office, his father agrees to pay Jerry five dollars. Jerry learns to earn his own money as a result. And once Mr. Todd tells Jerry and his pal Red how to paint the roof, he leaves them to it instead of hanging around to criticize and kibbutz. This is important to Jerry, because it shows him that his father trusts him.

Of all the father/son configurations in series books, the relationship between Jerry Todd and his father is one of the most realistic and, at the same time, the most idolized. Jerry's dad gives him pep talks that relate, not only to the situation at hand, but to life lessons, and draws parallels for Jerry. Mr. Todd teaches by example and encouragement, and Jerry trusts him totally. In fact, even though Jerry's dad is, at most, a peripheral character in all of the books, Jerry frequently recalls his father's maxims and advice and tries to live up to his father's expectations.

Still, however we, as readers, might judge or evaluate series book fathers, the long and short of it is to be found in the perceptions of series heroes themselves. Even the most inept and ineffectual fathers (like those of Poppy Ott and Mark Tidd) are still heroes to their boys ... and that fact makes these series books true to life, and almost every father, even a reprobate like Huck Finn's, a hero to his boys.



# 'Dash to DeKalb' memories



Recipient Doug Fleming (PF-899) and the 1999 *Richard R. Seddon Award*.



Samuel Huang (PF-963) receives the *Carl Hartmann Luck and Pluck Award* from '98 winner Angelo Sylvester (PF-928), right, as Horatio Alger Society President Arthur Young looks on.



Alvin Funderburg (PF-1025), left, presents a copy of his *The 122 Books of Horatio Alger, Jr.* to Ralph Carlson (PF-955).



Neil McCormick (PF-506) and Percy Seamans (PF-405) at the annual H.A.S. book sale.

Photos by  
Bernie Biberdorf (PF-524)  
and Doug Fleming (PF-899)



## MEMBERSHIP

### New members

Herbert Sohn, M.D. (PF-647)  
4640 N. Marine Drive  
Chicago, IL 60640 (312) 275-3200  
Dr. Sohn, who first joined the Society in 1982, is renewing his membership after a two-year absence. Welcome back!

Wayne W. Baker (PF-1036)  
4037 Skare Road  
Rochelle, IL 60168

Carol Cotten (PF-1037)  
2417 Jannebo Road  
Birmingham, AL 35216  
Carol learned about the Horatio Alger Society from director Tom Davis (PF-976).

Robyn L. Bader (PF-1038)  
28 Perry St.  
Petersburg, VA 23803 (804) 861-4180  
Robyn, a registered nurse, currently has 38 Alger titles. Her other interests include *Dick and Jane* readers, antiques and travel. Her abebooks.com Internet site is "Robyn's Readers." She learned about the Society from treasurer Chris DeHaan (PF-773), from whom she purchased several Algers on abebooks.com.

Alec Albee (PF-1039)  
17815 6th Ave. N  
Plymouth, MN 55447 (612) 449-0180  
Alec, a social worker, learned about the Society from Bart Nyberg (PF-879) and Bill Gowen (PF-706). In addition to series books and mysteries, his collecting interests include baseball cards.

### Change of Address

Jeff Looney (PF-903)  
85 Four Season Drive  
Charlottesville, VA 22901

### Moving?

Send your address change to:  
Horatio Alger Society  
P.O. Box 70361  
Richmond, VA 23255

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New deadline for orders: Dec. 15, 1999

*For more information on this special offer  
see flyer (including order form) in this issue!*

*Visit the official Horatio Alger  
Society Internet site at:*

[www.ihot.com/~has/](http://www.ihot.com/~has/)



# Auctioneers sold on new careers

By Malia B. Zoghlin  
Tribune Staff Writer

Internet auction sites such as eBay, uBid, Yahoo! and Amazon.com are creating a new kind of entrepreneur: The Internet Auctioneer. Thousands of people around the country are finding they can make decent money — even a living — by selling everything from basement junk (20-year-old stuffed animals that are now considered “collectibles”) to brand new collectibles, heirloom jewelry and even cars, houses and golf tee times through Internet auction sites.

The auction Web sites provide the venue, the customer base, the overhead, software, transaction service and even the “community” for running a virtual business.

“These people don’t fit the classic definition of an entrepreneur. You now have people who have a passionate interest in something — say, ‘Star Wars’ toys — becoming business owners,” said eBay senior communications director Kevin Purseglove.

Of course, that is the story of how eBay itself came to be. The company’s founder, 31-year-old Pierre Omidyar, started eBay after his girlfriend complained she couldn’t find people in the San Francisco area who shared her passion for collecting and trading Pez dispensers. Omidyar’s fiancée can now barter with sellers offering more than 2,000 varieties of Pez dispensers through eBay, including a “Rare! Rubber-head Batman and Robin.”

Although there are no hard numbers on full-time auction-based businesses, Purseglove says the number is clearly increasing.

“We hear from more and more people who are on-line on a full-time basis. But, with 4 million people using the site every day, it’s tough for us to know how many of them consider it a full-time business,” Purseglove said.

According to a March report by Forrester Research, on-line auction sales were \$1.4 billion in 1998 and are expected to grow to \$19 billion in 2003. At Elk Grove Village, Ill.-based uBid Inc., first-quarter revenues soared 1,554 percent over the year-earlier period. On eBay, more than 2 million items are available for bid at any one time.

A year ago, 45-year-old David Osborn and his wife, Janice, spent six days a week in their Omaha used-book store, Adventures in Bookselling, waiting for customers to walk through the door. While they waited, David spent some of his time listing their 11,000-book inventory on a Web site called Advanced Book Exchange



**Former Horatio Alger Society President Mary Ann Ditch (PF-861) sells books both on the Internet and at her Omaha store, Adventures in Bookselling.**

([www.abebooks.com](http://www.abebooks.com)), which claims to be the world’s largest source of out-of-print books, with more than 13 million titles.

The problem: Once the titles were listed, they sat on the Web site much as they sat on the shelf in his store. Essentially, Osborn waited for on-line buyers to find the books on the Web site just as he waited for off-line buyers to walk through the door.

Then someone mentioned an Internet auction site called eBay Inc.

“We decided to list a couple of items in eBay and were stunned when we saw how much they went for,” said David Osborn.

Part of the reason seems to be that potential buyers are swept up in the auction process itself, spurred by competing bidders to pay more than they would for the same item in a brick-and-mortar store.

The Osborns next auctioned off a collection of used dog books they had paid \$2,000 for. They made \$20,000 selling the items individually on eBay.

“It didn’t take long to figure out that we could be earning more money on eBay than at the store, especially when you figured in our store’s overhead costs. We were

(Continued on Page 18)

*Editor’s note: This article originally appeared in the July 19, 1999 Business Technology section of the Chicago Tribune. It is reprinted with permission of the author.*



# Auctioneers sold on new careers

(Continued from Page 17)

paying \$3,000 a month just in rent. On eBay, there's virtually no overhead," he said.

Anyone can register and list an item for sale on the auction Web sites. One need only provide a name and e-mail address and click "I accept" on the user agreement to start listing items for sale. The agreement typically outlines what the auction site provides (a venue) and what is the responsibility of the buyer or seller (everything else).

EBay's user agreement, for example, states clearly that it cannot be held liable for goods purchased via the auction site or for any dispute that may arise between the buyer and seller. The document reads: "We are not involved in the actual transaction between buyers and sellers. As a result, we have no control over the quality, safety or legality of the items advertised, the truth or accuracy of the listings, the ability of sellers to sell items or the ability of buyers to buy them."

EBay is also one of the few Internet companies to turn a profit. Essentially, the auction company earns its money by charging sellers a fee of between 25 cents and \$2 to post an item for sale (The fee is higher for higher-priced goods, such as vehicles and real estate). If the item sells, the seller is then responsible for paying eBay a commission on a sliding scale starting at 5 percent of any sale less than \$25, going down to 1.25 percent on a sale of \$1,000 or more.

There were \$540 million worth of transactions conducted between buyers and sellers between January and March of this year, most of them completed by personal check and money order.

Trust is established and maintained on eBay through eBay's Feedback, which allows buyers and sellers to rate their transaction experience with another registered eBay user.

For sellers, maintaining a spotless, positive feedback reputation is the heart and soul of conducting a successful business on the Web site. Any user with a net negative feedback rating of minus-four gets kicked off of eBay permanently. The system was set up to protect users from potential fraud, though it is not foolproof. Some sellers have used multiple e-mail addresses to praise themselves and their exemplary business practices.

In October 1998, the Osborns sold their store and set up virtual shop on eBay. The husband-wife team split the business tasks of on-line auctioning. David takes digital photos of the items they list for auction, writes the descriptions, answers bidder e-mail and deals with the administrative tasks of listing and supervising auctions,

while Janice handles the shipping of items to eBay auction "winners."

"Our motto is 'he pecks, she packs,' David said. "We've outfitted our attic with postal meters, weight scales and packing materials. I work on the second floor with the computer, putting up between 25 and 35 new auctions a day. We've got a real system down."

David Osborn says he works as many hours a day as he did when he sold both through eBay and the store: Six days a week, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. He also says they earn about the same gross — between \$7,000 and \$9,000 a month. The difference is they don't have the overhead costs — and they don't even have to get dressed to go to work.

"I don't miss standing at the counter and futzing with customers," he said. "Plus, I'm a bit of an introvert, so this kind of work suits me well. I like to be at home. If I get lonesome, I go to an antiques store and buy more stuff."

Mary Ann Ditch, who bought the store from the Osborns, is just the opposite. She sold books on-line before she bought the store, but she soon tired of the isolation.

"A year ago I put my very first book on-line," Ditch said. "I got my home office all set up and listed a book I had purchased for \$25 called *Tom Swift and his Television Detector* by publisher Grosset & Dunlop. It went for \$1,025. I thought, 'I'm going to like this.'"

But Ditch said after six months of staffing Internet auctions, she yearned to have more interaction with people in the off-line world.

"I'm a widow and I don't have any kids. I had spent 25 years working in the corporate world, so I was used to being around people. When I decided to try my luck at on-line auctions, I found the isolation bothered me," she said.

Ditch now spends her days at the store (where Janice Osborn works part-time) and part of her nights at home tending to her auctions on eBay. Ditch says the Internet auctions are still a vital part of her business.

"Without the Internet, I really think I would be forced to close the store. I don't earn enough at the store alone to pay the bills and make a living," she said.

A major downside of using on-line auctions such as eBay as a primary venue for conducting business is that the entire framework for conducting one's business — and making a living — is in the hands of a remote, unknown group of people and their technology. For example, EBay users experienced 22 hours of downtime in June when the auction Web site's servers failed. For David Osborn, that is one of the hardest parts of life as an auction entrepreneur.

"The scariest aspect of the business is that we're not in complete control," he said. "It isn't our Web site. If eBay slammed to a halt and was dark, we'd be in big trouble."



# Internet puts its stamp on the world of commerce

Do Internet auctions always mean the sellers will get better prices than in a store? It all depends on what they're selling, said Shane Greenstein, an associate professor of management and strategy at Northwestern University's J.L. Kellogg Graduate School of Management.

The seller of "non-standardized goods" — say a rare, collectible Disney toy — may be able to receive a higher price for an item on an auction site because there are more bidders. But the seller of standardized goods — a new camcorder, for example — may receive less in an auction situation.

"Auctions are really for unique goods — trendy items with limited distribution or collectibles, Greenstein said. "Otherwise, it's pretty hard to get excited about a product you can find almost anywhere."

There is something to be said, however, for the frenzy that an auction stirs.

"It's the blue-light special phenomenon, Greenstein said. "Somebody gets excited about a unique opportunity that's only going to be around for a short time. Other people get caught up in it. It gets people to buy things they may not buy or pay prices that they otherwise might not have paid."

Greenstein said the Internet already has had a

profound impact on commerce by creating an aggressive market that simply did not exist before.

"The Internet has reduced search costs and transaction expenses. In the long run, it may impact the concept of a fixed price in retail distribution," he said.

The notion of fixed prices is already up for grabs. The Sharper Image ([www.sharperimage.com](http://www.sharperimage.com)), for example, auctions new products that consumers may end up buying for half the list price.

But Steven Kaplan, professor of entrepreneurship at the University of Chicago, says that such a difference in pricing between the Internet and the real world can't last.

"Either the store will need to provide some service over and above what you can get on the Internet for people to pay the higher prices there, or the prices will eventually have to equalize," Kaplan said.

Greenstein said the hobbyists of the world have pushed the boundaries of what is possible in on-line transactions.

"What we should remember is if a hobbyist can figure out how to make money on this, one of my (MBA) students will figure it out and do it much better."

— Malia Zoghlin, *Chicago Tribune*

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