



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.

VOLUME XLIII

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2005

NUMBER 1

Ralph A. Gardner (1923-2005)

-- See Page 3



LUKE SAVES MRS. MERTON'S LIFE.

Luke Walton; or, The Chicago Newsboy. Frontispiece.

Horatio Alger, Jr.

Juvenile writer, durable metaphor and collectible author

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Speed reading Horatio Alger

-- See Page 18

President's column

Just a few days until the 2005 convention!

The last time I wrote, we had some snow on the ground, but it went away just shortly afterward. In fact, last week it was 70-80 degrees here and most of the golf courses had opened. I haven't had the opportunity as yet, but maybe soon. BUT, guess what I am looking at out the window as I write this? Yes, a snowstorm that started last evening and has been going on for almost 24 hours. If the temperature would have been a little colder, we would have had 8-10 inches of snow. Currently there looks like about 4-5 inches. Believe me, that is more than enough for the third weekend of April!

I'm looking forward to seeing everyone in Grand Rapids for the convention, and for those of you who cannot make it, please try and set aside some time next year, for we would very much enjoy seeing more people at the convention. It is always a great time seeing old friends!

The committee members for our "Gathering in Grand Rapids" have everything pretty much ready for us and they are planning another great convention weekend. The pig roast on Friday, May 13, at the DeHaans' farm in Wayland, Mich., and the banquet and awards on Saturday are all set. There will be our annual book auctions and a presentation on book repair, with Friday's opening presentation by several Society members on how and what to collect.

Please don't forget the Tulip Festival in nearby Holland, Mich., is taking place the same week, if you should want to either come early or stay later to see it.

Just a reminder that in my previous column I asked those attending the convention to share some of their special Alger books or memorabilia with their fellow Horatio Alger Society members, so please bring them with you. You may bring more than one item to share. There will be a table set up just for these items, and we will have tight security.

See you at the convention!!!!

Your Partic'lar Friend,
Bob Routhier
12186 W. Hill Road
Swartz Creek, MI 48473
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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 — youngsters whose struggles epitomized the Great American Dream and inspired hero ideals in countless millions of young Americans for generations to come.

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Please make remittance payable to the Horatio Alger Society.

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

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You can visit the Horatio Alger Society's official Internet site at www.ihot.com/~has/

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. E-mail: hasnewsboy@aol.com

The Horatio Alger Society loses a legend

By Robert E. Kasper (PF-327)

It is my sad duty to report the death of Partic'lar Friend Ralph D. Gardner (PF-053). Ralph died of complications from diabetes on March 30, 2005 in New York City. He was 81 years old.

Ralph was a charter member of the Horatio Alger Society, joining in 1963, and attended most of the early conventions until the late 1990s when ill health curtailed his travel. Ralph had the distinction of receiving more society awards than any other member (six in total) including the Newsboy Award on three occasions. The Newsboy Award is presented to "the person or organization that has done the most to add to the image of Horatio Alger, Jr." Ralph certainly did that and much more. In fact, the Newsboy Award was inaugurated in 1964 because of Ralph's pioneering effort on his biography and bibliography *Horatio Alger, or the American Hero Era*, published by The Wayside Press, owned by society co-founder Ken Butler.

More than 40 years later this book is still considered the "gold standard" for Alger collectors, despite the discovery of new information and research conducted since then. While Ralph was not the first bibliographer of Alger, he was the first to provide in-depth data about first editions and information regarding the myriad Alger publishers. Ralph was also Director Emeritus of the Horatio Alger Society, having been elevated to the position in the 1980s. Bob Bennett, who passed away last year, was the only other Director Emeritus.

Ralph began his professional career as a journalist with

The New York Times — first as a news correspondent with the Infantry during World War II and later with assignments at the Frankfurt and Paris bureaus. After a few years at the *Times*' city desk in New York, Ralph left to start his own advertising agency, Ralph D. Gardner Advertising. In addition to marketing and advertising for various clients, Ralph also provided public relation services to several Eastern Bloc countries during the 1960s.

Ralph's other endeavors are too numerous to mention here, but many of them focused on books and authors. He hosted a radio talk show from his apartment, "Ralph Gardner's Bookshelf," for a dozen years interviewing hundreds of famous authors.

This experience led Ralph to pen *Writers talk to Ralph D. Gardner* in 1989. He was a guest lecturer at several universities, a freelance contributor to many publications and wrote dozens of forewords for Alger books reprinted over the past 30 years.

I was fortunate to spend a delightful afternoon with Ralph last November in his Manhattan apartment over-looking Central Park. Al- though confined to a

wheel- chair and appearing somewhat frail, his mind was still sharp and his memory intact. We talked about Horatio Alger and his books and viewed some important items from his collection. When I mentioned a recent purchase I made of a rare first edition, Ralph's eyes lit up and he regaled me about how he found his copy years ago.

Although Ralph had disposed of most of his Alger collection, it was obvious that his passion and enthusiasm had not waned.



Ralph D. Gardner, 1923-2005

From *A Fancy of Hers / The Disagreeable Woman* (dust jacket). Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1981. Photo by Ralph D. Gardner, Jr.

Ralph D. Gardner, Adman and Horatio Alger Biographer, Dies at 81

By The New York Times

Ralph D. Gardner, a writer and advertising executive and a biographer of Horatio Alger, died on March 30 at Roosevelt Hospital in Manhattan. He was 81 and lived in Manhattan. The cause was complications of diabetes, his son Ralph Jr. said.

A freelance contributor to *The New York Times* and other publications on military, travel and other subjects, Mr. Gardner

was best known for *Horatio Alger: or, The American Hero Era*, a study of the life and work of the author of up-by-the-bootstraps tales.

Reviewing Mr. Gardner's book in *The New York Times Book Review*, Hal Borland expressed reservations about its worshipful approach to its subject, but said that "it offers what

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Editor's notebook

We were all saddened just a couple of weeks ago to learn that on March 30 the Horatio Alger Society lost one of its legendary members, Ralph D. Gardner (PF-053), who joined the Society back in July 1963, at the time he was busily working on his classic Alger biography/bibliography, *Horatio Alger, or The American Hero Era*. The book was published in 1964 by Wayside Press in Mendota, Ill., a commercial printer owned by H.A.S. co-founder Kenneth Butler.

I first met Ralph at "Nostalgia in Nashua," the 1984 convention hosted by Jim and Mary Jane Thorp. Ralph attended nearly every H.A.S. convention, until ill health related to a longtime battle with diabetes restricted his travel in recent years.

Executive Director Robert E. Kasper discusses Ralph's life and achievements on Page 3, and a pair of New York newspaper obituaries from mid-April are reproduced on Pages 3 and 5.

Because news of his death came just as this issue was close to going to press, we will run an expanded Ralph Gardner tribute in the next **Newsboy**, which will be coming out shortly after the convention.

In that spirit, we are asking members of the Horatio Alger Society who knew Ralph and have their own stories and anecdotes to tell, to write them down and submit them for this special tribute. Either send them by regular mail or e-mail, to my addresses located at the bottom of Page 2. Please send these write-ups by the end of May. Also, we've been searching through our files for various photos of Ralph from H.A.S. conventions, and we hope to assemble a nice tribute.

Convention notes: As H.A.S. President Bob Routhier mentions on Page 2, we're down to just a few days until the 2005 convention in Grand Rapids, Mich. In case you misplaced the schedule of events sent with the last **Newsboy**, another copy is enclosed. Activities as listed are subject to last-minute change, of course, and up-to-date news will be passed along periodically throughout the weekend.

Remember, the Holiday Inn Select is located on the east side of Grand Rapids, at 3063 Lake Eastbrook Blvd. (at 29th Street SE) in Kentwood, just a four-minute drive from Gerald R. Ford International Airport. The hotel has an indoor heated swimming pool among its many amenities, and operates a free, 24-hour airport shuttle. As soon as your plane lands, just phone the front desk at (616) 285-7600 to arrange to be picked up.

MEMBERSHIP

New members

Barry Schoenborn (PF-1087)

552 Brock Road

Nevada City, CA 95959 (530) 265-4705

Barry joined the Horatio Alger Society at the recommendation of H.A.S. President and fellow collector Bob Routhier.

Aaron Talbot (PF-1088)

554 NE 7th Avenue

Gainesville, FL 32601 (352) 262-6461

E-mail: aaron@talbot.net

Aaron is a graduate student who learned about the Horatio Alger Society through Internet research.

David A Scott (PF-1089)

Polyglot Press, Inc.

1523 Pine St.

Philadelphia, PA 19102 (215) 545-4540

E-mail: david@polyglotpress.com

As president of Polyglot Press, Inc., David has been in charge of his firm's 129-volume Horatio Alger, Jr. reissue series, and is publishing new editions of the works of George A. Henty, General Lew Wallace and numerous other authors.

Incidentally, if you still haven't made your hotel reservation, and although it's past the official deadline, give the front desk a call this week at the above number. They still may be able to find you a room.

If you're arriving by car, take Interstate 96, exit at 28th Street, go west to Lake Eastbrook Blvd., turn left (south) and the hotel is one block ahead on the right side. Two issues ago, we enclosed a color brochure card for the Holiday Inn Select, which includes a locator map on the back, along with the telephone number for the front desk. Bring this card with you for easy reference.

Annual H.A.S. auction: If you are planning to bring books or other items for the annual consignment/donation auction on Friday afternoon, please consider categorizing items as donations, because full proceeds will go to the Horatio Alger Society. For the first time in recent years, we do not have an estate or special-consignment collection available, which will affect our total auction proceeds. Therefore, any books or other memorabilia

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Ralph Gardner, 81, Authority on Horatio Alger

By Stephen Miller
Staff Reporter of the Sun

Ralph Gardner, who died March 30 at age 81, was a newspaperman and advertising executive who amassed what was probably the finest collection of Horatio Alger first editions and memorabilia, created the first exhaustive bibliography of Alger's writings, and published the biography *Horatio Alger; or the American Hero Era*.

Alger's oeuvre was potboilers about poor urban youths who make good, with titles like *Ragged Dick* and *Phil the Fiddler*. The books, wildly popular in the late 19th century, were already out of fashion at the time Gardner discovered a trove of them in a barn in Maine at age 13, but he was captivated.

Gardner's own life was hardly as ragged as one of Alger's boys. He grew up in a Fifth Avenue apartment building where tenants included Clare Boothe Luce, A.J. Liebling, and Stan Laurel. A family treasure was a framed portrait of Albert Einstein, a souvenir of the days when the physicist taught young Ralph how to play chess, while visiting a friend in the building.

Gardner attended Dewitt Clinton High School, where he worked on the student newspaper, and then found work as messenger and office boy to Arthur Hay Sulzberger, publisher of **The New York Times**. During World War II, Gardner joined the Army and served as a correspondent for **Yank**. After the war he stayed in Europe and worked at **Times** bureaus in Paris and Frankfurt.

Returning to America in the late 1940s, Gardner worked in a number of roles for the **Times** — night photo editor, advertising department — before leaving in 1955 to start his own advertising agency. Among his clients were Pilsner Urquell and Polish Hams. At one point, Gardner convinced the Secret Service to allow President Eisenhower to pose for a photo with one of his canned hams. It seemed like a marketing coup until he realized he couldn't use the president to advertise.

Through dogged research, Gardner built up his collection of Alger and other American juvenile literature in first editions, and he put together the first comprehensive bibliography of Alger's writings. He traveled to numerous auctions, and told the story of going to Queens to purchase some volumes of

Alger from an old woman. She also had a first edition of Mark Twain's *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*, but Gardner hadn't brought enough money to buy it.

Gardner also collected the magazines that originally serialized the tales, as well as masses of Alger ephemera, such as hotel registers containing Alger's signature. The materials filled several filing cabinets, which Gardner labeled his "Alger Machine."

Gardner's Alger biography, which was first published in 1964, included rather whimsical elements, such as imagined conversations with the author, as well as an evaluation of his work and influence. It did not make reference to Alger's pedophilia, a subject that came to widespread knowledge only with later biographies.

"He was the first person to do a lot of research on Alger," the co-author of *The Lost Life of Horatio Alger* (1985), Jack Bales, said. "The bibliography was a pioneering effort."

Gardner was instrumental in the republication in 1973 of a lost Alger work, *Silas Snobden's Office Boy*, which had somehow failed to make its way from serial to publisher in 1889.

Gardner was a founding member of the Horatio Alger Society, a charitable organization devoted to scholarship on all subjects Alger. He would appear at annual meetings puffing a pipe with a bowl fashioned after Alger's head.

He was also a member of the Baker Street Irregulars, the Sherlock Holmes fan club. In 1974, Gardner founded a weekly book review and interview show on WVNJ radio. The show ran through 1987, and excerpts were published in *Writers Talk to Ralph D. Gardner* (1989), featuring an introduction by Rod McKuen.

"As literature, Alger's works are meager at best," Gardner told the Christian Science Monitor in 1978. Somehow this did not damp his enthusiasm for them, and he confessed that two of his favorites were *Frank Fowler* and *The Erie Train Boy*. "I still go back and read them again and again," Gardner said.

Ralph David Gardner, born April 16, 1923, in New York; died March 30 of complications of diabetes; survived by his wife, Nellie Jaglom Gardner, and sons James, Ralph Jr., and Peter.

Obituary from The New York Sun, April 17, 2005

Ralph D. Gardner dies at 81

(Continued from Page 3)

is probably the best bibliography yet in print" of Alger's work. Mr. Gardner began his career in 1942 as an office boy at **The Times**, and later worked on the paper's picture desk in New York, Paris and Frankfurt.

He left **The Times** in 1955 to start his own agency, Ralph D. Gardner Advertising.

Mr. Gardner was born in Manhattan on April 16, 1923. He

received a certificate in journalism from New York University in 1942 and a certificate in military administration from Colorado State College the next year. He changed his surname from Goldburgh around 1950.

In addition to his son, who lives in Manhattan, Mr. Gardner is survived by his wife, the former Nellie Jaglom; two other sons, Peter, of Hanover, N.H., and James, of Manhattan; and six grandchildren. Another son, John, died in 1987.

Obituary from The New York Times, April 17, 2005

Editor's notebook

(Continued from Page 4)

donated will be most appreciated!

Book-hunting in Michigan: As convention co-host Dave Yarrington mentioned in the last *Newsboy*, there are only two traditional used-book stores in Grand Rapids, but they are a few steps from each other in the Eastown area and a short drive from our hotel. Those who attended the 1994 convention will recall the Argos Book Shop, which has been at 1405 Robinson Road (at Lake Drive SE) since 1976. Its hours are 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Saturday and noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. Phone: (616) 454-0111. Nearby is Redux Books at 1349 Lake Drive SE. Hours are 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday and 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday. Phone: (616) 742-2665.

The Eastown neighborhood also has several nice pubs, coffee shops and restaurants, including the Brandywine Mexican and American restaurant (almost next door to Redux Books at 1345 Lake Drive SE), and Pita House, which serves Greek and Mediterranean cuisine, at 1450 Wealthy St. SE.

There are several other used-book dealers in central and western Michigan cities and towns within a short to moderate drive from Grand Rapids. Some advertise regular store hours, while others are by appointment only. Additional information will be available in the hospitality room.

In living color: We have received several e-mails complimenting the most recent *Newsboy*, which included full-color illustrations for the first time in the 40-plus years of this publication. The use of color is the latest step in the history of *Newsboy* that began way back in July 1962 when H.A.S. co-founder Forrest Campbell ran off a two-page debut issue (Vol. 1, No. 1) using the mimeograph process on 8½ x 14 paper and mailed it from his home in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

By the late 1960s, a Multilith offset-printing process was used for *Newsboy* in a standard 8½ x 11 newsletter format, with this or similar offset processes used until 2003, when we converted to digital reproduction.

Over the years, we kicked round the idea of using color photos, but the cost of color in the ink-on-paper offset process was prohibitive, with its need for color separations, four printing plates for each color page, along with costly cyan, magenta, yellow and black printing inks. The expense of these materials made our use of full-color photos impractical, not to mention the additional labor involved in the print shop.

However, digital technology has brought costs down to a more reasonable level, the major new expense the consumable color dyes in the laser printer cartridges utilized by our commercial printing firm. Also, digital

photography has been a step forward, with film and chemical developing being replaced by digital cameras. For example, the Walgreens Drugs chain is currently converting all its in-store 24-hour photo labs from film and chemicals to electronic digital imaging.

By doing photographs electronically, we can import the black-and-white or color images directly onto the *Newsboy* master pages, which are then e-mailed to the print shop. Once there, the printing process is controlled from a computer work station, from where a typical *Newsboy* without color photos is given a final check, then outputted to a digital imaging device which prints, folds and staples the full run within a matter of minutes.

We won't be using color for every issue, but only when it can be seen to best advantage. Also, color is generally available in four-page "printer's layouts." For example, in the November-December issue, we chose color availability for both sides of the front and back covers, which were Pages 1, 2, 19 and 20. These pages (both sides of one sheet of 11 x 17 paper) were produced at greater expense on a full-color laser printer, and then joined with the remainder of *Newsboy*, produced, as mentioned above, on a black-image laser printer. So, the cost of color is multiplied when added to each four-page component of a typical 20-page issue.

We decided to utilize full color for the article on the **Garfield Library** because these unique and colorful book covers by Aldine Publishing Co. have rarely been seen, even by the most veteran Alger collectors. Before going ahead with this project, we had our printers do a small test, and we were so pleased that we decided to publish the issue with selected color images.

Closing note: In my last *Editor's Notebook* I discussed interesting items discovered inside books we had bought. Below is part of a six-panel, fold-out Grosset & Dunlap promotional flyer, inserted prior to the sale of the book. The actual size of this reduced image is 9a by 6 inches, and the flyer lists various boys' and girls' Stratemeyer Syndicate titles, the most recent books listed indicating this catalog was produced in 1914.

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| <p>STRATEMEYER POPULAR SERIES By Edward Stratemeyer</p> <p>The cheerful, entertaining series cannot help but appeal to every wide-awake American boy, because of the quick action and the vigorous, realistic characters. There is no end of thrills, combined with innumerable exciting adventures, and the whole series sparkles with the literary of outdoor life.</p> <p>12mo. Bound in cloth, stamped in colors. Price, 50 cents per volume.</p> <p>...The Last Cruise of the <i>Scimitar</i>; or, Luke Foster's Strange Voyage. ...Roshan, Shon's Discovery; or, The Young Miller of Torres Bend. ...From the Himala to Roper's Strange Struggle for Peace. ...Richard Darr's Venture; or, Striking Out for Himself. ...Oliver Budge's Search; or, The Mystery Hunter of the Yukon. ...To Alaska for Gold; or, The Fortune Hunter of the Yukon. ...The Young Aviator; or, The Pulling of a Rolling Stone. ...Bound to be an Esquimaux; or, Frank the Wolf Hunter. ...Sherband Tom, The Reporter; or, The Esquimaux in Strife; Boy Fighting for his Own; or, The Fortune of a Young Artist. ...Joe, The Swimmer; or, The Value of a Lost Chain. ...Larry, The Wanderer; or, The Rise of a Robber. ...Bernese Rover and Britton; or, Two Boy's Adventures in South Africa. ...The Young Landmark; or, From Maine to Oregon for Fortune. ...Finn of the North Pole; or, Two Boys in the Arctic Circle.</p> | <p>HEARKEN:</p> <p>Are you concerned about what your boy and girl are reading? If not, you <i>should</i> be.</p> <p>The books in this catalogue are all clear, bright, vigorous stories of our own day, just the kind the young people crave and should have.</p>  <p>They cover nearly every field of interest to young folks—school life, athletic and outdoor sports, touring, camping, sporting squares, the railroad, the ocean, flying machines, the Equator and the North Pole, adventures tinged with good (scholarship) books, all well-made and all well illustrated, nicely bound in cloth, stamped in various colors.</p> <p>The safest and best compromise for your boy or girl is good books. Here are some that have been tried and are found wanting. Most young people have read some of these and want others.</p> | <p>BEST BOOKS FOR BOYS & GIRLS</p> <p>SPLENDID STORIES AT LITTLE PRICES</p>  <p>REDUCED PRICES AT YOUR DEALERS</p> <p>Your bookseller, if he is progressive, has these books in stock and will supply them at reduced prices, and the publisher's printer can buy them if possible; but if he cannot supply them, or you are remote from any dealer, the publishers will send them by mail or express prepaid, on receipt of the prices quoted within.</p> <p>GROSSET & DUNLAP PUBLISHERS 526 West 26th Street, New York</p> |
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2005 CONVENTION PREVIEW

Our First Time!!

By Carol Nackenoﬀ (PF-921)

You might think that the five of us, pictured below during the 2004 Horatio Alger Society banquet at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, are a little old to be reporting that our first time at an H.A.S. convention was in Grand Rapids, Mich., in 1994.

But it's true, and it was just wonderful.*

And here is our 10th reunion photograph just to prove how close we've all become since that experience. Although we were greeted by some late-season snow showers, the weekend was warm and plenty lively.

We didn't know what to expect, but we made many friends and hung out in each others' rooms until all hours. The pig roast at Chris DeHaan's farm and Ralph Gardner's Alger quiz were also among our prized memories. We'd do it again in a heartbeat!

Now, we have the opportunity to return to Grand Rapids for another Horatio Alger Society convention. None of us wants to miss the opportunity to pick up just where we left off.

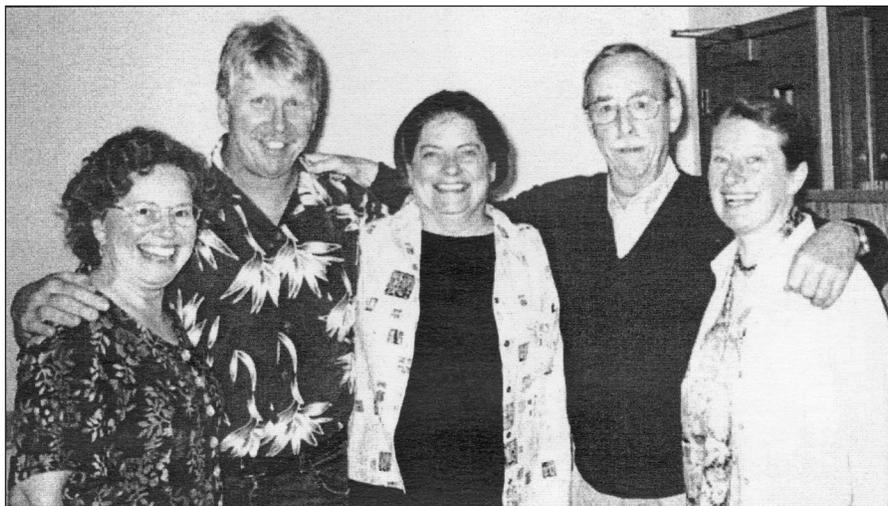
So we hope you're planning to join us for the 2005

H.A.S. convention in just a few days! We want you to be there. If it happens to be your first time, we think you'll find it memorable, and we'll try to make it so.

* **Note:** perhaps you'll remember the black-and-white Campari ads with the classy photographs on which "Our First Time" is based.

You may not remember the parody of this

advertising campaign that Larry Flynt inflicted on Jerry Falwell in **Hustler** magazine, leading to to a U.S. Supreme Court case that one member of the team in this photograph is teaching this term.



First-timers attending the 1994 convention in Grand Rapids, from left: Carol Nackenoﬀ, Michael Morley, Janice Morley, Bob Routhier and Jeanette Routhier. Not pictured: Samuel Huang (PF-963), also attending his first convention in 1994.

Ancient Middle Eastern trade center reborn in *Petra: Lost City of Stone*

It is the most comprehensive exhibition ever presented on the ancient Middle Eastern city of Petra and its creators, the Nabataeans, and it's something well worth seeking out by Horatio Alger Society members attending the 2005 convention.

The exhibit, *Petra: Lost City of Stone*, runs through Aug. 15 at Calvin College's Prince Conference Center. Hours are 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, and 9:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday. Admission is \$12 for adults, \$10 for seniors and \$8 for children 5-17. Calvin College is at 3201 Burton St. SE, a very short drive from the Holiday Inn Select.

The exhibit is the first major cultural collaboration between Jordan and the United States. It is organized

by Cincinnati Art Museum and the American Museum of Natural History in New York.

Items on display include stone sculptures and reliefs, ceramics, metalwork, architectural elements, terra-cotta or ancient water pipes, artworks in various media and other fascinating artifacts. All are on loan from collections in Jordan, Europe and the United States. Many are on display in the United States for the first time.

Among the highlights of the exhibition are several pieces recently discovered by archaeologists working in Jordan, as well as a monumental bust of Dushara, on public display outside Jordan for the first time. The bust is almost four feet tall and weighs some 2,100 pounds.

For additional information, visit www.calvin.edu/petra



Examples from the Polyglot Press Horatio Alger, Jr., collection, in a new laminated-cover trade paperback edition that includes Alger's 123 originally published titles, along with six additional "Sun Series" novels never commercially available in book form.

Exciting announcement from Polyglot Press

Davd A. Scott, president of Polyglot Press, Inc., has announced that its 129-volume Horatio Alger, Jr., collection will soon be available in a re-proofed, laminated-cover trade paperback edition, with a hard-cover edition with color applique covers also in the works. The Polyglot Alger Series includes the 123 originally-published books by Alger, along with six "Sun Series" titles not previously available in book form.

"As a convention-only special, Polyglot will offer the 129 new laminated-cover trade paperback Algers for \$10 apiece, and the applique-cover hardbound Algers for \$15 each for purchases at the convention (a 45 percent discount) and orders taken at the convention only," Scott said. "We will have a complete set of the new paperbacks on site, and a preponderance, if not all, of the hardbounds."

Polyglot Press has also been busily assembling a similar trade paperback edition of the works of George A. Henty, with 15 titles (along with all of the Algers) now available on-line at www.polyglotpress.com.

The spectacular cover art used for Polyglot's Henty series reproduces that from the original Blackie and Sons and early Scribner's editions, and Scott will be bringing a dozen of the Henty trade-paperback and hard-cover

editions to the convention in Grand Rapids, which will be offered at the same special convention price.

But the biggest news of all for Henty collectors is the forthcoming issue by Polyglot Press of a long-awaited second edition of Peter Newbolt's *G.A. Henty, 1832-1902: A Bibliographical Study*, published in England in 1996. This indispensable book has long been out of print, with infrequent copies appearing on www.abebooks.com routinely offered for \$400 and up.

Now, this classic work is being reissued in 2005 by Polyglot Press in hard cover (with dust jacket), in its official second edition, personally authorized by Newbolt. The book's expanded length of 763 pages includes 47 new pages of addenda and corrigenda reflecting Henty research over the past decade.

Also, all the original Newbolt photographs have been re-scanned using a superior high-resolution process.

"We are still determining pricing on the 2005 second-edition Newbolt," Scott said. "It originally sold for \$99.95. We are going to try and price it between 25 percent and 35 percent off to Henty Society and Horatio Alger Society members."

Horatio Alger, Jr.

Juvenile writer, durable metaphor and collectible author

By Arthur P. Young (PF-941)

It seems fitting that we honor both Horatio Alger, Jr., and the great city of Chicago by commencing with the opening paragraph of Alger's *Luke Walton; or, The Chicago Newsboy*:

"*News and Mail*, one cent each!"

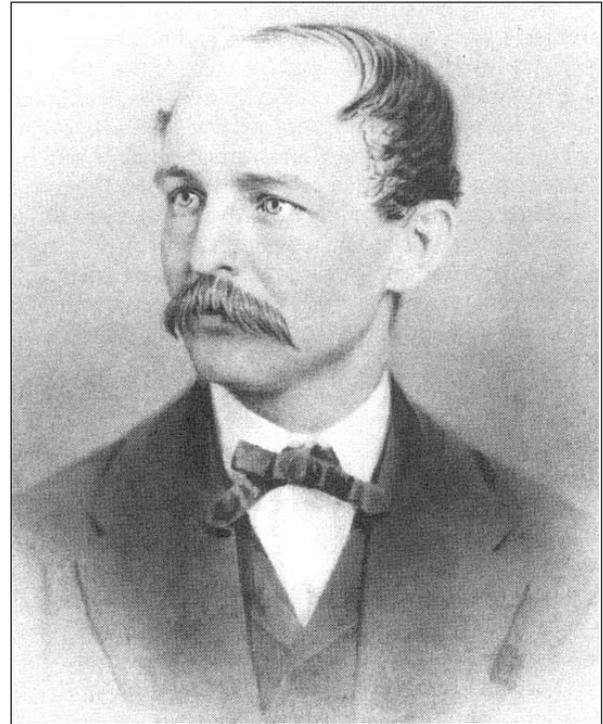
Half a dozen Chicago newsboys, varying in age from ten to sixteen years, with piles of papers in their hands, joined in the chorus.

They were standing in front and at the sides of the Sherman House, on the corner of Clark and Randolph Streets, one of the noted buildings in the lake city. On the opposite side of Randolph Street stands a massive but somewhat gloomy stone structure, the Courthouse and City Hall. In the shadow of these buildings, at the corner, Luke Walton, one of the largest newsboys, had posted himself. There was something about his bearing and appearance which distinguished him in a noticeable way from his companions.¹

Our story begins on January 13, 1832, when Horatio Alger, Jr. was born in Chelsea (now Revere), Massachusetts. His father, Reverend Horatio Alger, was a Unitarian minister in the First Congregational Church and Society of Chelsea. Alger's mother, Olive Fenno Alger, was the daughter of a wealthy merchant and land owner. Alger was schooled at home during his early years, became a voracious reader, and excelled in Latin and algebra by the age of 10.

Alger's parents moved to Marlborough, a town situated in the rolling hills between Boston and Worcester, Massachusetts in December 1844. Alger enrolled for three years at the Gates Academy to prepare for college. Following in his father's footsteps, Alger entered Harvard College in 1848, paying for his tuition by serving as a "president's freshman," running errands for the college president. Alger graduated near the top of his class, and received awards for academic achievement and prizes for his essays. He won the coveted Phi Beta Kappa key and reflected later that, "No period of my life has been one of such unmixed happiness as the four years which have been spent within college walls."²

During the next five years, Alger held a variety of posi-



Horatio Alger Jr., in his early 40s

tions, including teacher, headmaster, editor, and writer. His first book, *Bertha's Christmas Vision*, was published in 1856, and a year later was followed by *Nothing to Do*, an anonymously published volume of satirical poetry. He wrote many poems and short stories for a variety of Boston, New York, and Rhode Island periodicals.

He then entered the Harvard College Divinity School in 1857, and graduated three years later. Alger was drafted for service in the army of the Potomac in 1863, but two weeks after his pre-induction physical, Alger was exempted because of nearsightedness and a diminutive size. He was 5 feet, 2 inches.

He began to hit his literary pace in 1864 with the publication of *Frank's Campaign*, his third book. In the same year, he became minister at the First Unitarian Church and Society of Brewster, Massachusetts. He continued writing ballads, poetry, and short stories for a variety of publications. In spring of 1866, Alger's life turned upside down. He was accused of molesting two youngsters, did not deny the charges, abruptly resigned his ministerial post, and was gone in a matter of weeks.

Alger then moved to New York City and soon visited

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Arthur P. Young is Dean of Libraries, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois. This article was delivered as a paper to the Caxton Club, Chicago, on May 19, 2004.

Horatio Alger, Jr.

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the Newsboys' Lodging House and met Charles Loring Brace, a prominent social worker and philanthropist, who founded the Children's Aid Society in 1853. It was through his friendship with Brace that Alger learned firsthand of the life and plight of beggars, street urchins, bootblacks, homeless boys, newsboys, and hustlers. And it's from this setting that Alger experienced his greatest success, namely the "Ragged Dick" series, a group of stories about New York street boys who struggle and eventually make good. *Ragged Dick; or, Street Life in New York*, was published in May 1868 and it was an immediate success, delivering Alger from relative obscurity to literary prominence in the juvenile arena and beyond.

The characterizations in this series set the stage for the dozens of similar books which followed. Ragged Dick, or, as he is also known, Richard Hunter, was a playful lad who smoked, gambled, and played tricks on his friends. He was, however, generous, enterprising, self-reliant, and told the truth. With *Ragged Dick*, Alger began a lifelong commitment to the urban community, chronicling the dislocations resulting from the rapid industrialization of the nation. 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 a solid character who often advanced through enterprise and luck, and with the help of a friend or two along the way.

Following publication of *Ragged Dick*, Alger continued writing at a rather frenzied pace, regularly contributing to such story papers and magazines as **Ballou's**, **Gleason's**, **Harper's**, **New York Weekly**, **Student and Schoolmate**, and **Young Israel**. By the time of his death in Natick, Massachusetts, in 1899, Alger had written some 119 full-length books and more than 500 short stories and poems. Alger did not exclusively write juvenile fiction. He wrote several biographies which included the lives of James Garfield, Abraham Lincoln, and Daniel Webster. Alger's work has been reprinted by more than 125 publishers since his death, and in fact, he enjoyed far greater sales following his death than during his lifetime.

To comprehend the continuing hold of Horatio Alger on the American imagination, one must go back to the 19th century and become familiar with the tensions inherent in the evolving structure of capitalism. These



RAGGED DICK.

dualities and tensions have been brilliantly captured in Jackson Lears' book, *Something for Nothing: Luck in America*, published by Viking in 2003.

Debate about gambling reveals fundamental fault lines in American character, sharp tensions between an impulse toward risk and a zeal for control. Those tensions may be universal, but seldom have they been so sharply opposed as in the United States, where longings for a lucky strike have been counterbalanced by a secular Protestant Ethic that has questioned the very existence of luck.

What makes the conversation so revealing is that it counterposes two distinct accounts of American character. One narrative puts the big gamble at the center of American life: from the earliest English settlements at Jamestown and Massachusetts Bay, risky ventures in real estate (and other less palpable commodities) power the progress of a fluid, mobile democracy. The speculative confidence man is the hero of this tale — the man (almost always he is male) with his eye on the Main Chance rather than the Moral Imperative. The other narrative exalts a different sort of hero — a disciplined self-made man, whose success comes through careful cultivation of (implicitly Protestant) virtues in cooperation with a Providential plan. The first account implies a contingent universe where luck matters and admits that net worth may have nothing to do with moral worth. The second assumes a coherent universe where earthly

rewards match ethical merits and suggests that Providence has ordered this world as well as the next.

The self-made man has proven to be a far more influential culture hero than the confidence man. The secular version of Providence has resonated with some characteristically American presumptions. A providential sense of destiny could be expanded from individuals to groups and ultimately to nations—and to none more easily than the United States. Even before there was a United States, colonial orators assumed their settlements would play a redemptive role in the sacred drama of world history. As the Puritan John Winthrop declared in 1630, the holy commonwealth at Massachusetts Bay would be a “City on a Hill,” a beacon of inspiration for all Christendom. By the revolutionary era, the city on a hill had spread to the whole society: America became “God’s New Israel.” As the new nation grew richer and more powerful during the nineteenth century, the profounder religious meanings of Providence began to fall away. Prosperity itself came to seem a sign of God’s blessing — at least to the more affluent, who have always felt drawn to secular notions of Providence. For the deserving nation as for the deserving individual, progress was inevitable. Or so the more fortunate have assumed, from the first Gilded Age to our own more recent one.

For many Americans, belief in the breaks was a psychic necessity — a release from the moral closure of secular providentialism. Ministers might preach of merit rewarded, but even Horatio Alger acknowledged that luck was as important as pluck in achieving success. Decades ago, Louis Hartz recognized “how frequently Ragged Dick came to riches as a result of falling asleep in the snow and being found by a portly widower or rescuing a child from disaster and winning eternal gratitude.” Yet Alger held onto an implicitly providential framework: his heroes earned their good fortune through relentless energy — they were always up and doing, on the lookout for opportunity. No wonder they got all the breaks.³

I would now like to offer two commentaries on Alger’s accomplishments as a writer. The first is by Carol Nackenoff, author of the best thematic analysis of Alger’s works in a book entitled, *The Fictional Republic*:

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 meets the forces threatening to undo the grand experiment. And the Republic of the Creator, emerging from its rite of passage, triumphs.⁴

And Shaun O’Connell, author of *Remarkable, Un-speakable New York*, distills this essence from Alger’s writings:

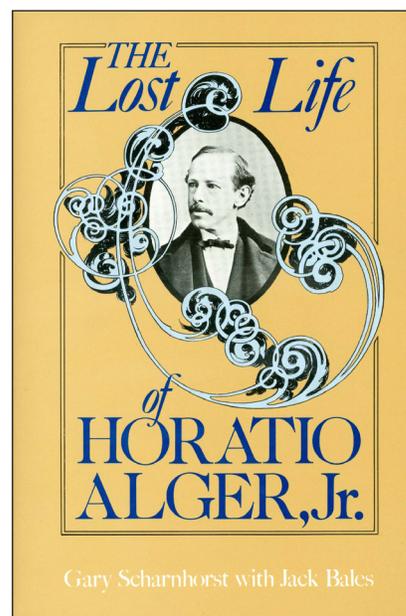
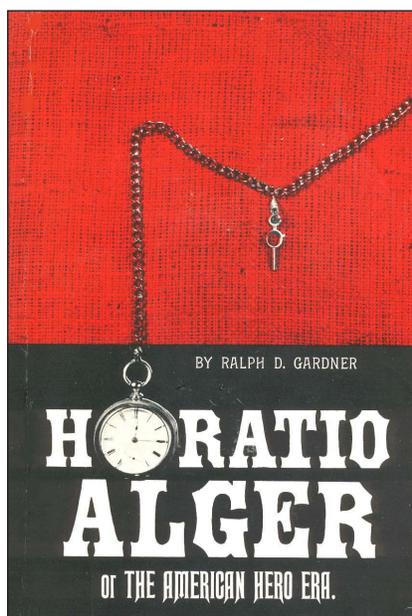
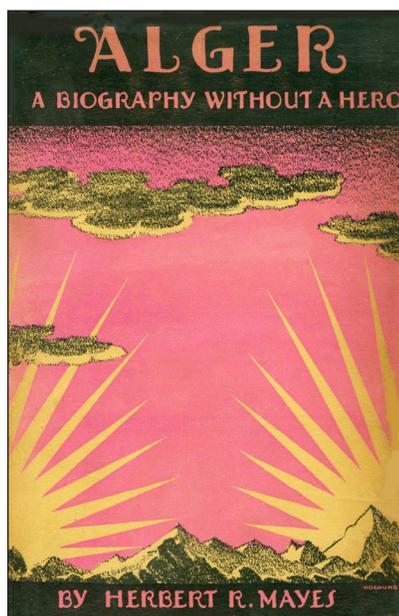
Alger’s heroes, too, would have it both ways — by achieving their success through manners and morality, by acquiring money, and attaining grace. The solution to this dilemma for Alger was to contrive a hero who preserved his sense of decency and character at the same time he pursued the dream of success. Alger adapted to his own purposes Benjamin Franklin’s myth of the impoverished idealistic young American who enters a strange city and through hard work, and 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 America wanted to believe about themselves and about the America they saw in New York City.⁵

Alger, along with a number of other juvenile writers, was not immune from criticism by reviewers and by those who worked in libraries. Alger’s works were seen by some as formulaic, repetitive stories with predictable outcomes. And the subjects of many of the tales, namely the orphans and street children, were not always considered sufficiently wholesome to ensure a redeeming value. One such sentiment was recorded by an Edison T. Filmore, who wrote to **The New York Times** on August 20, 1898:

The growth of free public libraries is nowhere so rapid and conspicuous as in the large cities. There, there is scarcely a child of what class or grade soever that does not belong to one library or another. The libraries, acting in concert with the schools, form one of the principle instruments of modern education, as is plainly shown by the increasing intelligence and culture of the body, of the younger generation.

Yet, though the benefits to be derived may be many and great, I have found what is in my estimation an evil, and that in New York City, affecting the children. The practice has been spreading among the smaller libraries of giving much undue prominence to the books of such authors as Horatio Alger, Oliver Optic, etc. Considering

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Alger biographers have included Herbert R. Mayes (he later admitted his book was a hoax), Ralph D. Gardner (his book held the first comprehensive bibliography of Alger's works) and Gary Scharnhorst and Jack Bales, whose *The Lost Life of Horatio Alger, Jr.* offered detailed original research on Alger's life and literary career.

Horatio Alger, Jr.

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the large percentage these books form of the total number on the shelves, it seems as if the libraries were making a specialty of circulating them. What object they may have in doing this I cannot imagine, except that since these books seem interesting they serve to keep the children from the streets.

This is all they accomplish. They are books devoid of truth, degrading and pernicious in effect. They have nothing in them that is instructive, nothing in them that is animating, and nothing in them that is elevating or ennobling. They treat mainly of the exploits and achievements of newsboys, bootblacks, street Arabs, Fagans, thieves, gamblers, tramps, and robbers. Their utter disregard for truth gives them a novelty and fascination that are almost irresistible to children. Once they fall into the hands of children it is only with the greatest effort that they can be got rid of afterwards. Naturally the harmful influence they exert molds much that is bad and unwholesome in the yielding minds of their inexperienced and youthful readers.

Recently, I interviewed a boy in one of the smaller libraries in regard to the reading of such books. He told me that he had read 52 Alger books all of them taken out

of the Yorkville branch of the New York Free Circulating Library, and that there were yet many more not yet read. He avowed that they were so much alike, repeating the same incidents and holdups so many times, that he could now write one himself. He said they are just as attractive to him now as they ever were and he wondered why he did not get sick of them.⁶

I think this letter writer and interviewer did not quite prove his case by interviewing the young school boy!

Let's now take a look at how Alger has been treated by his several biographers, key bibliographies, and by posterity itself. 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 1928.⁷ 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.

Mayes' biography, of course, was a literary hoax which took nearly 50 years for the author to disclose. Amazingly, he confessed the fabrication at a meeting of the Horatio Alger Society in 1977, and proceeded to sign a reprint edition of the hoax biography. He said the hoax was not intended to last very long, but that he felt trapped after a family friend gave the book a very favorable review. 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. Whenever you read that Alger was born in

1834 (1832 is the correct year), you know that writer has consulted the Mayes biography.

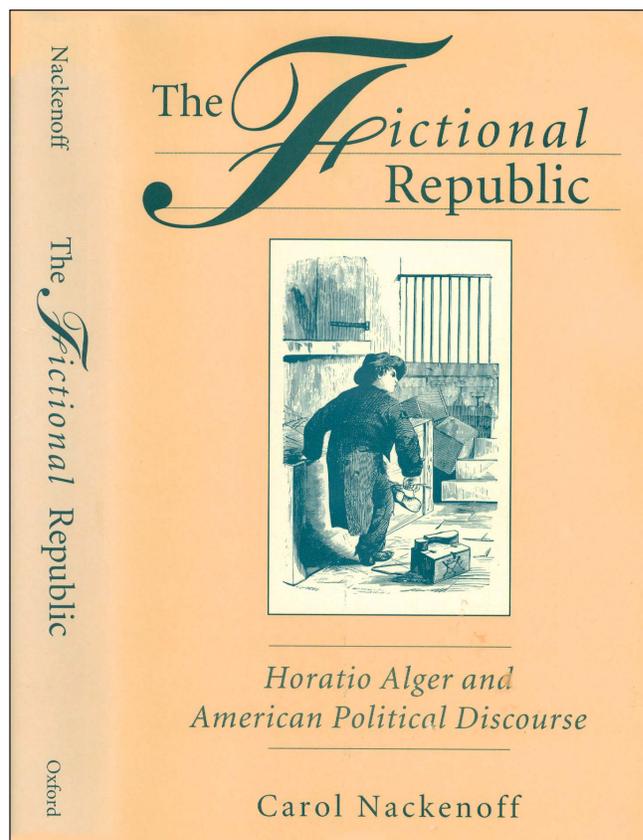
In 1964, Ralph D. Gardner wrote *Horatio Alger, or the American Hero Era*.⁸ Gardner's well-written biography brought together many new facts about Alger and conveyed the Alger story in a briskly-written volume. It is a good read. However, Gardner, as stated in his preface, did manufacture some of the dialog. He also appended an immensely important bibliography of Alger's works. Gardner single-handedly launched the resurrection of interest in Alger's writings and his importance to the history of American popular culture.

Gary Scharnhorst and Jack Bales published *The Lost Life of Horatio Alger, Jr.* in 1985. This work is the best-researched biography of Alger which we have and is the result of the exhaustive mining of 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 overly buoyant about some of Alger's contributions, Scharnhorst and Bayles may be judged overly cynical about some of Alger's flaws and literary shortcomings.

The most recent treatment of Alger, as already mentioned, is *The Fictional Republic: Horatio Alger and American Political Discourse*, by Carol Nackenoff, published in 1994. Nackenoff looks at Alger through the lens of thematic analysis and addresses such topics as technology, capitalism, democracy, mass fiction, culture 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.

As for his inclusion in mainline bibliographies, Alger has received some coveted recognition. *Ragged Dick* was selected by Jacob Blanck for *Peter Parley to Penrod: A Bibliographical Description of the Best-Loved American Juvenile Books* (New York: Bowker, 1938). *Ragged Dick* appears again in the landmark exhibition of the Grolier Club in 1947 and published by the Grolier Club as *One Hundred Influential American Books Printed Before 1900*.

Turning now to Alger's impact over the decades through the incorporation of his works and themes into all manner of American culture, I will offer a brief and highly selective inventory of his continuing presence. 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.⁹ 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, is 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 a 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 Galapagos Kid, or the Last All-American Boy*, was published by the Pushcart Press in 1976 by none other than a Luke Walton.¹⁰ 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 imagine, 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 decade with Alger as either a main or important secondary theme. Easily the most imaginative piece that ties Horatio Alger to another social setting and another time is the article written by Kathleen Abowitz, "Horatio Alger and Hip-Hop," published in 1996.¹¹ The author believes that the Alger formula is alive and flourishing in the many spheres of hip-hop music, which includes gangsta, rap, reggae, and other musical forms. The basic Horatio Alger mythology is very much present in hip-hop

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culture: ghetto boy or girl rises from humble beginnings through a combination of grace, lyrical style, performance virtuoso, hard work, strength in adversity, luck, and the help of elders and inspirational heroes. In the same way as Alger's heroes come from poor beginnings, hip-hop heroes come from the meanest city streets of Los Angeles, New York, Newark, and Oakland. Abowitz concludes, "With their wit, moxie, and rapping skills, they, like Alger's heroes, 'come well equipped with the qualities it takes to recognize and foil the con men, robbers, and other assorted evil-doers they encounter.'"

Forty years after his death, Alger's stories resurfaced in the comics, namely in **The Shadow** and **Doc Savage**, issued in the early 1940s. Horatio Alger's *Struggling Upward* was converted into the drama format and issued as a play in 1946 by the Dramatic Publishing Company of Chicago.

One year later, the great detective and western pulp writer, Frank Gruber, wrote "Murder '97." This volume was one in the series of famous Simon Lash detective stories, and revolved around a quadruple murder that was unraveled through tracing the original owner of Horatio Alger's *Ralph Raymond's Heir*. So here we have Alger inspiring a biblio-mystery.

"Shine! The Horatio Alger Musical" received its world premiere in October 1983 at the Virginia Museum Theater in Richmond, and received some very nice reviews. The CD jacket notes describe "Shine!" as "a touch of 'Tintype,' a glimmer of 'Annie,' a smidgeon of 'Oliver!,' bits and pieces of a dozen other musicals that have delighted Americans, and a lot of its own."

"Shine!" follows rather closely the travails and triumphs of Richard Hunter, otherwise known as Ragged Dick. Then, in 2003, Jon Boorstin published *The Newsboys' Lodging-House, or, The Confessions of William James*.¹² Boorstin takes William James on an imaginative fictional journey to New York City in the 1870s to save a nine-year-old seduced by the darker side of street life. Along the way, Horatio Alger is actively brought into dialog as a real person.

There are two organizations named after Horatio Alger, The Horatio Alger Association, founded in 1947, and the Horatio Alger Society, established in 1961. The Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans makes annual awards to people who have distinguished



Poster for "Shine! The Horatio Alger Musical" for its 1983 premiere in Richmond, Va.

themselves in many different arenas, awards scholarships to high schoolers, and periodically issues reports on the state of American society.

The Horatio Alger Society was formed as a group of book collectors who were inspired by Alger's messages of hard work, persistence, and success. The Alger Society holds an annual convention which features speakers and workshops on Alger-related themes, and sponsors an auction of Alger's books that is one of the highlights. The 2004 meeting was held at Northern Illinois University, and the 2005 event is Grand Rapids, Michigan. Every convention has an Alger-inspired theme, so "Dash to DeKalb" was inevitable last spring. Our keynote speaker was Nicholas Basbanes, familiar to all in the Caxton Club, and a young scholar, Kyoko Amano, who was awarded the first Horatio Alger Research Fellowship from Northern just four years ago.

Additionally, Northern Illinois University has made a commitment to acquiring all possible books, first editions and reprints, written by Horatio Alger. It is a major component of our American popular culture collection, and now numbers nearly 4,000 Alger volumes. We have the finest Horatio Alger first-edition collection in the world, including that in the Library of Congress.

There has been a resurgent interest in Horatio Alger throughout higher education, particularly in courses offered by departments of history, English, American studies, and so forth. I have located dozens of universities that offer courses, in whole or in part, about Horatio Alger and the success theme in the American social fabric. Among these institutions may be noted Southern Illinois University, Wayne State University, University of Wisconsin, University of Pennsylvania and Syracuse University.

And now some comments about Horatio Alger as a collectible author. Evidence of Alger's continuing interest to the collecting community is revealed by a recent search of the Advance Book Exchange or ABE online

books site, which currently has 60 million used books for sale. When books by and about Horatio Alger and other contemporaries are entered, the results are most instructive. There are only five 19th-century juvenile authors who lead Alger in the number of hits: Mark Twain, 38,000; Louisa May Alcott, 8,200; James Fenimore Cooper, with 6,800; Frances Hodgson Burnett with 5,900; and G. W. Henty with 5,200. Following Henty is Horatio Alger, with 4,100 books available. The rest on the selective list are Frank R. Stockton, with 2,900; Jacob Abbott, R.M. Ballantyne, and Edward R. Ellis, with 2,200 each; James Otis, 1,900; Thomas Bailey Aldrich, 1,700; Martha Finley (*Elsie Dinsmore* books), 1,600; and Oliver Optic, 1,500.

Collecting your first 30 or 40 Alger books in first-edition format is still relatively easy, with the average volume, depending on condition, costing between \$100 and \$400. Moving beyond the initial 30 or 40 to the remaining 80 first editions becomes incrementally more difficult, and in the top 10 range one will pay between \$750 and \$7,500 for the rarest treasures.

Parenthetically, several of the rarest Alger titles in first edition format are *Timothy Crump's Ward*, written anonymously; *The Disagreeable Woman*, written pseudonymously by Alger under the name Julian Starr; *The New Schoolma'am*, also written anonymously; *Dan the Detective*; and *The Young Boatman*.

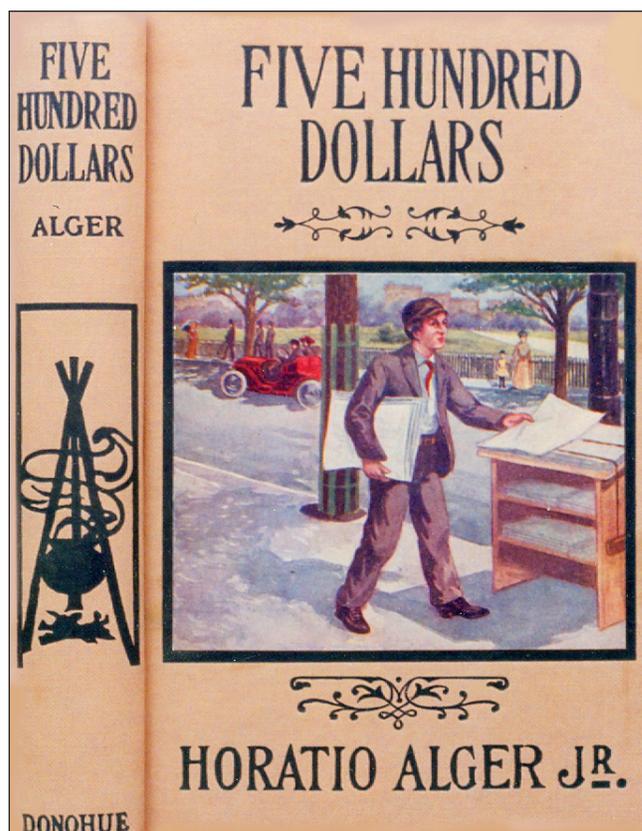
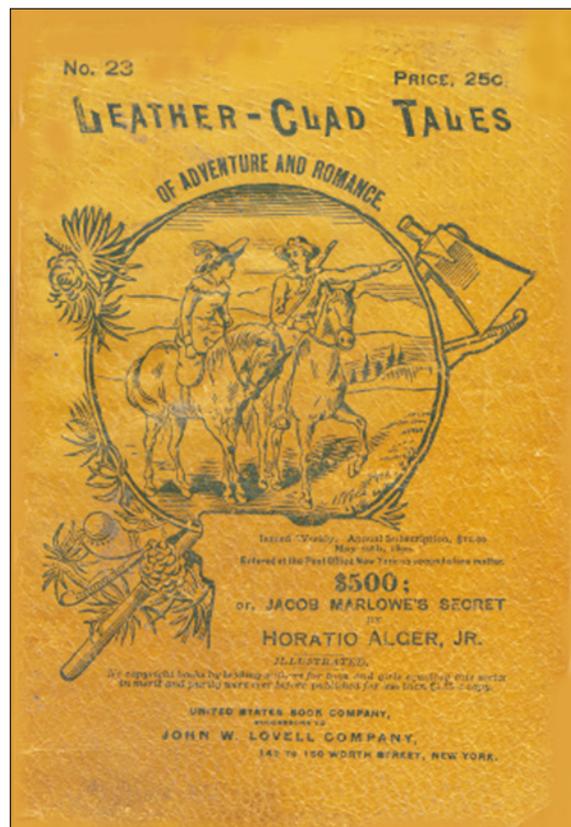
With well over one hundred reprint publishers to date, collecting various subsets of the Alger constellation is much easier and a lot of fun. Many Alger collectors focus on the more affordable reprint books and collect according to many variables, such as years of publication, cover design, period illustrator, dust-jacketed or not, etc.

The auction site eBay can be an important source for the buying and selling of books, including Horatio Alger. There are usually several hundred Alger items up for auction at any given time, and occasionally a real treasure comes down from the attic and bestirs the interest of advanced collectors. Some items have gone as high as \$2,500. I will save the pricing of Alger's works and the level of bibliographic *in*expertise displayed by not a few book dealers and eBay listers to another time and place.

Horatio Alger was not only one of the major writers of the 19th century, but he became an important symbol of

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Alger collectors can seek out extremely rare first editions, one prominent example the United States Book Company's paperback *Leather-Clad Tales of Adventure and Romance* (top right), which can easily sell for \$1,000 or more on the open market; or collect inexpensive reprints, such as this attractive M.A. Donohue format, for under \$20.



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American culture. What attracted me most to collecting Alger is the fact that he is a lens through which one can plumb the American character. Alger, for example, used the newsboy as a recurring character in a number of his books, and that led me to read further about the 19th and early 20th-century newsboys and to collect newsboy memorabilia.

I now have a collection of more than 100 newspaper boys, ranging in size from an inch tall to about 20 inches, in all manner of materials, from cast iron to bronze to porcelain. I have enjoyed doing research on the fine points of determining Alger first editions, and publishing the results.

Collecting Alger has brought me into contact with many people that I normally do not encounter in my library life. In the Horatio Alger Society, for example, one's expertise in particular Alger works is the great leveler. Your education or status in life is clearly secondary. And I find that rather refreshing, given the sometimes stodgy nature of academe. I have also met my fair share of overly zealous collectors who have displayed less than gentlemanly or ladylike behavior at auctions and in other collectors' homes. Yes, collectors will sometimes misrepresent a value to one another and, on the rarest of occasions, commit the most heinous crime, the theft of a book.

In view of my career as a librarian, I am particularly pleased that I have entered the collecting community. Before becoming a collector, I really could not have imagined the amount of effort, dedication, learning, travel, and emotional attachment to various books that is common in the collecting community and generally not part of the framework of librarianship.

And above all, it is the passion that must be applauded because it is the collector who brings together a unique group of books that is often difficult and sometimes impossible for a library to do. And getting some of these

collections into libraries requires patience, finesse, and an understanding of what it took for that private collector to amass his or her collection.

On the passion of collecting, I can do no better than to quote a friend and former colleague from the University of South Carolina, the redoubtable Matthew Brucoli, who over his lifetime amassed the premier collection of F. Scott Fitzgerald material. He recently emoted and, if you've ever met Matt, you know that's a proper verb, "As long as they can wheel me into a bookstore I'll be buying books and improving the Fitzgerald collection. That is what I do. I will still be looking for two Fitzgerald items that I stupidly failed to buy when I could have acquired them. I recently received a tip that one of them may be

sold by the estate of the collector who got it. I had nothing to do with his demise. If the item is put up for sale, we'll get it. The lesson I've learned over and over again — but we don't always live up to our own best lessons — is that you never regret buying a book. There is no such thing as over-paying for a book. The ones you regret are the ones you failed to buy for some foolish,

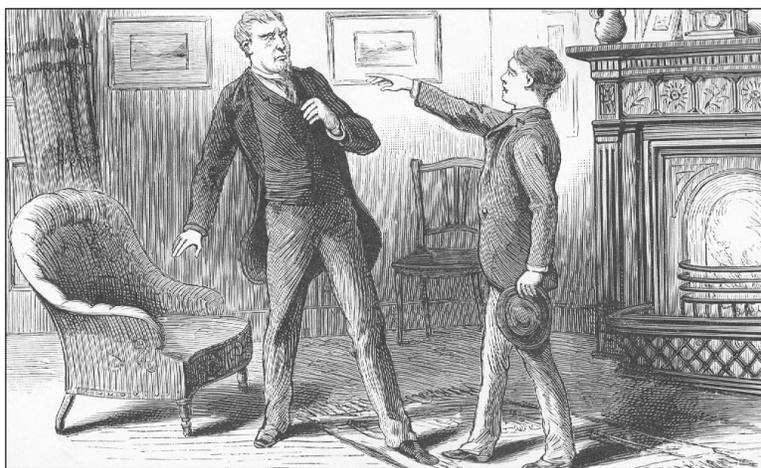
cowardly, irresponsible reason."¹³

Every collector loves to share some experiences in stalking his or her favorite books, and I shall surrender briefly to that temptation:

There was a privately published book, issued in 1922, which contained a large amount of material on Horatio Alger's Harvard class of 1852. Every one of the 88 students in the class has a photograph and a write-up, and the volume illuminates many other aspects of the collegiate experience at that time. The book is valued at about \$150-\$200, and that is what I happily paid for it some six or eight years ago.

When I received the book, I made a point of turning each and every one of the 400 or so pages, and when I got to the rear of the book where the various fraternities were listed and class songs, poems, and so forth were reprinted, I noticed that there was a folded sheet laid in, and I immediately started quietly saying to myself, "Oh no, it's simply not possible that the original class ode, delivered by Alger, had been stored away all these years next to the page upon which it was reprinted."

As I took the sheet in my hand and carefully unfolded



LUKE DENOUNCES THE FALSE FRIEND. Luke Walton; or, *The Chicago Newsboy*. Page 336.

it, I saw that it was indeed the original broadside which was printed and distributed for graduation ceremonies for the class of 1852. It was in good condition, and I had it professionally conserved and put into a nice display folder.

Quite recently, I purchased an Alger book published by A. K. Loring, the publisher who published the majority of his early books, without knowing whether or not it was a first edition or later. To my wonderful surprise, when the book arrived, the dealer had not noted that the book was signed by Mr. Alger.

Several years ago, a half dozen pen-and-ink drawings by J. Watson Davis, a house illustrator for A. L. Burt for many, many years, came up for auction, and they were illustrations for Alger's works. I've learned to ask, "Do you have any more of these?" In this case, the seller indicated, to my amazement, that he had another 30 original illustrations for Alger books done by J. Watson Davis. I was able to secure the entire remaining lot for the University Library.

Even when a book is meticulously examined by a seller, if there is insufficient knowledge about first-edition points and other matters of rarity, the book can be offered for sale at sometimes incredibly low prices. It does not happen very often, but you savor those moments when it does, and when you are the fortunate person to acquire it. Two such instances stand out in my memory. Several of the scarcest Alger first editions, namely paperback, so-called "leather-clad" books issued in the late 1880s and early 1890s, written under Alger's pseudonym, "Arthur Lee Putnam," came up at once and were priced at \$10-\$20 apiece. They routinely sell for \$1,000 or more. Needless to say, the mouse on my computer activated the order at record-breaking speed.

Recently, a book was put up on eBay, one of Alger's anonymously published works, *The New Schoolma'am*. The seller did not know that Alger was the author and failed to include other key bibliographic data. A colleague got lucky and the book closed at \$40 with only one bid. We then made a trade and the book landed in my collection. The item last sold for \$2,500. May everyone have similar good fortune in acquiring books for their own collection!

For a personal assessment, I think Horatio 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. He always favored the underdog and extolled the virtues of charity. 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. Both republican and democrat, left and right, will continue to evoke Alger to commemorate the past, or to criticize the present as failing to live up to some mythical past. And what more enduring legacy to leave than to be the focal point of the nation's continuing dialog about its core values.

We began with our hero, Luke Walton, on the Chicago streets — and now that you know what constitutes the typical Alger story — let's draw the curtain with the final passage from *Luke Walton*:

Luke Walton is not puffed up by his unexpected and remarkable success. He never fails to recognize kindly, and help, if there is need, the old associates of his humbler days, and never tries to conceal the fact that he was once a CHICAGO NEWSBOY.¹⁴

NOTES

1. Horatio Alger, Jr., *Luke Walton; or, The Chicago Newsboy*. (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1889), p. 1.
2. Gary Scharnhorst and Jack Bales, *The Lost Life of Horatio Alger, Jr.* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), p. 23.
3. Jackson Lears, *Something for Nothing: Luck in America*. (NY: Viking, 2003), pp. 2-3, 156.
4. Carol Nackenoff, *The Fictional Republic: Horatio Alger and American Political Discourse*. (NY: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 271.
5. Shaun O'Connell, *Remarkable, Unspeakable New York: A Literary History*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995): p. 84.
6. Edison T. Filmore, Letter to the editor, **The New York Times** (August 20, 1898).
7. Herbert R. Mayes, *Alger: A Biography Without a Hero*. NY: Macy-Masius, 1928.
8. Ralph D. Gardner, *Horatio Alger; or, The American Hero Era*. Mendota, IL: Wayside Press, 1964.
9. Nathanael West, *The Dream of Balso Snell, A Cool Million*. NY: Noonday Press, 1996.
10. Luke Walton, *The Gal'apagos Kid, or The Last Great American Boy*. NY: Pushcart Press, 1971.
11. Kathleen K. Abowitz, "Horatio Alger and Hip-hop," *Review of Education/Pedagogy/Cultural Studies* 19 (1997): pp. 409-25.
12. Jan Boorstin, *The Newsboys' Lodging-House; or, The Confessions of William James*. NY: Viking, 2003.
13. Matthew Bruccoli, Remarks, F. Scott Fitzgerald Centenary Celebration, University of South Carolina, 1997. <www.sc.edu/fitzgerald/centenary/proceed-ings.html#bruccoli>
14. Alger, *Luke Walton*, p. 346.

Speed reading Horatio Alger

By David J. Yarrington (PF-1050)

So you want to read every book Horatio Alger wrote. Let's see, he wrote over 110 books, that's a lot of reading time! There actually are quite a few people to have as a goal to read every book. As a former Education Professor and reading specialist, I can give those people some pretty good advice.

If we define reading as seeing every word, not to mention understanding, remembering and comprehending sometimes very complicated concepts, then it is physically impossible to read more than 250 words per minute. That means reading *Ragged Dick* (about 51,000 words) in about three and one-half hours at top speed, probably more like six or seven hours for an average reader. Most of us read the back of the Wheaties box at the breakfast table with the same rapt attention we read our physics textbook in high school; that is, slowly and carefully. On the other hand, by skimming, we can "read" thousands of words per minute.

This is sometimes called "speed reading." A mature reader adjusts his or her rate of reading (words per minute) to the difficulty of the material read and to his or her purpose (reading for enjoyment or reading to pass a test on the material).

Most of us are woefully slow readers. That's why Jack Kennedy and Jimmy Carter got so much publicity when it was announced they were speed readers, and "speed reading" courses appeared all over the country. So if we want to read every Alger book, it would be wise to understand and practice some flexible reading habits so we CAN adjust our reading rate to our purpose.

About 175 years ago, authors of school readers — William McGuffey was the first — wrote children's books so that book one was easier to read than book two, and book three was harder than book two and so on. It wasn't long before "graded readers" or "basal readers" appeared. These books were written for first-grade level and third-grade level and so on.

Then, the educators wanted to learn at what "grade

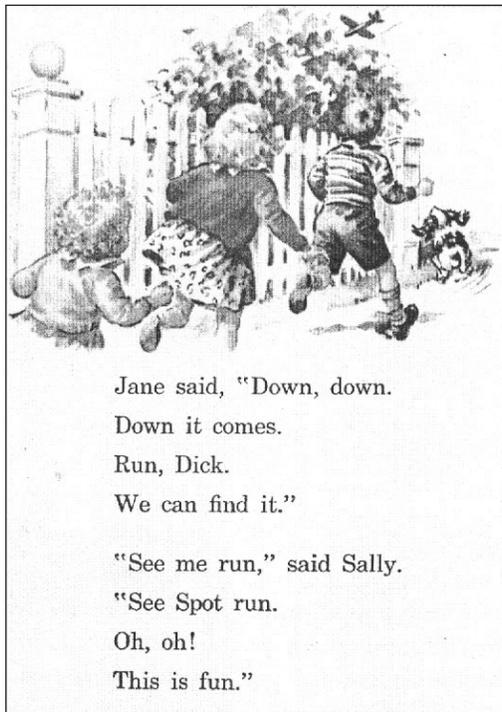
level" other library books were written so that they could encourage young children to read the appropriate level book. To do this "readability formulae" were developed to analyze books to determine what their readability level was. Most formulae used the average number of syllables per word and number of words in a sentence in a randomly selected 50 or 100 words to determine readability. So "See Dick run" became primer or first grade level and multi-syllabic words in longer sentences became higher levels. Unfortunately, content or the difficulty of concepts was not considered.

I analyzed *Ragged Dick* using the Flesch-Kincaid readability formula, a fairly modern and popular readability formula. Modern technology allowed me to analyze the whole 51,000-word book, not just a randomly selected passage. *Ragged Dick* has a readability level of 5.2, or fifth grade, second month. Research has indicated that the Flesch-Kincaid formula usually returns a level two or three grades below other formulae, so *Ragged Dick* is probably written at 6th or 7th grade level, pretty easy for most of us. *Ragged Dick* has about 50,403 words, 2,829 paragraphs and 3,963 sentences.

As mentioned earlier, readability scores depend on writing style, not the difficulty of the material. Horatio Alger was a Harvard graduate writing books for young boys, so he adjusted his vocabulary accordingly. Incidentally, the readability level of this article is 7.1, or seventh grade level.

We know very little about the brain process in learning to read and reading, but speed reading can be described best by the relationship between what happens in front of the eye and what happens behind the eye.

We know that when we read, the eyes make a series of stops called *fixations*. As they stop, the eyes see about two words, then they jump to the next fixation. There is a classic experiment in perception that you can try on yourself. It indicates the relationship between what happens in front of the eye and behind



Jane said, "Down, down.

Down it comes.

Run, Dick.

We can find it."

"See me run," said Sally.

"See Spot run.

Oh, oh!

This is fun."

The classic "graded reader," *Fun with Dick and Jane*, helped first-graders read basic sentences using mainly monosyllabic words.

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it. Do the experiment yourself by writing three lines on three separate 3 x 5 cards.

On the first card write:

CBYAFBBLNGPRVTXC

On the second card write:

AND WAS BUT RED SEE

On the third card write:

I LIKE TO SPEED READ

Now try the experiment with a friend. Cover the letters with another card and expose or “flash” the letters for just a fraction of a second. Practice it a few times. Have your friend read as you flash the cards, first the letters, then the words, then the sentence. What could your friend read? All three cards presented about the same amount of visual information in front of the eyes. Your friend saw about five times as much on the third card as on the first card.

The point is that as soon as meaning is added to the letters, we start to use our prior knowledge of the words to recognize words. As meaning is added to the visual presentation, we see more with the same two or three fixations. There is more to reading than just training the eyes to move faster. Without comprehension, there is no reading.

Following is a timed reading exercise from — you guessed it — *Ragged Dick*. Have someone time you as you read, stopping at one minute.

1. “Now Dick,” said Fosdick, “before we begin,
2. I must find out how much you already know.
3. “Can you read any?” “Not enough to hurt
4. me,” said Dick. “all I know about readin’
5. you could put in a nutshell, and there’d
6. be room left for a small family.” “I
7. suppose you know your letters?” “Yes,” said Dick.
8. “I know ’em all, but not intimately. I
9. guess I can call ’em all by name.”
10. “Where did you learn them? Did you ever
11. go to school?” “Yes; I went two days.”
12. “Why did you stop?” “I didn’t agree with
13. my constitution.” “You don’t look very delicate,”
14. said Fosdick. “No,” said Dick. “I ain’t troubled
15. much that way; but I found lickers didn’t
16. agree with me.” “Did you get punished?” “Awful,”
17. said Dick. “What for?” “For indulgin’ in a
18. little harmless amusement,” said Dick. “You see the
19. boy that was sittin’ next to me fell
20. asleep, which I considered improper in schooltime; so
21. I thought I’d help the teacher a little

22. by wakin’ him up. So I took a
23. pin and stuck it into him, but I
24. guess it went a little too far, for
25. he screeched awful. The teacher found out what
26. it was that made him holler, and whipped
27. me with a ruler till I was black
28. and blue. I thought ’twas about time to
29. take a vacation; so that’s the last time
30. I went to school.” “You didn’t learn to
31. read in that time, of course?” “No,”
32. said Dick; “but I was a newsboy a
33. little while; so I learned a little,
34. just so’s to find out what the news
35. was. Sometimes I didn’t read straight and called
36. the wrong news. One mornin’ I asked another
37. boy what the paper said, and he told
38. me the king of Africa was dead. I
39. thought it was all right until folks began
40. to laugh.” “Well, Dick, if you’ll only study
41. well, you won’t be liable to make such
42. mistakes.” “I hope so,” said Dick. “My friend
43. Horace Greeley told me the other day that
44. he’d get me to take his place now
45. and then when he was off makin’ speeches
46. if my edication hadn’t been neglected.” “I must
47. find a good place for you to begin
48. on,” said Fosdick, looking over the paper.
49. “Find an easy one,” said Dick, “with words
50. of one story.” Fosdick at length found a piece
51. which he thought would answer. He discovered
52. on trial that Dick had not exaggerated his deficiencies
53. Words of two syllables he seldom pronounced right
54. and was much surprised when he was told how
55. “through” was sounded. “Seems to me it’s throwin’
56. away letters to use all them,” he said.
57. “How would you spell it?” asked his young
58. teacher. “T-h-r-u,” said Dick. “Well,” said Fosdick,
59. there’s a good many other words that are spelt
60. with more letters than they need to have.
61. But it’s the fashion and we must follow it.”

Horatio Alger was obviously aware of the teaching of reading and the irregularities of the English language. Now, figure your reading speed by multiplying by eight, the line number where you stopped after one minute. Record your reading speed.

Now go back and finish the excerpt from *Ragged Dick*. We can assume that is your normal reading rate based on this crude estimate with no instructions how to read the

(Continued on Page 20)

Speed reading Horatio Alger

(Continued from Page 19)

passage. We define reading as seeing every word, and if you want to increase your reading rate, that's increasing your rate of seeing every word.

In the next one-minute timed exercise, try to read a lot faster. Simply by telling yourself you are going to read much, much faster, you will. Move your eyes quickly across the words, concentrating on the meaning, on moving rapidly, and not stopping and not going back. You will see the sentence "Read faster!" occasionally, to speed you up.

Start timing for the one minute **now**:

1. There is no doubt that if you want
2. to read faster you can do it. The
3. speed-reading people promised that you will get
4. your money back if you do not double
5. your reading speed. Well, if your beginning reading
6. is around 150 or 200 words per
7. minute, it is quite easy to double your
8. reading speed to 300 or 400 words per
9. minute just by saying to yourself "I want
10. to read faster," and occasionally trying to do
11. it. Concentrate on trying to read fast every
12. time you are reading easy material which is
13. appropriate for speed reading techniques. Actually
14. most of us are lazy, slow readers. It is said
15. that the average reading speed of most adults,
16. including college graduates, is 250 words per
17. minute, which is very slow. Read faster!
18. It is possible, seeing every word, to read 600
19. to 900 words per minute, if you try.
20. Read faster! Of course it isn't easy to
21. remember to read faster every time you read.
22. We have been conditioned to read slowly through
23. years of schooling. One cannot break the habit of
24. reading slowly in just one day. Read faster!
25. You need to practice to break such ingrained
26. habits. That is why the old speed reading
27. courses which cost \$300 to \$500 were so
28. successful. If you paid that much money to
29. learn to read faster, chances are, you will read
30. faster. What speed reading courses did was simply
31. force you to move your eyes faster with
32. reading machines and mechanical pacers. Read
33. faster! You can practice on your own using
34. a 3 x 5 card as a pacer, moving your hand
35. down the page. And by making up your

36. mind that you want to break the word by word
37. habit and read faster. You will be amazed at your
38. reading speed on this passage when you are
39. finished reading, achieved simply by telling
40. yourself to read faster without any practice at all.
41. This demonstration should be enough evidence for
42. you to realize that speed reading is all
43. in your head — it's a matter of practice and
44. habit. If you want to do it, you can.
45. By the way, if you double your reading
46. speed in this exercise, just make out
47. a check for \$400 to the Horatio Alger Society
48. and mail it to the author. That's how much
49. it costs to take a speed reading course and
50. double your reading speed — guaranteed! This
51. is just a simple exercise with with no test for
52. understanding or comprehension at the end, but
53. who is going to test you after you have
54. read several Horatio Alger books? By the way,
55. it's a good idea to read the Ragged Dick series in
56. the order they were written to follow the
57. progress of Richard Hunter. Read faster please!
58. If you don't intend to read very book
59. written by Horatio Alger, it's still a good
60. idea to adjust your rate of reading to
61. your purpose and the difficulty of the material.
62. How silly it would be to read the
63. directions for assembling a new computer using
64. speed reading. Also, how silly would it be to read a
65. Horatio Alger novel slowly word by word as
66. if you were studying for an examination? It
67. makes a lot of sense to read difficult
68. material slowly and easy material faster. It's as
69. simple as that. Now, when you read a
70. novel, you will say to yourself, "I'm going
71. to read faster," and when you start reading
72. technical material, you'll say, "I'm going to
73. slow down and perhaps re-read some of this
74. stuff because I really want to remember it."
75. If you are still reading this passage inside
76. one minute, you are reading about 600 words
77. per minute, which is plenty fast enough!

Now, multiply by eight the line number you stopped on after one minute. Did you increase your reading speed? If you did, you can realize how easy it is to become a flexible reader. Finish reading the passage. If you want to pay \$400 for doubling your reading speed, the Horatio Alger Society will appreciate your donation!