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HORATIO ALGER DAY
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MIRRORS WORK TWO WAYS

The temptation for me today is simply to toss away this script and just talk. The fact is that's what I'm going to do -- just talk. But I'm going to do it still using these few sheets of paper that contain thoughts that came to mind as I anticipated today's event.

What am I going to say to you today?

First, a bit about the man Horatio Alger. And a bit about the Horatio Alger Association.

Second, a bit about myself. Why they picked me to be here.

Third, I'm going to share with you a lesson or two I learned on the way to getting here. Heaven forbid, I am not going to tell you what to do or how to live your lives. Instead I am going to lay out some of the things that worked for me.

Fourth -- the happiest part of this occasion for me -- I will have the great privilege of presenting a Horatio Alger

Scholarship to one of your classmates.

Horatio Alger. Who he?

Mostly, he was a writer. Born in Massachusetts in the mid-1800s, son of a small town pastor of modest means, writer of 123 novels that were quite the rage at the dawn of the new century. These novels had a common theme. That theme, simply stated, was that commitment and integrity and, above all, hard work are the keys to success and fortune.

He wrote what are still referred to as "rags to riches" stories. His name, Horatio Alger has entered our vocabulary as a synonym for overcoming adversity to achieve both fame and fortune.

Not just luck, but commitment, integrity, hard work. The keys to success -- to the "fame and fortune" reward that stemmed from the body of Horatio Alger literature.

And what is the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans?

It's an organization of, as the name implies, men and women -- all colors, all creeds -- Americans who have made something of themselves. All of them men and women of humble origin.

In fact, if you are a rich kid, you aren't eligible for a place in the Horatio Alger Association. Now come to think of it, I haven't found anything else in my lifetime where being poor is an advantage over being rich!

The Horatio Alger Association has a thousand or so members -- men and women of all races and nationalities -- recognized by their peers for their accomplishment. A lot of them are people whose names are familiar to you.

Carol Burnett was honored last year. Dolly Parton will join us at our induction ceremonies for new members in May and so will Julius Irving, Dr. "J".

Bob Hope is a Horatio Alger honoree of some years ago. That applies too to Billy Graham and President Reagan and the late President Eisenhower. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall is one of us and so is Senator Robert Dole. And, come May, Senator Daniel Inouye, born in Hawaii, an American of Japanese descent. I was inducted in 1986 along with the eminent golfer Chi-Chi Rodriguez and Tom Monaghan, the man who started Domino's Pizza.

A primary purpose of the Horatio Alger Association is to perpetuate the private enterprise system -- a system that makes it possible for able and committed young men and women to get ahead in life. To come from behind, so to speak, and

gain positions of leadership, respect and, yes, even wealth.

I know I need not tell you -- ours is a great country. Ours is an environment that provides opportunity. So much so that almost daily we read in the newspapers or see on television examples and rewards of achievement that could happen "only in America".

It's that state of affairs, that competitive spirit of enterprise, that we in the Horatio Alger Association seek to preserve, that we seek to perpetuate so others following in our footsteps can realize their own dreams and aspirations.

Among the programs undertaken by the Horatio Alger Association is an annual scholarship program. Throughout the United States, other recipients of the Horatio Alger Award will participate, as I am participating, in Horatio Alger Days at a select group of high schools. Thirty in all this year -- 30 -- to award \$5000 college scholarships to young men and women who exemplify the Horatio Alger characteristics of integrity, commitment, self-reliance and, and this is important, a strong desire to continue his or her education.

Now, what about me? Why me for this occasion?

It's been more than 50 years since I was sitting where you

are now sitting -- about to graduate from high school, thinking about what I would do with the rest of my life. And like many of you, I came from what we now like to say was "a family of modest means". The fact is we were poor. I was never hungry, but the family during my growing up period was never a month ahead with the rent.

Memphis, Tennessee, is my home town. And I suspect my principal distinction for most of you is that I went to the same high school, Humes High, as Elvis Presley. Or rather, Elvis went to the same school as I. He followed me by almost 20 years. And for a few short months I lived in the little town where Elvis was born, Tupelo, Mississippi.

I went to school at the University of Mississippi -- known as Ole Miss. I went there for a very simple reason. It was the only college I could attend where I knew I could earn enough money to pay my way -- all of it. I did it by writing for my home town newspaper, The Memphis Commercial Appeal. Like some of you, my first published writing was in my high school newspaper. One of my earliest achievements of which I am proudest is that I was editor of my high school newspaper.

That experience -- writing in high school and writing in college -- had a lot to do with my going into public relations. I knew early on what I wanted to do -- that my

most marketable skill was writing -- and that I wanted to get into something where I could use what I was good at.

I also had another dream as a youngster. I wanted to go to the big city, to New York. I didn't know much about New York in those days, but subliminally I knew if you could make it in New York, you could make it anywhere.

I first came to New York in 1942 and worked here two years before the Army got me. Then, after two years in Europe for World War II, I returned to New York. I took the plunge and went into my own business as a public relations consultant. I was 25 years old, had \$3000 in capital that I saved while overseas and was ready to take on the world. When I started, it was me alone with a part-time secretary and desk space in a client's office.

Life has been pretty good for me -- from that day on. Some 40 years later, the public relations firm that bears my name is the largest in the world. We have 2300 employees. We have more than 40 offices. We are in 23 countries on five continents; I have been to all of them, some as many as 50 or 60 times.

Was I lucky? You're darn right.

But I have a theory about luck that I would like to share

with you. And that is that lots of people are lucky -- more than you would ever suspect.

In most instances, however, two things happen when luck -- I like to call it opportunity -- comes along.

The first thing that happens, or doesn't happen, is that the person is not able to identify that luck or opportunity is there waiting to be capitalized on. The result is that luck -- opportunity -- passes them by.

The second thing that happens is that many who recognize opportunity are not able to handle it. They aren't able to put it all together. They aren't able to do those things, in the way they should be done, to take full advantage of the bit of luck, the fortuitous happening, that has befallen them. They may be impatient; they may not want to put forth the hard work; they may not be willing to make the tradeoffs or the sacrifices. Most times, almost always, I have found that success exerts a price; it doesn't come easy; it doesn't come cheap. Nor does it simply fall in one's lap.

People have to want to be successful, to make something of themselves. Ask any of my fellow Horatio Alger honorees: they'll give you the same message -- people who succeed in life are the people who want to succeed. They start with a goal -- a dream, a vision. They have a plan -- they know

their plan is subject to change every step along the way, but they stay on course. And they are committed to hard work, to sacrifice, to paying the price and making the tradeoffs that contribute to their goal.

I have made it sound easy. I know it is not easy. Nor does it happen overnight. And it doesn't happen to everyone who comes up with a goal, develops a plan and is willing to work hard to make it happen.

But look at it another way: it never happens to anyone who fails to follow that approach. So I think it is worth trying -- for everyone. Sure, even in our great country, the odds aren't evenly distributed. But that doesn't prevent some people from beating the odds every now and then.

And the reason I have come here to be with you this morning is that I believe every one of you has what it takes to beat those odds. I am confident there are, among you, future Horatio Alger honorees -- young men and young women who will overcome adversity to distinguish yourselves.

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